Steering Committee Meeting

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Better Use of Multisectoral Data, Especially for Decentralised Governance and Local Accountability

DFID

Better use of multisectoral data, especially for decentralised governance and local accountability

Although progress is being made in providing better sectoral information in developing countries, there is still little progress in linking data between different sectors in order to build a more composite picture of levels of welfare and well-being. Although this applies to national sector ministries, this is especially the case at lower levels of administration. With decision making increasingly being delegated to more local levels, local policy makers, managers and communities need access to appropriate local level information.

Decentralised structures need better quality and reliable information to thrive. Strengthening local data systems can lead to greater accountability of service providers to local citizens, greater participation in local decision making, and better informed decisions based on local evidence. The presumption will be made that considerable data already exist, but are not currently being used effectively. Although it is acknowledged that there is obviously even more to be gained through the provision of better data as well, this will not be the primary focus of this work. However, there is the potential for the potential positive effect of increased and more effective use of data providing an impetus to the provision of better quality data.

The proposal is that a task team draws on lessons to be learnt from existing practice, This will include any examples where attempts are being made to produce better local information and to get it used, as well as identifying what are the key needs for better data, and the main constraints which need to be overcome.

While the work will largely address the issue through a 'local level' lens, consideration will also be given to how such data feeds through to, and is distributed from, central government sector ministries. At local level, the work will examine how data generated locally (e.g. from service provider management information systems) can be combined and better used. In addition, examination will also be made of what data central government should be providing in disaggregated form for local areas (e.g. census data), and how these can best be merged together.

The work will be based on a series of country case studies.

Objective

The main objectives of improving the provision and use of multi-sectoral data are perceived to be:

- Energising decentralisation
- Enabling more pro-poor service delivery
- Strengthening impact analysis
- Community empowerment through knowledge

Outputs

Outputs are planned in three broad areas.

Institutional issues

What are the features of more successful institurional/organisational arrangements in the provision and use of comprehensive data, as well as obstacles standing in the way? Issues to examine include:
- Coordination
- Hierarchies and how they relate
- Openness, transparency to civil society
- Local central relationships
- Power structures

Human resources

- What minimum skills does each stakeholder require to fulfil their role effectively
- What are the Incentives/motivations to co-operate with and operate systems effectively, rather than undermine or ignore them
- What minimum levels of training are needed for all stakeholders

Technical tools

An assessment will be made of the adequacy or otherwise of tools and methods typically available at local level for collecting, collating, analysing, and disseminating composite data across sectors. Based on this, conclusions will be drawn on where new tools are needed, and where existing tools need to adapted or improved.

- Harmonisation
- Data management
- Coordination of GIS frameworks
- Poverty mapping and overlaying other data

Methods / Approach

The work will be based on case studies conducted in a varied group of 6 countries. In case, the work will study of existing information flow and use:
- at national level
- at local level
- between national and local levels

The key questions will be: What works?   What doesn't?   Why?

In drawing conclusions, the aim will be to identify the critical success factors which need to be satisfied for success, and suggest their priority.

Finally, the work will draw up potential solutions where important and feasible, and a plan of action to take them forward.