

REFINING THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR 2030

TECHNICAL NOTE 3

2016 MONITORING ROUND: LESSONS LEARNED

2016 MONITORING ROUND: LESSONS LEARNED

The 2016 Monitoring Round was officially launched in September 2015 and concluded with a High Level Meeting in November 2016. Throughout the different stages of this process, the OECD-UNDP Joint Support Team worked together with more than two thousand stakeholders at country, regional and global levels to run the exercise successfully. Although this round reached record level of participation, covered unprecedented amounts of development co-operation, and improvements in country-level support and data quality have been praised by many stakeholders, there is still room for improvement. Below are key highlights of areas for such improvement

- More time was requested for stakeholders to kick-start the process within their organisations and to nominate national coordinators and focal points;
- When the right people are identified, capacity building and communication efforts are more effective which, in turn, contributes to data quality and timeliness;
- High level championing was also called for, in order to support countries in gaining political engagement at intra and inter-ministerial level;
- Regular communication from the JST was highly valued as well as the support material provided, however countries requested these in other languages such as Arabic, Russian and Portuguese;
- Lack of capacity was raised as an issue by government but also by other parties involved, who asked to participate at the regional workshops;
- The role of single focal point for development partners could be used more widely in order to support national coordinators in countries where capacity is limited and to strengthen the collaboration with other stakeholders.

Lessons learned for each stage of the monitoring process are detailed further below.

Preparation and sensitisation

- **Create momentum ahead of the launch** is essential and contributes to having a higher rate of participation and timely implementation. Experience from the 2016 round shows that kicking-off the process within each constituency, identifying the right people and ministries and getting the necessary political engagement to the exercise can take several months. The 2-page **invitation letter signed by the Co-Chairs** in 2015 was valuable but it should be spread more widely and better targeted. Such formal high-level invitation served as a political incentive to engage ministries in the monitoring round and helped the technical staff getting the message across their ministries of the importance of this exercise. The 4-page **leaflet** containing basic information on the round, translated to several languages, was useful and should be maintained, but it needs a strengthened narrative and more elaborated outreach in order to better attract participants. Global Partnership Co-Chairs and Steering Committee members can also help building political buy-in within their constituencies by raising the importance of the monitoring exercise.
- **Maintain database updated and keep regular contact with monitoring participants.** It took longer than expected to get formal confirmation from countries that they would join the monitoring process. From June to September 2015 about 45 countries had indicated interest in participating in the monitoring round, around 70 by November and finally 81 in April-May 2016. In some cases, the contacts from previous round had changed and the Joint Support Team had to find new entry points. In other cases, the point of contact was identified quickly but they had to gather internal support in the ministry to run the exercise. Having an updated database of

contacts and keeping in touch with target participants in-between monitoring rounds may help speeding engagement. Peer pressure can also play a role; a country whose neighbours have signed up may be more motivated to engage.

- **Framework revisions need to be finalised well before starting a new monitoring round.** The methodology for indicators 1, 2, 3 and 4 was developed in 2015 and was concluded close to the kick-off of the exercise, reducing the time for proper inclusion into support material. Experience shows that it is important to conclude any refinement work of indicator methodology well ahead of kicking-off a new round to allow plenty of time for guidance preparation and training of participants.

Launch of the monitoring exercise

Provide more time and better guidance for the identification of national coordinators and focal points. At the launch of the monitoring exercise, participating countries are invited to appoint a national coordinator to manage the monitoring implementation at government level. Development partners are also asked to indicate a focal point at country level, to engage in the multi-stakeholder dialogue, and a headquarter focal point to oversee the data collection and validation. Other stakeholders are also asked to appoint focal points. In the case of the 2015-2016 monitoring round, this identification of national coordinators and focal points took longer than expected. Since the Joint Support Team targets communication and capacity building to these focal points, it is important that their nomination is accurate and timely, ideally before the regional pre-monitoring workshops take place. More time and closer guidance from the Joint Support Team may be necessary.

- **Ensure attendance of most national coordinators to the regional pre-monitoring workshops, and more inclusive participation from other stakeholders.** These workshops are the main capacity building tool as they are an opportunity for national coordinators and focal points to familiarise themselves with the monitoring methodology and process and to share experience from previous rounds. Some participants from the 2015-2016 monitoring round indicated that while the political authority in charge of the monitoring exercise attended the workshop, the technical staff actually implementing it and collecting data could not join. Having the right people/ministries present and notifying participants well ahead of the event were raised as practical matters to be improved. Another issue was the limited presence of other stakeholders in the workshops, since development partners were on a self-paid basis and CSOs were invited within the limits of the Joint Support Team budget. Technical capacity and engagement to the monitoring could improve with better representation of constituencies other than government. Providing more time and guidance for the nomination of national coordinators and focal points may improve workshop attendance.
- **Training and support materials were highly valued but should be translated to more languages.** Participants appreciated the detailed monitoring guide, terms of reference, FAQ, slides, excel tool, and other support materials prepared by the Joint Support Team plus the fact that they were all available in a single online repository. Translating the key documents to French and Spanish was crucial; Arabic, Russian and Portuguese should also be considered in future rounds as many countries have requested it. Webinars were used to train stakeholders who did not attend the workshops but attendance and effectiveness were limited. In the future, webinar sessions could be organised on specific topics for example to address frequently asked questions from participants.
- **Keep the process alive along the way** by communicating regularly with stakeholders. The Joint Support Team made great efforts to update participants with messages and information in several languages and formats. Participants tended to respond better to deadlines and requests when prompted with reminders. This constant communication was labour intensive for the Joint Support Team but yielded good results and should ideally be maintained in future rounds.

Data collection, validation and review

- **Customise support and process to meet participants' needs.** Commitment of national coordinators was affected by staff turnover, elections, transitions, conflict in country and competing priorities. When external support was available at country level (e.g. UNDP country office support), implementation tended to be more thorough, and the data submitted of better quality. The "global light, country focused" approach turned out to be heavy for some countries. Disparities in country capacity to implement the full monitoring exercise meant that some participants completed only a selection of indicators and were forced to downplay the multi-stakeholder dialogue aspect. External support covered some gaps in capacity but was available in only a few countries. Another challenge was the reliability and comprehensiveness of existing Aid Information Management Systems, which did not always offer the relevant information in a compatible format. Countries appreciated the flexibility of deadlines and customisation of monitoring process accorded to their specific needs.
- **Strengthen the role of single focal point for development partners at country level.** Participating countries identified timeliness and responsiveness of development partners as the most critical elements in support of data collection, followed by in-country capacity and availability of resources to lead the exercise. While in-country capacity and resources have on average worked well in several countries, timeliness and responsiveness of development partners and other government ministries or units are considered as in need for improvement by a large number of respondents to the survey (see Technical Note 4 for details). The single focal point for development partners, identified collectively by development partners in a country, is a key resource to facilitate data collection and validation together with national coordinators. The importance of this role can be further emphasised and the identification of focal points streamlined in future rounds. If development partners coordinate their efforts within their group and with the relevant national coordinator from the beginning of the process, the single focal point can be identified earlier on and can get the training and capacity needed to better performs its role.
- **Encourage capacity building initiatives by other stakeholders.** A correlation was observed between stakeholder engagement and the quality and timeliness of the data provided by that stakeholder. Development partners with strong internal headquarter support (internal HQ helpdesk, dedicated officer tracking country offices) were more timely and provided better information with greater country coverage. CPDE organised training sessions for CSOs who were involved in the monitoring round in various countries and this has clearly contributed to raising the quality of the process and the data coming from the multi-stakeholder dialogues. Although the JST has no capacity to train other stakeholders, it could provide material to facilitate capacity building initiatives inside each constituency. Steering Committee members could also play a role in conveying the importance of internal training to their constituencies.
- **Optimise the helpdesk.** A helpdesk was set up for participants to get direct technical support. The JST answered questions from all stakeholders on process, content and methodology, in several languages and in a short turnaround time. This direct communication channel with the JST was highly appreciated by participants but entailed a lot of time and required technical and language skills from the JST. The format and tool used could be improved in future rounds in order to optimise answers to the most common questions received throughout the round.

Aggregation, analysis, report production, and publication

- **Plan more time for the review and quality assurance of data submitted.** Disparities in data quality presented a challenge for aggregation and analysis. Many rounds of iteration and reminders were necessary to get clarifications, corrections and to complement missing data.

Sufficient time needs to be allocated to this stage of the process to guarantee that checks and corrections can be duly made.

- **Streamline co-operation between country and headquarters' offices of development partners.** Internal organisational matters made co-operation inside development partners' offices difficult at times. Throughout the monitoring round, national coordinators worked in consultation with development partners' country offices that were then expected to liaise internally with their headquarters or relevant data divisions for verification before getting back to national coordinators. On occasion, this flow of communication was not straightforward or there were differences in data. The JST supported efforts for agreement, making sure that modifications were channelled via national coordinators as part of this country-led exercise. Having the right focal points for development partners, both at headquarter and country levels, early in the process can improve internal communication between them, understanding of roles and responsibilities and further collaboration.
- **Strengthen capacity and resources to enable Joint Support Team support.** Aggregation of data, liaison with stakeholders for validation, analysis of information collected, research for additional evidence, report writing, editorial work, managing contribution from authors and production itself represented a very heavy workload and complex project for a team of 4-5 people. With some delays in data submission, the actual time to produce the report was shortened and did not allow for deeper analysis and complementary analytical work as was intended. Increasing human capacity and resources at the JST level should be considered in future rounds.

Dialogue and dissemination

- **Improve guidance for follow-up and use of findings.** More than two thousand people were mobilised around the 2016 Global Partnership monitoring round. This community of development actors should be kept engaged on a constant basis, beyond the publication of the report. After the High Level meeting, limited follow up was possible as the work for refining the monitoring framework had to start. For future rounds, participants might welcome more guidance on how to use findings and turn them into actionable information.
 - **Clarify link between political and technical levels engaged in the monitoring exercise.** The narrative should be further clarified, especially during the dissemination phase. If political engagement is limited, the monitoring round may end up as a mere technical exercise, not informing political discussions as it is intended to.
- Strengthen linkages between the Global Partnership monitoring with SDG review processes.** This link should be strengthened, particularly to the development community. The appeal of the Global Partnership monitoring will increase if there is a clear narrative containing a storyline of how this process effectively contributes to SDG implementation.