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# Monitoring Mechanisms of the Social Safety Net Programmes in the COMCEC Region

Conceptual Framework and overview

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# Why this study?

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- The importance of SSNs for tackling poverty and inequality have been documented extensively by the literature
  - Strong **focus on evaluations** since 2006 especially
- However, **little focus on monitoring** despite it being a “hallmark of good public management” (*Grosh et al, 2008*)...
- Also: importance of **increasing interconnectivity** of COMCEC’s members, creating a **space for sharing knowledge** and learning from each other’s experiences and best practices while “developing a common language and understanding”.

## How did we address the issue? Study methodology...

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- ✓ **Literature review** and development of a **conceptual framework** for the study
- ✓ **Phase 1**: focus on all **57 countries**, selection of SSN, review of literature and phone/email interviews
- ✓ **Phase 2**: purposive sampling of **five case study countries** and in depth research
- ✓ **Analysis** and **write up** of findings and recommendations



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# Conceptual Framework

# Monitoring vs Evaluation

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	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Understanding and fixing programme failures and assessing functioning of key programme processes, for better programme management (note that this can include outcome monitoring)	Outcomes and impacts; determining the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a SSN
<b>Utility</b>	Aims at continuous program improvement and accountability	Provides information for major decisions such as starting, ceasing, expanding, or reducing a program
<b>Frequency</b>	A continuous, routine activity that should be an integral component of any programme	Infrequent undertaking (done at certain key moments in time)
<b>Coverage</b>	Comprehensive – aimed at all aspects of a programme/ across programmes	Less comprehensive – specific aspects or specific programmes
<b>Cost</b>	Involves low annual costs	Involves high costs for each study

# When is monitoring most needed?

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- “Programme evaluation has, across, much of its history, focused on outcomes. Lessons from the field, however, have plainly taught that **programme failures are essentially implementation failures**”  
*(Chen, 2005)*
- The exact mix of monitoring-focused or evaluation-focused activities needed to effectively implement SSNs will depend on the **level of ‘maturity’** of the programme itself.
- However, in practice, **concepts often intertwined in M&E frameworks..**

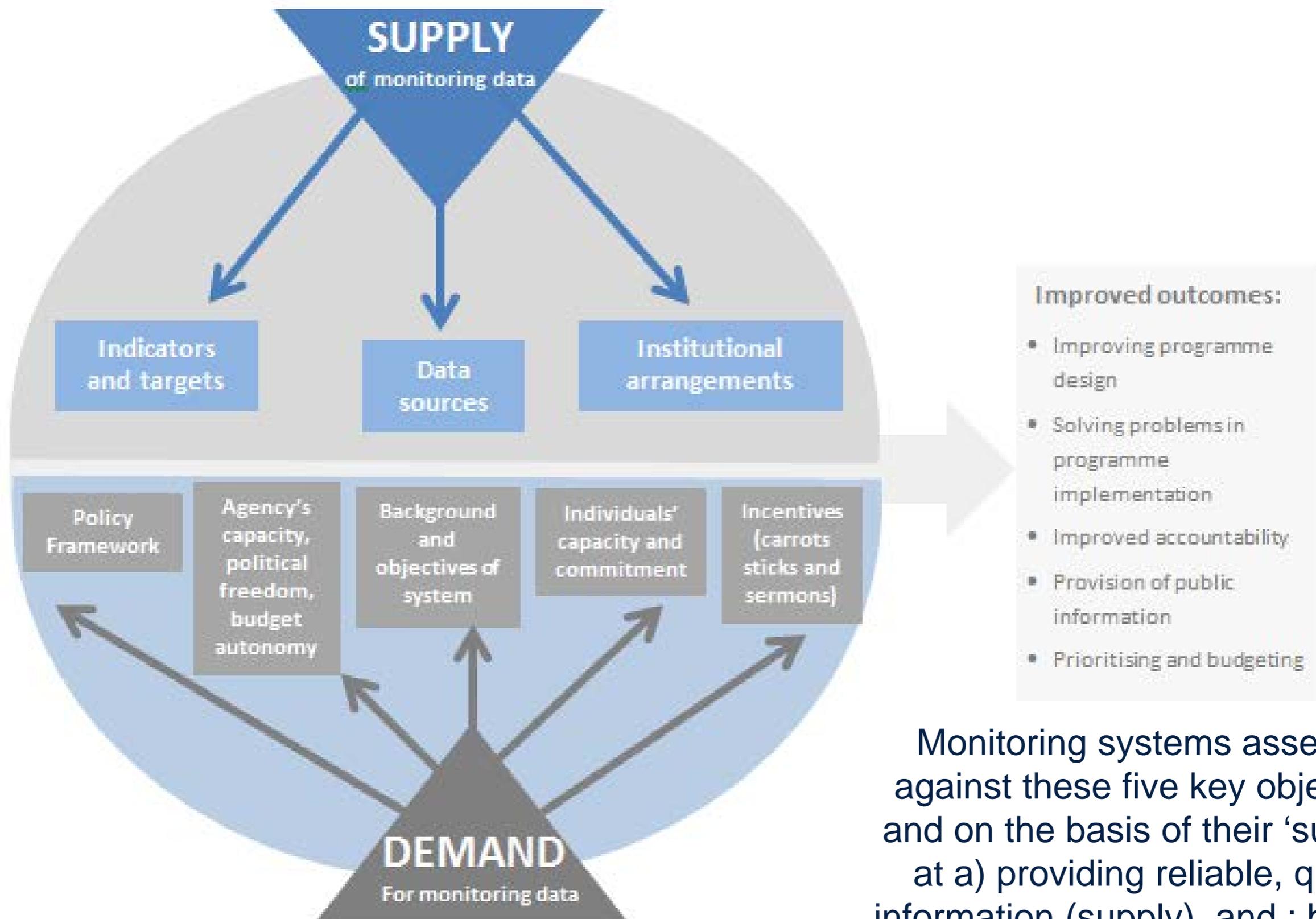
# What are the functions of good monitoring?

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- **Improving programme design:** in order to learn about the efficiency and effectiveness of a programme to inform decisions to extend, improve, or eliminate them (also informed by evaluation)
- **Solving problems in programme implementation:** Monitoring programme execution to detect and correct implementation problems
- **Accountability within the government:** monitoring of programme execution to ensure that agents are doing what they have undertaken to do
- **Provision of public information for external accountability:** providing information to the legislature and the public to: (i) render external accountability; (ii) provide information that legitimises a public action; or (iii) facilitate public choice and voice
- **Prioritising and budgeting:** helping to coordinate and prioritise

*(Shepherd, 2011)*

# Conceptual Framework



SOURCE: Authors

Monitoring systems assessed against these five key objectives and on the basis of their 'success' at a) providing reliable, quality information (supply), and ; b) being effectively used by intended users (demand) (Mackay, 2007).



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# Supply...

Providing reliable, quality information

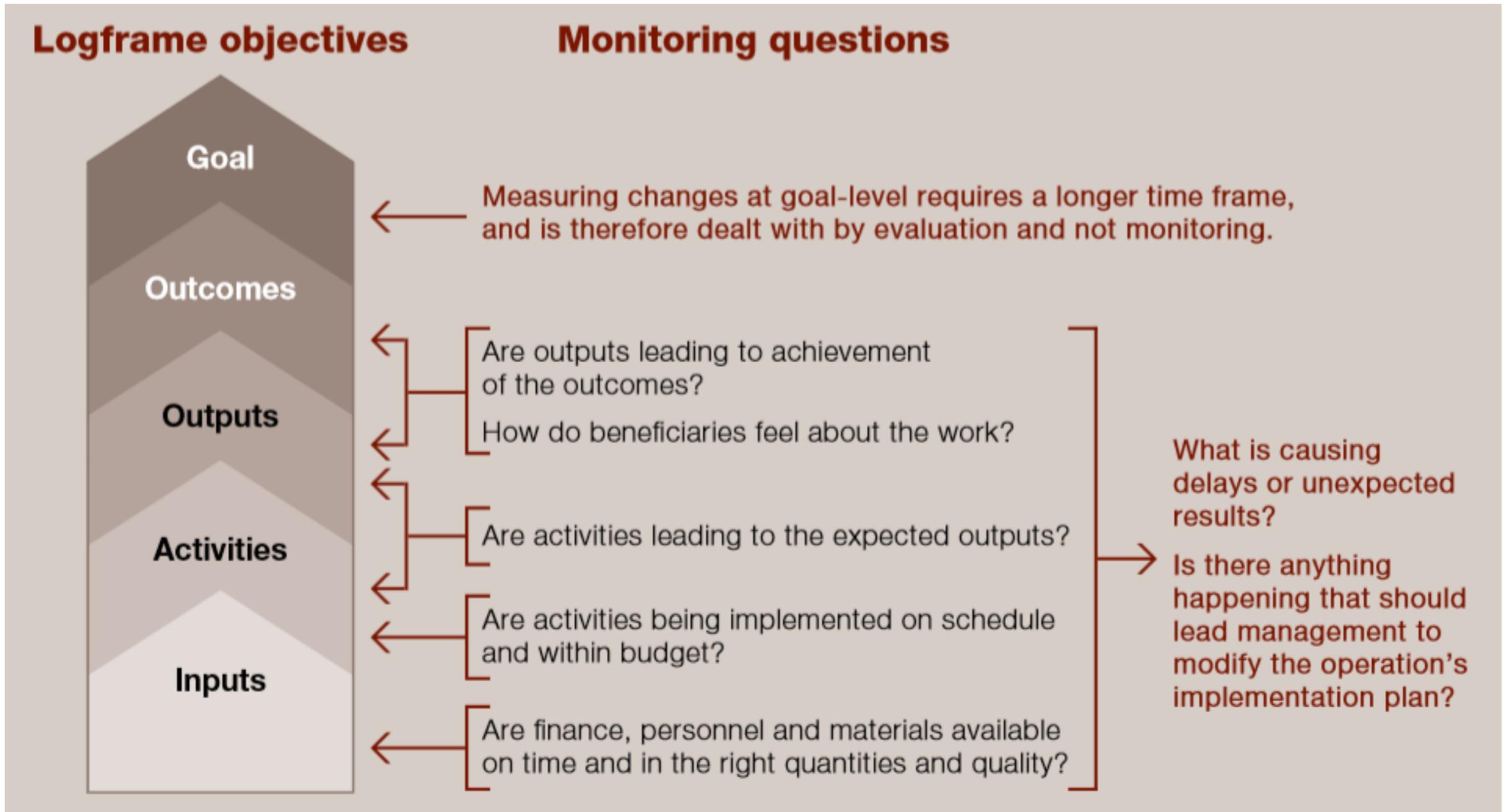
## Supply: setting indicators and targets (a)

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- Aimed at **monitoring progress** with respect to programme **inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes**, and **goals** – including providing a sense of **efficiency** and **effectiveness**
- Should be:
  - I. Clear (precise and unambiguous);
  - II. Relevant (appropriate to the subject at hand);
  - III. Economic (available at a reasonable cost);
  - IV. Adequate (provide a sufficient basis to assess performance); and,
  - V. Monitorable (amenable to independent validation)
- **Policy or ‘objective-related’ indicators**, are directly determined by the specific programme’s Theory of Change (TOC) and objectives (*outward looking*)
- **Administrative or ‘process-related’ indicators**, go one step further and focus on the programme’s administration (*inward looking*)

*Note that these will all depend on specific **information needs** of actors at different levels...*

# Supply: setting indicators and targets (b)



# Supply: selecting data sources

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## Challenges:

- Original data collection for monitoring activities can be an extremely “time-consuming and costly activity” (*Morse and Struyk, 2006*).
- “Data collection strategies necessarily involve some trade-offs with respect to cost, precision, credibility, and timeliness” (*Kusek and Rist, 2004*).
- Important to **identify existing and potential data sources**, establish their usefulness for monitoring purposes, and plan them carefully to deliver exactly the indicators needed – *focus on cost-effectiveness*

## Main data sources include:

- Programme’s MIS, or equivalent database
- Household survey data
- Other administrative sources
- Qualitative studies
- Standard reports by implementing bodies at the decentralised level
- Spot checks
- Community based monitoring: beneficiary surveys and Citizen Perception Surveys

# Supply: defining institutional arrangements

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- These are the “formal and informal processes, procedures, rules, and mechanisms that bring monitoring activities into a coherent framework” (*Bedi et al., 2006*) and define the actors and processes that make monitoring actually happen in practice
- Allows data from various sources to be
  - a) **collected** and collated together,
  - b) **analysed** and transformed into the required indicators to be used for monitoring purposes and inform management, and
  - c) **interpreted** correctly



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# Demand...

Making sure information is used by intended users

*“Efforts to strengthen monitoring systems are often viewed as technical fixes—involving better data systems, the conduct of good quality studies, and so forth. These supply-side issues are certainly important, but they are insufficient to strengthen the systems” (Mackay, 2007).*



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REMEMBER M&E INFORMATION IS USEFUL  
ONLY IF IT IS USED!

# Demand: an overview

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- Key factors that influence demand include:
  - An **enabling national policy and environment**, including a policy framework that is performance-oriented (setting performance expectations, monitoring progress, measuring results, and appraising, rewarding, or correcting performance)
  - **Sufficient capacity, political freedom and control over budget at the agency level**, meaning that decisions to act based on monitoring data are not obstacle by other bodies or national government
  - A **background** to the creation of the monitoring system which was internally driven and linked to specific policy objectives
  - Individuals in key positions (e.g. M&E officers) who are **capable and committed** to using monitoring data
  - Sufficient **incentives** ('carrots, sticks and sermons') for programme staff to engage with the monitoring system and actually use it as a tool for programme improvement, accountability, prioritisation of funds, etc



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# Phase 1 findings

4.7 emails per country, response rate 38%

3.6 phone calls per country

16 phone interviews, 13 email interviews

46 countries with 'sufficient' information



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# Supply...

Good efforts, but few countries reaching full potential.  
And often misconception of what monitoring is all about..

## Supply: setting indicators and targets

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- Indicators often **vague** in their construction and not clearly linked to data sources: e.g. “Level of beneficiary satisfaction”, “% of applications processed in time”
- **Monitoring frameworks incomplete in their scope**, either including too much focus on programme outcomes (and not enough on processes or management-related indicators) or not including any focus on outcomes at all and confusing outputs with outcomes
- **Missed opportunity** in terms of indicators that could have been constructed from data that was easily available and generated as a by-product of a programme’s daily functioning
- **Best practice** in the development of indicators mostly came from countries that had extensive **donor support**

# Supply: selecting data sources

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- Strong recent trend in the 57 countries analysed was the **creation of MISs** that could aid with programme monitoring and management, but still issues including:
  - Monitoring not being a priority when MISs are designed
  - Transferring data from decentralised locations to Central administration & lack of computers at the local level
  - Low capacity
  - Lack of tailored access rights to the data for different types of users
  - Insufficient or un-useful reporting being generated by the MIS
- In just over 1/5 of the countries analysed, data from **national surveys** was also being incorporated for monitoring purposes, though hardly any had explored the possibility of adding extra questions on SSNs to these surveys.
  - Problems of comparability, capacity, arrangements
- In few countries there was a practice of complementing traditional data sources with more **innovative approaches**
- In countries where more basic monitoring systems were in place, data sources were sometimes simply **written reports** and **supervision missions/spot-checks** (monitoring perceives as 'checking' on use of money!)

## Supply: defining institutional arrangements

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- The set-up of institutional arrangements for monitoring were influenced by:
  - **Complexity of the programme** being monitored (high number of intermediaries)
  - **Complexity of the overall Social Protection system** in a given country (fragmented systems)
- Overall, the key to setting up functioning institutional arrangements was the **development of clear guidelines** defining who was responsible for what, when and at what level of administration.
- In around 1/3 of the countries analysed, this was clearly done within the **programme's implementation manual or M&E framework** – examples include Mali, Togo, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Uganda.
- However, only rarely were there clear arrangements on how information could be supplied back to the local levels (lack of **feedback loops**)



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# Demand...

Scarce results

## Demand: enabling policy framework

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- A **fully enabling policy** was only found in around one quarter of the countries analysed, many of which were countries in Sub Saharan Africa that have been recently developing Social Protection frameworks (meaning that governments and donors are very interested to receive detailed information on the functioning of flagship SSN programmes).
- In several countries, **donor influence** was cited as a driving factor that was pushing a 'culture of accountability (see for example Gabon and Lebanon), while in others these broad policy processes were due to **local push-factors** (e.g. the Arab Spring).
- Where **performance-based and result-oriented management and budgeting** are clearly stated as objectives, more likely to have use of monitoring data (e.g. Kazakhstan)

## Demand: agency's capacity, political freedom, budget autonomy

- In many cases, **SSN programmes were not being implemented through independent agencies**, but through branches or departments within Ministries. In these cases, budget autonomy was very low leading to strong competition for limited resources within the Ministry
- Cases where the implementing body had an **independent status** (even when hosted within the line Ministry) generally faced less issues when it came to implementing monitoring activities (see for example Cameroon's Project Management Unit, and Kazakhstan and Pakistan's independent agencies).

## Demand: background and objectives of monitoring system

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- Overall, just **over a third of the countries analysed received donor support** to set up 'M&E systems' – these were countries with most focus on monitoring (but sometimes resistance from staff)
- In countries with **programmes that were long established** and had strong institutional ownership, **monitoring was sometimes less of a concern** – almost as though no real need was felt (this is a risk)
- **Emergency cash transfers** often started off with weak M&E but scaled up relatively fast due to the push, technical guidance and budget provided by donors (Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Somalia)

## Demand: individuals' capacity and commitment

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- A focus on **capacity-building and training** was often at its strongest when **donor money** or support allowed it (or where clear budget lines were set-up for this task). E.g. Bangladesh and Kazakhstan
- Large part of the problem was that many monitoring systems are **not given enough priority to have an independent budget and allocated staff**: multiple tasks and monitoring gets squeezed out
- **Low salaries** and consequent **high staff turnover** (e.g. cited in Azerbaijan, Benin, and The Gambia)

## Demand: incentives – carrots, sticks and sermons

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- Though not widespread, specific incentives for monitoring or M&E more widely were created within some country SSN programmes. These were all focused around **salary boosts, promotions** and **letters of motivation** (carrots), **rather than sticks** (enacting laws, decrees, or regulations mandating monitoring; withholding funding based on results, etc) **or sermons** (statements of endorsement; awareness raising seminars/workshops; providing examples of where monitoring helped; etc)



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# Before I close...

Next presentation will focus on five case studies and recommendations – but for now...

Do these comments resonate with your experience setting up monitoring mechanisms for SSNs? How?

Do you have any good stories to share of how monitoring helped to achieve those outcomes we discussed?



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Thank you