



Monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning

Mariana Wongtschowski, Lisanne Oonk and Remco Mur

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Can agricultural extension¹ systems deliver quality services to smallholder producers, often in remote areas? Yes, there is evidence that this is achieved in some developing and emerging economies. But this is by no means common practice, and many extension systems continue to struggle with weak performance. This series of six papers seeks to understand the patterns behind extension system performance by looking at the different factors that either drive performance or constitute yardsticks to assess performance: governance of extension systems (paper 1); quality of content in extension (paper 2); monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning (paper 3); ICT in extension (paper 4); assessing performance through cost-benefit analysis (paper 5); and incentives for enhanced performance of extension systems (paper 6). All papers explore emergent practices, showcase promising illustrative examples, and identify potential pitfalls that hinder improved system performance. The objective is to provide state-of-the-art reviews and build the foundation for an informed debate on potential pathways for transformation of agricultural extension systems.

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¹ Extension services are understood as encompassing all intangible services to farmers, including information, knowledge, brokering and advice, on issues such as production, inputs and technology, credit, nutrition, processing, marketing, organisation and business management.

1 Monitoring and evaluation for accountability and learning in rural advisory and extension systems

Even though the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has long been recognised by scholars, donors and practitioners worldwide, there have been some significant shifts in the understanding of its function and significance in the past few decades. The context of globalisation, changing policy objectives and international aid modalities has geared M&E towards higher complexity levels. It has to play its traditional role of generating information on the implementation and results of a program or project, but in addition has to assess policy impacts and provide the basis for improved management and decision-making as well as for accountability to farmers, donors, governments and tax payers (Pound et al., 2011).

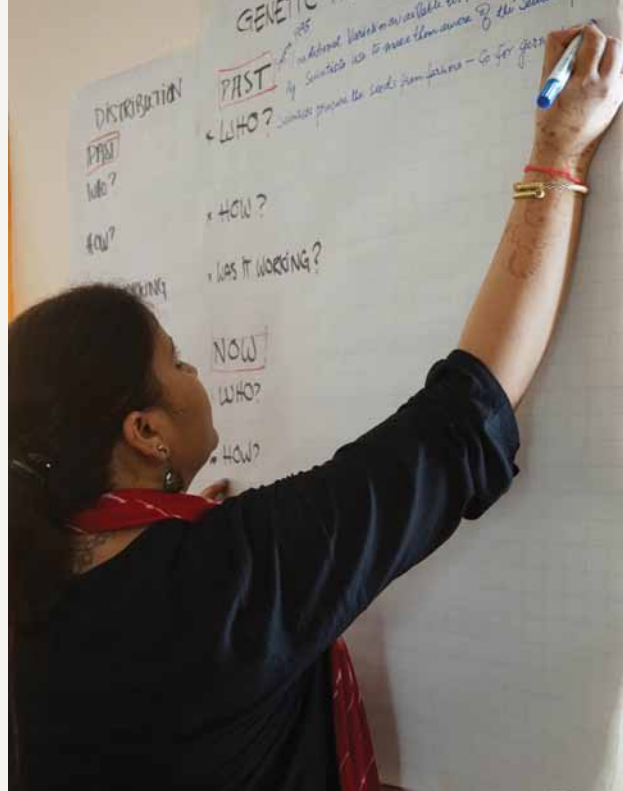


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Table 1: Purpose of M&E systems at different levels

Levels	What do you want to monitor?	Who (potentially) uses the information?	Tools/Methods
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach Quality of services Approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male and female farmers, extension agents and their supervisors, donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT for gathering farmer feedback, focus-group-discussions, case studies, most significant change narratives, farmers defining extension agenda (i.e. part of governance)
Sub-national	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of 'the planned vs. done' Planned budget and spent budget (depending on the autonomy people have at this level) Efficiency of resource use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government officials, supervisors of extension agents, donors, farmer organisations/unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports based on primary and secondary data, discussions in multi-stakeholder settings, including male/female farmer representatives, cross-site comparison
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which policy has been translated into results Macro investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy makers, government officials, donors, farmer representation (unions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-site comparisons, policy research/analysis, secondary data collection/analysis

A difference is commonly made between M&E for accountability and M&E for learning (see, for example, van Mierlo and Guijt, 2015; Hoffman et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2011; Christoplos et al., 2010).

M&E for accountability commonly focuses on upward accountability to government or the funding agency. M&E is often an obligation to demonstrate that contracted work has been conducted in compliance with agreed standards or to report on results vis-à-vis plans. Downward accountability involves making accounts and plans transparent to the primary stakeholders: clients.

M&E for learning requires continuous and conscious involvement of evaluators and stakeholders in collaborative learning, allowing stakeholders to share their views, perspectives and ideas, without fear of negative consequences (Kusters et al., 2011).

It is important to be aware of the underlying tensions that may exist in terms of why an evaluation is carried out. Nevertheless, the two objectives of accountability and learning are – or should be – complementary.

A number of donors have moved away from purely results-oriented evaluations to a stronger client and user focus with a broader set of evaluation objectives, including learning, transparency and capacity development (OECD, 2010). This shift has important implications for an M&E system, as will be further discussed in this paper.

The following section elaborates on the historical background of evaluation of rural advisory and extension systems, followed by a section on emerging practices aimed to improve M&E for accountability and transparency. The final two sections focus on processes that strengthen the performance of M&E, key lessons and conclusions.

2 Background: The importance of M&E in agricultural extension

In the past decades, changes in agriculture and extension systems have led to a shift in how services are provided in rural areas (Wongtschowski et al., 2013). These changes have not only shaped how agricultural advice and extension are conceptualised and carried out, but also how they should be monitored and evaluated.

Since its early days – and in many cases, until today - extension services have been synonymous with technology transfer from (formal) research to extension agents and ‘further down’ to ‘homogenous’ (usually male) farmers (see Special Series on Agricultural Advisory Services – Paper 2). Since the 1970s and 1980s there has been an increased awareness of the importance of farmers’ ideas and aspirations in optimising agricultural production and in the intrinsic differences among farmers (in terms of gender, farming systems, etc.), which has resulted in more participatory models of information provision.

At the same time, with the partial privatisation of extension systems in many countries in the 1990s, advisory services have increasingly focused on helping farmers to move beyond subsistence. The concept of ‘market-oriented agricultural advisory services’ became recognised as a mainstream strategy for smallholder commercialisation (Chipeta, et al., 2008). Service providers do not only focus on increasing productivity but provide a range of services, including production, farm management, postharvest handling, credit access, and marketing (Wongtschowski et al., 2013).

Both the development towards more participatory extension models and the growing role of the private sector in service delivery have contributed to more client-oriented extension models. If farmers are increasingly seen as customers of service providers, service providers are increasingly being asked

to (also) be accountable to farmers (Garforth in World Bank, 2004; Chipeta, 2006). There is a growing interest in participatory monitoring and evaluation methods (Rajalahti et al., 2005) and in approaches that address farmers’ diverse needs and ambitions (Koledoye et al., 2013).

In this context, we identify three main challenges in present M&E systems for extension services:

- 1 Design:** Overall, evaluations have made a major shift from single technology- focused M&E efforts to much more complex – and participatory - assessments of changes in agricultural institutions, farming systems, human resource capacity and trade relationships, together with the impact on the incomes and livelihoods of participants (Martin et al., 2011). However, this is still not common practice, particularly concerning the day-to-day monitoring of extension (systems). In addition, the attribution challenge – that is, clearly tracing an observed (on-farm) change to extension service delivery – becomes even more pronounced within such a broad understanding of extension.
- 2 Reliability of data:** Systems are designed, but data are not collected, or are of doubtful quality. This relates directly to (lack of) performance incentives, as discussed in Paper 6, or, as phrased by the World Bank, ‘lack of demand’. Lack of demand is rooted in the absence of an evaluation culture, which, in turn, stems from the absence of performance orientation in the public sector (World Bank, 2000).
- 3 Using data/analysis:** The third challenge relates to the use of M&E systems for learning and accountability. In a meta-evaluation of extension conducted by GFRAS in 2011, one of the findings was that in most of the evaluations carried out, feedback was provided to project staff, but to a much lesser extent to local stakeholders and commissioning organisations (Pound et al., 2011). There is also no evidence on how results of M&E are actually being used, either by donors or by project staff, to support learning and reflection leading to improved implementation.

Box 1: Mozambique: Disconnected M&E system

The second phase of the National Programme for Agricultural Extension (PRONEA) in Mozambique was launched in 2012. It’s monitoring and evaluation system has a number of indicators, such as number of trials, farmer groups worked with and their composition. Data are collected at district level, but they are unreliable, as they are often estimated and extrapolated, and figures are not checked.

If the indicators suggest that extensionists have not performed well, their supervisors put pressure on them to improve their performance. Extensionists therefore tend to exaggerate the figures when reporting on a quarterly basis – even though they run no risk of being demoted or fired, irrespective of their performance.

Adoption studies are part of PRONEA’s M&E system. However, these have hardly ever been carried out. Firstly, because they demand collaboration with research which has proven to be an obstacle in terms of planning, administration and finances. Secondly, they should be organised by district directors who do not see this as a priority, as it can expose the failures of the system (IFAD, 2013).

These challenges are well illustrated by the case of public extension in Mozambique, in Box 1. The examples in the next section demonstrate how private and public extension providers go about these challenges; where they succeed or fail.

3 Emerging practices to improve M&E for accountability and transparency

The cases described here showcase, on the one hand, the realities of effective lack of M&E systems in place, which relate directly to the three challenges presented in the previous section. On the other hand, they present interesting innovative practices (e.g. use of ICT, performance-based approaches and farmer-centred monitoring tools) which aim to respond to these challenges.

Uganda: M&E system aimed to work quickly, but does it?

The Plantwise program in Uganda, led by the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), an international NGO, focuses on making high quality, relevant information available to farmers, extension systems and governments through ‘plant clinics’: stands in local markets to which farmers can come with their questions. A Plantwise M&E system has been developed based on the assumption that increased timeliness, faster processes of (monitoring) data collection and improved quality of data enables project staff to make necessary adjustments and tailor the activities to the needs on the ground. The idea is that the M&E system could document farmers’ attendance, identify recurrent phytosanitary problems, support the surveillance and tracking of epidemics and new diseases, assess the quality of the diagnosis, and identify training needs and researchable topics.

The M&E system works as follows. Data collected from plant clinics is transferred to the District Agricultural Office, NGOs and later to the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) coordinator who is involved in the delivery of services. From there, the data are entered through customised data-entry forms into a digital system. Once harmonised and validated, the data are analysed and reported on.

However, in reality the system appears to be slow, incomplete and costly. ‘With the current system, the districts are unable to use the data for their own purposes. There are no functional procedures for reporting and data sharing. The data appear to become ‘lost’ as soon as they leave the district, which is a serious disincentive to comply with the data management system requirements. As the district does not retain copies of the prescription forms, it would not be possible for staff to enter and analyse the data locally even if they wanted’ (Danielsen in Mur et al, 2015: 126).

Mexico: ICT for consolidating M&E data beyond project level – and the challenge of reliable data

Modernización Sustentable de la Agricultura Tradicional (MasAgro) *Productor* is a country-wide initiative by CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center) and SAGARPA (Mexican Secretariat for Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development and Fisheries) aimed at strengthening food security through research, capacity building and technology transfer. It focuses on realising high and stable yields for small- and medium-sized maize and wheat producers.

As part of the initiative, an electronic log book or BEM (‘Bitácora Electrónica MasAgro’) has been launched with the aim of creating a central place for recording production data from the plots where MasAgro’s trained technicians work with farmers. The data are stored in a database, and are partly available online. Registered users of the online platform, such as technicians, local trainers, and private service providers are tasked to collect data and to ensure that these are properly fed into the online system.

The electronic log book is potentially a powerful tool, when results are analysed with the aim to inform new research initiatives. It is now in use beyond MasAgro, thanks to a fruitful effort to consolidate the governmental logbook (which many technicians had to use) with MasAgro’s own original system. Whereas the tool is powerful, the quality of the data presently collected is questionable. This will continue to be a problem until technicians understand the tool and see how the data can (also) be useful for them, providing insights on which interventions are going well, where and why they are not.

Vietnam: piloting a system with clear incentives to perform and monitor²

Vietnam is piloting a Result-based Payment System (RPS) in extension service delivery. Under this pilot, in Thua Thien Hue Province, 20 farming households of two villages in the most disadvantaged areas of A Luoi District are provided with extension services on vegetable production. Services are provided by (and results awarded to) farmer advisors. The extension station in the region defines criteria for selection of households to be serviced, which are then applied by the farmer advisors in actually selecting the households.

Performance specifications of the RPS scheme contain assessment criteria about the minimal level of service quantity and quality. Indicators are established through negotiation between the extension station and the farmer advisors as part of the RPS contract. The service package

² This section is based on Vögtli 2008.

on initiation of vegetable production in A Luoi District includes four expected results with corresponding indicators of quantity and quality, such as number of trainings and whether farmers applied what they learned, and the quality of their produce.

The experience shows that RPS is appreciated by farmers. The system improves farmers' capacity to express demand, satisfaction and dissatisfaction about service delivery. As a consequence, extension services are often of better quality.

RPS relies on financial incentives for performance and self-responsibility, which means that service providers are motivated by such incentives and have the competence and flexibility to adapt service delivery and 'experiment', thus becoming more competitive. For donors, the system ensures more transparency and accountability.

However, introduction of RPS is a long-term process. The transition does not only require a set of new rules but organisational development as well. Capacity building calls for initial efforts and considerable investments. It takes strong political will and leadership to pioneer and introduce a RPS in a public extension system. In addition, RPS application in the development context is not fully market compatible. Funds are still provided and steered by the donor and service prices might not be determined by a situation of real demand and supply.

Finally, the system requires consistent monitoring. The shift from input to output-orientation can result in a focus on topics which are of high visibility and low risk in their implementation. Advisors have also tended to select farmers who are likely to exhibit better performance (Vögtli, 2010). Performance-based contracts in other sectors (e.g. health and education) have shown similar challenges (Rothstein, 2008).

Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Rwanda: participation at the core

The Community Score Card (CSC) is both a tool and an approach to M&E, centred in the development and application of, and discussion of results from, a matrix consisting of indicators for the quality of services provided, and reasons thereof (see Figure 1). It was pioneered by CARE in Malawi in 2002. The tool has been since used in a variety of sectors and projects, including agricultural extension. It represents CARE's attempt to gather more and better data from 'clients' on the services provided to them in a systematic and non-threatening manner. The idea is to establish a basis for dialogue between parties, aimed at improving services, and the different factors affecting their quality and availability (CARE Malawi, 2013; Dedu and Kajubi, 2005).

Broadly speaking the CSC application consists of five phases (CARE Malawi, 2013):

- Planning and preparation: identification and training of facilitating staff, community research, introductory engagement with community, development;
- Community scoring of performance by community members: development of performance indicators and scoring system;
- Self-evaluation by service providers;
- Meeting between service users and providers, and action planning: district-level meetings, feedback and dialogue;
- Action Plan implementation and M&E.

A recent review of CARE's CSC programs in Ethiopia, Malawi, Tanzania and Rwanda, in sectors as diverse as water and sanitation, gender-based violence and agriculture, concluded that the programs have contributed to strengthening service provision and relations between providers and clients in all countries. The exact way in which they work vary depending on how the 'state apparatus' works. Nevertheless, impact is often only seen a local level, with only a few changes seen at more macro levels, e.g. policy change or resource mobilisation (Wild et al., 2015).

Figure 1: the Community Score Card Scoring Matrix. Source: CARE Malawi 2003

Example - Scoring Matrix

Group name: **Date:** **Village:** **Catchment area:**

Indicator	Score					Reasons
	Very bad = 1	Bad = 2	Just okay = 3	Good = 4	Very Good = 5	
Indicator 1						
Indicator 2						
Indicator 3						
.....						

4 Processes that strengthen or hinder M&E for accountability and transparency

In section 2, we listed three main M&E challenges: design, reliability of data, and using data/analysis. In this section, we will examine processes that are directly relevant to these challenges. Table 2 provides an overview of the processes and the challenges they respond to.

1 *Understanding the role of extension systems in development – and therefore defining what it should be contributing to, and how.*

M&E efforts need to understand extension as part of an innovation system – and not simply taking research outputs to farmers. This requires enhanced attention to the (quality of) partnerships that exist between extension, research and other partners, and the extent to which extension plays a role in defining the research agenda in order to ensure that research is relevant and beneficial to the needs and demands of farmers. Public investment in extension therefore needs to be assessed based on the extent to which new technologies are tested and adapted, based on their positive impact for farmers (Christoplos, Sandison and Chipeta, 2012).

In addition, M&E needs to consider extension goals beyond ‘increasing production’. As already mentioned, extensionists can play a variety of roles that are just as important, but that do not directly contribute to higher yields. They can support farmers in getting organised towards collective buy-in of inputs or marketing, communicating with local authorities on issues such as roads and markets, and linking farmers to other stakeholders, such as buyers and processors. They can support women in strengthening their own organisation – or starting up a new business. M&E systems should therefore be designed in a way that enables them to deal with the multi-faceted character of extension. This implies that a mix between qualitative and quantitative indicators must be used, and that some degree in flexibility in defining indicators with local communities must be granted.

2 *Stakeholder involvement and participation*

Growing evidence suggests that client involvement is a key requirement for successful evaluation practices. Involving those who are genuinely interested in finding out whether a system is working or not facilitates data collection and generates lessons learned (Martin et al, 2011). Importantly, ‘clients’ need to be also involved in defining the indicators for such an M&E system.

But how do we involve stakeholders in an efficient and effective manner? Pound et al. (2011) argue for mixed evaluation teams of internal and external evaluators, combining the benefits of an ‘impartial’ perspective with the increased ownership led by active participation of internal actors. The

Community Score Card experience points to the benefits of direct participation in improving quality of services, at the local level.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide powerful tools for participatory M&E systems. By filling in questionnaires about the service provided (and about the providers) on their mobile phones, farmers can provide timely and accurate feedback to extensionists and their supervisors. Such a system is not perfect, as farmers tend to be careful in providing negative feedback to someone who will come back soon for his/her next visit – and on whom they depend. There is no evidence of such a system being in place at large scale.

3 *Downward accountability*

Whereas some system of upward accountability is usually in place (if imperfectly) for most extension programmes, downward accountability to ‘clients’ is largely missing in publicly-funded extension. Accountability is intrinsically linked to governance, and the extent to which clients have a say at higher levels of planning and monitoring of the system.

Possible indicators of downward accountability include (Christoplos, Sandison and Chipeta, 2012):

- Mechanisms to incorporate feedback from male and female farmers into extension work plans
- Farmers’ knowledge of available service providers
- Willingness by farmers to pay for services
- Methods that include concrete requirements and measures for response to concerns raised by clients
- Availability of alternative service providers if clients are dissatisfied with the quality of the services they receive

The Community Score Card, as an approach, has been tried in different countries and sectors, and provides a concrete example of an M&E system that leads to both downward accountability and learning and action.

4 *Building capacity for M&E*

All M&E systems need capacities in place for data gathering and analysis. Whereas projects and programmes usually set resources aside for external evaluations, they rarely do so for building capacity of local actors to properly gather and analyse data.

In the example of MasAgro, mentioned in the previous section, the data gathering tool has been well designed and technicians trained in filling it in. But they have not been trained in understanding the (analysed) data, and in drawing lessons for their own work.

Participatory M&E requires yet a different set of skills: facilitation of meetings and focus group discussions, for example, which is not often considered a priority in the training of extensionists and their supervisors.



5 *Defining incentives/consequences linked to M&E*

Accountability and transparency are directly linked to funding and incentives, at different levels. Upward accountability is meant for funders and policy makers to re-evaluate the extension program. In evaluating the program, the funder re-evaluates how much to re-invest. After all, funders are often foreign governments, themselves accountable to demanding parliaments and internal M&E systems.

Outsourcing of services – i.e. giving a third party the responsibility to provide services - could be one of the strategies to improve the upward accountability and transparency of these services and to contribute to the overall performance and impact of the advisory systems. When outsourcing activities, parties have to come to a contractual establishment of clear targets, which allows for performance management based on progress-related disbursements (Heemskerck, Nederlof and Wennink, 2008).

At other levels, the link between accountability and incentives is even weaker. Usually, weak performance by individual extensionists – particularly if s/he works for the public sector – has few consequences for the extensionist in question, his/her supervisor, or the level of funding they receive (see also Special Series on Agricultural Advisory Services – Paper 6). The exception are performance-based payment systems, where performance is rewarded with (usually financial) incentives. Other incentives include opportunity for training and exposure to other experiences with the best extensionists.

In addition, whereas data gathered and analysed are often used to show how well policies and projects are implemented, lessons drawn and news of failure in projects do not tend to travel far. NGOs, local governments and private companies alike are often wary about sharing failures with donors – in fear of declining or discontinued funding as a consequence.

Table 2: Elements to strengthen M&E systems

	Design	Data collection	Data usage
1 Understanding the role of extension systems in development	x		
2 Stakeholder involvement	x	x	x
3 Downward accountability		x	x
4 Capacity building for M&E		x	x
5 Incentives and consequences		x	x
6 Political commitment			x

6 Political commitment

Current political systems often see a great disadvantage in openly discussing problems in an extension system. This has been recognised as a key bottleneck in M&E systems. External evaluators (or, as argued before, a mixed team between internal and external actors) can increase the impartiality of an M&E system, but will not fully address the problem. Multi-sector national extension platforms, such as the Uganda Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (UFAAS – see <http://www.ufaas-ugandacf.org/>) can be used as neutral actors who can convene controversial policy dialogues.

‘Since organisations, including extension systems, have a self-serving tendency, it is not unreasonable to expect that some staff members, especially those in the highest places, may want a pseudo evaluation that will postpone, buy time, or avoid threatening change. In these cases, evaluators are not taken seriously, and the evaluation becomes a meaningless political diversion.’ (Deshler, 1997)

Therefore, political commitment is a prerequisite to ensuring that M&E systems are set in place, have the required support in terms of finances and other resources, and are able to operate without political interference.

5 Implications for gender

M&E systems for extension must recognise gender inequalities in the agricultural sector as deeply rooted in inequalities in society as a whole. This includes issues such as inter-household relationships, rights to land and access to inputs, credits and markets (Christoplos, Sandison and Chipeta, 2012).

This implies that M&E systems must assess not only whether the extension system has been ‘gender-sensitive’, by adapting its way of working to, for example, tending to the crops and other activities managed by women or changing the timing of the trainings to accommodate women’s schedules. M&E systems also need to assess whether the system has tried to tackle the above-mentioned inequalities, promoting the empowerment of women and strengthening their ownership and control of the services provided (Chipeta, 2013).

To be able to do so, interventions need to define – preferably together with their clients – specific gender equality targets and indicators, on the basis of which the intervention can be monitored and evaluated. Collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data and indicators to identify and monitor inequalities in access to and control of services is essential (Mbo’o-Tchouawou and Colverson, 2014). A challenge faced when monitoring indicators on gender is that services usually tackle ‘households’, rather than individual clients. This means that counting women and men who accessed services cannot be done by simple extrapolation, but needs a more critical and systematic procedure (Christoplos, Sandison and Chipeta, 2012). Household-level and (sex-disaggregated) individual-level indicators could be used to better understand the relationship between improvements at the farmer level and livelihood and household well-being (Manfre et al, 2013).

Other processes to improve the relevance of M&E systems for gender-sensitive extension services include the empowerment of women’s group to play a more important role in M&E and the establishment of gender-sensitive complaint mechanisms (World Bank & IFPRI, 2010).

An M&E system must also keep track of the number of female extensionists – and explain why the number does (not) increase over time. The idea is that M&E can play an important role in understanding the underlining reasons for women (not) to choose extension as a career, and provide input and suggestions on how to tackle such constraints.

6 Lessons learned and conclusions

M&E systems that are well designed and implemented, in close consultation with the intended users, are a powerful tool to improve the performance of rural extension systems. At present, however, such systems are difficult to find.

M&E systems’ design has improved over the last decades: from the acknowledgement of non-linear quality of knowledge creation and dissemination, to the recognition of the importance of responding to farmers’ needs and interests. However, M&E systems in practice still tend to resort to indicators related to increased production and productivity, with little attention to organisational and institutional issues that

a well-functioning extension system can tackle. A thorough M&E system starts by involving extensionists and (male and female) farmers in defining indicators, in addition to the macro indicators needed by policy makers at higher levels of the system.

In addition, data gathering, analysis and use remain bottlenecks for both accountability and learning. A main reason for this is the lack of implications of (good and bad) performance. M&E systems are, in no way, used as management tools. They are considered a bureaucratic, expensive burden, and not an opportunity for learning and improvement (Kusek and Rist, 2004). There are few incentives for monitoring beyond extensionists' own eagerness to do their job well. Consequences of bad performance are rare, both for individual service providers, and for extension systems as whole.

Financial incentives to implement M&E are certainly powerful, but are not the only incentives to draw on (IFAD, 2002). Incentives can also refer to ways of making particular extensionists better valued professionals in the market, building a track record for future work. This is a powerful incentive in countries where publicly-funded extension is (partly) carried out by private organisations, and where there is competition between service providers.

Any effective M&E system needs initial investment in capacity building for extensionists, their supervisors and farmers

alike, with special attention to understanding inequalities within communities and households – and their implications for client-based M&E systems. This investment (in time and resources) should not be underestimated.

In addition, whereas M&E needs to have clear consequences and incentives in order to function well, it also needs to allow for time and room for learning. An often mentioned tension between M&E for accountability and for learning hinges on the fear of sanctions: people tend to go for the low hanging fruits (with important negative consequences to the level of service to the poorest and women, for example), or pretend to have more successful results than they actually have in reality. Timing can create tensions as well: official reports for accountability take a considerable amount of time, which could be (also) used for internal analysis and discussion. Whereas performance based systems may support accountability and transparency, the question is whether they are just as well placed to stimulate learning.

Last, but not least, M&E systems in which successes and failures are laid bare must be accompanied by openness of donors and implementers alike to recognise failure as part of the process, and willingness by these same actors to engage in an open discussion of what can be changed – and how – if these failures are to be addressed. In other words, there must be incentives to share and learn from failure. Donors have an important role to play in ensuring such incentives are in place.



Photo: Geneviève Audet-Bélanger

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