Building Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity in Local Governments
Asia Regional Evaluation Summit 1-Pager
September 12, 2013

Presenters: Chanin Chiumkanokchai, M&E Advisor, Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests Program
Gregory Pearson, Luxembourg Development Laos Office
Thatheva Saphangthong, Laos Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Panelists: Romeo Santos, Professor, Workland M&E Institute, Inc.
Maura Barry, Regional Local Capacity Building Advisor, USAID RDMA
Richard Columbia, Regional Evaluation Advisor, UN Population Fund

Summary: The first presentation discusses the risks and opportunities in conducting socio-economic baseline surveys to measure changes in livelihoods with local governments, using baseline methodologies such as sampling, questionnaires, and focus group discussion. The second presentation focuses on the development and practical application of the National Monitoring and Evaluation System (ProMIS) in the agriculture and rural development sector in Lao PDR. The sector wide approach in M&E within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) calls for a functioning performance monitoring system that could measure progress and strengthen accountability. The ProMIS system, which is a data collecting system, allows for improving capacity of M&E units within the government and gradually leads to the capacity building of the corporate level managers to manage projects through better informed decision making.

Highlights:
- Do not underestimate the time and resources needed to conduct social economic baseline surveys with local governments. Working in close collaboration with the government in collecting baseline data could promote local ownership. Although there is possibility of creating bias in data, on the job coaching that focuses on research ethics and the principle of confidentiality could enhance awareness and strengthen evidence-based decision making.
- M&E in the government sector is not particularly strong in Lao PDR. Insufficient attention on the logical framework in the design and implementation of programs has led to limited M&E functions. The ProMIS system provides a potential for improving the capacity of the M&E units within the MAF. Capacity building of governmental official is a crucial factor for success, in addition to the funding support needed to expand the ProMIS system into a fully-fledged, nationally owned M&E system.

Synthesis and Reflection: While M&E has always been the side of development in the past, today M&E is the core of development work. Evaluating M&E work (examining what agencies/organizations are accounted for) helps create the culture for M&E and for evidence-based programming and decision making. Bringing the work of M&E down to the next level (or utilizing data more broadly as opposed to just focusing on the quality of data) is important. M&E is the core of sound governance and it is only valuable if utilized intensely. There is no best M&E model and how will governments apply the different M&E models/methods depend on their context. It is essential that more triangulation happen on the ground and that there is political will to find the truth and use the data for decision-making. Using government systems, even if they are week, is actually helping to build the capacity of M&E in local governments.

Prepared by: Nitasmai Ransaeva