

Annex A: Responses to the 2006 Mid-term Review comments on monitoring and evaluation

Note: This Annex provides more detail to the commentary in section 3 of the main report. It should be read in the context of that commentary.

Recommendations as expressed in the main text of the MTR

1. Caveat: The MTR recommendations contain two contrary types of recommendations:
 - Avoid being interventionist; avoid “social engineering, leave RAOs alone to do their own thing.
 - Become more engaged with RAOs, take more responsibility for Purpose and Goal level outcomes

Monitoring and Evaluation (page 29...)

2. *M & E and reporting arrangements and schedules are critical to assessing the contribution of G-RAP¹. It is recommended that the G-RAP avoids building an M & E framework and process which specifically aim to extract information from RAOs beyond what is normal and internal to the organisation. [A] The key to addressing M & E capacity gaps is to induce a demand-led process which enhances the RAOs’ own internal learning processes [B]. In G-RAP’s grant-making assessment, greater priority should be given to RAOs’ own M&E processes and reporting schedules.[C]*

- [A] This is already the case. All the information that has been provided by RAOs is information they already had at hand.
 - [A] We are assuming that the MTR is not against gathering baseline data about the status of a RAO when first funded, from information they already have at hand
 - [B] Disagree: This sounds like social engineering, which the MTR has warned against. And it sounds very difficult to do.
 - [C] Agreed. This will be important if RAOs are to be asked to identify their own progress indicators and then assess progress against these. Some RAOs will have more capacity in this area than others.
3. *Experience with other comparable programmes and with mainstream MDDBS suggests that the monitoring framework agreed between G-RAP and its grantees needs to be kept to a minimum. A small number of broad objectives should suffice to focus discussion between the grant giver and recipient [A]. The objectives and the OVI should be set at a level that allows some flexibility and serendipity (‘happy chance find’) to occur in their achievement.[B]*
- [A] Agree: The new Logical Framework could have three Purpose level statements, that refer to broad areas of RAO activity: (a) improvements in their own management, (b) more effective relationships with government, (b) more effective relationships with non-state actors (CSOs, private sector, donors, etc). In place of the nine Purpose level statements at present.

¹ The major challenges to M & E lie not so much in the technical aspects of data gathering and reporting but in the attitudes and internal organisational culture.

- [B] The Most Significant Change (MSC) method was introduced to RAOs in 2006 precisely because of the recognition of the importance of unexpected events.

4. *An interesting area for debate is whether G-RAP should follow the MDBS model in linking payments to dialogue over objectives and their attainment. In a typical MDBS approach, for example, all parties make two yearly payments: the first is a basement tranche and is calculated on the annual budget, while the second is a performance tranche and is linked to what has been delivered by the individual grantees. The measurement of their performance is on an output and impact basis (as derived from M&E system) and measured against input/output ratio. This is certainly a possibility in the present case, though the MTR team would, on balance, advise a simpler model, with a single annual payment subject to satisfactory performance in the year just ended. G-RAP must deal with a large number of grant-holders, none of which has such a large disbursement as to justify a very sophisticated approach.*

- Disagree: This would generate almost universal antagonism towards G-rap amongst RAOs. This is likely to outweigh any possible improvements in performance motivated by the need to secure continued funding. Even the second simpler model has problems - how would an acceptable level of performance be defined? Both would require additional staffing to manage multiple sets of negotiations with RAOs. Both are contrary to the non-interventionist, anti-“social-engineering” stance taken elsewhere in the MTR.
- Proposal: It may however be possible to define certain minimum requirements that all RAOs need to meet. Such as narrative and financial reports presented within one month of the end of the reporting period, and audited accounts produced by...

The Logical Framework

5. *The MTR has some concerns about the revisions that have been made to the G-RAP logframe (see: Sections 1.5 & 2.10 of this report; also Annex A, Para 3.6). While these do help to link objectives to actors – the output level with the PMT, and the purpose level with the RAOs - they also have the effect of producing a logframe in which G-RAP managerial responsibilities are evident only at the lowest level. This might encourage an over-emphasis on administrative issues by the PMT, at the expense of programme and strategy.*

- Disagree
 - It is normal Logical Framework practice for project interventions to be spelled out at the Activities and Outputs level.
 - The project strategy should be evident in the whole structure of the LogFrame, especially the expected causal links between Activities, Outputs, Purpose and Goal
 - The MTR has already warned elsewhere of the PMT becoming too ambitious, and engaging in “social engineering”

6. *The MTR team acknowledges that considerable thought and effort have already gone into the logframe revision exercise, and has no wish to add to the workload unnecessarily. However, it would, on balance, prefer to see a logframe which identified objectives for G-RAP and the PMT at all three levels of activity - the*

administrative; the programme and the strategy. An internal review of logframe is therefore advised (see Para 5.41). The aim would be to extend the PMT relevant objectives to levels above the output level. The governance changes advised in this section of the report would hopefully facilitate this revision – with the administrative level being concerned mainly with delivery and reporting targets, the programme level with the steps the PMT and G-RAP management might take to help RAOs achieve their policy information and influencing objectives, and the Strategy level with the longer term changes proposed in the governance structure, with a view to creating a sustainable management model.

- Agree

- It is time for the LogFrame to be reviewed and revised. This document is part of that process

- Disagree

- A conventional Logical Framework does not have levels that are meant to correspond to “the administrative; the programme and the strategy”
- The objectives at the Purpose and Goal level are already relevant to the PMT and seen as part of its overall strategy, but PMT is not responsible for achieving outcomes at this level. They are the responsibility of the RAOs and the government respectively. This again is normal practice with the use of Logical Frameworks

Recommendations as expressed in Annex A

A.3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

1. *M & E of a core funding programme poses some problems, particularly as regards methodology. Policy influence is the major outcome anticipated by the development partners, but policy development is a complex process, heavily influenced by democratic governance, and policy influence cannot be delivered off the shelf. Equally, it is not always self-evident, even where it has occurred. In some instances, external influences are easily identified (as with major national media campaigns); in others, the process is more subtle, and influences are only evident in retrospect. In addition, governments are often resistant to the notion that their policies have been excessively influenced by others, and RAOs committed to their survival might be well-advised not to overstate their own importance even where they believe they have contributed significantly.*

- Agree, with the sentiment in this paragraph
- This is one reason why Most Significant Change (MSC) monitoring was seen as a potentially useful tool. But it was never proposed as the one and only tool to use, nor one that was compulsory. MSC is all about unexpected changes and changes that are important but cannot be easily quantified

2. *‘Fungibility’ is also an issue. For example, in the event that receipt of G-RAP core funding releases money to allow an RAO to undertake an activity that it would not otherwise have been in a position to undertake, which outputs should be used to judge the effectiveness of G-RAP – those that are claimed to be direct outputs of this funding, or the ancillary activities funded from the independent source? It could be argued that the latter is the more accurate standard by which to assess G-RAP’s influence, as it would not have been possible without the G-RAP funds.*

- G-rap has never intended make such detailed analysis of its contribution to RAO achievements.
 - The opposite is more in greater need: an assessment of the aggregate affects of multiple RAOs' activities on sections of government and particular policies.
3. *More practically, the limited influence of the PMT over the partner RAOs warns against linking the higher-level G-RAP indicators too strongly to PMT performance, as this might encourage an excessively interventionist approach*
- This seems contrary to earlier recommendations to link the PMT more tightly to Purpose and Goal level events
 - The PMT has always recognised its very limited influence over RAOs, as manifest in its limited ability to get six monthly narrative reports produced and within a reasonable time frame.
4. *G-RAP Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) has suffered from the ambiguities associated with the JPM. The JPM, in its M & E section, refers to two mechanisms – Annual Reviews and an external Mid-term Review. The former are to be commissioned by the Advisory Board and the latter by the Funders Committee. The Annual Reviews are to review G-RAP structures, procedures and eligibility criteria as well as determine whether the balance of organisations funded is appropriate. They are also expected to assess the impact of G-RAP on the external policy environment and determine progress towards achieving G-RAP goals and objectives. The MTR, commissioned by the Funders Committee, is expected to assess progress against project goals and objectives, and to make proposals on an exit strategy, as well as to consider and advise on the introduction of project funding for non-core funded RAOs and the criteria upon which such decisions should be based. The relationship between the two mechanisms is not explained neither is the existence of two separate mechanisms justified. There is also no explanation as to why two quite demanding reviews, exploring similar issues, should be conducted 6 months apart from each other.*
- Agree.
 - Proposal: (a) An annual review process with ToRs jointly agreed to by the Funders Committee and Advisory Board (need their new names); (b) an impact assessment undertaken at the end of Phase 1 in early 2009, to inform the implementation of Phase 2. The first should look at project management and short-term outcomes. The latter should focus on longer term impact, and the wider context, over the lifetime of Phase 1
5. *Nowhere in the JPM is there mention of the M & E systems of core-funded RAOs and the nature of the linkage, if at all, with G-RAP's own M & E.*
- The JPM does not need to be a deadweight. It is a historic document, that should be updated via MTRs (or equivalents), revisions to the Logical Framework, and the PMT's Annual Progress Report
 - The proposal made above involves use of RAO identified performance indicators
6. *Important efforts have been made by the PMT to address the weaknesses of M & E in the JPM. It has involved a revision of the log-frame and designing data gathering and reporting systems to respond to the needs of G-RAP's log-frame. At the beginning of 2005, important steps were initiated to develop a shared understanding of M & E in general and those for Research and Advocacy organisations in particular. Sustained input by an M & E consultant has involved, amongst others, providing advice on G-RAP's M & E and offering training on*

network analysis and the “Most Significant Change” (MSC) monitoring as a compliment to the more conventional log-frame indicator based M & E data collection processes. The MSC monitoring hopes to generate data relevant to G-RAP’s goal statement whilst network analysis could respond to the log-frame’s purpose level statements. The primary purpose of the M & E consultant’s input has been to enable G-RAP obtain the information it requires to monitor progress against its log-frame

- No comment needed
7. *The M & E consultant has provided interesting insights into M & E and RAOs found the training interesting. The team did not however come across evidence to show that newly acquired skills have been mainstreamed into the respective RAOs routine and internal M & E and reporting systems.*
 - If the intention is to be non-interventionist then it should be up to the RAOs as to whether they use the knowledge gained from training. The PMT should not be policing them. If RAOs continue to participate, voluntarily, in further training, this may be sufficient indication of its perceived value.
 8. *The consultant has promoted the use of the ‘most significant changes’ approach. This appears as a useful monitoring device, though not necessarily the best way of demonstrating accountability, or of focusing discussions on the broad objectives set out in the ‘pact’ between G-RAP and an RAO.*
 - MSC has never been proposed as the one and only method to use. A brief glance at the MSC Guide² will show that it was designed for organisational learning purposes, not for accountability purposes.
 9. *Likewise, network mapping techniques have also been promoted by the consultant. These are visually interesting though they do not necessarily address the main challenges confronting the RAOs, which have more to do with quality of perceptions, understanding and influence than the density of networks. It is far from clear what benefits such mapping techniques offer the RAOs. In general, it might be wiser for most of them to adopt more literal and descriptive monitoring methods, setting out in plain terms how they intend to inform and influence policy, and then describing their successes and any obstacles they have encountered.*
 - Network diagrams can show the aggregate outcomes resulting from the local decisions of many independent RAOs. This is emergent strategy, that rarely gets systematic attention, but which is likely to be very important in determining how governments respond to pressure from civil society. Network diagrams of aggregate outcomes need participatory analysis, via workshops, not the use of statistical measures such as density
 - Agree: Simple methods are preferable over complex methods
 10. *Given the apparently low uptake of these ideas, there is a need to rethink the role of M & E, and to move away from delivery of externally-generated M & E packages and methodologies. The effort should be on promoting a culture of regular M & E and learning within organisations. At the assessment stage, M & E should be an important area of interest to G-RAP. Organisations with well-developed M & E systems should have an advantage over others with poorly developed ones.*
 - These issues have been responded to above

² Available free online at <http://www.mande.co.uk/MSCGuide.htm>

- Agree with the view that “At the assessment stage, M & E should be an important area of interest to G-RAP”.
11. *The ‘social engineering’ bias probably explains why RAOs’ own internal M & E systems and processes do not feature significantly in G-RAP’s assessment criteria for core funding. They do however feature in the more intensive organisational assessment process where RAOs’ Performance Measurement and Performance Analysis & Programme Adjustments capabilities are explored. For example, eligibility for core funding focuses on RAOs’ capacities in the following areas: Research & Advocacy; Impact; Finance; Collaboration; Non partisan; Strategy; and Capacity to change. The proposal Assessment Sheet (PAS), ‘blue paper’ and the Organisational Assessment overview sheets however include programme design, monitoring and evaluation in their assessment criteria. It is however not clear whether the latter refer to the M & E of specific initiatives funded by G-RAP or deals with how the organisations conduct their own M & E or promote regular internal organisational learning and change.*
- This paragraph is confused. Engaging with RAOs M&E processes is more likely to reflect a social engineering bias than ignoring them

The G-RAP Logical Framework

12. *G-RAP’s M & E has suffered from the weaknesses inherent in the JPM and the ‘social engineering’ interpretation that has been subsequently been given to the programme. The latter has significantly shaped the construction of the log-frame, the basis for G-RAP’s M & E. The log-frame currently has 9 purpose level statements, 4 of which relate to the performance of individual funded RAOs and the remainder dealing with changes in relationships between RAOs, and with others. The interventionist ethos of G-RAP is reflected in Purpose Level statement 1 which anticipates that RAOs who gain access to G-RAP grants will subsequently be able to gain better access to funding. This ethos is similarly reflected in Purpose level statements 5, 6, 7 which seek to shape the sort of relationships that funded RAOs enter into. Constructed as it is, the log-frame conveys a certain normative view on the direction of growth and change that funded RAOs are expected to take. The consequences of competition for resources among RAOs have been downplayed in favour of the benefits of co-operation, collaboration and networking. Furthermore, the possibility of research institutions producing research outcomes with contradictory policy implications has not been fully appreciated. Neither has the right of advocacy organisations to advocate for and defend opposing policy positions.*
- If enabling RAOs to get better access to funding from other donors is interventionist, then it is probably a form of intervention that most RAOs would be happy with. They would probably see success in this area as a type of “problem we would like to have”
 - Agree, that the possibility and potential value of RAO competition, and of contradicting arguments by different RAOs, has been not been explicitly recognised.
13. *The above purpose level statements are reinforced by Output level statements 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 which put the onus on the PMT to ensure that purpose level objectives are achieved. Output 3, for instance, states that “G-RAP provides Once-Off grants to RAOs to enable them to become eligible for core funding.” A linear relationship between one-off grants and eligibility for core funding is assumed. Whilst the above purpose and output level statement allude to normative changes which may indeed be desirable there is a danger that G-RAP*

may inadvertently undermine the ability of the RAOs community to shape its agenda and the nature of its relationships in the way it deems fit. In short a non-interventionist model which allows RAOs to grow and change in ways that they choose for themselves might well have been more appropriate. Whilst co-operation, collaboration and networking are useful, how they are undertaken can only be nurtured by making resources available on demand.

- This criticism is overwrought. The Logical Framework does describe a linear causal relationship between Activities, Outputs, Purpose and Goal. It is reasonable for PMT to provide a sequence of different types of grants, identifying the RAOs capacity to manage these in the process.
- Disagree, that there “is a danger that G-RAP may inadvertently undermine the ability of the RAOs community to shape its agenda and the nature of its relationships in the way it deems fit.” G-rap simply does not have that sort of influence, even if it wanted to.

14. G-RAP’s own M & E would be strengthened were it to collect and process data generated routinely by funded organisations themselves. Its log-frame purpose level statements should aim to reflect what organisations seek to achieve for themselves. And its outputs should prioritise a smooth delivery of core funding as well as a strategic use of projectised funds.

- The first practice is already happening
 - Broadly agree: with the second proposal. It has been proposed above that the Purpose level of the LogFrame should have broad narrative statements of desired changes and each RAO should be asked to identify and use their own
-