Principles for developing
M&E Systems
Experiences by a Practitioner

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Introduction & Background

Objectives of this presentation

- Share **observations** on typical M&E related shortcomings

- Show the **potential** of tested M&E related approaches, tools and practices

➢ try to give **practical** thoughts and recommendations

What is this presentation based on?

Observations derived from 50+ M&E related jobs ...

- in several **countries** (mainly South East Asia)
- in a large number of **sectors**
- for a broad variety of development **organizations** (Bilateral Agencies, UN and other Multilateral Organizations, Development Banks, NGOs, Development Consultancies, others)
- from different "**perspectives**"
  - M&E System & Planning support
  - Baseline- and Endline surveys & Outcome/Impact Studies
  - Mid Term Reviews & End of Project Evaluations

Potential Benefits from a good M&E system

- increased **understanding** on the project by staff and other stakeholders
- orientation of activities towards **project goals**
- facilitates **steering**, also of large projects with many activities
- **shows problems** and other issues in a timely manner and thereby enables implementers and managers to tacked them
- enables you to **report** what you have achieved
- facilitate the effectiveness of MTRs and EoP **Evaluations**
- enhances discussions on how to **design follow-up projects**

Terminology

To simplify the presentation, the word "**project**" will be used as the 'unit' of the M&E system. However everything said here can be applied for programmes, organizations or other units

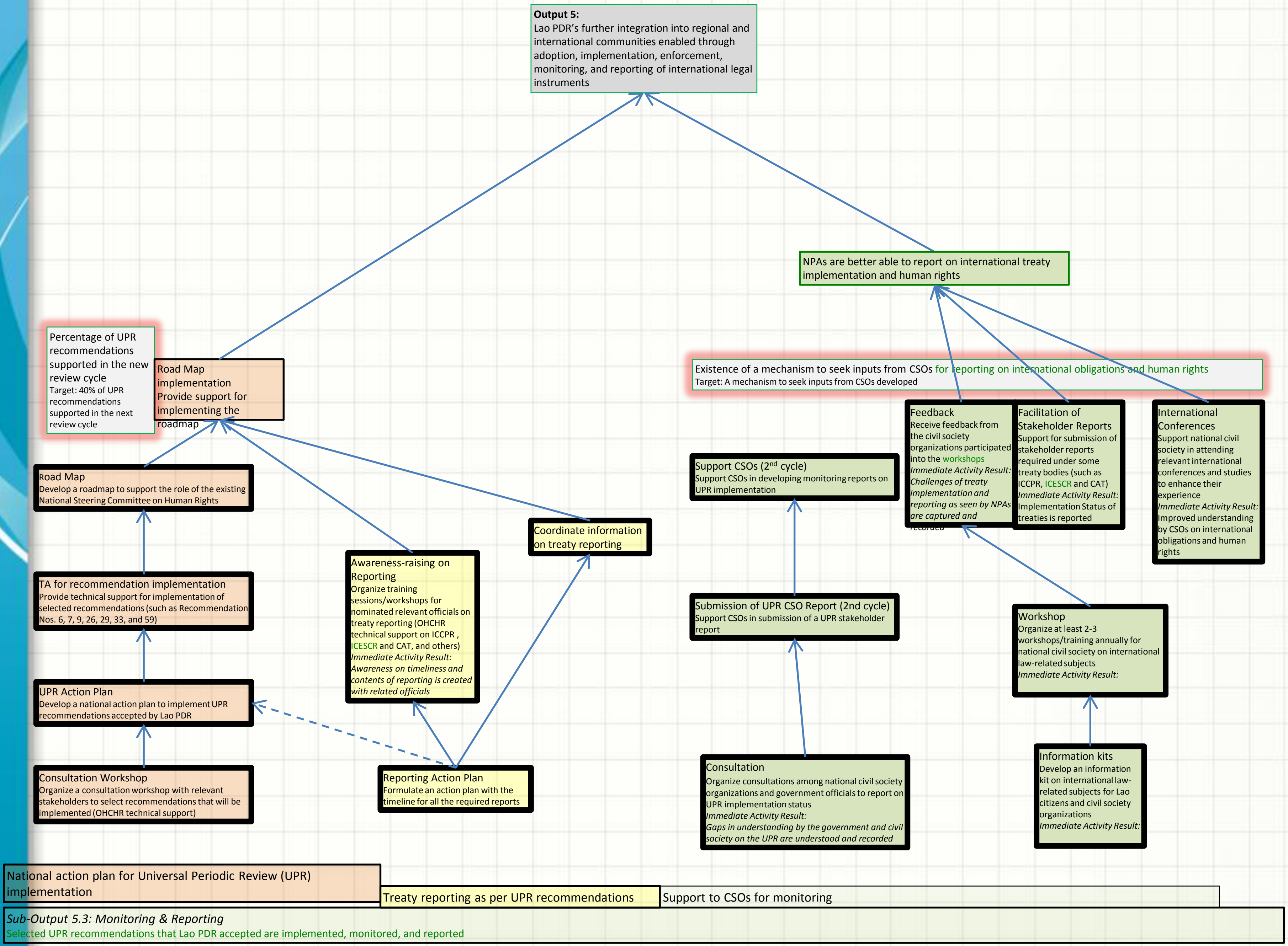
The term **M&E System** is used in a broad sense, encompassing not only the project internal Monitoring System, but amongst others also related surveys and Evaluations

Observations / Recommendations

Build a Results Model (1)

- **What is the problem?**
  - even after reading Log-Frames and Project documents stakeholders often struggle to **understand a project** well
  - **Indicators** sometimes don't well cover what the project tries to achieve
  - it is not clear which **additional information** (beyond Indicators) might be useful for the project to collect and discuss
- **What are Results Models?**
  - Results Models **visualize** the relationship between project activities, their Outputs, envisioned Outcomes and indicators in a simple manner and can furthermore show the attribution gap

Results Model forOutput 5: International Obligations (5.3)



Build a Results Model (2)

- **What is their function / usefulness?**
  - The **logic and structure** of the project is discussed and agreed upon between stakeholders and can be used for further planning
  - Results Models allow for the set-up or **review of project indicators** in the context of the overall logic of the project, mainly to ensure:
    - a balanced **coverage** of all activity-fields with indicators
    - that indicators are **not pure outputs** but also **below the attribution gap**
- **When to build Results Models?**
  - **as early as possible**, (best during the design-phase of the project or before the start of the actual implementation)
- **Who should design the Results Models and how?**
  - Results Models are best built in **workshops** with the participation and inputs from all key stakeholders
- **How to practically do this?**
  - **MS Powerpoint** has shown to be a functional programme to build Results Models

Formulate good Indicators

- **Typical weaknesses of Indicators:**
  - there is **no common understanding** among stakeholder on their exact meaning
  - indicators can only be **measured** with difficulty or large budget
- **How to design clear Indicators?**
  - Discuss all words used in the Indicators with key stakeholders and agree concerning their precise **definitions** in the context of the project
- **How to get measurable Indicators?**
  - Discuss from the very beginning, how the data for an indicator should be generated. Be as **detailed** as possible, if you can including
    - **sampling**
    - (concrete) **method** of data-collection (not just "monitoring system" or "survey")
    - further **details** (e.g. concrete guide-questions to retrieve the information)

Carry out useful Surveys

- **Try to design multi-purpose surveys**
  - e.g. **combine** Baseline surveys for monitoring with outreach surveys to collect preparatory information for the implementation
  - This will **save funds** and **raise more interest** in the survey
- **Use the mixed method / 'Middle Path' approach** (for most surveys)
  - use neither a small nor a huge **sampling** size
  - combine **different types of questions** creatively
    - numbers ('quantitative')
    - open questions ('qualitative')
    - ratings / predefined answers ('quantitative')
- **Use proper technical processes and tools:**
  - never design a questionnaire immediately, but **clarify first, what you want to know** (Results Models, Indicators, research questions etc.)
  - In your questionnaire, **specify** not only the questions but also the type of answer & predefined **answer categories**
  - **Analyse** your **qualitative data** by categorizing it first

Output Monitoring

(mainly for Financial Cooperation projects)

- **What is the problem?**
  - managers of large projects with many activities can easily **loose grip** on their implementation
  - in Financial Cooperation Projects, **Activity/Output Reporting** is often **not done** or not done systematically, leading to a lack of knowledge on what has been done and achieved and what were the major problems

- **What to do?**
  - make your Activity Reporting a **mandatory attachment to your Financial Reporting** (which usually functions well)
  - Link Planning and Reporting
    - **Format your** (MS Excel-based) **Workplan** in a way that facilitates monitoring from the beginning
    - Build an **Output Monitoring Module** into the Workplan file

Build M&E into other processes

- **What is the problem?**
  - budget for **separate M&E activities** (e.g. surveys) is often limited and therefore activities can be implemented only in large intervals
  - implementers and managers **want to know about the strengths and weaknesses** of the implementation in a timely manner

- **What to do?**
  - assess, **which processes** the project is implementing anyway
  - assess **which information** would be useful for you to know (review your Results Model)
  - **add respective data-collection, analysis and discussion** (e.g. mini-surveys) to your implementation processes

Raise your staffs' MS Excel proficiency

- **Background:**
  - MS Excel is a very **powerful** programme and can be used for almost all types of data-related issues
  - If you know how to use it, in most cases you **can avoid other, more complex programmes** (like SPSS or Access)
  - However most people **don't know how to handle** it well

- **Potential functions / features of MS Excel**
  - easy **navigation** through large data-sets e.g. by filtering and sorting
  - **data-entry sheets**, which look like the questionnaires and automatically link to the data-base (= another worksheet in a data-base format)
  - safe data-entry using **validation** (e.g. to enter pre-defined variables)
  - easy and flexible **analysis of quantitative data** (numbers and ratings) by adding calculation-columns in the data-base, by using Pivot-Tables (!) and by producing charts and tables
  - easy and flexible **analysis of qualitative data** by categorizing first and then further processing it (mostly by using Pivot-Tables)

Properly prepare your MTR and EoP Evaluation

- **What is the problem?**
  - typically evaluators have **limited time** to carry out the evaluation
  - evaluators a drowned in a **large number of documents**
  - nevertheless evaluators often spend a large part of their time, collecting and collating data and don't have sufficient time to **analyse the data and work on recommendations**
- **What to do?**
  - Properly prepare the evaluation internally, best by condensing all important information into a single (typically 20-50 page) **Outcome Study Report**
  - To feed this Outcome Study Report **collect/collate** the related information, which does not emerge from your Monitoring system
    - typically you will carry out **Stakeholder Interviews** and **Surveys** with the target beneficiaries to collect the relevant information
    - follow along the outcomes as defined in the **Results Model**
  - Try to **visualize** results as much as possible (e.g. by using charts)
  - **Enjoy** your Evaluation

Thank you

for your attention

... and if you found **anything interesting**, please don't hesitate to **ask me for my card** :)