



## Elements of M&E for Anti-Corruption Programming

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) typically serve two functions: accountability and learning. Here, we focus on the learning aspect: How can we find out whether anti-corruption programmes are effective? And what can we learn for future programming decisions? The following section, developed as part of U4's Essentials of Anti-Corruption online training, draws substantially on work presented in the *User's Guide to Measuring Corruption and Anti-Corruption* (Trapnell 2015) which remains an excellent tool to consult when thinking about how to monitor and evaluate anti-corruption programmes.

**Data points for M&E are different from analysis of corruption drivers.** Information sources that help with diagnosing corruption problems and selecting programme approaches may not be as helpful for monitoring the progress of the programme. However, they still have a role to play. Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and other tools that are central to diagnosing opportunities and constraints will not give useful data

points for monitoring the progress of a programme or reform process. Conversely, different types of data, like the number of negative audit findings or corruption complaints against a particular ministry, will help assess whether the reform effort targeting corruption in that ministry is making a difference.

**PEA can help with evaluating how and why a programme did or did not work.** However, that data will not tell why progress is or is not happening. For this, revisiting the PEA can be an excellent complement to monitoring data, especially for mid-term or final evaluations. Corruption, along with anti-corruption work, is highly political rather than just technical. This means that tracking the dynamics of reform is essential not just at the beginning, but throughout the process.

**'Everyday political analysis' complements monitoring data.** Between evaluations, a great approach to effective monitoring is to combine specific

One of a series of eight, this Issue Paper is a companion document to [The SDC's Anti-Corruption Guidance](#). The series provides recommendations on how to apply the Four Pillar approach described in the Guidance for the purpose of anti-corruption programming with a thematic focus or as a transversal theme. The Issue Papers follow the structure of the Guidance and they clarify the concepts, topics and approaches it presents, and also provide links to resources that go deeper into selected topics.

### Box 1. Example to illustrate measures at different outcome levels

Reduced corruption and procurement is the overall objective of a support programme. Administrative data documenting changes in internal regulations or processes, like the establishment of an e-procurement system, will be relevant for a short-term outcome but will not reflect the ultimate goal. A higher percentage of procurements conducted through that system might be an intermediate outcome for longer-term results.

Since corruption itself is so hard to measure, it is good to look for measures that might logically reflect reduced corruption; for example, a reduced difference between government contract costs and those in the private sector, or a greater diversity of vendors receiving contracts. Lower perceptions of corruption in the targeted ministry might also be a meaningful indicator, but only if it was previously known that procurement corruption was a major factor in shaping those perceptions.

Source: Author's own.

data with ongoing everyday political analysis to assess why progress is or is not taking place. This can be done, for example, in the context of quarterly or biannual project reviews: in addition to checking whether results are on course, see if the assumptions of the theory of change are holding true. The different types of data will be relevant to different phases of programme results.

**Different types of data will be relevant to different phases of a results chain.** Monitoring begins with a results chain that maps out inputs, outputs and expected outcomes for a particular programme or reform effort. It is constructed from the theory of change, filling in logical steps that the theory of change assumes and

identifying measures that could help with determining whether the effort is on track.

Good indicator data are especially needed at the outcome level since this level represents the actual changes resulting from an investment, as illustrated in Figure 1. Think of the different things you would count or measure at different levels. For short-term outcomes, for example, you might document whether certain policy changes have been made or if staffing has reached agreed levels. For intermediate outcomes, you may then begin to examine the effects of those policies and capacities, like processing more complaints or responding to information requests. Importantly,

Figure 1. Different types of data will be relevant to different phases of a results chain



Source: Adapted from Trapnell/UNDP (2015: 33).

familiar data points like perceptions of corruption or improved government performance scores only come in the longer term. **It is a common mistake in anti-corruption work to look for these types of changes too soon.**

## International corruption indicators are a double-edged sword

### Pros

It is tempting to use international sources for monitoring, because the information is **easily available** with little investment. And these indicators are often seen to lend credibility, because they are **independent and therefore less susceptible to manipulation** than locally generated data.

### Cons

However, international corruption indicators also have **several shortcomings** that need to be considered.

- Many of them are **too aggregated** for changes to be realistically attributed to a single programme. For a government-focused anti-corruption programme, for instance, an indicator like the institutional pillar of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index might look appealing. But it is important to dig into the details to see what sort of issues are included in this institutional indicator. Going down the list of elements, you can assess whether or not the programme you support is likely to address enough of these factors to logically expect that it could change the score. Especially if an indicator does not include this disaggregated information, which allows you to select scores more directly related to your programme, you will probably want to seek another information source.
- You need to **become familiar with the methodology** and question where the information comes from. Knowing the source of the information is important because the data need to be linked to the activities and logic of your programme. For instance, if your programme is focused on improving public services in order to increase overall legitimacy of the government, it may be more important to know public opinion than the views of business executives. The time lag between data inputs and published data sets may also be highly relevant: the 2021 value for a particular indicator may be based on data gathered in 2020 or even earlier, which could affect how relevant it is for tracking changes resulting from a new programme, especially in the short term.

■ **Track record over time:** You should also check what the indicators' methodological notes tell you about compatibility over time (the methodology might have changed and, therefore, results cannot actually be compared over time). For instance, the methodology of the Corruption Perceptions Index changed in 2012. Scores for a single country are now comparable across time but before 2012, they were not.

■ An important issue that is often overlooked is the **track record of indicators for reflecting the changes that you are interested in.** Take a look at how the data for an indicator have changed over time. If a country gets close to the same score year after year, even though relevant policy changes have been made in that time, this may signal that the indicator is not sensitive to these particular changes, and therefore would not be a useful indicator of the progress of your programme.

■ An international indicator may actually **not be credible to some key stakeholders** precisely because it is external and, in many cases, opaque. In particular, expert opinion may be rejected by governments or others who claim that a country is the victim of bias or unfair international reporting. So, keep the audience in mind when you select indicators. Alternatively, use locally generated surveys and reports. Information gathered from government statistics, reputable survey firms or NGOs, or even outputs from project activities like social accountability scorecards or user surveys may be much more likely to be adaptable to the specific inputs and objectives of your project and, therefore, more reflective of the changes that you are expecting. A good option is to combine carefully vetted international indicators and locally generated ones.

## Disaggregation of data is central to MEL

One of the reasons why disaggregated indicators are so important is that it is almost impossible to prove a plausible link between a particular programme and a change in an aggregated corruption index or overall population survey. In fact, changes in these measures may happen in ways that are completely unrelated to a specific anti-corruption effort, or even in opposite directions. The classic example of this is the possibility that the Corruption Perceptions Index would turn in a negative direction as a result of increased media reporting about corruption or more prosecutions; however, stronger media and more prosecutions are

both positive developments. An aggregate indicator might not reflect these positive changes at all, or at least not in a timely way.

A second reason for disaggregation is to get a more detailed perspective on implementation. And this applies to any data, not just aggregated indices. So, if for example, your programme seeks to increase corruption reporting, it may be very important to know where the reports are coming from, or the mode of reporting most commonly used in order to better target outreach activities or improve access to certain reporting mechanisms.

Finally, aggregated data almost never provide insight into how changes are affecting other development priorities, such as gender, poverty or conflict. For example, knowing the differential impact of anti-corruption efforts by region or locality may be very important for conflict-sensitive programming.

Similarly, disaggregating perception and experience data by gender, or focusing on corruption in services, especially relevant to women or poor people, illuminates the degree to which anti-corruption efforts are effectively pro-poor or supporting women's empowerment.

## **What does this mean for SDC programming?**

**The choice of indicators, including at outcome level, depends on the part or aspect of the system**

## **that a programme is working on, and what the programme is working towards.**

The discussion on indicators is constantly evolving and reflects an increased understanding of corruption and anti-corruption. There is no shortage of data and indicators at country, regional and international levels but a selection, and programme-specific adjustments, will need to be made on a case-by-case programme basis. For example, a programme working in support of the development of an effective asset declaration system could have indicators on compliance rates at various junctures during implementation and after completion including, as appropriate, those developed by the [World Bank Global Data Barometer Handbook](#) adjusted for the country level. A programme on public financial management could use indicators from the [Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability \(PEFA\)](#) framework. If judicial integrity is at the core of the programme, then there are numerous potential indicators that could be explored using the [UNODC Resource Guide on Strengthening Judicial Integrity and Capacity](#). For an intervention aimed at strengthening the Supreme Audit Institution of a country, data generated by the institution itself could be used as a baseline, and short-, medium- and long-term indicators be formulated. If anti-corruption is mainstreaming transparency and integrity elements into sectoral programmes, then there are resources available that could guide the development of specific indicators on that level; for example, there are indicators that have been developed by the [OECD](#) on the water sector that may be a useful source to consider.