

Identify issues and opportunities

Why is this important for MSPs?

The role and shape of MSP platform differ from country to country and may also vary between different scales, such as regional to national. **MSPs have to continuously respond to new socio, economic and political challenges as they evolve, expand and develop within a context.** Getting people to work together across various sectors and scales (national, regional and local) is a key challenge in starting and sustaining the MSP. Therefore, it is important to identify the needs and demands within the system and amongst the stakeholders, and effectively respond to these challenges.

It is likely that **different stakeholders will identify different issues and opportunities**, and it is important to understand the different experiences and expectations among MSP members so that these can be factored in to MSP design. This helps MSP members to see where there is commonality and where there is difference, and to play to their respective strengths within the MSP.

Understanding and strengthening a system of incentives – personal, professional and political – can go a long way in **building synergies** and encouraging partners to work together, and also keep stakeholders motivated as the MSP develops. These incentives may vary from according to the context and stage of the MSP. For example, the initial phase may require different kinds of incentives as compared to MSPs in their later or more mature stages when the system has been decentralised or has expanded to include various other stakeholders and networks, and thus there is more pressure to maintain motivations and interest from individuals and actors.

By contrast, in the initial phases, key opportunities and policy windows will need to be identified to introduce and institutionalise the MSP. In short, as the MSP develops and expands, a **more robust system of institutional incentives** is required to maintain its momentum and facilitate collaboration across various sectors.

How does this work in practice?

Incentives can range from being personal, professional or institutional. Though usually understood to be personal financial rewards, our research suggests that non-monetary incentives also tend to drive people to collaborate and come together. Some of the incentives could be:

Alignment of interests: The SUN-MSP framework does not financially reward individual stakeholders but common interest or shared vision can drive people to work together. For example, **Kyrgyzstan** witnessed a strong convergence of interests around flour fortification which eventually led to passing a legislation on the issue. On the one hand, flour fortification helped combat the challenge of anaemia in the country, it also boosted the sale of fortified flour, on the other hand, thus benefitting the business network.

Streamlining the funding system: The system of consolidated funding also provides a way for developing partnerships and aligning goals. For example, **in Nepal**, a Basket fund was created where the government and the Development partners make their financial contributions. The National Planning Commission (the platform where the MSP is hosted) is in-charge of releasing funds. There are some overlaps with other ministries resulting in parallel funding at the local level but having one disbursement agency for nutrition programmes may also lead to better financial management of programmes and create institutional incentives for partners to be more accountable.

Synergies at sub-national levels: Parallel reporting and governing structures can demotivate staff because it increases their workload. While senior policymakers may not be motivated to attend several meetings on the same issue, local level staff may be overly burdened by parallel reporting structures. It is important to identify institutional convergence to minimise such challenges. For example, **in Sri Lanka**, collaboration at sub-national levels is more effective because the nutrition steering committees are layered over existing administrative committees put in place to review the implementation of development programmes at the sub-national level. Programme and institutional convergence have helped in strengthening departmental coordination and in developing mutual trust across various stakeholders.