

## 17. PERU

# EVIDENCE-BASED PUBLIC POLICIES: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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### INTRODUCTION

The creation of the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS) in October 2011 marked a milestone in the institutionalization of social inclusion as a state priority for the Peruvian government. It consolidated the beginning of a reform towards an evidence-based development and social inclusion policy that focused on focalization, inter-agency and inter-governmental coordination, and rigorous evaluation of the results.

In this context, MIDIS created the General Direction of Monitoring and Evaluation (DGSE) as the unit in charge of monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and projects related to development and social inclusion in all levels of the Peruvian government. The mission of the unit is to improve the impact, efficiency, quality, equity and transparency of development and social inclusion policies and programmes and, therefore, to provide citizens and policymakers with the results of evaluations and the evidence generated by the M&E system.

Aware that the use of evidence in social policy is not an automatic event but rather a

process conducted in a political and institutional context influenced by various visions, actors and interests, MIDIS designed an M&E system that emphasizes developing instruments to ensure that the evidence generated not only fulfils the highest quality standards, but also is translated in a learning source to continuously improve development and social inclusion interventions.

## THE EXPERIENCE OF MIDIS IN THE USE OF EVIDENCE

Traditionally, M&E systems have been focused on the timely production of high-quality and independent information and evidence. Those efforts have resulted in great improvements on the professionalism and academic rigour of the scientific evidence generated about the efficiency and efficacy of public interventions on social issues. It is increasingly common to identify a crisis in the use of evidence in public policy decisions. This situation suggests that even though the generation of evidence is a necessary piece of the puzzle, it is insufficient to ensure informed public policies capable of improving the quality of social expenditure, because the use of evidence depends on multiple factors that can increase or decrease the probability of influencing public policy.

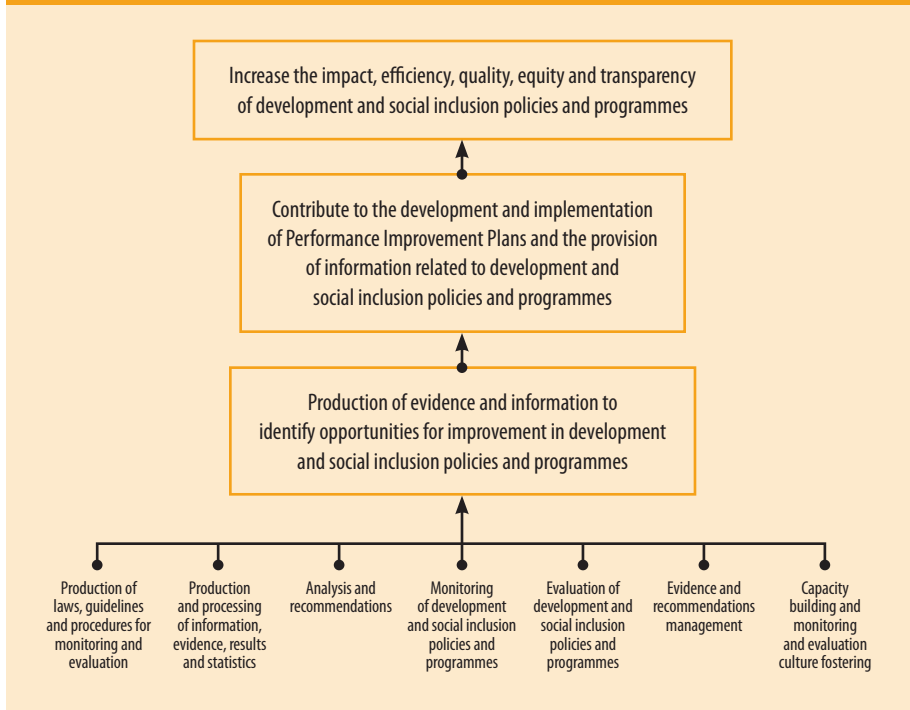
According to Weiss (1999), there are four factors that influence the use of the results of evaluations: interests, ideologies, institutional culture and information sources. If the evidence generates conflicts with any of those four factors, the probability of being used in public policy decisions decreases considerably.

From a different perspective, Innvaer (2012) argues that the ‘two-community thesis’ explains the limited use of evidence in public policy decisions. According to the author, there is a collision between science and politics that hinders the use of evidence in decision-making processes. Innvaer argues that scientists see themselves as rational, objective and innovative, and perceive politicians as interest-driven actors immune to innovation and scientific evidence. In contrast, politicians and policymakers see themselves as responsible, action-oriented and pragmatic leaders and perceive scientists as naïve and commonly disconnected with pragmatic reality. Innvaer suggests that, in order to promote the use of evidence in public policy decisions, it is mandatory to create conditions that increase the probability of use. This can be done, for example, by fostering spaces of dialogue and interaction between science and politics. However, in our opinion, the responsibility for promoting further dialogue between both fields cannot be placed on either side—a third actor is necessary to intermediate and facilitate dialogue.

In designing the M&E system in this context, MIDIS considers DGSE both as a unit that generates high-quality evidence and as a mediator between evaluators and policymakers. In that sense, through the dual role of DGSE, MIDIS intends to close the gap between the scientific world of academia and the policymakers’ perceptions of reality, translating evidence into clear, timely and viable recommendations that can be understood and, mostly, used by policymakers.

Therefore, unlike the traditional M&E systems, the DGSE concept constitutes an innovation; the final goal that justifies its existence goes beyond the production of information and evidence and aims to improve the impact, efficiency, efficacy, quality, equity and

FIGURE 1: DGSE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK



transparency of social and development interventions.

As shown in the logic framework developed by DGSE, the unit has conceptualized several products and services to produce systematic information and evidence regarding opportunities to improve social interventions (see Figure 1). Those results will allow DGSE to contribute to the development of performance improvement plans and to inform about the effectiveness of social policies and programmes with the objective of increasing the impact, efficiency, quality, equity and transparency of governmental interventions. The design of the DGSE model was validated and supported by all of MIDIS's internal stakeholders, who made several contributions to the 'MIDIS's Guidelines for Monitoring, Evaluation and Use of Evidence'.

In order to ensure evaluations' independence, impact evaluations of MIDIS's social programmes and policies are funded by either the Ministry of Finance or multilateral agencies. However, DGSE actively participates in evaluations and works closely with the Ministry of Finance, providing technical assistance to ensure the quality of the evidence generated.

In particular, it is important to note that the most innovative element of DGSE regarding traditional evaluations units relies on the evidence and recommendations management component. This specific line of action influences Performance Improvement Plans and the

FIGURE 2: DGSE IN THE CYCLE OF POLICY AND PROGRAMMES

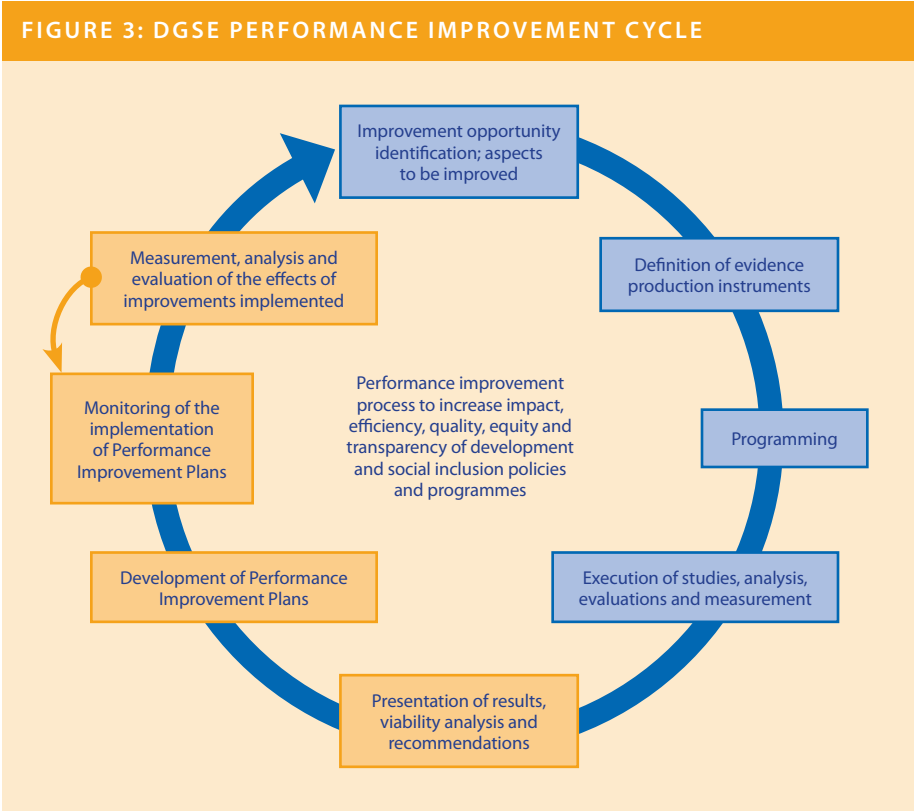


use of evidence. Therefore, it allows evidence to translate into greater impact, efficiency, quality, equity and transparency of public interventions on social and development issues.

DGSE has evolved from the production of information to the use of evidence and has learned that what justifies the existence of an M&E system is the final goal: improving the quality, efficiency, efficacy and equity of policies, programmes and services through evidence and results-based management. In this context, DGSE is determined to be a part of the decision-making process of policies and programmes, providing timely, reliable evidence and information in order to feed into planning, design and operational decisions.

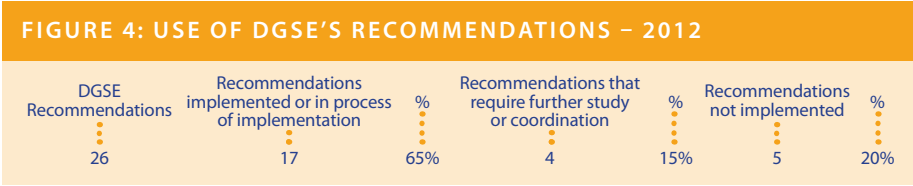
DGSE's model is not only centred in the evaluation cycle, but also considers the political context and the policy, programme and public administrative system cycles (see Figure 2). Therefore, DGSE provides evidence and information to programmes and organic units according to the phase of the cycle they are going through. For example, in the case of programmes in a design or redesign phase, DGSE provides evidence to identify and implement adjustments if necessary. In the case of operationally focused programmes, DGSE provides products designed to identify and solve specific problems that affect the intervention's efficiency and efficacy.

In terms of the products and services designed around the evaluation cycle, DGSE has developed a Performance Improvement Strategy (see Figure 3). The cycle begins by identifying potential areas of improvement in policies and social programmes. Either the programmes themselves or DGSE can start the process. In the second phase of the cycle, DGSE and the programmes decide together on the best instruments to produce the expected evidence in a timely manner.



Once the evidence production phase concludes, DGSE has conceived of an intermediate step between the production and use of evidence, where the Recommendations Technical Reports are prepared and presented. These management reports have been designed with the aim of providing policymakers in charge of the design and/or operation of public interventions with clear and timely recommendations that consider both the political and economic viability of implementation. Through this innovative design, MIDIS expects to connect scientific evidence with the pragmatic reality of the operation of social interventions, which should increase the use of evidence in decision-making processes.

Another innovative element in the Peruvian M&E system relies on the development of the Performance Improvement Plans, which demand close coordination and negotiation between DGSE and the programmes or units in charge of the operation of the evaluated interventions. The Performance Improvement Plans have been designed as a management tool that is based on the opportunities for improvement as identified in the Recommendations Technical Reports. The plans also consolidate the commitments assumed by the operators



of the evaluated interventions as well as the mechanisms for monitoring progress on implementing the reforms.

The next phase in the cycle is related to implementing the commitments assumed in the Performance Improvement Plans. Even though the implementing actions depend mostly on the operation of the evaluated programmes and interventions, DGSE is expected to provide technical assistance during the process in order to ensure correct and timely implementation.

Finally, the DGSE model considers a final stage, where the effects of the evidence-based improvements that were implemented in accordance to the Performance Improvement Plans are measured and evaluated on the impact, efficiency, quality, equity and transparency of the development and social inclusion interventions. This final step is also intended as a means to evaluate the success of DGSE as an evaluation unit. This component constitutes an innovation as well, because in the traditional evaluation unit model, success is commonly measured in terms of the number of evaluations performed or the scientific rigour and quality of the evaluations. That paradigm overlooks that real success goes beyond the ability of a unit to generate high-quality evidence in a timely manner, and needs to be measured in terms of the unit's contributions towards greater impact, efficiency, quality, equity and transparency of the policies and programmes evaluated.

Even though MIDIS's existence has been relatively short, the DGSE model design has already shown encouraging results. In the context of the redesign process of social programmes, in 2012, DGSE developed 16 evaluations that resulted in seven technical reports containing evidence-based recommendations for social programmes. Furthermore, 65 percent of the recommendations made by DGSE have been implemented (or are in the process of being implemented); 15 percent requires further studies or coordination with other sectors to be implemented.

A noteworthy example is the use of DGSE evidence in the decision to close a food assistance programme formerly named PRONAA (*Programa Nacional de Asistencia Alimentaria*). In 2012, DGSE commissioned seven evaluations regarding PRONAA, which showed that the programme was poorly targeted and was not available to a significant part of the population that required the most nutritional support. Additionally, the evaluations pointed out that PRONAA delivered a service with very low standards and had scarce transparency mechanisms, which resulted in corruption. The results and lessons learned from the evaluations conducted by DGSE over PRONAA were summarized in a Recommendations Technical Report and presented to the relevant decision makers. PRONAA was eliminated in May 2012 and ceased operations on 31 December 2012.

Other clear examples of how the DGSE model had an impact on policy are the evidence-based improvements introduced to the national *Cuna Más* programme in 2013 and the evidence provided for the Policy Guidelines against Child Chronic Malnutrition developed by MIDIS in 2012. In the first case, DGSE made evidence-based recommendations regarding the evaluations conducted in 2012 over the previous *Wawa Wasi* programme, which were used as an input to introduce several improvements to the quality of the day-care service provided. In the second case, DGSE provided national and international evidence that served as a basis to identify effective interventions against child malnutrition and to develop a policy tool to guide national and subnational government agencies in the design and implementation of their social policies.

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