

Changes in needs over time

Introduction: Why do MSPs change with time

Change is an essential part of the MSP process. While one set of changes is chronological in nature and occurs by virtue of a new platform settling in and finding its stride; a second set of changes is more deliberate in nature, having to be promoted by the MSP members in recognition of the unique nature of its mandates and functions.

Phases of an MSP over time

Distinct phases can be identified in the life of an MSP. These can be broken down into, for instance:

- **Initiating**, including clarifying the reasons for having and MSP, undertaking various pieces of situation analysis, and getting people on board.
- **Adaptive planning**, including identifying different issues and opportunities for the MSP, bringing people together, and generating visions and strategies.
- **Collaborative action**, including agreeing detailed action plans, establishing management structures, and improving capacities and resources for implementation.
- **Reflective monitoring**, including defining success criteria and how the MSP will measure these, and how progress will be reviewed and lessons learned.

While this process is not linear or limited, with action and monitoring leading to further planning and so on, the different phases suggest that the MSP will have different needs in terms of stakeholders, inputs and priority actions as time goes by. It is important to recognise these changing

needs, and for an MSP not to be stuck in actions that belong in an earlier phase.

Adaptation and collaboration

One key change is in how stakeholders interact. As highlighted in other parts of the toolkit, successful and sustainable MSPs comprise of autonomous stakeholders who come together as an MSP as a means towards achieving their objectives. In other words, for an MSP to be effective, it must be in the individual interests of different actors to help the MSP achieve the shared goals.

But these new interactions are not necessarily easy or straightforward: The classic 'forming–storming–norming–performing' model describes how new teams come together with little agreement; go through points of conflict and power struggles; start to come to consensus on roles and responsibilities; and finally settle into working together to achieve their goals. These phases are a normal part of a new initiative, and should be planned for in MSP design.

How to facilitate change

Although each MSP will follow a process that is unique to its circumstances, there are some standard steps that can be planned for. There are key questions an MSP can ask itself to understand how it is doing in each phase, such as:

Initiating:

- Are the reasons for starting the MSP clear?
- Have the overall dynamics of the situation been adequately explored?
- Have respected champions been mobilised?
- Is there a legitimate steering group in place?
- Has stakeholder support been established?

- Are the mandate and scope of the MSP clear?
- Is there an outline of the process?

Adaptive planning:

- Are understanding and trust being developed between stakeholders?
- Have visions for the future been generated?
- Have the issues and opportunities for different stakeholder groups been identified?
- Have strategies for change been agreed upon?
- Have responsibilities been agreed upon?
- Are the outcomes of the process being shared and well communicated?

Collaborative action:

- Have action plans been developed?
- Have resources and support been secured?
- Do stakeholders have the capacity needed to take action?
- Are the necessary organisational structures in place?
- Is stakeholder commitment being maintained?

Reflective monitoring:

- Has a learning culture and environment been created?
- Have success criteria been defined?
- Have monitoring mechanisms been developed and implemented?
- Has progress been reviewed and evaluated and lessons identified?
- Have the lessons learned been fed back into the strategy and implementation procedures?

The rest of this toolkit contains the detail of how to achieve these actions. The important thing to note is that the needs and opportunities of the MSP will change over time, and this should be factored in to the planning and design of the MSP itself.