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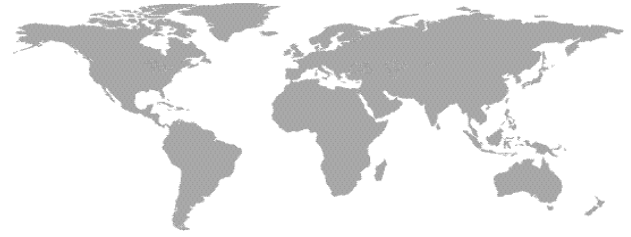
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Implementing a Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System in South Africa

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Building monitoring and evaluation systems helps strengthen governance in countries—by improving transparency, by strengthening accountability relationships, and by building a performance culture within governments to support better policymaking, budget decision making, and management. A related area of focus is civil society, which can play a catalytic role through provision of assessments of government performance. IEG aims to identify and help develop good-practice approaches in countries, and to share the growing body of experience involving such work.

The IEG Working Paper series disseminates the findings of work in progress to encourage the exchange of ideas about enhancing development effectiveness through evaluation. An objective of the series is to get the findings out quickly, even if the presentations are somewhat informal.

The findings, interpretations, opinions, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors, in their personal capacities, and do not necessarily represent the views of any institution, IEG, the World Bank, or its member countries.

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Abbreviations

AG	Auditor-General
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (previously called the Department of Provincial and Local Government)
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
FMPPI	Framework for Managing Program Performance Information
FOSAD	Forum of South African Directors-General
GIS	Geographical Information System
GWM&E	Government-wide monitoring and evaluation
IDP	Independent Development Plan
IT	Information technology
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Member of the Provincial Executive Council (provincial minister)
MFMA	Municipal Financial Management Act (of 2003)
NIMES	National Integrated M&E System (Uganda)
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
PALAMA	Public Administration, Leadership, and Management Academy (formerly called SAMDI)
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (Uganda)
PERSAL	Transversal government payroll and personnel data system
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act (of 1999)
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
PME	Performance monitoring and evaluation
PoA	Program of Action
SAMDI	South African Management Development Institute (now called PALAMA)
SASQAF	South African Statistical Quality Assurance Framework
StatsSA	Statistical Agency of South Africa

Foreword

As part of its activities, the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) provides technical assistance to member developing countries in designing and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and in strengthening government M&E capacities as an important part of sound governance. IEG prepares resource materials, with case studies demonstrating good or promising practices, which other countries can refer to or adapt to suit their own particular circumstances (**http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd**).

This paper presents the South Africa case study, which provides a number of interesting lessons relevant to other developing countries as well as to developed countries. The government of South Africa has followed a "big bang" approach in its efforts to build a national M&E system, starting as recently as 2005. The country has pursued capacity building and system building with a focus on monitoring; a conscious decision was made to pursue evaluation later. Interestingly, M&E system development is being allowed to evolve, rather than follow a completed and detailed blueprint.

A number of major M&E initiatives have been pursued over the past three years, and considerable success has already been achieved. This paper provides an honest assessment of the remaining challenges, including the barriers to achieving more of a performance culture in the government and civil service.

The South African experience is one that will certainly be worth observing closely, and learning from, in coming years.

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This paper has benefited from comments received from a number of people, including Keith Mackay, Manuel Fernando Castro, Gladys Lopez-Acevedo, and Marcus Goldstein.

The views expressed in this document are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, the government of South Africa, AFR*e*C, or any other institution with which the authors are affiliated.

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Executive Summary

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an extremely complex, multidisciplinary and skill-intensive endeavor. Government-wide M&E is even more so because it requires detailed knowledge both across and within sectors, as well as of interactions among planning, budgeting, and implementation functions in the public sector. The situation is complicated even further when the machinery of government is decentralized, with powers and functions distributed across three spheres of government. It is precisely this kind of complex intergovernmental structure, with diffuse powers and functions, which requires strong M&E systems to promote coordination and prevent fragmentation.

This paper outlines the process of implementing a government-wide monitoring and evaluation (GWM&E) system in South Africa. The first section sketches the context that created the impetus for establishing such a system. This context is clearly shaping the evolution of the system and influencing its longer-term sustainability. The second section outlines the various stages of conceptualizing and implementing the GWM&E system, which is currently very much a "work in progress." Key components of the South African GWM&E framework are described in detail, such as: the policy platform upon which it is based, the specific M&E products and their uses, as well as the major actors. The creation of a dedicated Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) within the President's Office in 2009 signaled a new phase in the development trajectory of M&E systems in the South African public sector. The new ministry introduced a *Policy Paper on Improving Government Outcomes* in Parliament in 2009, outlining an approach. The policy position draws on the existing GWM&E system and expands its policy reach by introducing a specific focus on performance and monitoring at the level of politically determined outcomes.

The third section reviews international experiences for lessons learned, which may also be germane to the South African context, noting similarities and differences in approach. Some of the critical implementation factors relate to the role of political leadership and championing of M&E, incentives for promoting usage of M&E findings, dealing with information and data constraints, capacity building, "ownership" of the M&E system by line ministries and other agencies, and managing the challenges of change. The fourth section examines a range of challenges and difficulties encountered in South Africa. The final section reflects on lessons distilled from the South African experience to date.

Some key lessons learned from the South African experience may be of relevance to other developing countries contemplating similar reforms, such as the following:

- There needs to be an appropriate balance between deliberate systemic design and organic evolution.

- Coordination is critical, and factors inhibiting coordination are multifaceted.

- A dual implementation approach, which combines short-term visible M&E achievements with longer-term strategic direction, is desirable.

- GWM&E is a management system, not an information technology (IT) system.

- There should be an appropriate balance between top-down guidance and bottom-up (sector and subnational) expertise.

- When sequencing reforms, do the basics first.

- Resistance is inevitable and managing change is critical to successful implementation.

- The choice between a principles-based versus a firmer policy regulatory approach depends on the specific country context.

1. Background

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is an extremely complex, multidisciplinary and skill-intensive endeavor. Government-wide M&E is even more so because it requires detailed knowledge both across and within sectors, and as well as of interactions among planning, budgeting, and implementation functions in the public sector. The situation is complicated even further when the machinery of government is decentralized, with powers and functions distributed across three spheres of government. It is precisely this kind of complex intergovernmental structure, with diffuse powers and functions, which requires strong M&E systems to promote coordination and prevent fragmentation.

South Africa's negotiated transition to a new democratic order in 1994 created immense pressures on the newly elected government. One of the key priorities was to overcome the legacy of racially skewed public service delivery under apartheid by enhancing access to, and the quality of, services to previously underserved communities and vulnerable groups, such as children and the disabled. The 1996 Bill of Rights confers on citizens socioeconomic rights to health care, housing, education, water, and other basic necessities, which are to be progressively realized with available resources by the state.

The 1996 Constitution also created three distinct but interrelated spheres[1] of government: the national government, provincial/local governments (of which there are 9), and municipal governments (of which there are 284). While policy making occurs primarily at the national level, implementation of policies in concurrent functions[2] occurs mainly at the subnational level. Provincial governments play a major role in delivering health, education, social development, and transport services. Revenue collection is centralized in the national government, but there is a system for allocating an "equitable shares" of the nationally collected revenues to national and provincial spheres.[3] Provincial governments have few of their own revenue sources and are largely dependent on the unconditional "equitable share" grants provided by the national government.

This complex, decentralized machinery of government, with powers and functions distributed across the three spheres, requires intricate coordination both across and within sectors—such as the education, health and "built environment"[4] sectors—at various points in the intergovernmental planning and budgeting cycles, as well as in implementation of joint work across two or more spheres. The intergovernmental system also interacts with a number of national, provincial and local public entities, and state-owned enterprises.

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[1] The South African Constitution refers to spheres of government, rather than tiers or levels. This connotes a more equal relationship in the powers that were negotiated.
[2] Concurrent functions in the South African Constitution refer to responsibilities shared by two or more spheres of government. For example, health, education, and social development are jointly provided through national and provincial governments.
[3] See s214 of the South African Constitution.
[4] In South Africa, the term "built environment" refers specifically to housing as well as supporting infrastructure, such as water, electricity, sanitation, roads, etc.

The South African Constitution also places a premium on a responsive, development-oriented public service,[5] effective and accountable stewardship of public resources by the executive government, effective oversight by Parliament and the nine provincial legislatures, and public participation in policy and implementation processes.[6]

In response, the South African government embarked on a sustained program of public sector reform, including reforms to the civil service performance management systems as well as budget reforms. These budget reforms initially focused on the financial dimensions of public expenditure management. However, there is increasing emphasis on service delivery and the gathering of nonfinancial information, in pursuit of greater value for money spent. The government is also committed to the Millennium Development Goals and other international commitments. All of these factors have led the South African government to recognize the need for a government-wide monitoring and evaluation (GWM&E) system.

2. Implementing a GWM&E System in South Africa

In 2005, the South African Cabinet approved recommendations from the President's Office on "an implementation plan to develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system." The system was to include functions such as monitoring, evaluation, early warning, data verification, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The role of M&E in the policy cycle of planning, implementation, and monitoring was established. A conceptual anchor for the system was the establishment of a set of national indicators. The implementation plan included dates for phased implementation of the system. Work was to be carried out by an interdepartmental task team, led by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), along the following workstreams:

- Principles and practices, led by the President's Office;

- Reporting and databases, led by the DPSA; and

- Capacity building, led by the Public Administration, Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA).[7]

Surprisingly, after the government's initial interest in the GWM&E initiative, it lost momentum for about a year. During this time there was little discernible progress on the assigned tasks and, instead, a lot of energy was spent on clarifying roles and developing terms of reference for the various working groups. While joint governmental initiatives can succeed, representatives from various departments need to align individual departmental resources with the project and such an alignment, or realignment, often takes considerable time. Representatives also have to contend with competing policy demands and interests as well as linkages to budget and planning cycles. This protracted period of internal norm setting and resource alignment, unfortunately, was not factored into the proposed work plan and, for a period, the interdepartmental task team stopped meeting, while deadline after deadline in the initial project plan was missed.

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[5] See s195 of the South African Constitution.
[6] See ss215 and 216 of the South African Constitution.
[7] Formerly known as the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI).

After about a one-year hiatus, it became clear that the President's Office needed to step in and revive interest in the GWM&E initiative. The administration's Policy Unit took the lead of the interdepartmental task team. More regular meetings and interaction among members facilitated discussion and, by the end of 2007, two of the three working groups had completed their tasks.

The institutional focus had thus shifted from a group of people with narrowly defined tasks, to an organizational body where the core national coordinating departments and provincial representatives could meet to develop mutually supportive approaches and work out agreements. . It was important that the newly constituted task team include actors that were already involved in M&E, for example, the National Treasury. Drawing on experienced people who had been actively implementing M&E systems injected a healthy dose of realism into the new vision.

One of the first tasks was to find conceptual agreement. This entailed a detailed understanding of the work processes by all the actors as well as of the interdependencies. It then became clear that there were three main areas of work which would contribute to monitoring and evaluation in government. Figure 1 describes each of the areas: (1) *Program Performance Information*, derived, among other things, from departmental registers and administrative datasets, and strongly linked to departmental budget structures; (2) *Social, Economic, and Demographic Statistics*, derived mainly from Statistical Agency of South Africa (StatsSA) censuses and surveys as well as departmental surveys, and (3) *Evaluations*, which mostly make use of researchers outside of government and tend to occur on an ad-hoc basis. The Program of Action (PoA) is an apex-level information system which draws on the other three components.

Figure 1: Components of the South African GWM&E Framework
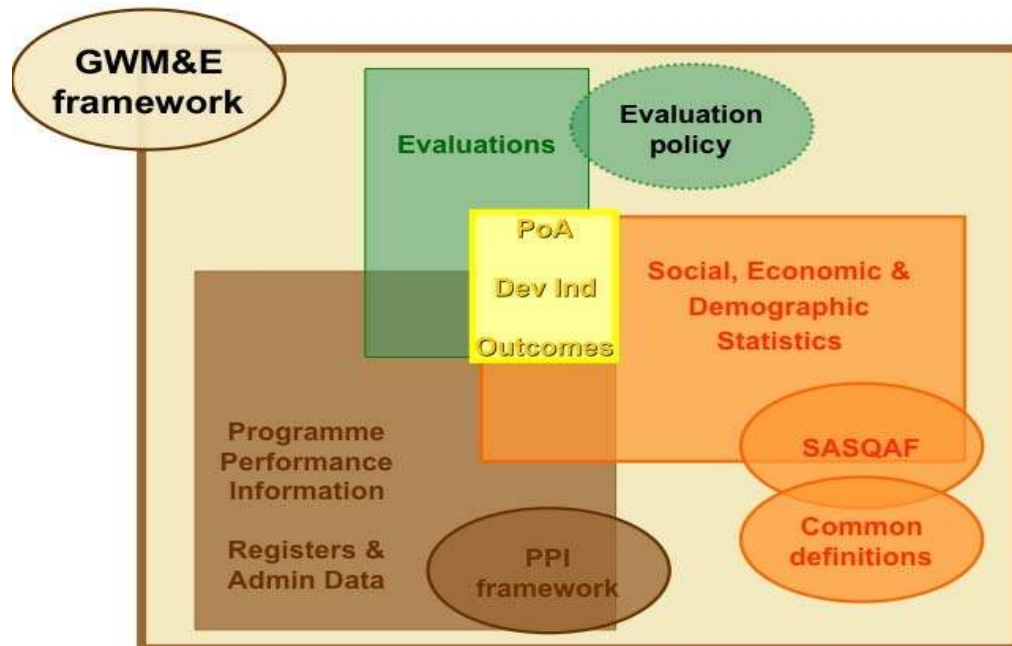
While the program performance information (driven by the National Treasury) focuses mainly on service delivery outputs and direct outcomes, the socioeconomic and demographic statistics provide the source data for baselines and performance measurement of intermediate outcomes and impact. Evaluations would provide analysis of, among other things, both program performance and socioeconomic and demographic statistics, to assess the impacts of government policies, programs, and projects.

2.1 Policy Platform

One of the first tasks under the revived GWM&E initiative was the development of a policy framework. Although the initial intent was to produce a set of guidelines on M&E principles and practices, it became increasingly clear that the guiding framework had to be more formally structured. The President's Office developed an overarching framework[8] and produced a document containing a set of principles, key monitoring and evaluation concepts, GWM&E system goals, descriptions of the various component parts of the system (shown in Figure 1), the roles of departments and civil servants as implementing agents of M&E, and the institutional arrangements and legal mandates underpinning these roles and responsibilities. The document concludes with guiding principles for implementation of future M&E systems.

Cabinet approval of the implementation of the GWM&E system at its inception in 2005 helped gave legitimacy to the policy framework of 2007. The executive authority of Cabinet was supposed to provide direction to departments in the national and provincial spheres of government and to the municipalities.

The policy framework was comprised of a mosaic of existing and some new, tailored requirements, for example, the South African Statistical Quality Assurance Framework (SASQAF). The new requirements were designed to complement the existing components in a synergistic, systemic manner. The policy framework therefore recognized that the GWM&E system was not being implemented from scratch, but had to accommodate bottom-up input from actors already actively engaged in M&E systems implementation.

The policy framework was an important and necessary step in developing the GWM&E system, and it serves the function as conceptual anchor. However, the task of policy guidance needed to be supported by a additional best-practice guideline documents. The most urgent need was in the area of coordination. The first document was an annual workplan, published as ***From Policy Vision to Implementation Reality, 2008***.[9] This document outlined the current and planned M&E initiatives of all the core coordinating departments and agencies. In addition, it provided information for each sector (including health, education, and water), and encompassed both national and provincial public institutions. The aim of the document was to allow the broader M&E community to understand forthcoming reform processes and to encourage core coordinating departments to better align their M&E and related initiatives.

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[8] http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/main.asp?include=learning/framework.html.
[9] http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/learning/reference/implementation.pdf.

Another document, **M&E Guidelines for Premiers' Offices**, was also developed.[10] This document addresses the complex M&E roles of coordinating structures in subnational governments. As noted above, the nine provinces form an independent tier of government in South Africa, and the Constitution provides them with considerable latitude in crafting their own planning and M&E systems. One example is the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS) which are developed by provincial governments, and which articulate both national government priorities as well as those of the provinces. The PGDSs are also intended to align with Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) prepared by municipalities. The quality of the PGDSs and the degree of alignment with municipal IDPs varies considerably across provinces. Provinces, at the time, were also in various stages of M&E implementation—some provinces such as Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal had made considerable progress with their systems, while others were just starting to institutionalize M&E.

In practice, this means that developing M&E systems for provinces requires the simultaneous development of three interrelated aspects: (1) concurrent functions of provincial governments; (2) monitoring the goals of the PGDSs; and (3) allowing information flows between the provincial and local spheres. The *M&E Guideline for Premiers' Offices* seeks to address these core issues, while cautioning against the creation of additional and duplicative M&E reporting requirements.

Following the completion of the policy framework and best-practice guide for premiers' offices, a second-generation set of M&E guidelines is planned. A guideline providing a generic M&E framework for use in each sector of government is also being developed. This generic framework will be customized for individual sectors and will provide a template that includes, for example, an M&E situational analysis, data management and indicator frameworks (including baselines), a monitoring and reporting approach, an evaluation approach for the next three years, system issues, a capacity-building plan, and a communication plan. An *M&E Guideline on IT Systems* is also being developed.

Importantly, the lead national department in each sector will be expected to prepare an inventory of all the indicators in use in that sector, describe the administrative data systems that provide information, outline reporting requirements, indicate baseline data requirements, and so on. The intention is that over a six-month period, this document will be developed (through workshops) for eight sectors and, for each sector, a detailed M&E framework and a short checklist of required actions will be developed. In those sectors where M&E systems are already functioning well, comparisons will then be possible against a national standard. For those sectors that do not have well-developed M&E systems, this document will set out the requirements of a well functioning system, as an reference list of good practices.

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[10] http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/docs/pcsa/planning/premiersguide.pdf.

Figure 2: Key Milestones in Implementing the GWM&E in South Africa
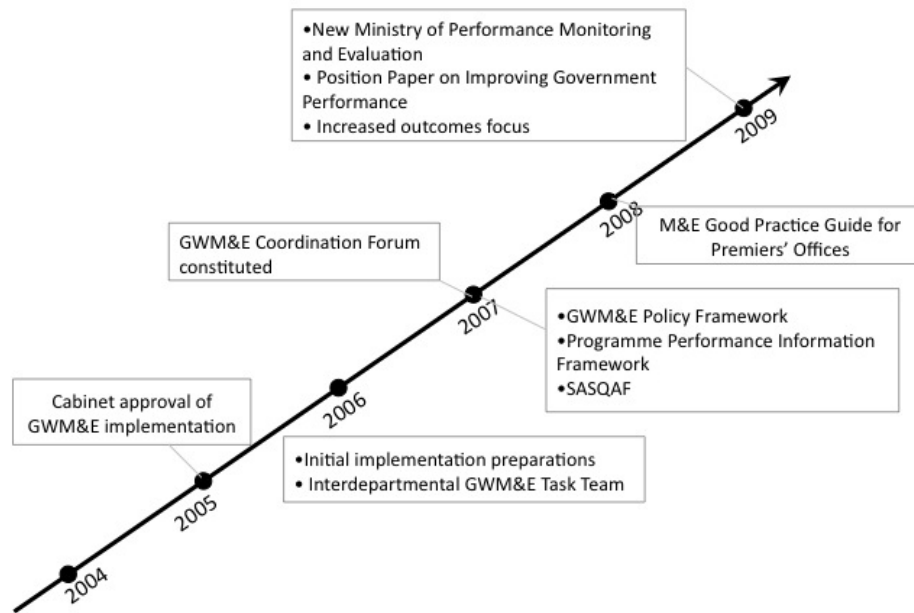
The South African government is cautious about narrowly restricting evaluation work to impact evaluations. If it uses a particularly narrow definition of impact evaluation and rules out evidence in policy making that is not secured through experimental or quantitative methods, it could implicitly delegitimize the democratic approaches promoted by professional evaluation organizations. The type of evaluation method employed has an impact on the developmental strategies that are favored. Not all solution-driven, bottom-up development strategies are able to be evaluated through experimental methods. The South African government is conscious of the need to make sure that the evaluation methodology it uses does not automatically favor linear and simplistic ideas of development, which are easily subject to experimental methods.

2.2   M&E Products, Uses, and Activities

The policy platform has created conceptual clarity and a common understanding of the intention and purpose of M&E in the South African government. However, it was evident that a policy framework would be redundant unless it helps to provide information that is reliable, accurate, and useful to strategy decision makers.

Development Indicators

Since 2007, the President's Office has published annually a set of core development indicators, which function as key indicators of human development in South Africa. The publication contains information sourced from official statistics, government

databases, and research by local and international institutions.[11] Information is grouped into 10 broad themes: economic growth and transformation; employment; poverty and inequality; household and community assets; health; education; social cohesion; safety and security; international relations; and good governance. For each indicator, the government's policy goal is described, a trend analysis is provided indicating specific policy interventions, a data table and graph (where applicable) are supplied, and information on the definition, data sources, and notes on the calculation are provided. The publication focuses on the impacts and outcomes of government policy (for example, infant mortality, education access and quality, and housing delivery). In some instances, information is provided on processes (such as the number of court cases processed). The information is drawn from a wide, eclectic range of data sources, but serves the purpose of allowing an assessment of policy implementation. It does not focus exclusively on outcomes but includes other critical measures of government performance as well. The first versions of the development indicators excluded a number of important performance dimensions for which data or reasonable proxies could not be found. It was, however, recognized that this constraint should be mitigated over time.

The publication of *Development Indicators* in September 2009 contained 76 indicators and the aim is to keep it as succinct as possible. The print run of 10,000 copies is distributed to all ministers and members of executive councils ("provincial ministers"), parliamentarians, provincial members of legislatures, and to every senior civil servant in 140 government departments nationally and provincially. The publication is also sent to universities, think tanks, and nongovernmental organizations, and is available on the Presidential Office's website,[12] further increasing its availability. It is published by the President's Office and receives considerable media attention. In the future, these data will be disaggregated on a more detailed geographical basis, using a Geographic Information System (GIS) platform. This will be useful for government planning and is particularly important in the context of the legacy of apartheid, which led to geographically concentrated poverty in rural areas and areas populated by black residents, and spatially skewed distributions of economic activity.

Program of Action

On an annual basis, the President announces a set of priority focus areas during the opening of Parliament in the State of the Nation address—these priorities are known as the government Program of Action (PoA).[13]

Starting in 2005, the President's Office developed an information management system that functions as a central repository for updated information on the implementation of the PoA. This is a custom-built electronic reporting system with a series of about 400 "project cards." Each project card outlines the policy objectives, describes the program or activity, lists the associated performance indicators and provides for an assessment of the level of progress against the indicators. The project card describes

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[11] South Africa, Office of the President 2009. "Development Indicators 2009", Pretoria, http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/main.asp?include=learning/me/indicators/2009/index.html.
[12] Development indicators are available at http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/main.asp?include=learning/me/indicators/2009/index.html.
[13] This should not be confused with the government's annual budget.

the challenges encountered, lists any partnerships with other government departments or civil society bodies, provides for a discussion of strategic policy issues that have arisen, and notes aspects for fast tracking.

On the basis of information provided in the project cards, progress on the implementation of these priorities was reported to the Cabinet on a bimonthly basis. A project card is assigned to a project manager and the information supplied has to be signed off by a Director-General (or Deputy Director-General). The information on the project cards then forms the basis of a report to the Cabinet which provides an overview of a number of government groups,[14] coordinated by the chair of the groups. After Cabinet approval of the full report, a short (two sentence) description of progress for each activity is posted on the Government Communication and Information Services website.[15] The PoA webpage receives about 10,000 visits[16] per month and is one of the 20 most frequented webpages in government.

As is probably the case with many custom-designed and pioneering systems, the initial information technology (IT) environment was very unstable. Users started to lose confidence in the system, and in 2007 a concerted effort was made to stabilize the IT platform. Over 300 users of the PoA IT system are trained each year, and a user help manual has been developed. The creation of the PoA system was an important first step in establishing a culture of reporting, but after four years of use, it is clear that it can be improved.

The reporting burden is quite severe and many senior managers feel that the turnaround time of two months is not enough time for progress to be realized. The Cabinet, however, has made it clear that they require these bimonthly reports, and would like even more in-depth reports, with clearer information on the impact of government programs—notwithstanding the short interval for reporting. The nature of many government initiatives often does not allow for an assessment of impact in the short term, and the request from the Cabinet can perhaps be seen as demand for more quality M&E information to support executive decision making. The current system also does not allow a direct link with the National Treasury's expenditure monitoring work.

Early Warning on the "Functionality" of Departments
During 2007, the President's Office developed an early warning system which provides evidence on the "functionality" of various national government departments. This system is primarily based on readily available information and does not entail an additional reporting burden on departments. Through a system of 32 indicators this system assesses the level of service delivery and reviews public opinion surveys (where applicable). The functionality indicators focus on a series of strategic management issues, examine budget and financial management processes, assess human resources management, and provide a measure of political and management

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[14] These were groups of departmental heads that reported to a cabinet subcommittee. The groups in 2005 were: governance and administration, economic affairs, social, justice and security. These groups have subsequently been reorganized.
[15] http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/poa/index.html.
[16] Most of these visits are from journalists and academics.

leadership. This system is now being automated and, in due course, will be extended to include provincial departments as well.

The focus in the system is on analysis rather than data collection. However, the sophisticated level of analysis that is required in the system demands a comprehensive understanding of the policy and operational environment of a department; such expertise is not always readily available in government. The system is in its early phase of development, and attention will be given to refining appropriate indicators for different types of institutions. The President's Office will also encourage the use of this M&E application by provincial Premiers' Offices.

M&E Learning Network

Learning network events were held on two occasions in 2007. These events, which have attracted over 300 participants since 2007 across the three spheres of government, have also involved international experts. The forums provide the opportunity to share success stories in the M&E environment, present information on similar practices from the international community, and allow M&E practitioners to build networks. Although such forums are an excellent idea, they require intensive organizational effort and therefore fewer have been held than would have been ideal.

2.3 Key Stakeholders and Their Roles

The initial core coordinating departments were the President's Office, the National Treasury, the DPSA, the Statistical Agency of South Africa (StatsSA), the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), and the Public Administration, Leadership, and Management Academy (PALAMA). After a time, two additional agencies—the Department of Education and the Eastern Cape provincial Premier's Office—were invited to provide insight on M&E practice in large service delivery environments.). These departments and agencies now constitute the GWM&E Coordinating Forum.

The President's Office

The President's Office needs to be provided with information on the performance of departments and agencies from all three spheres of government in implementing the PoA and assessing the impact of long-term efforts to improve economic performance and alleviate poverty. Equally critical, the development of sound future policies depends crucially on credible evidence. Accordingly, the President's Office has played a major role in providing political championing of the emerging M&E system in South Africa, as well as technical guidance to the various departments and agencies. The President's Office facilitates the implementation of the GWM&E system and actively promotes the use of appropriate performance indicators to measure delivery of the government's PoA.

Prior to 2009, a small unit within the policy unit in the President's Office focused on M&E. In April 2009 a new Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation was established, also located in the President's Office, which planned a larger expanded role for M&E, with an additional focus on performance monitoring.

The new ministry will be supported by a Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME), which is planned to include 50 high-level experts on staff. These experts will not only be involved with performance monitoring but also ongoing performance assessment and assistance. As part of its performance measuring role, the department will also develop coordination structures to promote more effective intergovernmental coordination. The department will have three branches: (1) coordination and performance assessment (2) data systems and architecture, and (3) service delivery interventions.

The National Treasury

An important driver of the M&E initiative in South Africa has been the National Treasury. Indeed, before a coherent M&E strategy was conceived, the Treasury had already begun to focus increasingly on nonfinancial information, such as service delivery outputs and outcomes, in pursuit of improved effectiveness, efficiency, and economy, as required by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) of 1999. The PFMA requires that measurable objectives be submitted for each main division (program) within a department's budget allocation. In addition, the PFMA requires that each department's annual report must fairly represent its performance against predetermined objectives. The Treasury has taken a very proactive approach to these legal requirements and has, through many workshops, developed prescribed formats for five-year strategic plans and annual performance plans[17] that link output measures to resource allocation in budget programs and subprograms. Together with the introduction of annual budgets in Parliament and the provincial legislatures, national and provincial ministers are also required to introduce these annual performance plans.

The Annual Performance Plans and Service Delivery Indicators, a prescribed format for the five-year strategic plans and annual performance plans, includes clear service-delivery targets and indicators for each expenditure program in nine provincial sectors. These sectors (health, social development, education, transport, agriculture, public works, arts & culture and sport, local government, and housing) report quarterly on their performance against the set performance objectives. In practice, this means that 500 performance targets are reported to provincial treasuries, which then forward the information to the National Treasury, where this information is collated and analyzed. Although there are problems with quality, these data constitute a major cornerstone of the GWM&E system in South Africa. As verification systems improve and audits of nonfinancial information are introduced, these datasets will also provide a crucial input into evaluations. One concern, however, is that these datasets are not yet widely understood or used outside of the national and provincial treasuries environment.

In 2007, the National Treasury formalized this contribution to performance management—and to the M&E system—in a framework document entitled *Framework for Managing Program Performance Information* (FMPPI). This document outlines the importance of performance information as a management tool

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[17] Strategic plans span a five-year horizon and are more high-level. Annual performance plans are compiled each year, are aligned to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and provide operational details.

and describes the role of performance information in planning, budgeting, and reporting.[18] It defines key concepts of performance information and provides an approach to the development of performance indicators. The FMPPI also outlines the roles of key government institutions in performance information management and discusses the capacity required to manage and use performance information. It also indicates the legal basis for publication of program performance information.

The National Treasury has developed an extensive monitoring system to assess compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act, focusing on aspects such as budgeting timeliness, audit outcomes, supply chain management, and management of conditional grants.

Statistics South Africa

Another important building block in the construction of the M&E policy was a framework aimed at the improvement of the standard of administrative datasets. During 2007, Statistics South Africa released the SA Statistical Quality Assurance Framework (SASQAF), drawing on the International Monetary Fund's Data Quality Assessment Framework and adapted to local conditions. The framework provides the criteria used for assessing and certifying statistics produced by government departments and other state organizations along eight dimensions: relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, interpretability, coherence, methodological soundness, and integrity. This important framework provides a standard set of criteria for the assessment of statistical products which can then be classified on a scale of one (poorest) to four (quality statistics). It should be noted that the requirements are quite stringent and most of the administrative datasets in use in the South African government will require some concerted improvement before they are able to meet these requirements to a high degree.

Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA)

The government training agency, the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA), received new impetus. In its renewed form, one of the aspects that received specific focus was the M&E training curriculum. Because the M&E curriculum had to follow the direction taken in the rest of the GWM&E system, the development of the curriculum had a natural lag time. However, after the initial delays in the development of the GWM&E system, PALAMA was keen to make progress in meeting their responsibilities as originally enunciated by the Interdepartmental Task Team. It initiated contact with all the major actors involved in the GWM&E and—through a series of extensive consultations, discussions, and workshops—developed an M&E curriculum. This curriculum highlights the link between strategic management and performance management and pays attention to both quantitative and qualitative research. The curriculum has three main audiences: (1) line managers with M&E responsibilities who are M&E end users; (2) M&E managers tasked with the responsibility of setting up M&E units; and (3) M&E practitioners in government. The proposed course will be customized at both a strategic level for senior public officials (politicians and bureaucrats), and at the technical operational level for M&E practitioners.

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[18] http://www.treasury.gov.za/publications/guidelines/FMPI.pdf.

The government annually spends about R3 billion (about US$428 million)[19] on training, and this has created a lucrative market for training providers. Noting government's interest in M&E matters, the private sector has developed a range of M&E training courses. However, it has become apparent that the quality of these courses is not always high or consistent. In the case of M&E, trainers have to register with PALAMA and be accredited as M&E trainers. PALAMA has also developed a postcourse assessment procedure, which will involve both the trained person as well as his/her supervisor.

Office of the Public Service Commission

In South Africa there is an independent body set up under the Constitution with a government oversight role—the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC). One of the key governance M&E instruments of the OPSC is the annual *State of the Public Service Report*, which assesses adherence by national and provincial departments to the principles of public administration enshrined in the Constitution. When service delivery quality assurance is assessed, a number of M&E tools and approaches are employed, including analysis of citizen surveys and site visits. Reports are also produced on trends in financial misconduct, public service investigations and grievance resolution in the public service. The OPSC also assesses the state of professional ethics and personnel selection processes in departments.

Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)

COGTA[20] has primary responsibility at the national government level for the oversight of municipal performance and for providing support to this level of government. The COGTA is the champion of the five-year local government reform agenda. This agenda comprises three main priorities. The first is to mainstream hands-on support for improving municipal governance, performance, and accountability in both cross-cutting issues and in five key performance areas: (1) municipal transformation and organizational development; (2) basic service delivery; (3) local economic development; (4) financial viability and management; and (5) good governance and public participation. The second priority is to address the structural and governance arrangements of the state that are designed to strengthen, support and monitor local government. The third priority focuses on strengthening the policy, regulatory, and fiscal environment, and enforcement measures.

Starting in 2003, COGTA has been developing a system for monitoring local government performance, based on the five-year local government agenda. A series of 120 core performance measures focuses on the five key performance areas listed above.

Department of Public Service and Administration

An innovative system to assess human resource practices has also been developed by DPSA. *Public Management Watch* is a quarterly report, which draws its data from the transversal government payroll and personnel data system (PERSAL). The quarterly

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[19] At an exchange rate of R7= US$1. The government's total budget is R650 billion, or US$93 billion.
[20] Previously known as Department of Provincial and Local Government.

report is generated in Excel and distinguishes among professional personnel, managers, and the rest of the staff. The report is generated based on thirteen categories of personnel data, including turnover rates, replacement rates, vacancy rates, vacant positions, leave trends, and employment termination. These human resource data are augmented by two categories of in-year expenditure data (compensation of employees and expenditure on goods and services), as well as the audit outcomes of national and provincial departments. Each category of data has an allowed range, and departmental performance is rated as being on-track (within allowable range), not doing so well, or of serious concern. A color-coded dashboard is also produced, based on these ratings. The various categories of data are weighted and a composite index on all national and provincial departments' human resources status is obtained.

At present, the veracity of this information continues to be negatively impacted by the low quality of PERSAL data on which it depends. Nevertheless, further improvements in this data system are expected, and it is already proving to be a very useful system to senior departmental management.

Auditor-General

The Public Audit Act of 2004 requires that the Auditor-General (AG) express an opinion on the reported information of the performance of those audited against predetermined objectives. Since 2005/06 the AG has provided management and audit reports on shortcomings in policies, systems, and procedures of government departments and agencies. There is concern that most departments' current management information systems, policies, and procedures would not meet the statutory requirements of the Public Finance Management Act of 1999, including the requirements of the *Framework for Managing Program Performance Information*.

The Auditor-General envisages that, starting with the 2011/12 financial year audit cycle, an audit opinion will be expressed on the quality of performance information. Given the pervasive weaknesses in department's management information systems noted above, there is a concern that performance auditing will impose an additional compliance burden on departments with severe capacity constraints. In addition, a narrow focus on the compliance aspects of performance reporting may miss the broader purpose of the GWM&E system.

2.4   *Performance Monitoring and Evaluation: Next Steps*

The creation of a dedicated Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) within the President's Office in 2009 signaled a new phase in the development trajectory of M&E systems in the South African public sector. The establishment of this ministry was precipitated by the growing concern that while access to basic services had improved significantly in the 15 years since the transition to democracy, the outcomes (for example, related to the quality of service delivery in sectors such as education and health) produced in many areas have often been below standard. Massive increases in expenditure on services have not always brought the results anticipated. The underlying reasons for this vary from, among others, lack of political will, inadequate leadership, management weaknesses, inappropriate institutional design and misaligned decision rights.

The new ministry introduced a *Policy Paper on Improving Government Outcomes* in Parliament outlining its approach. The policy position draws on the existing GWM&E system and expands its policy reach by introducing a specific focus on performance.

The aim is to have an early warning system in place that will allow the South African government to recognize bottlenecks in delivery times. While the policy paper emphasizes monitoring at the level of politically decided outcomes, the need to have an understanding of all the key steps in the delivery chain which will assist government to deliver on these outcomes is clearly recognized. While only monitoring for outcomes sounds methodologically pure, (and is, at an unsophisticated level, the standard refrain in M&E work), setting and monitoring outcomes alone is unlikely to make a difference. Unblocking service delivery requires more detailed understanding of the reality of managing delivery than the information that high-level outcomes provide. To improve the management of delivery, the Cabinet needs to have data-driven and evidence-based strategies or activities between the input and the output stage. It will therefore be a priority of the South African M&E system to understand and to measure, on a regular basis, the series of key steps in the delivery chain that lead to an outcome.

Executive oversight versus line function responsibility

The obvious question arises as to how far and how much the executive oversight then extends, and where the line function departmental responsibilities start. While the exact boundary of this interrelationship between the executive and line function is still under negotiation, the South African government is keenly aware that in some instances, the leadership role of the executive in a developing country requires a more direct, nearly interventionist role.

The indicators on which the *Policy Paper on Improving Government Outcomes* focuses are clearly not the high-level outcomes measures with which executives are concerned. These are critical inputs, output, and activities whose hard data linkages government is now trying to establish. While it is relatively easy to decide on the reform strategies and concise measures in education, health, crime and justice, housing and environmental matters, government has found it difficult to design similar measures in the unclear terrain of local municipal functionality, or public sector efficiency in general.

Accountability

An important building block of the PME approach is the creation of a strong performance culture with effective rewards and sanctions. One of the key features of the new PME system is the proposed performance agreements between the President and the political principals (at the national or subnational levels) in a sector.

Performance agreements, which would be made public, would be short and contain the type of measures discussed above. They would clearly state the main outcome desired and the strategies to be used, as well as outline the goals and targets along the way. The President would meet with the political principals and assess progress on a quarterly basis. The PME unit in the President's Office will provide the Minister of PME and the President with the appropriate background information to assess

progress independently from the departmental reports. Below the political level, the content of the performance agreement will form the basis for ongoing discussion and interaction between the officials in the PME department.

Coordination versus a joined-up government

Although the PME system is only in its initial stages of development, it has become apparent that the strong demand for data will lay the groundwork for additional public sector reform strategies. In the initial post democratic election phase after 1994, a slew of new policies and legislation had to be designed. In this period, coordination revolved around building coherence in the ideas. Regular meetings of officials became institutionalized in what is called the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD). It has become increasingly clear that coordination around service delivery requires a different format, where specific inputs (budgetary, human resources, and otherwise) and detailed data on outputs can be discussed. The government is therefore proposing that sectors convene "delivery forums" of all key actors in a particular sector, with contributions and responsibilities of everyone clearly defined. Unlike FOSAD, these delivery forums would involve contributors from both national and subnational governments, and, importantly, from civil society too.

Top-down and bottom-up approaches

Although laudable in its conceptualization as a monitoring tool, over time the PoA has grown too large—it currently contains over 400 activities which are "monitored" in unverifiable ways. This system may seemingly be doing the job of monitoring but there are too many opportunities for political "spinning" in the system and giving the illusion of accountability. The new PME system proposes the monitoring of 14 key outcomes — each one of which has a set of outputs, inputs, and strategies. The Ministry of PME has developed a first draft of the outcomes and related measures, and is now in discussions with various departments about their views (these will obviously be important and form the basis of the performance agreements between the ministers and the President). While the Cabinet is, in principle, open to discussions with line function departments about the exact details of the "Outcome Measures," the goal is to stay try and keep the number to 15 or fewer main outcomes, and to 4 or 5 measurable key outputs, inputs, and activities per sector.

It is important to recognize that the proposal on the development of the outcomes and outputs focuses on only a limited set of indicators per sector. The aim is to only monitor highly selective and strategic indicators for each sector at the highest political level, and leave the development of comprehensive sets of indicators to the respective sectoral entity. Characteristic of such a system will be ongoing, and perhaps necessary, tension over indicators that are developed by the sector specialists and the more strategic and overarching indicators called for by the central government.

3. Parallels with International Experience

At this stage it may be useful to compare the implementation experiences of the emerging GWM&E system in South Africa (discussed above) with those of other countries. This is always difficult to do, given the different developmental and

governance contexts and dynamics, which are often country-specific. Until recently, the literature tended to have a donor perspective, rather than a government perspective (UNICEF 1989; IFAD 2002; UNDP 2002; OECD 2002). Where the literature is related to government, the focus tends to be on the project, program, or sector level rather than from a government-wide perspective (Bergeron 1999; IFAD 2002; EC/UNPF 2002). There is, however, a new and quickly growing body of knowledge which deals specifically with whole-of-government M&E systems (Schiavo-Campo 2005; Mackay 1998 and 2007; Kusek and Rist 2001 and 2002).

Furthermore, public sector M&E reforms are seldom conceived and implemented separately from other broader public sector reforms. While there is a significant body of literature on performance budgeting (Schick 1966; Schick 1998; Diamond 2003; UNCDP 2006) and intergovernmental relations/fiscal decentralization (Oates 1972; Bird 1983; Gramlich 1983; Oates, 1983; Groenwegen 1990; Shah 1994; Hommes 1996), these thematic areas are seldom treated together in the literature. In analyzing the design and implementation of the emerging South African GWM&E system, this paper attempts to draw on each of these thematic areas.

3.1 Political Leadership and Championing of M&E

Kusek and Rist (2002, p.153) emphasize that introducing and sustaining a GWM&E is essentially a political rather than a bureaucratic or technical act:

> *Creating within government a new information system that brings more transparency, more accountability, and visibility can alter political power bases in organizations, challenge conventional wisdom on program and policy performance, drive new resource allocation decisions, and call into question the leadership of those responsible.*

A precondition for starting a results-based M&E system seems to be an unambiguous and sustained political commitment, from officials at the highest levels, to a performance-based ethos in the public sector. Influential and visible champions can play a crucial role in mobilizing support for M&E systems implementation. Stability in the political environment is also crucial since results-based based M&E only yields results slowly although there can be "quick wins."

In Australia, the election of a conservative government in 1996 led to a downsizing of the civil service and a reduced role for the Department of Finance. This resulted in the decade-long performance evaluation strategy being abandoned (Mackay 2007, p.43). Where the M&E system is driven by a central agency, then any reduction of the power and influence of that central agency could threaten the perceived relevance and utilization of the system (Mackay, 2007, p.28).

In South Africa, the leadership for the GWM&E system is shared by the President's Office, the National Treasury, and Statistics South Africa, with support from other agencies. This joint leadership should help mitigate the sustainability risk. It is interesting to note that the Office of President Zuma has signaled that M&E and the objective of evidence-based policy making will continue to be a high priority on the agenda of the incoming government. This augurs well for the continuing sustainability of the emerging GWM&E system.

3.2 Incentives for M&E

In most governments, incentives or sanctions are generally focused on policy formulation, spending allocations, and the early stages of implementation, rather than on actual results achieved or on the feedback loop from implementation experiences to new policies, strategies, or budgets. The implementation of any M&E system will have to create incentives for carrying out effective M&E and building capability for M&E improvement. Even if more information is available through better M&E, the crucial question is whether it actually results in behavioral change that improves service delivery. If not, M&E systems implementation just becomes a complicated and frustrating exercise in bureaucratic futility.

Mackay (2007) refers to "carrots, sticks, and sermons" as ways to create incentives. In the South African scenario, audits of nonfinancial information by the Auditor-General could potentially serve as a severe stick. In addition, the GWM&E *Policy Framework* and the *Framework for the Management of Program Performance Information* stress the need to reflect M&E responsibilities in the performance agreements of senior managers. The Department of Public Service and Administration is in the process of changing the format of individual performance agreements in government to include a component that will reflect on organizational performance.

3.3 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Convergence

In many countries, the development of a GWM&E system tends to be evolutionary and syncretistic rather than consciously designed from scratch with a clean slate. The implementation period may also be quite protracted. For example, in Chile—widely held up to be an example of good practice—ex-ante cost-benefit analysis was introduced in 1974; performance indicators were piloted in 1994; comprehensive management reports per ministry and evaluations of government programs were initiated in 1996; rigorous impact analyses were first conducted in 2001; and comprehensive spending reviews first conducted in 2002 (Mackay 2007).

A new national M&E initiative is often superimposed on existing organization-specific or specific-purpose systems, which had evolved in the past. A case in point would be Tanzania (Kabunduguru 2004). This was also the case in Uganda's National Integrated M&E System (NIMES) (Mackay 2007). The challenge therefore is integration, rationalization, and further development of various disparate systems. Furthermore, the institutional arrangement for M&E tends to differ from one public institution, program, or project to the next. Kusek and Rist (2001, p.17) stress the need for articulation across project, program, sector, and country levels:

> *But in the end it is the creation of a system that is aligned from one level to the others that is most critical—in this way information can flow up and down in a governmental system rather than it being collected at only one level or another, stored and used at that level but never being shared across level . . . . And while different levels will have different requirements [for performance information] that need to be understood and respected, the creation of an M&E system requires interdependency, alignment and coordination across all levels.*

Some M&E systems remain largely divorced from other public sector processes, such as planning and budgeting processes. This was identified as one of the current weaknesses of the Colombian system (Mackay 2007). In South Africa, there is already some linkage between the M&E process and the planning, budgeting, in-year reporting, annual reporting, and auditing processes, but this needs to be strengthened. In particular, the use of evaluation findings still needs to acquire influence in the intergovernmental resource allocation process.

3.4   Monitoring before Evaluation

In many developing countries, the initial focus was on strengthening monitoring and performance information first, before enhancing evaluation. The Ugandan government established an integrated national monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), with a focus on outcome indicators. A poverty M&E system to track progress using a core set of indicators has been established in Tanzania. However, the need for a greater emphasis on evaluation has been identified (Morris 2006). Similarly, in the early stages of the Colombian M&E system, the major emphasis was also initially on the monitoring dimensions (Mackay 2007, p.31).

In Australia, however, the initial focus in the late 1980s was on evaluations, with performance information being seen as something to be managed by line departments. In 1995, increased concern about the quality of performance information led to detailed reviews of departmental performance information (Mackay 2007).

In South Africa, now that the monitoring systems have been established, the quality of the data needs to be improved. The next stage of GWM&E implementation will focus on evaluations, which are more skill intensive. Fortunately, in South Africa there is a strong academic sector as well as private sector providers, so a good mix between in-house and independent evaluations is achievable.

3.5   Information and Data Constraints

In developing countries, baseline information is often not available or is not very accurate (Kusak and Risk 2001). Where data do exist, there may not be sufficiently long time series for sophisticated quantitative analysis. Conversely, a proliferation of indicators can actually undermine, rather than enhance, effective M&E (Schiavo-Campo 2005). There are also likely to be information asymmetries between various line ministries and public agencies, and the central agencies (such as the Ministry of Finance or President's Office) which may be driving the M&E system. To avoid having only self-serving information be released, systems of data verification and auditing of nonfinancial performance information need to be put in place. Public participation in M&E can also be a way to diversify monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Client surveys can provide invaluable information on the perceived quality of service delivery. Where information systems are in place, the emphasis often tends to be on data collection rather than analysis.

Like many other developing countries, South Africa will have to grapple with the problems of constructing credible baselines, setting and enforcing credible standards and improving the quality and usage of performance information for many years to come. It is critical to raise awareness among all concerned that M&E is not an

afterthought, but must be part of the initial conception of policies, programs, projects and other interventions. Through quantitative, qualitative, and analytical M&E skills development, coupled with judicious application of information technology, data can be turned into useful information and performance insights.

3.6 *Capacity Building*

The skills, infrastructure and institutional capacity required to put into place the information systems and processes that will ensure credible, user friendly, and timely performance information can be quite considerable. The skills requirements span social and economic research, statistics, data and information management, planning, public management, and budgeting. Kusek and Rist (2002) define the minimum capacity requirement for results-based M&E systems as: the ability to define and implement indicators; constructing baselines and collecting, analyzing and reporting performance data relative to the indicators; and communicating and reacting to M&E findings. Sustainability of the M&E system requires that enough people with the critical levels of skills be residents in the country rather than have the skills sourced from the international M&E community.

Capacity building has occupied a central position since the conception of the GWM&E system in South Africa. Nevertheless, creating the necessary capacity to ensure quality evaluations is likely to be a challenge in the medium term.

3.7 *Managing Change: Formal versus Informal Rules*

There is an ongoing need to create a culture in the public sector which demands and rewards good performance and which sanctions inefficiency and corruption. Reflecting on the Tanzanian experience, Kabunduguru (2004) notes that M&E is a new culture and that there could well be lack of a shared view among civil servants on why and how M&E should be conducted. There is a danger of M&E degenerating into a "compliance" reporting culture, with little critical organizational introspection and proactive managerial action. One of the critical questions in South Africa is whether there is sufficient political and managerial maturity to deal with politically sensitive and potentially embarrassing information.

On a more operational level, civil servants often fiercely resist M&E systems as "policing systems," both actively and passively (for example, not showing up at meetings, not gathering or sharing information or making any effort to ensure its quality, not following up on promised actions). Managing change is a crucial challenge in the South African context, to ensure that M&E practitioners are not viewed with suspicion or that M&E implementation is resisted.

3.8 *"Ownership" of the M&E System by Line Ministries and Other Agencies*

When the adoption of an M&E system is driven by a central agency, there is a risk that line ministries will not "take ownership" of the system. For example, in Chile, utilization of M&E findings and insights were very low in the line ministries and agencies: "The weakness of Chile's M&E system arises from its centrally driven, force-fed nature" (Mackay 2007, p.28). This can be contrasted with the Australian experience where evaluations were essentially collaborative efforts involving the

department of finance, other central departments and the line departments. This resulted in greater utilization of M&E findings and drew on the expertise within line departments regarding their programs and projects.

While the National Treasury was the first driver of processes to improve in-year nonfinancial reporting in sectors and across tiers, there has been more buy-in recently from the relevant national sector departments, which share concurrent competences with provincial departments. It is hoped that this same collaborative approach will be applied to evaluations in the future. The crucial challenge is to get buy-in from line ministries to use performance information for their own managerial purposes rather than merely for compliance purposes.

4. Fault Lines in Implementation

The principles according to which the GWM&E system was conceptualized can be seen as largely consistent with international practices. However, the strategy that was proposed for rolling out the system did not sufficiently take account of intergovernmental complexity; neither was there enough clarity about existing systems used for sectoral and institutional monitoring. A review by the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC) on M&E systems in government and reporting requirements was not released until mid-2007.[21] This delay meant that the central coordinating departments did not have a comprehensive view of the existing M&E practices across all spheres of government.

The original design also did not take account of the extensive nonfinancial monitoring done by the National Treasury through the formalization of the accountability cycle in strategic plans, annual performance plans, budget statements, and annual reports.

As already mentioned, after the initial Cabinet Memorandum on the development of the GWM&E system in 2005, there was a hiatus. However, many departments continued with the development of their existing in-house M&E systems (or in some instances, started to develop new M&E initiatives). Over time, various systems evolved with differing degrees of complexity. Owing to weak coordination, parallel and duplicate (and even triplicate) reporting systems emerged, often reporting the same information.

By about 2007, it became apparent that the implementation of the GWM&E system had to proceed in two respects: (1) promote the implementation of M&E practices in departments where there none existed, and (2) streamline and align existing reporting structures.

4.1 Coordination of M&E Design

It has proven quite difficult to achieve optimal coordination and to prevent duplication of activities among the core M&E stakeholders. On a superficial level, this can be attributed to "turf battles" between departments, but we think there are many and

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[21] http://www.psc.gov.za/docs/reports/2008/Reporting%20Requirements%20Report.pdf.

more complicated reasons why coordination is difficult and we would do well to examine this malaise more deeply.

Not all ministries and departments share the same view on the nature and role of the state, the role of the state *in relation to* society at large, the nature of services that should be delivered, or even the "form" the services should take. Such a divergence of viewpoints may be common in most societies, but it is perhaps exacerbated in developing countries where the institutions of democracy are still consolidating.

Moreover, in the South African government, there are different paradigms driving the approach to public sector reform, and considerable disputes about the nature of many initiatives. Due to the political position in South Africa, the pre democratic civil service had missed out on many of the typical public sector reforms of the 1980s. There have been two main drivers of reform processes, namely the National Treasury and the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). The National Treasury has a strong public expenditure reform agenda, with an emphasis on efficiency, economy and effectiveness issues, as well as reforms of the budget, such as instituting a medium-term expenditure framework and moving toward a performance budgeting, being given priority. The DPSA favors approaches that are focused on communities of practice, networks, etc., with a strong emphasis on training. While the National Treasury approach focuses on compliance and prescriptive management systems, the DPSA presupposes that these systems already exist and are institutionalized, and focuses on more sophisticated dimensions of knowledge management and continuous learning in departments. It is a moot point which of these approaches is most appropriate to a given developing country.

While a strong point in the original conceptualization of the GWM&E system was acknowledgement that the system was to be progressively built up over time, in terms of its coordination and alignment, this approach has proved to be difficult in practice. No doubt it is conceptually appropriate to be cautious and not to overdesign the system, allowing for best-practices to emerge. However, with different paradigms of reform and views of the state, this approach has led to a number of duplicative initiatives from central departments. These departments all claim to have mandates for M&E design, and have set about creating M&E reporting systems. The result, however, has been a range of M&E systems that "work hard" but do not necessarily "work smart" (see figure 3). In many instances, similar information is requested three or four times from a service delivery department and this has led to serious reporting fatigue and additional reporting burdens on departments already battling considerable constraints in terms of skills and capacity.

Figure 3: Duplication of Reporting
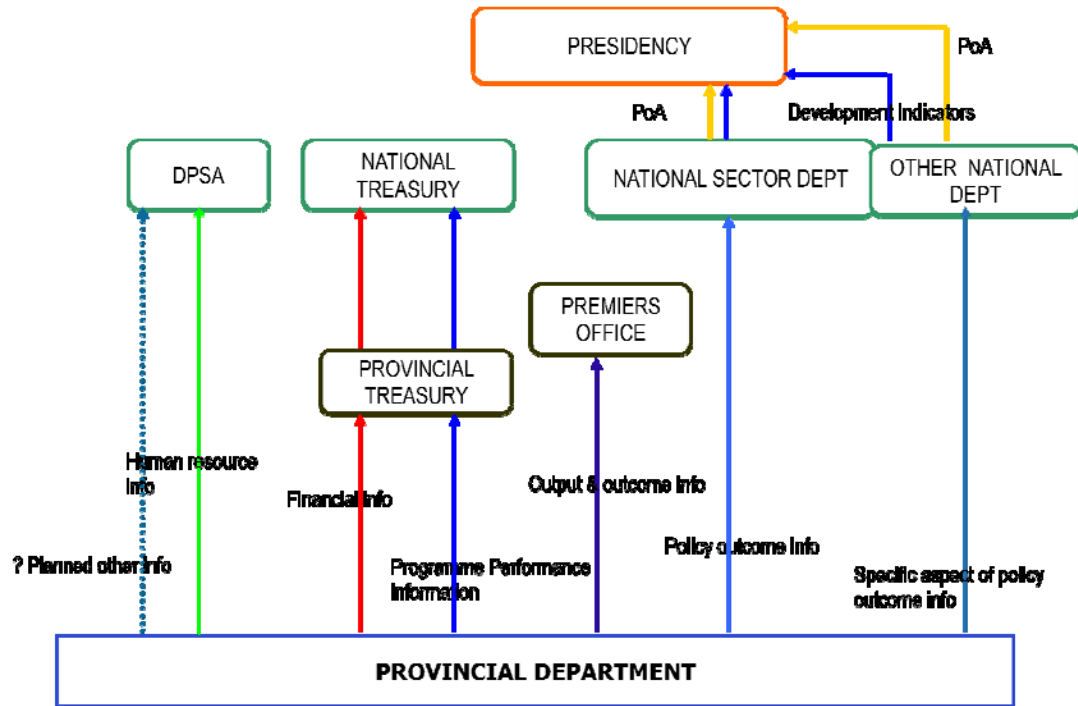
The creation of the M&E Coordination Forum was partly an attempt to address these very serious concerns about coordination and alignment. The Forum has gone some way toward addressing some of these concerns by providing more information for departments that want to see cooperation. However, there is a limit to cooperative coordination, and in some instances, departments will consciously avoid cooperation. It has now been proposed to the Cabinet that the Coordinating Forum be given a formal institutional base for decision making concerning the GWM&E System, and that consideration be given to creating a legislative or regulatory environment to formalize some of the emerging M&E practices.

4.2 A Decentralized Approach versus National Direction

The decentralized nature of the GWM&E system has been acknowledged since its inception. The development of sector-specific M&E systems is a conscious part of the approach, and it places the development of policy outcome measures in the hands of sector specialists. They are seen as the policy experts who are best placed, from a technical standpoint, to develop measures that will assess their policy success.

However, sector focus needs to be counterbalanced with the needs of the President's or Prime Minister's Office to give guidance and leadership on strategic outcomes. Finding the balance between these two contradicting (and sometimes conflicting) perspectives requires sophistication and dialogue. There cannot be a predetermined and mechanistic formula for determining performance measures. It would be naïve to think that a single decision maker in government could decide all of the indicators, and indeed it would be extremely naïve to think government can function that way. The aim should rather be to have a national dialogue—involving national and

provincial governments, together with acknowledged sector experts—on which aspects need to be measured in a sector. The new PME approach focuses on only a limited set of indicators per sector. The aim here is to monitor strategic indicators by sector at a high political level, not to develop a comprehensive set of indicators.

In the hiatus after the 2005 Cabinet Memorandum, there was a lack of clear direction from the core national departments. During this period, a few sector departments went ahead with sector-specific M&E systems, which they needed to track their performance in meeting policy objectives. The systems evolved but were uncoordinated, thus leading in some instances to duplication, omissions, etc. Once there was renewed impetus in the GWM&E implementation from early 2007, the challenge was to create a high-level policy framework with buy-in from all relevant national departments. Here the focus was on articulation of systems, data and metadata standards, quality of data, and harmonization and rationalization of systems. The challenge now is to integrate the bottom-up, detailed sector-specific systems with the high-level, top-down policy framework.

4.3   Complexity of Subnational Government

As discussed earlier, South Africa's Constitution created a complex, decentralized environment which separates the creation of policies (chiefly done at the national level) from the funding of these policies and implementation (which occurs at the subnational level). In such a governance context M&E becomes critical in assessing the impact of decentralized decisions by subnational governments on national priorities and policy outcomes.

Until the publication of the *M&E Good Practice Guide* for provincial governments in 2008, not much guidance was provided concerning the role of the Premier's Office in monitoring and evaluation. As a result, a wide variety of practices and conventions have emerged in the nine provinces, which are at various stages in institutionalizing M&E. A number of best-practices have also emerged, and these should be communicated to the entire provincial sector to stimulate learning and innovation. Since M&E is a relatively new discipline in the South African public sector, with many provinces only recently creating M&E units, it is important that good practices in provincewide M&E be disseminated and bad practices (such as duplicate reporting) be identified and discouraged.

Incorporating the local government sphere into the current GWM&E framework will be even more complex given the convoluted nature of planning, budgeting, and implementation processes, which cuts across all three spheres of government, and the severe capacity constraints experienced within municipalities. Typically there tends to be a lack of coordination between national and provincial departments with respect to M&E at local government level, and municipalities often bear the administrative burden of duplicated reporting to both provincial and national spheres. By January 2010, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) had not yet released a comprehensive framework for M&E within local government.

4.4   *Tensions between Budget-Linked M&E and Policy-Linked M&E*

The National Treasury, drawing on a performance budgeting[22] approach, has stressed the link between performance information and the budget structure and cycle (even though this link needs to be strengthened in the future, once public expenditure reviews and evaluations are done on a more systematic basis). This emphasis permits a closer link between resource inputs and service delivery outputs, which are critical to assessing value-for-money.

However, many line ministries view this focus as being too narrow, and the Treasury's conception of the results chain among input, outputs, outcomes, and impacts as being too linear, mechanical and hierarchical. Furthermore, operational program structures may differ markedly from budget program structures, and organizational structures may not map closely to budget program structures — further attenuating the purported link between personal accountability and outputs. In addition, operational program and project structures may span many public sector institutions in various sectors and tiers, unlike budget program structures which are tied to specific institutions.

The Treasury's emphasis on the budget structure tends to result in a focus on the performance of the public institution rather than the performance of the sector as a whole. Treasury's concern with fiscal accountability also means that the focus is often on outputs (which are under managerial control) rather than outcomes (which tend to be influenced by exogenous factors). While treasuries have a tendency to standardize, line departments often prefer to customize their own M&E approaches.

Furthermore, while national and provincial treasuries have emphasized an approach to collecting information that is based on a logical framework (log-frame) results chain, they have not focused on attribution or causality. This is because their focus, so far, has been relatively short term. The time horizon of analysis could be extended when more rigorous public expenditure reviews are conducted.

The main point here is that a GWM&E system serves many different objectives, such as comparing policy realization relative to policy intent, public resource allocation, accountability, etc. Therefore, trade-offs will have to be made and there will always be some degree of tension regarding fulfillment of these multiple objectives.

Moreover, it is very difficult to attribute causality. Many public sector institutions have begun to adopt a log-frame-based approach that is comprised of a results chain linking their application of resource inputs to producing service delivery outputs, which in turn contribute to desired program or project outcomes. However, in ex-ante planning, the assumptions underpinning the results-chain relationship are seldom explicitly articulated, and this compromises the risk management of program delivery

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[22] Like most countries, South Africa does not have strict (or "direct") performance budgeting, where an increment of additional output can be linked directly to an increment of resources and where budget allocations are strictly based on results (outputs and outcomes). Instead, there is performance-related (or "indirect") budgeting, where a basket of outputs is linked to a particular budget, and results (in terms of outputs and outcomes) are only one factor determining budget appropriations.

targets. Similarly, when analyzing data on actual program spending allocations, attribution of "cause-and-effect" relationships is the exception rather than the norm.

4.5   Good on Paper, but in Reality?

The South African experience with other public sector reforms (such as the Public Finance Management Act of 1999) leads us to believe that, initially, public institutions will craft impressive M&E frameworks, often with the technical assistance of external consultants. However, it will take some time before these M&E frameworks are actually fully operationalized and M&E findings are influential in shaping policy and strategy formulation and in public resource allocation. Over time, however, the requirement that public institutions produce M&E frameworks, the increased pressure for effective service delivery, and the concerted efforts to build demand for M&E findings and insights, should help create a culture receptive to M&E.

The Office of the Public Service Commission has been providing an important independent view. Often, useful recommendations are not effectively implemented by departments and have become recurring concerns (for example, introduction of performance agreements by accounting officers). In terms of the Public Service Amendment Act, the Public Service Commission may now issue directives for the implementation of their recommendations to the executive government on matters raised in Public Service Commission reports.

The OPSC will play a critical role in monitoring the extent to which public sector institutions build capacity for M&E in their sectors and align with the GWM&E policy framework.

4.6   Information Sharing

In the rollout of the GWM&E system, and especially through the production of M&E products, it has become increasingly clear that civil servants are uneasy about sharing data. In many instances, custodians of data guard their information and, in some instances, the "culture" has become so entrenched that governmental departments are forced to buy data that should be readily available from a sister department. Other consequences include different versions of similar data existing, and even different baseline data between departments (for example the number of households used for planning services). In part, this is because of the negative experiences by government departments when inaccurate data have been released to the public.

Furthermore, the reluctance to share information may occur not just between departments but even between program areas within the same department. Often, there are no central data repositories within departments. Different program areas frequently are not even aware of what data are available within the department itself. A resolution to this problem clearly does not only depend on the introduction of appropriate management system, but also on changing the organizational culture to one that values the sharing of information and analysis in pursuit of enhanced performance.

It could be useful to consider different levels of data availability—at the intragovernment and intraexecutive levels—before forcing departments to make data publicly available. It is clear that this is not a hurdle that will be overcome by administrative fiat. The proposed data forums, where M&E frameworks for each sector will be developed, will give special attention to data needs and custodianship of information.

4.7   Evaluation Lag

In the South African monitoring and evaluation system the focus has been, first and foremost, on the creation of monitoring systems, separate from evaluation processes—the "M" before the "E." After 1994, the civil service had to be transformed to deliver new governmental services and to ensure that services reached a much wider community than previously. This led to an emphasis on Management Information Systems and the focus on monitoring should be seen in that light.

Data and information are the foundations on which M&E is built. Administrative datasets in government are generally record-keeping by-products of departments' service delivery (for example, patient records, school enrollments, identity documents issued, purchases made, etc). Management information is taking these transactional databases and packaging the information so that it can be easily reported and analyzed, and management information is thus used primarily for the monitoring dimensions of M&E. Management information is often quantitative and internally focused, and seldom deals with citizen perceptions as to whether an initiative is aligned with the developmental aspirations of individuals and communities.

By contrast, evaluation provides the opportunity to go beyond merely reporting to understanding *why* phenomena take place, that is, the attribution of cause and effect between inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts within an explicit conceptual/theoretical framework. This is essentially the evaluation dimension. Instead of just checking if something is "on track," government needs to critically reflect on whether they are "on the *right* track," by questioning the fundamental assumptions on which a policy, program, or project is based. It is at this more rigorous analytical depth that M&E yields insights that can be influential in shaping future policy and resource decisions.

While the development of evaluation approaches has not yet been formalized and institutionalized, there exists a range of review and evaluation initiatives in the South African public sector. Foremost is the *15 Year Review*, published in October 2008.[23] This is an assessment of the government based on 60 commissioned papers, each of which analyzed one of six sectors. From these papers a review document of each sector was developed, and these were then provided the source material for one 60-page public document. This final document provides a sober and realistic assessment of government successes and failures. There has been substantial public interest in the document—20,000 copies have been publicly distributed, inserts placed in

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[23] http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/main.asp?include=docs/reports/15year_review/main.html.

newspapers, and numerous newspaper articles published about it. All of these documents are available on the President's Office website.[24]

It is therefore not correct to think of the South African government as not being involved in evaluation. Indeed, an important task under the proposed evaluation policy (to be developed by mid-2010) would be to coordinate the numerous evaluation activities that are already occurring. The policy will not focus on creating evaluation practices, but on institutionalizing them.

5. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

In the previous sections we described the implementation process, to date, of the emerging GWM&E system in South Africa. We then compared the South African experience with those of other countries, highlighting similarities and differences. The faultlines encountered in the implementation process are also described and analyzed. This section offers reflections on the South African experience, which may be useful to other developing countries contemplating a similar M&E reform.

- **There should be an appropriate balance between deliberate systemic design and evolution**

In the development of the GWM&E system in South Africa, the original conceptualization did not adequately take into account key aspects of subnational government and existing monitoring systems. This led to a delay in the process and negatively affected the rollout and reception of the GWM&E system. It is important that reforms be applicable, and not selected without due consideration of the preceding and existing processes and interdependencies. Too often in government, new initiatives are launched without a careful understanding of the existing situation.

However, one also needs to be cautious about thinking that a system can be comprehensively designed ex ante. To try and design such a system would necessitate the identification of every possibly relevant issue beforehand—this would unrealistically entail very protracted review and planning. Instead, one needs to make a start, often with an incomplete product, and allow the system to evolve over time. The key is to be flexible enough to allow a change in course when needed. This flexibility needs to be coupled with regular assessment of progress in implementation and strong political oversight to ensure that objectives and timelines are met.

- **When sequencing reforms, do the basics first**

Ultimately, the aim of a GWM&E system is to promote "learning organizations." In developing countries like South Africa, this is likely to be a medium- to long-term enterprise. Before more sophisticated M&E approaches, systems, and instruments are employed, the basic administrative processes have to be in place. The credibility of administrative data systems and administrative registers in departments depend on the

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[24] http://www.thepresidency.gov.za/main.asp?include=docs/reports/
15year_review/background_thematic.html.

efficiency of the underlying core business processes. For instance, database information on identity documents issued can only be credible if the administrative process for issuing the identity documents is sound. Similarly, financial information on local government revenue receipts depends on accurate meter reading, credit control, billing and other revenue management systems. No amount of sophisticated data mining using IT systems will improve the credibility of the data unless the underlying transaction-level data are accurate.

As discussed earlier, the initial emphasis in South Africa has been on monitoring rather than evaluation. This is partly a result of the National Treasury's emphasis on the system's development, as well as the need to embed basic management information systems in the South African public sector. While this is clearly less than ideal, this approach is at least consistent with the country's capacity constraints (which should become less binding over time) and it can serve as a springboard to institutionalizing M&E as a mechanism for improving service delivery.

- **Coordination is critical in a decentralized system; factors inhibiting coordination are multifaceted**

One strength in the design of the GWM&E system is the recognition of the need for a composite system that allows expertise in various sectors and tiers of government to develop appropriate M&E strategies. In many ways, M&E expresses the realities of governance in stark terms. Although coordination and linked-up government are not new concepts, we still have not developed strong protocols about how to proceed with these issues. Departments (especially central ministries) are very protective of their mandates, and often such mandates can overlap. In M&E design it becomes difficult to coordinate when people do not want to be coordinated. Those who seek alignment are always cooperative, but those who do not want it will just continue with their projects and claim that it is their mandate. M&E systems will need to develop strong protocols on coordination and alignment. In the South Africa case, we will be investigating the legal basis for enforcing better coordination.

Discussions around coordination can simplistically be described as "turf battles." However, such labeling does not allow for further analysis. It is perhaps more worthwhile to have in-depth discussions about different views on the role of the state and different paradigms for public sector reform.

- **There should be balance between top-down guidance and bottom-up (sector and subnational) expertise**

In the initial design stages of the GWM&E system, it was optimistic to think that one could end up with a set of indicators that would reflect a simple hierarchy, moving from output, to outcome, to impact. However, such a simplistic "nesting" of indicators assumes that all users have similar needs. It quickly became apparent that, at different points in the system, different stakeholders have different needs. The difference in the information needs of departments, which have policy imperatives, and the needs of the National Treasury, which is focused on budget accountability, is quite substantial. Similarly, the needs of the national Cabinet and the strategic oversight they seek, versus community-level indicators, are obvious. One solution is to develop sets of indicators that have different entry points.

Characteristic of such a system will be ongoing, and perhaps necessary, tension over indicators that are developed by sector specialists and the more strategic and overarching indicators called for by the central government. It would be naïve to think that there can be a single decision point in government that will decide on all indicators — no government can function that way. These types of imposed indicators are also generally resisted. It is perhaps more fruitful to think of an approach involving ongoing dialogue on the development of shared and commonly agreed indicators.

- **There should be a dual implementation approach combining short-term visible M&E achievements with longer-term strategic direction**

In the South African experience, it was clear that a successful GWM&E system had to do two things simultaneously: (1) provide clarity on policy and, (2) produce a suite of M&E products as soon as possible.

In the development of the GWM&E system it became apparent that one would need a more formal policy guidance environment than simply a "community of practice." Understanding the exact nature of the system though is only possible after some systemic M&E activities have been conducted for a period of time. If it were possible to have greater conceptual clarity before this period of activity, such an approach would save a lot of wasted time and effort. Once there is greater conceptual clarity about what the system entails, who the main actors are, and what their true focus and areas of expertise are, we could then move on to constructing a formal policy framework.

However, to give the system credibility, to make it a "real" product in the eyes of the executive government and other stakeholders, it was useful to buttress the policy frameworks and systemic discussions with some very real products that could demonstrate the value of the approach. The South African government made an effort to provide credible products that could provide new insights and quickly demonstrate that time and effort expended in creating an M&E system does produce valuable results.

- **GWM&E is a management system not an IT system**

In the early stages of the GWM&E system it was conceptualized as a government-wide IT system. Later versions of the *GWM&E Policy Framework* have stressed that the framework is primarily a management system. Information technology can, however, be used as a crucial M&E enabler.

The GWM&E policy framework seeks to embed within public sector organizations a performance management system that is clearly defined along with other internal management systems (such as planning and budgeting). The term "system," in this context, refers to policies, strategies, structures, processes, information flows, and accountability relationships, which underpin the practice of M&E across government. This may or may not be supported by IT software and other tools. If so, the emphasis is therefore on systems integration, interoperability, and standards for data exchange.

While judicious use of IT systems can facilitate M&E enormously, IT systems alone will fail unless public sector institutions modify their business processes to support the M&E system, capacity is created to sustain the system, and a self-reflective, mature management culture is created that demands M&E information and responds constructively, rather than defensively, to M&E findings. In South Africa, where management systems in certain provincial governments and municipalities are very weak, the importance of this cannot be overemphasized since IT systems are often perceived as an instant panacea.

- **Resistance is inevitable and managing change is therefore critical**

Past experience with public sector reform in South Africa has shown that "malicious compliance" is possible. In other words, there is compliance according to the letter of a law, regulation, or reporting format, but the spirit of the law or regulation is deliberately undermined. So, even though M&E frameworks and other guidelines are adopted, this does not change the informal institutions in the public institution (that is, "the way things actually are done") or the organizational culture or the management mindset. The crucial criterion by which the effectiveness of the emerging South African GWM&E system will be judged is to see if it actually has impacts on managerial behavior and executive decision making.

In rolling out the system further, there has to be a mix of compliance and collaborative approaches to building ownership of M&E systems by line ministries. To date this has been achieved to an extent by involving the relevant sector departments and their subnational counterparts in designing indicator frameworks. The President's Office has taken the approach of providing good practice guides (for example, to the provincial Offices of the Premier) rather than strict directives.

The South African public service has been in a state of continual transformation since the transition to democracy in 1994. Not surprisingly, many civil servants suffer from "reform fatigue." When implementing the GWM&E system, the President's Office has attempted to communicate the linkages with previous public sector reform initiatives and the intention to build on previous achievements, rather than displacing them.

Another source of resistance is that managers in the public sector may perceive the GWM&E system as an instrument of management control rather than an aid to improving future performance by reflecting critically on current practices. The effectiveness of the GWM&E system is inextricably linked to the broader task of creating and institutionalizing a performance orientation in the South African public service. This is complicated by the practical difficulties in linking service delivery progress (or lack thereof) to personal accountability. A recurring refrain heard in implementing the Public Finance Management Act of 1999 was the need to hold managers accountable for service delivery outputs. Accomplishing this in practice can prove challenging though.

Furthermore, changes in strategic planning, annual performance planning formats, and quarterly nonfinancial information indicators were initially driven by the National Treasury and its provincial counterparts. Understandably, the reforms mainly reached finance officials, and insufficient attention was paid to drawing in officials involved

in strategy and policy. At present there is a need for a common understanding of policy performance in the South African public service to transcend the traditional dichotomy between financial and service delivery (nonfinancial) information. Finance officials increasingly are required to play a support role with respect to resource allocation decision making and service delivery. On the other side, line managers are increasingly being required to account for value-for-money. Ongoing cooperation among the President's Office, the National Treasury, and other key departments will be needed to create this common vision of policy performance.

In the aftermath of the global economic meltdown, South Africa's fiscal position has swung from a modest surplus to an anticipated deficit of over 7 percent of GDP in the 2009/10 fiscal year. For the first time since the transition to democracy, government revenues have been undercollected by more than ZAR 60 billion. In previous years, improvements in revenue collection by the South African Revenue Service had resulted in revenue overcollections. At the same time, increased poverty and unemployment have significantly increased the demand for government services and social grants. This environment of increased fiscal austerity over the medium term could create a powerful incentive for line departments to use performance information intensively in pursuit of value-for-money and the elimination of wasteful and unproductive expenditures.

- **M&E is an art as well as a science, and there is no substitute for learning-by-doing**

South Africa has been in the privileged position of being able to learn from the experiences of other developed and developing countries. It has become clear that there is no blueprint for developing an effective GWM&E system. In the end, each country will have to craft a pragmatic response that speaks to its own political, development, and governance context, within its own prevailing resource and capacity constraints. Sequencing M&E reforms will also depend heavily on the specific country circumstances and the specific objectives of the country's own GWM&E system. The process of implementing a GWM&E system also creates opportunities for learning-by-doing and "meta-evaluation" (in the sense of evaluating the process of establishing and maintaining evaluation systems).

- **Choice of a principles-based approach versus a firmer policy regulatory approach depends on country context**

A principles-based approach is desirable because it permits innovation while maintaining the coherence of an M&E system. This allows individual managers to innovatively apply the principles of M&E to their own sectors. However, such an approach assumes that managers are empowered and motivated to improve service delivery. This may not always be the case in developing countries where lack of capacity is pervasive and incentives may be skewed. Regulatory approaches present a standard set of requirements for compliance, which can be uniformly enforced across sectors. This may obviously constrain innovation, may erode a sense of ownership and induce malicious compliance. On the other hand, it does provide clarity of purpose and expectations, and may be more appropriate in less sophisticated institutional environments. The position a developing country chooses along this spectrum depends crucially on its specific institutional and governance context.

Having drawn on our predecessors' implementation experiences, we offer these hard-won reflections in the hope that other countries may have a much smoother learning curve.

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