Introduction of the Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee TMF Evaluation commissioned and supervised nine studies, which are regarded as important building blocks for the synthesis report of this evaluation. These were seven thematic studies, and two cross-cutting studies. This study on monitoring and evaluation is one of the two cross-cutting studies. The Steering Committee regards this study as an excellent contribution to the final result, and admires the way the researchers have consulted with the field, and built up trust and a desire for developing learning capabilities. The study will have an important impact on the ways NGOs will further develop their PME systems and integrate those in their day-to-day activities. In the synthesis report the Steering Committee has given its own interpretation of the main conclusions in section 2.8, and has added further conclusions about the topic in section 4.6.
EVALUATION OF THE THEME-BASED COFINANCING PROGRAMME

Cross-cutting Study: Monitoring & Evaluation

FINAL REPORT

MDF/IAC

Ede-Wageningen, March 8th, 2006
“Put Practice into Learning and Learning into Practice”

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Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing Programme.
Cross-cutting study Monitoring & Evaluation.
MDF/IAC- February 28th, 2006

Executive Summary

This cross-cutting study is part of the overall TMF-evaluation (Theme-based co-financing programme), commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. It took place between May 2005 and February 2006. The study consists of a retrospective and a prospective part, the recommendations serving the new Co-financing structure (MFS).

The aim of the study is to assess the quality of present M&E performance among the TMF organisations and the Ministry, and to see how this performance could be improved. This aim is worked out in a number of detailed questions. Underpinning the evaluation is a conceptual framework ‘Managing for impact’, based on the assumptions that to be effective, M&E must support internal organisational and programme learning and be fully embedded in management functions and processes. The analytical framework is based on six dimensions: creating a learning environment, guiding the strategy, ensuring effective operations, designing the M&E system, M&E capacities and conditions, and gender equity. For each dimension a series of questions were developed that enabled a performance assessment in the particular dimension.

The evaluation made use of six major information sources: a self-assessment survey among TMF-organisations, interviews with TMF-organisations in the Netherlands, interviews with TMF-organisations in England and Switzerland, visits to partner organisations in the South, survey among Theme directorate staff and meetings with other Ministry staff, and assessments by evaluators from other lots. The analysis was done by cross-checking and triangulation of these sources. For the interviews with TMF-organisations an ‘intelligent’ sample was composed. The interviews had the character of ‘backstopping’, and feedback was realised, either by sending assessment reports or by organising small workshops with those organisations assessed. Two big workshops with the TMF sector, one at the beginning of the evaluation and one towards the end, has created interest and commitment for the evaluation, and has contributed to smoothing the way for a successful introduction of the MFS.

Conclusions

In the NGO co-financing sector, in particular among the TMF-organisations, the interest in PME is vivid and grows rapidly. The TMF contract-organisations have put considerable effort in improving their PME systems, and have supported their partners in doing the same. They have invested (partly with TMF funds) in following training, contracting experts or employing expert staff to design and improve their PME systems. Big TMF-organisations, receiving core-funding, have succeeded relatively better in this respect than small TMF-organisations. In spite of the above mentioned observation, the research has concluded that in about half of the cases the M&E systems of TMF-organisations need considerable improvement. About 8% of the M&E systems is of excellent quality.

The strength of the M&E systems in the TMF sector is their learning ability, which is strongest at the base of the chain. Learning is achieved in all sorts of formal and informal, structured and unstructured ways; learning has no fixed methodology or indicators. The information and insights gained are sufficient for operational management, and generally also suffice for satisfying the accountability-needs of higher funding levels. The information is shared with a wide variety of stakeholders in the sector in which the organisations operate,
and disseminated in many ways (meetings, workshops, publications, radio broadcast, website, e-mail and other IT applications). However, strategic learning is not passed on easily. The major weakness is that many organisations still struggle with the way how to deal with both qualitative and quantitative assessment at higher levels in the objective hierarchy and how to report on these. The major challenge of M&E in a co-financing chain-system is how to produce, on all levels, strategic information and pass this upwards in the chain. Examples suggest that this seems easiest when the M&E in the chain is a unique system or a very coherent interlocking whole of M&E systems. Advocacy and lobbying organisations or networks seem to be most impact-oriented.

A clear strategy of the TMF programme was lacking, linkages between components were non-existant. The objectives of the programme were not clearly defined and not systematically monitored either. There was no strategic partnership between the Ministry and the TMF-organisations, and hence no systematic learning in the programme, and no systematic feed-back. The Ministry (Theme directions) staff was not well instructed in monitoring the programme, and lacked time, and sometimes the interest and skills, to add to monitoring an added value (some staff, however, performed very well in monitoring the grants). On donor level, no effective learning mechanisms were established. The Piramide system is not adequate in this respect; moreover, its use needs considerable improvement.

**Recommendations**

A series of recommendations with regard to the new MFS programme, the MFS organisations and the Ministry’s role in MFS were formulated. The main issue is the formulation of the MFS programme’s objectives and strategy, with a clear indication of the linkage of the programme with the MFS organisations’ activities. It would help if the Ministry employs the DRAM principles in the formulation of the MFS programme. A genuine dialogue and a productive partnership are to be established between the programme and the funded organisations. The motivation for undertaking the sort of M&E required by the programme is totally dependant on this relationship and the quality of feedback given. The MFS reporting formats and mechanisms should put much emphasis on reflective aspects such as significant changes, reasons for success and failure, unintended positive and negative impacts, lessons learned and how performance will be improved.

It is recommended to the MFS-organisations to plan from desired impact (or organisational ‘mission’) downwards to programme purpose and programme outputs, and not to start the other way round, with activities and outputs, and plan upwards. In the latter case ‘impact’ tends to disappear behind the horizon. PME should strive to ‘manage for impact’. It is also recommended to the contract-organisations to develop, with partners, a coherent PME system which allows for operational as well as strategic monitoring. It is highly recommended that contract-organisations communicate and exchange PME experience horizontally among each other, in order to encourage cross-fertilisation.

Monitoring and evaluation should be seen as an essential and integral part of programme implementation by all parties involved in the MFS. Realistic budgets for M&E and learning activities should be proposed and approved. Their justification is in how M&E would enhance the overall impact and cost-effectiveness of the programme.

Three meaningful quotes from the evaluation: “when learning takes place, accountability follows”, “put practice into learning, and learning into practice”, and “time is the enemy of learning”. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>Beleidsmedewerker (policy staff member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDIN</td>
<td>Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORDAID</td>
<td>Dutch Development Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CU</td>
<td>Control Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>OECD Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCI</td>
<td>Development Cooperation Ireland</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCO</td>
<td>Dept. Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDE</td>
<td>Dept. Sustainable Econ. Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDO</td>
<td>District Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEK</td>
<td>Department Effectiveness and Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGIS</td>
<td>Directoraat-Generaal Internationale Samenwerking (Directorate-General of International Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMV</td>
<td>Dep. Human Rights and Peace building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMW</td>
<td>Directie Milieu en Water (Department for Environment and Water)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAM</td>
<td>Doelstelling, Resultaten, Activiteiten, Middelen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSI/MY</td>
<td>Social and Institutional Development Department, Social Co-operation and Institutional Development Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC</td>
<td>Educational Training Consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIVOS</td>
<td>Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, The Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAC</td>
<td>International Agricultural Centre/Wageningen University &amp; Research Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBFAN</td>
<td>International Baby Food Action Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCO</td>
<td>Interchurch organisation for development co-operation, The Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Integrated Conservation and Development Approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICDP</td>
<td>Integrated Conservation and Development Programme/Project</td>
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<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agricultural Development</td>
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<td>IICP</td>
<td>International Institute for Communication and Development</td>
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<td>IIED</td>
<td>International Institute for Environment and Development</td>
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<td>IOB</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs Policy Review Unit</td>
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<td>LF</td>
<td>Logical Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDF</td>
<td>MDF Management for Development – Training and Consultancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFO</td>
<td>Netherlands co-funding programme of 5 major NGOs (MFS/MFO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MFS</td>
<td>Mede-Financierings-Stelsel (Co financing structure)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NOVIB</td>
<td>Oxfam Netherlands</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>PIMA</td>
<td>Performance and Impact Assessment (AWF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Dutch Branch of Plan International</td>
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<tr>
<td>PME</td>
<td>Planning Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMS</td>
<td>Quality Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPE</td>
<td>Regeling Prestatiegegevens en Evaluatie onderzoek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART</td>
<td>Specific; Measurable; Available at acceptable cost; Relevant with regard to objectives; Time-bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNV</td>
<td>Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers/Netherlands Development Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMF</td>
<td>Thematisch Medefinancieringsprogramma (Theme-based Co-financing Programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>WI</td>
<td>Wageningen International</td>
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PART A: BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

This cross-cutting study Lot 8: Monitoring and Evaluation function of TMF organisations is part of the overall evaluation TMF (Theme-based co-financing programme), commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The evaluation took place between the summer of 2005 till the end of February 2006. It was executed by a consortium consisting of MDF Training and Consultancy based in Ede, and IAC (now Wageningen International) based in Wageningen, both in the Netherlands.

The main focus of this study is on the quality of the TMF organisations’ Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation systems, and more in general, the way in which these systems contribute to the management and learning ability of these organisations. The research concentrated on the whole chain of interventions, from the donor-level (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) via the contract organisations having received a grant, to partner organisations in the South and their beneficiaries, and back again. The evaluation had both a retrospective as a prospective focus. The data were collected through surveys, interviews and fieldwork in several countries.

This study is part of the wider overall evaluation of the NGO TMF-sector. The main aim of the overall evaluation is to investigate the way in which the organisations contribute to structural poverty reduction through direct poverty alleviation, society building and advocacy, and the degree of effectiveness and efficiency of their operation on the one hand, and the degree of relevance and sustainability of their activities on the other hand. The overall evaluation consists of seven theme-specific sub-studies (peace building, human rights, biodiversity and poverty alleviation, communication, HIV/aids, economic development, gender) and two cross-cutting studies (monitoring and evaluation function of TMF organisations and added value of the theme-specific approach).

This report consists of three parts: A. Background and methodology, B. Findings and conclusions, and C. Emerging insights and Recommendations.

2 The TMF Programme and Policy Context

The Dutch national Theme-based Co-Financing Programme (TMF) is a grant system for theme-specialised organisations which focuses on the structural alleviation of poverty in developing countries through reinforcement of the civil society. The grant system is inspired by the policy document ‘Civil Society and Structural Poverty Alleviation’ (January 1st 2003) which was developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the TMF-platform representing a large number of Dutch “TMF organisations”.

The mentioned programme has the following core themes: Sustainable Economic Development, Human Development, Socio-cultural Development, Political development, Peace and Security, Environment and Gender Equality.

The programme is a reflection of the vision that it is important that non-governmental development organisations participate in strategic thinking, policy development and programme implementation of international development cooperation efforts. Not only is there room for the six major (Dutch) Co-financing agencies but also for the smaller civil
society organisations operating from a theme-specific perspective. The reason for this importance is, in the first place, because structural and sustainable poverty alleviation is inextricably linked with the development of civil society. Non-governmental organisations, having different perspectives and networks, are often in a better position to contribute to civil society development than governmental institutions. In the second place, these non-governmental organisations can play an important role in maintaining a broad support base for international development co-operation in Dutch society.

The Theme-based Co-financing programme offers scope for financial support to these organisations. Precisely because of their role described above, it is important that they are in a position to continuously improve their performance. This can only be done when they have the capacity to learn from their present programmes and thus avail of effective monitoring & evaluation mechanisms for organisational learning. It is from this perspective that the evaluation of the M&E functions has been conceived.

The TMF Programme, which is now in its third year of implementation, is presently being evaluated. The evaluation focusses on the 2003-2006 and 2004-2007 funding rounds. The evaluation is to provide insights into TMF’s various components, and therefore nine studies were conducted which cover all seven themes and two ‘cross-cutting’-themes, of which the present study: the Monitoring and Evaluation function of TMF organisations forms part.

The evaluation of the TMF M&E function was preceded by a similar evaluation in the Co-financing (MFO) sector. Both evaluations mark the end of both the TMF and MFO sectors which are to be merged in one Co-financing structure (MFS), which will start to operate this year. All nine studies in the context of this evaluation are supposed to produce lessons, good practices and recommendations for the future MFS.

3 The Purpose and Approach of the Evaluation

The Terms of Reference of this study is based on the hypothesis that the monitoring and evaluation functions of TMF organisations are insufficiently developed (TOR, p. 99). They also explicitly mention that the study is to consist of a retrospective and a prospective part whereby the retrospective part forms the basis and contributes to the prospective part. With other words, looking back must produce clues for future adaptation of the monitoring and evaluation functions.

For the retrospective part, the central research question was formulated as:

- To what extent do the TMF-organisations dispose of a well-developed monitoring- and evaluation function?

For the prospective part, the central research question was formulated as:

- How would a qualitatively eminent monitoring and evaluation function be composed?

The study was to present a representative picture of the TMF-sector, and the methodology was to explain how the representative ness was guaranteed.

This evaluation has been conceived on the basis of the Terms of Reference, and has also taken into account the critical remarks with respect to the TMF-evaluation (March 9th 2005) by the TMF platform. Considering the M&E study, the TMF platform, in this document, proposed to reconsider the character of the study, for which consultation was necessary. Such consultation has taken place between the TMF platform and the consortium MDF/IAC on May 25th 2005. The main conclusion of this meeting was that the platform appreciated the MDF/IAC interpretation of the TOR, particularly on two points:

1. the characteristic approach which puts emphasis on learning by the TMF organisations rather than only on assessment of past performance in the field of M&E; and
2. the suggestion to include the Monitoring & Evaluation function concerning the TMF programme of the donor Ministry as subject of evaluation (discussed and approved by the Steering group). This made it possible to study the chain: DGIS – TMF contract-organisation – partnerorganisations. Both the relationships between DGIS-TMFcontract-organisation and between TMF organisation-partner organisation were assessed.

The approach has implied a high level of commitment and participation by the stakeholders in the evaluation. Two workshops with the TMF-sector were organised, one at the beginning of the study, and one at the end, to inform and share with the TMF organisations methodology and approach, and to share the results and validate these. The platform has taken a clear interest in the MDF/IAC exercise.

The ultimate aim of this assignment was to contribute directly to the learning capacity of the entire TMF sector in general, and the individual TMF organisations in particular. Enhancing this learning capacity was mainly to be based on lessons and insights generated during the retrospective part of the study. The MDF/IAC experiences concerning M&E based organisational and even sectoral learning in similar and other sectors of development cooperation has been used in the design phase of the prospective part.

The chosen approach has called for an active and direct involvement of all stakeholders, not only in the prospective but also in the retrospective part of the study. They were asked to critically co-assess the quality and effectiveness of their own M&E systems. This commitment and cooperation could only be obtained when all partners were convinced that they participated in a joint effort to construct a mutually acceptable and operational M&E framework to be applied in the sector, and that this was not a simple 'hit-and-run' type of evaluation. The implementation of this assignment is therefore ideally be considered as ‘embarking on a mutual learning trail’. The ultimate aim was to arrive, as close as possible, at a set of mutually agreed guidelines upon planning, monitoring and evaluation. Part C of this report mentions the lessons learned, or ‘emerging insights’ gained during this exercise.

The approach is based on the principles of participatory and interactive adult learning & learning organisations and the evaluative enquiry method, developed by the IAC. This approach prepares organisations for accepting the need for change and thus for becoming eager to learn. Facilitating organisations in getting in the right mind-set is crucial for a successful learning processes such as proposed in this study. The challenge is to gain the organisation’s commitment and dedication to participate in this study, by letting them discover themselves:

- the importance of effective M&E systems for their own learning and development processes;
- the prevailing weaknesses and shortcomings in their present M&E systems and the important role their partners in the South should play in it;
- the possibilities for carrying out M&E activities differently as well as the benefits of interactive, participatory learning processes with ‘sister organisations’ in the TMF sector.

The major task was to look thoroughly at the reasons why established M&E practices are or are not being adopted and then, in dialogue with the TMF organisations, explore the conditions and incentives necessary for improved M&E. In order to link M&E to improved performance it was viewed from the perspective of human and organisational processes. Most organisations are well aware of basic M&E principles, guidelines and theories. Instead, what they often lack are the practical tools and examples that would enable to put principles and theory into practice.

With the approach indicated above, it was evident that discussions with the TMF organisations on the present and the future had to be blended. As such, the contours of the improvements and changes in the M&E systems became gradually clear, even during the retrospective part, for all parties concerned. In the prospective part and later, these contours
were further validated with the TMF sector (gradually transforming, with the MFO, in the broad MFS-sector).

The TOR was interpreted, and a methodology conceived for the execution of the study. The questions were rephrased and complemented as follows:

- Are the present M&E systems of such a quality that, apart from keeping track of the activities, measurement of the outcomes/outputs, aimed effects and aimed impact is or will be possible?
- To what extent are the TMF organisations trying to be(come) a learning organisation? How have they chosen to give shape to the concept of learning organisation and have they already developed sufficient learning capacities?
- What are the reasons the organisations give for the quality and performance of their M&E systems?
- What do the organisations see as major factors that would enable them to improve their systems?

4 The Conceptual Framework Underpinning the Evaluation – “Managing for Impact”

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is high on the development agenda. Yet there remains a vast gap between theory and practice. Almost universally donors, development organisations, project managers and development practitioners want to see better monitoring and evaluation, yet in practice it often proves difficult to put such desired improvements into practice.

This evaluation has used a holistic model of M&E against which to assess the M&E performance of TMF organisations. This model is based on the assumptions that to be effective M&E must support internal organisational and programme learning and be fully embedded in management functions and processes. This represents a rather different paradigm of M&E than that which has characterized much accountability orientated M&E in the development field over recent decades. Historically, accountability orientated M&E has often focused primarily on upward accountability for the expenditure of funds and the delivery of outputs. Attention to outcomes and impacts and how feedback mechanisms could be used to help those implementing programmes improve their performance has been minimal.

More recently donors have become much more concerned with demonstrating the impact of their investments. Meanwhile, implementing agencies have realized that to achieve impact they must give much more attention to monitoring outcomes and impacts and directly using this information towards the realization of these higher level objectives. The demand for greater sophistication of M&E has also been associated with a much greater realization of the need for flexibility and adaptability in the implementation of development work. This has led to greater interest in a programme approach rather than specific projects, or at least in a new type of project management where there is more attention given to realizing higher level objectives and less concern with highly specified predetermined activities. All these new demands and directions require a much closer integration of design, management and M&E functions along with a more sophisticated and participatory learning orientated style of managing development interventions.

Many M&E experts like to make a very clear distinction between monitoring and evaluation. The conceptual framework underpinning this evaluation does not make such an absolute distinction but rather views monitoring and evaluation as two overlapping spheres of activity and information. ‘Monitoring’ does focus more on the regular collection of data, while evaluation involves making judgements about the data. In theory, monitoring is viewed as a regular activity...
while evaluation is a more periodic occurrence. But even in everyday life, monitoring and evaluation are very interlinked.

For example, when driving and monitoring the speed indicator, it is necessary to simultaneously evaluate the appropriateness of our speed relative to the road and traffic conditions. Leaving evaluation to later would be downright dangerous. This example illustrates that *where monitoring stops and evaluation begins is rather less clear than M&E theory often claims*. The separation of monitoring from evaluation has been partly driven by the classical approach to development projects, in which evaluation was undertaken every now and then by external experts, while monitoring was the task of project implementers. It is exactly this scenario that has resulted in an inability of many development initiatives to learn effectively as it disconnects the information collection from the sense-making that precedes improved action. In summary then, monitoring and evaluation is viewed in this evaluation as an integrated process of continual gathering and assessing information to make judgments about progress towards particular goals and objectives, as well as to identify unintended positive or negative consequences of action. As will be discussed later, M&E must also provide insight into why success or failure has occurred.

The term “M&E system” refers to the complete set of interlinked activities that must be undertaken in a coordinated way to plan for M&E, gather and analyse information, report and to support decision making and the implementation of improvements.

Despite the changing perceptions about M&E discussed above it has often proved difficult to change M&E systems and the culture of management. It seems that what it means in practice to facilitate learning, based on feedback from M&E, amongst implementing partners and beneficiaries, remains poorly understood. Further, changing M&E systems from quantitative indicator based systems focused primarily on activities/outputs to systems capable of integrating quantitative and qualitative information at all levels from activity to impact requires considerable methodological and capacity development.

The alternative paradigm of M&E underpinning this evaluation presupposes that any M&E system needs to fulfil the following five purposes. This is not simply an assumption but one borne out by the hands-on practice of M&E.

1. **Accountability** – demonstrating to donors, beneficiaries and implementing partners that expenditure, actions and results are as agreed or are as can reasonably be expected in a given situation.

2. **Supporting operational management** - providing the basic management information needed to direct, coordinate and control the human, financial and physical resources required to achieve any given objective.

3. **Supporting strategic management** – providing the information for and facilitating the processes required to set and adjust goals, objectives and strategies and to improve quality and performance.

4. **Knowledge creation** – generating new insights that contribute to the established knowledge base in a given field.

5. **Empowerment** – building the capacity, self reliance and confidence of beneficiaries and implementing staff and partners to effectively guide, manage and implement development initiatives.

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1 We are aware that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also the TMF Platform, have expressed other views on Monitoring and Evaluation. The Platform argues that monitoring is mainly to follow operational progress, while evaluation serves to measure purpose and impact.
Responding to the above issues, for this evaluation, we have utilized an analytical framework based on the following six dimensions:

1. Creating a learning environment
2. Guiding the strategy
3. Ensuring effective operations
4. Designing the M&E system
5. M&E capacities and conditions
6. Gender equity

For each dimension as series of sub-questions have been developed that enables an assessment of performance in the particular dimension. This analytical framework has been developed by the IAC based on IFAD’s M&E guidelines “Managing for Impact in Rural Development”.

### Basic element

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Key performance question</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Guiding the strategy</strong></td>
<td>This part is about assuring a good understanding the goals, objectives, and the resources of the project, and readjusting strategy and/or resources in case of lack of success or changed circumstances. It is also about being open to unplanned events which affect the project and allocation of available resources and guiding relationships between stakeholders to maximise impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Creating a learning environment</strong></td>
<td>Establishing a culture and set of relationships with all those involved in an initiative of a TMF organisation that will build trust, stimulate critical questioning and innovation and gain commitment and ownership. This part is about inspiring and helping those</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

involved with the project to think critically about progress, to learn from mistakes and to generate ideas for making improvements. It ensures a way of planning for periodic activities that helps the organisation to see what people have learned or not learned.

### 3. Ensuring effective operations

Managing the day to day coordination of financial, physical and human resources to ensure the actions and outputs required by the current strategy are being effectively and efficiently achieved. This part is about planning, organising and checking staff inputs, equipment, partner contracts, financial resources, (bi)annual work plans, and communications to implement activities effectively and efficiently.

To what extent are the planning systems effective in guiding your operations?

### 4. Establish-ing core M&E func-tions of information gathering and management mechanisms

Ensuring that the systems are in place to provide the information that is needed to guide the strategy, ensure effective operations and encourage learning. This part is the core M&E system: it is about designing and implementing information gathering and reflective learning processes to generate insights that help you to improve operations and strategic directions.

To what extent has the M&E system been developed to enable strategic change, learning and effective operations and does it adequately consider the information needs of stakeholders, participatory processes and critical reflection and does it give appropriate attention to questions of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact?

### 5. M&E capacities and conditions

Each M&E system is based on human and organisational capacity, incentives for M&E, organised M&E structures and responsibilities, organised systems for managing information, and finances and resources to operate the M&E system.

To what extent are human and institutional capacities and conditions present to allow the M&E system to be operational, including regular revision of the system?

Note: In view of the crosscutting objective of gender equity in the TMF programme, a 6th. M&E function has been introduced. Being the ability of the M&E system to contribute to measuring gender equality in all programme performance & learning.

### 6. Gender equality

Promoting gender equality is at the core of any poverty reduction strategy. Therefore PM&E systems also need to pay attention to gender equality & equal participation of men and women in projects and programs.

To what extent does the program/project promote gender equality and track accruing benefits to participating women and men?

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### 5 Design and Methodology of the Evaluation

#### 5.1 Key Features of the Methodology

The methodology utilised an elaborated form of the above analytical framework to assess M&E performance and stimulate feedback on learning processes, good practices and issue related to improving M&E and learning. The engagement with the TMF organisations was undertaken from the premise of assisting them to self-analyse their own M&E performance while at the same time gathering the necessary information for the evaluation and ensuring objective external assessment. A scoring system and associated set of criteria was developed for use by the evaluation team to ensure consistency of interpretation across all the TMF organisations interviewed.
The evaluation made use of the following sources of information (elaborated on later in the text):

1) Project files, lists and reports held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
2) A self assessment survey sent to 128 TMF organisations
3) Interviews with TMF organisations in the Netherlands
4) Interviews with TMF organisations in England and Switzerland
5) Visits to partner organisations and projects in the South
6) Survey of theme directorate staff within Ministry of Foreign Affairs
7) Meetings with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Staff
8) Meetings with European NGOs
9) Participatory Workshops with TMF Organisations
10) Inclusion of questions in and feedback from the TMF evaluations
11) Background knowledge by the evaluation team on M&E practices within the international development cooperation field

The nature of the evaluation, with its emphasis on insights into the reasons for M&E performance and options for improvement, required the use of qualitative approaches. The diverse sources of information enabled a high degree of triangulation in assessing the consistency and validity of responses, for example, between self assessment, interviews and Ministry files and perspectives. In undertaking the analysis and developing the conclusions the evaluation team had an internal workshop process that ensured consistency of interpretation from interviews with TMF organisations and partner organisations in the South. The draft conclusions were discussed in a participatory workshop with TMF organisations.

5.2 Sampling

During the two rounds (2003 and 2004), a total of 128 organisations received a TMF grant. Most of these organisations have partnerships with organisations in the south. Since it was impossible to contact all these organisations for the in-depth study, a sample was drawn. The sample was based on a number of criteria, in order to be as representative as possible. The information necessary for the sample was collected from the following sources: the CIDIN-study ‘TMF in perspectief’, the contact-person TMF of DSI-MY, and contact persons of the Theme directions of the Ministry.

The criteria for selection were:

- the spread over the various Directions and departments of the Dutch organisations having received funding during the two rounds (DCO 5%; DDE 10%; DMW 23%; DMV 38%; DSI 43%).
- the nature of the grants received by the organisations (core grant – 44%- or programme grant –56%);
- the spread over the two grant-years, with a slight preference for organisations having received the grant in the first round (56% vs. 44%);
- the volume of the grant (< 1 million Euro/4 years (20.5%); 1-5 million (56%); > 5 million (23%);
- the strategy employed by the organizations: Poverty alleviation, Civil Society strengthening, Networking

The above criteria, in combination with each other, were applied as pragmatically as possible (“intelligently”, as the Steering group had suggested). In spite of the fact that non-Dutch organisations will not receive TMF-grants in the future, six organisations in two other European countries were studied (to add to, or to replace Dutch organisations), the aim being to collect from them ‘good practices’ (it is claimed that these organisations have relatively good M&E systems). The choice to include non-Dutch organisations in the study was discussed with and approved by the Steering group. The sample is presented in the tables (5.4.5) below.
5.3 The Managing for Impact Assessment Tool

For the self assessment survey, TMF organisation interviews and overall analysis, as already noted above, the evaluation made use of an assessment tool developed by the IAC based on IFAD’s M&E guidelines “Managing for Impact in Rural Development”.

Table 1 lists the performance questions that formed the basis of the tool and the full Tool can be found in Annex X. Each performance question was scored in terms of whether performance in the particular aspect of M&E was:

1. limited;
2. being developed;
3. partially functioning;
4. fully effective.

Annex 1 provides the criteria used for this scoring. It should be noted that in the analysis distinctions were made on the basis of what was necessary and appropriate for a particular organisation and its TMF projects. For example a larger organisation working with numerous partners would require a more sophisticated information management system than a very small organisation working with a single project. Despite the different nature of the information systems if they were appropriate for the needs they could still both be scored fully effective. In other words the criteria were applied relative to the organisations context and not in absolute terms.

For the analysis the results were mapped onto ‘spider’ diagrams which then illustrated strengths and weakness for a particular organization or for a cluster of organisations.

Table 1 Performance Questions Related to the Managing for Impact Model of M&E.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Project strategy towards impact</th>
<th>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.a To what extent is program design and redesign participatory? (strategic level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b To what extent is there an understanding of the intervention strategy (development pathway)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.c To what extent are changes made at strategic level? (e.g. changes in log frame at outcome and impact level)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring effective operations</td>
<td>2.a To what extent is the revision of the operational plan participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b To what extent are the planning systems effective in guiding your operations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c To what extent are institutional processes, systems contributing to effective operations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting up and using the M&amp;E system</td>
<td>3.a To what extent is the purpose of the M&amp;E system directed towards: Accountability; Supporting operational management; Strategic management; Knowledge creation; Empowerment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b To what extent are the following key evaluation/ performance questions included in the M&amp;E system: Relevance; Impact; Sustainability; Effectiveness; Efficiency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.c To what extent are the key information needs of the different stakeholders included in the M&amp;E system?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d To what extent is the M&amp;E system focused on the program, organisational, and institutional issues eg. staff performance, partner collaboration, policies, networks, etc?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e To what extent are methodologies used for data collection, and processing, participatory or conventional?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.f To what extent are stakeholders involved in data collection, and processing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.g To what extent are different (critical) reflection events &amp; processes in place?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Main Evaluation and Data Gathering Activities

5.4.1 Introduction
The data were collected from a wide variety of sources. The TMF-organisations were approached with a self-assessment survey, the invitation for workshops and visits to their headquarters, field offices and partner organisations by the evaluators. Other information about the TMF organisations was gathered through the staff of the Ministry and through the researchers of the seven other TMF evaluation studies. The Ministry was approached with documentary research, interviews with key stakeholders, and a survey among Theme Direction’s staff members.

Systematically, the following data-gathering activities took place.

5.4.2 Documentary research – files Ministry of Foreign Affairs
From the files of the various Theme Directions, documents with respect to 36 TMF-sample organisations were collected. These documents concerned:
- TMF-appraisal of the application,
- M&E chapter from the application,
- CoCa-list
- (parts of) Progress report(s),
- Input of data in the Piramide system,
- Other interesting documents available: checklist CU, Project Evaluation Sheet, external Evaluation report, Logical Framework, Intervention tree, etc.

An interview with the Director DSI and staff members of DMW took place to introduce this evaluation and to have a general idea about the DSI-conception of the monitoring of the TMF-system by the Ministry. Mr. D.J. Koch (DSI-MY) served as contact person for all contacts with the Ministry.
5.4.3 Interviews with TMF-organisations in the Netherlands

The interviews with TMF-organisations started in August 2005. The first organisations to be interviewed were those with partner-organisations in Vietnam, Peru and Uganda. During the months of August and September 8 interviews with “contract”-organisations took place. These were also meant to prepare for the missions abroad.

Interviews with the other organisations in the sample were executed between September and December 2005.

Altogether, 17 interviews with Dutch organisations have been conducted by MDF/IAC-staff. Some Dutch organisations were not interviewed by us as they were just undergoing another evaluation, or were subject to the same TMF-evaluation (by other lots). Information about 18 other TMF-organisations (Dutch and international) were collected by our fellow-researchers of other sub-studies (lots), according to a format provided by us. This arrangement was found appropriate in order to prevent overlap by sub-studies. We are grateful for their cooperation.

Table 2 The organisations in the sample and those studied by other lots (questionnaire filled-in for us)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dutch Organisations interviewed (with indication of DGIS theme direction)</th>
<th>Organisations studied by other lots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agromisa (DDE)</td>
<td>International Development Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNCV Tuberculosefonds (DSI)</td>
<td>Zuid-Noord Federatie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste (DMW)</td>
<td>Fauna&amp;Flora International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIA Kerkinactie (DMW)</td>
<td>International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Ends (DMW)</td>
<td>International HIV/AIDS Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICP ILEIA (DDE) [DCO]</td>
<td>World Population Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILEIA (DDE)</td>
<td>Femmes Africa Solidarité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practica (DDE)</td>
<td>Birdlife International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoa (DMV)</td>
<td>HOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Trade (DDE)</td>
<td>NIZA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCNV (DSI)</td>
<td>HREA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC Energia (DMW)</td>
<td>Save the Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC Compas (DDE)</td>
<td>WWF/NC-IUCN/FOE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETC Prolinova (DMW)</td>
<td>African Wildlife Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface for Cycling Expertise (DSI)</td>
<td>Mama Cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharm Access (DSI)</td>
<td>Woord en Daad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIZA (DMV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.4 Interviews with TMF-organisations in England and in Switzerland

Between September and December 2005, the planned interviews with selected international TMF-organisations based in England, Switzerland and the Netherlands have taken place. In London, England, 4 organisations have been interviewed (telephone-interviews). In Geneva, Switzerland, four organisations have been visited and interviewed, sometimes several times. Finally, two international TMF-organisations have been interviewed in the Netherlands.

All interviews with TMF-organisations have lasted at least two hours (2-4 hours), and some organisations have been revisited, called by telephone or mailed in order to collect supplementary information. Relevant documentation was collected as background (planning documents, description of the M&E systems, progress reports, etc.). As a rule, a report of the interview, or the analysis of the interviews, has been communicated to them. We received many positive reactions from this feedback, including complementary or corrective information.
Table 3: The international organisations interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geneva, Switzerland</th>
<th>London, United Kingdom</th>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Council on Human Rights Policy</td>
<td>International Alert</td>
<td>International Aids Vaccine Initiative (Amsterdam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association for the Prevention of Torture</td>
<td>Media Diversity Institute</td>
<td>International Confederation of Midwives (The Hague)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Global witness limited,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Baby Food Action Network</td>
<td>Consumers international</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4.5 Survey among Theme Direction staff members (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Questionnaires were distributed among staff members of the five Theme directions (DMV, DMW, DSI, DDE, DCO). Initially, response was very poor, but with help from DSI-MY (D.J. Koch), more forms were returned (even months after the deadline date!). A number of staff answered that they had only recently received the files and were not qualified to answer the questions. Eventually, 64 returned questionnaires have been treated.

5.4.6 Visits to partner-organisations in the South

On the basis of information collected about the countries of intervention of the Dutch TMF-organisations, we choose to visit Vietnam, Peru and Uganda. The choice of a fourth country to visit has caused considerable problems because of the lack of a clear picture of countries of intervention of Dutch TMF-organisations. Neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Steering Committee nor the CIDIN (which put a number of trainees on the job to collect basic data about the presence of TMF-related activities in the various countries), produced feasible data on which to base the choice for a fourth country to visit. Obviously, the Steering Committee’s preference was a country in francophone West Africa, like Burkina Faso. However, the number of TMF-partner-organisations in that country which were not yet covered by other sub-study researchers, did not justify a mission to Burkina. Finally, South Africa was chosen, with permission of the Steering Committee.

The following visits of 10 days each took place:
- Vietnam: September 2005
- Peru/Bolivia: September 2005
- Uganda: October 2005
- South Africa: December 2005

Table 4 Partner organisations interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Peru/Bolivia</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
<th>South Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mai Vietnamese Handicrafts (partner of Fair Trade)</td>
<td>ALLPA (partner of Fair Trade)</td>
<td>Uganda chapter East Africa Energy and Technology Development Network (ETC hosted Energia Network)</td>
<td>Turtle Trading (partner of Fair Trade), and one of their suppliers Nantecara African Foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Research &amp; Support Center (partner of CARAM/VU network)</td>
<td>Consultants Ricardo Soberón and Hugo Cabieses (researchers for Trans National Institute)</td>
<td>Uganda chapter (ETC Ecoculture hosted Prolinnova Network)</td>
<td>Alternative Information and Development Centre (TNI partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPAS (partner of IPAS network)</td>
<td>ETC Andes (ILEIA partner)</td>
<td>Peasant Farmers Association for Rural Development (member of the ETC hosted COMPAS Network)</td>
<td>Western Cape Anti-Crime Forum (partner of NIZA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.7 Workshops with TMF organisations

On the 1st of September a workshop was held in Hotel De Bosrand (MDF-Ede). All TMF organisations of the two rounds were invited. 60 organisations attended. A mix of serious interest in the subject and willingness to learn, curiosity and TMF-community feeling motivated them to attend. The MFO were also invited; four of them sent a representative.

It was felt that the attendance, the spirit and the discussions express the vivid interest of the TMF organisations in the M&E-theme, and their commitment to participate in this evaluation. A workshop report was sent to all participants (cf Annex 6).

On the 2nd and 3rd of February 2006 a second workshop for the TMF-organisations was organised in Hotel De Bosrand (MDF-Ede), this time to share with them and validate the results of the evaluation, and to discuss M&E issues for the future in the MFS (in the meantime introduced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to replace TMF and MFO). On the request of DSI-MY, Ministry staff has presented ideas about tailor-made monitoring in the MFS, afterwards discussed with the TMF and MFO representatives present (cf Annex 7).

5.4.8 Meeting with Ministry staff of the Theme-Directions

On the request of Dirk-Jan Koch (DSI-MY), Sjoerd Zanen (MDF) facilitated a Ministry of Foreign Affairs meeting with Thematic Directions (DMW, DDE, DSI, DMV, DCO) and other departments (FEZ, ACD and DEK). The theme was ‘Monitoring in the MFS’. Among these departments there is consensus about the necessity for the Ministry to develop a common MFS (Mede Financierings Structuur/Systeem) monitoring system. Experiences from the ongoing TMF-M&E could be useful in this respect (cf Annex 5, point 3).

5.4.9 Meeting with European NGOs

In September, in Sweden, an INTRAC-conference on M&E was attended. The conference was meant for European NGOs and was funded by SIDA, as a preparation for the World conference on M&E which will take place in the Netherlands, March 2006. During this conference interviews with the INTRAC-management and with IICP (from The Hague) have been conducted.

5.5 The analysis of data

The above mentioned sources have been the basis of the analysis of the assessment of the TMF organisation’s capacity for Managing for Impact. Each source provided information about the same issues, but in its own specific form and with its own specific bias. Right from the start of the research it was evident that the variation between the TMF-organisations (contract-organisations which received the grant, as well as all their partner-organisations)
was so great that quantitative comparison would make little sense: such would mean comparing apples with pears, which would in the end have little validity.

It proved more interesting to compare the outcomes of the sources with each other, and to find out what picture would emerge out of the assessment of the TMF organisations from so many, various, angles, including their own.

Thus, the main findings of individual investigations have been contextualised and related back to the main evaluation issues. The backbone of this comparison are (again) the components of the Managing for Impact model which was used in this study. The issues were translated into leading questions which received answers from all six sources. Together, they cover the key-questions raised in the text of the offer underlying the investigation of the M&E-lot of this TMF evaluation, as can easily be checked (cf MDF/IAC: Put Practice into Learning and Learning into Practice, 25 February 2005; cf section 3 above).

Seven of the (altogether 10) MDF/IAC researchers who have contributed to this study, have sat together during two days to:

a. answer the above questions with the help of the findings he or she collected (some conducted interviews in the Netherlands, some elsewhere in Europe, some in the South and the East, and some conceived and analysed surveys);
b. compare the individual data with each other and try to destill trends, either common or contradictory, related to the specifics of the organisations;
c. translate these trends into useful recommendations for future attention.

The overall procedure thus applied is called “triangulation”: cross-checking information about the same issues from various sources.

This methodology of analysis in itself is not unique. By way of comparison of findings on the same issues – but from different perspectives –, consistencies, inconsistencies, contradictions and paradoxes were identified and analysed. Different perceptions and bias were weighed in a group-process, forcing everyone to understand similarities and explain contradictions. In this way, the bias of each perspective was significantly reduced, and sense was made out of a vast quantity of materials. Instead of producing statistical results which explain little, we opted for a broad, multi-stakeholder perspective, producing a picture which, perhaps, does not stand the scientific test, but which at least seems to present and plausibly explain trends in the Management towards Impact of all parties involved in the thematic co-funding programme. The outcome of the analysis may provide lessons for the future of the co-funding sector at large.
PART B: THE QUALITY OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN TMF CONTEXT

6 Introduction

It is the impression of the evaluators that among the TMF-organisations the interest for M&E grows rapidly. It must be realised that many TMF-organisations are relatively young, and only recently form part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ TMF-programme, which prescribes (sketchy as it may be) the necessity of M&E, to be related to a so-called DRAM-methodology which was only scarcely known to many of them. It is only natural that the development of the M&E function, on various levels in the TMF-chain, goes gradually. In fact, several staffmembers of the Ministry have underlined that for them too, the so-called Result Based Management is still ‘a learning process’ (cf 9.6).

The Result Based Management (RBM) is at the basis of the importance attached to the M&E-methodology as it is required today. The Ministry has introduced for this purpose a DRAM format, derived from the more elaborate Logical Framework format. However, the evaluators are of the opinion that DRAM or Logical Framework as such, is not sufficient for the learning processes which are supposed to take place with M&E. This will be explained in the following part C, where mention is made of the Accountability-Learning paradigms. Therefore they have investigated more aspects of PME.

Through various sources findings have been analysed in order to know what the consistency is of planning, monitoring and evaluation by TMF-organisations, both by “contract organisations” (those organisations which were contracted by DGIS to execute an agenda for which they received a grant), as well as by “partner organisations” of the above mentioned contract organisations. The chain as a whole has been given special attention and the functioning of DGIS concerning M&E with their contract partners has been focused upon as well.

Three of the 4 evaluation questions are treated in two leading sub-chapters, each followed by some concluding remarks.

1. Quality and Effectiveness of PM&E Systems and Factors influencing the effectiveness of M&E (and Learning)

2. The use of M&E for learning to improve Organisational and Programme Performance.

The fourth evaluation question concerning the major factors enabling the organisations to improve their PM&E systems will be treated in part C.

7 Quality and Effectiveness of M&E Systems and factors influencing the effectiveness of M&E

7.1 Guiding the strategy and ensuring effective operations

In interviewing and by visiting (almost) randomly chosen TMF-organisations and their partner organisations the full range of possibilities of working out PME-systems becomes evident. Each TMF-organisation appears to have conceived, to have developed, and to use different PME-systems, according to the nature, the particular focus, the scope and the working methods of these organisations. Standardized systems do not exist in the TMF-sector (although some cross-fertilization takes place), and this seems logical if we consider the large variety in interests, background and organisational cultures. They all have different
backgrounds and their arrangement in one category ("TMF") and in one of five sub-categories ("themes") does not reflect their reality but only answers the classificatory needs of the donor.

For the purpose of this evaluation, it would not be useful to try to describe all PME-variations encountered. Instead, certain components or characteristics of the systems were assessed according to the criteria used by the evaluators (see the matrix which goes with the Managing towards Impact - model).

Although the TMF-organisations claim to dispose of a consistent PME-system, only 62% consider that the planning system is guiding the operations effectively, and only 50% think that their system enables them to follow activities and outputs effectively. More than 50% of the Dutch organizations are having a system which makes their strategy more understandable, but on a lower score 59% of the Dutch contract organizations, use their M&E system in order to understand changes.

When it comes to following progress or change on the levels of outcome and impact, almost all organisations face difficulties; only 10% claim that they face no problems in this respect. This also became clear in the interviews that most organisations monitor adequately on activity and output-levels, but that on higher levels (outcome and impact), the monitoring becomes vague. The answers reveal a number of reasons for this state of affairs:

- a weak conception of the “DRAM” intervention logic, in which a distinction is made between output (R, as the fruit of a series of activities), and the achievement of the (programme’s) purpose (D);
- a strong operational (sometimes actionist) focus and a much less strategic focus;
- the lack of a view of the situation or context where the impact is finding place;
- a weak focus on impact as some organisations are mainly process-focused (to sluice funds to partner organisations);
- the weakness of indicators which are not defined in a SMART way;
- a weak focus on impact and a strong focus on output, as in case of business, commerce, trade or research programmes;
- the mentality – the degree in which M&E is seen as a crucial task integrated in the permanent efforts of performance improvement.

This same trend has been found at the level of the Dutch TMF-organisations interviewed: 3 out of 14 were dealing in a convincing way with outcome and impact. All these organisations are relatively big (more than 20, 30 staff), and have received core-funding. They have a very strategic orientation, and have made it their specific focus to refine their M&E system and
that of their partners as an integral part of a capacity building process. They dispose of specialised and experienced staff, recruited or financed (partly) with TMF-funds.

The overall picture is given concerning the Dutch TMF-organisations, with respect to guiding the strategy and ensuring effective operations and the evaluation scores in the PME matrix.

### Dutch Contract Organisations (T=14) – scores in % on performance qualifications (from limited to fully effective)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding strategy</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.a</td>
<td>Participatory design</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b</td>
<td>Understanding strategy</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.c</td>
<td>Strategic changes</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.a</td>
<td>Participatory operational planning</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.b</td>
<td>Effective planning systems</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.c</td>
<td>Good institutional processes for operations</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent scores, 3 and 4 on many issues indicate that the conditions are met and the foundations are laid for ensuring effective operations and guiding strategy, but that, on a number of points, improvement is required to arrive at fully mature and effective systems.

On the contrary however, the evaluators of the other lots find that the contract-organisations dispose of functional M&E systems in most cases (78%) but, they are less convinced about their quality, which they class as good in only 39% of the cases, and weak in 11% (don’t know 33%). The partner-organisations, according to the evaluators, have functional M&E systems (60%), but 62% of these systems are considered weak or bad (23% don’t know).

When looking at the international TMF organisations (three in England, four in Switzerland and two in the Netherlands) their PME-system, or the capacity to manage towards impact, was generally assessed as functioning: on most criteria “partially functioning” and less often “fully effective”. Generally, the strategies are well developed, discussed and understood by senior staff and key stakeholders. The operational planning is usually delegated to various sections of the organisation. Regular coordination meetings find place. The organisations are well structured, roles and responsibilities are clearly specified, and staff is motivated to provide feedback and to share information.

Interesting in this respect, is the excellent M&E performance of the two advocacy-lobbying networks, which score high on almost all criteria. They are very impact-oriented (they know exactly what they want!) and dedicate considerable time to monitoring. In fact, they are constantly monitoring. One of the networks has developed sophisticated Logical Frameworks which are constantly revised and adapted, and are used as instruments of communication.

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3 The number of organisations studied is too small to establish statistically significant relationships between performance and size of organisation, origin of organisation (Dutch or non-Dutch), size of grant, etc.

4 In total, from the other lots, twenty filled-in forms were received and processed. They contained an assessment of the M&E systems of the organisations the evaluators had studied in some detail. The “themes” of these studies were Bio-diversity, Economical Development, Peace building, HIV/AIDS, Gender, Human Rights and Communication.

5 Four of these organisations were research-organisations, two of them were organisations doing advocacy and lobbying work, and one was a branch organisation. They all received TMF-core-funding. They were selected because of their presumed good quality.
and exchange between the networks. Such (correct and preferential!) use of LF is seldom found in the world of international cooperation.

Three out of four of the research organisations appear very much output-focused (publications) but are not systematically focused on the impact of their studies (the use made of their publications) – although impact is obvious. Commenting on impact, however, remains anecdotal. When confronted with this observation, they all agreed that they neglected this level of monitoring, but were very interested to concentrate on it in the future. Such impact-monitoring could enhance their legitimacy vis-à-vis donors and the public, and hence improve their “marketing” (attracting donor-funds), and even the motivation of their staff (“they would love it”).

The interviews with the international TMF-organisations showed that the level of sophistication and formalisation of M&E systems depend on the size of the organisation: the bigger they grow, the more elaborate and complete becomes their system of strategic, programmatic and organisational monitoring, steered by experienced and professional staff. However, this does not imply that the learning capacity of smaller organisations is necessarily less developed.

Ipas Vietnam introduces peer reviewing between hospitals

Ipas is an International NGO which has worked for three decades to increase women's ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and to reduce mortality and injuries of women from unsafe abortion. Ipas's global and country programs include training, research, advocacy, distribution of equipment and supplies for reproductive-health care, and information dissemination.

Ipas is an NGO whose local offices are fairly autonomous. Ipas Vietnam has a strong relationship with Hospitals in mayor towns like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Assisting in designing internal procedures on women’s health issues, training of hospital staff, helping hospitals to collect feedback and information on their performances, etc. is core business of Ipas Vietnam.

The practice
Ipas Vietnam assists hospitals to design and implement an internal M&E system using a performance improvement approach to check the quality of their abortion procedures and related services. As part of this system Ipas introduced the idea of peer reviewing among providers in the same hospital, between Vietnamese hospitals and between Vietnamese hospitals and foreign hospitals.

Specificity?
In Vietnamese society peer-reviewing is relatively new, especially reviewing with a foreign organisation. Peering can result in horizontal learning between sister organisations, based on a common interest in the topic, which allows for an open mind to improve. Peer-reviewing among providers at the same hospital helps the health providers and managers recognize their own problems and find the most feasible and effective solutions.

Peering between hospitals is a practice designed and stimulated by Ipas Vietnam and the Ministry of Health. Ipas Vietnam then introduced the idea and guided the hospitals.

Specific circumstances/favourable conditions in which it could develop? Why did it succeed?
Ipas has built a long term relationship with the Vietnam Ministry of Health and the two biggest Obstetrics and Gynaecology hospitals, the National Ob-Gyn Hospital in Hanoi and Tu Du Ob-Gyn hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Trust increased based on joined reflection, which resulted in improvements. Ipas through its international network brings in innovative ideas like organisational peer reviewing, which are positively taken on by the hospital management teams.

Can it be taken-over/applied elsewhere? Under which conditions?
Organisational peering can be applied by any organization which is open for feedback and interaction with likeminded organizations.
Advocacy and lobbying organisations and networks are very much focused on impact. They are permanently aware of ultimate goals and desired effects on the highest levels. They also know what has to be achieved to make such changes possible. Their whole strategy is geared at working from impact and effect backwards, instead of the reverse. The research-project focused on the development and application of an Aids-vaccin (IAVI) follows the same strategy: working backwards from impact, and constructing, adapting and adjusting all lower levels of objectives, orientation and strategy, in order to make that urgent impact come closer.

The other research organisations are too much focused on the products, the outputs of their activities. Their added value would increase if they would also more systematically monitor what use is eventually made of their studies and publications (about human rights and international trade).

In the following table, the findings are summarized. These international organisations were among the TMF-organisations visited with the best PME systems. However, as stated before, they were not selected in a random manner. It must also be said that a number of these international organisations were already highly favourite partners of DGIS before the start of the TMF programme. During the TMF programme the number of Dutch organisations and non-Dutch organisations were matched, while towards the end of the programme the non-Dutch organisations were excluded from funding. The non-Dutch organisations were known to make better funding proposals than the Dutch organisations. This high quality is confirmed by the following figures.

| International contract organizations (T= 7) – scores on performance, in % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                                                                 | score | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   |
| Guiding the project strategy towards impact                  |
| 1.a Participatory design                                      | 0%   | 0%  | 14% | 86% |
| 1.b Understanding strategy                                   | 0%   | 0%  | 43% | 57% |
| 1.c Strategic changes                                        | 0%   | 0%  | 14% | 86% |
| Ensuring effective operations                                 |
| 2.a Participatory operational planning                        | 0%   | 0%  | 14% | 86% |
| 2.b Effective planning systems                                | 0%   | 0%  | 29% | 71% |
| 2.c Good institional processes for operations                | 0%   | 0%  | 14% | 86% |

7.2 Establishing core M&E functions of information gathering and management mechanisms

PME systems
All organisations dispose of PME systems with procedures to enforce planning and to collect information in order to follow progress of the operations. As main purpose of M&E, a number of organisations state that this should be accountability: to be able to report to the donor in order to justify the use of their funds. Several of these organisations operate two parallel systems: one destined for the satisfaction of donor needs, and a second one for internal operational or learning purposes, this second system being more elaborate than the first one.
In their self assessment, the same idea comes forward: as the main purpose of M&E most organisations mention accountability in the first place (92%). Apart from accountability, 64% mention that their system is used for knowledge creation and empowerment.

The level of formalisation or standardization of the M&E system varies largely. In the worst case staff-members of the Dutch contract organisation collect information on partner level during visits, in order to use this in their reports to the donor. In the best case, reporting formats on various levels, and with respect to various aspects (efficiency, staff performance, best practices, lessons learned, case studies, etc.), eventually produce a coherent analysis for the Annual Report. Some organisations are in the process of creating a Management Information System in which M&E information will be integrated.

A large majority of the TMF-contract organisations (86%) consider that they use a PME-system which is consistent. In 78% of the cases they designed it themselves. They mean to say with consistency that the planning and the monitoring & evaluation is linked in one system or one set of procedures. Moreover, the consistency is most often illustrated by the use of the typical instrument of PME, namely the Logical Framework (LF), by 69%. Although most organisations consider the LF a very useful planning tool, only about half of the organisations working with the LF consider that they master the application of the LF well, the other half think that they master the LF only partially.

Most TMF-organisations (66%) are of the opinion that the LF does not suffice to follow, illustrate or understand change in the given contexts, is not flexible enough, is too problem oriented, and that elements of process, capacity enhancement and behavior changes are not reflected in the LF. Therefore, the LF has to be complemented by other methods. Other tools or systems are also needed to monitor change.

On the contrary however, the evaluators of the other lots⁶ find that the contract organisations dispose of functional M&E systems in most cases (78%) but, they are less convinced about their quality, which they class as good in only 39% of the cases, and weak in 11% (don’t know 33%). The partner organisations, according to the evaluators, have functional M&E systems (60%), but 62% of these systems are considered weak or bad (23% don’t know).

The quality of the reports of the contract organisations to DGIS is not convincing (47% good, 40% reasonable and 7% bad). They do not systematically monitor on outcome level (only 35% of them does), and neither on impact level (only 11% does). In most cases they do not use indicators, in spite of the fact that 59% disposes of staff especially for the purpose of M&E.

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⁶ In total, from the other lots, twenty filled-in forms were received and processed. They contained an assessment of the M&E systems of the organisations the evaluators had studied in some detail. The “themes” of these studies were Bio-diversity, Economical Development, Peace building, HIV/Aids, Gender, Human Rights and Communication.
The reports of the *partner organisations* (to the contract organisations), according to the evaluators, are weak or bad in most of the cases (62%). They only monitor on outcome and impact levels in respectively 24% and 12% of the cases. In 59% no indicators are used. Contrary to the contract-organisations, the partner-organisations dispose of qualified M&E personnel in only 13% of the cases.

### Integrated monitoring and evaluation system FXI and fruitful co-operation with NIZA

The *Freedom for Expression Institute* (FXI) is an NGO stationed in Johannesburg, South Africa. They were founded in 1994 through a merger of three organisations that had been active in the previous anti-apartheid struggle. In the early stages of the emerging democracy, FXI was established to protect and foster the rights to freedom of expression and access to information and to oppose censorship, in the context of legislation under the new constitution. Presently FXI runs three main programs: Anti-Censorship Programme, Access to Information Programme, and the Media and ICT Programme. This last program is being funded by NIZA. (Not from the TMF funds!)

#### The practice

In its co-operation with FXI, NIZA combines its different resources for programme support and institutional strengthening: Supported by their institutional funding from the TMF, NIZA supports an internal project for organisational development and simultaneously, with funds from other sources, NIZA is currently funding FXI’s Media and ICT Programme. NIZA’s support can be summarised as follows:

- **In the context of institutional strengthening, workshops on monitoring and evaluation have been conducted.** As a result of this, FXI has been able to grow professionally.
- **Direct assistance has been given by the controller of NIZA to the financial manager of FXI and together they try to simplify the co-operation procedures.** Currently they are also looking into the extensive accountability NIZA has imposed. FXI would like to see these replaced by a yearly audit report by South-African auditors.
- **NIZA also connects FXI with other organisations.** So NIZA is for FXI a donor, a lobbyist, a planner, and a facilitator at the same time.
- **In 2001 FXI has started with an internal project for organisational development which was funded by NIZA.** This project was kick-started by an external evaluation, which stated that FXI could operate in a more proactive way.
- **The logical framework was introduced as a planning and monitoring tool.** FXI now works with a 3-year rolling planning system. Every year an adjusted plan for the next three years is made, that incorporates the new insights and developments, without, however, leaving the strategic long-term objective out of sight. Different committees, in which people from all kinds of organisations are participating, bring in the ideas for new activities. They play a part in the planning of new activities, but also, due to their extensive network, in evaluating the perceived impact of these different activities. FXI is presently working on more quantitative indicators to better monitor their own performance.
- **Every 18 months there is an extensive internal evaluation.** And every three years an external evaluation is held. The staff performance is audited every six months, according to their results and the engagements that were made. For the last months a Dutch apprentice, recruited through NIZA has been working with FXI. This has shortened the chain of contact between NIZA and FXI.

#### Specificity?

The case of FXI is a good example of the effectiveness of investing in M&E. The support of NIZA has helped FXI to organise its M&E system and, more importantly, to convince the staff of the importance and of setting up a functioning Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation system that enables the staff and management to take operational and strategic decisions, based on relevant information that is being generated with participation of the key stakeholders. In other words, learning has been put on the first place. This has also brought about a degree of maturity in the relations between NIZA and FXI.

#### Specific circumstances/favourable conditions, why succeed?

NIZA receives a core funding from the TMF, which enables it to improve its own capacity and through this that of its partners in Southern Africa. PME is a consistent part of these improvements and with the support of the TMF funding, NIZA’s aim is to strengthen the capacity of its partners and improve PME procedures in the programs it is conducting in co-operation with these partners which are being funded from other sources. In this way, NIZA can improve the management of programs it conducts, for example those funded by PSO, in spite of the fact that PSO only allows 6% of the budget to be used for NIZA’s own program management, communication and support of the partners.

#### Taken-over-applied elsewhere?

The allowance that some donors permit for the management costs of projects, which often is just around 5%, is certainly not enough for a system that does not only generate the necessary reports required for accountability, but that permits the generation of useful management information and the taking of appropriate management decisions based on professional monitoring reports. FXI is a good example of how things might go when there is more money available for the management costs: they developed in co-operation with NIZA a sound monitoring and evaluation system, which is one of the best we have seen during our study. So there has to be a attitude change of the donors concerning these topics.
They are in 60% of the cases negative about the feedback by the Ministry on the TMF-organisation's Annual Plans and (especially) reports. In these cases they classify this feedback as absent, negative, insufficient, weak or moderate (matig). An exception was found with respect to the feedback to TMF-organisations by DCO (100% positive).

The DGIS staff is positive about the M&E systems of the TMF contract-organisations in 55% of the cases (lyrical in 8%). They think that DRAM is applied correctly in 49% of the cases. They see a clear relation between the planning and the activities in 71%, and a good use of indicators in 48%. Information provided on inputs and outputs is satisfactory (92% resp. 83%). However, it is less clear whether the objectives will be achieved (45%). In 65% of the cases insufficient information is provided on impact, and in 64% the information on sustainability is not satisfactory.

Given the fact that the DRAM methodology and the use of indicators was prescribed, it may be concluded that the Ministry staff judges quite negatively: neither DRAM nor indicators are correctly applied in more than 50%. On effect, impact and sustainability, the scores are even more negative (55%, 65%, 64% respectively).

The Controllers of the Theme directions state that there are presently few problems with the financial accounting (there were a few in the beginning of the programme). The required reports are usually provided in time and are of acceptable quality.

The perceptions of the DGIS staff are somewhat ambiguous. In spite of the reservations about the M&E systems of the contract organisations (45%), they still qualify the reporting as good in 84% of the cases (of which 8% excellent).

Involvement partner organisations
In general, implementing partner organisations are, in one way or the other, involved in the design of the system (82%). Sometimes, representatives of the beneficiaries are involved (37%), and sometimes external help is sought in the design of the system (37%), particularly the design of the LF. In a much lesser extent (10%) the contract organisations have involved the donor in the PME design. About 66% of the organisations dispose of other tools too.
For many organisations M&E is a centralised system. Only about half of the organisations know more or less which information the various stakeholders need, and only 36% think that their M&E system can provide that required information. The data, which are gathered in numerous ways, are reflected upon mainly by the management alone (69%) or by high-level staff (61%), and in only 14% of the cases beneficiaries are involved in that reflection. However, after the analysis of the data, partners and main stakeholders are in most of the cases involved in decision making (85%)

**PME conditions**

According to the TMF-organisations, their staff is convinced about the importance of M&E and is motivated to carry out M&E. Only half of the organisations dispose of staff with specific M&E tasks. Generally, the staff charged with M&E has limited capacity and skills for setting up and carrying out M&E activities (43%). 54% of the TMF-contract organisations dispose of a special M&E budget. 35% use a Management Information System, which is however seldom (25%) accessible to the stakeholders.

One feels that helping effective operations are the availability of long-term strategic plans, well functioning Boards, external evaluations, the respect of ISO standards, standardization of indicators and formats, good communication with key stakeholders and management information systems.

Hindering effective operations are uncertainty about funding, lack of dialogue with the donor, a too specific theme-focus of the donor, the problem of dealing with cultural factors, political interference, programmes which are too wide in scope.
### Dutch Contract Organisations – scores in % on performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Setting up and managing M&amp;E systems</th>
<th>Capacities and conditions for the M&amp;E system</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Purpose of M&amp;E system</td>
<td>Human M&amp;E capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.a</td>
<td>Performance questions</td>
<td>Incentives for M&amp;E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b</td>
<td>Info needs of stakeholders</td>
<td>Structures &amp; processes for M&amp;E</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.c</td>
<td>Info on program, organisation etc</td>
<td>MIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.d</td>
<td>Methods for data collection &amp; processing</td>
<td>M&amp;E Funding</td>
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<td>3.e</td>
<td>Participation in data collection &amp; processing</td>
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<td>3.f</td>
<td>Critical reflection processes &amp; events</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.g</td>
<td>Participation in decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.h</td>
<td>Timely &amp; good quality reporting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.i</td>
<td>Reporting on stakeholders info needs</td>
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<th>Score 3</th>
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</table>

The most frequent scores, 3 and 4 on many issues (but most often less than 50%, and never on all issues), indicate that the conditions for good PME systems are met and the foundations are laid, but that, on a number of clear points, improvement is required to arrive at fully mature and effective systems. The RBM-part is clearly one aspect which is not functioning in a satisfactory way. Therefore, little strategic information is generated or shared.
When looking at the international TMF organisations (three in England, four in Switzerland and two in the Netherlands⁸) their PME-system, or the capacity to manage towards impact, was generally assessed as functioning: on most criteria “partially functioning” and less often “fully effective”.

However, in three cases, the M&E systems of these organisations were not found to be highly formalised, and to be covering all programmatic, organisational and administrative aspects of the organisation. The bigger the organisations are, the more was found in them a tendency for sophistication in organisational management and monitoring. Such organisations have more resources available for they invest in management information systems (MIS). In smaller organisations the procedures remain more informal, and staff has only average knowledge of M&E and is less specialised in specific M&E issues.

⁸ Four of these organisations were research-organisations, two of them were organisations doing advocacy and lobbying work, and one was a branche organisation. They all received TMF-core-funding. They were selected because of their presumed good quality.
### International contract organizations (T= 7) – scores on performance, in %

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>score</th>
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<td>Info on program, organisation etc</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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Questions on performance, Info needs of stakeholders, Incentives for M&E, MIS and M&E funding were scored by the evaluation team as partially functioning. When compared with these scores, the Dutch contract organisations need to focus more on Human capacity, incentives, info needs etc.

### 7.3 Gender Integration in the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and Practices

The TMF programme is anchored in the overall development co-operation policy of the Ministry of Development Co-operation and should therefore contribute to its overall aims. The programme tries to do so by supporting organisations in developing countries in accordance with various intervention strategies (direct poverty alleviation, civil society building and influencing policy). The TMF, more in particular, aims at strengthening the civil society actors in their contribution to structural poverty alleviation, gender equality and 

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9 Request for quotations ; Evaluation of the Theme-Based Cofinancing Programme 2005 / S 4-003592, annex 16 Terms of reference TMF evaluation
improvement in the position of women\textsuperscript{10}, defending rights of and by the poor, creating countervailing power mechanisms and social movements\textsuperscript{11}.

In practice, this implies that in the TMF programme a gender mainstreaming strategy should be followed. The core of a gender mainstreaming process is the integration of gender issues in analysis, planning and the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes and organisations.

This study therefore included two questions on gender in the analytical framework:

1. To what extent is gender integrated in the programme design?
2. To what extent are data collection, processing and reporting gender disaggregated?

The main findings are based on an analysis of the response to the survey of TMF organisations, the survey of DGIS, the interviews with contract organisations in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe and the field missions to partner organisations.

For the Dutch contract partners and the combined non-Dutch (international) partners, there is a stronger integration of a gender perspective in the design phase than in the collection, processing and reporting of gender disaggregated data. For the international contract partners this is not so. They score stronger on the gender disaggregated data. In general, it may be concluded from the field reports and the narratives of the evaluators, that in nearly all of the non-gender-specific organisations, staff are aware about gender inequities and how these relate to the programme objectives and outputs. In some

\textsuperscript{10} Beleidskader TMF 2006-2010, www.buza.nl

\textsuperscript{11} Policy paper Civil Society en Structurele Armoedebestrijding, www.buza.nl
cases it even became clear that the analysis of gender inequality in the context and the results of programmes on the existing gender relations was much further advanced than became apparent from the formal reporting. The reporting formats based on the logical frameworks that inform most programmes do not sufficiently integrate a clear gender perspective in the formulation of objectives, outputs, effects etc.

Adjusting the guidelines for project/ programme/ institutional support formulation could quite easily lead to improvements. As most organisations are aware and have what now remains “informal knowledge” this can be made explicit. The “gender organisations” like ETC Energia, IPAS, MRSC do score much better on gender issues related reporting as this is the purpose of the organisation or the programme/ project.

The International contract organisations have not scored a level 4 in relation to the collection of gender disaggregated data. This represents their own critical assessment of how “well” they are doing. It does not imply that in comparison to Dutch or overseas partner organisations they are doing worse, it probably is the contrary: their standards are higher.

7.4 Chain-relations, consistent or not?

Chain relations were studied in some detail in four countries (Vietnam, Peru, Uganda, South Africa). This in order to deepen some questions like: Are the PME-systems in the chain consistent? Or, differently formulated, are the TME-systems adequate for the various stakeholders operating in the chain?

Comparisons between the ways in which different organisations deal with TME were made and discussed in interviews, in search for lessons that would be useful for all. Comparing appeared difficult because of the very different nature of the organisations and their relationships with TMF-contract organisations. The variations in chain-relations in the countries studied, and their consequences for the respective PME-systems, can be summarized as follows:

• Fair Trade, and in particular its suppliers in Peru (ALLPA), in South Africa (Turqle Trading) and in Vietnam (Mai) – which were all visited -, are “fair trading” enterprises, involved in product development, marketing and sales. They are special enterprises because of the social objectives which they pursue, but their PME-systems necessarily have a strong business orientation. Product and marketing information systems are well developed and dominate the PME culture of the organisations, although the contract-organisation in particular puts much emphasis on the social objectives.

• Trans National Institute, and in particular its partners (individual consultants in Peru, Alternative Information and Development Centre in South Africa were contacted) seeks to create and promote international cooperation by analysing global problems and searching for possible solutions. In the case of Peru they focus on the problems related to the state policies on coca production, and in South Africa on unemployment issues. In order to be flexible and to keep an independent expert position in these issues, they do not seek institutional alliances but support the work of experts who are influential in national and international policy debates because of sustained strategic information and professional research inputs. The PME practices that these researchers apply lack the structure of an institutional system, but allow great flexibility and instantaneous reactions to developments in the policy arena.

• ILEIA and its partners (Peru partner LEISA Revista de Agroecología was visited) are strictly focused on their clearly formulated institutional mission, namely increasing the availability and exchange of information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture. The most important activity is the publication of a quarterly magazine. Its PME is in the first place focused on the effectiveness and efficiency of this operation, which is business-like in nature. There is less or no focus at all on the impact the reading
of the magazine might have on improving agricultural production. The main strategic
decisions are the annual decisions on the themes for the next four issues, a decision
which is taken on the level of the global network.

- **ETC-COMPAS (PFARD in Uganda, CEPROSI in Peru and other Latin American partners
were met, among others) is one of the TMF organisations supporting networks of local
organisations with a common development aim geared at endogenous development. The
nature of the development strategies in Endogenous Development is so truly non-
classical that this makes high demands on the PME. In fact, the question here is whether
the concept of endogenous development is not in contradiction with PME-needs from
higher up the chain.

- **NIZA has made a strong point in thoroughly improving the PME systems of its partners
through specific capacity building activities and prepares its partners to handle funds of
different origin in a better way.

Another difference is the length and complexity of the chain from the donor towards the
ultimate target groups, and back, which makes the PME systems vary accordingly.

- **In the case of Fair Trade and its partners, we are dealing with various fully independent
organisations which have a very business-like relationship. Each of them has its own
PME system.

- **The Transnational Institute pursues its objectives through individual researchers involved
in activities planned by TNI. The only PME system is TNI's own system.

- **ILEIA may operate in a global network of fully independent partners, the tasks are so well
defined, and the network is so solid that, at least for an external observer, it operates as a
unity and with one PME system. The use of this system may show some variations
between the partners, but basically it is one and the same system.

- **ETC-COMPAS works with a wide range of very different organisations. The binding factor
is that they all work according to the same principles of endogenous development. Each
organisation has its own PME system, but the joint focus and certain requirements that
partners in the COMPAS network must comply with give it a certain uniformity.

- **NIZA, Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam, IPAS (and likewise organisations), work
on the development of PME of their partners, hence a relatively short cooperation chain.

The above mentioned characteristics lead to different kinds of systems in the chain. There is
quite some variation in the coherence of the chain relations, or the coupling of various
systems into a coherent information flow.

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**International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD – The Hague) Monitoring and Evaluation of
country programmes**

IICD’s mission is to promote development in southern countries by helping them to introduce information and communication
technologies (ICTs). IICD is presently active in four sectors in nine countries, where they identify ‘projects’ through
government channels. The project identification and formulation is a thorough process, which includes round-table
conferences and ICT awareness seminars. It results in clear project documents with mutually agreed objectives and
expectations. The implementation of the projects includes training, hardware installation, organisation of provider services,
and an elaborate monitoring procedure. Each project aims at 50 ICT-users. The projects last about 6 years. At present all
projects are still considered pilot projects. Their experience will be used for the embedding-process of ICT in the government
sector.

Each country disposes of an IICD-M&E partner, usually a local consultant, who coordinates data-collection (filled-in
questionnaires) and data-analysis (SPSS statistics programme). The questionnaires are extensively tested and dispensed by
IICD-headquarters, to be answered by four categories of project participants: 1. project partners (managers and their teams);
2. project participants who have followed training courses; 3. end-users of projects: doctors, or students, or farmer-groups or
women-groups; 4. members of Information-Exchange Networks, linking various projects, and other ICT users. The
questionnaires touch on satisfaction of the services provided by the project and the level of local project ownership. The end-
users questionnaire contains questions about effectiveness and impact, grouped according to the criteria: awareness,
empowerment, economic impact, and organisational impact. For each criteria scale-constructs are used (Likert 7-point scale), ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, whereby a score of more than 5.5 is considered as a positive impact of the application and use of ICT in the particular project. As said before, the questionnaires are regularly repeated, mapping a process over time. Answers are collected with respect to questions such as: how far have local people been empowered? Are they more aware of the possibilities of ICT? Did users gain economically? Was there any impact at the level of the organisation or the sector?

The results of the analysed questionnaires are presented during bi-annual focus-group meetings with all the country’s project managers (8 to 15, depending on the country), facilitated by the local M&E partner, and in the presence of IICD representatives. During these meetings problems are discussed and solutions sought. It appears that these meetings have a considerable learning effect and lead to links and exchanges between projects.

The strength of this system is the constant reflection and learning it creates at the level of all stakeholders: project participants, project managers and IICD representatives. It is a self-evaluative method, which measures perceptions. The M&E tool covers the project’s internal process (evaluated by the degree of client satisfaction), the project’s development impact (evaluated by the degree of awareness/empowerment/economic impact and organisational change) and IICD’s effectiveness (evaluated by the degree of local ownership of IICD’s assistance). The typical financial accountability-aspect is left out of this M&E tool. Within the countries a learning spirit, or a ‘culture of learning’ is created, guided by data collection, focus group meetings and country reports. The latter also incite learning in the IICD-organisation, the products of which are recycled in Annual Plans.

This example of an organisation creating projects with considerable learning-capacity derives its success:

- from consistency in methods and tools, which are (after extensive testing) similar worldwide,
- from the commitment and willingness of project-partners to participate in the M&E system,
- from the capability of local consultants to facilitate the process, and
- from the dedication of IICD staff to constantly stimulate the process of self-reflection.

In the case of Fair Trade and its partners, the agreed intervention logic is clear for both sides. The activities which are undertaken in the course of the project are well understood by both sides and the expected results are monitored. The planning of the financial, procedural and production aspects, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the activities are well structured and well understood by all the stakeholders involved. Sometimes special procedures or standards introduced in the enterprises reinforce the common understanding of monitoring practices (f.i. HACCP: Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points).

Apart from the activities, the results are monitored closely, and the information is important for all parties. Fair Trade Assistance has developed an instrument for the monitoring of direct results, the TMF Crafts: System of Monitoring. This system is based on an analysis of the central problem that the project addresses: the weakness of the company which limits its access to the (mainstream) markets. It has been used to benchmark the starting position for the project (baseline) and will be used again for monitoring the progress of the project’s results. Both partners are very well aware of the indicators of this monitoring system and there is no doubt that this instrument will guide the decision making which should lead the project to the achievement of its purpose, namely increased sales in the mainstream market.

The monitoring of the project’s impact on the socio-economic conditions takes place on a more informal basis. Fair Trade has developed a special instrument in order to measure a great number of socio-economic indicators, the Social Business classification. The generation and flow of information on social progress, and in particular the use of this information for decision making, nevertheless seems to have less priority than the information on product development. It is interesting to see how every stakeholder in the chain plays its natural role: FTA, at the donor end of the chain, is the first in taking initiatives for improving the monitoring of social progress, while the business people in the workshops and factories put their first priority in the monitoring of the sustainability of their business. In the end, this testifies of a complementary partnership.
The *modus operandi* of Transnational Institute (short operational chain and relatively ad-hoc nature of the interventions, see above) allows a swift response to developments in the sector. Because of the nature of the interventions in this programme, monitoring of the complex external environment is more relevant than the monitoring of progress on the operational level. It seems recommendable that the monitoring on operational level should not be neglected; after all, the adequacy of the response of TNI to the external developments depends also on the efficiency of its operations. Moreover, without clear evidence of the results at the operational level, the information which the donor receives, may provide a good analysis on the strategic level, but will not make it clear enough which role TNI effectively plays and how efficient they make use of the resources provided by the donor.

Where the contract organisation supports networks of local organisations or smaller networks through the spreading of quality information (ETC in Uganda and Peru; ILEIA in Peru, CARAM/VU and IPAS in Vietnam), and assists them with M&E (most often with the introduction or improvement of Logical Frameworks, but also, as in the case of Energia in Uganda with checklists: LEGS Livelihood, Environmental sustainability, Gender responsiveness and Sustainability), the networks are very focused on the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness of the activities. The results of this monitoring are shared and analysed in the networks, which are characterized by short and efficient communication lines. The objective of monitoring is learning from the experiences of others, in the first place. The regular basis of well structured meetings makes it also likely that the information is used for decision making. Stakeholders have a great sense of ownership and participate in M&E on all levels. Reporting is simple but adequate. However, much knowledge (on impact f.i.) is not recorded.

COMPAS presents an interesting dilemma in the field of supporting endogenous development. Endogenous development explicitly tries to revitalise and optimise the use of local resources and construct development on the basis of the values of the local peoples. These resources are material, social and spiritual in character. Poverty is to be understood as lack of access to these three types of resources, and development should target their recovery. TMF funds are channelled in a long chain, and accountable information is passed back in this chain. External actors who want to support the (by definition) internal processes of endogenous development may only motivate and train the local actors, enabling them to realise an active monitoring and to stimulate their learning processes. M&E, in this way, is not just a useful management tool, but, as a matter of fact, it becomes the core activity of the cooperation process.

COMPAS can not direct or control the planning and monitoring processes without violating the principles of endogenous development. But, paradoxically, as the very nature of the cooperation consists of a joint learning process which is conducted through planning, monitoring and evaluation, and COMPAS is accountable for the quality of this cooperation towards DGIS, COMPAS inevitably plays a quite dominant role in PME and, by virtue of this role, also in the decision making process. This is justified because of the donor-recipient relation: for the donor, in order to be able to decide to continue or not the support of the endogenous process they helped unleash, regular assessment is required. The dynamics of this process and its inevitable contradictions may also be part of the explanation why in the COMPAS project a relatively large share of the funds is used for PME and for the learning process. The actual research and development activities in the indigenous communities are done with surprisingly low budgets, and quite a large part of the total budget of COMPAS-support is spent on PME, joint learning activities and communication.

The difference of the processes of PME in Endogenous Development and the very different role of the external actor in this process, may be explained by the word ‘*desenrollo*’ (unfolding, ontluiken). It needs patience to watch the process ‘unfold’, a patience which donors usually lack. Within the ‘competitive’ environment that more and more seems to
dominate international development cooperation, a donor cannot permit the luxury of financing autonomous processes and then just wait for the ‘proceso de desenrollo’. To ensure support, the system of PME will have to generate relevant information on results, achievement of targets and impact at the level of higher objectives for which the funds are being earmarked: poverty alleviation, strengthening of civil society and political impact.

The situation alluded to above may not be so different from many other project activities in complex processes of development. What applies to such projects is probably that not all assumptions can be true and that at any moment the plans may have to be adjusted. Therefore, the quality of such interventions cannot be judged only through the accomplishment of the results hoped-for, the quality of its learning process should also be taken into account.

Finally, there is a good example of the effectiveness of investing in M&E, as in the case of NIZA. What they try to do with their partners (f.i. FXI and WCACF which were visited) is to help them organise a performing PME-system, which enables the staff and management to take operational and strategic decisions based on relevant information which is being generated with the participation of key stakeholders. In other words, learning has been put on the first place. This has brought about a degree of maturity in the relations between NIZA and its partners, and as a result, they are discussing the reporting requirements in search of appropriate accountability without too many administrative burdens. Some partners work very specifically with quantitative and qualitative targets concerning ‘outcome’ of activities. With this information, adjustments in programmes are made, based on the monitoring information – effects can thus be improved and the outcome may have a longer lasting effect. Moreover, this monitoring provides quantitative information on outcome-level which can directly be reported to the donor. Some information (answers on formal questions) are summarized in the following table. They are but a small part of topics studied while visiting partner organisations “in the field”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner organizations of the Dutch &amp; International organizations – scores on performance</th>
<th>score</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Guiding the project strategy towards impact</td>
<td>1.a Participatory design</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.b Understanding strategy</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.c Strategic changes</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Ensuring effective operations</td>
<td>2.a Participatory operational planning</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.b Effective planning systems</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.c Good institutional processes for operations</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Setting up and managing M&amp;E systems</td>
<td>3.a Purpose of M&amp;E system</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.b Performance questions</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.c Info needs of stakeholders</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.d Info on program, organisation etc</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.e Methods for data collection &amp; processing</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.f Participation in data collection &amp; processing</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacities and conditions for the M&amp;E system</td>
<td>Critical reflection processes &amp; events</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.g Participation in decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.h Timely &amp; good quality reporting</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.i Reporting on stakeholders info needs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3.j</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Capacities and conditions for the M&amp;E system</td>
<td>Human M&amp;E capacity</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.b Incentives for M&amp;E</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.c Structures &amp; processes for M&amp;E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.d MIS</td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.e M&amp;E Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Creating a learning environment</td>
<td>Learning environment project</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.b Learning environment with stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Gender integration</td>
<td>Gender integrated in design</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.a</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.b Gender disaggregated</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Capacities and conditions are parts of the M&E framework which still need attention. For setting up and using the M&E system (questions 3b and 3e - methods for data collection) the score is also relatively low.

### 7.5 Conclusions

The picture which emerges from these various sources is quite unequivocal. The main conclusions of the use of M&E in the TMF sector are the following.

#### Strategy development

1. The major challenge of M&E in a chain is how to produce, on all levels, strategic data which serve the purpose of all actors concerned.
2. Among various kinds of organisations, advocacy and lobby organisations or networks were noticed to be most impact oriented.
3. In general, big organisations with core funding tend to be more performing in operating multi-functional M&E systems; they usually dispose of specialised and qualified personnel, and of sufficient funds.
4. Passing strategic information up in the chain is easiest when the M&E is a unique system or a very coherent interlocking whole of M&E-systems.
5. A clear strategy of the TMF programme is lacking. The themes are not related, and do not reinforce each other, programmatically. The objectives of the programme are not clearly defined, and not monitored either. The actual evaluation is the first (and last) effort to establish the outcome and impact of the TMF programme.
6. The Ministry level, in most of the cases, is not well integrated in the thematic programmes; in those cases it constitutes an inactive level, content-wise, with limited communication and feedback to the contract organisational level. However, in some cases (we estimate 8%), there is a strong synergy between the TMF programme and ministerial policy.
7. One of the reasons of the limited effectiveness in the relation between the donor and the TMF organisations is the ambiguity in their relationship. On the one hand, the relationship is supposed to be a ‘partnership’, on the other hand the ‘autonomy’ of the NGOs is supposed to be respected. The typical modality of ‘partnership’ in TMF is represented by
the ‘programme-grant’, while the typical modality of ‘autonomy’ is the core-grant. In reality, the degree of strategic exchange is not dependent on the above distinction.

8. One wonders how the Ministry on the one hand, and the TMF-sector on the other hand interpret the concept of ‘partnership’ in TMF context, and which role plays ‘trust’.

9. The Millennium Development Goals, important monitoring criteria for the donor, do not really constitute formal indicators (as far as we have seen); they are usually mentioned as an afterthought.

The TMF M&E systems
1. In the NGO co-financing sector, in particular among the TMF-organisations, the interest in PME is vivid and grows rapidly. With TMF, contract organisations have put considerable effort in improving their PME systems, and have supported their partners in doing the same.

2. However, in more than half the cases, their M&E systems require improvement (both contract-organisations and partner organisations).

3. The strength of the TMF organisations’ M&E systems is their learning ability, which is strongest at the base of the chain. Learning is achieved with all sorts of formal and informal instruments, meetings and contacts – learning has no fixed methodology or indicators. The information collected seems to be relevant and sufficient for project/programme management in most cases.

4. The generated information in the chain, including financial data, produced and presented for reasons of accountability, generally suffice for satisfying the needs of donating partners higher up in the chain.

5. The main weakness of the TMF organisations’ M&E systems is the fact that they seldom exceed input and output levels, and touch on outcome (effectiveness) and impact in only a small minority of cases.

6. Major constraints in this respect are considered to be the sub-optimal mastering of the Logical Framework (or DRAM), particularly the formulation of indicators, either quantitative or qualitative indicators. The close monitoring of the context is sometimes forgotten and sometimes implicitly or explicitly done: the context determines the ‘external factors’ or assumptions, which influence the feasibility and the relevance of interventions.

7. The M&E systems in the chain are often fragmented, not firmly coupled or interlocked.

8. For the above mentioned reasons, a lot of vital information is ‘lost’ in the chain, and is thus little used; much less strategy development finds place than would potentially be possible.

9. So, the effectiveness of TMF M&E systems, in most of the cases, is restricted to operational level – which is important, but not enough.

10. Gender is little explicit or specific, on all levels of M&E, although gender consciousness is often present among the TMF stakeholders.

M&E in the chain
1. Systematic planning and monitoring and (less often) evaluation find place everywhere in the chain;

2. In the TMF-chain, various types of M&E-relations are met: a. the contract organisation monitors all (control of the chain); b. each organisation in the chain has its own M&E systems or practices; c. different partners in the chain have the same M&E system, or interlocked systems.

3. TMF contract organisations often contribute to the PME of their partner organisations, either by instruction, imposition, quality information, concepts, instruments, training.

4. The longer the chain, the more pronounced is the difference in monitoring focus. The lower in the chain, the less awareness there is of the chain.

5. It highly contributes to the quality and the functioning of M&E systems in a chain if the different stakeholders have a good understanding of each other’s positions, interests and information needs. Stakeholders should make sure not only to generate the information
they themselves need, but, in a common understanding, generate also information which is of importance for their partners;

6. Feedback mechanisms operate weakest in the top of the chain (from Ministry to contract organisation), and at its bottom (feedback to beneficiaries).

7. Along the information chain, important information is often lost due to lack of interest, cultural differences, incomplete data collection, weak presentation of data or analysis, and lack of qualitative or quantitative (SMART) indicators – this is especially the case with a ‘cascade-upward’-type of reporting, and sometimes due to rigorous aggregation;

8. Passing information up the chain to donor-level usually demands thorough aggregation and consolidation of data by the contracting organisation;

9. Sometimes DGIS is just an extra layer on top of the chain, seemingly without being a real part of it. They may be served with the information they need, but if they do not clearly express that need, they are provided with information which is only partly relevant for them, and often considered superfluous.

10. If properly used, M&E becomes the tool which keeps the critical discussion alive along the chain, and helps the different stakeholders to learn the nature and the dynamics of the process and to understand their own position in the chain. In this way, M&E becomes an important instrument for decision making for the implementers and helps to provide the donors with the information they need.

11. Very little information on impact level is collected in the chain; consequently, the donor is hardly fed with strategic information. What seems to be the major challenge of M&E in a chain is how to produce, on all levels, strategic data which serve the purpose of all.

12. Strategic information has a bigger chance to be generated in the chain, either if there exists a unique M&E-system (controlled by the contract organisation), or the various monitoring systems interlock in a logical and systematic manner.

13. While M&E systems are most effective if designed by the stakeholders themselves, the task of the contracting organisation is to streamline and to see that the highest (donor) level is also served with relevant information; the various M&E activities in the chain must eventually cover both the operational and the strategic level. Where, in the chain, M&E is restricted to operational monitoring, the contract organisations should see to it that more impact-oriented (preferably independent) studies or evaluations are organised; these should provide information on strategic issues.

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8 The Use of M&E for Learning to Improve Organisational and Programme Performance

8.1 Creation of a learning environment with stakeholders

The evaluators have considered the following questions:

- To what extent are organisations able to learn from their performance through instituted practices?
- Does the information produced in the M&E executions result in learning, and does this learning result in adjustments, improvements, innovation in the programmes, either on operative or on strategic level?
- To what extent is a learning environment created with stakeholders, including beneficiaries?
The TMF organisations see themselves as learning organisations (77.5%). Their self-image is very much linked with the idea of attaching much value to critical reflexion (98.6%), of being flexible, of possessing a good learning capacity, of being good listeners to partners, etc. Two-third of the organisations think that they communicate easily internally, both horizontally and vertically, both formally and informally. They think they have an open organisation culture. “Learning all the time”.

They stimulate learning in their internal organisation through regular staff-meetings, internal assessments, periodic critical reviews, much communication with others, workshops, participation in networks, publication of experiences, success stories, ‘lessons learned’ and ‘best practices’, etc. Among new possibilities to exploit such initiatives is ITC.

The receptiveness for learning and new ideas translates itself in the will to “share” with partners, and to involve these in decision-making. It is also expressed in the flexible use of their operational tools, for instance the Logical Framework: 100% says that they regularly adapt Activities, 52% that they adapt Output level, 24% that they adapt Outcome level, and 10% adapts even Impact level. Whether strategic thinking is developed in the same extent, is less obvious.

In general, these ideas are backed up by the figures (below) which show that indeed, in most cases, the environments of TMF organisations or programmes are favourable for learning. This means that staff regularly meets and discusses openly and critically what is going on, analyse expected and unexpected issues, successes and failures (why, so what and now what?). Lessons learned are formulated. Critical feedback and learning are stimulated.

However, when it comes to sharing this learning with partners and beneficiaries, the situation is less ideal. It appears difficult to extend learning processes to partners, to create a framework for shared learning, and, in general, to streamline or focus learning, especially on strategic levels.

Good examples of ‘learning organisations’ which have found solutions for these difficulties, are NIZA and IICD (not exclusive). NIZA has embedded learning systematically in the
business process. On various levels, and on various moments in the year, reflection is organised, steered by many kinds of formats of questionnaires. As such, PME becomes one organic whole, where lessons learned automatically result in adapted, new plans, and innovative initiatives are implemented. IICD has developed an approach in which also, on a very regular basis, information is collected from all levels of the intervention chain, then analysed, shared, and its consequences translated in new actions.

While NIZA and IICD have formalised the learning approach, in many other organisations the level of formalisation is less developed, and learning less instituted, but takes place more informally, or ad hoc. In these cases there is still room for maturing of the M&E system in this respect.

The most critical factors for continuous learning as established processes, it appears from these experiences, are the working culture, the mentality, the focus of learning, and the working instruments and systems of the organisation.

Another critical factor is the possibility and the willingness to change. Some organisations have gone through a number of change processes and now want to stabilize and consolidate their identity, their organisational structure, systems, and staff. The international TMF organisations make a very professional impression, and seem to dispose of high antennae to pick up in the world what could possibly be useful for them.

The impression of the British NGOs is that they are big and dispose of financial reserves, with big programmes and high budgets. Though they may be different in scope, they have learning and sharing with stakeholders integrated in their thinking and systems, and reflected in their methods and approach. They speak of ‘learning partnerships’, striving at synergy and added value of collaboration between different parties with different backgrounds. They make the impression to be very selfcritical and modest in their stand towards partners. Learning has also a clear role in Human Resource Development: they work with personal development objectives related to organisational objectives.

The same outward orientation was found in Switzerland, but since most of these were research organisations of limited size, they are hardly comparable to the big British NGOs. Most of the learning in these organisations is in the intellectual sphere. They have recruited very competent staff and provide these with possibilities to do highly professional research, which they submit to various levels of scientific testing. However, as stated before, they are less focused on the impact of their studies.

The lobbying and advocacy International Baby Food Action Network applies the Logical Framework as their typical learning tool, with which they communicate horizontally between network partners, and vertically with donors. They have made monitoring and learning (constantly being conscious of what is going on, analysing what the effects of actions are, how friends and foes react, etc.) as ‘a way of life’, to which they dedicate a large share of their time.
The same attitude is found back in the International Aids Vaccine Initiative, which has taken impact as their focus, and work back to adjust all objectives to this goal, not leaving anything to chance.

A number of these organisations do not have 'local partners' in a cascade sort of way, which they involve in learning processes. Stakeholders may change all the time, and reflection with them is intense, but the direction of learning is to learn from lower levels, not always reciprocal or democratic, and its focus is streamlined according to the needs of the organisation, not the needs of individual stakeholders.

With respect to the learning-ability of TMF-organisations, a number of criteria were looked upon by the other lots like learning from mistakes, much and broad discussion and reflection in the organisation, easy horizontal and vertical communication, attach much value to innovation, new ideas. Questions, which refer mainly to organisational culture, mentality and practice. Their appraisal was more critical: contract-organisations are good at learning in 53% of the cases and 47% weak or bad. Partner-organisations scored a bit higher on learning: in 59% of the cases and in 41% scored weak or bad. Being more critical compared to the self-image of the organisations, and the assessment by the MDF/IAC team of Dutch and international TMF-organisations, we are looking forward to reading their reports.

The opinion from the staff-members of DGIS who are charged with the monitoring of the TMF-grants, concerning the question whether activities of the TMF organizations are ‘innovative’ was as well not so positive. While the staff judged that the activities contributed to the “reinforcement of the civil society (here or there)” (83%), they judged the organisations or programmes ‘innovative’ in only 60% of the cases (40% not innovative or doubtful).

On the contrary, a positive and optimistic picture emerges again from the wealth of information about partner-organisations (of all kinds) in 3 continents. The organisations there, which are mostly young and managed by young, dynamic people, are very result-and action-oriented, do not suffer from bureaucratic weight, are in contact with many other civil society organisations and networks, and have an open mind for learning and innovation. From the material, it appears that the learning capacity of local organisations is reinforced and productive because of four circumstances:

- Regular exchange of experiences among many categories of stakeholders;
- Expert and cheap input from (external) partner-organisations;
- Freedom from preconceived ideas, norms and irksome procedures;
- Open minded learning mentality (‘they like to talk, to think, to learn’).

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12 They are spread over five Theme-directions. They know the TMF-organisations maximally two years, except for staff who already knew the organisations before they received TMF, and had developed quite close contacts with them. But many staff only received the file recently and has not had the chance to get to know the organisation. It was difficult for them to answer the questions as they had received a report perhaps only once, etc..

13 The capacity of the organisation to innovate was one of the seven selection criteria for TMF (cf Policy framework TMF).
In the international, national or local networks of Energia, Compas and Prolinnova, ICE, IPAS and CARAM, one remarks the presence of many different kind of stakeholders, both local as well as regional and international, representatives from rural or urban origin, from civil organisations, but also from various levels of the government. They communicate in numerous meetings, workshops and conferences, discussing and sharing experiences, best practices and lessons learned, and disseminating results to a broad audience, either in publicised form (booklets, yearly reviews and journals) or on internet (web sites). There exist peer structures and mechanisms for horizontal feed-back. They organise many reflection, training and learning sessions which largely contribute to the relevance, the result- and the action-oriented nature of the programmes pursued.

A more critical look might reveal that:

a. a lot of learning is implicit or informal, and not generated by instituted mechanisms;

b. most innovative and original planning is on operational level, much less on strategic level;

c. systematic follow-up in elaborating, applying and monitoring and evaluating new ideas and initiatives may lack.

But, as in all cases of TMF: the reverse, very sophisticated M&E through performing LF-applications, is also found.

### M&E as joint learning

The Compas programme is an initiative to improve the quality of development support initiatives. The project provides support to local organisations, which are enhancing biological and cultural diversity and sustainable management of natural resources by building on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and local leadership.

A systematic action research and development programme has been launched for this. The project provides small grants for field activities, stimulates a systematic testing and learning process, documents experiences and lessons learned, organises exchange meetings and publishes results to a wide range of readers.

Together with some 25 partners in 12 countries collaborative and comparative research is underway concerning traditional cosmologies, indigenous knowledge, the way local communities carry out agricultural experiments and the impact these have on biological and cultural diversity and land use practices. Traditional worldviews, knowledge, leadership and values are not romanticised nor rejected as old-fashioned, superstitious or obsolete; they are taken as the starting point of testing and experimenting and form the basis for an intercultural dialogue on knowledge and development. Through action research ways are sought to strengthen the dynamics of traditional knowledge systems and to enhance bio-cultural diversity.

Every year, all the partners of COMPAS in Latin America have exchange meetings amongst themselves and with their partners in development; workshops, training and discussions are part of the learning process about endogenous development.

### The practice

In its activities that aim at stimulating endogenous development, COMPAS is faced with an obvious contradiction: On the one hand, endogenous development is a process that must originate “from within” and external interventions are a deviation from this principle. The support that COMPAS gives to its partners should therefore leave the initiative fully to them and should
not impose anything. In this thinking, M&E procedures cannot be prescribed by the external donor, but should be allowed to be developed by the local partners, making proper use of their own learning systems and focussing on indicators of locally recognised relevance.

On the other hand, however, the mere fact that certain initiatives are being supported and others not makes any support of COMPAS by definition an external intervention. The decisions that are being taken in every link of the support chain all have to be based on an analysis of the reality according to criteria and indicators that, whatever the strength of the participation of the target group may be, are at the end fully controlled by the donor.

The need to generate a development process from within, building on local strength and potential, in combination with the need to make sound decisions at the donor end of the cooperation chain, based on relevant and reliable information determine the character of COMPAS’ interventions: small scale community based projects with relatively high investments in joint learning. These projects leave the initiative with the local communities and must therefore not exceed the local “absorption capacity”. As a consequence, the operational budgets of the projects are remarkably low. At the same time, these projects focus very intensively on learning with participation of all the stakeholders in the cooperation chain. Generation of information, exchange of information in contacts between the different links of the chain and joint Monitoring & Evaluation (=learning) activities are very intensive and the budgets for these joint learning activities may very well exceed the local operational budgets of these projects.

Fundamental for this approach is a restraint on the side of the donor as regards the external interventions and this includes restraint in the M&E activities. But joint learning is continuously stimulated and this need drives the M&E system. COMPAS leaves the initiatives to the partners, allowing the endogenous development process to unfold (“desenrollo”), rather than to be pushed. But staff members of ETC do participate in frequent discussions about the management of the project and collaborate with the partners in designing research methods and monitoring of the research process. They also participate in the implementation of the case studies, documentation of learning experiences etc.

Specificity
In line with the approach of endogenous development, which requires full local ownership of the process, M&E is not imposed, but there is a maximum effort for joint learning. In this way, the endogenous development approach pretends to overcome the failure seen in many studies on indigenous knowledge, that the focus is limited to that part of the local knowledge system that can be understood from the perspective of the Western knowledge system.

The core activity of the cooperation in Endogenous Development is the M&E system. It is being designed in close cooperation between all the stakeholders throughout the chain.

For allowing a well functioning M&E system to develop, the learning needs of all partners must be taken into consideration, out of a well understood joint interest. We could observe that the development of such a system was sometimes frustrated by unilateral accountability requirements imposed by the donor, that included indicators and criteria of which the relevance was not shared by the local stakeholders.

Repeatable?
Endogenous development puts in practice and takes the consequences of something that, to some extent, is important in almost all development cooperation activities: Sustainability can only be achieved if the local stakeholders (= the principal actors in the development process or the beneficiaries of the development cooperation, take the process in their own hands and built on their own strengths.

In that sense, the M&E practice in the COMPAS network of Endogenous Development organisations, with operational investments tailored to the needs of the local stakeholders and with M&E investments that are driven by the need for joint learning throughout the chain, implies a lesson for almost all development cooperation activities.

The challenge is the development of a M&E system which is encompassing, so that it covers all levels of the intervention logic, and hence also results in strategic outcomes. It is especially in that respect - the introduction of coupled or interlocked PME, or an encompassing PME system - in which several Dutch organisations working in the TMF-funding-chain (NIZA, ICCT, Compas) have been successful.
With such approaches – avoiding, of course, to force local partners into PME straightjackets! - a large programme like TMF may have an added value to Dutch development policy’s learning ability. But such value can not be realised by the implementing (‘contract’ or ‘partner’) organisations alone. The broad questions must come from the donor level, or at least be inspired by its policy formulation procedures. A serious application of Result Based Management finally presents a chance to realize what has always failed in Dutch development cooperation, namely the interplay or cross-fertilisation of policy-formulation and policy implementation.

Finally, in considering the learning chain, the worrisome links are at the top and at the bottom: the link between DGIS and the contract organisations (as regards the design of the M&E-system and the feed-back to the organisations), and the link between implementing organisations and ultimate beneficiaries (in the collection of data to feed the M&E-system). Before embarking on that subject, some concluding remarks will end this section.

8.2 Some final conclusions

In the TMF-sector, learning environments have been created on all levels. However, the coupling of these environments (between contracting organisations and partners lower in the chain), is not always streamlined. The learning-link with the beneficiaries is only clear in cases where these beneficiaries constitute networks, of which contracting organisations are partners, and where reflection and learning is embedded in the network structure.

1. Where M&E is streamlined throughout the chain in a coherent manner, it is used as a permanent communication and learning mechanism. In this case, learning is usually steered by formalised procedures and formats.
2. Learning capacity may be developed, but learning often lacks a focus. Learning produces more effect if it is steered in certain directions or finds place in learning frameworks. Learning should be embedded in the approach of the organisation or programme.
3. Learning on operational level is more evident than learning on strategic level; strategic learning is not easily passed upwards or downwards in the chain. So called ‘double loop’ and ‘triple loop’ learning (revision of mission and strategy) hardly exist in formalised form. A link should be gorged between accountability and learning. NIZA proposes: “If learning takes place, accountability follows”.
4. Focused learning is strongest and most effective in TMF programmes where this learning is stimulated, organised, well analysed and directly leads to adaptations in the programme. Such programmes are coherent, have one structure (or structures are linked) and fine-tuned procedures for learning.
5. The learning continuity with the ultimate TMF beneficiaries is only guaranteed in cases where these beneficiaries constitute networks of which the contracting organisations are also members, and where reflection and learning are embedded in the network structure. Moreover one needs time. (“Time is the enemy of learning” - comment of one workshop participant).
6. On donor level, no effective learning mechanisms are established. The MIS (Piramide) rather serves accountability purposes than learning purposes. In TMF context, it is not exploited as a learning tool. Learning must also be learned.

9 The First and Final Link in the Chain: DGIS and the Contracting Organisations

9.1 Monitoring and evaluation

The Ministry makes a clear distinction between monitoring on the one hand and evaluation on the other hand.
Monitoring is seen as a process primarily undertaken by the executive bodies responsible for the implementation of development activities funded by the Ministry, focussed on the implementation process and on intermediate progress realised. Its aim, as stated in the Ministry’s most recent overall monitoring report (“Resultaten in ontwikkeling”, november 2005), reads as follows: “… to show tangible, established results and thereby to provide an insight in the end-products which are realised in the context of development cooperation. The reporting is not an analytical document which leads to selective policy recommendations, but on the basis of this reporting efforts in partner countries can be appreciated. It also provides signals for further analysis … “ (p.8).

Evaluation, on the other hand, preferably executed by independent outsiders, is focussed on analysis and judgement of projects, programmes or policies, during or after their implementation, with the use of various development performance parameters (effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, etc.).

In the NGO-world less distinction is made between monitoring- and evaluation functions. One speaks of M&E. In this view, monitoring also implies appraisal, and thus evaluation. Evaluation may be performed by the stakeholders themselves, in critical self-evaluations, whereby outside ‘consultants’ play the role of facilitator. During an interview, IOB officials spoke with abhorrence about this system where objectivity seems to lack. This proves that the IOB concept of evaluation is more focused on ‘scientific’ measuring of results and outcome and ‘accountability’ to the donor, while the NGO concept is more focused on ‘learning’ by the stakeholders themselves in order to improve implementation and deepen insights.

Whereas independent evaluation was introduced by the Ministry since the beginning of development cooperation, systematic monitoring is a more recent phenomenon. During the 1990-s, the weakness of systematic planning and monitoring by ‘projects’ has resulted, on Ministry-level, in the adoption of methodologies of project-cycle management (PCM), covering, in an integral way, PME: planning, monitoring and evaluation. Most PCM-tools are based on Objective Oriented Project Planning (O OPP or Z OPP) and make use of the Logical Framework. Herewith Result-Based Management (RBM) was introduced. Only after 2000 RBM was generalized in all sectors of development cooperation, hence also in the TMF. In 2001, a ministerial project-group M&E was instituted and a project director appointed to reinforce the monitoring of the International Cooperation programme (see Position Paper Monitoring en Evaluatie van het OS-programma – Hans Pelgröm/Bert van de Putte, concept 26 februari 2002). This project-group is now integrated in the DEK-direction.

9.2 Results Based Management and intervention logic

The Logical Framework, if applied according to the rules of the game, meets the demands of RBM, which is now being applied by most donor organisations. RBM demands the measurement of various levels of project-execution. This requires a hierarchy of objectives which the Logical Framework (Logframe, LF) provides. Through this hierarchy input (means and activities), output (results), the realisation of the project purpose (short term objective) and the realisation of overall or development objectives are analytically separated, which allows, with proper indicators, for the determination/measurement of “efficiency”, “effectiveness”, and “outcome” and “impact” of development activities. The “logical” assumption underlying the framework is that the objectives are linked by causal relationships. This model is also favoured in evaluations, promoted by IOB, the Ministry’s policy review unit. However, the “learning”-component in organisations is not covered by the Logical Framework. This component, considered more and more important in Development Cooperation, does not seem to be considered in pure RBM, and is neither covered by VBTB/RPE (see below).
In TMF (thematical co-financing)-context, RBM is worked out in an intervention-logic (called DRAM) whereby Purpose, Results, Activities and Means are to be linked in a Logframe-like way. Each level of DRAM is to be made measurable, as much as possible, with the help of (quantitative or qualitative) indicators. DRAM-systematics are supposed to be applied both in planning and in monitoring. They are worked out in several (versions of) Monitoring instructions.

9.3 Government regulations

With respect to evaluation, the semi-independent IOB (Policy Review Unit) of the Ministry plays a special role. It not only undertakes thorough and longlasting evaluations of policy issues, programmes and sectors of their own choice (socalled central evaluations), but it also reviews the quality of past evaluations commissioned by ministerial directions and delegations (socalled decentral evaluations). The most recent of these quality reviews is called “Onderzoek naar de kwaliteit van in 2003 afgeronde decentrale evaluaties” (june 2005).

The above mentioned evaluation enterprise is imposed by recent government regulations with regards to accounting of public expenditures. Following a government policy document (VBTB), a set of requirements concerning “evaluation of policy objectives and the quality of evaluation research” became operative in 2002 (Regeling Prestatiegegevens en Evaluatieonderzoek – RPE). According to VBTB and RPE regulations the direction FEZ (Financial Economic Affairs) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, yearly makes up an evaluation agenda which forms an integral part of the Ministry’s budget (IOB , june 2005:1). RPE has resulted in assessment-checklists with quality indicators concerning the Validity, Reliability and Utility of evaluations.

9.4 Requirements related to politics and the democratic process

In line with governmental result-based principles, Development Cooperation as a whole needs to produce results and impact, which serve as a measure of policy “success” in the political arena (the Minister has to answer to Parliament). Such political requirement have led to a more and more systematic search for (preferably positive) results, of which the above mentioned report “Resultaten in ontwikkeling” is one of the first products.

Presently, the Effectiveness and Quality Direction (DEK) is about to develop a coherent monitoring framework covering all the activities of the Ministry’s development cooperation. For bilateral cooperation this framework has been worked out. It consists of four levels (see Figure below): political level, internal level, intervention level and intervention- environment level and is called “Managing for development results: samenhang ‘brede’ jaarplan cyclus” (i.e. coherence of the ‘broad’ annual plan cycle). The figure shows the PME-cycle (policy, formulation, intervention, appraisal, reporting of results).
Figure 1: Managing for development results: Samenhang "brede" jaarplan cyclus

What is interesting in this figure is the “sector waardering” (appraisal of the sector) which refers to the progress in development sectors as a result of interventions, so to Outcomes of development activities. On that basis embassies are supposed to judge progress made over a certain period with the help of a 4-point appreciation scale (very satisfactory, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very unsatisfactory). In addition, to determine “development results”, figures are collected which refer to Millennium Development Goal-indicators. The figure described above could simply be applied to Theme-based co-financing (TMF), whereby “sector-waardering” is then to be replaced by “thema-waardering”.

Compared to past “integrated” development strategies, in this set-up the relationship between “sectors” or “themes” on the one hand, and “human development” (or, for that matter, overall development) on the other hand, remains implicit.

How the information on which sector-appraisal and theme-appraisal is, or should be collected, is unclear for many informants inside and outside the Ministry.

9.5 The Management Information System: Piramide

All development activities the Ministry undertakes, whether on bilateral, multilateral, embassy, co-financing etc. level, are to be registered in “Piramide”, a Management Information System (MIS) introduced two years ago on all levels of the Ministry and its delegations, at enormous costs. At regular time intervals, for each activity, a short “narrative” text has to be formulated with respect to Inputs, Outputs, Doelstellingen (targets) and Duurzaamheid (sustainability), and a score (A,B,C,D) has to be added with regard to progress made since the last reporting, an appraisal based on reports or personal contacts (e-mail, telephone, meetings, visits). In the TMF-case, this is done by each official who is in charge of managing a grant – some officials manage only one grant, others manage up to 10 grants, the utilisation of which, one could say, they “monitor”.

In one Theme Direction, there is a check on the registration: the CU verifies whether the scores and the narrative part are in line with each other. This CU is of the opinion that the quality of the registration should be improved. On the basis of a reading of all recent registration texts concerning TMF, the evaluators agree with this point of view. On December 20-th, 2005 the TMF registration in Piramide was up to date.
Piramide serves as a database, a memory, containing information on all development activities. But what is done with it? It is certainly used for monitoring contracts or contract-management (have the terms of the contract been respected?). Progress, or lack of progress in the mentioned fields (outputs, target, sustainability), can also be read in Piramide by comparing actual with past scores. But what is done with the narrative information? Is the Ministry using this information? For which purposes? Does it serve learning and is the information useful for policy development? These are some of the questions which were included in the questionnaire for the policy-staff (beleidsmedewerkers) of the Theme-directions.

9.6 Concluding remarks

With the introduction of RBM, a major paradigmatic shift has taken place over the last few years. The Dutch government’s VBTB was meant to bring about a change in attitude in the monitoring of its activities. In a guide on Monitoring and reporting, distributed to TMF organisations, the shift is formulated as follows: “Instead of detailed reporting on expenditure, the focus is now on the results achieved and lessons that can be learned, and the relationship between the results and the Minister’s policy objectives. Those who receive contributions should report in a result-oriented manner as well, so that the Minister can answer to parliament. This is not the only reason, however. Clear and concise reporting is vital to establish a meaningful (policy) dialogue between the Ministry and the recipient of the contribution”.

Furthermore, it is mentioned in the same document: “Result-oriented reporting is also a learning process for the Ministry. Through trial and error one learns, not only to avoid getting tangled up in details and stay focussed on the big picture, but also to formulate measurable and meaningful objectives”.

The text cited shows that the Ministry not only assumes that “result-oriented” PME will be new for the Theme-based Cofinancing (TMF) organisations, but testifies of the fact that it is new for the Ministry as well, and will need to be learned “through trial and error”. In rounds 2003 and 2004 of the TMF-scheme, recipients as well as donor, seem to have been engaged in this learning process.

Initially, the NGO world has regarded the official M&E systems of donors with suspicion. As against the importance of accountability, considered “top-down” by them, they have over and again stressed the more “bottom-up” importance of trust. Rather than focussing on results and impact, they have stressed process and learning. However, a certain cross-fertilisation between the two paradigms seems to have produced a balance. The TMF organisations have accepted RBM and are actually applying it in the management systems of their organisations, similarly “through trial and error”. Of course, the financial interests have played a role: RBM is henceforward obligatory and a condition for receiving Co-financing. In the competition to obtain grants, extra points can be gained if RBM shows clearly in the application. Have they “made the best of a bad bargain” (eieren voor hun geld gekozen)?

A last remark concerns the learning capacity of the Ministry: is the Minister’s policy based on or inspired by lessons learned from practice? This has always been a contested issue in development cooperation. Most often, policy is derived from political or ideological agendas, preoccupations in the donor country, or adopted from the big donors (World Bank, IMF). The interplay of policy and implementation of development activities is problematical. The recommendations of evaluations have often received insufficient follow-up. Those close to the field (projects, embassies, NGO offices) have often complained about the policy changes from The Hague which seemed not to be based in any way on development experiences in local situations. The learning-from-practice capacity on the Ministry’s policy level seems always to have been limited. However, with partnership as leading principle in the actual
Development Cooperation policy, one would assume more exchange and more synergy and mutual learning.

9.7 Management of the TMF-grants by the Theme Directions

9.7.1 Actors and procedures

The management of the grant starts after the contract (de beschikking) has been issued. Untill that moment, the application procedure has been coordinated by DSI-MY, but from the start of the implementation process, DSI-MY’s role fades away. They do in no way share in the management of the grant. They do not monitor the programme as a whole. DSI only monitors the grants which fit the programme of one of DSI’s sections. In fact, there is no overall monitoring of the TMF-programme. During the application phase, proposals have been attributed to the Theme directions for appraisal dependant on their content. The monitoring of the approved grants is exclusively done by those who have also appraised the grant applications and approved them (NB- the appraisal procedure will change with the MFS).

On the other hand, the TMF programme as a whole is evaluated (as the present exercise shows), and the evaluation is organised under the supervision of DSI-MY (on an ad-hoc basis).

Within the Theme directions, the management of the grants is attributed to their departments (if any) and the department’s staff-members. The selected staff-members may have from one to ten grants to manage. The minimum formal management actions imply the approval of the annual plan including an annual budget, and the annual report, including a financial report (the financial reports are usually appraised by the CU, Control Unit of the Theme direction). Some directions have organised a yearly policy-meeting with each TMF-organisation separately. However, these meetings, more often than not, seem to concern organisational issues rather than to imply a policy debate. Most staff-members (BM=beleidsmedewerkers) have some more regular contacts by e-mail, telephone or during meetings or visits. Some BM have had very intensive contacts with certain TMF-organisations, either to urge them to do their work properly, to help them set up their monitoring system, or to exchange points of view in a real partnership-fashion.

Certain instructions with regard to Monitoring and reporting may be annexed to “de beschikking”. The evaluators have found three versions of a monitoring instruction, distributed by different Theme directions. One Theme direction (DMW), after the beschikking has been issued, invites the TMF organisation to propose a “monitoring protocol” which suits them best, but which meets the formal monitoring requirements. Since then the term “tailor-made monitoring” (maatgesneden monitoring) has come into vogue.

In the ‘Monitoring and reporting’ instruction, the DRAM-principle for the intervention logic, and SMART-criteria for ‘results’: Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic and Time-based, are explained. Next, the principle of measurable parameters or indicators is explained (efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability). When discussing ‘measuring procedures’, it is mentioned: “... it is not the intention to saddle recipient organisations with a bureaucratic system devised by the Ministry. The key consideration is that the criteria selected and the measuring method should contribute to the achievement (realisation) of the organisation’s objectives”. With other words, a methodology is not imposed, provided that each organisation disposes of a methodology which meets the minimal requirements. Finally, some (minimal) instructions are given with respect to the annual report which should consist of three parts: an overall summary, a financial summary, and a specific summary on progress achieved
(following Inputs, Outputs, Objectives and Sustainability, being the same categories as used in Piramide).

From the above mentioned instruction, a new version has been conceived by DMW and is used by this direction. DCO has quite another format in which the link between planning and monitoring is even more explicitly indicated, including in the composition of documents (annual plan, annual report, etc.). In the files of DMV a detailed format with Table of contents for the Annual Plan was found.

Figure 2: Process-flow monitoring TMF by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The procedure described above is summarized in the following process-flow.
The above process-flow hardly needs explanation. It clearly shows that the whole monitoring procedure is in the hands of the Theme directions. It also shows that the procedure is focused on control, and that there is no formal arrangement for strategic discussions.

9.7.2 Monitoring of the grants: practices and perceptions

**Questionnaire**

For the sake of the present evaluation, a questionnaire was distributed among 47 BM in order to find out their perceptions about the TMF programme, the monitoring by TMF organisations and their own monitoring of this programme.
After having introduced the study on the level of DSI/MY, the Theme Directors and on the level of appointed TMF-representatives of each Theme Direction, the questionnaire was sent to the BM (personally) who figured on the lists provided by the Theme Directions themselves\textsuperscript{14}. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire for each of the selected TMF-grants (for 110 grants). Eventually, 65 (usable) completed questionnaires were processed. A number of BM argued that they had just received the file and had no knowledge of the TMF – organisation yet. This in itself is a typical situation (see also below, and footnote): there is a lot of pushing and shoving of files from one BM to another, for various reasons (BM who are transferred to other departments, BM who receive other priority engagements and are relieved from the TMF-dossiers, redistribution of dossiers after new BM have arrived, etc.). Other filled-in questionnaires arrived far after the deadline.

Practices

The files which are attributed to a Theme Direction, are internally redistributed among the staff.

Table: 5 Number of TMF-grants managed by BM (beleidsmedewerker) of Theme Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Direction</th>
<th>Number of TMF-grants (2003, 2004)</th>
<th>Managed by number of BM</th>
<th>Average files managed per BM</th>
<th>Min./Max. no. of TMF dossiers managed per BM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMW</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Min.: 1; max. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMV</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Min.: 1; max.: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDE</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Min.: 1; max.: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSI/SB, DSI/ER</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Min.: 1; max.: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(not considered)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Those who manage many grants must have an extensive knowledge\textsuperscript{15} about TMF organisations. For them, comparison between organisations is possible. However, managing many grants may cause overburdening of BM during certain periods of the year. The problem with regular change, of course, is the loss of knowledge, the loss of learning, the loss of continuity. There are no procedures for safeguarding the lessons learned and best practices of TMF-organisations monitored once a BM hands over a file to somebody else. There are only the written files and the information contained in Piramide.

Some characteristics of the management of the files:
- Duration of management of the TMF-grant (based on answers of completed and processed questionnaires; T=65):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
<th>More than 2 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some differences between directions: DSI: 63% more than 2 years; DDE: 46% less than 1 year; DMW: 50% more than 2 years

Apart from appraising documents, 75% state that they give feed-back, of whom 11% very much. However, from other sources it appears that the quality of this feed-back is contested, in casu by the evaluators of other lots of this TMF evaluation (see chapter ..).

Perceptions

It has been remarked that those who monitor a TMF organisation more than 2 years (T=25), generally have a higher opinion of the monitoring system of the TMF organisations than the average BM who monitors grants for a shorter period: 72% of those who handle the file more than two years, assesses the Monitoring system of TMF-organisations as good-outstanding;

\textsuperscript{14} The lists proved incomplete, and eventually covered only 85 of the 126 grants awarded.

\textsuperscript{15} However, see also point 3, below, where it appears that a number of those BM who have managed the files over two years, still have little idea about the monitoring practices of the TMF organisations.
20% finds it weak/insufficient; 8% doesn’t know - “geen zicht op”; “kan ik niet beoordelen” (which is remarkable, after more than 2 years!). On average, a positive judgement is given in only 55% of the cases.

The use of the information
What does the Ministry do with information provided by TMF-monitoring (reports etc.)?

Table 6 Use of information – % of total answers by BM, per direction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme direction</th>
<th>nothing</th>
<th>Contract management only (accountability)</th>
<th>Policy development also (learning)</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DMV</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMW</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDE</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCO</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall (T=50)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are perceptions by BM. How the situation is in reality, is difficult to assess. Many BM say that they have learned from it a lot, personally. What the department, the Theme Direction, and finally the Minister does with the ‘lessons learned’ and ‘best practices’ (if reported on these), is vague. There are no formal procedures to process or store the information which is produced by the monitoring-process (except for the Piramide data). Therefore, when a BM stops managing a grant, a lot of information is lost, or at least not readily available any more.

For those who manage files more than 2 years, 75% (much more than the average 25%) states that information is used for policy matters (“M&E produces info which is indispensable for ministerial policy”; “data have led to more attention to certain institutions”; “information is used for contacts with other donors”; “embassies make use of the knowledge and contacts”; “real partnership, policy input, regular exchange of news and data”). Perhaps these BM have more access to circles where policy is made than the others.

9.8 A concluding picture emerges

The Theme directions have first gone through the selection of grant-proposals and organisations. The procedure has gradually been perfected and objectified, to the satisfaction of the Ministry and also the TMF-organisations individually. The process, conceived by the Ministry staff itself (some piloteers, the TMF Reference group and DSI-MY), has been positively assessed \(^{16}\). It is remarkable that for the coming MFS a whole new set of procedures has been proposed. In itself, this testifies of the wasting of intellectual capital. It is hoped that this does not demotivate the staff, who in the future are exempted of the selection process, but still have to monitor/manage the grant. It would be only one small step to outsource this management too. In that case, the Ministry staff would be dissociated from the contents and the practice of an important section of the Dutch development cooperation, namely the funding of the civil society organisations.

Anyway, the staff of the five Theme directions have monitored the implementation of the grants. Some have seen this as a challenge and a personal learning experience, some have seen it as a burdensome job. Most of them have just done what was expected of them. The files of the grant-organisations have often changed hands, so that many staff members have only the faintest idea of the progress of the TMF grants. No instruction exists on how the staff must handle the TMF-organisations, except that they have to appraise the annual report.

\(^{16}\) MDF, Ede, maart 2005: Externe evaluatie van de interne beoordeling van TMF-aanvragen (rondes 2004 en 2005)
(including financial reports) and the yearplan, and that they have to register the state of progress in Piramide, the Ministry’s MIS.

The survey among the staff has demonstrated that they perform this assignment perfunctorily. Depending on the Theme direction, they may also have an annual review meeting with the organisation, or they may, during a mission, meet with the TMF organisation’s partners in the field. Depending on the Theme direction, a general reporting instruction has been handed to the contract-organisations. There exist at least three versions or formats for M&E and reporting.

There is a policy document dealing with the TMF programme. However, what is not clear at all, is the overall strategy of the programme, and its monitoring. Hence, it is not clear to the staff what is the use of the reports. To many of them, the reason for the actual evaluation is not clear either.

The majority, as was mentioned before, performs their tasks in a perfunctory manner: they check on accountability, and fill in Piramide, the essential tasks of contract-management. If contract management is what they do, the contract-organisations will deliver what is needed for that purpose. No need to deliver more than what the contract-manager needs. Obviously, the contract-managers are happy with what they receive: 85 % are positive about the reports. They appreciate the reports as they satisfy their needs, and not because they find them of good quality: most staff find that DRAM is only weakly applied, indicators are hardly used and that reporting on the levels above Output is insufficient. But the reports are apparently considered adequate for the accountability function.

In this sense, DGIS is just an extra layer of reporting in the chain, without being an integral part of the overall M&E-chain. Ideally, the M&E chain should produce and supply the donor with strategic information, or provide the elements with which DGIS can do something strategically. But this will only happen when DGIS asks the questions, and indicates what kind of information they need. With other words, the Theme-directions should make a DRAM representation of the objectives of their policy, after which the contract-organisations indicate how they interlock with one or the other level. Only then is it possible to appraise the effectiveness, the efficiency and the impact of the TMF funding-channel as part of the Ministry’s poverty alleviation strategy.

In fact, some staff members in several directions do much more with the information, and have developed a much richer relationship with the contract-organisations. They have developed a partnership with them in which policy and implementation reinforce each other. If the staff in question is sufficiently close to the policy level in a particular field, the mutually beneficial synergy may feed strategic understanding and development in an effective way.

### Synergy in a donor – TMF organisation collaboration

The BM (beleidsmedewerker) of DSI/SB supervised the international NGO from 2001-2004 (from well before TMF). She knew her predecessor (who had identified the NGO to be subsidized by the Ministry) personally, and likewise, she now still supervises (as head of DSI/SB) her successor who now monitors the NGO. She has a professional background which matches the preoccupations of the TMForganisation. At least a few of the staffmembers who worked for the TMForganisation in 2001 still work for the same organisation.

The BM’s supervision of the TMForganisation consisted in advising them to introduce the Logical Framework, and to attend training courses in Logical Framework (LF). All networks of which the “organisation” exists, followed a training in LF. The networks now use the LF also as a monitoring instrument. It serves them to identify regularly “lessons learnt” and “best practices”. The LF has induced them to focus on learning through the continuous monitoring of all their practices and experiences. It is one of the few organisations which seems to apply the LF in a correct way, notably as a management and learning instrument. The BM has also organised and chaired two round-table meetings (during international conferences) between the networks of the organisation with the aim to encourage exchange and mutual learning.

The BM has induced them to write reports which serve the networks themselves in the first place, and has
suggested them to use the same LF format for reporting, which they did. She has taken time to give feedback on every individual report of the five networks of the organisation which has resulted in better quality reports. The LF approach has had its impact on the organisation’s TMF-application which was considered the best of all DSI applications.

The information from the networks has served the Ministry in its policy, and the BM’s intensive contacts with the local networks (members of the networks are also found in ministries of countries all over the world and in international fora such as the the World Health Assembly) has reinforced negotiating power. During conferences attended to by the BM she always kept close contacts with the TMF organisation.

The BM has put considerable effort in the handing over process to her successor. Unfortunately, the Minister has decided not to continue funding to (most of the) international "TMF" organisations. The BM considers mutual affinity and synergy between donor and NGO staff instrumental for both parties. Nowadays the funding procedures tend to become more distant and detached. This makes it more difficult to find out the complementarity and the added value of the TMF organisation for Dutch policy implementation.

Some TMF organisations (which were mentioned above) have conceived the kind of M&E-chain which could supply all the information the Ministry may want for strategy development. But the donor hardly seems to do anything systematically with their quality reports. This seems a waste of effort and an example of missed opportunities.
PART C: Emerging Insights and Recommendations

10 Introduction

A co-financing programme like TMF is based on certain assumptions and logics. Its functioning, with its strengths and weaknesses, depends on the operationalisation of these factors in a specific context. The role of planning, monitoring and evaluation is not unequivocal. According to our understanding, a number of parameters play a role. We present the following insights as lessons which we, as evaluators, have learned, after having conducted this evaluation. The 8 learning points form a normative picture or framework with which we will look back at our research. The choice of the 8 learning points is based on advancing conceptual understanding and knowledge, and empirical findings from our TMF-lot 8 evaluation on what is required to set-up Monitoring and Evaluation which fulfils three essential functions, namely:

- Keeping track by means of collecting information and analysing the information (qualitative as well as quantitative) to find out whether the envisaged outputs, outcomes and impacts are being realised - single loop learning.
- Enabling the organisation(s) to learn from and adjust the implementation process if so required - single and double loop learning.
- Provide the information on which the organisation(s) can base strategic decisions for future programme development and implementation - double and triple loop learning.

For each learning point the conceptual/ theoretical insights are presented first, followed by the experiences and lessons learned during the evaluation and, last but not least, recommendations are given which follow from these insights17.

11 The vital importance of assessing impact

In all countries, the consequences of free market ideology and policy have led to pressure on public expenditure. The result is much greater scrutiny over the use of public funds for development programmes. Furthermore, growing public and political scepticism about the results from the last 50 years of international development cooperation (whether justified or not) is forcing development agencies to demand greater accountability and greater evidence of impact for each euro spent. The number of development organisations competing for both public and private funding has also dramatically increased, making accountability an important aspect of being competitive in bidding for funding.

However, it is not only upward accountability that is important. Some development organisations are now putting much more emphasis on transparency and accountability towards the people they aim to serve and their implementing partners.

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**Downward accountability**

ActionAid International is one of the better known examples. During annual reflections, expenditure is openly shared with partners and local people and the question ‘Was it worth it?’ is discussed openly as the basis for mutually agreed cost reallocation. This process has become a powerful symbol of ActionAid International’s intent at transparency and has improved relations along the entire aid chain.

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17 For a number of theoretical perspectives, this chapter draws on Woodhill (forthcoming) M&E as Learning. Rethinking the Dominant Paradigm in Monitoring and Evaluation of Soil Conservation and Watershed Development Projects, to be printed by World Association of Soil and Water Conservation, 2006.
Increasingly donors want to know - and development agencies want to demonstrate - the ultimate results of investments made. ‘How have people’s lives changed for the better?’ or ‘How has the environment actually been improved?’ are recurring questions. This quest for insights about impact, while understandable, brings with it four challenges for M&E practitioners.

First, there is much confusion around what ‘impact’ means and what it is the donors are actually requesting and expecting. Second, impact is often (but not always) a long term result that occurs after a development initiative has finished. There is often neither the follow-up funding nor the mechanisms to track this impact (it should also be realised that this issue is often used inappropriately as an excuse for not even considering the impact dimension). Third, attributing impact to a particular organisation or intervention is often extremely difficult, if not impossible, given all the other actors and factors that also influence the situation. Fourth, as one moves from assessing inputs to outputs, outcomes and eventually tracking impacts, it becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to define simple, meaningful and easily measurable indicators. Usually a more complex story of a range of interacting factors must be told to explain impact in a meaningful manner.

These issues give rise to a fundamental paradox. For accountability to the wider public, politicians or the media, simple highly summarized and quantitative information is demanded. Yet, the nature and complexity of much development work makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to produce meaningful information in this form.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Logical framework Approach**

The logical framework approach (or ‘logframe’) is central to the story of M&E in development and has fed much fierce debate about advantages and disadvantages. The logframe is now a relatively ‘middle-aged’ procedure after its entry into development practice from about 1970 on. Over time, and now present under various guises and evolutions, it has become close to a universal tool for development planning. In the Dutch accountability system this has become known as DRAM. On the surface, the logical framework approach embodies much good common sense. It involves being clear on objectives and how they will be achieved, making explicit the underlying assumptions about cause and effect relationships, identifying potential risks, and establishing how progress will be monitored. Who feels the need to argue about this?

However, in practice, the logical framework approach also introduced some significant difficulties for those planning and implementing development initiatives:

- **Lack of flexibility:** In theory, a logical framework can be modified and updated regularly. However, once a development initiative has been enshrined in a logframe format and funding has been agreed on this basis, development administrators wield it as an inflexible instrument.

- **Lack of attention to relationships:** The logical framework’s focus on output delivery means that often too little attention is given to the processes and relationships that underpin the achievement of development objectives.

- **Problem-based planning:** The logframe approach begins with clearly defining problems and then works out solutions to these problems. Alternative approaches to change emphasise much more the idea of creating a positive vision to work towards rather than simply responding to current problems.

- **Insufficient attention to outcomes:** For larger scale development initiatives, the classic four level logical framework offers insufficient insight into the crucial ‘outcomes’ level, critical to understanding the link between delivering outputs and realising impact.

- **Oversimplification of M&E:** The logframe implies that M&E is simply a matter of establishing a set of quantitative indicators (means of verification) and associated data

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18 Doelstellingen, Resultaten, Activiteiten, Middelen belonging to the overall Dutch governmental M&E system – ref. Van Beleidsformulering naar Beleidsverantwoording.
collection mechanisms. In reality, much more detail and different aspects need to be considered if an M&E system is to be effective.

- Inappropriateness at programme and organisational levels: The logical framework presupposes a set of specific objectives and a set of clear linear cause and effect relationships to achieve these objectives. For programmes and organisations there are often cross cutting objectives best illustrated using a matrix approach rather than a linear hierarchy. For example, an organisation may be interested in its gender or policy advocacy work in relation to a number of content areas such as watershed management planning and local economic development.

In spite of these reservations, mainly in the use of the Logical Framework, many organisations work with it, and its principles are accepted (and prescribed – DRAM). Summarizing, it should be remarked that:
- the core ideas behind the logical framework (LF) are relevant for the sector,
- that the LF should be used in flexible and creative ways,
- that the LF is often applied in a poor, mechanical way in which case it has become a constraint to creative and grounded thinking about M&E and the way development initiatives are managed,
- that the LF should be complemented with organisational learning tools,
- that DRAM is an incomplete version of the LF, and should be complemented, especially with Overall objectives (for reasons of impact assessment) and a context-analysis (Assumptions – to assess feasibility, sustainability, etc.).

**Experiences**

In principle, all interventions by TMF-funded organisations, can be designed with the usual intervention logic of the logical framework, which includes an overall (development) objective, a more direct intervention purpose, and the very concrete expected results of the actions. According to the nature of the intervention, the overall objective may be more or less feasible, at shorter or longer term, and subjected to a number of more or less uncertain assumptions. The expected results, the project purpose, their logical relation and the accompanying assumptions may be clear and simple, or more vague and complicated.

There are many excellent examples of the use of the Logical Framework on various levels. Often, it is only one tool among others which is used in M&E.

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**Logical Framework as a Monitoring and learning tool**

The TMForganisation/IBFAN was advised to introduce the Logical Framework, and to attend training courses in Logical Framework (LF). All networks of which the “organisation” exists, followed a training in LF. The networks now use the LF also as a monitoring instrument. It serves them to identify regularly “lessons learnt” and “best practices”. The LF has induced them to focus on learning through the continuous monitoring of all their practices and experiences. It is one of the few organisations which seems to apply the LF in a correct way, notably as a management and learning instrument. Monitoring through the LF is permanent and has become a ‘way of life’.
A format for reporting following LF-logic

### Format Project Document

I. Introduction
- Indicate the purpose of the document. Refer to other relevant documents (evaluation report, project documents of previous phases).

II. Context
- II.1 Vision, mission and history of the organisation
- II.2 Institutional setting
  - Describe the vision and mission of the implementing organisation and highlight the main points of its history.
  - Describe the institutional setting in which the organisation operates (main other players, competitors and strategic alliances).

III. Content
- III.1 Objectives
- III.2 Expected results
- III.3 Activities
  - Describe the activities (throughput) to be undertaken to realise these results.
  - Indicate the financial and other means (input) necessary to undertake these activities.
  - Present an itemized budget for the proposed project broken down per activity and per year. Mention verifiable indicators for achieving these results.

IV. Organisational characteristics
- IV.1 Organisational characteristics
- IV.2 Finance
- IV.3 Administrative organisation and internal control
  - Indicate legal status and mandate of the organisation. Describe the governance structure and to whom the organisation holds itself accountable. Describe the organisational structure (include an organogram), the management style and the human resources of the organisation.
  - Indicate the financial basis of the organisation (assets and sources of income). Present an overview and a forecast of contributions from other donors.
  - Give insight in the administrative organisation, management information systems and mechanisms for internal and external control.

### Format Annual Plan

I. Introduction
- Indicate the purpose of the document. Refer to the relevant Project Document.

II. Context
- II.1 Institutional setting
- II.2 Policy environment
- II.3 Problem analysis
  - Indicate whether there have been or will be any changes in the institutional setting of the organisation resulting in an adjustment of the original project planning.

III. Content
- III.1 Objectives
- III.2 Expected results
  - Summarize the results to be achieved or contributed to in the current year and describe the planning of the results to be achieved or contributed to in the year to come. If necessary, make the activities mentioned in the Project Document more operational and mention verifiable indicators. Motivate possible major deviations from the original project planning.

IV.3 Activities
- IV.4 Resources
- IV.5 Implementation

### Format Progress Report

I. Introduction
- Indicate the purpose of the report. Refer to the relevant Project Document and Annual Plan and possible further correspondence.

II. Context
- II.1 Institutional setting
  - Indicate whether during the reporting period there have been any changes in the institutional setting of the organisation that have influenced project progress.

II.2 Policy environment
- II.3 Problem analysis
  - Indicate whether during the reporting period there have been any changes in the policy environment in which the organisation operates that have influenced project progress.

III. Content
- III.1 Activities
  - Describe the activities undertaken during the reporting period. Motivate possible major deviations from the original Project Document or the relevant Annual Plan.
- III.2 Resources
  - Present an itemized financial report for the reporting period broken down per activity. Indicate how own and local contributions, contributions from other donors, and DGIS funds have been used. Motivate possible major deviations from the original financial planning or the relevant Annual Plan.
- III.3 Results
  - Refer back to the indicators mentioned in the Project Document and/or Annual Plan.
  - Describe the results achieved and the results contributed to during the reporting period. Motivate possible major deviations from the original project planning or the relevant Annual Plan.
- III.4 Objectives
  - Describe the effects of the project. Indicate whether the objectives mentioned in the original Project Document or the relevant Annual Plan are likely to be met. If not, explain why and indicate the implications.
- III.5 Sustainability
  - Indicate whether the achieved results or the results contributed to during the reporting period are likely to be sustainable. Describe measures taken to that effect.

IV. Organisation
- IV.1 Organisational characteristics
- IV.2 Administration and monitoring
  - Indicate any changes in the administrative organisation, management information systems, mechanisms for internal and external control, or the mechanisms for progress monitoring that may influence project implementation in the year to come.
The interesting feature of the above format which the Ministry’s DCO direction gives to the TMF-organisations is that all reports are structured in the same way, based on the same logic, the logic of the Logical Framework. However, apart from ‘DRAM’, a section on Organisation (IV) is added. Three report-formats are shown here; in reality there are two more (Final report, Midterm Review).

Other donors: DFID format for annual reporting

The narrative report should contain:

a. **Basic project/programme information:**

b. **Significant changes:** details of any changes made to the project or its approach during the period of the report …

c. **Progress:** This should be a clear concise summary of what the project has achieved since your last progress report. Please refer to the indicators used in the LF as a means of measuring progress …

d. **Success and or downfalls …

e. **Partnership, management and implementation:** A brief analysis of the partner(s) roles and the added value of the UK organisation during the reporting period. … An analysis of the relationship between Southern partners may also be applicable.

f. **Sustainability:** … We are particularly interested in how sustainable interventions might be without the need for further funding.

**g. Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** detail arrangements and responsibilities and processes in place for ensuring new knowledge and best practice arising from the project are incorporated into future projects.

h. **Lessons Learned:** Please summarize using the headings below any lessons arising from this project and how these lessons will be used to improve performance in the future.
   - Project level lessons
   - Sector level or thematic lessons
   - General development lessons

i. **Information, Dissemination and Networking:** detail the mechanisms used for dissemination outside project stakeholders.

ej. **Risk Assessment:** the risks described in the project proposal should be referred to and an up to date comment made as to whether or not there has been a change in the risks and if so, why.

The Logical Framework: in order to use the Logical Framework as a useful tool for monitoring and planning and to allow the overall impact at the end of the project to be fully assessed, you should revisit the project Logical Framework each year and measure progress using the indicators developed at project proposal stage. If these are no longer suitable, or if the outputs or activities have changed, the Logical Framework should be revised.

The DFID format encourages the project/programme to provide information on all levels of the intervention logic. It also stresses the context (risks), the organisation of monitoring and evaluation, lessons learned and dissemination of knowledge. The Logical Framework is explicitly mentioned as planning and monitoring instrument, specifically to assess impact at the end of the project. Moreover, the Logical Framework is to be ‘revisited’ yearly, which means that it is to be flexibly adapted yearly on the basis of monitoring data.

The Achievement Rating Scale refers to the objectives and important issues of the programme of which the donor needs information.

The format looks detailed and specific, but after careful study it appears applicable to all kinds of ‘projects’, also lobbying, advocacy, peace building, etc., mainly because of the flexibility of the instruments. At least it invites to thorough reflection on a number of issues dealing with accountability as well as learning.

Some items in the above mentioned formats, like the achievement rating scale, resemble the rating system of the DGIS Piramide system. However, in Piramide, for no evident reason, no reference is made to impact, while in the DFID scale it is. One could conclude that, in
Piramide, the most important result desired, the impact of the programme on the sector, or on the wider society, is omitted.

In the Dutch monitoring and/or reporting instructions no mention is made of the context, while the context relates to the relevance (and the impact) as well as to the risks of the programme. In the DFID format reference is made to lessons learned, with respect to three levels: project, sector and general development (society), somehow comparable with project outputs, project purpose and impact.

**The limits of Quantitative Indicators for M&E**

Not everything that is important can be measured. The classic mantra for M&E has been to develop Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Reliable and Time bound (SMART) indicators. The drive for setting up M&E systems based only on easily measurable quantitative indicators has perhaps been one of the key reasons for the failure of M&E systems to be operationalised or to contribute useful information for the management of development initiatives. What ‘keep it simple’ advocates overlook in setting up M&E systems is the importance of understanding why a particular result is occurring or not. Quantitative indicators can often tell what is happening, but fail to answer the question ‘why?’ The ‘why’ question is fundamental if appropriate improvements are to be identified and implemented. To understand why certain changes are and are not occurring requires a level of critical analysis that depends upon qualitative information and well facilitated dialogue. This is not to dismiss the value and importance of quantitative indicators but to recognise the need for both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Further it is often possible to summarise qualitative information numerically, however, this requires some methodological sophistication.

**Experiences**

During our 4 field studies we have seen clear examples across a range of organisations working at grassroots level, to international lobby and advocacy organisations that they can all give good qualitative descriptions of what is happening due to the programmes executed. These qualitative data also give information on the level of outcomes and explanations for why results are or are not being achieved. A strict use of the Logframe, with an emphasis on quantitative reporting does not invite organisations to include this information in the reports and crucial information gets lost in the process or does not reach the higher levels in the chain. On the other hand, some of the organisations mentioned succeed in quatifying qualitative information, or at least, to make that information “verifiable”.

**12 A common understanding of M&E along the whole chain**

The evaluation of the Civil Society building programme of the MFO’s in 2002 has clearly established the need to look at the development cooperation funding in terms of a chain of interlocking and mutually dependant actors. In such a chain there is a clear need to have a mutual understanding between different actors and stakeholders about the underlying problems that are being addressed, the objectives that steer the intervention, the intervention logic, and the contributions each stakeholder is going to make.

**Experiences**

The various TMF projects which were studied in the context of this evaluation, all thank their existence to this chain of relations which is supposed to lead to the eventual impact of the project. There is a final objective, which is generally clear to all stakeholders in the chain. The donor who finances the cooperation does so because it wants to support this objective, and believes that the proposed strategy to achieve this objective will be effective.

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But to measure this final impact is quite difficult. In the first place, it may be a problem to agree on clear indicators which can measure the progress of these ultimate goals. For example, how to measure improved social conditions among the workers of workshops of ALLPA’s suppliers (Fair Trade partners), how to measure more sustainable production practices among the smallholders in countries where the ILEIA magazines are distributed, how to measure sustainable development based on the cultural and spiritual strengths of the indigenous communities in Uganda and Peru supported by COMPAS, or the sustainable development as a result of Agromisa’s collection of best practices in various African countries?

Then, if practical indicators are found, the big question will always be to what extent progress (measured by these indicators) can be attributed to the intervention, the low-input technology, the publication of the ILEIA magazine, the sharing of best-practices among farmer’s networks, the particular action the government has opted for? Questions which are difficult, if not impossible to answer.

Furthermore, monitoring of impact-related indicators will often present rather disappointing conclusions: crime rates in South Africa’s Western Cape have gone up in spite of the many activities of WCACF since a number of years, the living conditions of the coca farmers in Peru is deteriorating in spite of TMI’s lobby work, FXI sees itself confronted with increasing numbers of cases of censorship and a growing gap in communication between the rich and the poor. The question could be asked: what is the sense of monitoring these indicators if they don’t give any evidence of the impact of our activities?

We want to underline that detailed monitoring of impact indicators is always highly relevant. These sometimes rather frustrating questions must be asked again and again. The progress or decline, attributable or not to our interventions, must be monitored, because this information is the basis for understanding the effectiveness of the intervention logic of the cooperation chain. In order for the cooperation chain to be effective, information about impact is of vital importance. In the intervention logic of a programme, it should always be clear how the attainable results which will be achieved will eventually contribute to the impact of the higher objectives. Positive impact will only be the final result of an intervention under the assumption that other factors are also contributing or are, at least, not counterproductive. Even if certain external factors may be the cause for decline, in these disappointing circumstances, this information is of great importance for strategic and maybe even operational decision making. It contributes to the learning process. Professional M&E must always keep track of developments at impact level.

There may be a tendency to consider positive results as achievements and to blame negative results on external factors: a logical trap, in particular for the passionate kind of professionals whom we encountered in many meetings. Therefore, it is of great importance to be aware of this trap. It is always important to make an in-depth analysis of the results. Such an analysis should always include a revision of the intervention logic by studying the relation between the results of the intervention and the direct, intermediate and ultimate effects, and the changes in the context of a project.

13 Balance between strategic and operational monitoring

A M&E system is a system generating information, which is to be used by certain involved stakeholders. An appropriate M&E system covering a chain is a system which generates, for every stakeholder, the information which is relevant to him from the perspective of his own position and interest. Stakeholders should not only generate the information they need, but, in common understanding, also the information which is of importance to their partners.
For that reason, it is important that M&E exceeds the level of Activities and Results/Output and the accountability related to these levels of achievement. Data collection on the higher Outcome level fulfils two objectives: to help orient the intervention logic towards effectiveness and sustainability at the receivers end, and to motivate the donor end of the chain for continuous support of the process.

It should therefore be considered good practice to conduct regular outcome and impact studies which measure the progress on the level of the highest objectives of an intervention, and consider the context with regard to the various external factors of the intervention’s framework. Such studies orient and fuel the learning process and are of great importance for the legitimacy, the dynamism and the continuity of the intervention.

**Experiences**

Different organisations seem to focus their attention on different levels of the intervention and this has consequences for the monitoring. We have seen organisations mainly focused on the operational level (neglecting strategic monitoring) and organisations focused on the strategic level (neglecting operational level, such as assessing results and efficiency). Organisations which focus directly on impact and strategy, such as advocacy and lobbying organisations and networks, need a great strategic flexibility and therefore a continuous monitoring of the developments at the level of the impact of its interventions. As a matter of fact, a great deal of their interventions consists of activities which are M&E activities as such. They monitor intensively and continuously the changes in the problem situation they work on. What these organisations face is an attribution problem: are the changes a direct result of their actions? Here, an instrument for monitoring the external environment is needed (such as the Media Impact Report, in the case of TNI in Peru).

The donor needs both: information about the long-term relevancy of the interventions but also of the short term effectiveness and the operational efficiency.

The lesson we learn from observations in four countries is that the M&E system should be tuned to and appropriate for each situation. In programmes which produce very practical and direct results, the emphasis of the M&E will be on the operational level, while if results are expected on a longer term, are insecure and not so clearly definable, the strategic monitoring becomes more important. Depending on how simple or complicated, clear or disputable the results, purposes and objectives may be, there may be a very straightforward or more complicated relation between the operational plans which must lead to concrete results, and the impact of these results at the level of the overall objective. In other words the intervention logic can be established.

**14 Focus on learning makes the difference**

Development initiatives are increasingly focusing on capturing ‘lessons learned’ or identifying ‘good’ and ‘best’ practices and producing these as knowledge outputs. In some cases, these efforts have led to useful insights. On the whole, however, lessons are of poor quality (see Box 1) (Patton, 2001; Snowden, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor quality lessons (Guijt and Woodhill, 2004)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o The lesson learned does not have a generalised principle that can be applied in other situations. It is simply a description of an observation, or a recommendation that lacks justification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The lesson has not been related to the assumptions or hypotheses on which the programme or project has been based and so lacks a meaningful context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The lesson is an untested or inadequately justified assumption or hypothesis about what might happen if something is done differently. In other words it would be foolish to rely on the lesson without it first being tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The lesson is either too general or too specific to be useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o The lesson has not been related to existing knowledge, hence it is unclear whether it represents a repetition of existing understanding or offers a fresh insight.</td>
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</table>
Such ‘lessons learned’ efforts fail for several reasons. To start with, those involved are rarely clear about who the lesson is relevant to or who needs to learn what. Furthermore, they fail to make a solid connection between the existing knowledge and theory base - and any knowledge gaps - and the ‘new’ lesson learned. Hence it is often unclear if the lesson is really ‘new’ or whether it confirms or contradicts existing theories and practices. In many cases, lessons learned are also often either too specific or too generalized to be considered a useful contribution to the existing knowledge base. A further problem occurs because the extent to which the lesson or good practice has been tested and validated over time or in different contexts is unclear, making the validity of its wider relevance questionable. Finally, it is often believed that, if a lesson learned is documented, it can be transmitted to others and they will use it. This ignores the complex and dynamic way in which practitioners engage with theory and practice and the processes by which they learn how to improve what they do.

While it is clearly a positive step to see those involved with M&E perceiving the ‘knowledge’ function of their work, this trend will only yield real benefits if much more attention is given to understanding underlying knowledge and learning processes.

Aside from being aware about how learning and knowledge generation takes place it is also important to recognise that TMF organisations work in dynamic environments and uncertainty has dramatic implications for the way in which planning, management and M&E processes are conceived. Most significantly, management must be highly responsive and adaptive. This means regularly checking that goals and objectives remain relevant and constantly adjusting and refining implementation strategies in response to changed circumstances and new insights.

Combining a constructivist perspective with the consequences of dynamic environments and uncertainty implies shifting from externally conceived design and evaluation of development initiatives to effective processes of internal learning. Therefore, those implementing and benefiting from an initiative will need to carry greater responsibility for its strategic guidance. This calls for changes to the way in which development initiatives are designed, managed, contracted and, most significantly, monitored and evaluated. The external (expert)-oriented processes of development programme design and evaluation must be replaced by an ongoing internal learning process with key stakeholders. It is ultimately those most directly involved who are in the best position to improve development performance.

**Experiences**

All the organisations we visited are in some way or another working on human development. To that effect they intervene in complex processes, departing from a working hypothesis that the direct results of their interventions will have certain effects on the process and that these effects will eventually lead to the desired impact on human development. The character of the interventions may vary a lot, in size, in complexity, in budgetary requirements etc., but invariably, the impact is never exactly what was foreseen during the planning of the intervention. Even the direct outcome of the activities may already be different than what was planned. With respect to the effects which the direct results of the activities have, still more pleasant and/or disappointing surprises will appear. Hence, the impact of an intervention simply will not be as it was foreseen.

Therefore, for a professional development oriented organisation, the understanding of the process is of vital importance and the lessons learned in the course of an activity may be as relevant as the results itself. Valuable lessons can compensate disappointing results. Even so, professional blindness may put the sustainability of positive results at risk.

Continuous learning is therefore the quality that makes the difference in development work. Proper planning based on a well-founded analysis and careful monitoring and evaluation are
the most essential instruments of such an organisation. Each organisation needs its own PME system and such a system must be well embedded in the whole organisation, in such a way that all concerned use it as a learning tool.

### Working with Best Practices
(from a working document by Agromisa)

A partner-network of Agromisa, PELUM-Zambia, has decided to work with Best Practices: collect them from the field-work of its member organisations, share them by means of workshops and publications, and make available background-documentation for other PELUM members, for them to try the practices in other areas. By working with Best Practices, PELUM will utilize its network system to share formal and informal information, experiences and practices to contribute to food security among small-scale farmers in Zambia.

They define Best Practice as follows: a Best Practice is an environmentally sound, socially just, culturally sensitive, economically viable, coherent set of actions with a better than currently observable effect towards attainment of goals in Sustainable Development (InterSard, 2003, PELUM Zambia, 2005).

They disseminate Best Practices by and through visits, meetings, local institutions, field demonstrations, extension workers, drama, Internet, Telecentres, capacity building workshops and training, electronic and printed brochures and folders, publicity during field days and market days.

When PME is felt as an obligation and a fulfilment of an administrative requirement, all parties concerned in the chain of activities and the donor in particular, should be alarmed, because in that case the sustainability is at risk. When the PME system of an organisation functions well and everyone at his or her place in the chain enjoys it as an instrument for learning, progress may still be very limited and slow, but the long term perspective will be that durable impact can be attained.

It must therefore be considered as good practice when staff at the donor end of the chain scrutinise the information they receive, not just for the accountability reasons or for the accomplishment of the outcome of a project to which an organisation has been committed, but also for the lessons that were learned, intentionally or unintentionally. Learning should be a mentality; it should be strongly anchored in organisational culture.

### 15 Accountability appropriately combined with the purpose of shared learning

Effective change can only occur if the whole cooperation chain functions and every stakeholder plays his or her role. M&E becomes an important instrument for decision making for the implementers of the interventions, and at the same time helps to provide the fund-givers with information which may serve them for strategic reasons, only if:

- the beneficiaries of an intervention assume the final responsibility for its implementation and thus become the real owners;
- the intermediate organisation supports building up the capacity (all kinds of capacities) of the beneficiaries; and organisations at the donor end assure the programme’s continuity.

If the chain functions as such, it helps the different stakeholders to learn the nature and dynamics of the process, and to understand their own position in the chain.

The design of M&E systems is therefore most effective if its meets the interests of all the stakeholders. Monitoring requirements which are being imposed by funding bodies, and do not match the beneficiaries’ own information needs for decision-making, may serve accountability purposes, but hardly ever produce needed information in an adequate quantity and of an adequate quality.

One secret of good M&E of complicated development processes seems to be, therefore, to combine and joint learning along the chain, and accountability upwards in the chain. A
number of organisations have found this balance. NIZA, which, by virtue of its core-subsidy could invest much time and energy in M&E, learned this lesson, as illustrated by its statement: "when learning takes place, accountability follows".

16 Sufficient budgets for M&E is a must for sustainability

The monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes is often poor, simply because the financial resource and human capacity needs have been dramatically underestimated. The situation is easily illustrated by comparing the resources committed to financial accounting to those committed to monitoring the outputs, outcomes and impacts. In most projects or organisations you will find well qualified accountants, bookkeepers and financial managers backed-up by accounting software and adequate computer facilities. By comparison, more often than not the capacities and resources for monitoring the deliverables and impacts will be significantly less. Yet, monitoring the results and understanding reasons for success or failure is without doubt a more complex and demanding task than keeping track of finances, and in the end even more important in terms of overall performance.

Experiences

We have no data on the costs of the whole process of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. But one conclusion is very clear: the allowance that some donors permit for the management costs of projects, which often is just around 5%, is not necessarily enough for a system which does not only generate the necessary reports required for accountability, but which permits the generation of useful management information and the taking of appropriate management decisions based on professional monitoring reports.

We should not create a “competition for the lowest overhead” budgets. As soon as the institutional support projects are over, the organisation will again be confronted with a too small overhead budget. In such a case, the monitoring will automatically be reduced to complying with the minimal monitoring requirements imposed by the donor. Monitoring will be reduced to reporting and the aspect of monitoring which in our opinion is the most important one, namely the internal and external learning process, will loose its quality. Hence we would like to oppose the idea promoted in popular political discussions that the percentage of overhead would be an indicator for efficiency. The truth may rather be the reverse: if overhead budgets are too low, development organisations are forced to work blindly, resulting in lack of sustainability and, consequently, in an inefficient use of the financial resources.

We therefore emphasise as being a very good practice the importance of what NIZA presents as a principle of monitoring: “If learning takes place, accountability follows”. And we want to present as a very bad practice the opposite of this, which, to our regret, we have also found taking place in TMF funded projects: “If learning does not take place, monitoring is reduced to meeting accountability obligations only”. In such a case, M&E will be perceived by the staff as a burden, rather than as what it is supposed to be: a valuable management tool.

17 The Role of the Donor

We have the impression that the monitoring by BM, since standard procedures or norms lack, is subjective and dependent on the knowledge, interest and time of the BM. Some seem to lack the capacity or interest to comprehend the monitoring by contract-organisations they are supposed to monitor.

The management or monitoring of grants is either done by BM who have just taken up the file, or by BM who monitor the TMF-organisation for over two years. Almost half of the files have past hands recently. There is only a limited continuity in the management of TMF-files
Is it favourable when a BM manages a TMF-organisation for a long time? The advantage seems to be the continuity, the building up of trust, and perhaps the improvement of the organisation because of the BM’s support. A disadvantage may be the loss of objectivity, a risk which we sense is worrying some senior Ministry officials (“het jarenlang steunen van hun vriendjes en vriendinnetjes in de ecologie-lobby of de feministische lobby”).

What are the staff-constraints for the BM monitoring TMF-organisations? We are not in a position to give a well-founded answer to this question. However, what comes out of the survey with the BM, presents some contradictions, which put question marks to the consistency of their judgement.

What appears strange, is that 84% of the BM interrogated find the reporting good, in spite of the obvious shortcomings in the application of DRAM, which they themselves have commented upon, and the lack of effectiveness, impact and sustainability monitoring. So the question arises: how do they appraise the reports, and what importance do they attach to RBM?

Other BM have preferred to remain very vague in answering questions on the intervention logic. From the way a number of BM have answered the questionnaire, we find it plausible to believe that they are only interested in the accountability part. Some experience the work as a heavy burden which has to be done “apart from all my other work”.

**Recommendation**

In view of the above observations, we believe that it would be worthwhile to consider to put more effort in supervising the monitoring of the grants – such as is already incidentally done by one or two directions. Thus, perhaps, more useful information and more useful insights for policy development would then emerge and be consolidated, and Piramide would be fed with more comprehensible data.

Therefore, we recommend that, to prevent (negative effects of) bias and subjectivity, the monitoring procedure by the Ministry staff should be more formalised and include quality controls as regards instructions on treating reports and giving feed-back. It would be very helpful if such instructions were preceded by two steps (see also 19.2):

1. to specify the Ministry’s policy in DRAM-format,
2. to make a connection between the objectives of the TMF-programme on the one hand, and the Ministry’s policy on the other hand.

The above mentioned recommendation is based on a view that monitoring should be a permanent process covering all aspects of the interplay between interventions and policy, learning and planning. This view is in conflict with another view (heard at the Ministry), namely that monitoring should only cover the control of the implementation of programmes, and that lessons learned leading to policy insights are produced during evaluation. In our view, monitoring and evaluation should be a combined and permanent process during all phases of interventions, whereby all aspects of relevance, feasibility, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact are covered. In principle, such M&E is executed by, or on behalf of, or in dialogue with all stakeholders implicated in the intervention.

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20 Staffing constraints in DCI (Irish Development Cooperation) were defined as: insufficient numbers of staff, large volume of different responsibilities for each in the different grant schemes, very limited previous development experience, relatively high turnover, and limited experience in managing partnership-based schemes. These constraints also apply to the DGIS Theme Directions, in varying degrees.

21 The issue at stake is the application of RBM in planning and monitoring/reporting. As has been remarked before, this is the all-important issue in Development Cooperation today.
18 The importance of participation, ownership and trust

Participation
The participation of primary and other stakeholders in the formulation of development initiatives has become a widely accepted ‘good practice’, underpinned to a large extent by the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA and PLA) methodology. The value and importance of participation has now flown over to the M&E field with much interest participatory monitoring and participatory impact assessment which draw on many of the visual PRA tools.

However, as with participation in planning, a big gap is evident between the rhetoric and the practice. A lack of capacity to appropriately and effectively use participatory tools and methods often leads to poor implementation and hence poor outcomes from supposedly participatory processes. Further, a naivety or deliberate avoidance of power issues has led to much criticism of participatory processes.

Meaningful participation implies much involvement in and control over the development process by those benefiting from or directly involved in implementing development initiatives. This challenges the top down planning and upward accountability driven M&E that characterises much development administration. The call for greater participation in M&E has fundamental implications for both theory and practice and is a key rational for a more learning-oriented paradigm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Committee Netherlands – Vietnam: designing data collection tools and formats with villagers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCNV has a long history in Vietnam and a very good reputation, as the Committee started to work already before the end of the war. The health programmes at community level are inspiring similar projects elsewhere in the country. Due to their excellent relationship with the Government, they are one of the few NGO’s (there are officially no NGO’s in Vietnam) who can engage with the Government on critical issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCNV has a detailed participative methodology, which is rooted on longterm engagement with local authorities. Strategies, objectives and design of the projects are at a high participatory level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Describe the practice.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The majority of data are collected at village level, by villagers themselves. MCNV designs the tools for data collection and the formats for data processing together with villagers. Typically a tool or format will be revised after a first year of practice. Practical and visual tools are being used, like visual indicators of vaccination coverage in the village, presented at a central venue all households according to vaccination stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Why is it “good” (or “best”)? What is so specific?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As much as possible data collection tools and formats are easy, designed by villagers, and processed and stored at a central place. They contribute to strengthened managerial competences of household members as well as village representatives, who as a result become more independent to continue monitoring afterwards their health practices. They also are more confident to design and use new data collection and processing tools and formats in the future. Basically MCNV initiated the idea, but villagers designed these tools and formats. This is a basic guideline for the MCNV project. MCNV provides further organisational support for aggregating data at a higher level at Province or national level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Specific circumstances/favourable conditions in which it could develop? Why did it succeed?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacitating partners in M&amp;E skills is a central element of a strong M&amp;E system. It was practiced and it succeeded in this case, as capacitating local level competences over longer periods of time is a central project strategy of MCNV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Can it be taken-over/applied elsewhere? Under which conditions?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea that villagers and CBO can design and use their own data collecting - and data processing tools and formats is not new, but still not often practiced. It can be fostered under condition that time is allowed for gradual improvements of tools and formats, and assistance is provided in further processing of data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences
A principle which is considered to be as vital for the soundness of a development process as the previously discussed principles of learning and that of participation is that results cannot be sustainable if the results have not been appropriated by the end users. For such ownership to take effect at the receiving end of the chain, it is an absolute requirement that the stakeholders are active, not passive beneficiaries and that they participate very actively in the planning of the intervention and in the learning process through M&E. Only then is development intervention morally justified.

But, seen from the donors’ perspective, development projects are interventions by outsiders. The donors give funds for a particular purpose and look for recipients to whom they can entrust their money, so that the impact which the donor wants to achieve will be attained. Even though the donors may endorse the principles of participation and ownership to a high degree as we saw in the case of the endogenous development promoted by COMPAS, they cannot escape from taking certain very fundamental strategic decisions.

The element that can keep the interactions between the interventionist intentions of the donor and the desired ownership of the receiver in balance is trust: the donor understands and endorses the ambitions of the receiver and the receiver understands the agenda and obligations of the donor. We have been able to observe that this trust has indeed been established between Dutch NGO’s and their partners in Latin America and South Africa.

M&E is an important instrument in the development of such trust and it cannot be stressed enough that the basis for it is not established in a relationship of dependence, where the donor sets the rules and the receiver obeys and accomplishes, but in a process of learning together. If this learning process takes place, there is a basis for genuine cooperation. A cooperation that will of course, have to follow certain rules, in particular where it comes to the management of funds. But in such a trustful relationship of learning together, the accountability will follow almost automatically.

Partnership – Trust: the MAPS in Ireland
Ireland DCI has looked to develop a new relationship between the donor and the NGOs, based on multi-annual strategic planning and partnership. The idea was to avert from project-focused and short-term schemes which tend to emphasise activities rather than outcomes and impact, do not enhance the development of a stronger and more vibrant civil society and tend to be time-consuming for both DCI and the NGOs. The principle of partnership is fundamental and is manifested through the Partnership Monitoring Committees whose function is to help establish good relationships and a balance between learning and accountability (in the broadest sense).

1. MAPS is an innovative concept, with a series of interlocking features, each representative of international best practice. Its objectives are such that the scheme will constitute a very effective framework for coherent and predictable development work by its partners. At the functional level, NGO field-staff and Southern partner staff will be aware of best practice methodologies and will be mainstreaming the cross-cutting issues in every programme being funded by MAPS. At the management level, all the programmes will be operating in compliance with coherent strategy plans, and impact and outcomes assessment will be ongoing. The scheme has potential as a force for programmatic transformation and the continual quest for best practice.

2. MAPS requirements include a focus on strategy, a shift from a project-based approach, working through and with Southern partners, and mainstreaming a number of cross-cutting issues.

3. Not all elements have been implemented in the pilot phase. In the opinion of the evaluators, there is scope for all the NGOs to progress further and faster down the programmatic road, by constant focusing on key features such as macro-level, strategic impact, long-term perspective, and a more refined partnership-based mode of operation.

4. The development of trust is a key factor in the partnership relationship between DCI and the MAPS NGOs. The key factors in developing trust are:

- **Regular Contact** – through the quarterly Partnership Monitoring Committees;
Commitment – it should be evident that the government puts a high priority on working with NGOs, perceiving them to have a relevance, and complementarity with its own work; this provides a foundation of openness and willingness to enter into dialogue. Commitment is also seen in the time that both parties have put in the process.

Access. A lot of informal dialogue and discussion adds depth to the relationship between the government and the NGO. The partnership process is not limited to specific moments, activities or channels of communication.

5. Partnership needs trust. In MAPS this has been growing, partly as the result of innovations such as the Partnership Monitoring Committees. Continued development of trust requires ‘no-surprises’ relationships which can:
- tell the bad news, of objectives not achieved, as well as the good; acknowledge in a mature way the weaknesses in the approach of one’s own agency;
- provide straightforward and comprehensive reporting; question stereotypical perceptions; ensure accurate accounting;
- have realistic joint objective-setting at the levels of both policy and programme; develop clearer understanding of each other’s constraints;
- move towards jointly agreed definitions of key concepts; acknowledge history, and move on; and develop understanding of why different issues are seen by different partners as having different levels of importance.

6. From the evaluation a number of common characteristics of the principles of partnership emerge: Flexibility; Transparency and accountability; Advocacy; Mutual influence and reciprocal learning; Capacity-building; Long-term relationship.

7. It is clear that there is a need for the government (DCI) to develop its own partnership policy which will articulate what it sees as the key elements of partnerships for its engagement with NGOs, whether through MAPS or other funding mechanisms.

8. A number of comments on the difficulty with monitoring and evaluation have focused around the need for appropriate indicators. For most organisations, the difficulty is in developing indicators for outcomes and impact, especially when there is a need to develop proxy indicators. The key to the effective use of any monitoring and evaluation system is for it to be kept as simple as possible. This includes keeping the number of indicators down to a minimum. Training field staff on impact assessment may be useful.

9. For DCI (equivalent to DGIS in the Netherlands) monitoring involved reviewing the reports submitted by the agencies and carrying out monitoring visits. However, there is little assessment of the value added of taking a programmatic approach. The NGOs are encouraged to move towards assessing their outcomes and impact but there is little by way of similar movement on the part of DCI itself. The gap here is that DCI did not develop a set of objectives and indicators for themselves on which to measure the progress and outcomes of the scheme. A new set of objectives will be required, together with a supporting framework of indicators with which to assess its impact and contribution.

10. Recommendation. The Guidelines for MAPS should be clearer, more comprehensive and more policy focused. Also, the format for the (narrative) Annual Report has to be improved; it has to be impact oriented, and implies the need for NGOs to have developed objectives and indicators at outcome and impact level.

11. Recommendation. There is a need to deepen the NGOs-DCI dialogue both within and beyond the Partnership Monitoring Committees, thereby addressing divergences, policy evaporation, and shared-learning constraints.

12. Recommendation. The Civil Society Section of DCI (their role being equivalent to the Thematic Directions in the Dutch TMF-programme) is to be provided with external (out-sourced) technical support to strengthen the capacity to monitor effectively and evaluate programmes, replete with the lateral learning and focus on outcomes and impact assessment features.

13. Recommendation. That all partners (of ‘themes’ as they are defined in the Dutch TMF) come together for a twice annual plenary meeting, with facilitation, to share learning on MAPS thematic and policy issues, to harvest best practices, to clarify the expectations of DCI, to address evaporation, to exchange outcomes on mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues, and to engage in programme-level learning and thematic discussion.

14. Recommendation. A distinction between management and learning will be formulated.

(source: Evaluation of the DCI Multi-Annual Programme Scheme 2003-2005 – adapted)
19 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall the evaluation found a higher level of M&E awareness and good practice amongst the organisations receiving TMF funding than might be expected on the basis of past experience within the international development sector, and the literature available on TMF. It was clear that M&E, both from the perspective of improving implementation performance and from accounting to funding agencies was high on the agenda for TMF supported organisations. Further, in most cases significant efforts were being made to improve M&E.

In relation to the TMF programme it must be recognised that there is a very wide diversity of types of organisations working at very different scales, in very different contexts and on very different issues. This makes generalisation about the specifics of what constitutes an appropriate M&E system difficult. It also needs to be recognised that much of the TMF programme is micro-scale in terms of funding levels relative to other development investments. This has implications for the sophistication of M&E that is appropriate. Never-the-less the evaluation concluded that there are number of common key principles that could underpin the approach to M&E taken by DGIS and TMF supported organisations.

It was striking to the evaluation team that in general there was a much greater depth of M&E, learning and analysis going on within the TMF supported organisations that is reflected through the TMF Programme's reporting system.

In relation to the analytical framework used for the evaluation three main weaknesses emerged in current practice:

1. While there is a relatively high awareness of the need for monitoring at output, outcome and impact level, many organisations still struggle with how in practical terms to deal with both qualitative and quantitative assessment at higher levels in the objective hierarchy and how to report on these.

2. The importance of internal learning processes to improve project performance is well recognised and the evaluation often found a deep understanding of the reasons for success and failure. However, such understanding was rarely translated back into changes in the overall project strategy as agreed with the TMF programme. Change and improvement often occurred outside the framework of the funding and reporting framework and was not made explicit.

3. The richness of understanding within the TMF supported organisations about the performance and impact of their work is not being used to report back to the TMF programme.

From the perspective of the TMF programme and the new MFS programme these three weaknesses have significant implications. Significantly these issues are not only about the M&E systems of TMF supported organisations themselves but rather about the relationship between the TMF programme and TMF organisations. This is why the issue of developing and common understanding along the funding chain emerged as such a critical issue.

19.1 Recommendations to the MFS programme

1. **M&E principles and Expectations:** The MFS programme establish a clear set of M&E principles and expectations based on an approach to M&E similar to the ‘managing for impact’ approach that underpinned this evaluation. Such principles and expectations should embody a flexible approach to M&E enabling MFS organisations to develop
systems appropriate to their context and work, while still meeting programme reporting requirements

2. Developing M&E strategies and plans: The MFS programme, as part of project application and contracting should require organisations to develop and submit a strategy for how they will monitor, evaluate and learn from their work and report to the programme. This strategy should put emphasis on internal learning and improvement processes, attention to understanding and monitoring the intervention logic from outputs, to outcomes and impacts and analysis of the reasons for success and failure. In doing so the use of appropriate participatory methodologies should be encouraged as should a balance in the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators and methods. Guidelines for developing such strategies and plans should be produced which account for the diversity of organisations and projects.

3. Enabling strategic change in project plans: The MFS programme funding and accountability mechanisms should encourage and reward strategic review and change of funded projects where implementation experience and lessons indicate that original goals, objectives or activities are not longer appropriate. However such flexibility and adaptability must be based on quality M&E and good justification for change.

4. Enabling M&E Innovation and Lesson Sharing: The MFS programme should encourage innovative approaches to M&E and support funded organisations to shared lessons and learn from each other. This would require an overarching M&E support function by the programme, potentially linked with training activities, publications and a web-based M&E resource site.

5. Assistance in developing appropriate outcome and impact questions and indicators: Linked with the above recommendation, the MFS programme should enable MFS organisations to have access to expertise on how to develop appropriate outcome and impact questions and indicators that can be cost-effectively monitored. In particular a series of good case studies should be developed particularly in relation to areas of work that are social change orientated and which do not lend themselves to simple quantitative indicators. The MFS programme should be very conscious that it is much easier to demand outcome and impact reporting than it is to actually gather such information in a way that is meaningful and cost effective.

6. Building a Partnership: The MFS programme should investigate ways of ensuring there is dialogue and a good relationship established between the programme and the funded organisations. The motivation for undertaking the sort of M&E required by the programme is totally dependant on this relationship and the quality of feedback given. This requires shifting from a mechanistic programme management model to a relationship centred approach. Workshops and meetings with a number of MFS organisations is a potentially cost effective way of achieving this objective.

7. Reflective Orientated Reporting: The MFS reporting formats and mechanisms should put much more emphasis on reflective aspects such as significant changes, reasons for success and failure, unintended positive and negative impacts, lessons learned and how performance will be improved.

8. Investment in M&E and Learning: In assessing the budgets of project proposals and in overall management of the MFS programme more attention should be given to investing in appropriate M&E capacities and systems. Potential MFS organisations should be asked to develop a realistic budget for M&E and learning activities and to explain how this would enhance the overall impact and cost effectiveness of the project. To support the recommendations made above the MFS programme should ensure sufficient resources for a programme wide M&E and learning support function.

19.2 Recommendations to the MFS organisations

1. Monitoring and (internal) evaluation should be a permanent and integral process during programme implementation. Its main function is internal learning, with the aim to enhance the quality of the programme.
2. Impact is not something for the far future. Impact monitoring should regularly be undertaken. It produces strategic information needed by higher levels. The attribution-question will cause fruitful reflection.

3. When learning takes place, accountability follows’ - When applied in donor-funded programmes, monitoring implies learning but also accountability. Both are important. Learning precedes accountability. Reporting follows learning. Reporting should reflect in a concise way the learning experiences. Donors should not want more than the information they need and process. Therefore they should make their information needs known. A format is useful in this respect.

4. It is recommended to contract-organisations to (continue to) use the Logical Framework. However, the LF-tool is not enough in M&E.

5. Programme implementers should be the ‘owners’ of the LF or part of the LF.

6. The Logical Framework or other sophisticated PME tools should not be imposed down in the chain. It risks to replace spontaneous learning by mechanical fact-finding.

7. It is essential to avoid curbing ‘unstructured’ or ‘informal’ learning. But a ‘thermometer’ should register learning, mainly by intensive communication with many stakeholders, resource-persons, key-informants, or by way of small ad-hoc studies, or fact-finding missions, etc.

8. In chain-relations every level should be conscious of its role in the chain and the information needs of other levels.

9. It is recommended, wherever possible, to consider to plan from desired impact (or organisational ‘mission’) downwards to programme purpose and programme outputs, and not to start with activities and outputs and plan upwards. In the latter case ‘impact’ tends to disappear behind the horizon. Impact should always be close-by, and the PME should strive to ‘manage for impact’.

10. It is recommended to try to develop, with partners, a coherent M&E system which allows for operational as well as strategic monitoring. PME from various levels should ‘interlock’.

11. It is highly recommended that contract-organisations communicate and exchange experiences horizontally (as happens in the Netherlands more and more nowadays), in order to allow cross-fertilisation – also among partner-organisations, and with all means (meetings, seminars, publications, web-sites, e-mail, IT).

In the Netherlands:
* FIA – Facilitair Initiief Amsterdam
  Initiative of non-profit organisations in the field of Development Cooperation. Its aim is to support each other in management through service-sharing (dienstdeling)22.
* The “Evaluation Society” initiative of KIT/ICCO/SNV for OS organisations who are interested to share ideas on M&E.
* TMF/MFS organisations which organise joint (tailor made) training sessions (PME).
* The Partos publications and workshops on particular issues of M&E.
* The annual conference on M&E, last year organised by IAC, and this year to be organised by MDF.
* The INTRAC “world”-conference on M&E, to be held in Soesterberg, coming April.
Etc.

12. It should be avoided that in the new MFS a kind of competition is created whereby organisations keep information and innovative ideas to themselves.

13. MFS organisations should defend the crucial role of M&E in programme implementation and lobby for sufficient funds to execute this function in a professional way.

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22 www.dienstdeling.nl : De deelnemers aan FIA lopen in de dagelijkse praktijk tegen vergelijkbare problemen aan. Geen van de organisaties heeft de mogelijkheid op alle onderdelen van de bedrijfsvoering veel te investeren. Door kennis en ervaring te delen en gezamenlijk problemen aan te pakken, zijn we in staat effectiever om te gaan met de schaarse middelen en beperkte tijd. De toegevoegde waarde ligt in directe uitwisseling van kennis en informatie met als doel verbetering bij alle organisaties.
19.3 Recommendations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

With respect to the linking of policies between the Ministry and the MFS-programmes

The logic of “DRAM” employed by the Ministry dictates the following:

1. There should be a link between the funded MFS-programmes (with a certain ‘theme’ or in a certain ‘sector’) and the Ministry’s policy as regards that ‘theme’ or ‘sector’.
2. Therefore, it would be recommendable that the Ministry’s ‘theme’ or ‘sector’ policy, in accordance with their own principles, were formulated in “DRAM”-format, with SMART indicators.
3. The Outcome of the MFS-programme should have a place in the DRAM intervention logic (Result level?) of the Ministry’s ‘theme’ or ‘sector’ policy.
4. If the two entities (the Ministry’s policy and the MFS-programme’s policy) are interlocked in the manner as described in point 3, the Ministry should be able to formulate questions (derived from their Result-indicators) which the MFS-programme could answer. These questions relate to strategic issues of the MFS-programme (MFS programme purpose and overall programme objectives).
5. The Ministry should be mainly interested in strategic information from the MFS-programmes (namely information on the MFS programme’s Outcome and Sustainability levels, see point 8).
6. The Ministry may want to take note of the Outputs of the MFS-programme, but lower than Outputs in the intervention logic is not really their affair: the Activities belong to the competence of the MFS-organisations. For the activities, the MFS-organisations are mainly accountable to their beneficiaries or Boards.
7. Not to deal with Activities means an economy of (scarce) time for the Ministry’s staff monitoring the MFS-programme. During field-visits he or she will take note of the activities leading to the Outputs he/she monitors. The efficiency question (relation between Inputs and Outputs) will be handled by the MFS’ (registered) accountants.
8. However, it is important that the donor takes note of Lessons Learned in achieving (or not) Programme Purpose, Outcomes, Impact and Sustainability of the MFS-programme, as these may affect the Ministry’s own policy.

The above mentioned chain of recommendations may provide content to the concept of ‘partnership’ between the Ministry and the MFS organisations. The methodology described will require an adequate tuning between the two partners as regards the linking of the MFS programme to the Ministry’s policy. This does not mean that the MFS becomes the executive instrument of the Ministry’s policy. MFS remains autonomous in all it does. Only, the MFS’ programme purpose fits with the Ministry’s policy – this was already the case in the TMF past.

To link MFS programmes and Ministry’s policy and keep it attuned (which implies mutual cross-fertilisation), requires regular strategic dialogue, and this is exactly what the NGOs want. The ‘protocol’ proposed between the Ministry and the MFS organisations (once the funding is granted) should be a ‘monitoring protocol’, in the sense that it defines the strategic information which the MFS programmes should regularly supply (based on the interlocked DRAMS of Ministry policy and MFS programme policy).

9. The protocol may also contain a reporting-format, which should be conceived to prevent being a burden for both. Here, one should strive to ‘optimal ignorance’ (Robert Chambers), meaning that the report should be restricted to that information which is needed and used, and nothing more. It is recommended to take the DFID reporting format (see above, box in C-11) as point of departure, and adapt it to the MFS context and particularities of DGIS.
10. Also contained in the ‘protocol’ should be a description of the role of the Ministry staff who monitor the MFS grant, so that it is clear what should be expected from him or her.
11. Most important is to create time for the Ministry staff for the monitoring of MFS grants. It is also recommended to have certain staff go for follow-up training in PME.

12. Monitoring and evaluation should be seen by the Ministry as an essential and integral part of programme implementation. They should be conscious of the quality enhancing effect of M&E. They should be sure that on programme-level enough funds are available to operate a good M&E system.

13. Strategic dialogue should take place at the end of the year. During seminars the programmes’ progress in a particular ‘sector’ or with a particular ‘theme’ should be discussed, in the presence of Ministry staff and programme executive staff, and informed resource persons. These seminars are occasions to collect information and insights which might lead to refining programme strategies or Ministry policies.
Epilogue: Reflections on the methodology and process of the evaluation

1. Reflection on the course of the evaluation

If we would have to make a Logical Framework of this evaluation, we would not have a lot of trouble with the intervention logic, nor with the indicators or sources of verification. It would be the assumptions which would cause most problems.

One of our assumptions was that the target-groups of evaluation would be ready to participate and to reserve time to join in mutual reflections. Retrospectively considered, this was a risk-factor.

As for the TMF-organisations, their collaboration has been magnificent. We were welcomed everywhere with open arms, and no time constraints hampered the interviews, which often lasted more than three hours. The participation in the workshops was also very positive. However, after New Year, when the introduction of MFS came nearer, time started to run out for everybody. The TMF-platform made it clear that the combination of the TMF-evaluation and the MFS-introduction began to cause problems of interest and availability for people to attend. For that reason we had to postpone the second workshop, which caused time constraints on our own side. This hampered the finalisation of the products we had wanted to deliver (guidelines, tool-kits). However, the delivery of these products had become less urgent, since efforts had already been undertaken to work on such guidelines, namely by the branche-organisation Partos, with whom we developed good relationships. We invited Partos’ researcher in our final workshop to present his findings. In the meantime, a new urgency made us change the character of the second workshop, and we decided to try to improve the tension and atmosphere between the NGO sector (TMF/MFO/MFS) on the one hand and the Ministry on the other hand. From the reactions of the participants, the workshop has contributed to a better atmosphere and a better climate of dialogue which, we also hope, will create fertile soil for the implementation of the recommendations of this report.

As for the Ministry officials, the time-constraint existed during the last two months of the year. It so happened that we had planned our survey among the staff during that period. Unfortunately, because of delayed responses, the survey lasted more than one month longer than was foreseen. During December, we had planned to organise a validation meeting, presenting the results of the survey with the representatives of the TMF-programme and – reference-groups, the Theme Directors, and other interested DGIS staff. This meeting had to be cancelled. Therefore, we missed the chance to have the opinions of senior staff on the limited monitoring capacity of the Ministry as shown in the analysis of the survey. However, prior to the survey we had already discussed the topic with the DSI director, with the DEK director, with the IOB-staff, and (during an earlier evaluation on TMF-procedures in 2005) with plv-DGIS. During the second workshop head DSI-MY presented her views. Therefore, we do not think that the outcome of the survey and the conclusions about the Monitoring and learning capacity of the Ministry as presented in this report, are in any respect startling. Neither do we think that more interviews would have had an added value.

2. Reflection on the Managing for Impact evaluation framework

The managing for Impact framework, explained in Part A, has been originally designed to guide the development of M&E systems in IFAD programmes. As the framework intends to orientate the design of systems enabling organisations to follow the performance of programmes and the realization of intended outputs and outcomes, as well as learning from
the execution and where necessary re-orientating strategy and methodology, it implicitly incorporates a normative understanding of what a “good” PM&E system entails.

Based on this normative character of the original framework, we have developed the framework as an evaluative tool for the TMF M&E evaluation. The evaluation seeks to develop an assessment of the quality and performance of existing M&E systems and uses four levels of maturity of the PM&E system: limited, being developed, partially functioning and fully effective. For each of the basic elements performance indicators were described for each of the four stages of maturity.

During the process of evaluation many organisations in the Netherlands and abroad were visited (Dutch and international contract organisations and partner organisations in the developing countries). Using the matrix and its guiding evaluative questions helped to give a uniformity of methodology and assessment framework. Different evaluative methods applied the same framework which enabled comparison and triangulation of findings and the synthesis of the findings and insights as well as the formulation of recommendations.

The framework, as was said, was originally developed for IFAD programmes and projects which means that there are underlying assumptions about the “organisation” of PM&E linked to larger, well funded and staffed projects and programmes. The organisations we met and evaluated in the TMF lot 8 evaluation did not always match this project/ programme profile very often. This implied that the criteria which were developed to guide us in the determination of the maturity of the PM&E system did not always match the reality. Reality was more complex than we had anticipated: organisations were small, were networks without clear project/ programme organisations, worked with volunteers, did receive only very limited amounts of funding from TMF not warranting the set-up of advanced PM&E systems….. But we also saw that simple PM&E was often appropriate in the setting and context in which organisations were working. The framework did help us in distinguishing different levels of maturity though we did not always use the indicators as they were formulated. Some of the cells of the framework, for example the use of MIS or the set-up of an organizational structure for PM&E, were less relevant because they were not appropriate to the reality of the organisations. Others, for example on the learning practices, were very usable.

As regards the use of the 4-point scale (which was questioned by the Steering Committee, and which re-emerged as comment by DGIS on the draft of this report), we have realized that the choice to score between 2 and 3 was indeed difficult. However, the DEK of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Resultaten in ontwikkeling) has also used a 4-point scale. In their case the choice between score 2 and score 3 was between ‘satisfactory’ and ‘unsatisfactory’. Of course, in reality, such a judgement can hardly ever be made and lacks all nuance or gradation. So, such a 4-point scale needs a special approach. One should imagine an imaginary point between score 3 and 4, and to reflect hard what makes the coin fall either to the right or to the left. We have practiced with this, and have instructed all researchers to do likewise. Finally, it is the reflection which counts most.

It is recommendable that in the future set-up of PM&E for the MFS the normative underpinning of a PM&E framework will be made explicit, and adjusted for different types of organisations. Expectations about the quality of PM&E need to be linked to and be appropriate for the type of organisation (project / programmes, donor, network), its size, the financial inputs received from TMF/ MFS, professional or voluntary etc.

3. The implementation of the TOR

In retrospect, the TOR, which had been re-interpreted in our Proposal, appears to have been respected in a fairly complete way. The extra questions mentioned in the TOR are not
treated systematically in the way they are formulated, but are nonetheless answered throughout this report.

It is true that some items have not been explicitly mentioned in this document, like the PIM-PAM-PET principle. The reason is, that the issues the PPP is referring to, are all integrated in our Managing for Impact-model.

The use of case-studies, which is referred to in the TOR, was judged to be less appropriate in our study, where representation was asked. Moreover, upon consulting the draft-report on the M&E functions among MFO and their partner organisations (commissioned and received from IOB via DSI-MY), we realized that the cases of the M&E practices, which are systematically presented in that report, did not deviate from the practices we studied. This is not surprising since it is the same civil society: in Africa they do not distinguish between MFO and TMF! In that sense, we believe that the two reports are complementary.

4. Tailor-made M&E

As part of the prospective phase of the evaluation, the evaluators (MDF/IAC) originally proposed to develop (in collaboration with interested TMF organisations, and based on the results of the retrospective part of the evaluation) a set of ‘guidelines’ or ‘toolkits’ of M&E instruments which would fit the particular needs of various kinds of organisations (networks, partnerships, advocacy groups, etc.). This proposal has not materialised for a number of reasons:

1. during the period of the evaluation the TMF organisations were very occupied due to
   a. the introduction of the new MFS (co-financing structure), for which a number of them were preparing programme proposals, and
   b. the TMF-evaluation, which has heavily drawn on the time of a number of organisations subject to evaluation.
2. a number of initiatives of the same kind existed already, the most serious one being Partos which was about to develop manuals on ‘Resultaat-meting’ (measuring results), to be used in the MFS.
3. The TMF platform was also about to develop ideas of M&E to be used in the new MFS.
4. The Ministry was doing the same, with meetings and the formulation of a paper which would later be called “Contouren voor maatgesneden monitoring in het MFS” (‘Contours of tailor-made monitoring in the MFS’; not yet released).

It did not seem opportune to try to add other exercises to these valuable initiatives. Instead, on request of the organisations, the evaluators were associated with some of these initiatives (facilitating a meeting for Partos, and a meeting for the Ministry), and finally decided to invite representatives of the TMF platform (Bert v.d. Putte on behalf of the platform) and Partos (Hotze Lont, researcher of Partos) to present their findings on the second workshop of the M&E-lot of the TMF-organisation (February 2nd and 3rd 2006). Bert v.d. Putte had recently also been co-responsible for research on the M&E-functions of the Co-Financing Programme, commissioned by IOB (Inspection unit of the Ministry). The aim of these presentations was to encourage further exchange, to foster mutual contacts among the organisations themselves and to stimulate cross-fertilisation among them.

The idea of tailor-made monitoring needs some explanation.
Partos

Partos (in: Informatiebrochure Kwaliteitsmanagement en resultaat, oktober 2005; and their presentation on February 2nd 2006) defines the following principles which they propose to their members:

- there should always be a coherent intervention logic which makes explicit in which way one expects that the employed means and activities contribute to the mission, vision, purposes and strategy of the organisation;
- an indication is provided that the expected results will be relevant for the beneficiaries and will be demand-driven;
- the intervention logic is regularly checked whether it is still opportune;
- the organisation is capable of (quantitatively) establishing their own output;
- the organisation clearly indicates prospects for outcome and impact, with a time-horizon;
- the organisation indicates how outcome and impact will be measured and reported upon;
- The qualitative way of establishing results/outcome/impact is externally verifiable;
- The organisations use their knowledge to learn and to improve, they make explicit the way in which they realise this, and provide that knowledge to others.

On the basis of the above mentioned principles, they have developed tools for measuring and reporting upon results. Hereby the following dimensions were taken into account:

- intervention strategy (direct poverty alleviation, society building, advocacy, reinforcing the support base/draagvlakversterking);
- the place in the intervention chain (from target group to donor);
- time-horizon with respect to the realisation of results (inputs, outputs, outcome, impact).

Furthermore, it is indicated in each case how data are collected, how they are stored, how sustainability is guaranteed and the place steering on results will occupy in policy documents, operational annual plans, reporting and M&E.

The result is a set of guidelines or tools, more or less appropriate, in the form of indications or recommendations what to do and how to do it, a combination of a manual and a checklist.

We (the evaluators) consider these tailor-made tools, and the way they are integrated in the overall business conduct of the organisation, an appropriate way of “Managing for Impact”.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (DSI-MY) tailor-made monitoring concept.

The aim of the concept ‘maatgesneden monitoring’ presented by DGIS is to enhance the learning capacity of DGIS on the one hand, and to enable an adequate check on efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in the use of MFS-funds, employing the standard concepts of the Ministry’s MIS (Piramide): inputs, results, purposes (effects) and sustainability.

The tailor-made monitoring ideas were first expressed during a meeting with representatives of the Theme-based directions (+ FEZ, ACD, and DEK), on the 1st of August 2005. Their mutual conclusions were the following:

- A common monitoring system is needed in the MFS, so that organisations are treated in a similar way.
- The system should be based on the autonomy of the organisations, and should not imply a heavy workload.
- The organisations and DGIS should interact as partners.
- The system should be tailor-made.
• The organisation should develop, in collaboration with the Ministry, key indicators on the Piramide criteria. Effect-based management (VBTB) – planning and monitoring - should be the norm.
• Guidelines for policy dialogue and field-missions should be provided.

The above mentioned ideas were further worked out, especially the desirability to demand each funded MFS organisation to propose a so-called monitoring-protocol, which could be tailored to the needs and ideas of the organisation or the sector it operates in. New ways of results-measurement and the formulation of innovative indicators would thereby be encouraged.

Another idea is the organisation of annual seminars and workshops per sector, in which information and programme-progress is exchanged between insiders and outsiders, with the aim to enhance the learning capacity of the sectors and that of DGIS itself.

The ideas presented above (not yet formalised) go in the direction of a learning partnership, and of outcome and impact measurement, and thus strategic monitoring, such as recommended in this study.

See also Annex 4, last point: Reporting formats in MFS.
## Annex 1 Assessing the capacity to manage for impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</th>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Being developed</th>
<th>Partially functioning</th>
<th>Fully effective</th>
<th>Comments, ideas for further improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Guiding Project strategy towards impact</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.a To what extent is program design and redesign participatory? (strategic level)</td>
<td>Design and redesign of project strategy is done mainly by project holders or external consultants. Stakeholders can be consulted on their views or asked for information.</td>
<td>Steps are being taken to actively involve key stakeholders in strategic decision making but this is not yet effectively occurring.</td>
<td>Key stakeholders are being involved in project design and redesign but these processes and mechanisms are only partly effective. They have an influence over strategic decision making although this may not be on a regular and systematic basis.</td>
<td>Key stakeholders are being effectively involved in project design and redesign and are having a significant influence over strategic decision making. These events take place on a regular basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.b To what extent is there an understanding of the intervention strategy (development pathway)?</td>
<td>Limited awareness and understanding of the intervention logic by stakeholders</td>
<td>The importance of understanding the intervention logic is recognized but there remains limited understanding by key stakeholder groups</td>
<td>Some project staff and some key stakeholders have a reasonable understanding of the intervention logic but this is not yet comprehensively being utilized for PM&amp;E</td>
<td>All stakeholder groups and project staff can discuss the intervention logic and are aware of the assumptions and risks and can relate this to the PM&amp;E processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.c To what extent are changes made at strategic level? (e.g. changes in log frame at outcome and impact level)?</td>
<td>Little attention is given to strategic objectives with management focusing primarily on the delivery of predetermined outputs and activities</td>
<td>Awareness and concern about the need for strategic guidance but little evidence of strategic changes being made. External evaluations rather than internal learning remains a major factor for changes made at strategic level.</td>
<td>Evidence that changes are being made to the strategy based on internal learning and stakeholder participation.</td>
<td>Regular / systematic review of strategic issues on e.g. outcome / impact level or other strategic issues (e.g. during annual review, technical advise missions, mid term), based on internal learning and stakeholder participation and resulting in regular improvements to the strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 Ensuring effective operations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.a To what extent is the revision of the operational plan participatory?</td>
<td>Design and redesign of project operations is done mainly by project holders or external consultants. Stakeholders can be consulted on their views or asked for information.</td>
<td>Steps are being taken to actively involve key stakeholders involved in operational decision making but this is not yet effectively occurring.</td>
<td>Key stakeholders are being involved in work plan design and redesign but these processes and mechanisms are only partly effective. They have an influence over operational decision making although this may not be on a regular and systematic basis.</td>
<td>Key stakeholders are being effectively involved in work plan design and redesign and are having a significant influence over operational decision making. These events take place on a regular basis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</td>
<td>Limited 1</td>
<td>Being developed 2</td>
<td>Partially functioning 3</td>
<td>Fully effective 4</td>
<td>Comments, ideas for further improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.b To what extent are the planning systems effective in guiding your operations?</strong></td>
<td>Work plans and budgets (operational plans) are mainly developed by project staff only, although they do not always reflect staff capacity (numbers, time) or funds, eg due to high staff turnover or external influences. Operational plans are mainly revised by project staff only.</td>
<td>Work plans and budgets are sometimes but not systematically reviewed and adapted or by all necessary people involved.</td>
<td>Work plans and budgets are regularly reviewed and adapted but not very systematic or by all necessary people involved.</td>
<td>Staffing, equipment, goods, office buildings, contracts, finances etc are adequate for operations and well specified in work plans and budgets. These are regularly reviewed by all necessary people involved.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2.c To what extent are institutional processes, systems contributing to effective operations?</strong></td>
<td>Information on operations is shared but this happens haphazardly and may not be timely or of good quality information on operations. Hierarchical structures may hinder adequate communication and feedback on operations. External factors may hinder adjustment of operation plans, as the organization finds it difficult to respond to these external factors, (eg lack of human capacity).</td>
<td>Information &amp; communication processes sometimes provide information on operations but this is not timely or of good quality. Hierarchical structures (may) hinder adequate communication and feedback on operations. External factors may hinder adjustment of operational plans.</td>
<td>Basic management procedures are in place. Work plans are regularly adjusted although the information may not always be timely or of good quality. Roles and responsibilities on information sharing concerning operations are clear. Sharing of information is stimulated, specified and adhered to.</td>
<td>Basic management procedures are in place. Work plans are timely and adequately adjusted based on timely and good quality information. Roles and responsibilities on information sharing concerning operations are clearly specified and adhered to. Staff is motivated to provide feedback on operations. Sharing of information is stimulated in systematic reflection moments.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3 Setting up and using the M&E system

3.a To what extent is the purpose of the M&E system directed towards:
   - Accountability
   - Supporting operational management
   - Strategic management
   - Knowledge creation
   - Empowerment?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited 1</th>
<th>Being developed 2</th>
<th>Partially functioning 3</th>
<th>Fully effective 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The M&amp;E system is mainly geared towards (external) accountability and operational management only.</td>
<td>The M&amp;E system is mainly geared towards (external) accountability and operational management but has some elements of generating lessons learned, providing information for strategic change. It builds the M&amp;E capacity of some stakeholders, involved in monitoring and managing their own processes and development.</td>
<td>To some extent the M&amp;E system ensures both upward, downward and sideward accountability; it provides information that can assist in strategic decision making as well as for operational management; it focuses specifically on generating lessons learned within specific thematic areas; it also builds the M&amp;E capacity of all stakeholders involved in monitoring and managing their own processes and development.</td>
<td>The M&amp;E system ensures both upward, downward and sideward accountability; it provides information that can assist in strategic decision making as well as for operational management; it focuses specifically on generating lessons learned within specific thematic areas; it also builds the M&amp;E capacity of all stakeholders involved in monitoring and managing their own processes and development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.b To what extent are the following key evaluation/ performance questions included in the M&E system:
   - Relevance
   - Impact
   - Sustainability
   - Effectiveness
   - Efficiency?

| Key information needs of project staff and donors are included in the M&E system. | Key information needs of some stakeholders are included in the M&E system: project, donor, one or two partner agencies | Key information needs of most stakeholders are included in the M&E system. Mainly project, donor and some partner organizations (beneficiaries are often excluded) | All key information needs of stakeholders are included in the M&E system, beneficiaries included. |

3.c To what extent are the key information needs of the different stakeholders included in the M&E system?

<p>| The M&amp;E system addresses 2 evaluation/ performance questions: effectiveness (at operational level) and efficiency. | The M&amp;E system addresses 3 evaluation/ performance questions: effectiveness, efficiency and impact | The M&amp;E system addresses 4 evaluation/ performance questions: effectiveness, efficiency and impact and either relevance or sustainability. | The M&amp;E system address all 5 evaluation/ performance questions: relevance, impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</th>
<th>Limited 1</th>
<th>Being developed 2</th>
<th>Partially functioning 3</th>
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<th>Comments, ideas for further improvement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.d To what extent is the M&amp;E system focused on the program, organisational, and institutional issues eg. staff performance, partner collaboration, policies, networks, etc.?</td>
<td>M&amp;E system generates information on program issues.</td>
<td>M&amp;E system generates information on program issues and sporadic information on organizational or institutional issues, eg staff performance, partner collaboration, policies, networks etc. but this is not comprehensive.</td>
<td>M&amp;E system generates information on program issues and also generates information on organizational or institutional issues, eg staff performance, partner collaboration, policies, networks etc.</td>
<td>M&amp;E system generates information on program issues and also generates information on organizational and institutional issues, eg staff performance, partner collaboration, policies, networks etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.e To what extent are methodologies used for data collection, and processing, participatory or conventional?</td>
<td>Methodologies used for data collection, and processing, are mainly conventional (more extractive, often sophisticated eg surveys, questionnaires, blood tests etc).</td>
<td>Methodologies used for data collection, and processing, are a mix of participatory and more conventional approaches, with a tendency towards either one of them</td>
<td>Methodologies used for data collection, and processing, are a mix of participatory and more conventional approaches, with a tendency towards either one of them</td>
<td>Methodologies used for data collection, and processing, are a balanced mix of participatory and more conventional approaches. There is a clear philosophy behind the use of more participatory approaches.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.f To what extent are stakeholders involved in data collection, and processing?</td>
<td>Data collection and processing is mainly done by project staff and external persons.</td>
<td>Data collection and processing is mainly done by project staff and external persons. Some stakeholders are involved in data collection only.</td>
<td>Most stakeholders are involved in data collection, and processing. Or all stakeholders are involved but mainly in the data collection process.</td>
<td>All stakeholders are involved in data collection, and processing. This is supported by a participatory philosophy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.g To what extent are different (critical) reflection events &amp; processes in place?</td>
<td>Reflection / review of progress etc is mainly done once a year, during the annual review or during external reviews.</td>
<td>Reflection events &amp; processes are organized on a regular basis (eg quarterly, semi- and annually). At these events' successes and sometimes failures and unexpected outcomes are reviewed. This is sometimes done using critical reflection.</td>
<td>Reflection events and processes are organized on a regular basis (eg quarterly, semi- and annually). At these events' successes and sometimes failures and unexpected outcomes are reviewed. This is sometimes done using critical reflection.</td>
<td>Critical reflection events and processes are organized on a regular basis (eg quarterly, semi- and annually). Successes, failures and unexpected outcomes and reasons for these are critically reflected on during these events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.h To what extent are different stakeholders involved in these decision making processes? (Strategic &amp; operational)</td>
<td>Strategic &amp; operational decision making processes are carried out by project managers / coordinators.</td>
<td>Some stakeholders are involved in these decision making processes, but these concern mainly operational issues.</td>
<td>Most stakeholders are involved in these decision making processes, both strategic &amp; operational</td>
<td>All stakeholders are involved in these decision making processes, both strategic &amp; operational</td>
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<td>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.i To what extent are the reporting documents and processes timely and of good quality? And why?</td>
<td>Progress reports are developed but they may not arrive in time or be of good quality. This may be due to inadequate M&amp;E/reporting capacity (knowledge and numbers) or to, low motivation to report (eg because information needs of stakeholders are not addressed).</td>
<td>Reporting documents and processes are only sometimes timely and of good quality. Mainly due to poor M&amp;E/reporting capacity (knowledge and staff capacity) or to low motivation to report (eg because information needs of stakeholders are not addressed).</td>
<td>Reporting documents and processes are mostly timely and of good quality. Mainly due to adequate M&amp;E/reporting capacity (knowledge and staff capacity) and to high motivation to report (eg because information needs of stakeholders are addressed).</td>
<td>Reporting documents and processes are timely and of good quality. Mainly due to adequate M&amp;E/reporting capacity (knowledge and staff capacity) and to high motivation to report (eg because information needs of stakeholders are addressed).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.j To what extent are the results / findings communicated / reported and in line with stakeholders' needs?</td>
<td>The results / findings are only shared with donors and are generally not shared with other stakeholders. The information in the reports is mainly focused on projects' and donors' information needs.</td>
<td>The results / findings are only sometimes communicated / reported to stakeholders, mostly donor agencies. Also the reports are not specified towards stakeholders and their information needs.</td>
<td>The results / findings are communicated / reported to most stakeholders, mostly timely and of good quality, addressing their specific information needs. Also the communication method (eg written report, verbal, visual) is mostly in line with stakeholders' background.</td>
<td>The results / findings are communicated / reported to all stakeholders, timely and of good quality, addressing their specific information needs. Also the communication method (eg written report, verbal, visual) is in line with stakeholders' background.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Capacities and conditions for M&amp;E</td>
<td>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4.a To what extent is human capacity adequate for M&amp;E?</td>
<td>Not enough people in place to do M&amp;E. Knowledge and skills of staff &amp; stakeholders to carry out M&amp;E activities are inadequate.</td>
<td>Some staff in place to carry out M&amp;E activities, but inadequate in numbers to carry out all M&amp;E activities. Some knowledge and skills on M&amp;E but inadequate to make the M&amp;E system functioning.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders have average knowledge and skills to carry out M&amp;E activities but not enough for a fully functioning M&amp;E system. Number of people (staff &amp; stakeholders) nearly enough to carry out M&amp;E.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders have adequate knowledge and skills to carry out M&amp;E activities. Enough people to carry out M&amp;E.</td>
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<td>4.b To what extent are incentives for M&amp;E in place and adequate?</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders carry out M&amp;E activities but may not be very motivated to do this. Eg because of inadequate M&amp;E human capacity (knowledge and skills and numbers), finances for M&amp;E, or because the M&amp;E system does not deal with the specific information needs of all stakeholders. M&amp;E may be seen mainly as an external demand (eg from donors).</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders are only a little bit motivated to carry out M&amp;E activities. They may not have enough human capacity (skills, numbers) or money to carry out M&amp;E. Also the information is generated but the M&amp;E system does not deal with all stakeholder information needs.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders are generally motivated to carry out M&amp;E activities, but they may not always have the necessary capacity (eg human, knowledge, skills, financial) to do it.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders are motivated to carry out M&amp;E activities. Eg because of adequate M&amp;E human capacity (knowledge and skills and numbers), finances for M&amp;E, and because the M&amp;E system deals with the specific information needs of all stakeholders. The information generated helps them to monitor and manage their own processes of development.</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>4.c To what extent are structures and processes for M&amp;E in place and adequate?</strong></td>
<td>Staff are aware that they have a role to play in M&amp;E, although they may mainly see M&amp;E as the role of the M&amp;E officer or of external evaluators. Decision making is mainly done by managers / coordinators who use their own observations and some of the findings generated by the M&amp;E system.</td>
<td>M&amp;E roles and responsibilities are defined but may be overlapping or unclear or conflicting. Decision making processes generally do not make systematic use of M&amp;E findings. Decision making processes generally exclude other stakeholders.</td>
<td>M&amp;E roles and responsibilities are defined in job descriptions and are generally adhered to. There may be some overlapping or conflicting M&amp;E roles and responsibilities but these are not seriously hampering the M&amp;E and decision making processes. The M&amp;E roles and responsibilities are not yet fully integrated and complementary. Decision making processes generally make use of findings from the M&amp;E system. Decision making processes generally remain with project staff and donor agencies.</td>
<td>M&amp;E roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in job descriptions and adhered to. There are no overlapping or conflicting M&amp;E roles and responsibilities. The M&amp;E responsibilities within the organization / system are integrated and complementary. Decision making processes are clearly linked to findings from the M&amp;E system and are open, clear and functional. Decision making processes are a shared responsibility between project staff and key stakeholders.</td>
<td><strong>MIS in place:</strong> database and written materials are easily accessible providing the relevant information to all stakeholders. The database is easy to use and provides relevant information for decision making. Info in database is clearly linked to the M&amp;E system.</td>
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<td><strong>4.d To what extent is MIS adequate?</strong></td>
<td>The information that is kept is often in written form (eg progress reports) and difficult to access for others. Often kept in the office of M&amp;E officer or program manager only. The information generated by the MIS has some overlap but also differences with the information that the M&amp;E system as a whole is meant to generate.</td>
<td>Some information is kept but this is not done systematically. Information may be kept in written form or in a computerized database but has no clear link with the information needs of different stakeholders as spelled out in the M&amp;E system.</td>
<td>MIS in place (eg computerized database and written materials) but the information in the database may not generate all relevant info for decision making for all stakeholders. Or the information is somewhat difficult to access by different stakeholders. The info is not always fully integrated in the M&amp;E system.</td>
<td>MIS is in place; database (computerized and written materials) are easily accessible providing the relevant information to all stakeholders. The database is easy to use and provides relevant information for decision making. Info in database is clearly linked to the M&amp;E system.</td>
<td><strong>MIS in place:</strong> database and written materials are easily accessible providing the relevant information to all stakeholders. The database is easy to use and provides relevant information for decision making. Info in database is clearly linked to the M&amp;E system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.e To what extent are financial capacities for M&amp;E adequate?</td>
<td>There is some money for M&amp;E but more money is needed to carry out more participatory M&amp;E. Generally enough money for key M&amp;E events, eg MTR, which can also be externally funded. Separate M&amp;E budget line may be lacking.</td>
<td>Some money available for M&amp;E but inadequate to ensure that enough relevant information is generated for decision making. Not enough money available for stakeholder M&amp;E interventions (eg stakeholder review meetings).</td>
<td>Finance for M&amp;E is on the whole adequate but some additional money needed to fully implement an integrated, participatory and learning oriented M&amp;E system. Separate budget line for M&amp;E although some money for M&amp;E may be captured under management budget line.</td>
<td>Enough money available for M&amp;E activities: data collection and processing, database, human capacity (enough M&amp;E staff, enough training in M&amp;E), key reflection events (eg annual stakeholder workshop) etc. Separate budget line for M&amp;E, which includes all M&amp;E related activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Creating a learning environment</td>
<td>Staff meet to discuss progress and sometimes problems and solutions. These meetings are not regular.</td>
<td>Staff meets regularly to discuss progress, issues, problems and solutions but this is not done in an open atmosphere and critical reflection and feedback is not happening.</td>
<td>Staff can discuss openly and critically on what is going on, why, so what and now what. This may not be done regularly or systematically and lessons learned are not always documented. Critical feedback and learning are stimulated but not consistently.</td>
<td>Staff regularly meet to openly and critically reflect on and discuss expected and unexpected issues, problems, and lessons learned for the future. Lessons learned are also documented. Critical feedback and learning is stimulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent is a learning environment created with stakeholders (including beneficiaries)?</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders meet to discuss progress and sometimes problems and solutions. These meetings are not regular.</td>
<td>Staff meets regularly to discuss progress, issues, problems and solutions but this is not done in an open atmosphere and critical reflection and feedback is not happening. Meetings with stakeholders on this rarely happen.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders can discuss openly and critically on what is going on, why, so what and now what. This may not be done regularly or systematically and lessons learned are not always documented. Critical feedback and learning are stimulated but not consistently or with all stakeholders.</td>
<td>Staff and stakeholders regularly meet to openly and critically reflect on and discuss expected and unexpected issues, problems, and lessons learned for the future. Lessons learned are also documented. Critical feedback and learning is stimulated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance questions (Include Why / why not?)</td>
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<td>6. Gender integrated in PM&amp;E</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.a To what extent is gender integrated in the program design?</td>
<td>Gender issues are sporadically specified in program design. No gender analysis undertaken.</td>
<td>No (proper) gender analysis undertaken. Gender is only sporadically specified in program design, mainly 'number of men/women' but no specific strategies to minimize gender inequalities</td>
<td>Gender issues are specified in program design: targets are gender disaggregated, indicating number of men and women per objective. This may not be done systematically or based on a thorough gender analysis.</td>
<td>Gender issues are specified in program design: some gender related objectives are formulated targets are gender disaggregated, indicating not only number of men and women per objective, but also focused on areas of importance. Gender issues are analyzed and specific strategies are aimed to minimize gender inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.b To what extent are data collection, processing and reporting gender disaggregated?</td>
<td>Data collected, processed and reported are sporadically gender disaggregated.</td>
<td>Few data collected, processed and reported are gender disaggregated.</td>
<td>Most data collected, processed and reported are gender disaggregated.</td>
<td>All data collected, processed and reported are gender disaggregated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2: Resources consulted

General
Berenschot (2005)
Terms of Reference evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing programme 2005/S4-003592
Berenschot (15 February 2005)
Selectie voor de onderwerpen ten behoeve van de deelstudies evaluatie TMF (19 pages)
Berenschot (28 April 2005)
Verslag bijeenkomst (TMF evaluatie) beoordelingscommissie en IAC/MDF (dd. 27 april 2005)
TMF-platform (9 March 2005)
Kritische bevindingen bij de opzet van de evaluatie TMF (9 pages)
TMF-platform (4 April 2005)
Reactie op selectie onderwerpen en organisaties evaluatie TMF (6 pages)

Policy documents
MDF (2005)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2001)
Beleidsnotitie “Civil society en structurele armoedebestrijding” (www.minbuza.nl)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2001)
Beleidsnotitie “Milieu en structurele armoedebestrijding”.
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2002)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2003)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2003)
Beleidskader thematische medefinanciering voor de ronde 2004, brief van de Minister, 17 maart 2003 (www.minbuza.nl)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (2003)
Ministerie van Buitenlandse zaken (undated)
Beleidskader thematische medefinanciering voor de subsidieperiode 2005 - 2008 (www.minbuza.nl)

Other relevant documents
Stuurgroep evaluatie medefinancieringsprogramma (November 2002)
Eindrapport stuurgroep evaluatie medefinancieringsprogramma (in opdracht van GOM/DGIS) (91 pages)
Annex 3: Working with Best Practices

(from a working document by Agromisa)

A partner-network of Agromisa, PELUM-Zambia, has decided to work with Best Practices: collect them from the field-work of its member organisations, share them by means of workshops and publications, and make available background-documentation for other PELUM members, for them to try the practices in other areas. By working with Best Practices, PELUM will utilize its network system to share formal and informal information, experiences and practices to contribute to food security among small-scale farmers in Zambia.

They define Best Practice as follows: a Best Practice is an environmentally sound, socially just, culturally sensitive, economically viable, coherent set of actions with a better than currently observable effect towards attainment of goals in Sustainable Development (InterSard, 2003, PELUM Zambia, 2005).

They disseminate Best Practices by and through visits, meetings, local institutions, field demonstrations, extension workers, drama, Internet, Telecentres, capacity building workshops and training, electronic and printed brochures and folders, publicity during field days and market days.

**Key questions in assessing sustainability of Best Practices (BP):**

| 1. How does the BP contribute to improved livelihoods: |
| - increase practitioners income |
| - asset accumulation |
| - food security/nutrition |
| 2. To what extent can the BP be scaled up at community level: |
| - resource availability (capital, physical e.g. land) |
| - labour |
| - time |
| - market availability and accessibility |
| 3. To what extent can the BP be replicated in other areas: |
| - how easily adaptable is the BP |
| - is the BP location specific? |
| 4. How has the BP been sustained: |
| - how long has it been practiced |
| - how has it evolved |
| 5. How is the BP advocating for social justice: |
| - does the practice discriminate either by gender, age, religion, social status, literacy? |
| - Does the BP require large investments, unaffordable for the poorer sections of the community? |
| 6. What are the environmental consequences arising from the BP: |
| - are environmental conditions adhered to? |
| - Did you notice adverse effects on natural plants and animals? |
| - On the soil? |
| - On the water? |
| 7. Is the BP compatible with cultural norms: |
| - are customs and traditions taken into account? |
| 8. How cost efficient (profitable) is the BP: |
| - does cost of practice outweigh benefits e.g. time and labour saved? |
| 9. How accessible is the BP: |
| - is information readily available for all |
| - is there an associated cost e.g. to access information or input? |
| 10. Who is the owner of Best Practices? |
Annex 4: A format for reporting?

1. Introduction

DGIS has not clearly described how TMF organisations should report. Various rather vague versions of monitoring or reporting instructions were issued by different Theme directions. The hesitance is caused by the DGIS staff feeling that, since the TMF organisations are ‘autonomous’, not too many instructions or formats should be imposed on them. However, plenty of conditions have to be met to qualify for a TMF grant during the application phase, so that the above described feelings seem exaggerated. The situation is typical for the mutually ambiguous relationship the TMF organisations and DGIS keep up.

One would expect that a format were acceptable in a partnership relationship. In fact, a number of TMF organisations have found it awkward that the donor does not provide a clear format for reporting. They have asked for one, and have then received individual advice, sometimes copied from any other document. The inconvenience of such arrangement is that the provided instructions are often not complete and never match the philosophy of TMF. For instance, in none of the instructions found (3 versions at least) anything was mentioned about the desired ‘learning ability’ of TMF organisations, or about the choice of southern partners in partnership relations, or about ‘balanced accountability’, being all essential elements of the TMF policy framework.23

Co-financing schemes in other European countries (Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, England) all provide formats, not for monitoring, but for reporting.

2. Formats in other European co-financing schemes

Development Cooperation Ireland, in their NGO co-financing scheme, provides a ‘Report Form’, asking to list the specific objectives and to outline the activities linked to these objectives, to report key results achieved as outlined in the application, describe problems and challenges encountered, and changes and adjustments to the original proposal considered necessary to get maximum results and benefits from the project ……..(so far not exceptional), but then adds questions on Realised Benefits:

- How many people benefited?
- In what way has the project benefited the community under the following headings. If there have been negative effects these should also be stated and how it is proposed to address these negative effects.
  - Reaching the poor;
  - Sustainability;
  - Levels of participation;
  - Gender;
  - Environmental Effects;
  - HIV/AIDS – did the project benefit those living with HIV/Aids and if so outline those benefits.

Comments

With a format like the DCI-format summarized above, it would be easier for the Dutch Ministry officials than is presently the case, to have an idea about the sustainability of the programme the report is dealing with, the outcome and impact, the effect on poverty

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alleviation, and gender. These are all subjects which the DGIS staff finds difficult to grasp, but which are important aspects in the TMF.

_This is still not enough._


The narrative report should contain:

a. Basic project/programme information;
b. Significant changes: details of any changes made to the project or its approach during the period of the report …
c. Progress: This should be a clear concise summary of what the project has achieved since your last progress report. Please refer to the indicators used in the LF as a means of measuring progress …
d. Success and or downfalls …
e. Partnership, management and implementation: A brief analysis of the partner(s) roles and the added value of the UK organisation during the reporting period. … An analysis of the relationship between Southern partners may also be applicable.
f. Sustainability. … We are particularly interested in how sustainable interventions might be without the need for further funding.
g. Monitoring, evaluation and learning: detail arrangements and responsibilities and processes in place for ensuring new knowledge and best practice arising from the project are incorporated into future projects.
h. Lessons Learned: Please summarize using the headings below any lessons arising from this project and how these lessons will be used to improve performance in the future.
i. Project level lessons
j. Sector level or thematic lessons
k. General development lessons
l. Information, Dissemination and Networking: detail the mechanisms used for dissemination outside project stakeholders.
m. Risk Assessment: the risks described in the project proposal should be referred to and an up to date comment made as to whether or not there has been a change in the risks and if so, why.

_The Logical Framework:_ in order to use the Logical Framework as a useful tool for monitoring and planning and to allow the overall impact at the end of the project to be fully assessed, you should revisit the project Logical Framework each year and measure progress using the indicators developed at project proposal stage. If these are no longer suitable, or if the outputs or activities have changed, the Logical Framework should be revised.

_Achievement Rating Scale:_ to provide an assessment of the likely achievement of the project’s output(s) and purpose as stated in the Logical Framework with help of a rating scale from 1 (fully achieved, very few or no shortcomings) to 5 (not achieved).

In the Final Report this part has been replaced by an assessment of _issues relevant to the objectives_ of the Civil Society Co Financing programme:

- Equity, social inclusion ad the strengthening of the social capital; participation of the poor; enhancement of the rights of the poor; influence and advocacy;
- How the project adds value to current knowledge and practice (eg through innovative techniques);
- How the project is contributing to a reduction in poverty;
- How the project has contributed to DFID’s country and target strategies.
Comments
The DFID format presented above, encourages the project/programme to provide information on all levels of the intervention logic. It also stresses the context (risks), the organisation of monitoring and evaluation, lessons learned and dissemination of knowledge. The Logical Framework is explicitly mentioned as planning and monitoring instrument, specifically to assess impact at the end of the project. Moreover, the Logical Framework is to be ‘revisited’ yearly, which means that it is to be flexibly adapted yearly on the basis of monitoring data.

The Achievement Rating Scale refers to the objectives and important issues of the programme of which the donor needs information.

The format looks detailed and specific, but after careful study it seems applicable to all kind of ‘projects’, also lobbying, advocacy, peace building, etc., mainly because of the flexibility of the instruments. At least it invites to thorough reflection on a number of issues dealing with accountability as well as learning.

Reporting formats in MFS
Some items in the above mentioned formats, like the achievement rating scale, resemble the rating system of the Piramide system. However, in Piramide, for no evident reason, no reference is made to impact, while in the DFID scale it is. One could conclude that, in Piramide, the most important result desired, the impact of the programme on the sector, or on the wider society, is omitted. It would be worthwhile to include information on impact in a reporting format.

In the Dutch monitoring and/or reporting instructions no mention is made of the context, while the context relates to the relevance (and the impact) as well as to the risks of the programme. In the DFID format reference is made to lessons learned, with respect to three levels: project, sector and general development (society), somehow comparable with project outputs, project purpose and impact.

The main question is that DGIS should ask the questions they want to have answered. If they want to know how the (future) MFS grant relates to the Millennium Development Goals they should ask that question in a ‘format’. It is therefore recommendable that DGIS lists the questions which they deem useful for them in the context of MFS and of Result-Based Management. These questions are to be more or less standardized for all programmes subsidized by DGIS, in order to facilitate analysis of the data which are to serve DGIS policy. The questions may be arranged in a sort of format. It would be more appropriate to talk about ‘Reporting Protocol’ instead of ‘Monitoring protocol’, as the MFS organisations should be free in their monitoring approach and practices, whereas it could be demanded from them to streamline their reporting, for the sake of the M&E of the Ministry and the lessons they have to learn to permit them to plan strategically, which is the Ministry’s major vocation and mission.
Annex 5: Tailor-made Monitoring and Evaluation

1 Introduction

As part of the prospective phase of the evaluation, the evaluators (MDF/IAC) originally proposed to develop (in collaboration with interested TMF organisations, and based on the results of the retrospective part of the evaluation) a set of ‘guidelines’ or ‘toolkits’ of M&E instruments which would fit the particular needs of various kinds of organisations (networks, partnerships, advocacy groups, etc.). This proposal has not materialised for a number of reasons:

5. during the period of the evaluation the TMF organisations were very occupied due to
   a. the introduction of the new MFS (co-financing structure), for which a number of them were preparing programme proposals, and
   b. the TMF-evaluation, which has heavily drawn on the time of a number of organisations subject to evaluation.
6. a number of initiatives of the same kind existed already, the most serious one being Partos which was about to develop manuals on ‘Resultaat-meting’ (measuring results), to be used in the MFS.
7. The TMF platform was also about to develop ideas of M&E to be used in the new MFS.
8. The Ministry was doing the same, with meetings and the formulation of a paper which would later be called “Contouren voor maatgesneden monitoring in het MFS” (‘Contours of tailor-made monitoring in the MFS’; not yet released).

It did not seem opportune to try to add other exercises to these valuable initiatives. Instead, on request of the organisations, the evaluators were associated with some of these initiatives (facilitating a meeting for Partos, and a meeting for the Ministry), and finally decided to invite representatives of the TMF platform (Bert v.d. Putte on behalf of the platform) and Partos (Hotze Lont, researcher of Partos) to present their findings on the second workshop of the M&E-lot of the TMF-organisation (February 2nd and 3rd 2006). Bert v.d. Putte had recently also been co-responsible for research on the M&E-functions of the Co-Financing Programme, commissioned by IOB (Inspection unit of the Ministry). The aim of these presentations was to encourage further exchange, to foster mutual contacts among the organisations themselves and to stimulate cross-fertilisation among them.

The idea of tailor-made monitoring needs some explanation.

2. Partos

Partos (in: Informatiebrochure Kwaliteitsmanagement en resultaat, oktober 2005; and their presentation on February 2nd 2006) defines the following principles which they propose to their members:

- there should always be a coherent intervention logic which makes explicit in which way one expects that the employed means and activities contribute to the mission, vision, purposes and strategy of the organisation;
- an indication is provided that the expected results will be relevant for the beneficiaries and will be demand-driven;
- the intervention logic is regularly checked whether it is still opportune;
- the organisation is capable of (quantitatively) establishing their own output;
- the organisation clearly indicates prospects for outcome and impact, with a time-horizon;
- the organisation indicates how outcome and impact will be measured and reported upon;
- The qualitative way of establishing results/outcome/impact is externally verifiable;
- The organisations use their knowledge to learn and to improve, they make explicit the way in which they realise this, and provide that knowledge to others.
On the basis of the above mentioned principles, they have developed tools for measuring and reporting upon results. Hereby the following dimensions were taken into account:

- intervention strategy (direct poverty alleviation, society building, advocacy, reinforcing the support base/draagvlakversterking);
- the place in the intervention chain (from target group to donor);
- time-horizon with respect to the realisation of results (inputs, outputs, outcome, impact).

Furthermore, it is indicated in each case how data are collected, how they are stored, how sustainability is guaranteed and the place steering on results will occupy in policy documents, operational annual plans, reporting and M&E.

The result is a set of guidelines or tools, more or less appropriate, in the form of indications or recommendations what to do and how to do it, a combination of a manual and a checklist.

We (the evaluators) consider these tailor-made tools, and the way they are integrated in the overall business conduct of the organisation, an appropriate way of “Managing towards Impact”.

3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DSI-MY) tailor-made monitoring concept.

The aim of the concept ‘maatgesneden monitoring’ presented by DGIS is to enhance the learning capacity of DGIS on the one hand, and to enable an adequate check on efficiency, effectiveness and relevance in the use of MFS-funds, employing the standard concepts of the Ministry’s MIS (Piramide): inputs, results, purposes (effects) and sustainability.

The tailor-made monitoring ideas were first expressed during a meeting with representatives of the Theme-based directions (+ FEZ, ACD, and DEK), on the 1st of August 2005. Their mutual conclusions were the following:

- A common monitoring system is needed in the MFS, so that organisations are treated in a similar way.
- The system should be based on the autonomy of the organisations, and should not imply a heavy workload.
- The organisations and DGIS should interact as partners.
- The system should be tailor-made.
- The organisation should develop, in collaboration with the Ministry, key indicators on the Piramide criteria. Effect-based management (VBTB) – planning and monitoring - should be the norm.
- Guidelines for policy dialogue and field-missions should be provided.

The above mentioned ideas were further worked out, especially the desirability to demand each funded MFS organisation to propose a so-called monitoring-protocol, which could be tailored to the needs and ideas of the organisation or the sector it operates in. New ways of results-measurement and the formulation of innovative indicators would thereby be encouraged.

Another idea is the organisation of annual seminars and workshops per sector, in which information and programme-progress is exchanged between insiders and outsiders, with the aim to enhance the learning capacity of the sectors and that of DGIS itself.

The ideas presented above (not yet formalised) go in the direction of a learning partnership, and of outcome and impact measurement, and thus strategic monitoring, such as recommended in this study.
A short summary and an announcement for the follow-up

TMF Evaluation, lot M&E
MDF / IAC-WUR
November 2005

1. Introduction

This workshop was organised as part of the TMF Evaluation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is presently taking place. MDF/IAC are executing the M&E study of this evaluation.

As was explained in accompanying letters and documents, this M&E evaluation by MDF/IAC is meant to be a contribution to the learning capacity of the whole TMF sector in general, and the individual TMF-organisations in particular. An assessment of this type demands an active participation of all stakeholders. Therefore, the TMF-organisations have been asked to co-evaluate the quality and the effectiveness of their own M&E systems.

MDF/IAC have considered this evaluation as ‘embarking on a mutual learning trail’, a trail which will eventually result in a set of principles, ‘good practices’ and M&E guidelines, from which each TMF organisation should be able to derive its own organisation-specific M&E system.

Until now, our mutual learning trail has consisted of an Internet M&E self-assessment Survey, which many TMF-organisations have filled in, a number of oral interviews, analysis of M&E documentation of DGIS, and visits to TMF-organisations in The Netherlands and abroad (with workshops sharing results), and the Workshop in Ede on September 1st 2005. During the last mentioned event the preliminary results of the Survey were presented.

Also presented during this Workshop was an analytical framework (IFAD-IAC) which was developed to help organisations and projects/programmes to better understand how well they are doing in terms of managing towards impact. Learning about successes and failures through regular monitoring and critical reflection is fundamental for guiding interventions towards achieving impact. The model contains four basic elements which are needed to allow organisations to be guided towards impact: creating a learning environment; guiding the strategy; ensuring effective operations, and designing the M&E system.

The Workshop day in De Bosrand in Ede consisted of sharing a number of experiences: visions of M&E expressed in works of art, the presentation of M&E systems by Fair Trade and NIZA, and a collective reflection on Challenges and Good Practices, following the presentation of the above mentioned M&E framework. The purpose of the workshop was to engage together in a M&E learning trail which result in tangible outputs.

In the following pages we will summarize some of the comments, ideas and suggestions which were expressed during the day in Ede. We do not pretend to be complete but offer you a selection of statements which would help to further embark on the mutual learning trail, meant to:

“Put Practice into Learning” and “Learning into Practice”
2. Summary of views expressed during the Workshop

Almost all participants have acknowledged the importance and necessity of Monitoring & Evaluation in Development Cooperation, either as an instrument of accounting or as an instrument of learning, or both. There seems to be no lack of goodwill as to M&E, but it must be recognized that the insight in M&E and the knowledge about current M&E techniques and methodologies differ widely among the representatives of the various TMF organisations present during the Workshop. It is not known whether the TMF-organisations have systematically sent their M&E specialists to the Workshop. In at least several cases representatives were sent to learn, and to meet colleagues from other TMF-organisations.

Almost all participants have also acknowledged that M&E is no simple affair in the TMF context, where the NGOs often occupy an intermediary position between the donor on the one hand, and partner-organisations in the South on the other hand. By the latter they are often considered as donors themselves, which leads to ambiguity in their role, if not in their identity.

However, difficult as it might appear, all organisations appear to have put up some sort of M&E system, or M&E procedures. Some have developed sophisticated data-gathering and learning systems, others have at least created some basic procedures or have designed simple formats for reporting, if only to be able to cope with the information demands of the donor. Some have designed their own system in a creative way, others have asked outsiders to help. A considerable number has at least once followed a training course or workshop on M&E (information collected during the Workshop).

In most cases M&E is seen as an instrument to account for the utilisation of the funds received. Expenses must be justified on the basis of a a budget agreed upon and a contract signed with the donor. Accompanying the bookkeeping part, one finds it obvious and acceptable that documents should be written regularly to report on the progress of operations for which subsidy was received.

Less evident for most organisations, especially the small one’s, is the utilisation of M&E either for management purposes (information necessary to be able to make decisions) or for learning on all levels of the organisation or programme. The last mentioned M&E function, learning, is an important aspect of TMF, as it is assumed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that TMF organisations be innovative, and that they contribute in a creative way to the development of the civil societies in the South (and thus contribute to poverty alleviation). In this respect, the donor wants to have answers from this Evaluation, such as: to what extent are the TMF organisations trying to become a learning organisation? How have they given shape to the concept of learning organisation? What are their learning capacities? What is the role of their M&E-system in this respect?

It has been remarked several times during the Workshop that “DGIS” is not very helpful in guiding the (sometimes recently becoming) TMF organisations in the development of adequate M&E systems, and in many cases it hardly gives any constructive feed-back on reports. Together with the Result-based DRAM-format which is prescribed for TMF applications, this may have reinforced the impression of several TMF organisations that with M&E it is accountability only that counts. Some organisations object to this format and sigh: “Do we, in the NGO-world, really need to copy the ‘business world’”; “where does the measurement end”?

Even if Northern-based TMF organisations recognize the relevance of M&E, either for accounting or for learning, or for both, they remark that with their Southern partners there
often lacks “a culture of measurement”, or “a culture of quantification”, as they have called it. They say: “In their culture M&E is undervalued”, “partners are not used to produce data”, “partners are sometimes unwilling to share information, they don’t see the value of giving feedback”, “M&E is not a priority for them”; moreover “many partners have limited writing skills”, or are illiterate altogether (in the case of grassroots organisations). We see here a difficulty of a cultural nature, in which certain NGO with Southern partners are trapped. Some organisations have remarked: “partners’ reporting is slow, incomplete or non-existent”, but this does not seem common. Most NGO fear (and feel uneasy about it) that they overload their partners with requests for information, feeling the hot breath of the donor in their neck.

The buzz-word that looms over these discussions is “trust”. A M&E system only aiming at accounting or justifying expenses and actions to the donor (as some think it should), is not testifying of a relation between donor and NGO built on trust. In a cultural way, “trust” can be seen as the opposite of “accountability”, and it neither fits in the paradigm of “result based management” and the regulations which the Dutch government finds that must govern all expenses of public funds. In this respect, the TMF organisation may find itself trapped again: on the one hand it also demands justification from their partners, on the other hand it would prefer that their partnership rests on trust, so: “trust is conditional”, which seems to be a contradiction in terms.

Accepting the duty to report on basic DRAM issues such as “relevance”, “output”, “outcome” (effect), “impact” and “sustainability”, which questions should then be posed, and how should the data-collection then be organised? For several organisations the methodological aspects of M&E elicit many questions: “How to get the right information in the right time?”, “To what degree do you measure details, especially small organisations?”, “There is so much information that changes all the time – how do you use it for adjusting your strategy?”, “Who needs to receive what information?”, “How to process ‘informal’ information?”, “How do you cope with the external factors?”, “Keep also a close watch on the environment the program is situated in”.

The same confusion exists with respect to Logical Framework terminology: “what is the difference between ‘result’ and ‘impact’?”, “The donor always asks what we have ‘achieved’ without making clear what he means”, “Make sure you formulate questions in order to make sure that you evaluate achievements, not activities”, “Make the LogFrame suitable for different levels”!, etc. Especially the concepts “effects” and “impact” cause alarm: “How to deal with impact?”, “How to include unexpected effects/results (+ or -) in the M&E-system?”, “How to measure your contribution to impact?”, “Difficult to measure change in attitudes”, “Keep track of unintended effects of your intervention strategy”, etc.

And then, of course, M&E capacity demands resources: manpower, skills, time and money, which are often scarce, as the following statements suggest: “M&E is often not a priority in an organisation”, “How do you ensure the availability of sufficient M&E resources?”, “Time pressure. Little time for M&E. Prioritising time for M&E is needed”, “Our resources are limited to deal with the high M&E demands of donors”, “You have to have capacity in terms of skills (writing) and time”, “We lack financial and human capacity for M&E”, “M&E is time-consuming for the organisation and the stakeholders – where does the measuring end?”. Several representatives have mentioned “staff-turnover” or “staff discontinuity” as a threat “to keep track”, or to build up M&E capacity in an organisation, and a cause of “a lack of institutional memory” – that is why “M&E has to be firmly embedded in the organisation”. They seem to ask patience to the donor: “It takes time before the M&E-system is in place, we have only just begun”, “Experience has to be built up”. 
Finally, learning. The advantage of the model on ‘Managing for Impact’ was that planning/DRAM-elements on the one hand, and the learning environment were presented in one and the same model. This might have guided the participants in the direction of an integrated approach to M&E which combines Planning and M&E, and which serves management as well as learning (innovation), and can also be used for accounting to the donor. The model was meant for that shift from either-or (accountability/learning) to and-and.

**Learning too needs time**, which is often felt to be a scarce good in the TMF-organisations where work is hectic—time is the greatest enemy of learning, or so it seems. The conditions for learning are not automatically present: “they have to be created: who takes the initiatives, how to create time, how does learning become a priority of the management?”, and also “how to create the atmosphere in which partners dare to be critical?”, “how to share responsibility for failure?”, “how to bring mistakes in the open and learn from them?”.

“Creating a learning environment is difficult”, says one participant, and moreover (said several participants) “there is a workshop fatigue (among partners)”. However, when asked to list “good practices” and challenges, this gave rise to enthusiastic accounts of positive events and happenings which everyone had at least once experienced in his or her organisation:

- We reserve one week/month in the organisation for reflection, M&E, analysis.
- We organise Yahoo website meetings – regular telephone conferences.
- We hold annual review meetings with a Steering group in which the donor is represented. And: make both ends of the aid-chain meet more regularly.
- We publish in hard-copy 20 best practices and distribute them among the staff.
- Our experience: give always feedback on each other’s reports.
- Let organisations share experiences IA, HRM, IT, Finance.
- We organise regular peer-reviews between organisations or between partners – horizontal learning. We have created partner-networks for discussing best practices, problems, difficulties, solutions.
- We have found out that self-assessments lead to more participation, ownership and commitment to learn and improve performance.
- Regular interviewing of beneficiaries on how they use their newly acquired skill makes them conscious of learning and its impact.
- During evaluations: we appoint an internal reference group which deals with assessing the TOR, reports, follow-up.

The most heard and read comments on the presented Managing for Impact model were:
- it stimulates because it invites to think more broadly than only Logical Framework;
- “creating a learning environment” gives room for common sense, and the idea of people as key players;
- gender should not figure in the model/matrix, or at least not exclusively, but also other inequalities (disability, ethnicity, poverty, age, etc.). Better to treat Gender as a transversal theme.
- external factors, and actors do not figure clearly. Where can the role of stakeholders be seen? Make a distinction between internal and external conditions. Where is accountability in the model? Where are Communication and Feedback in the model?
- there is no attention for “informal approaches”, “qualitative approaches”, etc.

One comment on the day: “I’ve learned that we need to think less about reports written by a few, and read by none. Our challenge is to make M&E a learning experience for all, that is active, interesting and useful”.

A general remark found back on one of the coloured cards employed by the groups:

*“It would be good to have a more indepth reflection on M&E for TMF”*
3. How to proceed - the next phase of this M&E evaluation in the TMF sector

As was mentioned in the Introduction (above), the ultimate aim of the association of the TMF organisations with the MDF/IAC evaluation, was to come to M&E-guidelines on which individual organisations could base their own M&E-system. These guidelines were to be discussed and agreed upon by the major stakeholders in the future MFS (co-financing structure, replacing the actual MFO and TMF) – NGO/CSO and the donor.

This present report does not yet contain sufficient elements to propose guidelines in the sense as meant above. Since the September 1st Workshop, the research for this evaluation has proceeded: interviews with TMF organisations in England and in Switzerland, visits to TMF partner-organisations in Vietnam, Peru/Bolivia and Uganda, interviews with TMF organisations in the Netherlands, etc. More study, for instance on Ministry level, will follow. The results of these studies will be presented to you in due time, during the next workshop.

Which building materials has this September 1st Workshop provided to the discussion, what preliminary conclusions may be drawn?

This meeting of TMF organisations may be characterized as exploratory. For the first time so many (62 organisations, 75 persons) of them were together. The result of the day is an inventory of views and visions, thoughts and feelings with regard to Monitoring&Evaluation in the TMF context. In spite of the very different size of the organisations, the volume and the nature of the funding received, the knowledge and experience concerning M&E of their representatives present, a number of tangible points emerged during the discussions, debates and various kinds of presentations. These may be summarized as follows:

1. A few organisations find M&E burdensome, it is felt as imposed by the donor and serving the donor’s interests only; it requires too much (scarce) time. For these organisations M&E has no added value. Several organisations expressed that they have insufficient capacity for it.

2. Among many organisations a tension is felt between the accountability-function versus the learning-function of M&E; some organisations consider accounting (report writing) as the primary function of M&E.

3. For some organisations the idea of M&E as a learning instrument is new; for others it is a leading principle.

4. A number of TMF-organisations lack comprehensive knowledge about the principles and the application of DRAM or the Logical framework.

5. In some M&E systems a clear link between Planning and M&E lacks.

6. Many organisations do not use M&E in their management system.

7. The relationship between the donor and TMF organisations can in many cases be characterized by ‘control’ only; in these cases there is no learning in the relationship.

It is certain that the MDF/IAC research on TMF (referred to before) will produce more statements like those presented above. Hopefully, the point of view of TMF-partnerorganisations (on the one hand) and the donor (on the other hand), will shed a better
light on the whole chain of relationships going from donor via TMF-organisations to beneficiary, and back.

For the next meeting we will prepare a list of conclusions of our research, and a suggestion how to take into consideration these conclusions during your next assignment: to design with us guidelines for M&E (see above, Introduction). Therefore, the next workshop will be less general, it will be a real working session, from which clear "outcomes" are expected. Apart from M&E guidelines designed by TMF organisations, on the second day of the workshop DGIS will present the future Ministry-requisites for M&E. The second day will thus be a debate and exchange between DGIS and the TMF organisations.

The outcomes of this exchange will be applied in the new MFS (Mede Financierings Stelsel) arrangement. Therefore, only Dutch TMF organisations will be invited for this second workshop.

The second workshop will be organised in January 2006, the 11th and 12th, again in De Bosrand, Ede. One night B&B in De Bosrand can be provided for €30. These costs and travel expenses are at your own cost, like last time. Documentation and a detailed programme will be sent to you in due time.

We hope that this report reflects your own experiences of the September 1st Workshop-day in Ede, and contains some useful conclusions. Please, feel free to mail your comments, either to sz@mdf.nl or to simone.vanvugt@wur.nl.

All the best, Sjoerd Zanen (MDF) Simone van Vugt (IAC-WUR)

TMF Evaluation, lot M&E
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1. Introduction
In accordance with the principles of the TMF-Evaluation, a validation session was organised by the executive agencies of this evaluation (MDF and IAC) for all the Dutch TMF organisations which have been subject to the TMF-evaluation lot 8, M&E. Moreover, representatives of the MFO, the TMF Platform (Advisory Council of the evaluation), Partos, the evaluations’ Steering committee (Berenschot and Ton Dietz), were also invited. DGIS was invited during the second day of the workshop (See annexe 1: List of participants). The international TMF organisations were not invited (unlike during our first workshop). This was a deliberate choice made by the evaluation’s Steering committee. It was suggested (by the TMF platform and by DGIS) to invite all the organisations which will become part of the MFS, but time constraints and the limited capacity for this event in the conference centre prevented this.

2. Earlier feedback
As a matter of principle, the assessments have been shared with the TMF-organisations being subject of investigation (apart from some exceptional cases). This feedback has been very rewarding for us. Not only did almost all organisations ‘recognize’ themselves in the assessments, but they often also provided supplementary information. It must be remembered that the long interviews with the organisations were a mix of prospective and retrospective scrutiny, combining (mutual) assessment, (joint) analysis, and sometimes advice for the future. Some evaluators have experienced the sessions as ‘backstopping missions’, others as real ‘learning experiences’ or ‘eye openers’. In the countries abroad, at the end of the mission, workshops were organised with all or most partner organisations which were involved in the evaluation. Information was shared and often recommendations were given for improvement of M&E systems.

This evaluation started with a workshop. Invited were all TMF-organisations wishing to take part. During this workshop the evaluation methodology was presented to and discussed with the organisations. In a structured way, their interest and commitment to M&E, and their knowledge and experience with respect to M&E, was investigated. This was the beginning of a learning trail which continued during the months of the evaluation process, and which ended with the validation session during the second workshop.

3. Validation session during the workshop
The conclusions of the study were presented in a detailed way (See Annex 2: Presentation). The presentation was followed by questions of clarification. The participants were then asked to comment, in groups, on eight ‘lessons learned’ (during the evaluation, by the evaluators). This resulted in lively discussions in various places of the building, and over lunch. Comments were written down and stuck on wall charts.

Following the presentation of the evaluation’s conclusions and their digestion by the participants, the workshop programme continued with two presentations very much in line
with the M&E issues discussed previously: the first one on conceptual and methodological distinctions between monitoring and evaluation, and methods of data collection (by Bert van de Putte, representing TMF-Stuurgroep), and the second one on ways of applying standard concepts of M&E on various types of organisations (by Hotze Lont, Partos). Both presentations were followed by discussion.

For the last programme item of the day, the participants were asked to note down some statements concerning what they considered the most remarkable learning points of the day. These statements were given to the group of about 20 participants who spent the night in De Bosrand, and who discussed these after dinner.

The next day, a brief summary of the various issues of the first day were presented. For this day, DGIS was invited to present (on their own request) some principles of tailor-made reporting which they intend to introduce for MFS. During discussions, more issues of the MFS and its procedures were touched upon, without being exhaustive, and in an informal and relaxed atmosphere.

4. Some conclusions of the workshop
As is often the case during workshops, much is said, but what is said is not always easily recognizable as clear conclusions. However, a number of themes kept returning in the discussions, and we think that these points are worth mentioning, to be considered as mere statements or as genuine concerns.

1. The problem of measuring impact. The problem of attribution. The analysis of the context. Impact is often considered as something of the far future. It is considered difficult to link programme achievements with impact. Moreover, NGO often lack the capacity to make extensive studies of the context. It was suggested to collaborate with Embassies or other donor organisations in this respect.

2. How to find a balance between operational and strategic monitoring?
One hesitates about strategic monitoring as one feels that indicators for outcome and impact are difficult to formulate (see also point 1). Also difficult is the collection of the right strategic information from lower levels in the chain (see also point 4). The coherence of one interlinked M&E system throughout the chain is difficult to realize.

3. How to find a balance between accountability and learning?
On the one hand, there is a broad consensus about NIZA's statement “if learning takes place, accountability follows”. Some think that the statement could also be reversed. Others think that the two principles are so fundamentally different that it would be better to separate them from each other (see also point 4).

4. How to reach a common understanding of the chain?
This question refers to the basic inequality which one often finds in chain-relations, and to the various ambiguities in the relationship between contract-organisation and partner-organisation and beneficiaries. These ambiguities affect the operation of M&E, especially with regard to data collection. A coherent M&E system can perhaps only be realized when the contract-organisation takes the lead. Others think that the logic, concepts and priorities of partners in the chain must prevail.

5. How to make M&E sustainable in an organisation?
Many (especially smaller) organisations cope with capacity problems when it comes to M&E functions. When budgets are cut, the first economy usually concerns M&E. Donors must be aware of the importance of M&E as added value of programmes (not only the physical results count!), and must realize that M&E, if properly executed, needs considerable resources.
The above mentioned issues are not exhaustive, but they reflect some concerns and ongoing reflections in circles of MFS organisations. Some issues have been the subject of this evaluation and clear opinions about them have been made known in this report.

5. The contribution of DGIS with regard to the management of the MFS

DGIS (DSI/MY: Leni Buisman; DMW: Lex v.d. Hoeven; DEK: Fritz Meijndert) explained a number of the present TMF practices, the monitoring by Ministry officials, the use of Piramide, and proposed a number of improvements to be introduced in the new MFS.

A few issues:

1. DGIS recognizes the present underdevelopment of their monitoring capacity and practices. Field-visits are rare. The use of Piramide for monitoring policy is restricted. The institutional memory is weak due to frequent staff changes and lack of time and attention to deal with TMF monitoring. The Ministry wants to pick up the monitoring function after the first selection of MFS grants.

2. During the workshop, the TMF sector has pressed for a more substantial policy dialogue between the NGOs and the Ministry, well facilitated and on thematical level. They consider the actual practice as a technocratic affair, mainly focused on accountability. The Ministry staff present agrees and promises to develop this aspect too.

3. The TMF participants have suggested that the link between bilateral and TMF/MFS channel could be reinforced. It was suggested that Embassies exchange context-analyses with the NGO sector. DGIS will look into this issue.

4. The Ministry wants to reinforce the evaluation capacity. Nowadays there is hardly any follow-up and many evaluations end up unexploited in the drawer.

5. Some participants have indicated the restrictions of the DRAM-(Logical Framework) methodology. They seem to indicate that the learning-component is not well covered with DRAM. They have proposed the term Flex-frame to replace Log-frame, meaning to reinforce the learning function in monitoring.

6. DGIS has explained their intended introduction of tailor-made, so-called ‘monitoring protocols’, which are to be proposed by the MFS organisations being selected for a grant, and to be integrated in the beschikking (contract). Many questions remain with regard to this protocol. They will be answered in the course of time.

The grand conclusion of this exchange between the TMF and MFO sectors on the one hand and the DGIS on the other hand is that they have both appreciated the dialogue, that it is now more clear that there is ample room for manoeuvre, and that DGIS is open for many ideas existing in the NGO world. All think that the dialogue should be continued on such a constructive basis.

The consultant world too is very interested in the new MFS, and is reflecting on the way they may contribute to its successful introduction and operation. They too look for possibilities of dialogue with both parties, as they are always accustomed to do.
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Presentation of First Results TMF Evaluation lot 8, M&E (power point presentation by Hettie Walters)

Conclusions and Emerging Insights

Conclusions
1. TMF M&E systems in use
2. Learning
3. Strategy development

Emerging Insights
1. Common understanding of M&E in the whole chain
2. Balance between strategic and operational monitoring
3. Combining accountability and shared learning
4. Measuring impact: vitally important
5. Budgeting for M&E; making it sustainable
6. Learning makes the difference
7. Importance of ownership and trust

A. Conclusions

1. TMF M&E systems in use
   - Rapidly growing interest in M&E in the TMF sector
   - M&E systems in use require improvements in 50% of the cases
   - Strengths:
     - learning ability; stronger informal than formal,
     - financial accountability sufficient
   - Weaknesses:
     - seldom exceed output/results levels to reach outcome and impact M&E,
     - Sub-optimal mastering of the Log. Frame method (or DRAM)
     - Inconsistent monitoring of the context for understanding results or absence of results
     - Systems are fragmented: loss of information in the chain
     - Effectiveness of M&E system more operational than strategic level
     - Gender is given little explicit or specific attention in PM&E, gender consciousness at ‘field’ level is often present
2. Learning

- Generating and using information to question and improve performance internally in projects, programmes, organisations, involving all key stakeholders
- Developing capacities to do a better job!!!
- Learning environments and opportunities have been created at all levels of the chain (least at Ministry level)
- Learning is less formalised lower in the chain and more formalised higher in the chain
- M&E streamline throughout chain → permanent communication and learning
- Decrease from single loop learning (operational change), via double loop (revision of programme elements, indicators) to triple loop learning (revision of mission and strategy).
- Learning continuity until the beneficiary level only takes place where these are part of the network with the contracting organisation, and learning and reflection is part of the network structure and practices.
- At donor level no effective learning mechanisms for TMF are established Piramide serves as an accountability tool not as a learning tool.

3. Strategy Development

- Challenge: produce strategic data serving all actors involved
- Advocacy and lobby organisations are most impact orientated: monitor context
- Core funded big organisations have better M&E systems: multi functional, staff, funding for M&E
- Strategic information passes easiest up the chain if the M&E system is of “one” organisation or if it is very coherent in linking different levels and actors
- A clear strategy of TMF is missing, insufficient coherence between themes and no learning is taking place at “instrument” level (but for this evaluation)
- The Ministry level is:
  - Not well integrated in the chain
  - Inactive
  - Limited communication and feedback
  - In 8% strong relation and feedback (personal relations)
- Limited effectiveness of donor-contract organisation relationship:
  - Ambiguity in their relation:
    - Partnership and autonomy
    - Partnership and trust
- MDGs no role of importance

B. Emerging insights

Lessons learned by the evaluating team about what constitutes and are practices in a good M&E system.

1. Common understanding of M&E

- Common understanding of the chain by all partners
Shared understanding of each others roles and places in the chain
Understanding double roles and changing roles:
- Donor and recipient of funds
- Strategic thinkers and implementers of policy

2. Balance between strategic and operational monitoring
- A system which generates relevant information for all stakeholders
- Generates information on output/ results, outcome/ impact levels
- Outcome / impact level for:
  - Orienting intervention logic towards effectiveness and sustainability, context developments
  - Give donor required information at their level of interest
- Logical Framework can be used universally
- Levels of detail and preciseness of indicators may vary from one organisation to another depending on their place in the chain, the orientation of the project, type of work undertaken, flexibility in its use is needed everywhere.
- Orientation on operational issues or more strategic orientation leads to differences in application of log. Frame: more outputs/ results level or more outcome/ impact orientation.

3. Combining accountability and shared learning
- "When learning takes place, accountability follows" (Niza)
- Learning promotes taking ownership and responsibility
- Learning is linked to a felt interest
- M&E without felt self-interest and learning only serves “accountability” to external parties and does not lead to good data production.

4. Measuring impact: vitally important
- All TMF projects have formulated impact level changes and M&E at this level is important
- But how to measure?
  - How to measure the change?
  - Attribution: is it due to what we did? Positive and negative outcomes
  - Context monitoring: how has the context influenced the outcome/ impact
- Results at all levels of intervention logic should be analysed for taking operational and strategic decisions

5. Budgeting for M&E; making it sustainable
- Budgets for overhead costs should give sufficient budgetary space for the set-up and functioning of adequate M&E at all levels in the chain for accountability, managing and learning.
- Striving towards the lowest overhead can lead to loss of quality and reduce M&E to simple reporting without promoting learning mechanisms
6. Learning makes the difference
- Understanding the implementation process is as important as understanding the results or absence of envisaged results
- Donors should scrutinise reports for results and learning information
- Proper planning based on well founded analysis and careful M&E are essential instruments in a learning and effective development organisation.

7. Importance of ownership and trust
- Success of the chain depends on ownership and participation of all stakeholders in analysis, planning, M&E
- Trust can overcome differences of positions and interests of stakeholders in the chain
- But trust creation must be made an explicit process in the chain in shared learning and mutual accountability
- Dependency is contradictory to trust