

**“Monitoring and Evaluation of development plans”
in the framework of the Project
‘Regional Dialogue and Capacity Building on the economic reforms in
Egypt, Jordan and Syria’ (PID 73058)**

**Report on the Workshop:
26 - 29 July 2010 – SPC, Damascus, Syria**

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Introduction

The author was invited to facilitate the workshop “Monitoring and Evaluation of development plans” from 26 - 29 July 2010 – Damascus on the premises of the State Planning Commission, Syria.

This report is about subject matter contents and an assessment of the results by the author. The opinions and views expressed are those of the author alone. No assessment of the administrative and organizational matters is left to a report of the consultant of InWEnt Amer Ghrawi who expertly managed the organization and the preparation of the workshop.

As stated in the Terms of Reference, the course purpose was, that:

The workshop should transfer knowledge in monitoring and evaluation methodologies of macro development plans of the State. It should provide methodological tools and instruments which are, on the one hand, up to date with current international practices in multilateral and /or donor institutions and have shown good results, and, on the other hand, reliable and applicable.

More specific the author stated in his proposal prior to the workshop conducted several specific targets envisaged to be attained:

Target 1. A comprehensive presentation of monitoring and evaluation systems specifically in the context of the requirements of the recent FYP of the Syrian Arab Republic and its perspectives, measuring and monitoring long-term and mid-term objectives

Target 2. The assessment of political interventions as means of influencing the goals of the development plan at various levels of aggregation (national, regional, population groups).

Target 3. The elaboration and presentation of specific monitoring tools to measure and observe progress and possible adverse tendencies according to planning goals

Target 4. Joint elaboration of a toolset and a roadmap for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the current FYP of the Syrian Arab Republic and its further objectives including the use of Quality Assurance Methods at milestones and intervention points

Report contents

This report is concerned with the above mentioned workshop in Damascus, Syria only and is divided in three parts:

1. The workshop content as given and implemented in Damascus with some annotations about its contents
2. An evaluation of the results of the group exercises performed by the working groups during the workshop
3. A final assessment of the author of this report including the goals envisaged beforehand and how and where the targets have been reached and why if not.

The Workshop Agenda

The definite workshop agenda differed slightly from the prepared and communicated program insofar as some of the envisaged contents seemed repetitive and especially the working groups required more time to elaborate their results and their presentation than previously anticipated.

Final Workshop Program		Original Program
Monday, 26th July 2010		
09:00	Registration of Participants	No changes , no Working Groups
09:00 – 09:30	Opening Session	
09:30 – 10:00	Group Photograph and Coffee Break	
10:00 – 12:30	Introduction to Workshop: Agenda, Objectives and Goals, Timetable Presentation: Development of GDP / Participation of Agriculture in Syrian and Transition country's Economies Presentation: Planning concepts	
12:45 – 15:00	Presentation: What is Development and how to measure it Presentation: Developing indicators – an overview	
Tuesday, 27th July 2010		
09:00 – 10:30	Presentation: The OECD Guidelines: Quality Standards for Development Evaluation - Purpose, planning and design - Implementation and reporting - Follow-up, use and learning	Skipped: A Presentation of Evaluation Standards of German Society of Evaluation ¹ - Utility - Feasibility - Propriety - Accuracy
10:45 – 12: 45	Presentation: Evaluation Tools (Quantitative and Qualitative) - System of National accounts - Censuses and Surveys - Qualitative Surveys	
13:00 – 15:00	Group Work: The current Evaluation of the Five Year Plans (FYP) of the Syrian Arab Republic – Relation to Methods and Standards - The previous FYP (2001-2005) - The current FYP (2006-2010) and the - Next FYP (2011–2015)	See Results GW Day 2

¹ A second presentation of evaluation standards was skipped because attention to theoretical presentation declined rapidly and Best Practice exercises and Group work attracted much higher concentration

Coffee breaks and lunches have been excluded from the program to make it more concise. The skipped, modified or included sections are indicated in the columns "Original Program" together with an indication where results of the working group exercises will presented later

Wednesday, 28th July 2010		
09:00 – 10:30	Presentation of working groups results of the previous day	Skipped: Compare Monitoring Strategies, Evaluating Processes and Relevant Development Indicators to - The current FYP (2006-2010) and the - Next FYP (2011–2015) See Results Common Exercise Day 3
	Presentation: Internationally Acclaimed Political Monitoring Strategies - PSIA Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (World Bank) - PIM Perpetual Inventory Method (OECD) - PDGG Participatory Development and Good Governance (OECD)	
10:45 – 12: 45	(continued) Common Exercise: Goals of Five Year Plans (FYP) of the Syrian Arab Republic –until 2015 and M&E Tools Containing : Evaluating Processes and Projects / Development M&E and Development Indicators for one of the Macroeconomic Indicators (Agricultural growth)	
13:00 – 15:00	(continued)	
Thursday, 29th July 2010		
09:00 – 10:30	Group Work: Four working groups to develop Timetable, Milestones and Quality assurance for M&E of a Development Subsystem in Syria – 2015, choosing one of the proposed Development Subsystems or for another of own choice: - "Human development first", MDG - Financial system, Banking System - Economical Growth & Trade - Regional development	Skipped: Presentation of working groups results from the previous day
10:45 – 12: 45	(continued) Presentation of working groups results Group Work: Joint Meeting for Proposals for a Draft Concept of a Comprehensive M&E System for Development Planning of Syrian Arab Republic Presentation of working groups results	See Results GW Day 4a See ResultsWGW Day 4b
13:00 – 15:00	Evaluation of the workshop Closure and Certificates	Included: Presentation of Cooperation Partners to develop a M&E System for Development Planning of the Syrian Arab Republic

Synthesis:

The agenda of the Workshop consisted mainly of two types of training schemes: the presentations conducted by the author mainly with the help of PowerPoint files and Group Work, where participants shared their experiences and developed own concepts and solution related to previously acquired knowledge during the presentations. The Common exercise was a hybrid combining the presentation of concepts together with ongoing contributions from the participants. As the name suggests, all the participants participated in this exercise in common and no groups were formed. The working groups consisted of 4 groups with 7 or 8 participants from different professional background and also gender balanced.

The Evaluation of the Results of the Exercises

Results Group Work Day 2

The task of the four groups was to compare the previous 9th and 10th Five Year Plans (FYP) of the Syrian Arab Republic and envisage the prospects of an M&E system for the oncoming 11th FYP in Relation to the existence of an M&E system and the Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. The References were the OECD Quality Standards for Development Evaluation and the "Development Evaluation Framework" also of OECD origin.

The presentations of the four groups showed some striking resemblances so the distinctions of the four different groups are not punctuated rather the similarities are emphasized.

All groups stated the considerable differences between the 9th and the 10th plan, as much as the 9th FYP resembled the central planning scheme and offered no continuous M&E approach. The evaluations of the envisaged goals of this plan were elaborated at the very end, comparing the achieved results with the intended goals. Even if this may seem over simplified, a new approach of the 10th FYP showed clearly the FYP a monitoring structure had been established after 2 years. However, this did not seem to too successful after having started too late during the implementation of this plan.

The 10th FYP plan built on the experiences of the 9th FYP an incorporated many of the OECD Quality Standards for Development Evaluation but fell short in respect to participatory approaches and decentralized development monitoring. Whereas the 9th FYP experienced evaluation mainly by centralized statistics, the 10th plan experienced many new tools of data monitoring including decentralized health survey, asset index surveys, qualitative surveys and analytical use of small area estimates as had been presented in the overview of the first day.

If shortcomings could be named in the most recent 10th FYP M&E system, participants noted a weakness in the partnership approach and also failings in coordination and alignment. An example mentioned was the unsuccessful attempt to convince the private sector of delivering the attributed financial contribution in the planned M&E system. Capacity development seemed to be another permanent bottleneck.

For the oncoming 11th plan, a comprehensive participation of the private sector is expected and the systematic development of an M&E system prior to the implementation of the development plan is hoped for. Pending difficulties like unsatisfying partnership approach can and should be addressed immediately. The capacity of developing a comprehensive M&E system is still not felt to be available at SPC and further international partner cooperation is required. Very important seemed to be an alignment of other stakeholders, be it line ministries together with Central Bureau Statistics of to the necessities of a M&E system for the immediate future of the 11th FYP.

Results Common Exercise Day 3

The common exercise was based on **one** of the goals and target of the 10th FYP to reach an agricultural growth of 5%. According to recommendations from the participants an increase of Agricultural Export Revenues by 10% was also included. This goal and the targets had been selected unanimously.

In the common exercise the facilitator guided the participants through the phases of result oriented planning matching the inputs of various participants to the various planning stages. Having completed the planning phase from general to specific, the monitoring system was proposed for this (sub-) system of development. Here sets of indicator for the different phases were chosen and proposed following the criteria of indicators presented on the first day (SNART-CCR) together with the recommendation of the facilitator to allow in all circumstances the common accessibility of indicators. For each set of indicators the statistical tools were attributed together with the known experts to manage these tools and the frequency of their execution. This would lead to a system of milestones allowing an evaluation system based on constant, systematic monitoring system at a predictable frequency. Due to very lively participation the exercise took more time than expected but the result was a simplified planned M&E system for a small subset of the development plan. Unfortunately time constraint did not allow setting up a system of milestones for a more elaborate M&E system.

The resulting system from the sketch board was translated to the computer for further reference and orientation preparing for the next exercises:

Simplified Example of Planning and Monitoring Process for one Exemplary Goal linked to two Exemplary Targets

Simplified ROP (Result Oriented Planning)	← Planning →				
	Goals	Inputs	Activities /Projects	Outputs	Outcomes
Macro-Economic Goal Chosen Agricultural Growth Targets - Increase Agricultural Growth by 5% - Increase Agricultural Export Revenues by 10%	- The Government wants to reduce direct subsidies for the Agricultural Sector - The Government wants to grant loans with favourable conditions for Farmers	- Increase cultivated area in Region/ District ² - Allow water from Tigris to be pumped to same Region/ District - Introduce Dripping Technique for irrigation in same Region/ District - Use improved seeds and pruned bushes in same Region/ District	Increase the efficiently irrigated area in Same Region/ District	- Increase the income of rural population for Region ³ - Enable diversification of income resources in Region	Improve economic situation of rural population
Simplified Monitoring System for Goal / Targets	→ Monitoring →				
Selected Indicators	The subsidies: The amount of reduction of money from direct subsidies	- Area (ha) of newly cultivated are in same Region/ District - Cubic metres	- Productivity - Non irrigated area - Traditionally irrigated - Newly irrigated area	- Income - Expenditure - Assets	- Improved income - Reduced child labour

² Region/ District stands for an exemplary area where the projects are applied. If more than one is involved, the number of projects has to e repeated because each project has to be monitored independently. If this occurs frequently another column (e.g. Programs) should be included.

³ Region stands an exemplary region where the output of projects / programs occur, it usually includes several exemplary areas of type Region/ District

	The loans: The amount of money allocated The amount of money withdrawn	pumped from Tigris to same Region/ District - Percentage of Improved Seeds Uses in same Region/ District - Decrease of water use for same Region/ District - Percentage of newly irrigated land in same Region/ District	in Same Region/ District - Decrease of water use in Same Region/ District		- Reduced migration to urban area
Tools	Financial Statistics	Agricultural Surveys Short Term Agricultural Studies	Agricultural Surveys Short Term Agricultural Studies	- Household Expenditure Survey - Short Term Surveys on Income/ Expenditure and Living Conditions	- Population Census - Household Expenditure Survey
Owners of Tools (Usually Experts on Indicators)	Ministry of Finance Central Bank	Min of Agriculture Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) Research Institutes	Min of Agriculture CBS Research Institutes	CBS Research Institutes	CBS
Frequency	Yearly / Every 3 Months	Yearly / Every 3 Months /Short Term Intervals if necessary	Yearly/ Semestral (Every 6 months) / Short Term Intervals	Every 5 years / Short Term Intervals if necessary	Every 10 years / Every 5 years / Yearly

Quality Assurance (QA)	For Each Indicator by Mixed Team: Authors of Tools, Planning Authority and External Expertise	Create System of Monitoring QA and Early Warning System if Indicators show deviation from envisaged results at any stage
Milestones	Check results by Mixed Team at regular repeating intervals. Referring to frequency of indicator results available like every three months	

Synthesis:

The commonly elaborated results were promising showing a wealth of detailed knowledge of the participants but revealed also a lack of systematic approach to elaborate an M&E system. However, this was not surprising as none of the participants (with one exception to be elaborated later) had done this before.

Results Group Work Day 4a

This group work was based on the common exercise above and invited the four working groups to develop Timetable, Milestones and Quality assurance for M&E of a Development Subsystem in Syria – 2015, choosing one of the proposed Development Subsystems or for another of own choice. Four Development subsystems were proposed but all groups felt confident enough to plan and develop an M&E system for a subsystem of own choice:

The goal of the **first group** was to develop a positive image of Syria as a tourist destination in the international context. Here the planning context was well addressed but the relation of the indicators linked to the different planning phases was not completely implemented. Also the system lacked quantifiable indicators, however, in the output and outcome sections targets were quantified. Like this a monitoring system was difficult to develop. Although many aspects of a well planned approach were present, the draft of a complete M&E system was not reached, however due to time constraint not more than a rough draft could be expected.

The **second group** chose the increase in life expectancy in Syria with a chosen target as from 71 to 73 years as the goal of a development subsystem. Here many components of the planned system were in an appropriate place and the chain of activities, output, outcome and impact was well established. Also the indicators together with tools and owners were well linked to the planning phases and a draught for an M&E system was possible.

To reduce the adverse impacts of illegal settlements was the goal of the **third group**. However, no quantifiable targets were attached to the goal. The planning components were comparatively well established and indicators linked to these. There was a certain lack of describing the tools together with owners and frequency which would make the elaboration of an M&E system difficult, but first steps were made successfully to link planning to the monitoring of indicators.

Finally the **fourth group** opted to develop a system to reduce poverty by half (17% to 8%) until 2015 and monitor the progress through an M&E system. Noting the experience of several group members with the subject helped the systematic approach following the matrix of the development frame work as a reference. All planning phases were well in place, most of them linked to the indicators and even milestones had been established given the frequency of the collection of indicators. Several advanced data collection methods (asset index and qualitative surveys) were propose to be incorporated into the M&E system, as a whole this group exposed the most successful approach of an M&E system based on the common exercise.

Synthesis:

Several successful solutions were presented, mainly two groups presented systems able to be developed further into a successful M&E system. All groups had grasped the idea of planning phases, starting from Inputs and generalizing the result oriented planning phases from the activities or projects over outputs, outcomes to impacts. Sometimes the relationship between inputs and the activities were not completely grasped. The relation to indicators and the regular collection of data as essential to an M&E system was only implemented well by two groups. For these two groups little work would be necessary to draft a M&E system for their selected goals. Nevertheless, it is doubtful if any of the participants could be entrusted to develop a complex M&E system for the complete 11th development plan. Some of the components, like Milestone consolidation, Project Management tools, Quality management basics and methods could only be nudged superficially. A comprehensive M&E system would probably need more intense coaching and support than just a short introduction

Results Group Work Day 4b

Not surprisingly the recommendations of the four groups for a comprehensive M&E system remained rather vague showing that a comprehensive notion of the complexity of accompanying a Five Year Development plan requires further assistance. The four groups proposed the following after a short group consultancy about the necessities for a complex M&E system for Syria and the next 11th FYP:

Group 1:

- Building a mixed expert team from SPC to prepare the M&E system
- Study cases in the monitoring & evaluation process in all sectors
- Participation of other stake holders with SPC
- Continuous training on technical issues of monitoring & evaluation

Group 2:

- Training on successful formulating monitoring & evaluation reports
- Capacity building of the scientific analysis and how to design and evaluate indicators
- Continuous training on the development of a monitoring & evaluation system
- Develop and improve participatory concepts between different sectors in designing development plans.

Group 3:

- More insight in the technologies of monitoring & evaluation
- Special quality training for different sectors
- Training on constructing and structuring indicators
- Training on the various software programs applicable for monitoring & evaluation
- More participation of ministries (planning directorates) in the whole M&E process

Group 4:

- Training and capacity building to elaborate well structured indicators to evaluate goals
- Defining the roles and the institutional relations between related parties to monitor and evaluate development plans. Suggesting that the SPC is the focal point for evaluation and giving it the legal mandate to do so this role has to be confirmed.
- Correcting mechanisms of development plans and learning to benefit from monitoring & evaluation reports.

UNDP .

- Creating a working team from different parties specialized in monitoring & evaluation that can assist in the 11th five years plan.
- Articulation of the political will to implement a M&E system for the 11th FYP including clear indications and regulation of conditions, purpose and expected results of this system

Synthesis:

These proposals were compiled with the translation and help of Amer Ghrawi, the consultant for InWEnt and organizer of the workshop. In the following final assessment of the author some of these recommendations will be commented upon.

Assessment and Recommendations of the Author

Acquiring knowledge about an M&E system is not that difficult, putting one into practice is altogether a task not easy to achieve.

Already in the opening session to this workshop it was quite surprising to learn, that this workshop had many predecessors by several authors / sponsors like GTZ, KfW, UNDP and not rarely with almost identical goals. As partners supporting the transition process of the Syrian economy especially the three above mentioned organization invested some efforts to improve capacities not only in the State Planning Commission but also

in several line ministries. One dares to ask, however, why this type of workshop has to be repeated setting almost identical targets. The answer to this question seems to be simple: it takes more than one FYP to change the route of the economical development in Syria. Another answer would be, it is not so much a technical problem to be solved but rather an organizational. This means that acquiring knowledge about Project Management and applying it to various stages of a Development Plan is not enough to establish a monitoring system based on mutual trust among ministries, guarding their subject matter authorities, the Central Bureau of Statistics, responsible for producing some and publishing and controlling almost all of Syria's data and the State Planning Commission steering and controlling the process of establishing and modifying modern control mechanism for this process.

So, the objectives of the TOR mentioned in the beginning were doubtlessly reached, knowledge was transferred and this was proven especially by the results of group works of day 1 and the first part of day 4, where participants developed their own development plan for a particular goal. When regarding the more specific targets formulated by the author these results were not all completely achieved.

Certainly **target 1** has been reached because as time permitted a rather comprehensive presentation of international standards was possible. But quite different also to other preceding and comparable courses and workshops, the author had the ambition to make the participants develop their own M&E system based on best practices presented in the workshop, also simulating the effects of political decisions and the monitoring of adverse and unforeseen effects. This target may have been ambitious but with the previously acquired knowledge it seemed possible and the positive results of the group exercises bolstered the assumption that this was possible. Nevertheless, the **target 2** was reached only insofar as monitoring tools were discussed for various scenarios, but the political interventions could hardly be simulated because it was difficult to identify the author of these political mandates. Is it the line ministries, is it the SPC or the government represented by the Office of the Prime Minister to steer the Development plans? The **target 3** was easier to reach, many statistical tools have been used for monitoring purposes and the technical preconditions of a sound M&E system are certainly available. The central difficulty was finally manifest in the challenge reaching **target 4**. Participants had difficulty combining their often profound technical knowledge of subject matters (like reducing poverty) with other political areas to combine for an overarching M&E system.

For the setting of the workshop it was excellent as two experts accompanied the course from the beginning: Dr. Krakowski, program director of GTZ for the support of the Syrian Economic Reform shared the opening session and joined the final session of recommendations. Ahmad Shikh Ebid Team leader of UNDP Syria for the technical support for the implementation of the 10th FYP took part in the entire workshop and was an invaluable contributor throughout.

As a final recommendation from Ahmad Shikh Ebid I, the author, would readily subscribe: the political commitment for a mutual M&E system has to be precise and of central importance and its rules and regulations of openness, mutual trust, alignment and quality control have to be made compulsory by the Syrian Government to all stakeholders involved in this process. This environment of political commitment has to be initiated, nurtured and controlled by the Syrian Government and rules and regulations have to be made clear and transparent to all. The technical problems of implementing, adapting and managing an M&E system is of subordinated urgency; it can be assisted and supported by the available supporters as the mentioned above; GTZ, KfW, UNDP and others with some ease.

As the facilitator of this workshop I have to thank for the dedicated commitment of all participants, their tremendous effort and their amazing knowledge and background on subject and professional matters. The organizational aspects were impeccable due to the technical support, the excellent interpreting team, the catering team and the hospitality of SPC, which made the working atmosphere delightful and easy. Thanks at last to InWEnt and its consultant Amer Ghrawi for the organization and the perfect preparation of the workshop