



# Establishing a National M&E System in South Africa



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*South Africa has a number of actors with legal or constitutional mandates for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). There has been a major shift in emphasis concerning M&E since 2009, partially stimulated by a political need to improve service delivery, but also from the extensive exposure of both technocrats and political leadership to international experiences. As a result, the Ministry of Performance M&E was created in the Presidency in 2009, and the Department of Performance M&E (DPME) in January 2010. The DPME has introduced a number of initiatives since its establishment, including a focus on 12 government priority outcomes; the assessment of the quality of management performance of national and provincial departments; a new system of monitoring front-line services; a national evaluation system; and a municipal performance assessment tool, which is still in development. These tools have contributed to a major increase in the availability of evidence for policy and decision making. Rapid recent progress is due to strong support at the onset from South Africa's President, learning from international experience, and strong teams in DPME and the National Treasury. Despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain in ensuring the coherence of reform initiatives conducted by central government departments, improving administrative data quality, and establishing M&E as a core role of management.*

## South African Government Context

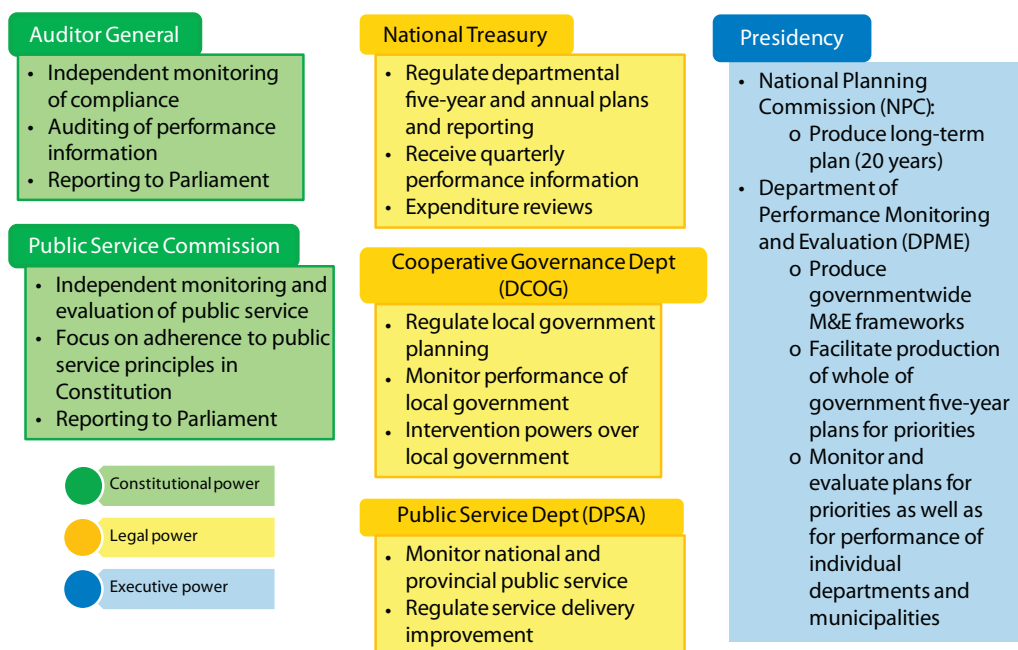
After the democratic elections of 1994, South Africa developed a semifederal system with three spheres of government—national, provincial, and local. Some areas of competence are unique to one sphere of government, for example, land and justice are a national function. Others are shared between different spheres, for example, education and health are both national and provincial, and all spheres of government have responsibilities for housing and roads. The provinces are responsible for implementation of most developmental functions (education, health, agriculture, social development, and others), with local government responsible for water, electricity distribution, integrated planning, local roads, and amenities. Provinces have provincial legislatures and a strong

degree of autonomy, but not as much as in a federal system such as Canada. Planning and M&E systems have to operate across these different levels, and developing a common approach across the multiple actors is a complex process, even though South Africa is a unitary state.

## Who Is Responsible for M&E in South Africa?

There are a number of departments and institutions responsible for planning and M&E in South Africa (figure 1). Responsibilities and mandates are dispersed in national, provincial, and local governments due to the semifederal nature of the state. The national government has limited powers to drive M&E in other government spheres, and is also limited by its own organizational design.

**Figure 1. Main Stakeholders in M&E in South Africa and Their Source of Authority**



Source: Presentation by Dr. Sean Phillips, Director General to Donor Forum, Presidency, June 2012.

The Constitution mandates that the Auditor General and the Public Service Commission carry out independent monitoring of certain aspects of government and report on this to Parliament. Three national departments have strong legal powers to regulate certain types of planning and, by implication, also M&E: the National Treasury (departmental strategic plans, annual performance plans, and quarterly reporting against these); the Department of Public Service and Administration in relation to the performance of the public service; and the Department of Cooperative Governance, regarding monitoring of local government. The Presidency has also taken on certain planning and M&E roles, using the authority of its position and Cabinet decisions rather than legal powers. The President also has powers from the Constitution to ensure efficient government.

It has proved difficult to achieve optimal coordination and avoid duplication of activities among the core M&E stakeholders. Superficially, this can be attributed to “turf battles” between departments. However, not all ministries and departments share the same view on the nature and role of the state, nor the nature or form of services that should be delivered. Moreover, there are different paradigms driving the approach to public

sector reform, and disputes about the nature of many initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

While a strong point in the original conceptualization of the governmentwide M&E (GWM&E) system was agreement that the system should be built over time (Engela and Ajam 2010), this approach has proved difficult in practice. With different paradigms of reform and views of the state, this approach has led to central departments creating separate M&E reporting systems. Similar information may be requested three or four times from departments, leading to additional reporting burdens on departments already battling considerable constraints in terms of skills and capacity, and serious reporting fatigue.

## Evolution of the M&E System in South Africa

### The development of a GWM&E system

Historically there have been various poles of M&E in South Africa, without a centrally driven system. During the 2000s, there was a growing interest in M&E, and the M&E role in the Presidency began to strengthen. In 2005, the Cabinet approved a plan for the development of a GWM&E system. It was envisaged as a “system of systems” in which each department would have a functional monitoring

system, out of which the necessary information can be extracted. In 2007, a policy framework was published to guide the GWM&E system (Presidency 2007), which included the need for frameworks for program performance information, statistical data quality and evaluation, and in the process sought to strengthen the links between the Presidency, the Treasury, and the national statistics agency. Policy frameworks were developed for these elements between 2007 and 2011.

### **New administration in 2009**

The government that came to power following the 2009 elections faced a number of pressures, including (i) persistent poverty and inequality; (ii) widespread service delivery protests at the municipal level; and (iii) loss of some political support in 2009 elections. These pressures resulted in greater willingness of the ruling party and the government to be frank about the poor quality of public services, corruption, and other governance problems as well as a political consensus to improve government performance, including through a greater focus on M&E. The Ministry of Performance M&E was created in the Presidency in 2009, and the Department of Performance M&E (DPME) in January 2010. In addition, an advisory body, the National Planning Commission (NPC), was established in the Presidency to focus on a long-term 2030 plan.

South African officials visited the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, India and Brazil; reviewed the experience of the United Kingdom's Delivery Unit, which focused on delivery of a few strategic priorities; and conducted a desktop study on the M&E systems of 14 countries. Based on this experience, soon after the new administration took office, the new Ministry for Performance M&E published a position paper, "Improving Government Performance: Our Approach" (Presidency 2009), which outlined the basis for the outcomes approach, including:

- a focus on a limited number of cross-government outcomes (which eventually became 12) so that efforts to promote change could be focused;
- moving government to an impact focus, rather than a focus on just conducting activities, which in many cases did not translate into impacts on citizens;
- a performance agreement to be signed by ministers including high-level targets against

these outcomes, which the President would monitor;

- the development of cross-government plans (delivery agreements) to deliver these outcome targets, with a results-based management structure and indicators and targets at the different levels;
- the use of existing coordination structures as "implementation forums" to focus on achieving these outcomes; and
- regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet of performance on delivery agreements progress.

After the creation of DPME, officials visited Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Colombia, the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Australia. These visits directly led to the development of a series of different M&E roles: the experience of Canada led to assessing the management performance of departments, and the experiences of Mexico and Colombia influenced the development of an evaluation policy. A push from the president for hands-on monitoring by an inspectorate led to the approach of front-line service delivery monitoring. Most recently, the poor performance of local government has led to an initiative to strengthen oversight and identify appropriate support strategies. So what has occurred is a process of responding to political priorities and drawing on international experience to avoid reinventing wheels. These developments are outlined in this note, in order of their establishment, followed by a discussion on the emerging challenges and lessons.

## **Principal Components of the M&E System**

### **Outcomes approach**

In January 2009, the Presidency attempted to reform the Cabinet reporting system, asking departments to develop appropriate indicators to allow accurate monitoring of their services. Departments struggled to fulfill this request due to their lack of technical M&E knowledge and in some cases bureaucratic unwillingness to be transparent. Informed by this experience, the initial work on the outcomes approach was very much driven by the Presidency. While it managed to move government in a new direction, it created resistance from departments.

The work on outcomes became the initial focus of the new DPME. The 12 outcomes, including education, health, crime and others, were agreed on in January 2010; performance agreements signed with the ministers in April 2010; outcome facilitators at the deputy director general (DDG) level<sup>2</sup> were appointed to support implementation of the outcomes between July and November 2010; delivery agreements concluded and signed by the different departments and provinces by November 2010; and the first quarterly monitoring report on the outcomes produced in November 2010.

Since then, these reports have been produced on a quarterly basis, highlighting the progress compared to the plans at output and suboutput levels, problems, and actions taken to resolve the problems. These reports are considered at quarterly implementation forums that bring together different departments in some outcomes (for example, on rural development), or national and provincial departments where these are concurrent functions (for example, in education and health). The reports are then taken to Cabinet Subcommittees and the Cabinet. Outcome facilitators also produce independent progress briefings for the Cabinet.

Some key remaining challenges are:

- the difficulty of keeping delivery agreements short and strategic—there is a tendency for detail with too many indicators, which is difficult to manage;
- ministers and heads of departments of the same rank have struggled to coordinate with each other;
- a result of the focus on activities has been a tendency to produce process indicators, rather than indicators that measure actual improvements at output or outcome level;
- poor translation of the delivery agreements into departmental plans, and from strategic to operational plans;
- information management systems to produce the data required are not fully in place in many departments, and required data are often unavailable;
- differences between (overpositive) departmental reports and public experience of services; and
- departments not necessarily using monitoring data on delivery agreements' imple-

mentation to inform improvements in their programs.

### **Linking performance monitoring to planning**

M&E systems should be closely linked to planning and budgeting. In South Africa, until 2009, there was no clear planning mandate in government, and no national plan. Prior to 2009, the Treasury, in effect, performed the main planning role, linked to budget decisions. The National Planning Commission has just produced a long-term 2030 National Development Plan, which was approved in August 2012. However, this does not yet link through to planning at different levels of government.

The Treasury established the basic planning and M&E system for South Africa's government, in which national and provincial departments produce five-year strategic plans and annual performance plans (APPs) that are monitored quarterly. This system was applied to provincial departments in 2000 and national departments in 2010.

This system works, although there are challenges with compliance in some departments. The system has evolved and is now more linked to outcomes. DPME is now involved in the budget process, and because budget guidelines ask departments to include links with the delivery agreements in their plans, the DPME checks the strategic plans and APPs to ensure that the link with outcomes is in place.

The APP system tends to be at quite a low level and could be strengthened by improving the outcome focus in the strategic plans. A challenge is that the terminology used is not the same as in the outcomes, but there is room for streamlining and making the outcomes and APP systems integrate better.

It has also become apparent that there is a conceptual misalignment between budget reform based on expenditure programs and M&E reform based on implementation programs. While the same terminology has been used in both reforms, the program categories required for appropriate management of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are different than the program categories used in the budget and expenditure allocation process. The performance information reforms will not proceed appropriately until

this problem is resolved. DPME is working with Treasury for a solution.

### Monitoring the management performance of departments

The DPME embarked on a study tour of Canada and was impressed by its system for assessing management performance. Research was conducted on similar systems in different countries, and South Africa developed its own system (now called the Management Performance Assessment Tool, MPAT), which was rolled out in October 2011. The system has a number of underlying principles:

- a focus on management performance, not service delivery performance;
- building on existing tools used by government departments to promote buy-in and avoid reinventing wheels;
- complements the Treasury’s Financial Management Capability and Maturity Model;
- a focus on facilitated self-assessment, followed by peer moderation, to promote ownership of the process;

- a collaboration with offices of the premier in provinces<sup>3</sup> to perform a similar role for provincial departments; and
- repeating annually to track improvement.

Table 1 shows the levels for 1 of the 31 standards on M&E, and figure 2 shows the results. These figures reveal that 44 percent of national and provincial departments are not compliant with the legal requirements on M&E, and that only 13 percent are being “smart,” in this case implementing evaluation.

Overall, around 120 out of 140 national and provincial departments have completed the process, and the Cabinet has decided that all departments must participate in the next assessment cycle. The response to the process has been very positive, despite worrying results.

In general, managers are very interested in how their departments perform compared to others, and many departments have already implemented improvements in preparation for the next assessment cycle. The MPAT process has also identified areas of management where

**Table 1. MPAT Levels on M&E**

1.3 Performance Area: M&E		
1.3.1 Indicator name: Use of M&E outputs		
Indicator definition: Extent to which the department uses M&E information		
Secondary data: AGSA findings on predetermined objectives—reported information not reliable		
Question: which set of statements best reflects the department’s use of M&E outputs?		
Statement	Evidence	Performance level
Department does not have an M&E policy/framework or does not have capacity to generate information.	Not required	1
Monitoring reports are available, but are not used regularly by top management and program managers to track progress and inform improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly monitoring reports</li> <li>• Minutes of top management meetings or program meetings to assess use of reports</li> </ul>	2
Monitoring reports are regularly used by top management and program managers to track progress and inform improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly monitoring reports</li> <li>• Minutes of top management meetings or program meetings to assess use of reports</li> </ul>	3
All above in level 3 plus: evaluations of major programs are conducted periodically and the results are used to inform changes to program plans, business processes, APP, and strategic plan.	All above in level 3 plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation reports</li> <li>• Changes to programs and plans</li> </ul>	4

Source: Presidency 2012.



**Figure 2. Scores on M&E (% of departments scoring at the levels shown in table 1)**



Source: Presentation by Ismail Akhalwaya to Donor Forum, Presidency, June 2012.

national policy departments need to implement support initiatives. The DPME is also now going to assess the performance of department heads, which includes using MPAT information.

There are also some good examples of national and provincial departments' performing well in the management assessment. These range from departments scoring well on one of the key performance areas (for example, human resource management), to scoring well across all four performance areas. Case studies have been compiled for these examples and are being shared widely in government (box 1). These case studies should serve as positive motivation and guidance to other departments.

A key challenge is ensuring that improved management results in improved levels of services to citizens. Failure to prove this in future MPAT evaluations will discredit the process.

### Monitoring front-line service delivery

The President had a vision of M&E that included monitors in the field collecting evidence at service

delivery sites. In response, the DPME started a program of unannounced visits to service sites such as health facilities, social grant facilities, police stations, and municipal customer walk-in centers. The objectives are to collect evidence on the quality of services and to work with the relevant departments to show them how to use such monitoring information for improvement.

The visits are conducted by monitoring teams comprising officials from the DPME and officials from the M&E units in the provincial offices of the premier. During the monitoring visits, the teams interview users and staff for their view on system performance and a scorecard is produced for each facility, as well as an improvement plan. Between June 2011 and July 2012, about 200 sites were visited. A picture of what is emerging countrywide can be seen in figure 3, and figure 4 shows an example of scorecards for police stations visited in one area.

Although there has only been one year of GWM&E implementation, monitoring data have already identified policy and system weaknesses, such as poor facility maintenance and the lack of effective operational management systems. When policy and system weaknesses are identified, they are escalated to senior department management or to the ministerial level as needed.

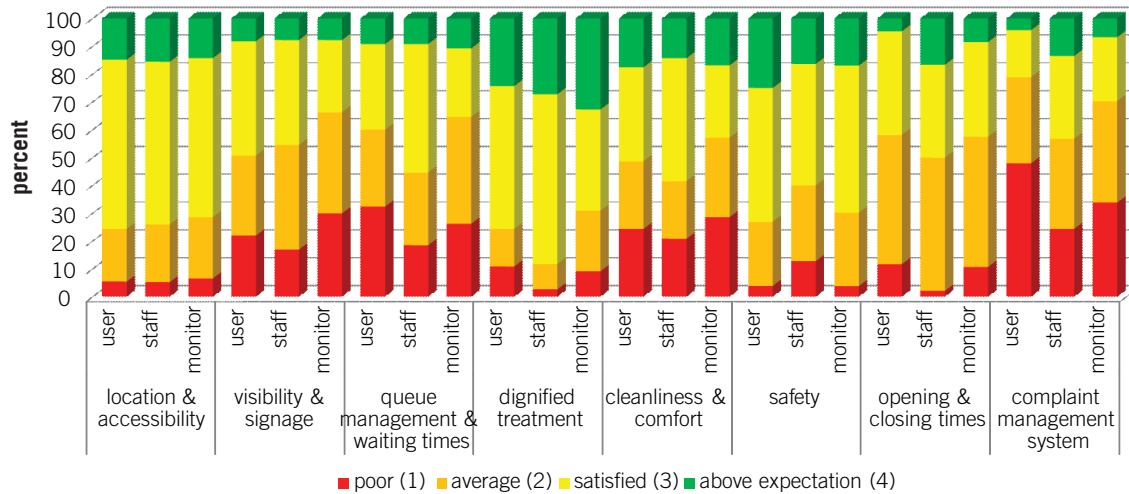
Another initiative is the Presidential Hotline set up in 2009 to allow citizens to log their complaints and queries regarding service delivery. The hotline was transferred to the DPME in 2011 to ensure that government accountability and responsiveness to these queries improves and to analyze trends in citizen concerns. To date, more than 135,000 cases have been logged and assigned to the relevant departments and agencies for resolution, and 82 percent of these cases have been resolved (that is, feedback/assistance has been given to the caller). On a monthly basis, departments are informed of their responsiveness to complaints via a scorecard on progress in case resolution.

### Box 1. Good Practice Example—National Department of Environmental Affairs

The National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) scored highly on all four of the key management performance areas. The DEA has a sound organizational culture driven by strict policies and procedures, such as concrete planning, measurable outcomes, effective performance monitoring, and clear expectations in terms of managers. There was evidence that the DEA managers are living their values, and there is a culture of performance. Manager turnover is low. The specific best practices were: (i) the clear division of responsibilities; (ii) strategic planning on a continuous basis, rather than just for periodic deadlines; (iii) clear deadlines in supply chain management and financial administration; and (iv) the proactiveness of the Human Resources Unit.

Source: DPME Good Practice Case Study, September 2012, Pretoria, DPME.

**Figure 3. Summary of Results for First Quarter 2012/13**



Source: DPME quarterly report.  
 Note: The results are for 78 sites monitored April 2012 to June 2012.

**Figure 4. Scorecard for Police Stations Visited April 2012 to June 2012**

Sector: SAPS		Baselines visits							
Key: Assessment ratings		Assessment areas							
Above expectation	4	Location & Accessibility	Vis bility & Signage	Opening & Closing Times	Queue Man-agement & Waiting Times	Dignified Treatment	Cleanliness & Comfort	Safety	Complaint Management System
Satisfied	3								
Average	2								
Poor	1								
Hanover Park/Philippi Police Station	Staff	3	2	3	3	3	3	N/A	3
	Monitor	1	2	1	2	2	3	N/A	2
	Citizen	1	2	1	2	2	3	N/A	2
Tsineng Police Station	Staff	2	2	3	3	1	2	N/A	2
	Monitor	2	2	3	3	1	3	N/A	2
	Citizen	2	2	3	3	3	3	N/A	1
Rosedale SAPS	Staff	4	4	4	4	4	1	3	2
	Monitor	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
	Citizen	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
Seshego Police Station	Staff	2	3	3	4	4	2	4	4
	Monitor	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	3
	Citizen	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2
Hillbrow Police Station	Staff	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
	Monitor	3	3	1	3	3	3	2	2
	Citizen	3	3	1	3	2	3	2	1
Natalspruit Police Station	Staff	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	Monitor	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2
	Citizen	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	1

Source: DPME Report for 2012/13 Quarter 1 (internal DPME document).

### The national evaluation system

South Africa's M&E work in the 2000s focused on monitoring, although some departments conducted evaluations. In 2011, a study tour to Mexico, Colombia, and the United States led to development of a National Evaluation Policy Framework, adopted by the Cabinet in November 2011. The framework uses a strategic approach that focuses on important policies/programs/plans, and those selected are embedded in the National Evaluation Plan. The focus has been on utilization, public dissemination of all evaluations unless confidential, and inclusion of an improvement plan, which is then monitored. The approach emphasizes learning rather than a punitive approach, so as to build a culture of evaluation into departments and not promote resistance and malicious compliance.

Six types of evaluations are envisaged, while specific evaluations may be a combination of types:

- (i) diagnostic—identifying the root cause of problems, and potential options to address them;
- (ii) design—a short program design evaluation by M&E units within departments to ensure designs are robust, ideally before implementation starts;
- (iii) implementation—measuring an intervention's progress and determining how it can be strengthened;
- (iv) impact—identifying the impact of interventions and its attribution, and how they can be strengthened;
- (v) economic—the cost-effectiveness or cost benefit of interventions; and
- (vi) evaluation synthesis—drawing lessons across a number of evaluations.

Evaluations are conducted jointly by the department(s) concerned and the DPME, and the DPME partially funds the evaluations (average of US\$60,000 per evaluation). An Evaluation and Research Unit has been established in the DPME to drive the system and provide technical support, supported by a cross-government Evaluation Technical Working Group. Guidelines are being developed, as well as standards for evaluation and competencies for program managers, M&E staff, and evaluators. Training courses start in September 2012.

The first evaluation is currently being completed. The first National Evaluation Plan was

approved by the Cabinet in June 2012, and work is now progressing on the eight evaluations included in the plan. Fifteen evaluations are planned for 2013/14, and 20 per year thereafter. A similar process is occurring at the provincial level, and the DPME is working with three provinces to pilot provincial evaluation plans. In 2013/14, all provinces will develop provincial evaluation plans.

### Monitoring of local government

Local government is performing poorly, and at present there is no integrated set of minimum norms or standards of performance (administrative, political, or service delivery). Drawing on the monitoring of management performance of national and provincial departments, the DPME is working with key national and provincial partners to establish a similar process for municipalities to provide an integrated and holistic picture of performance for each municipality. The objectives are to:

- enable strategic leadership of the local government sector and inform policy reform initiatives;
- provide evidence for tailored and coordinated support and/or intervention measures to specific municipalities; and
- guide national and provincial departments to better support municipalities in identified areas of underperformance.

The municipal assessment tool is at a draft stage and covers planning, human resources, finances, service delivery, community engagement, and governance. It will be finalized and piloted in selected municipalities in the current fiscal year, before full rollout begins in the 2013/14 fiscal year.

## Emerging Successes, Challenges, and Sustainability Issues

### Emerging successes

Initial impacts of the South African M&E system include:

- Increased **strategic focus of government** on achieving a limited number of outcomes. Quarterly reports enable the Cabinet to regularly monitor progress in meeting the government's key strategic agenda.
- Introduction of **whole-of-government planning** linked to key cross-cutting outcomes,



which clearly links inputs and activities to outputs and outcomes.

- A higher level of understanding of how the work of the different departments affects other departments, and **greater coordination between departments and spheres of government**.
- **More systematic M&E** is beginning to facilitate more efficient use of limited resources.
- The emphasis on measuring results is catalyzing change; some departments are embracing the approach, putting in place improvement plans, focusing on measurable results, and improving their data.

### Factors supporting the system

*Commitment from the president*—There has been high-level political commitment to a strong M&E system. The exact form is not necessarily clear, has varied in focus, and has evolved in practice. However, this commitment has facilitated the rapid buildup of capacity, and the DPME now has around 200 staff. This also creates a potential challenge in that should the president change, there could be a problem with maintaining commitment to the systems, as happened in Australia in 1996.

*Institutional elements*—Having flexible support has been crucial in supporting the emergence of DPME<sup>4</sup>—support includes the strong National Treasury, which provides support to departments to help them improve their financial management capacity; a well-established departmental planning and reporting system (even if there are some challenges with it); capacity to undertake evaluations in some departments and the Public Service Commission; and the presence of an EU-funded program, the Program to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD), which promotes evidence-based policy making.

*Development of a high-quality team in the DPME*—A very strong team developed in the DPME, which has enabled the rapid development and implementation of the system, while increasing the DPME's credibility.

*Learning, including from others*—South Africa has sought to avoid reinventing wheels, using study tours, conducting research and knowledge exchanges, and building ongoing networks with peer countries to learn from others. In addition, reflective processes are being used to ensure learning at all stages.

### Challenges

Challenges to be addressed in the next stages are detailed below.

Improved coherence and coordination areas include:

- Strengthening the **coherence of central government** departments and their understanding of their roles in the M&E system, ensuring a common conceptual base and that systems integrate better. The DPME is currently considering introducing legislation to address some of the gaps and overlaps.
- Strengthening the role of **implementation forums** in coordinating implementation of the outcomes.
- Improving the **status of M&E** by acknowledging it as a key part of the strategic function, essential for planning and budgeting, tracking progress, learning, and improving implementation.

Monitoring and reporting challenges include:

- Avoiding duplication of **reporting**, and the view of some actors that the DPME is duplicating the work of the Auditor General, National Treasury, and other agencies.
- Strengthening the incorporation of monitoring as **part of the management function**, and facilitating continuous improvement.
- Improving **citizen feedback** as part of the monitoring system, which can speed up improvement cycles.
- Strengthening monitoring of local government.
- Now that an Evaluation Policy Framework has been developed, developing a policy framework for monitoring.

Planning areas needing improvement include:

- Better integration of planning systems and a strengthened link with M&E. A specific challenge is improving the planning of **implementation programs** at much lower levels than budget programs (including developing log frames with a matrix of indicators), which will facilitate program implementation as well as M&E.
- Improving the **ability to predict** (and hopefully avoid) problems—a key desire of politicians. Challenges for support roles include:
- Strengthening the **capacity to use evidence** to support policy and decision making—this

includes policy and data analysis skills and bringing in additional skill sets such as operational analysts to improve problem solving.

- Improving the quality of **administrative data** and, where possible, getting single entry of data at field level.

### Sustainability

There are two main issues in terms of sustainability: the sustainability of the DPME as a **department** (in particular beyond the term of the current President who initiated this phase of M&E), and the sustainability of the **systems and capacities** that have been developed, such as MPAT or evaluation. The measure of the DPME's success will be when many of its functions have been internalized in departments. Key ways of supporting sustainability include:

- Moving from a directive style to a coordinating style, where the DPME is a champion and shows leadership in M&E, but builds the involvement and **commitment** of partners.
- Enhancing the **use of M&E information**, for example, by the Cabinet, so key decision makers appreciate the value of M&E.
- Building **alliances**, for example, through the national Evaluation Technical Working Group, proactive work with Treasury, joint study tours, M&E forums, and so forth.
- Building forums that strengthen the **M&E voice** (for example, national and provincial M&E forums).
- Strengthening **capacity** for M&E, using learning events, exchanges, and training.
- Strengthening the perceived value the DPME is providing in helping departments achieve their objectives,<sup>5</sup> while also helping them internalize M&E to improve their performance, and in the process ensure that they receive credit for their success.
- **Simplifying systems**, for example, to reduce duplication in reporting, therefore increasing M&E's perceived value.
- Increasing **responsiveness** to politicians, so they see M&E as a valuable tool to achieve their goals.

Areas where further work is needed include:

- Continuing to improve the effectiveness of outcomes' planning and M&E and ensuring M&E is adding value.
- Developing political consensus on the importance of internal monitoring as part of a

broader public service reform and management development process, and supporting continuous improvement and M&E as a key task of a central body such as the DPME.

- Strengthening the legislative base around M&E to institutionalize the role of the Presidency, reducing the risk of relying on a single, strong political champion for M&E, who is vulnerable to political changes.

### Conclusions

Overall, the system has evolved tremendously in the two plus years that the DPME has been in existence. The systems are developing credibility, and with over one year left prior to the end of this term of government, they should be fairly well established by the end of the current term. There needs to be stability in the DPME team for the systems established to flourish and have impact.

The experience in South Africa shows how when the situation is sufficiently favorable, an M&E system can be rapidly developed and implemented, and also how using international experience can speed up the process. Unlike its peers, South Africa has tried to establish the M&E system across both national and provincial levels, and is now developing the local government element of the system. This shows that M&E can be implemented at the local level, although it does increase the complexity of the process, adding many different stakeholders who have to buy into the system and change their behavior.

There are a number of challenges because the system is not yet consolidated across the multiple actors, and there is a long way to go in developing a culture of M&E in the government system. A critical issue is the relationship between the key center of government stakeholders, notably the DPME and the National Treasury, and considerable work is underway to strengthen that relationship through practical collaboration at the technical level as well as higher-level relationship building.

The M&E system is promising, and much has been achieved in two years. However, the system is still emergent and not yet fully institutionalized, and it is too early to see extensive use of M&E information in decision making. It will take three to five years to confirm that the M&E system is making real contributions to improving performance and accountability in South Africa's government.

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## Notes

1. There are two main reform approaches in South African public services: (i) a strong public expenditure reform agenda with an emphasis on efficiency, economy, effectiveness issues, and budget reforms, such as instituting a medium-term expenditure framework and moving toward performance budgeting; and (ii) the approach focused on communities of practice, networks, and so forth, with a strong emphasis on training and learning. While the first approach focuses on compliance and prescriptive management systems, the latter 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.

2. The highest-level technical official in a government department is a director general, equivalent to a permanent secretary, who works for a minister and deputy minister. Deputy director generals (DDGs) are therefore high-level officials, appointed at this level to be able to work effectively with the DGs of different sector departments and provinces.

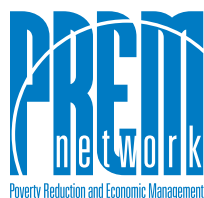
3. Each province has a premier, like a provincial prime minister, appointed by the provincial legislature. The office of the premier is responsible for overall provincial coordination, although provincial departments also have a strong link to their national equivalents. Monitoring information, say on education, goes directly from provincial departments to the national department, not via the office of the premier.

4. The PSPPD is a partnership between the Presidency and the European Union that funded research; supported a wide range of capacity development activities including study tours, exchanges, seminars, and conferences; supported the development of the M&E system (notably evaluation); and undertook some knowledge management.

5. This was influenced by the United Kingdom's experience.

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