How to move beyond the impact evaluation trap?

Challenges and solutions for the setting up of comprehensive M&E systems for Social Protection Programmes

Working Paper

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Abstract

Within Social Protection programmes, M&E is often treated as a theoretical box-ticking exercise – sometimes obstacle and feared – rather than as a useful programme improvement and accountability tool. Drawing on experiences from four different country settings (Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Moldova), this Paper outlines a Conceptual Framework for building an effective M&E system. We show that, to be 'fit-for-purpose' – essentially to provide systematic and continuous information for internal improvement and external accountability – an M&E system needs to incorporate both supply- and demand-side considerations. Providing practical examples, we discuss the key factors that play a role in successfully introducing and embedding M&E practice at the macro, meso and micro level once an M&E system's indicators, data sources and institutional framework have been adequately defined.

Acknowledgements

1 Background

The importance of Social Protection programmes for tackling poverty and inequality has been documented extensively by the literature (DFID, 2011), mostly thanks to a recent wave of rigorous impact evaluations of cash transfer programmes, following from the seminal study of Progresa in Mexico. However, one of the aspects of such programmes that is often given insufficient attention is the establishment of a more comprehensive, strong and functioning programme Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system, that goes beyond the undertaking of few specific ad hoc external studies to provide systematic and continuous information for internal improvement and external accountability.[1] Whether due to budget constraints, lack of trained staff, fear of evaluation, or lack of motivation, M&E is still "rarely used for Safety Net Programmes in the developing world", despite it being a "hallmark of good public management" (Grosh et al, 2008). Almost as a reflection of this, the literature on the topic is sparse and mostly focused on the normative aspects of what an M&E system should look like rather than on the practical challenges faced by countries when designing and implementing such systems (Gosling and Edwards, 1995; UNDP, 2002; Adams et al., 2003; Kusek and Rist, 2004; Gorgens and Kusek, 2009 among others). Moreover, most existing literature lacks a specific focus on Social Protection or on an integral vision that links the supply of and demand for M&E data within low and middle income country administrations.

This paper aims to fill this knowledge gap by developing a Conceptual Framework describing the supply and demand-side challenges that affect the design of M&E systems and use of M&E evidence within Social Protection programmes. We start from the premise that M&E systems work when they can provide – at a reasonable cost and without creating un-necessary burden programme operations – both the necessary information for programme managers to continuously improve programme design and implementation, as well as the evidence requested by citizenship and political constituencies to support the case for investment of public resources in Social Protection.

This framework is applied to four country case studies, based on OPM's experience designing and implementing M&E systems for Social Protection programmes in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Moldova. In Section 2.1 we discuss why M&E, and more specifically monitoring, can be so important in the initial phases of programme implementation. In Section 2.2 we outline the overall Conceptual Framework for the case study analysis, focusing on the supply and demand-side 'building blocks' of a strong Social Protection M&E system. In Section 3 we discuss the evidence from the four case studies, first untangling the challenges faced by countries when setting up such M&E systems and then discussing best practice in overcoming these challenges. Finally, in Section 4 we draw some conclusions and overall recommendations that are of practical relevance for policy makers, international practitioners, and academics.

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[1] According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and to commonly accepted DAC terminology, monitoring can be defined as a "continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an on-going development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, and progress in the use of allocated funds". Evaluation, on the other hand, is defined as the "systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed activity, program or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability".

2   Framing the issue: building blocks of an M&E system for Social Protection programmes

2.1   Why are M&E systems important for Social Protection programmes?

A recent World Bank report provocatively states: "It is tempting – but dangerous – to view M&E as having inherent value…The value of M&E does not come simply from conducting M&E or from having such information available, [but from] using the information to help improve government performance" (Mackay, 2007). This implies that the benefits, e.g. in improved performance and impact need to outweigh the costs of setting up the system.[2] More specifically, the importance of M&E for Social Protection programmes can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, M&E fulfils an *inward* looking function by improving programme management. On the other hand, M&E serves an *outward* looking function by increasing programme accountability. We discuss each of these perspectives below.

Facing inwards: improving programme management

Inwards-facing M&E could be seen as having three main objectives, all of which are essential to increase the effectiveness of Social Protection programmes[3]:

1. **Improving programme design**: in order to learn about the efficiency and effectiveness of a programme so to inform decisions on whether to extend, improve, or eliminate a programme. This type of M&E would include the incorporation of beneficiary and non-beneficiary views on service quality and un-met needs, as well as forms of outcome monitoring. The ultimate aim would be to better serve the poor and more efficiently provide services.

2. **Solving problems in programme implementation**: monitoring programme execution to detect and correct implementation problems and facilitate evidence-based fine-tuning of the operational design. The type of data to be collected might include the monitoring of process-oriented indicators that answer questions such as '*were payments were made on time*?' or '*were the mechanisms for selection of the beneficiaries applied correctly on the ground?"*

3. **Prioritising and budgeting**: helping the government finance authority and programme managers to: (i) coordinate; (ii) undertake planning and budget allocation decisions.

Facing outwards: improving programme accountability

The two main accountability functions played by M&E are:

4. **Ensuring accountability within the government**: monitoring of programme execution to ensure that agents are doing what they have undertaken to do.

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[2] While the costs relative to the benefits of an M&E system are not the topic of this paper, as that had been decided prior to OPM's involvement, the point still reinforces the consideration above that the additional costs and burden on data providers needs to be minimal.
[3] Note that these objectives are reorganised based on a Classification by Shepherd (2011).

5. **Providing public information for external accountability**: providing information to elected officials and the general public to (i) legitimize the programme through the provision of programme results and achievements; (ii) encourage public choice and voice.

This difference between inward and outward facing M&E points to a fundamental difference between the M and the E components. The use of monitoring data to steer programme management potentially has rather different effects on a different timescale to the use of learning from summative evaluations to inform future programme design. These different purposes can have significant implications in the allocation of resources and the focus of the M&E work. While this is not the main topic of the paper, it is still useful to keep these different aspects of M and E in mind.

In the case of M&Es for Social Protection programmes, there was an in-built rationale for improving programme operations, and hence a possibly stronger than usual attention given to improving monitoring systems (e.g. Moldova, Ghana), alongside careful consideration on evaluation.

2.2   Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework we propose for this paper is based on a review of the relevant literature. It acknowledges that to be effective monitoring systems need to be both inward facing (towards management) and outward facing (towards accountability). To do so, M&E systems must be designed in such a way so as to strike a balance between the capacity (and cost) to produce evidence in a timely fashion and with quality, and the demand for evidence of a particular kind or nature for decision making according to the needs of multiple users.

On the **supply side**, we argue that a successful M&E framework will clearly articulate the institutional arrangements and data sources needed to facilitate a reliable flow of information. The system must also maintain the right balance of indicators that are both useful to managers and manageable to collect given the existing government capacity. If these components are in place then the intended users of the system (programme managers, front-line workers, etc.) can see how the system will help them, encouraging up-take of M&E data.

The **demand side** of the framework focuses on whether there is actual demand for and *use* of M&E information to support core programme and government activities (including internal and external accountability) by actors at different levels (individual, meso, and macro). Clearly, demand is interlinked with the supply component of the framework since it may trigger and incentivise the provision of more reliable and high quality data. These concepts are summarised in

Figure 1 below and briefly discussed in the following paragraphs. The Conceptual Framework is then applied to the case studies outlined in Section 3.

Figure 1 Overall Conceptual Framework for the study: demand and supply of M&E data for Social Protection programmes

Source: Authors, adapted from Barca (2013)
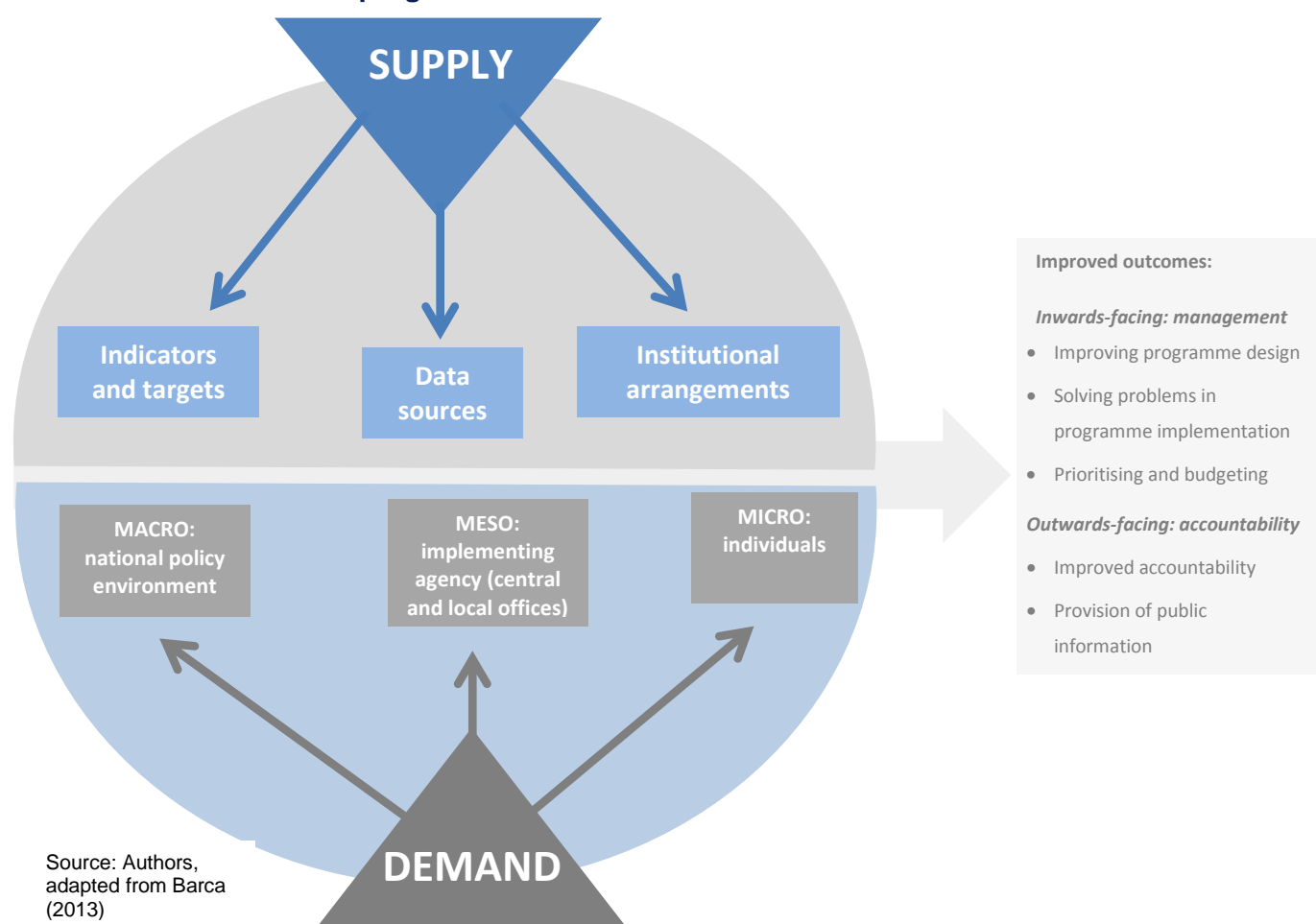
When discussing the **supply side of M&E systems** we refer to the ability of the system to provide reliable, quality information. The three main building blocks for the M&E system are therefore:

- The **indicators** which provide the 'content' of the M&E system, (i.e. 'what' is being measured, monitored and evaluated).

- The **data sources** of the system, how they relate to each other and the instruments used for data collection, compilation, analysis and reporting (i.e. 'where' data comes from); and

- The **institutional arrangements** which clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of different organizations and actors within the system and then outlines how the information will be used and shared. (i.e. 'how' data is collected and used).

On the **side of the demand**, as Bedi et al, (2006) points out, "unless decision makers actively seek evidence to support policy making and programme management, monitoring practices are unlikely to take hold". The demand and use for M&E information can be framed at three different levels:

- At the **Macro** level, it depend on the overall national context, including:

  - The overarching national policy, (performance-orientation and overall level of policy focus on Social Protection)

  - The overall institutional culture

  - The role of donors (pressing for accountability, attaching conditions to aid, etc.)

  - The role of Civil Society (holding government to account or not) and middle classes (potentially against redistributive policies so keen to have evidence of impact, etc.)

- At the **Meso** level, within the institutions in charge of implementing Social Protection programmes both at national and decentralised level, key factors include:

  - The level of political freedom and control over budget at the agency level

  - The background to the creation of the M&E system

  - Practices in benchmarking performance across different locations and learning from best practice across the country

  - Level of interaction between central and decentralised levels (mutual feedback, knowledge of differences across different branches, etc.)

  - The existence of Standard Service Agreements

- At the **Individual** level, demand for M&E will depend on the understanding, attitudes and incentives of staff at national and local levels. Individual actors will be more likely to embrace M&E data if they understand the potential usefulness of it, are not scared of being 'judged' based on M&E data (so likely to fight it), and feel that the insights gained from good M&E will actually be applied to improve programme design/implementation (i.e. it is not just an exercise that is done for the sake of doing it, and they are an active, 'empowered' part of the programme).

3 Building comprehensive M&E systems for Social Protection programmes in Ghana, Kenya, Moldova and Mozambique

In this Section the Conceptual Framework outlined in Section 2.2 is applied to the experience designing and implementing M&E systems in four country case studies: Ghana, Kenya, Moldova and Mozambique. For each element of the framework, key challenges and lessons are drawn out based on country experiences.

Before delving into the details of the process of designing and implementing the M&E system for the flagship Social Protection programmes in each country, the table below briefly gives an overview of these programmes and some of the key characteristics of their M&E systems.

Table 1 Country overview

	Moldova	**Kenya**	**Ghana**	**Mozambique**
Programme/s analysed	'*Ajutor Social*', a means-tested income-gap cash benefit provided to all applicant households under a certain income threshold, reaching some 60,000 beneficiary households	Five different cash transfer programmes consolidated under the *National Safety Net Programme* (NSNP), including Kenya's flagship *CT-OVC[4]* and *HSNP[5]*	*Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty* Programme (LEAP), Ghana's flagship cash transfer programme which reached 77,000 poor households in 2014 having started in 2008.	Four different programmes, including the country's major cash benefit: the *Programa de Subsidio Social Basico* (PSSB) targeted at labour incapacitated households and covering 325,000 households
Programme objectives	Supporting the poorest and most vulnerable households in the country	Varies according to programme – see footnotes for CT-OVC and HSNP as examples.	"To empower the extremely poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable populations to 'leap' out of poverty"[6]	To guarantee minimum standards to households with elderly, disabled or chronically ill members and who are permanently unable to work

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[4] *Kenya Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*, reaching over 100,000 households and 230,000 OVC across the country as of June 2010. The objective of the program is to provide regular cash transfers to families living with OVC to encourage fostering and retention of children and to promote their human capital development.
[5] *Hunger Safety Net Programme*, now in its second phase of expansion aimed at reaching 100,000 households in the arid drylands of four Kenyan counties: Marsabit, Mandera, Turkana, and Wajir. The goal of 'HSNP2' is to continue to reduce poverty, hunger, and vulnerability in the focus counties, resulting in better and more sustainable safety nets for poor and vulnerable households.
[6] Quoted from the LEAP Manual, page A2, April 30, 2012

	Moldova	Kenya	Ghana	Mozambique
Background to M&E system development	The *Ajutorul Social* was newly designed following a reform of Moldova's Social Assistance system – this included design of a new M&E system	Given the focus on consolidating across five different programmes, harmonising M&E practice in a unique framework was a policy priority	A scale up of the programme was being discussed in 2013 and a Needs Assessment had highlighted the need to develop a comprehensive M&E framework	Despite the PSSB being in operation since the '90s, there was no structured M&E framework or process in place
Year when revised M&E system was designed	2008-2009	2013	2013	2012-2013
Key elements of proposed M&E system	System combines data from programme MIS, Statistics Bureau, external administrative sources and ad-hoc qualitative studies. Strong focus on developing indicators useful for all levels of management.[7]	Consolidates and harmonises M&E practice across the five existing programmes, while focusing on policy strategic indicators and objectives.	Builds on existing data sources where possible and seeks to improve them in such a way that providing information is less burdensome and that information-providers obtain useful and timely feedback.	Combines MIS with information provided by Statistics Office, and ad hoc internal/external studies. Plans for the use of M&E evidence to guide control/supervisory visits between national and decentralized levels of implementation.

3.1   Supply side

As summarised in the Conceptual Framework, on the supply side three dimensions need to be considered: the development of indicators and targets, the establishment of data sources, and the setting up of institutional arrangements and processes. This section considers each of these aspects and brings in the evidence from the four case study countries.

3.1.1   Indicators and targets

The definition of key indicators and targets is the area where most attention is paid in the literature, especially as the overall concepts are easily applicable across different fields, including Social Protection programmes (Adams et al., 2003).

Importantly, the literature highlights that indicators should be designed to monitor progress with respect to all the elements of the M&E logical framework (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and goals) (Grosh et al., 2008) and that they should be: precise and unambiguous; appropriate to the subject at hand; available at a reasonable cost; provide a sufficient basis to assess performance; and, amenable to independent validation (Schiavo-

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[7] For more details see also Barca and Carraro (2013)

Campo, 1999)[8]. While these principles guided the development of indicators and targets in the Case Study countries, several other lessons and best practice also emerged. We discuss these below.

Defining indicators based on information needs

In the four study countries a similar demand-driven approach was used to develop the content of the M&E system. With little differences, this included assessing information needs based on three distinct factors:

- The programme's **objectives, Theory of Change and Results Framework**. For example, what information do I need to assess whether Input, Activity, Output or Outcome X in the Results Framework has been achieved and to what extent?

- The **needs of different actors and stakeholders**. For example, what does Actor X want to know about the programme and for what purpose? What information does Actor X need to adequately fulfil his/her duties in relation to the programme?

- The functioning of **key programme processes**. For example, what are the main steps involved in Process X? What could go wrong at each of those steps? What information is needed to monitor each of those steps?

In Ghana, for example, an important part of the work developing indicators for the LEAP programme included agreeing with government and a wide range of stakeholders on a programme Theory of Change and developing a Results Framework to prioritise indicators on that basis. In Moldova, Mozambique and Kenya, where such a process had mostly been completed already, much of the work focused on developing indicators that could adequately trace the Results Framework from inputs through to desired impact.

In both Ghana and Mozambique, this process was complemented by field visits to local levels of programme administration so as to map existing M&E practices and assess information needs at these levels. Interestingly, key informant interviews revealed that higher level managers were often not aware of the challenges and decision-making needs of lower levels. Such interviews were complemented by a set of workshops within the central agency in charge of implementation to identify any gaps, prioritise indicators and develop consensus. In Ghana, consultations were extended to other ministries that were engaged in the programme (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Local Government), prompting discussions about the role of M&E in improving the linkages between LEAP and other social programmes (an objective of LEAP and an achievement in its own right). In Kenya such a process was not necessary as the national M&E system was mostly based on the existing M&E systems of the five programmes it encompasses.

In Ghana, Mozambique and Moldova, business processes for each programme being monitored were traced so as to make sure that each aspect of programme implementation could be assessed within the M&E framework. Processes mapped included training of staff, informing the public, determining eligibility and enrolling beneficiaries (targeting and registration), processing and making payments, case management and grievances. For

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[8] This is also known as the CREAM criteria, based on the acronym of Clear, Relevant, Economic, Adequate, Monitorable. A similar set of criteria is commonly referred to as the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

each of these processes, a handful of indicators and targets were designed and linked to Service Standards. For example, if payments were set to be made to recipients every two months, the indicator would be: percentage of households receiving cash within the two month period.

Prioritising, refining and organising indicators as an iterative process

Naturally, such an extensive mapping of information needs can lead to a number of indicators that is extremely large and unmanageable. In Ghana, for example, the outcome of the consultation process was a set of 100+ indicators, while in Mozambique the initial mapping and 'brainstorming' phase led to the design of some 20 disconnected spreadsheets containing over 1000 indicators that did not form a coherent framework for M&E. Best practice in the four countries involved an iterative process of prioritising, refining and organising indicators.

To *prioritise* indicators, further consultations were organised with a range of stakeholders (the main users of the M&E system). In Ghana, the 100+ indicators were reduced to 55, following a series of workshops, where the overall programme theory of change was reviewed. A relevant consideration in the prioritising indicators was the accessibility of the underlying data sources. In Kenya, the main objective of the national M&E framework was to harmonize and strengthen cash transfer processes. For this reason, indicators that could be applied across the five cash transfer programmes were given priority, reaching a total of 39 indicators. In Moldova and Mozambique, negotiations within the relevant line-Ministry adopted participatory techniques (physically ranking indicators using a flip chart and post-its). The trade-off at this stage of the process is clear: more indicators better allow to monitor a programme in all its characteristics and processes, but too many indicators lead to higher costs and fatigue on the side of the intended users.

Refining indicators involved a careful assessment of each indicator to make sure it fulfilled the so-called 'CREAM' criteria[9] and could be actually applied in practice. In Ghana and Mozambique, where a wide range of data sources was being planned to populate the indicators, this involved mapping each indicator back to its constituting formula (numerator and denominator) and potential data source, as well as defining how often that indicator would be collected and by whom.

Once this process was completed, indicators were *organised* based on their use. In Moldova, and Ghana an important distinction was made between those focusing on programme operations ('management' or 'operational' indicators, that could be used by programme managers at all levels to assess the overall functioning of the programme), and those focusing on results ('analysis' or 'results' indicators, used by high level managers to measure progress against outcomes and for external accountability). Within each of these, indicators were then organised by programme process and by logframe level (input, output, etc.).

It should be noted that in all four case studies these processes of filtering and refining indicator sets were iterative, involving lengthy negotiations to ensure buy-in and agreement from actors with differing needs and priorities. There was also a common understanding that the ensuing framework was not set in stone: it had to be flexible and adaptable to changes over time, as long as these were made through a transparent process. This was particularly

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[9] CREAM is the acronym of Clear, Relevant, Economic, Adequate, Monitorable

the case where the M&E framework was being developed at the same time as the programme processes it was set to monitor[10]. In Mozambique and Ghana, moreover, it was envisioned in the design phase that the framework would be populated gradually, as data sources became available.

3.1.2   Data sources

"Too much data can be distracting, or worse, can lead to the data being completely ignored" (Morse and Struyk, 2006). Moreover, original data collection for monitoring activities and M&E more widely can be an extremely "time-consuming and costly activity" (ibid). It is exactly for these reasons that identifying existing data sources, establishing their usefulness for monitoring purposes, and planning them carefully to deliver exactly the indicators needed is such an important task.

Overall, the literature on the topic stresses that the process of generating the information needed for programme indicators should be cost-effective: "the information gathered should be worth the time and money it costs to collect it and in line with local capabilities and resources. Effective monitoring systems start by building on information that already exists drawing on existing local data collection activities or working with indicators used for other similar programmes" (Grosh et al, 2008). Nevertheless, "data collection strategies necessarily involve some trade-offs with respect to cost, precision, credibility, and timeliness" (Kusek and Rist, 2004). For example, the more structured and formal methods for collecting data (randomized control trials, large surveys) generally tend to be more precise, costly, and time consuming.

In the four case study countries, these principles established by the literature were consistently applied. Potential data sources were evaluated and selected based on three main criteria: mixing monitoring and evaluation components, building on existing data sources, and minimising the burden of data collection and analysis. We analyse each in turn.

Mix monitoring and evaluation components

One risk with combining the concepts of monitoring and evaluation into one acronym (M&E) is that neither gets the attention it needs. The challenge is especially relevant when discussing the individual objectives each concept fulfils (Table 1). In the literature and in practice, this conflict has often led to the evaluation component of M&E outshining the monitoring component. This is due to a whole host of reasons, many linked to the political economy of aid as discussed in Barca and Carraro (2013). In this paper we follow the framework developed by Chen (2005) and argue that the exact mix of monitoring-focused versus evaluation-focused activities needed to effectively implement Social Protection programmes will depend on the level of 'maturity' of the programme itself.

For example, for Social Protection programmes in the planning stage, it will be important to "provide pertinent information (…) to help stakeholders in developing the programme's rationale and plan" (Chen, 2005). This type of data can be gathered through a needs assessment or a situation analysis that examines pre-existing processes and data that a program might leverage. Similarly, at the implementation stage, the main focus will need to be on troubleshooting implementation problems through on-going "process monitoring". Process monitoring can be internal through the delivery of regular program reports from the

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[10] This was the case in Ghana and Mozambique, where there was a 'chicken and egg' situation by which indicators needed to be developed for processes that were still ill-defined.

field or external through the establishment of random spot check visits by an outside organization. Once activities have stabilised and the programme has reached its "mature implementation stage" (ibid), regular monitoring activities can be complemented by more in-depth 'evaluative' studies that look at certain thematic issues, seek to improve implementation, assess user satisfaction, or strengthen accountability. Only when a programme has been in operation for enough time to ensure the delivery of outcomes is it useful to develop an impact evaluation aimed at assessing to what extent it has achieved its goals (ibid).

Table 2 Monitoring and Evaluation for Social Protection programmes, compared

	Monitoring	**Evaluation**
Focus	Understanding and fixing programme failures and assessing functioning of key programme processes, for better programme management (note that this can include outcome monitoring)	Outcomes and impacts; determining the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a Social Protection programme
Utility	Aims at continuous program improvement and accountability	Provides information for major decisions such as starting, ceasing, expanding, or reducing a program
Frequency	A continuous, routine activity that should be an integral component of any programme	Infrequent undertaking (done at certain key moments in time)
Coverage	Comprehensive – aimed at all aspects of a programme/ across programmes	Less comprehensive – specific aspects or specific programmes
Depth of information	Identifies whether a program is being implemented as expected or whether the outcomes of the program show progress or not	Identifies the change in outcomes resulting from a program or whether the program's benefits are accruing to its intended target group
Cost	Involves low annual costs	Involves high costs for each study

SOURCE: Adapted by authors from Burt and Hatry (2005) and Grosh et al (2008)

Building on existing data sources

Building on existing data sources has multiple advantages other than reducing costs: it makes a system more sustainable, it requires less active management[11] and it avoids duplication of work. Such sources can be classified as internal (generated and managed by the programme) and external (managed by external actors). So what are the potential data sources that could be assessed for pros and cons[12] and used to populate indicators within a Social Protection M&E framework?

The main internal data source for M&E systems of Social Protection programmes should be the programme's **Management Information System (MIS)**, or equivalent administrative

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[11] The team in charge of M&E of a specific Social Protection programme at central level is never larger than 3-5 people.

database. Compared to surveys, administrative data can be readily available and quickly respond to programme changes; offer a much larger sample size which allows for disaggregated geographic analysis; allow the tracking of individuals and households over time (longitudinal data); be significantly less expensive; and, be matched to other data sources (including surveys). Important limitations, naturally, include: the 'denominator problem' by which the "choice-, event-, or participation-based nature of administrative data limits inferences"; the fact that administrative data does not measure all outcomes (for example some indicators of well-being); and, that "data is only available when the client is 'in the programme'", while less is known when they leave or do not enter (Hotz et al, 1998).

In some cases, such as in Kenya, programme MISs pre-date the development of the M&E framework[13]. In Moldova, Mozambique and Ghana, on the contrary, an MIS had not yet been finalised at the M&E design phase. In these cases, a strong commitment had been made towards developing an MIS to manage programme processes, meaning there was an opportunity to influence the design of the MIS based on M&E needs. This was of a welcome opportunity to ensure that relevant data was being collected adequately, but also presented challenges in terms of finalising the M&E framework without a key component in place. In Mozambique, this led to considerable delay and uncertainty in the process of finalising indicators within the framework. In Ghana and Moldova the problem was tackled by developing a 'temporary' Excel-based MIS while the full application software was being developed and tested[14]. Such temporary solutions pose a separate set of challenges in terms of capacity required to operate a heavily manuals system and risks associated with data duplication and mistakes. On a more positive note, working through this process and being able to show meaningful data resulting from the new M&E data collection system was a huge success in motivating the national team to move forward with securing the funding and commitments necessary to build the larger MIS system. With real, concrete data, leaders could see how the system could benefit and improve the program.

A second important source of data are internal **standard periodic reports** compiled by implementing bodies at the decentralised level, often based on reporting templates set by the central level. These reports constituted the backbone of the existing M&E system in Mozambique, Ghana and Moldova, reflecting a bureaucratic and paper-based approach to monitoring and evaluation, with little analysis and therefore minimal use of information to affect change. Such a system also only focused on procedures (reporting to the next level of hierarchy) rather than outcomes (using the information to change practice). This system is naturally not void of use, as it allows managers at all levels to qualitatively comment on their operations. However, an assessment of existing forms in Ghana and Mozambique showed that these required too much time to complete; were not tailored to programme processes and managerial needs; were not consistently applied across locations; were often completed with significant delay, and; lacked analytical content once completed. This led to cutting down and re-tailoring of the forms in coordination with local managers, including a strong focus on downwards flows of information: making sure local managers received feedback on the information they provided.

A third source of potentially internal data (which is sometimes contracted out externally) are ad-hoc **qualitative studies**. These are often under-used and can help to understand why and how things are going wrong in real time, and, most importantly, how problems could be

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[13] In Kenya a process is underway to integrate the MISs from the five major cash transfers into a national 'Single Registry'.
[14] For more details on the temporary MIS database developed for Moldova, see Barca and Carraro, 2013.

addressed and solved. Based on interviews and focus groups with administrators, benefit recipients and other households, these studies quickly gather information at relatively low cost, helping to explain problems and trends and gain a practical understanding of the problems at hand. In Moldova, such studies were employed 3 times over the first year of implementation and had a critical role in explaining trends that were visible in the quantitative MIS data (i.e. low take up and retention, see Barca and Carraro, 2013).

As for external data sources, **existing household surveys** (Household Budget Surveys, Living Standard Measurement Surveys, Labour Force Surveys, etc)[15], guarantee a wealth of information (household income, consumption, education, health status, etc.) at a very low cost (no additional data collection needs). One caveat applies, however: survey data can be used to observe overall trends in a given area. However, in order to untangle differential impact on beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries it is necessary to either add a question to the relevant survey on receipt of the transfer or to have a national identification number that allows to link survey respondents to specific programme beneficiaries. This was the case in Moldova, where negotiations with the Statistics Bureau allowed for such an analysis of impact without the need for an expensive ad-hoc survey. Similar negotiations were initiated in Mozambique, though the process of agreeing MoUs for data sharing and introduction of additional questions into nationally representative surveys has proved more complex in this case.

It can also be important to secure access to **other administrative sources** of information to cross-check and contextualise Social Protection-specific information. These could include the line-Ministry's staff database, the Bank's payments database, the Ministry of Education's or Ministry of Health's MIS etc. Building linkages can be simple in cases where every citizen has a national identification number that can be used as a Unique Identifier, as is the case in Moldova and increasingly in Kenya. The challenge faced was gaining access to this data from other government units who may not be willing to cooperate, as will be discussed in the next section.

Possibly the most widely cited external data sources are externally contracted **impact evaluations**. These are ad hoc surveys with experimental evaluation designs that provide 'rigorous' evidence of programme impact: helping to understand causal relationships and generate counterfactuals (e.g. what would have happened if the benefit did not exist). Such evidence is needed for indicators analysing targeting effectiveness[16], impact on consumption[17], simulated poverty, changes in access to health and education services, etc. Since 2006, when the 'evaluation gap' was first denounced by Esther Duflo and her colleagues at the Centre for Global Development (CGD, 2006), over 800 costly impact evaluations of social policy interventions have been carried out in low and middle income countries[18]. We argue, together with a recent wave of literature on the matter (Bedi et al, 2006; Jones et al, 2009; Kusters et al. 2011; Weyrauch and Langou, 2011), that while ad hoc evaluations do provide important information, they seldom feed into programme improvement and planning and are therefore often less 'useful' than on-going monitoring and less expensive forms of evaluation based on existing data. For this reason, such surveys

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[15] These are usually collected by the national or regional statistical office on a regular basis.

[16] Note that analysis of targeting effectiveness can also be done with a sufficiently representative household survey where a) programme targeting criteria can be simulated to calculate the potential 'eligible' population, and; b) a question has been added to assess who is actually receiving the benefit.

[17] Note that this analysis could also be done with a household survey that has a large-sample panel component and fulfils the criteria in the footnote above.

[18] This information was disclosed on occasion of the 2011 conference of the Network of Networks of Impact Evaluations (NONIE). See http://nonie2011.org/?q=content/post-2 for details

were not built into the core M&E framework in Moldova and Mozambique. In Ghana and Kenya, on the other hand, impact evaluations had already been scheduled and resourced, meaning they were incorporated as data sources. However, as programmes move from being small pilots to national implementation, impact evaluation become increasingly unrealistic given their large cost.

Increasingly, M&E frameworks for Social Protection programmes are also incorporating data sources that are independently commissioned so as to provide beneficiary perspectives on programme implementation. These come in several different forms, but can be classified as **Beneficiary Surveys or Citizen Perception Surveys**. In Mozambique, for example, a Beneficiary Score Card methodology was designed to complement the supply-side focus of the other data sources. Similarly, in Kenya a Citizen Satisfaction Survey was contracted to an external firm. The main challenges faced in these two countries were how to cover the relatively high costs of such a survey and how to set an adequate sample.[19] In Ghana a **spot check process** was introduced as a more streamlined and cheaper way to gain insight into program performance and improvements.

To conclude, international best practice shows that the best M&E systems are those that include and collate information from different sources, ensuring that indicators are all accounted for and that both programme and citizen perspectives are incorporated.

Minimising the burden of data collection and reporting

Unsurprisingly, a successful M&E system minimises the data-gathering effort and ensures that those who gather and analyse data can see the benefits of doing so.

In Ghana, Moldova and Mozambique, a large amount of the data for the M&E system was designed to be generated as an integral part of normal programme administration rather than as an additional task. For example, as data are entered from a questionnaire/form used for targeting into the MIS for the purposes of beneficiary selection, the same data can be used for M&E without any additional effort. Similarly, 'data collection' was also designed to happen concurrently with other programme processes (e.g. case management) rather than as a separate endeavour. In Kenya, the fact that the national M&E framework mirrored the frameworks within the five programmes meant that existing systems automatically generated data without any additional effort.

This principle translates into the collaing and reporting phase as well: the more these processes were automated, the more likely these were to be used. In all four countries, for example, the data from the MIS was automatically processed into a set of standard reports that could be produced at pre-defined intervals (bimonthly, quarterly, yearly, etc) or upon demand. The reporting function within the MIS software was also designed to allow for a set of useful disaggregations including by gender, time-period, urban/rural, administrative unit, etc.

This does not mean that no time should be spent on analysis. In fact, best practice has shown the need for comparatively less time be devoted to data collection and reporting and more to data analysis and interpretation.

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[19] More on how these challenges were tackled is discussed in the next section.

3.1.3   Institutional arrangements

The third key aspect of creating a functional M&E system is the establishment of institutional arrangements – the "formal and informal processes, procedures, rules, and mechanisms that bring monitoring activities into a coherent framework" (Bedi et al., 2006). While a monitoring framework may be perfect on paper, the institutional arrangements define the actors, processes, roles and responsibilities that make monitoring actually happen in practice, allowing for data from various sources to be a) collected and collated together, b) analysed and transformed into the required indicators to be used for monitoring purposes and inform management, and c) interpreted correctly.

While the overall institutional arrangements depend on the level of complexity of the M&E system (e.g. the indicators selected and the type of data sources that are being used as described in the section on data sources), there was evidence of best practice emerging within the four case study countries.

First of all, it was essential for the institutional arrangements of the M&E system to **reflect the overall institutional structure of the programme**, while filling any gaps. In Ghana, this meant ensuring that reporting lines reflected the existing LEAP administrative system, the incentive structure within that system, as well as taking account of the government's objective of greater devolution of power to the districts. In Mozambique, an assessment of the existing structures showed that the most similar role to that of 'M&E' officer at local level were staff members responsible for 'planning and communications'. At central level, no nucleus that was clearly responsible for M&E across different programmes could be identified, meaning that a case for building an M&E unit had to be made with the Minister[20]. In Kenya, given that the national M&E system required the cooperation of five existing cash transfer administrations, challenges were faced by the Social Protection Secreteriat who did not have sufficient functional authority for coordination.

Secondly, and related to the first point, it was important to work as much as possible with **existing systems, staff and processes** and to help improve them. This was the case in Ghana where the templates for District Quarterly Forms were adapted rather than scrapped. A feedback mechanism was introduced to report results back to the district social welfare officers, thereby providing an incentive for them to complete the District Quarterly Forms in the first place. Building on existing processes nevertheless implied the need for additional resources. A Capacity Development Plan for M&E and a Costing Plan were developed to provide detailed information for planning. Capacity Development was also a focus in Mozambique and Moldova, where job descriptions were modified so as to incorporate new tasks relating to M&E and extensive training of existing staff was conducted. In Mozambique, the new system also heavily built on the existing practice of supervisions between different levels of implementation.

Third, it was clear that building institutional arrangements with new actors for M&E purposes requires **time, dedication and in some cases legal frameworks or memoranda of understanding**. For example, in Moldova new questions on receipt of the Ajutor Social benefit were added to the Household Budget Survey thanks to long negotiations with the Statistics Bureau. Similarly to obtain administrative data from other sources (government, banks, etc), legally binding agreements and/or memorandums of understanding had to be

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[20] This case had been refused at the time of writing this paper.

drafted and approved by government. A similar process was attempted in Mozambique and Ghana, with less clear-cut outcomes.

Table 4 summarize some of the main points that emerge from the analysis of case studies from an M&E systems supply perspective.

Table 3 Most frequent 'pitfalls' in the supply of monitoring systems

Indicators	Data sources	Institutional arrangements
• Too many indicators (difficult to track and use) • Indicators not closely linked to specific programme targets and set-up • Indicators too 'ambitious' (too difficult or costly to collect the data needed) • Indicators too ambiguous (difficult to interpret correctly) • Indicators not disaggregated sufficiently for programme management	• Data sources for each indicator not clearly identified • Data sources identified, but not feasible (lack of budget, time, capacity, etc) • Insufficient triangulation between data sources (e.g. lack of qualitative studies, etc) • Inadequate use of existing data sources (national surveys, other administrative databases, etc) • Programme MISs not set up to collect and retain sufficient information as a simple by-product of programme processes	• Processes for collecting, analysing and reporting unclear (no clear definition of roles and responsibilities) • Insufficient capacity and training of staff • Insufficient budget allocated

3.2   Demand side

On the demand side we focus on the factors that enable the use of M&E data by intended users. Following the Conceptual Framework, we analyse this at the Macro, Meso and Micro level.

3.2.1   Macro: national policy environment

At the national or 'Macro' level, several factors were found to influence demand and use of M&E information in the case study countries.

First of all, an **'enabling' national policy** significantly improved the chances of stakeholders being actively involved in the design and use of the Social Protection M&E system. However, what does 'enabling' mean in practice? First it means having a policy framework that is performance-oriented. This includes setting performance expectations, monitoring progress, measuring results, and appraising, rewarding, or correcting performance. This was partly the case in Ghana, where the LEAP Management Unit regularly reported on progress to donors and where the National Development Planning Commission tried to foster an M&E culture. It was also the case in Kenya, but was less the case in Moldova and Mozambique. In Kenya,

interestingly, changes in government at the beginning of the M&E development phase meant that additional focus had to be placed on fitting the process into a revised policy framework and 'direction' – but this also implied renewed enthusiasm and sense of purpose within the relevant line Ministries[21]. On the other side, an enabling environment was fostered where there was a strong policy focus on Social Protection more widely. For example, in Ghana, the start of the design work coincided with a time where a new Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection was being created, and the desire to scale up the flagship LEAP social cash transfer programme, which implied the need for better run systems and higher accountability. Broadly speaking, an enabling environment was the case in all four case study countries, where increased political recognition of the potential contribution of social protection to the reduction of vulnerability and poverty translated into the adoption of either new laws and Social Protection reforms and/or to a willingness to scale up the existing programme.

Second, designing integrated M&E systems was potentially easier in contexts where there was an overall **institutional culture** that fosters linkages between different ministries (accounting to each other) and has actors focused on planning (e.g. National Planning Commission), though the practical difficulties doing this should not be underestimated. For example, Ghana's LEAP programme was intended to enable poor people to access different social services. It was straightforward to meet with different ministries, though in practice obtaining data from other ministries and linking it to the cash transfer data was extremely difficult, and hence became less of a priority.

The **role of donors** pressing for accountability and attaching conditions to aid also had large impact on the overall value attached to M&E Commitment to actually operationalize the system and support the government through the production of the first round of data analysis and reporting can be critical in getting the government to see the value of such an exercise. In Ghana this required a high degree of funding, as well as practical, hands-on support by UNICEF, the importance of which can hardly be over-estimated. In Kenya, the harmonisation of the country's five cash transfers into the NSNP received extensive support from development partners through the instrument of a World Bank Performance for Results (PfR) loan. This loan is disbursed into the Treasury once agreed targets have been verifiably hit, providing strong incentives for M&E to be set up proficiently. Donors played a similar role in Moldova (DFID and World Bank) and Mozambique (UNICEF and World Bank).

A similar role could also be played by **Civil Society** (holding government to account or not), but this was not often the case in the four countries. In Kenya, it is unlikely that the NSNP has broad-based support from civil society or is a significant electoral issue. This means that the accountability structures in place within government, and between government and development partners, are not currently founded on accountability between government and citizens. Measures to build this include providing anonymised NSNP datasets to the government's Open Data initiative[22], providing annual indicators to the publicly available National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System, and making public the NSNP annual reports and targets on the social protection website.[23] In Moldova, an interesting role was

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[21] In Kenya, a new constitution was also put into practice alongside the election, with significant decentralisation of power to newly created sub-counties. This did not lead to major changes in the objectives of the NSNP or its M&E framework, but the constitutional changes have meant that the Government has been exploring the ways in which the local officials can contribute to monitoring within the new structure, and the new Government priorities have imposed some additional reporting requirements and objectives on central government staff.
[22] See https://opendata.go.ke/
[23] See http://www.socialprotection.go.ke/

played by the country's middle classes and news outlets who made a strong stance against the government's new redistributive policies and the Ajutor Social specifically. The need to provide evidence in favour of the new policy's impact triggered renewed interest and use of the Ajutor Social's M&E framework (see also Barca and Carraro, 2013). In Mozambique possibly the most reliable and relevant streams of M&E information to date has come through a community based M&E initiative led by the national Civil Society Platform.

3.2.2   Meso: implementing agency (central and local offices)

At the 'Meso' level, within the institutions in charge of implementing Social Protection programmes both at national and decentralised level, an important factor affecting use of information generated from the M&E system was the level of **autonomy in decision-making and the incentives within the institution**. This was the case in contexts where decisions to act based on M&E data were not obstacled by other bodies or national government (i.e. it made sense to monitor because one could take useful decisions based on the findings and act upon them). Ministries in charge of 'Social Welfare' or 'Social Development' are often not high enough in the hierarchy of line ministries to have this autonomy, meaning they often lack the political freedom and control over budget to act upon M&E data effectively. In Moldova, changes to programme implementation had to be approved by the Council of Ministers (including Ministry of Finance) and passed as legislation before they could become effective, with a negative impact on the usefulness of M&E functions. Similarly, in Kenya, the NSNP policymakers did not have sufficient budgetary flexibility to respond to indicators that were off track and were rather focusing on delivering against targets set centrally by the new government. With the implementation of regular management meetings to discuss responses to off track indicators, this may change. In Mozambique INAS Delegations (local offices) have a certain degree of autonomy with expenditure and planning, but budgets were determined based on historical expenditure, rather than performance or needs in the specific geographical area of operation. In Ghana, the LEAP implementing bodies were not even in charge of the payment dates[24], meaning they had no power to rectify a problem that was central to the programme's operation (the promise to pay every two months). To what extent this had an adverse effect on the desire to use M&E data is impossible to say.

Of course, the importance attributed to M&E at the implementing agency level also depended on how much the agency actually **backed the development** of an M&E system in the first place. Where such a process is entirely externally driven by donors, it is difficult for the system to be appreciated and used – especially when it is perceived as a burden (time, nuisance). As described in previous sections, many measures were set in place to avoid this perception, despite the initial donor 'push'. For example, the system was developed following long and iterative consultations with stakeholders to fit their needs. In Ghana, an Excel-based interim MIS was developed to prove the usefulness of automatically processing data for M&E purposes and generate enthusiasm around the new processes while the new MIS was developed[25].

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[24] The beneficiary payments were categorised as 'goods and services' in the ministry's budget, which has a low priority. There were attempts to categorise it to a higher priority level, which would have protected the payments, but this process was still ongoing. The current situation was that the payments were irregular, thereby making it impossible for them to have the hoped for consumption smoothing effects (as recipients got no payments for e.g. 9 months and then received a tripe payment).

[25] This helped key stakeholders 'see' how the data can help them. They also saw how the data collected from the reporting correlated with their knowledge of issues in the field. For example, in one District the payment vouchers were printed incorrectly and had to be reprinted, which took a while. As a result all the communities

The existence of a culture of **benchmarking performance** across different locations and learning from best practice across the country (including potentially performance incentives as in Brazil) also increased the likelihood that M&E data was used effectively. This became increasingly important in Moldova, where different *raions* (regions) were compared against each other in the Quarterly Monitoring Reports generated through the programme's MIS, highlighting high performing and low performing Social Assistance Departments and allowing to generate a discussion around why that was the case. In Mozambique, more resistance to benchmarking was placed by the implementing agency, partially as the country did not have a uniform distribution of 'delegations' (local offices) and these had different staffing levels and population burdens (benchmarking was perceived as unfair). In Kenya and Ghana, there had not yet been a substantial opportunity to compare performance across different areas of the country. However, in Kenya, the 2014 financial year performance will be compared across different programmes in an annual learning event. In Ghana, the feedback process of results to the districts is also envisioned to include an element of comparison, while it is recognised that it needs to be handled carefully.

Linked to this aspect of benchmarking, the case studies highlighted the need for a strong **connection and liaison between central and decentralised levels** based on mutual feedback, knowledge of differences across different local branches, and continuous engagement. When this is the case, M&E is not to be feared as 'judgement' but seen as opportunity for learning. In the four case study countries, this level of continuous liaison (through phone-calls and field visits) had only been achieved in Moldova thanks to the leadership of a donor-financed team sat within the relevant ministry in the first two years of implementation. In Mozambique, the system was designed to embed a dialogue on performance, bottlenecks and challenges on the basis of the available M&E information into the routine processes of supervision, control, oversight and follow up. Unfortunately the process has not been fully operationalized in the field yet. A similar approach, with international experts being embedded for two years, is now being sought in Ghana thanks to DFID funding. The question remains how sustainable this is in the long term. The challenges maintaining such a close and learning-focused relationship with local branches are practical on one side (lack of staff, lack of budget for field visits) and 'cultural' on the other (respecting hierarchies, bureaucratic approach, local offices fearing judgement in case of under-performance, etc). In Kenya, for example, some agencies have sought to retain control of the information that they provide in their performance related reporting, rather than report centrally through the M&E framework, perhaps because of worries about the implications of reporting negative performance.

Finally, where **Standard Service Agreements** helped to transparently frame objectives in terms of service delivery and were taken seriously by the implementing agency (plus publicised and communicated), it was easier to foster a culture of accountability towards programme recipients and citizens more widely. This was the case in Moldova and Ghana.

3.2.3   Micro: individuals

At the 'Micro' or individual level, staff incentives to use M&E data varied based on the incentives within the institution, natural inclination, dedication to their job, appreciation of the usefulness of M&E, and overall training and capacity. While some of these characteristics cannot be modified by external 'incentives' ('carrots, sticks and sermons'), some of them

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were paid late. This was correctly reflected in the data collected which showed only 12.5% of communities paid on time whereas in other districts this figure ranged from 80-100 percent.

can. A long list of further incentives for utilisation of M&E is described by the relevant literature and summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Incentives for utilisation of M&E: carrots, sticks and sermons

Carrots	Sticks	Sermons
- Awards or prizes—high-level recognition of good or best practice - Budgetary incentives for high-performance and additional funding to ministries to conduct M&E. - Greater management autonomy provided to programmes performing well. - Conduct regular "How Are We Doing?" team meetings (managers and staff) to clarify objectives, review team performance, and ways forward. - Performance contracts or performance pay for civil servants & M&E as one criterion for staff recruitment, promotion, and certification. - Ensuring that data providers understand how their data are used and the importance of providing accurate and timely data. - Training for programme managers and staff, budget analysts - Identification and highlighting of good practice examples of planning, techniques, and reporting - Systematic feedback from ministers to ministries - A government-wide network of officials working on M&E. This helps provide identity and support (to those	- Enact laws, decrees, or regulations mandating M&E & formal requirements for the planning, conduct, and reporting of M&E - Withhold part of funding from ministries/agencies that fail to conduct M&E. - Achieve greater transparency by regularly publishing information on all programmes' objectives, outputs, and service quality. - Performance comparisons across jurisdictions (states, provinces, districts, municipalities) to highlight good/bad performance - Highlight adverse M&E information in reports to Parliament/Congress and disseminate widely. - Set challenging but realistic performance targets - Include relevant performance indicators (outputs, outcomes) in the annual performance appraisals of managers. - Penalize noncompliance - Hold town hall meetings with citizens to showcase good/bad government performance - Involve civil society in M&E of government performance— results in pressures for better performance and accountability - Institute performance contracts or performance	- High-level statements of endorsement by president, ministers, heads of ministries, deputies, and so forth. - Frequent repetition of message of support at meetings of ministry senior executives, section heads, other staff. - Awareness-raising seminars/workshops to demystify M&E, provide comfort about its doability, explain what's in it for participants. - Use of actual examples of influential M&E to demonstrate its utility and cost-effectiveness. - Explain to service managers and staff how M&E can help them deliver better services to their clients. - Conferences/seminars on good practice M&E systems - A network of officials working on M&E— helps showcase good practice examples of M&E in ministries, demonstrates their feasibility, and helps encourage quality standards. - Support for government M&E from multilateral and bilateral donors in their loans to governments—highlights and endorses M&E.

Carrots	Sticks	Sermons
who often feel isolated within each ministry/entity) - Financial support and technical assistance for government M&E from multilateral and bilateral donors.	pay—direct penalties for poor performance.	

Source: Mackay 2007, adapted by authors

First of all, staff at national and local levels will be more likely to embrace M&E data if they **understand the potential usefulness** of it. Nevertheless, this can be difficult because of a typical 'catch 22' problem: the path to getting an M&E system requires investments in time, while the usefulness can only be seen once it is working. As described above, in Ghana and Moldova this problem was partially addressed by tailoring the M&E system to intended users and building interim systems that could generate enthusiasm while the system was being fully developed. Other strategies to demonstrate usefulness in the four countries revolved around communicating M&E in a way that it resonated with intended users. For example, this involved running seminars on good practice M&E systems in particular ministries and in other countries and providing actual examples of influential M&E; explaining to service managers and staff how M&E can help them deliver better services to their clients; jointly reflecting on and interpreting the first batches of M&E data to untangle managerial implications. Enthusiasm for M&E is also generated when staff feel that the insights gained from good M&E will actually be applied to improve programme design/implementation (i.e. it is not just an exercise that is done for the sake of doing it, and they are an active, 'empowered' part of the programme).

Secondly, the **'fear' surrounding M&E** can be reduced by shifting the focus from 'controlling' to 'learning' and building forums for local and central level administrators to compare and contrast their experiences and learn from each other. This approach is now being experimented in Kenya (creation of a Joint Learning Event) and was partially overcome in Moldova thanks to continuous liaison with regional structures.

Third, **reducing the capacity constraints** of staff involved in M&E was the most difficult challenge in the four study countries as it required large investments for recruitment and training. Everyone will agree to the need of having M&E, but will also need to focus on the core functions of the cash transfer programme (e.g. making payments), which will be of higher priority than M&E. This problem was addressed in Mozambique by designating specific staff members for M&E functions and including this in their job descriptions and performance agreements (to be followed up by training).

4   Concluding remarks

To conclude, based on this Paper's Conceptual Framework and evidence from the four country case studies, when can M&E systems for Social Protection programmes work?

In brief, when supply and demand side factors are concurrently addressed, ensuring the provision of reliable and quality information as well as the actual demand for and *use* of that information to support core programme and government activities (including internal and external accountability) by actors at different levels.

Specifically, on the **supply side**, this will be the case when:

- **Indicators** have been agreed, prioritised and refined as the result of a participatory and iterative process that accounts for the information needs of stakeholders, as well as reflecting the programme's objectives, Theory of Change, and core business processes;

- A wide range of **data sources** (both internal and external) is adopted, making sure these build on existing sources, minimise the burden of data collection and reporting, and prioritise monitoring over evaluation at the initial stages of programme maturity;

- **Institutional arrangements** of the M&E system reflect the overall institutional structure of the programme, work with existing systems, staff and processes, and are built acknowledging the need for time, dedication and in some cases legal frameworks or memoranda of understanding.

On the **demand side**, use of M&E data will be enhanced when:

- The macro-level **national policy environment** is 'enabling' (performance oriented and strong focus on Social Protection), offers an overall institutional culture that fosters linkages between different ministries and has actors focused on planning, and Donors and Civil Society play an active role in fostering M&E practice;

- The meso-level **implementing agency** has a sufficient level of autonomy in decision-making to make M&E useful, backed the process of developing an M&E system in the first place, and had a culture of benchmarking performance across different locations. This was enhanced in cases where there was strong liaison between central and decentralised levels based on mutual feedback and awareness of location-specific constraints (M&E perceived as learning rather than judgement) and where Standard Service Agreements helped to transparently frame objectives in terms of service delivery;

- At the micro-level, **individuals** responsible for M&E understood the potential usefulness of it, did not 'fear' M&E as a 'controlling' function and had sufficient capacity to perform their functions.

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