

# Pioneering Real-time Impact Monitoring and Evaluation

## PROGRESS AND FIRST RESULTS

*PRIME NEWSFLASH, FIRST QUARTER OF 2014*

The first quarter of 2014 has come to an end and it is time for an update on PRIME. Key activities in the end of 2013 and early 2014 included: extracting, cleaning and mapping the existing M&E databases of CBI and PUM, a review of the literature on the impacts of advisory services on SMEs, preparation of the case study methodology and the participation in various interesting PRIME related events.

**In December and January the information of 850 CBI audits were converted from Word documents to an aggregated database in Excel.** Software was developed to search for data, perform data clearance, and put these in the right position in the Excel sheet. This and other information from CBI's internal data management system was converted in an analysable format and added to the aggregate PRIME database.

**PUM's data base management has been streamlined.** For PUM a generic computer model was developed to transform data from questionnaires to an analysable format (e.g. multiple answers to a question) or to add additional information to the database (e.g. country information).

**In the first quarter of 2014 the case study methodology was further elaborated.** An advanced working document was discussed in the contact group on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March. Preparations have started for the first two case studies: Indonesia and Bolivia. Preparatory studies are ongoing and missions are foreseen in the second quarter of 2014.

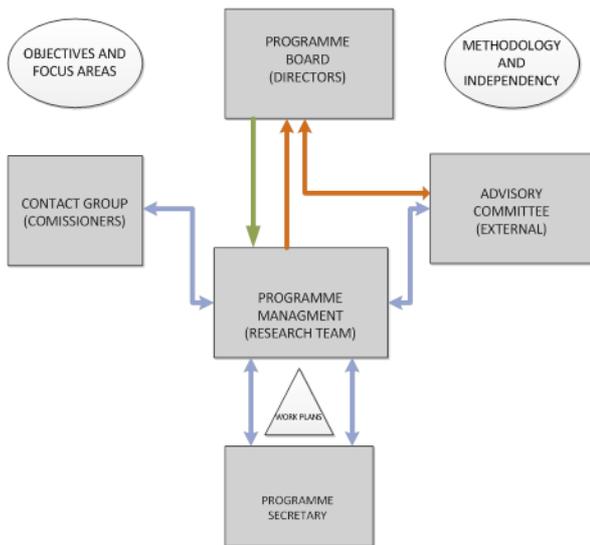
**Case study selection proceeded with the feasibility studies: desk-research and interviews with PUM and CBI staff.** Preparation included some very interesting interviews with staff, program managers, participants and experts from PUM and CBI. For the Bolivia case study, the research team talked also to local experts Sergio Prudencio and Karen Wachtel. Aside from Bolivia and Indonesia, four other countries have been selected provisionally based on a combination of criteria, using a random list of CBI intervention countries with the explicit objective to maximise diversity in terms of continent, and synergy with PUM.

**On the 12th of December the PRIME team participated in a seminar on "Impact evaluation in private sector support programmes" organized by LEI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.** The second session in this series of seminars discussed several approaches to tackle the challenges of measuring impact in these heterogeneous and complex programmes. Special invitees were Menno Pradhan from the University of Amsterdam, who explained the rationale behind randomizing interventions, and James Copeland from the University of Bath, who reflected on impact evaluations of Challenge Programmes in the UK.

**What is "PRIME"?** The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), the Foundation Netherlands Senior Experts (PUM), the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (LEI Wageningen UR) and the Erasmus School of Economics (ESE) develop a joint programme to pioneer impact evaluation methods of support to small and medium enterprises in developing countries. The PRIME programme is designed to develop an approach to data collection that enables the impact of PUM and CBI to be tracked while at the same time giving both organisations more insight into their interventions and the opportunity to learn about how they can manage for greater impact.

**How does PRIME use the M&E data?** Time-series datasets will be constructed with data on key indicators of new SME clients. This dataset will be used in the econometric analysis of impact and to develop a typology of different modalities of support provided.

**How does PRIME use the case studies?** The case-studies are complementary to the quantitative analysis of the monitoring data. Case-studies will include in-depth semi-structured interviews with client enterprises, non-client enterprises, BSO representatives, and local (sector) experts in order to get a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that resulted in the (non) changes in SME processes and performance.



CBI and PUM presented the PRIME-approach as a way to report and learn about impact in one of the four workshops.

**On the 9th of January the Programme Board met to discuss the work plan and budget for 2013-2014.** The discussions in the board meeting approved the new organogram, with a prominent role of a Contact Group to be in regular contact with the research team. PRIME will start activities with the approved budget and evaluate the progress quarterly with a new analysis of the budgets needed per activity and deliverable in the meeting in December 2014.

**On the 29th of January PRIME presented the overall methodological design to ITC staff.** The International Trade

Centre implements the third phase of the Netherlands Trust Fund Export Sector Competitiveness Programme (NTF III – ESCP). Based on the evaluations for the earlier phases, ITC sees the need for a more robust and credible monitoring of outcomes and impact of their interventions. ITC is aware of PRIME and indicated their interesting in participation. The research team presented the overall methodological design to ITC staff. A concept note is now under discussion. It responds to the observation in the final NTF II report that there is a need to find a limited set of informative indicators on progress and impact, monitored over a longer period of time.

**On the 30 of January the PRIME research team joined CBI's two-yearly External Experts Conference, entitled "Inspiration for Development-Trade 2.0".** In the afternoon sessions we organized, together with CBI, two 75-minute workshops. Our workshop entitled "No Impact without Monitoring and Evaluation" introduced the PRIME project to CBI's external experts. This workshop provided an ideal opportunity to harvest information and to get first-hand feedback from CBI's external experts. The collected input will be used, among others, to further develop our case study protocol, questionnaires and to define indicators to assess the success of a mission.

**In an meeting on the 23rd of January with PUM, an experimental research approach was discussed.** This discussion followed form another key finding from the literature namely that relatively little is known about the impacts of variation in the intensity of the projects. With regards to the activities of PUM this raises the question whether more impact can be generated by getting the experts to visit the SMEs multiple times, rather than the current 1-2 week mission. PUM and the research team agreed to design a pilot to research this issue through an experimental design.

**In February, the research team welcomed Fédés van Rijn, who has been contracted by LEI to work on impact evaluations.** She has just finalized her PhD thesis in the area of Development Economics. Together with Giel Ton, and with backstopping from Wil Hennen on data management, she forms the core PRIME research team in LEI. Karen Maas and Job Harms are the main researchers from ESE involved.

**On February the 13<sup>th</sup> PRIME researchers had a meeting together with the researchers of the Dutch Evaluation Office (IOB) and CBI to discuss the process of sector and beneficiary selection, the activity 'packages' and impact pathways.** This information is used by IOB and PRIME to refine the theory of change and outcome areas that need to have priority in the research. There followed an open discussion about the usefulness of the existing monitoring data and different approaches to counterfactual analysis in case-studies.

**In mid-February the staff of the WTO who visited The Hague.** Dick de Man of CBI referred to the PRIME project, and a Powerpoint presentation was provided to CBI to be circulated among the WTO delegation.

**On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March the draft synthesis report of the literature was discussed in the Contact Group meeting.** In the course of 2013, the team reviewed a rich body of empirical studies on the diverse ways in which prior economic studies have attempted to measure the impacts of advisory services on SMEs. One key finding is that a wide range of indicators are used to map impacts of advisory services on SME business practices, ranging from financial record keeping to registering with the chamber of commerce to risk-taking behaviour. The research team will select some of these indicators that may enhance the CBI and PUM M&E systems.