International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

Annex 3: The different units of analysis that could be used to evaluate a complex program to support a ministry of transport's decentralized management and planning systems

The case describes a hypothetical by quite typical multi-component donor support program to a ministry of transport to help strengthen the ministry's commitment to decentralized planning and management and the promotion of district level initiatives. Box 1 summarizes the five components of this program, which include providing computer systems, training on financial management, decentralization planning and communication, and a fund to provide small grants to local districts for the purchase or construction of transport services.

Box 1: Components of a hypothetical Ministry of Transport support program to strengthen decentralized planning and management

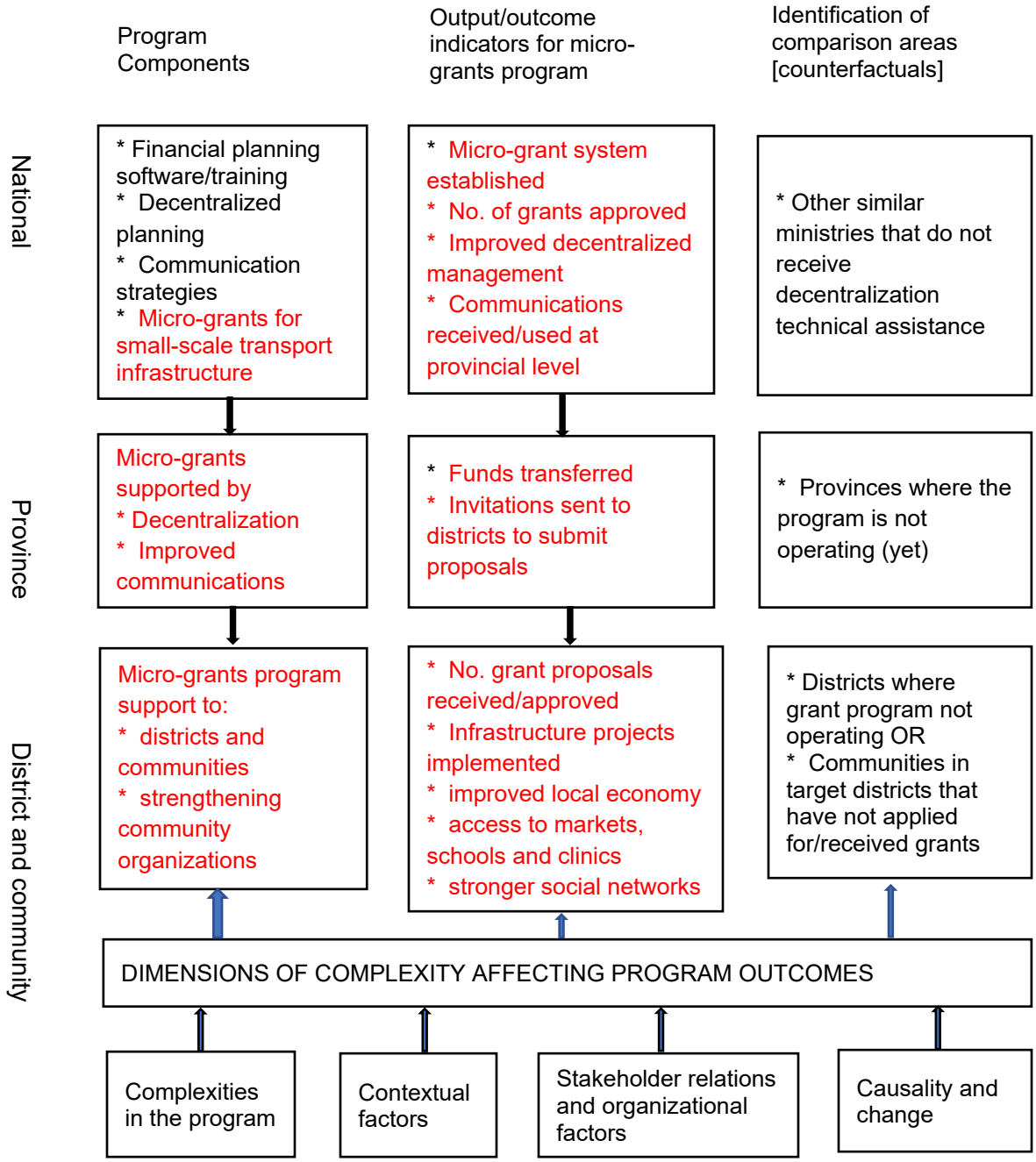
The hypothetical program includes the following main components:

- Provision of computers and planning and management software
- Reorganization and support for financial planning and management systems
- Decentralized planning of rural transport infrastructure and participation of local communities
- Communication strategies to inform districts and local communities about the program
- Micro-grants to local communities for transport infrastructure

Source: Adapted from Bamberger and Mabry 2020 Chapter 16

Figure 1 describes the structure of the program. It is managed at the national level and operates in a number of provinces. Within these provinces a number of pilot small grant programs have been approved in selected districts. Communities in these districts can submit proposals to obtain grants and technical assistance to support projects such as the construction or maintenance of local roads, subsidizing public transport or experiments with intermediate means of transport (IMTs) such as trailers that can be attached to a motor cycle to transport agricultural produce to markets. The figure lists some of the output and outcome indicators that could be used at each level of the evaluation. It also shows that the program only operates in certain provinces and districts so that the provinces/districts where it does not operate could be used as comparison groups to define the counterfactual. Some of the contextual factors, such as the local economy, local and national political scenarios, climate and population movements that can affect project outcomes overall and in particular regions, are also identified.

Figure 1: Unpacking the micro-grant component of a multi-donor supported decentralized transport support program



Possible units of analysis for unpacking the program into evaluable components

Various units of analysis could be considered to break the complex program into units/components that are easier to evaluate:

Option 1: The 5 main project components

- the provision of computers and planning and management software
- Support for reorganization of financial planning and management systems
- Decentralized planning of rural transport infrastructure and promotion of local community participation
- Communication strategies to inform districts and local communities about the program
- Microgrants to local communities for small-scale transport infrastructure

Option 2: Comparing programs in different provinces

Option 3: Comparing the operation of the program at different levels (national, regional and local)

Option 4: Preparation of case studies on a sample of district-level programs

Option 5: If a theory of change has been developed, it would be possible to compare different steps of the program.

The program can be considered complex because it involves five different components, operates in many different districts and provinces, involves a number of funding agencies and national planning and implementing agencies. It is also affected by a number of contextual factors (the local economy. water resources, demographic changes and migration, the local and national political context and the conditions of local transportation infrastructure and public services); and the processes of causality and change are likely to be complex and non-linear.

Source: Adapted from Bamberger and Mabry (2020) Real World Evaluation Chapter 16