

# EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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## A Diagnosis of Colombia's National M&E System, SINERGIA





## **A Diagnosis of Colombia's National M&E System, SINERGIA**

*Colombia's national system for monitoring and evaluation, SINERGIA, is one of the strongest in Latin America. This rapid diagnosis identifies the strengths of the system and the main challenges still facing it.*

*A number of options for further strengthening the system are identified with the objective of ensuring it becomes fully institutionalized.*

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Building monitoring and evaluation systems helps strengthen governance in countries — by improving transparency, strengthening accountability relationships, and by building a performance culture within governments to support better policymaking, budget decision-making and management. A related area of focus is civil society, which can play a catalytic role through provision of assessments of government performance. IEG aims to identify and help develop good-practice approaches in countries, and to share the growing body of experience with such work.

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## FOREWORD

The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) — formerly known as the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) — of the World Bank has a long-standing program of support to strengthen monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and capacities in developing countries, as an important part of sound governance. As part of this support, IEG has prepared a collection of resource material including case studies of countries which can be viewed as representing good-practice or promising-practice. This collection is available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd/>

The Bank's Latin America & The Caribbean region is expanding significantly its work to help strengthen government M&E systems, and is active in many countries in the region. This rapid diagnosis was prepared in that context. The diagnosis provides a stocktaking of Colombia's national system for monitoring and evaluation, SINERGIA. This system is generally recognized as already being one of the strongest in Latin America. The government, with World Bank support, is currently examining options to further strengthen the system, with the objective of fully institutionalizing it. This diagnosis is in the nature of an evaluation of SINERGIA — its strengths, the challenges facing it, and future directions. A number of options for the further development of the system are proposed in this paper. The evidentiary basis of this rapid diagnosis was obtained via a number of Bank missions to Colombia, discussions with government officials and presentations by them, as well as a review of World Bank and government documents on SINERGIA. Detailed terms of reference for a future, more in-depth diagnosis of SINERGIA are attached as an annex to this paper. This future diagnosis will help answer a number of detailed questions about the performance of the system, such as the extent of utilization of M&E findings by different ministries and agencies within the government.

Preparation of this rapid diagnosis was a collegiate endeavor involving a number of staff from the Bank's Latin America & The Caribbean region, as well as IEG's coordinator for evaluation capacity development. The team which helped prepare the diagnosis included Gladys Lopez-Acevedo, Fernando Rojas, Aline Coudouel, Miguel Mercado-Díaz, Wendy Cunningham, Jairo Arboleda, Tarsicio Castañeda, Rodrigo Garcia, Marcela Rubio and Juan Manuel Quesada, with Keith Mackay as the lead author.

The paper has benefited from comments received from a number of officials of the Government of Colombia, including Bertha Briceño, Manuel Fernando Castro, Ana María Fernández, Ana Rodríguez, Rafael Gómez, Ariane Ortiz and Danilo González.

The Spanish translation of the paper was undertaken by Diana Chávez, with assistance from Marcela Rubio and Lucy Bravo.

The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank or of the Government of Colombia.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

COINFO	Comisión Intersectorial de Políticas y Gestión de Información para la Administración Pública (Intersectoral Committee for Information Policy and Management)
CONPES	Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (National Council for Economic and Social Policy)
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (National Statistical Office)
DEPP	Dirección de Evaluación de Políticas Públicas (Directorate for Evaluation of Public Policy )
DDTS	Dirección de Desarrollo Territorial Sostenible (Directorate for Sustainable Territorial Development)
DIFP	Dirección de Inversiones y Finanzas Públicas (Directorate for Investment and Public Finance)
DNP	Departamento Nacional de Planeación (Department of National Planning)
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICBF	Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (Institute for Family Welfare)
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEN	Ministerio de Educación Nacional (Ministry of Education)
MPS	Ministerio de Protección Social (Ministry of Social Protection)
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PFMP II	Public Financial Management Project II (World Bank)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBM	Results Based Management
SENA	Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (Vocational Training Institute)
SIGOB	Sistema de Programación y Gestión por Objetivos y Resultados (System of Programming and Management by Objectives and Results)
SIIF	Sistema Integral de Información Financiera (Integrated Financial Management Information System)
SINERGIA	Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Resultados de la Gestión Pública (National System for Evaluation of Public Sector Performance)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The government of Colombia has achieved a considerable success in the creation and strengthening of its whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, SINERGIA. It is one of the strongest M&E systems in Latin America, in terms of the types of M&E it undertakes, its overall credibility, and its utilization. Much of this progress has been achieved since 2002, following the election of a reformist President, Álvaro Uribe. The President uses this information to enhance political control of the executive government and to support social accountability — “social control” — of the government to ordinary citizens and to the Congress. He uses the monitoring information produced by the M&E system in his monthly “management control” meetings with each minister, and he also uses them in his weekly townhall meetings in different municipalities around the country. The M&E system also includes an ambitious agenda of evaluations, particularly impact evaluations, and a growing number of these will be completed in coming years. These evaluations are already starting to be utilized as an input to government decision-making.

The main challenge now facing SINERGIA is its full institutionalization within the government, so that it will continue to thrive and to support good governance after a future change in administration. For SINERGIA to be fully sustainable in this sense will require the strengthening of both the demand and supply sides of M&E; these are closely related. The supply side can be strengthened by improving the quality and credibility of monitoring information, by better coordination of data standards and data production, by reducing the costs of data supply, and by increasing the volume and breadth of types of evaluations which are conducted. The demand side can be strengthened by promoting greater awareness of, and confidence in, the monitoring information and evaluation findings which the system produces — awareness among ministers, civil servants, and in civil society. Greater utilization of M&E information will require that key ministers and their ministries — especially the Presidencia, the Department of National Planning and the Hacienda — play a leading and even forceful role in championing the usefulness of the M&E information produced by SINERGIA. This support will need to go well beyond simple advocacy, and will need to include steps to ensure the utilization of the M&E information to support budget and national planning decision-making and social accountability.

Sector ministers and their ministries also have a role to play in producing and ensuring utilization of M&E information, in sector ministry policy development and planning, and in the ongoing management of government activities by ministries and entities. Their use of M&E information would be expected to encompass both the information produced by SINERGIA, and M&E information which their own ministries are meant to collect.

Thus on both the demand and supply sides, there is a need for greater clarity and focus of M&E roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. This diagnostic paper presents a number of options to achieve this and to ensure that M&E information is utilized more intensively.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Bank is preparing a programmatic loan to support the Government of Colombia in its continuing efforts to strengthen its national system of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) — SINERGIA.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this rapid diagnosis is to assist the Bank team and the government in their joint understanding of key aspects of this M&E system, including:

- its genesis;
- legal framework;
- objectives, and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders;
- principal M&E components of SINERGIA: SIGOB and impact evaluations;
- extent of utilization of the M&E information which SINERGIA produces;
- SINERGIA: strengths, challenges and future directions; and
- conclusions.

The information base on which this rapid diagnosis relies consists of a number of government reports and policy statements, documentation on a broad range of lending and donor projects funded by the World Bank which have either supported SINERGIA (or have supported specific activities under the broad aegis of SINERGIA), formal conference presentations by senior government officials, information collected by Bank staff who have participated in numerous project preparation and supervision missions, and feedback on this diagnosis from government officials in the Department of National Planning (DNP).<sup>2</sup> Bank missions have included meetings with officials from central and sector ministries, the General Comptroller's office, municipal governments, and civil society groups, concerning M&E issues including the strengths and weaknesses of SINERGIA. These meetings have been a valuable source of information, although a more structured approach to capturing the views of relevant officials would be necessary to present a more considered, in-depth picture.

This paper seeks to document what we know, and what we do not know, about SINERGIA. It should be viewed very much as a work in progress — as a vehicle to seek further information, comments and judgements about the many detailed facets of SINERGIA and its possible future directions. One challenge facing outside observers is to be clear about which of the various components of SINERGIA and other budget/planning systems are working reasonably well, and which exist largely on paper. A more in-depth diagnosis will be necessary to resolve a number of important, outstanding issues on which current evidence appears weak or inconclusive. Draft terms of reference for such a diagnosis are attached in an annex; this diagnosis would constitute, in effect, a formal evaluation of SINERGIA.

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<sup>1</sup> SINERGIA — Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de Resultados de la Gestión Pública (National System for Evaluation of Public Sector Performance).

<sup>2</sup> Departamento Nacional de Planeación.



## 2. GENESIS AND BROAD DEVELOPMENT OF SINERGIA

The genesis of Colombia's M&E system was the decision of the Finance Minister to replicate in Colombia the World Bank's own approach to evaluation. With technical assistance from the Bank, the government mapped out the basic architecture for an M&E system. This first stage of the system's evolution ran from 1990 to 1996, and included a formal requirement for evaluations in the revised 1991 Constitution. SINERGIA — the *national system for evaluation of management and results* — was formally created in 1994. The Bank provided ongoing support to SINERGIA through this period, mainly via the Public Financial Management Project I (1994 to 2001). The second stage in SINERGIA's evolution, from 1996 to 2002, marked a period when the standing of SINERGIA within the government reportedly declined, partly due to a perception of difficulties with the management of the system. The option of abolishing it was raised during this period because of doubts as to its relevance to the public sector reform agenda. However, the constitutional requirement for evaluation precluded this option. Towards the end of this period, in 2001, the Bank intensified its support for SINERGIA not only via a new Public Financial Management Project (PFMP II), but also by co-sponsoring with the Inter-American Development Bank a series of impact evaluations of two major government programs, Empleo en Acción (a job creation program) and Familias en Acción (a conditional cash transfer program).<sup>3</sup>

The third stage, from 2002 to the present, was initiated with the election of a reformist President, Álvaro Uribe. The new government was dismayed to note that the large increases in government spending in areas such as schools and health care had not been matched by corresponding increases in government performance (outputs and outcomes) in these areas.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, President Uribe stated his strong desire for a new culture of public administration, based closely on social accountability — “social control”. Thus he introduced a system for monitoring and reporting progress vis-à-vis presidential goals and the country's development goals (SIGOB),<sup>5</sup> he has actively sought to implement the constitutional mandate for evaluation, and has issued a presidential directive<sup>6</sup> and policy statement on results-based management.<sup>7</sup> He integrated SIGOB into SINERGIA and has re-energized SINERGIA. This led to the appointment of a new head of the evaluation unit which manages SINERGIA, located in the department of national planning, and to the recruitment of staff and consultants to this unit.

During this third stage, the Bank substantially increased the range and level of support it provided to government M&E, via two structural adjustment loans and a related technical assistance loan, a social safety net loan, sectoral work and a second public financial management project. Other donors have also been active in supporting SINERGIA during this period of rejuvenation, as shown in Table 1. Since 2002, \$10.8m has been spent on SINERGIA, with almost half of this total funded by the IADB, 32% by the World Bank, and 8% by USAID and UNDP. During this period, when there were severe macroeconomic fiscal constraints, the government itself funded only 12% of SINERGIA's costs; clearly, this low level of government financial support is not sustainable in the long-term.

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<sup>3</sup> The project documents for these and some other Bank loans are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> See CONPES, 2004; Castro, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> SIGOB — Sistema de Programación y Gestión por Objetivos y Resultados (System of Programming and Management by Objectives and Results).

<sup>6</sup> Directiva Presidencial 10 de 2002.

<sup>7</sup> CONPES (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social) (2004) Renovación de la Administración Pública: Gestión por Resultados y Reforma del Sistema Nacional de Evaluación. CONPES 3294.

<b>Table 1. Funding Support for SINERGIA: 2002 to 2006 (\$ '000)</b>						
<b>Source of funds</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>Total 2002-2006</b>
World Bank PFMP II	350	300	305	288	300	1,543
World Bank Social Sector loans	1,500	—	450	—	—	1,950
IADB	2,666	—	2,509	—	—	5,175
USAID	—	—	50	200	200	450
UNDP	—	—	400	—	—	400
Government	250	250	256.7	270	270	1,297
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,766</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>3,970.7</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>10,814</b>

Source: Department of National Planning.

### 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The following discussion is based on a rapid stocktaking and analysis of legal instruments in Colombia. The Bank is currently preparing a more detailed analysis to help identify overlaps and gaps, and what types of legal instrument will be needed to fill these gaps — decree, law, or policy statement.

A detailed legal framework has been built to support SINERGIA in the years since the creation of the Constitutional mandate in 1991. This stipulated the focus of the evaluation system as being “to assess the public sector’s management and results”. Laws in 1993 regulated the fiscal control function (exercised by the Contraloría) to include “results control systems”, and also regulated the internal control function within public sector agencies to include management evaluation and control systems. A law of 1994 gave DNP responsibility for creating SINERGIA and for reporting annually to the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES), the high-level policy committee which is headed by the President, on the results of the evaluation system. SINERGIA itself was created through a DNP resolution in 1994, which operationalized the constitutional and legal mandate and also assigned responsibility for self-evaluation to all agencies in the executive branch of government. In addition, DNP assigned to itself the responsibility for developing methodologies to guide the system’s evaluation activities. More recently, a 2003 law stipulated that the national budget include details on the objectives, intended results and management indicators for all government activities.<sup>8</sup> Other laws during this period have added to the complexity of the legal framework. That said, it is commonly accepted in Colombia that a detailed legal and regulatory basis is required to provide direction and legitimacy for any area of government reform, such as M&E. Of course, while such a framework is considered necessary, it is not sufficient to ensure that the function performs well. Other factors discussed below, such as the strength of leadership for the reform, the resources provided to support it, the establishment of routine rules and procedures, and incentives for the utilization of M&E information, are also key to a system’s success.

The government itself has recognized that the multiplicity of laws and decrees has led to a profusion of M&E concepts, methodologies and instruments, and that greater clarity is needed now that SINERGIA is entering a more mature stage of development. This led to the policy document issued by the CONPES (#3294) in 2004: *Renovation of Public Administration: Management by Results and the Reform of the National System of Evaluation*.

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<sup>8</sup> Ley 819 de 2003 o Ley de Responsabilidad Fiscal.

## **4. OBJECTIVES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **4.1 Objectives**

The government's latest policy statement on SINERGIA — CONPES 3294 — articulates the objectives of the M&E system as follows:

1. to improve the effectiveness and impact of government policies, programs and public institutions;
2. to help improve the efficiency and transparency of the planning and allocation of public resources; and
3. to stimulate transparency in public management, in particular by stimulating oversight by citizens — i.e., social control.

These broad-ranging objectives can be disaggregated into six different types of desired utilization of the M&E information produced by SINERGIA: (1) to support resource allocation and decision-making in the national budget by providing information on the actual and likely performance of alternative spending priorities; (2) to support national planning decision-making, both when the four-year national plans are developed and when annual priorities are identified under the national plan; (3) to ensure the cohesion of government action around those development priorities; (4) to assist sector ministries in their policy development and planning work; (5) to support the ongoing management of government activities by ministries and agencies; and (6) to ensure the transparency of government performance by making M&E information available to the Congress and to civil society — i.e., fostering accountability through “social control”.

Of these objectives, as we shall see below, the one which Colombia's SINERGIA has most successfully emphasized, particularly since 2002 at least, has been social control.

### **4.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders**

The Directorate for Evaluation of Public Policy (DEPP)<sup>9</sup> in DNP is the lynchpin of SINERGIA. This unit coordinates the system, provides advice on methodologies and types of evaluation, and manages some evaluations; it also provides technical advice and financial support for some of the sophisticated impact evaluations and other types of evaluation conducted by sector ministries and agencies. It advises subnational governments piloting M&E systems, and also entities such as the Ministry of Social Protection (MPS)<sup>10</sup> which is establishing a monitoring and evaluation system. DEPP manages the information system which tracks progress against the President's Goals, SIGOB, and it is jointly responsible with the Presidencia for preparing annual and end-of-administration reports on the Government's performance vis-à-vis commitments under the national development plan; these reports form a key input to the President's own annual reports to the Congress (Figure 1). DEPP has a staff of 31, of whom about 70% are currently employed as consultants.<sup>11</sup>

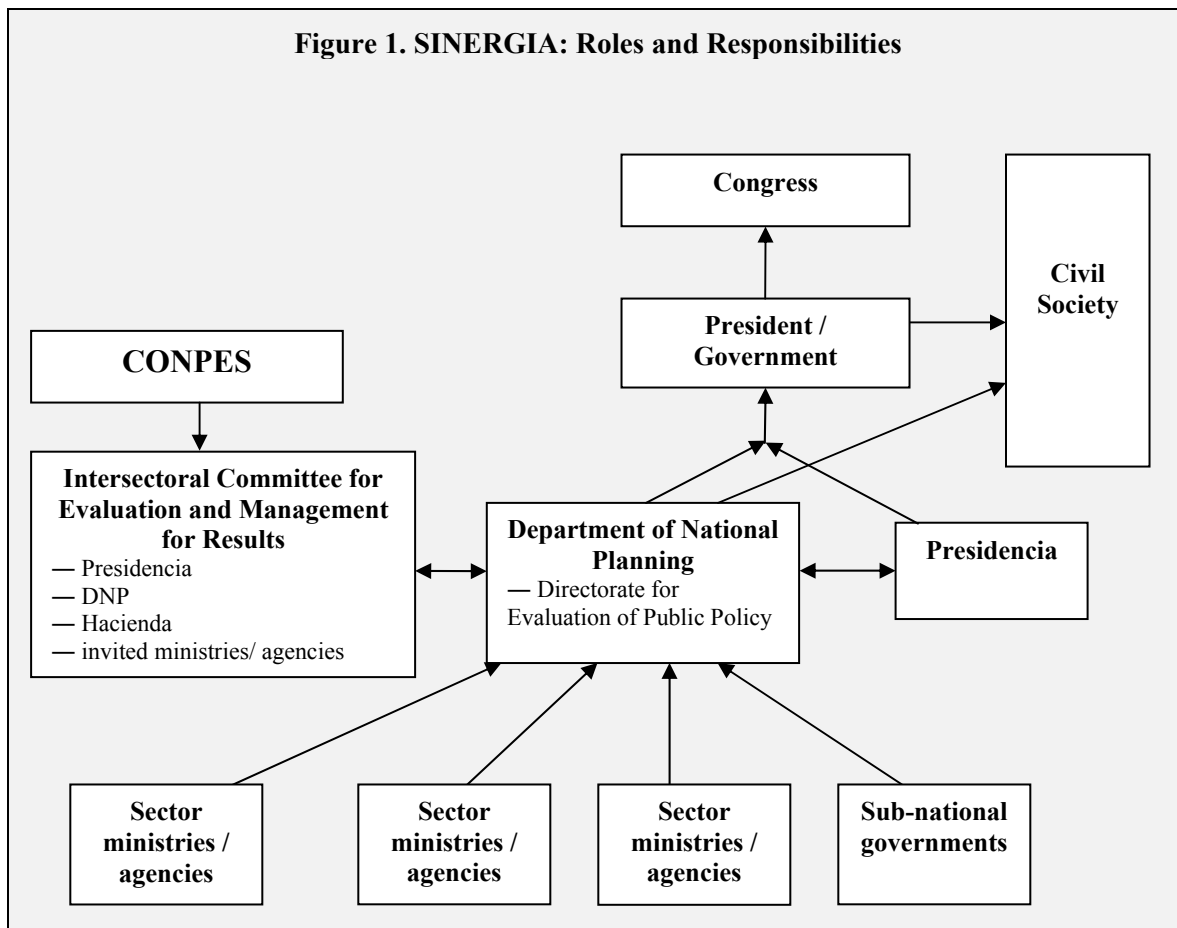
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<sup>9</sup> Dirección de Evaluación de Políticas Públicas.

<sup>10</sup> Ministerio de Protección Social.

<sup>11</sup> This low level of permanent staff reflects the government's tight controls on the total number of civil servants.

DEPP coordinates the reports of sector ministries and agencies, and subnational governments, which provide the monitoring information needed for the SIGOB (discussed below). These entities and subnational governments are formally responsible for *managing for results*. DEPP also acts as the secretariat to the Intersectoral Committee for Evaluation and Management for Results.<sup>12</sup> This committee, which was created by a decree of December 2002, has a formal responsibility for coordinating M&E actions among government units deciding the four-year evaluation agenda — corresponding to the President's term of office — and the corresponding annual agenda of evaluations to be conducted. This committee also decides technical standards and agrees the evaluation methodology for individual evaluations; it acts, in effect, as a steering committee for individual evaluations. Other members of this committee include other directorates of DNP, the Presidencia, Hacienda, and sector ministries and agencies invited to participate when their programs are being evaluated. The committee has met six times since its creation in early 2004, and it, in turn, reports to CONPES. In 2004 the CONPES issued a policy statement on *managing for results* and on needed reforms of SINERGIA.



<sup>12</sup> Comité Intersectorial de Evaluación y Gestión por Resultados.

## **5. PRINCIPAL M&E COMPONENTS OF SINERGIA**

Government monitoring and evaluation usually encompass a broad range of tools, methods and approaches. These can appear confusing to the layman, but it is important to understand their range, and particularly their uses, advantages and limitations, and the costs, skills and time required for each. A short overview of some key types and methods is provided in Box 1. It is important to understand that these various types of M&E are complementary; each has strengths and limitations, and the challenge is to decide how best to combine them in a national M&E system.

SINERGIA's two main components are SIGOB, a system of performance indicators which tracks progress against the President's Goals, and its agenda of impact evaluations.

### **5.1 SIGOB**

There are about 500 performance indicators that relate to the 320 Presidential Goals,<sup>13</sup> and for each indicator SIGOB records the objective, baseline performance, annual targets, actual performance against these targets, and the imputed amounts spent by the government; thus SIGOB includes a large number of indicators on government performance that include input, process, output and outcome measures. The information is disaggregated by region, including for the major cities. In addition, where a target has not been met, there is a requirement that the goal manager prepares an explanation for the reasons for the shortfall. These "exception reports" are included in the SIGOB database, the core of which is publicly available and on a real-time basis.<sup>14</sup> The website also encourages accountability by identifying the goal manager, their ministry and formal position, and their email address.

An initial, basic version of SIGOB was developed in 2002 with UNDP support, and was initially located in the Presidencia. Responsibility was subsequently transferred to DNP in 2005, under the aegis of SINERGIA, where a new software package with increased functionality was developed. DNP negotiates the annual targets with each ministry and agency. DEPP is also supporting pilot work to replicate SIGOB in the municipality of Pasto.

The data which comprise SIGOB are supplied by ministries and agencies. In addition to whatever data controls are applied by the entities which supply these SIGOB data, DEPP itself endeavors to identify any data problems or inconsistencies, and has a team responsible for monitoring the quality of the SIGOB data and for following up on suspected data problems with the entities which supplied them. However, in the absence of a system of regular, detailed data audits, the reliability of the data is unknown and has certainly not been demonstrated. One partial exception is the Ministry of Education (MEN) which, with Bank support, is reportedly undertaking some limited audits of the data provided by departments and municipalities;<sup>15</sup> as funding allocations to the states are based on school enrollment data, there exist incentives for states to over-estimate enrollments.

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<sup>13</sup> Programas de Acción Gubernamental. These are reflected in the National Development Plan.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.sigob.gov.co/ini/>

<sup>15</sup> Colombia is a unitary republic with 32 departments (a level of sub-national government) plus the district of Bogota. Each department oversees a number of municipalities. There are about 1100 municipalities in Colombia.

### **Box 1. A Brief Primer on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Performance indicators are measures of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts of government activities. Indicators can be very high-level, in terms of measuring the government's performance against Presidential Goals, or vis-à-vis the national development plan, or in terms of detailed ministry and agency activities. They are useful for setting performance targets, for assessing progress toward achieving them, and for comparing the performance of different organizations. They are a relatively inexpensive means of measuring government performance, and on a frequent basis. While they can be used to identify problems, thus allowing corrective action to be taken, a limitation is that they do not usually reveal whether or not government actions led to improved performance — they can, however, be used to flag the need for a review or evaluation of an issue. A common danger with performance indicator systems is over-engineering the system, by including too many indicators which are underutilized.

Rapid appraisal methods are quick, low-cost ways to gather the views and feedback of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, in order to provide rapid information for management decision-making, especially at the activity or program level. Methods include interviews, focus group discussions, direct observation, and mini-surveys. The findings from these qualitative methods usually relate only to specific contexts or communities, making it difficult to generalize the findings. They are also less valid, reliable and credible than formal surveys.

Rapid evaluation involves a formal review of a government activity or program. In Chile, for example, rapid evaluations entail desk reviews by external consultants of a program's objectives and preparation of a logframe analysis (which maps the causal links between government activities and desired outcomes and impacts). Any available data (including performance indicators) are analyzed to try to assess the efficiency or effectiveness of the activity. The World Bank uses this approach in many of its ex ante and ex post evaluations of its projects. The Bank also uses a range of additional information in its ex post evaluations, including the findings of supervision missions, key informant interviews, and any primary or secondary data which have been collected. The main strengths of rapid evaluations are their speed and relatively low cost. Their main disadvantages compared to more rigorous approaches are their weaker empirical evidence and much weaker data-analysis techniques, and the difficulty they face in identifying possible causal relationships between government actions and subsequent improvements in performance.

Impact evaluation focuses on the outcomes and impacts of government activities. Rapid evaluation methods can be used to estimate impact, but more sophisticated methods of impact evaluation can provide much more reliable and credible findings. These more sophisticated methods entail the comparison of program beneficiaries with control or comparison groups at two or more points in time. Advanced statistical techniques are used to identify the precise impacts of the program on beneficiaries. This type of evaluation is highly demanding in terms of data, and this can be very expensive; however, there are ways in which this cost can be reduced significantly. It is necessary to plan such evaluations well in advance of when their findings will be needed, as it is usually not possible to conduct them quickly. Most importantly, this type of evaluation has been shown to be highly cost-effective when it leads to even marginal improvements in program performance.

Comprehensive spending reviews are a type of policy evaluation. They are used by Chile's Hacienda to review all programs within a particular functional area, such as schools. These entail desk review of issues of inefficiency and duplication of programs. The United Kingdom's biennial spending reviews investigate these issues as well as program outcomes and government priorities.

Sources: World Bank, 2004a, 2005c, 2006a.

The government's policy statement on SINERGIA (CONPES 3294), which was drafted by DEPP/DNP, has flagged the need to address the problems with the reliability of SIGOB data, including their quality, consistency (where problems have arisen from multiple, uncoordinated data sources), regularity and verification. This policy statement also raises explicit concerns about ministries "gaming" the data which they provide for SIGOB.

## **5.2 Evaluations<sup>16</sup>**

These constitute the second principal M&E component of SINERGIA. About 16 evaluations are currently underway or have been completed, with another 17 to be conducted over the next five years or so (Table 2). Most of these are impact evaluations and entail a sophisticated statistical analysis of program beneficiaries with control or comparison groups. They also usually include a focus on operational efficiency and other management issues. A small number of other types of evaluation are conducted, and these focus narrowly on management and institutional issues.

Since 2002, at least two-thirds of the total amount spent on SINERGIA from all sources — mainly the IADB, the World Bank and the government — has been spent on evaluations. Their cost has ranged from \$15,000 up to \$2 million for the rigorous impact evaluation of the rural component of Familias en Acción. For the evaluations which have received funding support from the Bank, the main vehicle for this support has been sector-specific loans, particularly in the social sectors. The level of additional financial support from sector ministries and agencies for these evaluations is not known. CONPES has endorsed impact evaluation as an instrument of social policy (CONPES 3188).

Table 2 also shows that the cost of many of these evaluations is high. This arises from the need to conduct detailed data collection for many of the evaluations, due to the absence of adequate administrative, household and other data. This issue, and the potentially high cost-effectiveness of this type of evaluation, is discussed in greater detail below.

DEPP has used a competitive bidding process to contract out these evaluations to academia or to domestic or international consulting firms. These evaluations are contracted out to help ensure the objectivity, reliability and credibility of the evaluations, and also because of a scarcity of impact evaluation expertise within government. Another objective is to help build local capacities for evaluation. DEPP and the sector ministries typically work closely in managing these impact evaluations.

Thus for DEPP, the priority is to be able to manage or oversight these evaluations, rather than to conduct them itself. The skills base which exists in DEPP to support this work is limited; and DEPP's reliance on contract staff — who account for 22 of DEPP's 31 staff — may have acted as a barrier to the development of professional skills, for example through their ineligibility for training scholarships. A priority for DEPP will be to strengthen its capacity to manage these evaluations.

The government has stated that decisions as to which activities should be subject to sophisticated impact evaluation are based on 5 criteria: (1) amount of resources they consume; (2) the characteristics of the population they service (e.g., the poor, or the displaced); (3) importance of the activity, in terms of whether it is a priority for the national development plan; (4) innovativeness of the activity (e.g., a pilot); (5) potential for replication. SIGOB's performance information does not appear to have been used to flag "problem" government programs for which

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<sup>16</sup> These are known as "strategic evaluations", or Evaluaciones Estratégicas.



an evaluation would be warranted, but it would be worthwhile for DEPP to adopt such an approach. In Chile, for example, indications of poor program performance are used as one trigger to warrant a more in-depth investigation of the causes of poor performance through a formal evaluation — either a rapid evaluation or a sophisticated impact evaluation.

<b>Table 2. Agenda of Impact and Other Evaluations</b> (US\$ cost of each evaluation in parentheses)		
<b>Evaluations Completed</b>	<b>Evaluations Underway</b>	<b>Evaluations Planned (2006-2010)</b>
Empleo en Acción (\$1.5m) Adulto Mayor (\$50,000) Corpomixtas (\$15,000) Programa de Apoyo Directo al Empleo — PADE (\$66,000)	Familias en Acción — Rural (\$2m) Familias en Acción — Grandes Ciudades (\$180,000) Jóvenes en Acción (\$670,000) Vivienda de Interés Social —VIS (\$226,800) Programa de Renovación de la Administración Pública — PRAP (\$311,000) Hogares Comunitarios (\$1.36m) Fondo Colombiano para la Modernización y Desarrollo de las Micro, Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas — Fomipyme (\$88,000) Sistema General de Participaciones — SGP (Parte 1) (\$419,000) Red de Seguridad Alimentaria — RESA (\$125,000) Programa de Paz y Desarrollo y Laboratorios de Paz (etapa 1) (\$206,000) Desayunos Infantiles Estratificación Socio económica (\$200,000)	Cursos de Formación Complementaria — SENA (\$200,000) SENA — Institucional (\$60,000) ICBF — Institucional (\$30,000) SENA — Otros Programas (\$95,000) Reinsertados (\$119,000) Familia Guardabosques (\$119,000) Programas del Sector Agrícola (\$119,378) Familias en Acción Desplazadas (\$119,378) Banco de Pobres (\$198,000) Red de Apoyo Contra la Pobreza Extrema — PEP (\$198,000) Evaluación Programas Sector Justicia (\$119,000) DANE — Institucional (\$60,000) MinInterior — Institucional (\$25,000) Rapid evaluation pilots (\$98,000) Evaluación Plan Decenal de Cultura (\$150,000) Mujer Cabeza de Familia Microempresaria (\$150,000) Programas de alimentación escolar en Colombia (\$600,000)
Total: \$1.631m	Total: \$5.786m	Total: \$2.460m

Source: Department of National Planning.

As noted earlier, the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee has formal responsibility for deciding both the four-year and the annual evaluation agendas. So far, however, the agenda of evaluations has been decided in a bottom-up manner rather than in a planned, top-down manner. Thus the evaluation agenda is currently determined on the basis of evaluations funded by international donors as part of their loans to the government, together with some additional evaluations which are largely funded by individual sector ministries and agencies, and with some financial and technical support from DEPP. This approach can be expected to have helped achieve a high level of acceptance of the findings of these evaluations, on the part of the ministries and agencies whose programs have been evaluated, and on the part of DNP and other central ministries. However, it also means that the evaluation agenda has been heavily dependent on donor support and evaluation priorities. It would be worthwhile for the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee to play a substantive role in overseeing SINERGIA's performance and in developing its future directions.

### **5.3 Other M&E Activities**

DNP/DEPP has been active in a number of other aspects of M&E, such as efforts to strengthen public accountability in government performance, provision of technical assistance to some ministries/agencies which are trying to develop their internal M&E systems, M&E capacity-building in the public sector and in academia, advancing the piloting of performance-based budgeting at the municipal level, the preparation of a performance-based investment budget report, and the development of policy guidelines on M&E. Aspects of these initiatives are considered below.

## **6. EXTENT OF UTILIZATION OF M&E INFORMATION PRODUCED BY SINERGIA**

### **6.1 Accountability — Political and Social Control**

A unique feature of Colombia is President Uribe's strong commitment to the use of M&E information to enhance political control of the executive government and to support social control. The SIGOB database is loaded in his personal computer, and he uses this information in his monthly "management control" meetings with each minister and DNP. During these meetings, the progress being made against each presidential goal is reviewed, and ministers are required to provide reasons for any shortfalls in performance. Performance indicators and actions to meet these targets are also agreed. The Presidencia has met with ministers to ensure they are all skilled in the use of SIGOB. The President also uses this SIGOB information in his weekly townhall meetings in different municipalities around the country, and also in the annual television presentation to citizens, in which the president and his ministers discuss the government's performance and answer citizen questions on these issues.

This strong presidential commitment to using M&E information to monitor and report on his government's performance appears to be unique in Latin America and perhaps in the world. It sends powerful signals to individual ministers and civil servants in their ministries and agencies, and can be expected to have fostered a performance culture; the actual extent to which such a culture has developed is not known, however — this is one issue which an in-depth diagnosis would be able to investigate. There does not appear to have been a widespread adoption of M&E practices by all ministries and sub-national governments, however. That said, there are several ministries, agencies and municipal governments, discussed below, which are currently working to strengthen their M&E systems, some of them with the active support of DEPP.

Another unknown issue is the credibility of the information which government reports to civil society.<sup>17</sup> Some prominent representatives of civil society have cast doubt on the credibility of the SIGOB data — the main argument being that these data are produced by government and that they are thus inherently unreliable. SINERGIA's reliance on the government reporting on its own performance is thus viewed by some as a structural weakness of the accountability arrangements (see below). The SIGOB website allows readers to give their judgements about government performance vis-à-vis its promises (as reflected in the national development plan), and about the accessibility, quality, and usefulness of the publicly-available SIGOB information on government performance.<sup>18</sup> In addition, DEPP surveyed over 3,000 households in 13 capital cities in July 2006, to ask them directly an expanded set of similar issues, including also the transparency, responsiveness and accountability of the government and of different types of government entity, availability of information about government performance, the importance of citizen participation in public management, and the quality of a range of public services.<sup>19</sup>

Another aspect of SIGOB is that it is essentially a monitoring tool. Explanations of over-performance or under-performance need to be informed by program and policy evaluations that,

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to the publicly-available SIGOB database, all of the SINERGIA evaluations and a range of reports on government performance are publicly available from DNP's website ([www.dnp.gov.co](http://www.dnp.gov.co)). The ability of ordinary citizens to make use of this information is unclear, however, although academia and some NGOs certainly have the potential to use such information.

<sup>18</sup> The questionnaire is available at: <http://sinergia.dnp.gov.co/sinergia/opi>

<sup>19</sup> The results of this survey are expected to be published early in 2007.

in turn, need to be based on rigorous policy and program formulation linked to Presidential Goals and the country's development goals.

DEPP has developed an ambitious set of initiatives to further promote social control, and it appears that the first of these has made some progress. These include:

- Colombia Lider — an independent, civil society partnership of media, banking, foundations and other organizations to promote good governance and social control. This consortium, which has been encouraged and supported by DEPP, will highlight good performance of municipal mayors, and will monitor government plans and spending, and analyze their impact on poverty;
- partnerships with civil society organizations to disseminate M&E information;
- use of TV and radio stations to produce programs on government performance;<sup>20</sup> and
- contracting of sectoral experts to analyze and report on government performance. This would also provide some complementary quality assurance of the government's M&E information, such as the SIGOB data.

Although progress on the last three initiatives appears modest, these efforts to engage directly with civil society could have a significant pay-off if eventually successful, and would also be very difficult to reverse in future years. A strong example of such a civil society initiative, which was developed independently of the national government, is Bogotá Cómo Vamos. This initiative was created by a consortium of a private foundation (the Corona Foundation), the main daily newspaper in Bogotá (El Tiempo), and the Chamber of Commerce (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá), and it appears to be fully institutionalized.<sup>21</sup> Bogotá Cómo Vamos involves widespread publication of data on municipal government performance together with data from public opinion surveys. The three partners in this venture are supporting the replication of the approach in Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena and Medellín. This initiative is an excellent example of the type of mechanism that can be supported to promote social control of government performance.

The president also reports formally to the Congress each year, on the extent to which the national plan's goals and objectives have been attained. The extent to which Congress is able to use this information is unclear, however. Congress plays only a weak role in the budget process (World Bank, 2005b). Congressmen have little technical support to enable them to easily digest performance information and evaluation findings, and Congress' discussion of the annual budget in any case tends to focus on narrower political issues. This experience is perhaps similar to many other countries; the potential for Congress to play any significant role in SINERGIA therefore appears to be weak — unless Congress takes the initiative in demanding government M&E information and institutionalizing its usage.

## **6.2 Support for Budget Decision-Making and National Planning**

### ***Budget Rigidities***

DNP is responsible for preparing the four-year national development plan, and also has responsibility for the annual investment budget. The latter includes infrastructure and other

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<sup>20</sup> DEPP has supported a series of 20 radio programs on the results of the government's social policies, and on ways in which citizens can request support from the government. The radio programs have been transmitted via 80 community radio stations across the country.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bogotacomovamos.org/bogotacv/scripts/index.php>

investments, as well as investments in human capital (such as education and training); the investment budget comprises about 15% of the total national budget. Hacienda is responsible for the remainder — the recurrent budget — which also includes ongoing funding for civil servants and their administrative activities, government debt servicing, pension payments and transfers to sub-national governments.

The extent to which there is potential for M&E information to influence budget decision-making and national planning in Colombia is not clear. There exist considerable budget rigidities in Colombia for several reasons, including the constitutionally-mandated transfers to sub-national governments and a range of permanent entitlements and revenue earmarks. As a result, as much as 95% of the budget is earmarked and is thus inflexible in the short-run.<sup>22</sup> But while performance information and evaluation findings may be able to exert only limited influence on national budget allocations in the short-run, there might well be considerable potential in the medium- to long-run, especially if there exists clear evidence about government performance in attaining Presidential Goals and other government priorities (see Box 2). And even in the short-run, there is potential for sub-national governments to themselves use M&E information; these governments account for over one third of the federal budget spending, and have greater flexibility in budget allocations.

### **Box 2. An Example of an Influential Evaluation in Colombia**

*Familias en Acción* is a government conditional cash transfer program which provides income support to poor families which commit to ensuring that their children receive preventive health care, enroll in school and attend classes. The program was created in 1999 in response to the economic crisis.

A rigorous impact evaluation of the program, whose final stage is to be completed in 2006, was contracted out to external consultants, under the supervision of DNP. The evaluation found that the program had achieved impressive nutrition, education and health impacts. These findings persuaded the government of President Uribe, who was elected in 2002, to not only retain the previous government's program but to commit to a doubling of its coverage, from 500,000 to one million poor families. In late 2006, the government decided to further increase the program's coverage, to 1.5 million families.

The *Familias en Acción* evaluation has cost \$1.5 million so far. While this is a large amount, it is relatively small when compared with total government spending on that program (around \$100 million at the time of the evaluation). Due to its major influence on the government, it can be judged to have been highly cost-effective.

For this reason the pilot approaches to performance budgeting in Medellín and Pasto are potentially significant. For example, the municipal government of Medellín conducts surveys of around 23,000 households to obtain detailed indicators on human development. These are then mapped to identify the poorest districts. Government spending has been heavily reoriented to favor these districts, and performance baselines and targets are set to assist in monitoring government performance. The lack of evaluations is a constraint on understanding the results of this spending, but the government employs local academics to analyze the likely results chains of alternative options for government spending — this helps the government to decide the types of activity on which it should spend. With support from DEPP, the municipal governments of Pasto

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<sup>22</sup> However, the Hacienda reportedly applies considerable discretionary power in releasing funds to authorized expenditures. To the extent this occurs, it increases the short-term budget flexibilities.

and Medellin have prepared performance-based budget reports for fiscal year 2007, and are preparing organic budget laws to formalize this approach. Their performance budgeting work is supported by monitoring systems and tools similar to SIGOB. On the demand side, mechanisms for social and political control have been promoted in both cities, drawing lessons from the *Bogotá Cómo Vamos* experience. In Pasto, the local alliance for accountability has undertaken a survey of 1300 households on themes analogous to the national survey conducted by DEPP, but placing greater emphasis on issues of citizen participation and local governance. An independent study on subsidized health services was commissioned and publicly discussed with the city mayor, and this process generated commitments by the local government to improve various aspects of service delivery. These municipal models provide lessons for the introduction of performance budgeting at the federal, department and municipal levels throughout the country.

An example of the government's ability to respond nimbly to emerging priorities is the creation of the Empleo en Acción program during the economic crisis of the late 1990s. The government also agreed to undertake a major impact evaluation of this program; however, the government decided to terminate the program before the evaluation findings were available. Many valuable lessons for evaluation planning can be drawn from this case study (Box 3).

One interesting performance-based budget initiative is the management contracts which have been piloted between DNP/Hacienda and two social sector agencies, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Vocational Training Institute (SENA), with World Bank support.<sup>23</sup> These contracts involved the setting of performance indicators and targets for service delivery and administrative implementation.<sup>24</sup> When the targets are met, the budget allocations of the two agencies are increased by allowing them to retain a greater share of the non-tax revenues which they collect. It is unclear whether or not these pilots will be retained or scaled up.

### ***Performance-Based Budgeting and Planning***

DEPP has prepared “performance-based budget” reports, for both 2005 and 2006, for Colombia's investment budget. These reports are presented as an annex to the regular budget documents, which continue to be presented on a line-item basis. The performance-based reports use a programmatic classification to group government activities according to common objectives, which in turn were based on the Presidential Goals and the national development plan. The reports showed the stated objective for each “program”, the corresponding performance targets (using SIGOB data), and also the corresponding investment budget for that year. However, programs have not been rigorously constructed (following logframe or similar methodologies) and budget allocations are frequently estimates of the financial support given to such a program under different budget lines. Publication of these ex ante reports — i.e., before budget execution — is a form of performance budgeting, albeit the weakest type since the reports are unlikely to have any influence on budget decision-making in the absence of an explicit mechanism to achieve this; thus they might best be viewed as accountability documents. Note that the other types of performance budgeting which a country could adopt are performance-informed budgeting, where M&E information provides one input to budget decision-making (as is the case in Chile and in most OECD countries), and direct performance budgeting, where budget allocations are based on

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<sup>23</sup> The Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF) and the Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA).

<sup>24</sup> An analogous approach to the setting of performance targets is the “efficiency agreements” which are meant to be agreed in the context of the Indicative Plans” which ministries and agencies have to agree with DNP and Hacienda. See CONPES, 1999. It is unclear if there are any consequences for entities which fail to meet their targets.

an explicit formula or grading (examples here include higher education funding based on number of students and the type and topic of their degree, and health funding based on the “casemix” method).<sup>25</sup>

### **Box 3. The Empleo en Acción Program: Lessons for Evaluation Planning**

The Government requested Bank support for a new direct job creation program, based on public works, in response to the economic crisis of the late 1990s. A Bank loan became effective in early 2001, and the loan included funding for a sophisticated impact evaluation; this evaluation was a condition of the Bank’s lending. Some delays were experienced in implementing the project, and at the same time economic conditions started to improve. By early 2004 the new government had decided to terminate the Empleo en Acción program; by then, some \$183 million had been spent on it.

The findings of the impact evaluation, which cost about \$1.5m, became available later that year. The evaluation found that the program had succeeded in transferring income to the poorest households, and it had increased the employability of program participants. It had also produced public works that benefited local communities. However, the program failed to meet the targets for the number of individuals who would benefit from the program, and it also failed to meet the target for the level of net annual earnings which the program provided to beneficiaries. An implementation completion report on the Bank project has recently concluded that the program was, overall, not cost-effective compared with similar direct job creation programs in other countries and compared with other types of support for the unemployed.

Although the impact evaluation was not influential, it does provide several lessons for evaluation planning, and these are highly relevant to the management of SINERGIA. One is the need for a high level of care in planning an evaluation, particularly one which is complex and expensive, and will take quite some time before its results are available. Unforeseen events external to the evaluation are always a possibility; the challenge is therefore one of risk management. It is also important to plan evaluations so that findings will be available to feed into likely decision points, such as the election of a new government (when a new national plan will be prepared), and the annual budget cycle. Another issue for evaluation planning is prioritizing evaluations — deciding which government activities should be evaluated, when the findings are likely to be needed, and to what depth of analysis (and cost) should the evaluation be conducted. Prima facie, for a major government program such as Empleo en Acción, it is highly appropriate to conduct an in-depth impact evaluation. Even if such an evaluation provides only a marginal improvement in the program’s performance — i.e., its efficiency and effectiveness — spending \$1.5 million on the evaluation of a program which spent \$183 million (and potentially might have spent a lot more) would be highly cost-effective. Where evaluation funds are constrained, or where there are tight timing constraints, then other, more rapid types of evaluation are more likely to be appropriate. A final lesson for SINERGIA is the value in conducting regular in-depth reviews of its own M&E activities, to find out which have been effective, which have not, and the reasons why.

Note that the impact evaluation of Empleo en Acción has added to the “library” of evaluation findings available to the government. These findings should prove valuable to the government in the current debate on the desirability of creating a new public works program.

<sup>25</sup> The casemix method is a means of classifying hospital patients according to the nature of their diagnosis and the level of health care which is required. The funding provided to each hospital is based on the numbers of each category of patient who receive treatment, and the average cost of providing the corresponding level of treatment. Average costs are based on the health system as a whole.

There does not appear to be any relationship between the level on which SINERGIA focuses — the Presidential Goals — and the much more micro, project focus of the work of DNP in preparing the annual investment budget. At the start of each new, four-year Administration, the DNP with the imprimatur of the President submits to Congress the national development plan. This indicates proposed investments over the period. The investments included in this plan constitute the “Programs and Projects Bank” from which specific investments (and only those) can be selected for inclusion in subsequent annual budgets. DNP’s Directorate for Investment and Public Finance (DIFP)<sup>26</sup> sets the standards that projects must meet. Entities prepare projects — either by themselves or through outsourcing — and send them to DIFP. Then DIFP checks whether projects meet the prescribed standards and ranks them according to government priorities.

In making the annual selection, DIFP conducts an ex ante evaluation of individual investments, although in practice this comprises more of a technical “assessment” than a formal evaluation; a review of DIFP’s evaluation methodology has recently been completed. Ministries and agencies are meant to conduct ex post self-evaluations, but the reliability, credibility and rigor of the self-evaluations which are conducted are open to question, and have been questioned by DIFP itself. It is unclear to what extent DIFP has been able to make substantive use of SIGOB information or the findings of the small number of SINERGIA evaluations which have been completed so far. The newly created sectoral spending committees, which include DIFP, DEPP and Hacienda, provide a potentially important forum for utilization of SINERGIA’s M&E information in the future, particularly as the volume of evaluation findings expands rapidly in coming years as a result of the ambitious evaluation agenda which is underway.

An important test of the relevance of the M&E information which SINERGIA has produced to date will be the extent to which it was used in the new 4-year national development plan which DNP prepared and which was submitted to the Congress in November 2006. DEPP believes that DNP and sector ministries have made good use of information from SINERGIA to define the goals embodied in the national plan, as well as to report the government’s (and ministry) performance in terms of the extent to which the goals have been achieved.

The M&E work of SINERGIA appears to be largely separate from the M&E activities of another directorate within DNP, the Directorate for Sustainable Territorial Development (DDTS).<sup>27</sup> The DDTS is responsible for monitoring and evaluation<sup>28</sup> of the work of sub-national governments — the 1100 municipalities and the 32 departments which oversight them — funded by transfers from the central government. The quality of the information provided to DDTS by the municipalities is reportedly poor, with many data gaps. Note that the municipalities separately provide the information on which sector ministries and agencies rely, and which they in turn input to SIGOB. The municipal-level work of DDTS and that of DEPP — on performance budgeting in several municipalities, for example — have not been coordinated.<sup>29</sup>

The split investment/recurrent budget also has implications for the use of M&E information from SINERGIA in the preparation of the recurrent budget; it raises issues of information exchange

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<sup>26</sup> Dirección de Inversiones y Finanzas Públicas.

<sup>27</sup> Dirección de Desarrollo Territorial Sostenible.

<sup>28</sup> The evaluation work of DDTS appears to consist of assessments of municipal performance which are based on the performance information collected.

<sup>29</sup> One way in which M&E at the sub-national level has developed in other countries is to publish benchmarking comparisons of the quantity and quality of service provision by sub-national governments. This enables relatively high-performing and low-performing governments to be identified.



between DNP and Hacienda, coordination, and decisions on evaluation priorities. The option of unifying the investment and recurrent sides of the budget was recently considered within the government, but no consensus was reached. At present, the structure of the national budget in Colombia constrains the scope for use of M&E information.

Four other issues will also influence the ability of the government to undertake performance budgeting. The first is the December 2005 decision to implement a medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF). One advantage of an MTEF is that it provides greater surety in outyear funding for government ministries and activities. It can also provide an environment in which greater flexibility and responsibility is given to ministries and agencies, and these can be used to promote a greater performance orientation within government, as adopted by a number of OECD countries.

A second issue is the lack of a programmatic structure to the budget. DEPP's "performance budgets" for the past two years have reported planned budget spending on a program basis, and it constructed this programmatic classification of activities on an ad hoc basis. The investment and recurrent budgets continue to rely on conventional line-item budgeting, however; DEPP's performance budget reports are attached as an annex to the conventional budget reports.

There are many potential benefits from a program budgeting approach.<sup>30</sup> It links cost items (i.e., activities) which have common objectives, and it assists program and spending prioritization; it also makes it easier to expand, reduce or even terminate programs and the activities which they comprise. It facilitates evaluation by grouping linked activities, and also facilitates the setting of baseline measure of performance and performance targets. It helps clarify who is responsible for performance. However, while a program budgeting approach facilitates the use of M&E information during the budget process, it is not a prerequisite to a well-functioning M&E system which is intensively utilized by government, as the case of Chile amply demonstrates: Chile possesses the best-functioning M&E system in Latin America, in terms of a mature system of M&E which is fully utilized in the budget process, yet Chile continues to rely on line-item budgeting.

A third, related issue for Colombia is the apparently weak links between the integrated financial management information system (SIIF)<sup>31</sup> on which the budget is based and SIGOB. This makes it harder to link government spending on particular activities to the outputs, outcomes and impacts produced by those activities. Thus DEPP's performance budget reports have involved the manual matching of SIGOB performance information with the cost data produced by SIIF. Chile has to conduct similar manual matching — which is time-consuming — when it estimates the budget spending on the programs which it evaluates.

Related to this is a fourth issue: the limited information which DIFP possesses concerning actual government spending at the sub-national level. While information on budget allocations is available, data on budget execution by individual departments and municipalities are simply not available. This makes it impossible to compare government outputs of goods and services with the amounts spent on them, and it is an impediment to better budgeting and planning, and to performance-based budgeting.

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<sup>30</sup> This discussion focuses on an objectives-based program structure. Alternative program structures can be built, based for example on type of activity (e.g., hospitals) or target group (e.g., the aged).

<sup>31</sup> Sistema Integral de Información Financiera.

This preliminary analysis of the work of DIFP and DDTS suggests that the M&E initiatives of DEPP have generally not been closely integrated into the work of the rest of DNP. Considerably closer coordination of DNP's M&E work can be viewed as a prerequisite for the achievement of performance-based budgeting and performance-based planning. Similarly, the apparent lack of M&E coordination with the budgeting work of Hacienda would appear to be an obstacle to a greater emphasis on performance budgeting by that key ministry.

### ***Rapid Evaluation Pilots***

One significant, recent development is the work of DEPP, in consultation with DIFP, to conduct two pilot rapid evaluations. These are intended to provide a rapid, low-cost method of evaluation which would better complement the more sophisticated and usually expensive impact evaluations on which SINERGIA has hitherto largely focused. These rapid evaluations will clarify the objectives of the two programs being evaluated, the logic of the program design, and will attempt to assess their activities, management, cost and performance. The innovative methodology which DEPP has developed is based on a combination of the rapid evaluation methodologies used by the Chilean and United States governments. The new methodology is called the Evaluación Ejecutiva (E<sup>2</sup>). It is intended that such evaluations will be able to be completed within 3 months at a cost of \$15,000-20,000 each.

Hacienda has no direct involvement in either SIGOB or the evaluations, and makes no direct use of them. However, another significant development is Hacienda's recent agreement to pilot two additional rapid evaluations — these will essentially comprise desk reviews, using Chile's "evaluations of government programs" methodology. Hacienda is also investigating the possibility of pursuing performance budgeting on a systematic basis.

### ***Mix of M&E Tools***

The piloting of rapid evaluations will provide an important addition to the range of M&E information available for budget decision-making and national planning. For budgeting and planning to be done well requires the analysis and provision of advice on the performance of a very broad range of government activities — on those already underway and on possible new activities being considered. SIGOB already provides performance information for all government spending, and it focuses at the level of the Presidential Goals. Such information is relatively inexpensive to produce, and it achieves breadth of coverage. But its limitation is that it provides little or no understanding of the reasons why government goals have, or have not, been achieved. In contrast, SINERGIA's impact evaluations have the advantages of depth and rigor — they can identify causal relationships and prove definitively whether individual government actions are, or are not, producing the intended results. But sophisticated impact evaluations are typically rather expensive and time-consuming to conduct.<sup>32</sup> This is why rapid evaluations are a useful addition to the M&E toolkit: they are relatively quick and inexpensive, and can be used to evaluate a much broader spectrum of government activities than the large, one-off impact evaluations. Their

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<sup>32</sup> DEPP has estimated that SINERGIA's evaluation agenda covers about 24% of the investment budget. This figure relates to the government activities which have been subject to some sort of evaluation under SINERGIA. Of course, this statistic should not be interpreted to suggest that further evaluation of these activities is not warranted: it is rarely if ever the case that even an expensive impact evaluation can comprehensively evaluate all possible issues relating to a program's implementation, outputs, service delivery, targeting effectiveness, outcomes and impacts, and including the full geographic coverage of a program. Thus most evaluations address only a subset of these issues. Moreover, even well-established government activities require periodic, repeated evaluation.

disadvantage, as noted in Box 1, is that their findings are considerably less reliable than sophisticated impact evaluations.

The various M&E tools discussed here are complementary. Each has strengths and limitations, and each has a role to play as part of Colombia's M&E toolkit. The challenge for the government is to choose the mix which provides the most cost-effective use of the funds available for M&E.

Note that Chile has successfully employed a range of M&E tools in its budget cycle: the Hacienda uses performance indicators (some 1,560), rapid reviews (14 are completed each budget), sophisticated impact evaluations (4 are completed per budget), and comprehensive spending reviews of an entire sector (one per budget). Chile funds its M&E system using its own budget funds, without any donor funding support.

### **6.3 Support for Results-Based Management by Ministries and Agencies**

There appear to be several entities which have devoted considerable effort to building their own M&E systems for their own, internal purposes. DEPP provides a range of support to these ministries, depending on circumstances. For some, it involves advising or even initiating sophisticated impact evaluations (such as for some components of the Familias en Acción program); for others it entails assistance in creation of ministry monitoring systems (such as for the Ministry of Social Protection).

It would be useful to investigate the genesis and motivation underlying the creation and institutionalization of these entities' M&E systems, to identify lessons which might have broader applicability across government. These entities include the Ministry of Education (MEN). It has a management information system which includes program goals, objectives, performance indicators, targets, baselines and exception reports. This database is comparable to SIGOB, but it reportedly includes many more performance indicators. One difficulty faced by MEN has been the generation of data for SIGOB. Despite MEN's detailed database, the information it provides cannot interface directly with SIGOB; instead, the MEN data have to be extracted manually and adjusted to meet the SIGOB definitions. It is possible that this disconnect partly arises from the different levels of focus of the two systems: SIGOB is very clearly focused on the level of the Presidential Goals, whereas MEN's system is focused on serving the much more specific and detailed requirements of ministry planning and activity management. It would seem reasonable to assume that most if not all other ministries and agencies face greater difficulties in providing data for SIGOB. It is not clear if there is scope to achieve greater harmonization of performance indicators — in terms of data definitions, periodicity, geographical coverage, etc — between the whole-of-government SIGOB system and ministry/agency systems.

Another entity to note is the ICBF, which has created its own evaluation office to assist ICBF's own management and planning. The evaluation office has prepared evaluation guidelines, and it oversees the sophisticated impact evaluations which it contracts out to academia and consultants. (ICBF also undertakes some other types of evaluation.) It co-finances the impact evaluations with the World Bank (through social sector loans), the IADB and DEPP; ICBF also receives technical assistance from these entities. Some of the evaluations of ICBF programs have been led by the multilateral donors. ICBF has an overall budget of some \$500m, and its evaluation budget is expected to be about \$2m in 2006 (compared to \$3m in 2005, when it financed a large survey of nutrition). All of ICBF's impact evaluations are counted by DNP as coming under the aegis of SINERGIA.

Ministry/agency M&E systems can be expected to make it easier for entities to satisfy the information needs of SINERGIA, but they should be viewed as quite distinct from SINERGIA, whose objectives are very much focused at the whole-of-government level. And entities with good-practice M&E systems appear to be very much the exception, however. As already noted, there has not occurred any widespread adoption of M&E practices in ministries and agencies across the government. An in-depth diagnosis would be necessary to determine if sector ministries and agencies collectively make much use of the two main information components of SINERGIA: SIGOB and the impact and other evaluations. In other words, are most entities simply suppliers of data, produced on an ad hoc basis, to SINERGIA?

## **7. SINERGIA: STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

### **7.1 Strengths and Challenges**

The government of Colombia has achieved a considerable success in the creation and strengthening of SINERGIA. It is one of the strongest whole-of-government M&E systems in Latin America, in terms of the types of M&E it undertakes, its overall credibility, and its utilization; much of this progress has been achieved since 2002. Creation of the SIGOB system for monitoring the progress against the Presidential Goals has been notable, as is the intensive use made of this system by the President, the Presidencia and the DNP. Indeed, the President's role as the key champion for, and user of, such a monitoring system is unprecedented within the region. The ambitious agenda of impact evaluations is also impressive.

The CONPES policy document on SINERGIA (#3294) lists four challenges facing this M&E system: (1) lack of a single, clear conceptual framework, (2) a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the organizations which support SINERGIA, (3) absence of clear links between planning, budgeting and evaluation, (4) problems with the availability and frequency of data, as well as problems with data quality controls.

This rapid diagnosis concurs that these substantive issues clearly need to be addressed. The main challenge facing any government M&E system is its full institutionalization. This entails not only the creation of a system which provides good-quality information, but one where that information is used intensively in supporting sound governance, and where the system is fully sustainable — in other words, a system which is likely to survive changes in government and to continue to be relied upon by future administrations. This definition of a “successful” M&E system provides the yardstick against which SINERGIA can be compared. It also provides the destination towards which options for the future development of the system, and for World Bank support, should be framed.

Utilization of SINERGIA information has been substantive for accountability purposes: the accountability of the President to civil society and to the Congress, and the accountability of ministers (and their ministries) to the President. Prima facie, this unique emphasis on accountability seems unlikely to continue to such a high degree when the current President leaves office in 2010. Nevertheless, if in the meantime the processes and popular support for presidential accountability have become established, there will be continuing demand for the type of information provided by SIGOB. DEPP has recently drafted a CONPES document intended to establish policy guidelines for government accountability and social control.

DEPP believes that SINERGIA information has also been used by the planning area of DNP and by sector ministries to assist their work in preparing the 2006-2010 national development plan. This issue has not been subject to detailed investigation, however.

There is little evidence that the four other potential uses of the M&E information produced by SINERGIA have been realized to any significant degree so far: (1) to support resource allocation and decision-making in the national budget; (2) to ensure the cohesion of government action around those development priorities; (3) to assist sector ministries in their policy development and planning work; (4) to support the ongoing management of government activities by ministries and agencies. An in-depth review of the use of M&E information by sector ministries and agencies might well reveal that the President's use of SIGOB information prompts some of them to take this information seriously in their planning and policy development work. And it is

possible that as a growing number of sophisticated impact evaluations and rapid evaluations are completed in coming years, they will increasingly be used for budget and national planning purposes — although it would be a misconception to assume that the supply of evaluation findings automatically leads to their utilization.<sup>33</sup>

A recurring issue is the quality, availability and cost of the data used by SINERGIA and by ministries and agencies for their own work. One difficulty is lack of harmonization of data definitions. Another is the substantial absence of formal data audits. And the cost of impact evaluations has been driven up by the need for more detailed information than is available from either the regular household surveys conducted by the national statistical office, DANE,<sup>34</sup> or from the administrative data produced by entities. Prima facie, there is an important role which both DANE and the high-level data coordination committee, COINFO,<sup>35</sup> which was created in 2003, could play here. The government is aware of these difficulties and it has decided to give a high priority to strengthening administrative and other data by, for example: promoting greater harmonization of data; the regular collection of core socio-economic, health and nutrition data; and the development of minimum data standards. It has also signaled the need to improve data coordination through support to both DANE and COINFO.

The evaluation agenda is also costly. The cost of the impact evaluations underway or recently completed is \$7.42m, with an additional \$2.46m to be spent on new evaluations planned for the next five years. While this evaluation agenda might appear, prima facie, to be expensive, its cost represents only a very minor percentage of total government spending on the evaluated programs — thus the evaluations would need to result in only a relatively minor improvement in the effectiveness of government spending to make them highly cost-effective.

That said, there are ways in which the cost of evaluations could be reduced considerably, although some of these options would take several years to achieve.<sup>36</sup> A number of the large evaluations have to collect data by means of large, one-off, expensive surveys. The need for such ad hoc surveys could be reduced through an expansion of national statistical collections, such as longitudinal databases which track samples of the population over time; readier availability of data would also reduce the length of time needed to conduct an impact evaluation. The expansion of national statistical collections would itself be costly, and would take a number of years to complete, but would help to further increase the cost-effectiveness of SINERGIA. Another option is to rely much more on local Colombian evaluation consultants, rather than expensive international consultants. DEPP is using the rapidly increasing number of evaluations being conducted as an opportunity to increase the domestic supply of capable evaluators.

The government is pursuing an ambitious and broad-ranging strategy for strengthening SINERGIA. The initiatives include, among others:

- SIGOB;

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<sup>33</sup> There are many barriers to achieving utilization of evaluation findings. Various supply-side attributes must be achieved for utilization to occur, such as the timeliness of an evaluation and its credibility. And the demand side is key: awareness of the evaluation findings and preparedness to use them by policy analysts, decision-makers, and managers of government activities. See World Bank, *Influential Evaluations: Detailed Case Studies*, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística. The World Bank is providing an institutional development fund grant, for \$0.29m, to help DANE improve its household surveys.

<sup>35</sup> Comisión Intersectorial de Políticas y Gestión de Información para la Administración Pública — Intersectoral Committee for Information Policy and Management.

<sup>36</sup> Some technical options are discussed by Bamberger (2006).

- support for replication of improved SIGOB-type databases in municipal pilots (Medellín and Pasto);
- the agenda of impact and other evaluations, conducted jointly with DNP/DEPP, social sector ministries/agencies, and donors;
- development of a rapid evaluation methodology, and the pilots being planned by DEPP/DIFP and in Hacienda;
- efforts to engage directly with civil society, to encourage utilization of M&E information;
- preparation of government performance reports for the President, Congress and civil society;
- preparation of performance budget reports, linking national development plan activities with their imputed costs, on a pilot, programmatic basis;
- support for performance budgeting efforts at the municipal level (Medellín and Pasto), with a view to mainstreaming these pilots;
- efforts to coordinate the generation of information feeding the M&E system, and to ensure the quality of the information — with a particular emphasis on the data registry for subsidy programs;
- the Constitutional provision for evaluation, and laws, regulations, decrees; and the CONPES policy statement on M&E;
- support for the Intersectoral Committee for Evaluation and Management for Results; and
- support for COINFO.

This broad-ranging strategy has been opportunistic, and this is wholly appropriate for two reasons. First, it is important to trial a number of initiatives to see which ones are more successful in the Colombian context: building a whole-of-government M&E system is an art, not a science, and it is often difficult to judge which initiatives are likely to be successful. None of those governments which have successfully built a whole-of-government M&E system did so in a linear, predictable model where the whole system was clearly envisaged from the start and progress was made incrementally, step by step, to achieve this vision. Rather, successful countries such as Chile, Australia and Canada have started with some view of what a “successful” system would look like, but have also worked to create a whole-of-government system in an opportunistic manner, adjusting their plans as new opportunities emerge and as particular roadblocks have been encountered. These opportunities and roadblocks are not only country-specific, but are also government-specific, according to the strengths and weaknesses of individual ministries and other bodies (such as the national audit office), and according to the depth of commitment to a results focus of the key stakeholders in government. The arrival, or departure, of an M&E champion such as President Uribe is enormously influential, but it is also fortuitous. Similarly, the Hacienda’s consideration of the possibility of pursuing performance budgeting provides a discrete window of opportunity to pursue this potentially significant use of SINERGIA information.

The downside of this opportunistic approach is the apparent absence of strong linkages between many of the various initiatives. From this perspective, it might be argued that SINERGIA is not so much an integrated M&E system, but rather a collection of performance-related activities with two main (and largely unrelated) components: SIGOB and the impact evaluation agenda. In parallel with these multiple initiatives, donor support appears, *prima facie*, to have been highly

balkanized. Given the priority for SINERGIA to now enter a period of consolidation (discussed below), emphasis should be placed on achieving much better coordination among donors.

A good-practice feature of DEPP's management of SINERGIA has been its willingness to present the approaches, methods and results of SINERGIA to public debate via the international conferences which DEPP sponsors — in 2004, 2006, and annually in the future.<sup>37</sup> These also provide a forum in which plans for the future strengthening of the national M&E system can be debated. Continual review and adjustment of the strategies underlying a national M&E system are highly desirable.

A second argument for a broad-ranging strategy is that the institutionalization of SINERGIA can be expected to be stronger, the greater the performance orientation of numerous stakeholders inside and outside of government — such as sector ministries/agencies, sub-national governments, the Contraloria, the Congress, and civil society. Demand from these stakeholders for M&E information is likely to be cumulative and mutually-reinforcing. It is also likely to lead to efforts to strengthen the supply side of M&E — such as improvements in the quality of data which feed into SIGOB, and in the availability of data needed for evaluations. Thus the greater are the synergies amongst all the performance-oriented M&E initiatives, the greater will be the probability that SINERGIA will thrive. The downside of this complexity, however, is a growing burden on DEPP in terms of management and coordination challenges. A careful balance between breadth and depth therefore needs to be achieved.

There are many performance-related activities which do not fall directly under the aegis of SINERGIA — such as the project evaluation work of DIFP and entities, the assessment of municipal performance by DDTS, and the M&E systems created by social sector entities for their own internal uses. To the extent these other performance-related activities are strengthened, this could provide useful demonstrations of the value of M&E, which in turn could strengthen the lessons for other ministries and agencies, and would also help to further legitimize M&E (and SINERGIA) within the government. DNP will need to consider carefully the extent to which DEPP becomes involved in these efforts, many of which are not directly related to the development of SINERGIA. The clearest relationship between SINERGIA and these other M&E activities arises from the need to achieve some harmonization of data requirements, standards and procedures; the degree of actual (or potential) overlap between SINERGIA and other M&E systems and activities is not clear, however. This is another issue which would benefit from in-depth review.

DEPP's efforts to institutionalize SINERGIA can be classified into three categories, in a sequential chain: demonstration; expansion; and consolidation (Table 3). These can be further categorized into those which appear to have had some success, those whose level of success is uncertain, and those which have encountered real challenges. The extent of success can not be judged clearly, however, and an in-depth diagnosis would ideally be undertaken to assess this more definitively. Indeed, one observation is that progress in institutionalizing SINERGIA should be subject to continuous monitoring, through agreed performance indicators and targets, and regular evaluation; thus the government should apply high expectations to SINERGIA in terms of regular and credible monitoring and evaluation of it. This is an important, potential role for the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee.

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<sup>37</sup> The two conferences held in 2004 and 2006 each attracted about 800 participants, a remarkably high number which indicates the perceived importance of monitoring and evaluating government performance.



Clearly, demonstration activities should only be expanded once they have achieved some substantive measure of success. And activities which are at the expansion stage, such as the performance (investment) budget reports, could usefully be broadened to include the recurrent budget. Activities in the final stage of maturity, such as the work of the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee — whose role, responsibilities and membership still have to be fully defined — should be helped to rapidly improve and consolidate.

<b>Table 3. Stages of Maturation in SINERGIA Activities</b>			
	<b>Demonstration</b>	<b>Expansion</b>	<b>Consolidation</b>
<b>More Successful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SIGOB pilots in municipalities</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SIGOB</li> <li>• impact evaluations</li> </ul>
<b>Uncertain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rapid evaluation pilots</li> <li>• performance budgeting pilots in municipalities</li> <li>• “institutional incentives” involving public recognition of high-performing organizations and civil servants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance budget reports</li> <li>• easy-to-read reports on M&amp;E findings (for civil society and Congress)</li> <li>• institutional framework for accountability (draft CONPES document)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regulatory framework, including Intersectoral Evaluation Committee</li> </ul>
<b>Less Successful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• direct engagement with civil society</li> </ul>		

## 7.2 Options for Consolidation of SINERGIA

Within this framework, and given the unique window of opportunity over the next three and a half years during the second Administration of President Uribe, what steps might offer the greatest potential for achieving a high level of institutionalization of SINERGIA, and of maximizing its prospects for sustainability? The priorities for consolidating SINERGIA would appear to include the following:

- ensure a much more focused, strategic approach to evaluation planning, under the leadership of the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee, to ensure that the range and depth of SINERGIA’s evaluations best support the government’s budget decision-making and national planning;
- foster much greater ownership of SINERGIA’s M&E information by sector ministries and agencies through their broader involvement in the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee, and through clearer roles, responsibilities and functions for the Committee;
- give the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee the responsibility to consider and agree the recommendations from the large number of evaluations which will be completed in coming years, and to ensure the implementation of these recommendations through their close monitoring;

- to achieve a demonstration effect, encourage a broader range of sector ministries and agencies to undertake evaluations through creation of a central pool of some evaluation funding to support rapid and impact evaluations. Such funding, which would ideally be overseen by the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee, would also help ensure the continuity of the government's evaluation agenda. It could also attract a range of donor funding;
- support the rapid evaluation pilots to be trialed by the Hacienda and DNP, with a view to their rapid expansion and consolidation if the pilots are judged to be successful. Seek close collaboration between the two ministries in these efforts;
- identify good-practice M&E approaches adopted by social sector entities (such as, possibly, MEN and ICBF), and use these as a basis on which the Intersectoral Evaluation Committee would mandate specific M&E functions which all ministries and agencies are required to undertake;
- strengthen the municipal pilots which are pursuing performance budgeting, and expand the pool of pilots to include some much weaker municipalities, with a view to the eventual consolidation of the approach at the sub-national level — involving centrally-determined standards and requirements — if the pilots are found to be fully successful and replicable;
- ensure much greater quality assurance of the data which ministries, agencies and sub-national governments provide for SIGOB — independent data audits will be required if a high level of credibility of SIGOB data is to be achieved;
- review the various data systems which central ministries maintain, with a view to seeking greater harmonization, simplification and coordination to prepare a set of basic standards of administrative data;
- ensure that both DANE and COINFO play an important role to guarantee the quality of data used by SINERGIA — in SIGOB and in evaluations — and to reduce its cost;
- explore ways to further reduce the cost of the impact evaluations conducted under SINERGIA — such as via the expansion of national statistical collections, and greater reliance on local Colombian evaluation consultants;
- establish the necessary linkages between the country's development goals, policies, (properly structured) programs and projects; only when these linkages are established can there be proper evaluation of Presidential Goals. Such policy evaluations should be piloted.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

SINERGIA is a well-performing, whole-of-government M&E system. The main challenge it now faces is its full institutionalization, so that it will continue to thrive and to support good governance after a change in administration. For SINERGIA to be fully sustainable in this sense will require the strengthening of both the demand and supply sides of M&E; these are closely related. The supply side can be strengthened by improving the quality and credibility of monitoring information, reducing the costs of data supply, and increasing the volume and breadth of types of evaluations which are conducted. The demand side can be strengthened by promoting greater awareness of, and confidence in, the monitoring information and evaluation findings which the system produces — awareness among ministers, civil servants, and in civil society. Greater utilization of M&E information will require that key ministers and their ministries — especially the Presidencia, DNP and Hacienda — play a leading and even forceful role in championing the usefulness of the M&E information produced by SINERGIA. This support will need to go well beyond simple advocacy, and will need to include steps to ensure the utilization of the M&E information to support budget and national planning decision-making and social accountability.

Sector ministers and their ministries also have a role to play in ensuring utilization of M&E information, in sector ministry policy development and planning, and in the ongoing management of government activities by ministries and entities. Their use of M&E information would be expected to encompass both the information produced by SINERGIA, and M&E information which their own ministries are meant to collect.

Thus on both the demand and supply sides, there is a need for greater clarity and focus of M&E roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. It is argued here that the CONPES and the Intersectoral Committee for Evaluation and Management for Results should play a significant role in the oversight of SINERGIA and in ensuring its full institutionalization to further strengthen sound governance.

## **Terms of Reference for an In-Depth Diagnosis of SINERGIA**

### **Introduction**

The Government of Colombia has been working since 1990 to create a robust and sustainable M&E system. The World Bank and other donors have provided a range of support for this purpose, including loans and technical assistance.

The objective of the current assignment is to prepare a diagnosis of the strengths and challenges facing the institutionalization of M&E in Colombia. Particular, but not exclusive, attention will be paid to the government's M&E system, SINERGIA. The World Bank has published a guide which provides an overview of concepts and issues, and which will assist in this diagnosis.

### **Tasks**

These ToRs specify the tasks to be undertaken in the assignment.

1. Prepare a diagnosis, of about 60-80 pages in length, providing an overview of the Colombian government's approach to M&E, with a particular focus on SINERGIA. The types of issue which the paper will be expected to address will include the following (an expanded listing of these issues is provided in the Attachment to these ToRs):
  - the genesis of the government's approach
  - legal and institutional framework
  - use of M&E for political and social control
  - role of M&E in the budget
  - role of M&E in preparation of national development plan
  - use of M&E by sector ministries / entities
  - M&E and results-based management
  - types and quality of M&E conducted under SINERGIA
  - other M&E work under aegis of SINERGIA
  - overall Colombian M&E strategy
  - conclusions and summary of recommendations
2. Preparation of the diagnostic paper is expected to involve a review of existing analyses and reports on SINERGIA and on related public sector reforms. It will also require close familiarity with the products of SINERGIA and the work of the unit in the Department of National Planning (the Directorate for the Evaluation of Public Policies) which manages the system. The current head of that unit, Sr./Sra. XXXXX, will be the main government liaison point for the purposes of this diagnosis. Interviews of key informants in government, congress, civil society, and in the donor community would be expected to be involved.
3. You will complete the paper, which is to be written in English, by xxxxx. You will also be provided with tickets for business class air travel to Colombia, and will be reimbursed for hotel and incidental costs at the standard World Bank per diem rates. You will be paid \$yyyy upon satisfactory completion of this diagnostic paper.

## **Diagnosis of the Colombian M&E System — Detailed Issues**

### **Genesis of Government's Approach**

What are the origins of M&E in Colombia? Who prompted this initiative and why? How has SINERGIA developed over time, and what have been the main events and circumstances underlying this evolution? What have been the stated purposes of SINERGIA (e.g., national or sectoral planning; budget decision-making; ongoing program management or results-based management; accountability relationships to DNP and the Hacienda, to the President's office, to Congress, to sector ministries, to civil society — “social control”), and have these stated purposes changed over time? How has the priority for M&E been stated, in terms of direct and indirect links, in the context of the main public sector reforms in Colombia? What types of M&E have been emphasized as SINERGIA has evolved over the three stages in this period (i.e., 1991 to date)?

### **Legal and Institutional Framework**

What laws, regulations, etc. govern the M&E system in Colombia (e.g., the constitutional requirement, the CONPES policy document, etc)? Who has been responsible for monitoring their application, and how closely have they been applied? What gaps and overlaps exist in them? What is the institutional framework under which M&E takes place? Roles of DNP, the Intersectoral Committee for Evaluation and Management for Results, CONPES, sector ministries, etc, in commissioning evaluations? What are the other roles/responsibilities of key stakeholders in SINERGIA? — DNP, Hacienda, the President's Office, the sector ministries and entities, the Contraloría, lower levels of government, and the Congress? What incentives exist for these stakeholders to take M&E seriously? — how strong is demand for M&E information?

### **Use of M&E for Political and Social Control**

How important has been the current President's support for SINERGIA? In what ways has the President used information from SINERGIA? How effective has M&E been in terms of improving the quality of public policy implementation? What have been its biggest successes/failures so far? Does Congress demand information on public sector performance? Does it use the M&E information provided via SINERGIA? Does it have the proper incentives structure? What information is available to the public and how is it used? How credible are SINERGIA M&E information to civil society? How can the use of M&E data be improved to promote greater accountability?

### **Role of M&E in the Budget**

Actual use of M&E information from SINERGIA by DNP (DIFP) and Hacienda during the various stages of the (split) budget process? — i.e., to support policy advising and planning; budget decision-making; performance review and budget reporting. What are the implications of the split investment / recurrent budget, and of the high degree of short-term budget rigidity, for SINERGIA? How useful has been the DNP's initiative to present a supplementary document for the investment budget, reporting the government's budget outputs on a programmatic basis? What types of performance budgeting might be feasible in Colombia? Is there any disconnect

between the M&E work of sector ministries and the use of such information in the budget process? What opportunities exist to strengthen the role of M&E in the budget?

### **Role of M&E in Preparing the National Development Plan**

Extent of actual use of M&E information from SINERGIA by DNP and sector ministries in the development of the 2006-2010 National Development Plan? Extent to which the Plan highlights monitoring information and evaluation findings?

### **Use of M&E by Sector Ministries / Entities**

Do sector ministries use the M&E information produced by SINERGIA? If so, how (e.g., for policy development and planning; budget allocations; program management; accountability requirements within the sector or externally)? If there is little or no utilization of M&E information, why is this? Do there exist “islands of good-practice M&E” in sector ministries / entities? Document in detail at least two successful ministry/agency M&E systems (e.g., ICBF, MEN). How persuasive are these islands for other ministries? To what extent has SINERGIA contributed to their development?

### **M&E and Government Performance**

Can the government reasonably expect its public sector to move towards greater use of M&E information? What changes to public administration (budgeting, human resource management, auditing and control, etc.) need to take place for this to happen? Is there genuine interest and demand from key stakeholders to make intensive use of M&E information?

### **Types and Quality of M&E Conducted Under SINERGIA**

#### **(i) Types of M&E**

Which types of M&E tool are emphasized in SINERGIA? — performance indicators; rapid reviews or evaluations; rigorous, in-depth impact evaluations; other? How much does each of these types of M&E cost? Report the total cost of each impact evaluation and of all other types of evaluation conducted so far, and provide a cost disaggregation into (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, (3) management and (4) dissemination. What has been the annual cost of SINERGIA in recent years? What are the implications of the heavy reliance on donor funding of SINERGIA?

#### **(ii) Performance Indicators and Data Systems**

Is there a disconnect between the SIGOB focus on Presidential Goals and the focus of sector ministries/agencies — are entities much more focused on micro, project-level issues. Are there multiple systems of performance indicators at the sector or agency level? To what extent are SINERGIA and ministry / entity data systems harmonized?; can they be harmonized (in terms of data definitions, periodicity, geographical coverage, etc), and what are the implications for M&E coordination and burden at the facility level? How are data requirements defined? What do SIGOB performance indicators focus on: spending; administrative processes; outputs and service delivery; outcomes; national impacts? How are data collected at the entity level? Are they adequately controlled for quality and content? Have any data audits been conducted by sector ministries / entities, or by the DNP, or others? What options exist to reduce the cost of evaluations through greater reliance on national statistical collections and less on ad-hoc data surveys? Are data processed adequately by SINERGIA and presented in a useful way? How are

data passed on to DNP? Data utilization — is it too much, too little, or just enough? How about timeliness? How can information management be improved? How are final reports prepared and presented to the President, Congress, and civil society?

### (iii) Impact Evaluations

Who commissions and manages impact evaluations? Which stakeholders are involved in determining which programs should be evaluated, and which issues investigated — are they focused on “problem programs”, pilot programs, high-expenditure or high-visibility programs, or are they based on a systematic research agenda to answer questions about program effectiveness? Who conducts the impact evaluations, and what quality assurance processes are followed? Which government programs have been subject to impact evaluation? Have any shortcomings been identified in the impact evaluations conducted so far under SINERGIA? Have these impact evaluations had any observable impact on policy decisions or on program management? What sectors are good candidates for such evaluations in the future? What are the strengths and weaknesses of local supply of M&E? What are the key capacity constraints and what are the capacity-building priorities?

### (iv) Other Types of Evaluation

Assess the usefulness of the pilot rapid evaluations (based on the evaluation approach of Chile’s *evaluations of government programs*) being conducted by the Hacienda and by DNP. What types of government processes — national planning, budget decision-making, ministry / entity management, social control — could be supported by a broader range of evaluation types being conducted under the aegis of SINERGIA? What issues and challenges would the government face if it decided to broaden the range of types of evaluation it commissions?

## **Other M&E Work Under Aegis of SINERGIA**

Make a rapid assessment of all other M&E capacity-building activities undertaken by DNP/DEPP, including: SIGOB pilots in municipalities; performance-budgeting pilots in municipalities; “institutional incentives”; etc.

## **The Overall Colombian M&E Strategy**

How comprehensive and appropriate is the strategy proposed by the CONPES policy document on M&E (CONPES 3294)? What are its strengths and shortcomings? How far along is its implementation? What issues need to be resolved to make it more effective? Is there adequate stakeholder buy-in? What opportunities exist for additional, lower-cost types of evaluation and review to be conducted? What is the appropriate balance between independent evaluation and self-evaluation, or can the benefits of both be obtained without incurring the disadvantages of either? What are the threats to sustainability of SINERGIA?

## **Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations**

What are the main strengths of SINERGIA and the remaining challenges it faces? What are the critical success factors and key options facing the institutionalization of SINERGIA and of M&E more broadly, in the government? How can the sustainability of SINERGIA be assured following the eventual change in Administration? Briefly, what are the key lessons for other countries?

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