



Jamaica – The Development and Use of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: Jamaica’s Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Jamaica is an upper middle-income country and the largest in size and population in the English-speaking Caribbean. For decades, Jamaica has struggled with low growth, high public debt and many external environmental, economic and social shocks that have further weakened the economy. Over the last 30 years, real per capita GDP increased at an average of just one percent per annum, making Jamaica one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world.

To reverse this trajectory, the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) embarked on a comprehensive and ambitious programme of reforms for which it has garnered national and international support: a four-year Extended Fund Facility (EFF) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been providing a support package of US\$932 million; and World Bank Group and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) programmes have provided US\$510 million each to facilitate the GoJ’s economic reform agenda to stabilize the economy, reduce debt and create the conditions for growth and resilience. In an attempt to achieve developed country status by 2030, the Jamaican Government has developed a strategic road map ‘Vision 2030’ by which the people living in the country and in the diaspora will make Jamaica “the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business”. This National Development Plan integrates 31 sector plans prepared by task forces, comprising stakeholders from public and private sector bodies, civil society and international development partners.

Public sector transformation and modernization, sustainable macroeconomic programme, and labour market and tax reforms are strategies developed under Vision 2030 to improve public sector efficiency, cost-effectiveness and ease of doing business, which are critical to creating an enabling environment for growth and development. The Government of Jamaica, in its effort to strengthen results-based management in the public sector, has sought to implement an Integrated Managing for Results Programme to assist civil

servants to maximize resource utilization through measurement of targets and monitoring of government organizations and officials to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

According to Conlin and Stirrat (2008)⁵⁷, there have been major shifts in development thinking and practice. These involve new ways in which assistance is directed towards developing countries and new modalities in conceptualizing the relationships between donors and recipients. In Jamaica, these shifts are evident in efforts by development partners over the last 20 years to move the focus of development assessments from outputs to results. Responding to this shift, the Jamaican Government has made significant investments in policies and programmes to improve human capital development, strengthen social cohesion and inclusiveness, and alleviate poverty, while continuing to focus on large infrastructural programmes and projects. In so doing, the Government's results-based management approach is aimed at satisfying donor expectations and continuously improving the development and results-oriented focus of the nation and people.

Development assistance for Jamaica has become more complex as a result of severe global economic challenges. Therefore, the nature and primary purpose of evaluations have to evolve in response to the need for increased accountability, transparency, relevance and public interest, and should include assessing value-added service delivery systems and responsive business models that are agile enough to meet the changing needs and standards within a global context. For example, in the past, rural development was based on continued support to the production of specific crops in the agricultural sector. New trade regimes and the removal of quotas have now seen rural communities partnering with private investment and financing cooperatives to improve supply chains and increase the number of value-added products. These linkages are now keys to promoting sustainable rural development and improving the income levels and standard of living for thousands of people in Jamaica and by extension the Caribbean Region.

MONITORING MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

MacFaul and Hyvarinen (2015)⁵⁸ posit that a country's success at attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will depend on how well efforts can be guided and where resources are directed. The international community needs to develop a reliable integrated indicator monitoring framework and commit to ongoing monitoring in order to assess and evaluate the implementation of these goals.

This framework will need a multifaceted approach, where progress is measured at the national, regional and international levels to determine changes in public policies of varying countries to reflect the goals, targets and indicators as stated by the United Nations. Thus,

57 Conlin, S., and Stirrat, R. 2008. 'Current Challenges in Development Evaluation'. *Evaluation*, 14(2): 193-208.

58 MacFaul, L., and Hyvarinen, J. 2015. 'Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals'. 31 May 2015. <<http://www.sustainabledevelopment2015.org/index.php/blog/296-blog-governance/1649-monitoring-the-sustainable-development-goals>>.

the development of a practical and coherent indicator framework requires the designing of a workable integrated system to capture various data sets. MacFaul and Hyvarinen note the importance of learning a lesson from what was loosely referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) monitoring and evaluation framework. They state that this framework consisted of a variety of monitoring component which evolved over time but had no provision for rigorous evaluation of the goals.

In the past, Jamaica's main challenges in monitoring and evaluating the MDGs stemmed from the late emergence of an integrated monitoring framework, as well as the need for effective design and implementation of programmes to advance the expansive scope of each goal. In order to monitor and evaluate the SDGs, large amounts of information are required from several disciplines such as economics, social sciences, and medical sciences. The development of a reliable indicator monitoring framework will also demand a considerable amount of time and technical work from public sector agencies.

To improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) across the public sector and to present valuable evidence that such a framework can be effective, the following actions are being pursued under the GoJ Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES):

- Increasing the use of M&E, as it influences accountability, transparency and focuses implementation on efficiency and effectiveness.
- Improving the commitment to focus on the development of M&E capacity and infrastructure and ensuring the sustainability of this commitment over the long term.
- Increasing the number of skilled persons to collect, analyse and report on the progress and performance of key government policies, programmes and projects, including cross-cutting initiatives in the advancement of SDGs.
- Encouraging an increase in political support and the use of M&E as a normal part of doing business.
- Enhancing the capacity of government and civil society entities to develop and use M&E information in designing, implementing and monitoring programmes.
- Encouraging greater use of evaluation findings in decision-making.

THE GOJ'S PMES FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES

In an effort to continuously improve and sustain development, the Jamaican Government has not only road-mapped development at the national level through Vision 2030 but has also taken on a synergistic approach with the implementation of its PMES across ministries, departments and agencies since 2010. The PMES is a management approach that is highly consultative and integrative with and supportive of the National Development Plan. It is aimed at improving the performance of initiatives and delivery of goods and services, and ultimately ensuring a better quality of life for citizens through strengthened social and economic growth and investments in human capital.

Also, the PMES strategies support the national goals, outcomes and strategies outlined in the National Development Plan. The plan has four national goals and 15 national outcomes geared towards empowering Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential; creating a society that is secure, cohesive and just; achieving a prosperous economy; and attaining a healthy natural environment.

The integrated results-based PMES is being implemented on a phased basis across the Government. Phase one began in November 2010 with the introduction of ministries to a whole-of-government business planning approach and sensitization to PMES. Phase two commenced in 2011 with the introduction of ministry-level business plans, and performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting to ministries and executive agencies. Phase three started in 2012 with the introduction of PMES to 32 selected entities (including all executive agencies and some departments) to agency-level business planning and performance reporting. The fourth phase, scheduled to have commenced in April 2014, would have seen the introduction of agency-level business planning and performance reporting to all remaining departments and agencies.

OUTLINE THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF EVALUATION (PMES SYSTEM)

Of the evaluation principles the PMES has adopted and is promoting, three are fundamental in guiding the assessment of initiatives and recognizing their impact on people's lives. Three others are aimed at strengthening accountability for implementation. The fundamental principles for guiding the assessment of initiatives and recognizing impact are:

- seeing if the change is actually taking place;
- determining to what extent the change is a result of government initiatives (policies, programmes and projects); and
- determining what in particular is influencing that change and in what way.

The fundamental principles for strengthening accountability for implementation are:

- achieving and accurately reporting on results is a primary responsibility of implementing entities and their partners;
- conducting rigorous and objective evaluation is an important tool in helping implementing entities to manage for results; and
- ensuring that the importance of thoroughness and discipline of evaluation are communicated throughout the evaluation team and the stakeholders.

In promoting good evaluation, the PMES has adopted international criteria and developed standards on identifying the initiatives to evaluate, as well as selecting evaluators relevant to the subject matter. The PMES is also encouraging an agreed approach to evaluation; ensuring adequate technical capacities among evaluators to develop measures for results; strengthening the leadership to undertake and guide evaluations, change the culture

towards evaluation and use data findings to improve strategies and implementation; and changing organizational structures within implementing entities to support the function and responsibility of evaluation.

HOW JAMAICA HAS BEEN USING EVALUATIONS

Evaluation being an independent systematic investigation into how, why, and to what extent objectives or goals and overall results are achieved (William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2012), it needs to be undertaken along internationally accepted ethical principles and practices, as expected results on positive changes in people's lives are critical to the sustainable development of a nation. No doubt, the global changes in evaluation principles, methodologies and practices have been facilitated by an increased sophistication in the development and use of technologies such as GIS, cell phones, satellite imagery (remote sensory, etc.). In Jamaica, evaluators are increasingly taking advantage of the best geographic information science solutions to improve the assessment of strategies for road safety, national developmental investment planning and social development, and safety and security. For instance, data from such solutions facilitate spatial analysis of the effectiveness of strategies to reduce road fatalities, determine the impact of mining activities on rural communities, and identify high-crime areas and emergence of crime patterns.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the PMES encourages a consensus that will focus on a monitoring process for the SDGs that will require a 'roll up' from a national level to a regional level through a clear set of complementary monitoring processes that would also support indicators and targets related to sectoral priority issues that impact small island states in the region. To effectively establish such an integrated framework, Jamaica and Trinidad could provide the working prototype that would increase knowledge sharing, use of evaluations and M&E capacity-building across the region. A set of common regional indicators could be developed that would be practical and cost-effective to monitor and complementary to global and national indicators. Small countries like Jamaica, even with their limited experience, can provide valuable insights on ways of developing effective M&E mechanisms in heavily indebted island states that would bring significant value towards the use of evidence in results-based decision-making.

However, further improvement is needed in building Jamaica's national M&E capacities. Despite the gains being made, there is need for improvement in the collection and dissemination of data; increasing or strengthening of the demand for evaluation data; taking evaluation functions that work (small pockets of excellence) and upscaling these to other institutions and wider sectors; and continuing the identification of champions at all levels and empowering them. Jamaica needs to decide on a limited set of relevant global and regional monitoring indicators that will also be integrated into national monitoring efforts. Due to the novelty of the PMES and the need for evaluation of initiatives at the programme implementation level, there is a great opportunity for blending evaluation principles and

practices. This has created enthusiasm and interest in methods of further developing evaluation as well as in its impact on people's lives.

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