

Developing country M&E frameworks: Purpose, scope, opportunities and lessons from Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) partnership

Convener: CLEAR South Asia

Motivation

A Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework is essential for guiding the execution and evaluation of a country's developmental programs. It provides a comprehensive plan detailing what will be monitored and evaluated, the frequency of these activities, and the responsibilities of various ministries and agencies to strengthen the overall M&E ecosystem in the country. The framework can guide the processes for M&E data collection, analysis, reporting, and using findings in policy formation. It can also provide long-term direction for planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation to achieve the SDGs. A number of country governments today recognize M&E Frameworks as vital for effective policy making and governance, offering insights into current M&E practices and possibilities for improvement.¹

In the last two decades, Bhutan has made significant strides towards the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the World Bank data, for instance, Bhutan's poverty headcount ratio² dropped from 13.4 percent in 2003 to 0.9 percent in 2019.³ Bhutan's multi-year planning strategy, beginning with the first five-year plan for development in 1961, enables the country to plan for growth and development.⁴ In addition to the five-year plans, Bhutan has taken efforts to build robust monitoring and evaluations systems. As early as 2006, the country developed a National Monitoring & Evaluation Manual to standardize

¹ Monitoring and Evaluation for Better Development Results. (2013, February 21). World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/02/14/monitoring-and-evaluation-for-better-development-results>

² Percentage of the population living below the poverty line, defined at 2.17 USD at 2017 PPP.

³ Bhutan | Data. (2023). Bhutan | Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/BT>

⁴ Bhutan: 1st Five Year Plan (1961-1966) | ESCAP Policy Documents Management. [Bhutan's First Five-Year Plan](#)

M&E systems. More recently, in 2017, the GNH Commission Secretariat developed the Draft Development Evaluation Policy and the Draft Development Evaluation Protocol and Guidelines, with the goal of enhancing the evaluation ecosystem and improving resource utilization.

That said, the country has recently undergone significant civil service reforms, including the disintegration of the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) and the realignment of its functions between the Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance (MoF). Recognizing the need to strengthen its M&E systems, particularly in light of these reforms, the government sought assistance from UNDP Bhutan to develop a comprehensive M&E framework. As the core implementation partner of GEI, CLEAR South Asia, supported by GEI and UNDP colleagues, developed the country's first M&E framework.

CLEAR South Asia proposes to host a panel discussion at the National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) conference, bringing together partners and organizations engaged in building M&E frameworks globally. This panel will highlight the value of long-term M&E Frameworks for countries, sharing experiences and insights from collaborations with governments like Bhutan. The discussion will address potential challenges and opportunities, exploring the critical factors necessary for the successful implementation of M&E frameworks in developing contexts.