

Critical Friends, Detached Observers, or Visiting Judges?

**Reflections on the Role of External Project
Monitors**

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Purpose of our Presentation

- **Explore concept of External Monitoring**
- **Share experiences and questions**
- **Looking ahead:**
 - **Is external monitoring obsolete?**
 - **Any lessons that could inform current and future practice?**



Monitoring Experience

- **Canada South East Asia Regional HIV/AIDS Project**
- **Pakistan Health Sector Program**
- **Nigeria AIDS Responsive Fund**
- **Southern Africa AIDS Training Program III**
- **Social Institutions Development Programme**
- **South Asia People and Policy Project**
- **Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Capacity Building Program (for DFID)**
- **Social Policy Reform in Transition Economies (World Bank Institute)**

Monitoring (OECD DAC)

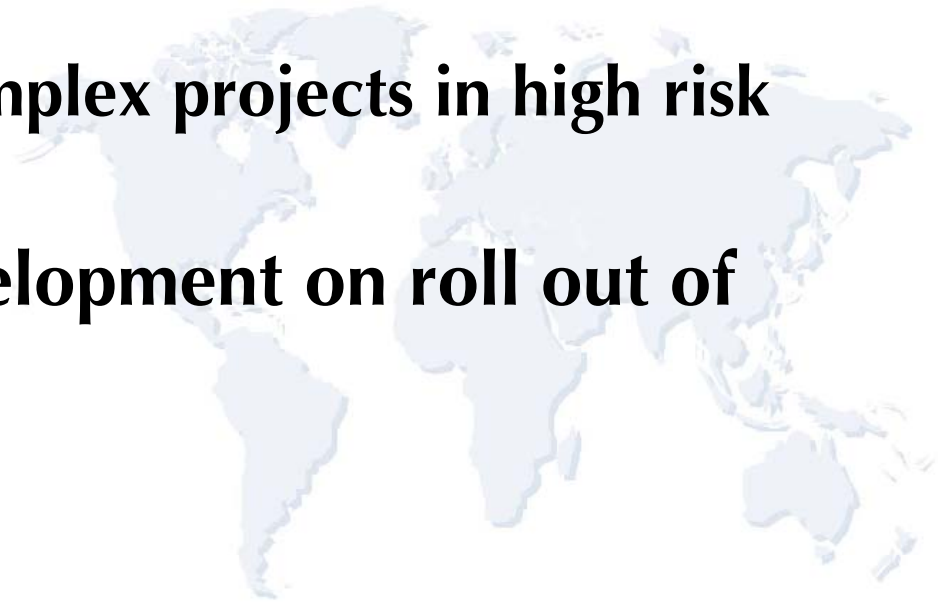
- **Continuing function**
- **Uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators**
- **Provides management and main stakeholders with indications of**
 - **Extent of progress and achievement of objectives**
 - **Use of allocated funds.**

External Monitoring

- **Independently review and report on performance**
 - **Review Baseline Data, progress reports and performance information**
 - **Undertake regular field visits**
 - **Participate in Committee meetings**
 - **Technical facilitation/capacity building**
 - **Provide advice on technical implementation**

Why do agencies use external project monitors?

- Range of technical competencies required
- Shortage of staff → outsource some aspect of quality control
 - Especially: large, complex projects in high risk environments
- Support capacity development on roll out of RBM



What's the difference?

- **External Monitoring**

- Ongoing
- Formative
- Comment on project documents
- Shorter reports
- Recommendations specific, practical, immediate

- **External Evaluation**

- One time event
- Formative or summative
- Use project documents to evaluate
- More primary data collection
- Broader recommendations

External Monitoring: The bright side

- **Outside View**
- **In depth knowledge of the investment**
- **Cumulative results tracking**
- **Mentoring/capacity development**
- **Mediation function**
- **Create opportunity for reflection**
- **Shape project directions**



External Monitoring: Limitations and Challenges

- **Role and responsibilities often not clearly defined**
- **Stuck between the fronts**
- **Loss of distance**
- **Visits often burden for project teams**
- **Is information & advice being used?**



Current Trends

- **Paris Declaration Context**
 - Shift towards programs/sectors & multilateral agencies
→ Fewer bilateral projects
 - Emphasis on local ownership/leadership
→ Fewer Northern Executing Agencies
- **Fewer external monitors used/needed**
- ***But:* Continued or even growing emphasis on accountability**

Conclusions

- **External monitoring in its old form becoming obsolete?**
- **But: Potentially valuable lessons from ext. monitoring experiences to date**
- **Elements of the concept can be helpful in new development context**
 - Involved but distanced observer/advisor
 - “Critical Friend”

Nearly the end

- **Please share your**
 - **Experiences**
 - **Questions**
 - **Comments**
 - **Suggestions**



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