

Supporting the Development and Practical Application of a National M&E System

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Saphangthong: We can say actually this is an ongoing process of development of this kind of system and we are now [inaudible comments] so that's why it's the right time to share the experience. I will introduce myself. My name is Dr. Saphangthong. I'm from the Ministry of Agriculture of Lao PDR. And my colleague is –

Frederick Pearson: Hi I'm Frederick Pearson. I work with _____ Development Group and I'm a technical advisor for M&E. Okay so I'll start with the presentation. Yesterday, Dr. McCleary during the personnel discussion mentioned the importance of agriculture as to linkage poverty alleviation and –

Moderator: I don't think it's on.

Frederick Pearson: Sorry. Can you hear me now?

Moderator: Yeah I think you have to come a little bit closer. I'm sorry.

Frederick Pearson: So yesterday morning during the first panel session Dr. McCleary mentioned the importance of agriculture as the means of targeting poverty reduction. And in the case of Lao PDR this is a very salient point. In Lao 85 percent of the households are involved in agriculture activities and property income generation. Also because it's such a prominent and important sector there's a huge subscription of official development of systems projects ODA to the Agriculture and Rural Development Center.

Last fiscal year from which we have records there were 31 active ODA projects. And it's contributed \$44 million to the ministry's budget, which to be honest, far dwarfs the government's contribution to the ministry project. Lao PDR is also a long term recipient of ODA and it is the host nation, the primary signatory, to the Vientiane Declaration, which is the furtherance of the first declaration of the Paris Declaration and the Rome Declaration. There are 16 donors who subscribe to the agenda portion and the commitment is to harmonize and use local systems.

Also in line with the Vientiane Declaration there's been an increased call – an increased emphasis by the ministry and also larger development partners to move towards a sector-wide approach rather than sponsoring individual projects. However one of the conditionalities for being able to transfer assistance to a sector-wide approach is to have an effective performance monitoring system which will increase the accountability and responsibility.

Dr. Saphangthong:

In this [inaudible comments] demand from the inside/outside. And they're going in the [inaudible comments] and FAO, we're starting to formulate a small project to have a – we call the M&E system, a big M and small e. It's got to be more monitoring correctly and properly evaluating. I mean this has been presented in the morning also, it's more the monitoring part That's why I'm [inaudible comments] And so as I respond to these things that started the baseline. And it has just been five years ago.

And formulate the project started to have what do you call [inaudible comments] and project monitoring information systems. That is the key

that we started with. For they're starting with – There is another contract with – There is someone from the Ministry of Planning and Investment. So I mean this project or the system itself; it can respond not just only to public investment in the project but also the ODA project from [inaudible comments].

Long [inaudible comments] presentation because we started our work since 2011 up to now and I have a series of presentations coming with the PromIS system now and we've started to hire right now. Along with these skills we have a training and with permission from the district.

Frederick Pearson:

For the fulfillment of my primary responsibility for M&E is to advise on a program that is co-funded by four different donors. There's EFAD, World Food Programme, as he has said, and Luxembourg Development. Luxembourg Development provides the technical assistance to this program. And it's quite a large program. It's designed for over six years and with budget of \$19.3 million. In fact we had more money than we could ever possibly spend. So that's why our interest is to help capacitate the government [inaudible comments].

We have very ambitious targets. We are contributing to the reduction of extreme poverty in 225 villages. And our total target is to reach 17,000 more households in rural areas. Now when we started the technical assistance to this program we started in January of this year. And we were presented immediately with two options. We had the option to be there creating a program specific M&E system that we would do our own M&E, report to our donors and report to government, or (and we were aware of this) the promises which is

being developed by the [inaudible comments] with support that they owe.

And we had the opportunity to sit down and consult on this team and see how we could support them straight from the system and work through the system. So we made the direct decision that we're not going to create a program specific M&E system. We're going to work within the government system and strengthen it.

Dr. Saphangthong:

In the proMIS system actually I believe we have been working and shaping up as the EFAD looks to women as the first line to come to us and then now also with OED and we're able to move in. So I think with this we will share out the more simplified log frame monitoring system and pull any [inaudible comments] program. The program is really one to have this for them whether it's a wish and ability or like our program is answering for each project. Because up to now it's still very difficult to identify which government and program project that fits in and belongs there.

And the donors agencies and their poverty investment programs. With technology going [inaudible comments] at least it's quite similar to what Jeff presented this morning. We are more what we call a [inaudible comments] approach. We are still working with people in the very simplified ways of measuring and we come up with like three or four pre-labeled – I mean [inaudible comments] provision. It's good. There is the lower unit but I mean looking at this I'm like maybe I will give you the information and [inaudible comment] we work with the district and the commission.

Also along with this, while it is getting – I mean we are approaching now because we just finished our impact assessments from last year and the

mapping things also is really all live and working now. [inaudible comments] And the report [inaudible comments] we have been planning five year. And they're planned for if I start [inaudible comments].

Frederick Pearson:

Just to add on to what Dr. Saphangthong just mentioned. The Ministry of Agriculture has a very well-articulated strategy plan to 2020. They also do every five years, a master plan. And within the plan there are targets set. The difficulty with the Ministry is being able to identify where all the ODA projects fit in relation to the targets. So the master plan and strategy plans have identified eight areas of intervention within the ProMIS system we are asked to identify where our project chooses to set the targets.

So for all the ODA projects this will allow the government to know which donors contribute what to which areas, locations, and targets and households. Now one of the – So last year's methodologies was the main journey of ProMIS systems through ODA projects. This is the area that we are most interested in. As the first project or first program to work with the ProMIS system we've had the opportunity to help strengthen the system but also to draw on the resources to customize some of the M&E elements required for our project according to plans.

Now EFAD has special corporate indicator sets that are built in for addition in all the programs around the world. So we've been able to use this and customize our own specific project, within the ProMIS system to allow for old core donor reporting requirements and for government reporting requirements. Fundamentally what we're also trying to do is to be a model. We want to be

able to draw in other ODA projects soon. I think we're all – As Dr. Saphangthong mentioned World Bank and ADB have started to express interest in going to this system as well.

This will allow for continually strengthening of the system with testing of the system and different products to see how it works across different areas of intervention.

I'll present our key findings. M&E, particularly the government sector, and also the ODM sector are not particularly strong in Laos. There's not enough training on logical framework approaches and trying to monitor towards results. Government staff – particularly when we're talking at the district levels and provincial levels – have not received sufficient training on them, so the levels of understanding for M&E are quite limited.

Also if you think of the number of projects that are involved in the center all of them drawing different resources from the districts, all the median resources of the province, there are not enough people in these offices to be able to support the huge number of projects that are in the sector.

Dr. Saphangthong:

And along with the development process of these we did a [inaudible comments] system logic training of more than 20 trainings for each district over these two years. So I mean from [inaudible comments] it was measuring the same people in the same [inaudible comments] group. Then this government will start to find it's [inaudible comment] familiar with these log frame things, and just moving forward this system that they [inaudible comment] doing this type of testing in _____ province in Laos and _____ City.

Also we have what we call ProMIS system [inaudible comments] the capacity of the Laos people because along the way we've given ownership. We've given [inaudible comments]. I mean our system is really coming to them and actual and government need. But what is the decision to make with the budget?

Frederick Pearson:

So in terms of a capacity level this is our primary recommendation. Any M&E system is only going to be as good as information that gets into the system. So you have to have well-trained people who understand how to plug data, how to interpret data, and how to correctly enter it. The center recommendation is [inaudible comment]. The FAO support was signed for a sector in time. But that is going to end now. And it's a crucial period because we're moving from the pilot state to implementation stage.

So this is one of the reasons why our [inaudible comments] budget we're about trying to support the continuation.

Dr. Saphangthong:

And then in District One it's moving, as Fred has mentioned through the other ODA project also. That's why we are now in the process of upscaling of the system itself. But the main thing is, as I mentioned earlier it was [inaudible comment] but we're moving forward with it [inaudible comment] also with getting [inaudible comment] and also with the [inaudible comments] program that [inaudible comments].

Moderator:

If the donors want to get into the system now is the key time because this is the only opportunity to influence the specific design within the ProMIS system for your own programs. So it's a critical time and it's a good time to come support initiatives like this. Thank you. [applause]



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