



Building Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity in the Republic of Yemen



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This note disseminates key lessons learned from a World Bank–financed project in the Republic of Yemen, “Monitoring and Evaluation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and Reform Programs,” which established and operationalized a Poverty Reduction Strategy Monitoring Unit. The approaches used, such as a study tour to Uganda, focused international training sessions, and the successful work on improving and minimizing the number of indicators, provide some lessons learned for other countries seeking to build M&E capacity. Policy makers learned from Uganda’s good practices of connecting accountability with resource allocation and of the importance of a strong and independent statistics office. The Republic of Yemen’s experience also illustrates the value of having a powerful M&E champion to support such a significant initiative. Finally, the inclusion of civil society organizations in the planning process and in M&E outputs, especially on the central level and on policy matters, increased popular support and was an important factor in building M&E capacity.

Country Context

The Republic of Yemen’s history as a fragmented country dates back to northern Yemen’s roots within the Ottoman Empire, and southern Yemen’s rule under the British. After an intense, two-decade long civil war, the north and south were reunified on May 22, 1990. Conflict, however, continues among warring tribes and factions. Tension has increased as a result of the current wave of protests across the Middle East.

Political Economy

The Republic of Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East and North Africa region. The fragility of the political and security environment and the social unrest linked to persisting poverty are among key country risks. Most institutions are relatively weak, due to capacity issues, corruption, over- or understaffing in the

civil service (a legacy of the 1990 reunification when existing civil services were merged without reform), and the persisting need to clarify institutional mandates and structures. The World Bank has noted that the Republic of Yemen will not meet its Millennium Development Goals for 2015. The country will have to overcome serious challenges to achieve its strategic vision, such as the impending rapid decline in oil revenues, the weak capacity of governance institutions, the pressures of high population growth, the worsening scarcity of fresh water, and the present challenges resulting from protests and regime changes.

Following the World Bank’s re-engagement with the Republic of Yemen in January 2012, an Interim Strategy Note (ISN)¹, covering the period FY2013–14, was presented to the World Bank’s Board of Directors in November 2012. The time frame of the ISN was planned to match that of the

current transition government in the Republic of Yemen, expected to continue through 2014.

The ISN framework is oriented around three main principles: (i) intensifying participation and inclusion, especially among women and young people; (ii) strengthening institutional capacity, governance, transparency, and accountability; and (iii) enhancing the operational flexibility of the World Bank–supported program. Strengthening institutional capacity is essential to the development/redevelopment of the Republic of Yemen’s M&E program.

The transitional government has prepared a development program for the next two years, called the Transitional Program for Stabilization and Development. The program includes several short-term emergency priorities, such as security stabilization, peaceful power transfer, and humanitarian needs. Medium-term priorities include economic growth sectors, basic infrastructure, social protection, and good governance/state building. A joint donor group is working with the authorities on this program to assist during the fragile transition stage.

Phase 1: Post-Reunification (1995–2005)

For the purposes of this note, three phases of M&E development have been identified. Following reunification, efforts toward promoting good governance and pursuing comprehensive reforms began in 1995 with the implementation of the Economic, Financial, and Administrative Reform Program. Efforts continued with the development of the Second Five Year Economic Plan and Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). The government completed the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in 2000, which was followed by the Republic of Yemen’s first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2003–5). However, the PRS-related planning was not reflected in budget lines because the country did not have the required capacity given the weakness of its financial systems.

In 2003, the Republic of Yemen benefited from a PRSP trust fund grant; the purpose of the grant was to support the government of Yemen’s implementation of its first PRSP, as well as to strengthen partnership, outreach, and dissemination activities with parliamentarians and civil society, all of which were identified in the Joint International Monetary Fund (IMF)–World Bank Staff Assessment of 2002. One of the four components housed in the grant included the institutional setup of a PRSP Monitoring Unit in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC). Implementation of the program was delayed, however, because the training and awareness campaigns on the PRSP and PRSP monitoring were not initiated during the first two years of the program. Although 12 workshops were held between 2003 and 2005 to improve awareness

of the PRSP and help in identifying and gathering information to construct the monitoring indicators, the M&E Unit itself was not established. As a result, there was no centralized unit within the government to establish a statistical baseline, and no agreement on indicators or on which agency would lead the data collection, resulting in tensions between MOPIC and the National Statistics Office (NSO).² At the time, the priority was not focused on data gathering. Rather, the focus was on establishing the poverty reduction program as outlined in the interim World Bank–IMF PRSP monitoring review.

Phase II: Developing M&E Capacity (2006–7)

The Republic of Yemen’s “Strategic Vision 2025” is the country’s long-term development plan, first outlined in 2006, and oriented toward lifting its international ranking from a least-developed country to one of “medium human development” by 2025. The plan was translated into a series of successive national plans, including the Third Socio-Economic Development Plan for Poverty Reduction, which is packaged together with the second PRS as a single program under the DPPR. The government developed an M&E strategy for the DPPR that included specific measures to elaborate a poverty monitoring system covering data generation, analysis, storage, and dissemination of information required to track trends in poverty and to help assess progress toward achieving PRSP goals.

The German Agency for International Cooperation made significant contributions to building capacity within MOPIC by placing an employee in-house for two years to assist with the development of the M&E master plan, as well as the M&E strategy for the Third Socio-Economic Development Plan for Poverty Reduction. The government of Yemen developed the National Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy as an M&E system for the DPPR. MOPIC led the creation of this system, which involved a participatory process with line ministries and other key stakeholders to draft the goals and activities all the way through to the completed M&E framework. MOPIC’s M&E Unit carried out multiple rounds of workshops with line ministries and other stakeholders to whittle down the number of monitoring indicators. The DPPR stressed the need to reduce the budget deficit, strengthen national accounts, and improve the country’s statistical capacity. Also highlighted in the DPPR was the need for sectoral reforms to increase efficiency and better manage scarce resources as well as expand the still insufficient budgeting systems.

Training workshops covered a variety of M&E functions, including alignment of outcomes with related indi-

cators and preparation and implementation of the M&E work programs consistent with the overall M&E strategy.

Phase III: Operationalizing an M&E Unit (2007–10)

As mentioned earlier under phase I, a PRSP monitoring unit did not yet exist in MOPIC, though some degree of progress had been made with the training and workshops that took place during phase II. The World Bank project that began in October 2007 was created in response to the recommendation to establish and operationalize the PRSP monitoring unit as stipulated in the M&E strategy. The project supported capacity building for operationalizing an M&E system in MOPIC to enhance the institutional and individual M&E competencies of staff in MOPIC and across the line ministries to help operationalize and maintain an M&E system focused on poverty reduction.

The process of building M&E capacity in the Republic of Yemen entailed a large number of (often overlapping) activities, which made progress challenging to follow at times. The MOPIC project coordinator mitigated this challenge with regular communication and document sharing with the World Bank for terms of references and overall project management, as well as regular coordination with the World Bank Yemen Country Office on issues related to procurement and financial management. The project accomplished many of the original goals and made significant progress in building M&E capacity.

This initiative consisted of five main activities (see figure 1).

Activity 1: Refinement of outcomes and indicators. First, the relevant outcomes and development

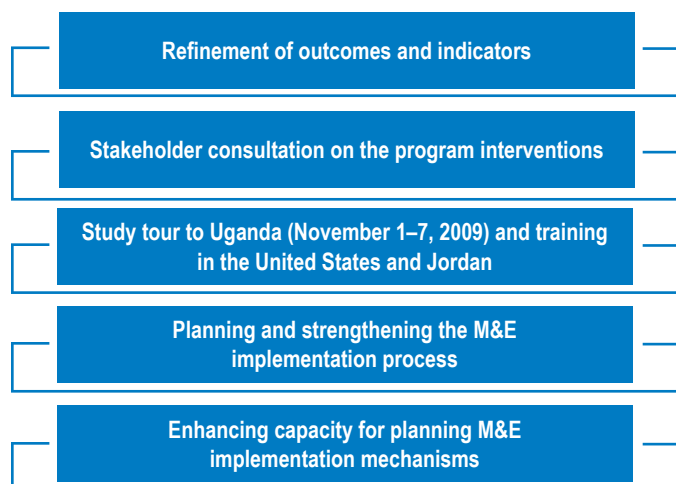
goals were extracted from the DPPR, including sector strategies. Next, a list of implementation measures and/or programs was constructed and plotted against goals in a matrix format. Strong and robust indicators—consistent among agencies—were established, and a simple analysis of monitoring indicators conducted. The project reduced the number of existing DPPR indicators from 450 to below 200.³ MOPIC held a significant number of workshops with individual sector representatives to drill down on what information was collected, requiring many negotiations to reach agreement on which ministry/agency would provide data for specific indicators. Each line ministry or relevant agency now has a person(s) devoted to M&E, as do the offices in the governorates. Not every goal was met by the end of the project, as an indicator database developed in DevInfo⁴ was not complete at that time. There were also issues with data collection, as the same data were sometimes reported from multiple agencies.

Activity 2: Stakeholder consultation on the program interventions. With the assistance of international and national experts, the M&E team from MOPIC finalized the outputs from Activity 1 for stakeholder consultations. The consultations were open to the government, the donor community, and civil society.

Activity 3: Study tour to Uganda and training activities in the United States and Jordan (MOPIC 2009). As part of the project, a delegation from the Republic of Yemen conducted a study tour to Uganda in November 2009 to learn from the country's M&E practices and experiences. Seven staff members from the M&E Unit at MOPIC and from the line ministries participated, along with three representatives from civil society organizations. The group discussed many useful topics with their Ugandan counterparts, including the inclusion of civil society organizations in the planning process and in M&E outputs; the strong sponsorship from the prime minister's office of the M&E coordination process to provide the leverage and power needed to push through the necessary changes; and the importance of establishing a permanent secretariat in each ministry. The main lessons from the Uganda study tour are outlined in box 1. To learn from other experiences, Yemeni government members also participated in training activities at the World Bank in Washington, DC, and in Amman, Jordan.

Activity 4: Planning and strengthening the M&E implementation process. Technical assistance was provided to distill the M&E strategy document into working plans within the overall framework of agreed outcomes, indicators, and

Figure 1. Activities to Build M&E Capacity in the Republic of Yemen (2007-10)



Source: Authors' illustration.

Box 1. Uganda Study Tour

Yemen government participants:

- Ministry of Planning and International Coordination
- Head, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
- General Manager for Studies
- General Manager, Sectoral Policy
- Head, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-funded projects monitoring unit
- Three National Statistics Office coordinators

Yemen civil society participants:

- Three representatives

Visits to Ugandan government included:

- Office of the Prime Minister
- Ministry of Public Service
 - Office of Budgeting at the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development
 - Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Water, Lands, and Environment
 - Ministry of Local Government
 - Planning Unit of the General Authority for Development of North Western Areas
 - National Planning Authority (NPA)

Main lessons learned from the study tour:

- Sponsorship from the Ugandan Prime Minister's Office for the M&E coordination process at the central level provides the necessary leverage and political collateral to activate different commissions and structures across government ministries and institutions. This sponsorship also contributes to ensuring timely access to data and information for regular reporting by the ministries, as well as coordination of government performance control functions at the central, ministry, sector, and local levels.
- Connecting accountability with resource allocation provides incentives to activities across sectors. In Uganda, the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development produces a biannual report on budgeting performance, with a focus on accountability, resource allocation to achieving certain results, and establishment of a budget control and accountability unit within the ministry to supervise activities in the following five sectors: education, health, water, transport and public works, and agriculture.
- A strong and independent (or quasi-independent) statistics office is the key to a successful M&E program. The development of a strategic plan to improve statistical activities with the aim of disseminating final results of censuses and surveys in no more than six months enhanced usage of such data in Uganda's planning and budgeting. Key products of Uganda's Statistics Bureau included: population and social surveys, data on the private sector and industry, information technology assessments, department surveys and capacity building, and statistical coordination services.
- M&E efforts are greatly supported by establishing a permanent secretariat in each ministry to act as a technical bureau responsible for coordinating special tasks for the ministry. This supported the preservation of accumulated technical expertise and its concentration and ensured business sustainability in each individual ministry.

Source: Authors' compilation.

proposed program interventions. The training and workshops provided the relevant teams with the skills required to eventually implement the M&E master plan.

Activity 5: Enhancing capacity for planning M&E implementation mechanisms. This activity developed a draft plan, defining and establishing the monitoring structures, and advancing the work into actual implementation. Developing the master plan formed the basis for implementing a coherent M&E system for DPPR-PRSP programs linked to sector M&E systems. MOPIC has developed an M&E master plan and put in place an integrated M&E system to implement the plan, linking it to sector M&E systems and aligning it to agreed outcomes, as well as adhering to institutional, structural, and technical proposals built into the master plan. MOPIC is responsible for coordinating the DPPR-PRSP monitoring process and therefore reporting structures to and from other sectors have been aligned accordingly.

While the World Bank supported the project, it met most of the objectives and made significant progress. However, though the M&E Unit was established in MOPIC, most of the staff was actually pulled from other departments within the ministry (such that new hires were not made). The database in DevInfo is not complete, and sometimes receives the same data from different sources, for example, the NSO and the Ministry of Health. Data are often delayed and have to be requested numerous times.

The project had a slow start—it was approved in March 2007, but did not become effective until October—however, eventually a fully staffed M&E Unit was up and running, supported strongly by the minister, raising its status and strengthening its mandate. Nonetheless, there were some challenges regarding low project implementation capacity and political delays because key reports had to be approved by the Yemeni Cabinet before the project could move on to subsequent new activities.

M&E Champions

The champions instrumental in moving forward the process of building M&E capacity included the former Deputy Prime Minister and former Minister of MOPIC (and current Managing Director of the Social Fund for Development) and the Vice-Minister of the DPPR.

The minister of MOPIC fully and openly supported the project. This moved transactions and activities along when delays cropped up and raised the level of respect of the M&E Unit among the other ministries and agencies involved. MOPIC led the process of adopting a more systematic approach to M&E and enhancing the capacity to assess the impact of the Republic of Yemen's poverty reduction efforts and progress in achieving its strategic vision. The Social Fund for Development (SFD) is a local Yemeni agency that is known and respected for its own M&E processes and was involved in several of the activities. At the end of the project, a large degree of progress was made, and the objectives remain important for the country, as highlighted in the Fourth DPPR, published in 2011. Drawing on lessons from the third DPPR and previous PRSPs, this fourth DPPR is the first plan to have its own M&E framework and mechanism, with a separate annex solely devoted to M&E.

Conclusions and Next Steps for Strengthening Results-Based M&E in Yemen

The objectives of the World Bank-funded project were, and still are, very relevant to the issues facing the Republic of Yemen. Although the topic of M&E had been raised for several years before grant approval, implementation of

M&E-related policies and activities had not yet taken place. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the main M&E activities, as well as some of the roles and responsibilities for M&E activities outlined in this note.

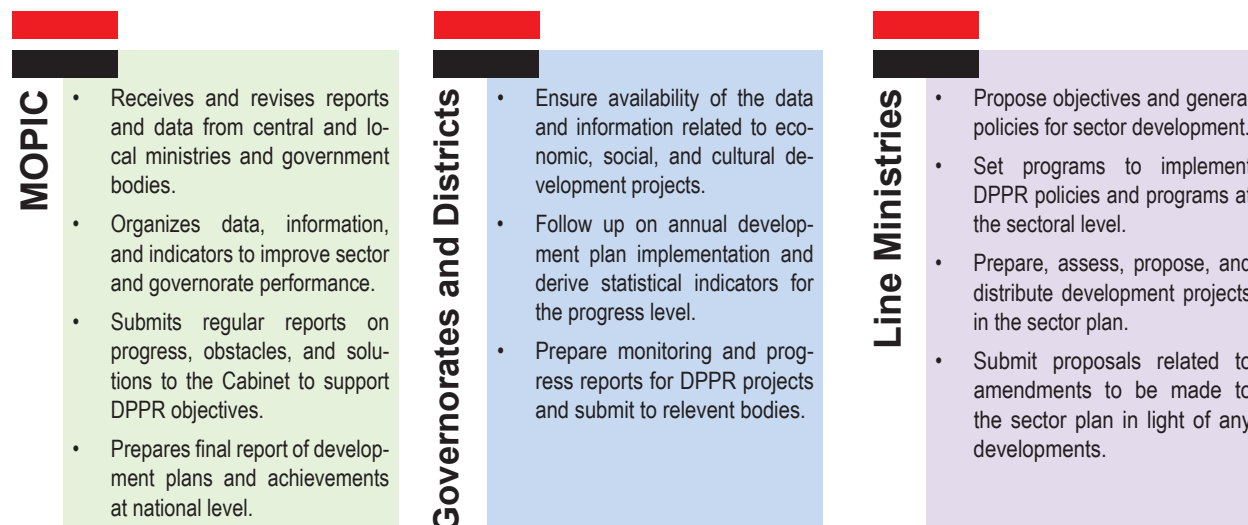
During the process of building M&E capacity, it became clear that more cooperation with the NSO was needed. Line ministries occasionally complained of data issues between themselves and the NSO, including a lack of access to NSO data, or, duplicative and inconsistent results. This led to some delays in data gathering and reporting. To address this issue, a Cabinet resolution was passed in 2010 (Cabinet Resolution No. 314) to reinforce and

Figure 2. Fourth DPPR M&E Activities



Source: MOPIC 2011 (annex 1).

Figure 3. Examples of Fourth DPPR Roles and Responsibilities



Source: MOPIC 2011 (annex 1).

frame the involvement of the NSO in the development of the M&E process between MOPIC, the line ministries, and other agencies. Implementation of this resolution is in progress, though arguably at a slow pace. The government does not yet have a centralized online system that links the statistics office and line ministries to the M&E Unit to allow for regular updating of all indicators. The Republic of Yemen also has a statistical master plan to be implemented by the NSO, which brings some coordination challenges. As the official state statistical agency, the NSO is key to many, if not most, of the monitoring indicators.

Although the infrastructure for a monitoring system has been established within MOPIC, the practical measures of identifying indicators and implementing a system for systematic M&E have not advanced further. After the grant closed, the next step was to be implementation of the M&E master plan. However, shortly after grant closing, social unrest began, stalling further progress, which serves to illustrate the additional challenges faced in fragile and conflict-affected country settings.

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Notes

1. An Interim Strategy Note is prepared for countries that are in transition from conflict or political crisis, countries going through an unusually uncertain period, and countries where the Bank is reengaging after a prolonged hiatus.
2. In the Republic of Yemen, the organization is referred to in English as the Central Statistics Office, or CSO. This note uses the translation National Statistics Office, or NSO, to prevent confusion with the common acronym for civil society organizations.
3. A list of 450 indicators was reduced to the current 194, as per the Fourth DPPR, released in April 2011. It was estimated that only 30 percent of the original indicators even had baseline data to use for comparison.
4. DevInfo is the online database that was created as part of the World Bank project to operationalize the M&E Unit in MOPIC. It is maintained and updated by the M&E Unit, and as the unit collects information from different departments, it then enters it in to DevInfo, which can be accessed at: <http://www.devinfoyemen.org/di6web/home.aspx>. Most of the Web site is in Arabic, except for the "Gallery" section, which has some indicators in English.

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