

Review progress and use lessons

Why is this important for MSPs?

Once stakeholders have agreed on their key indicators and success criteria (see Define success criteria), MSPs should set up systems to gather this information. MSPs can then use this data to answer questions about the MSP's success. Remember that a useful definition of success for MSPs is if they can emerge, maintain themselves over time, and realize activities related to their goal (see Concepts and definitions). **MSPs should be monitored (and perhaps occasionally evaluated) just like projects, regularly and with relevant questions and indicators.** The methodologies might differ, however, as qualitative data such as the views of MSP stakeholders on how the platform is functioning will be just as important as numerical data on numbers of meetings or resources confirmed.

The lessons that are learned through this process of monitoring can then be used by MSPs to keep doing what is working, and change what is not. Since there is always uncertainty in the life of an MSP, members should be prepared to try out lots of different ideas to see what happens, and accept that some of these ideas will not work as expected. Adaptation to things not working becomes an integral part of the innovation and change process – the basis for new learning. The important thing is to **carry out regular monitoring and gain rapid feedback so that the MSP can respond quickly and adjust the approach as necessary.**

This **reflective monitoring practice** lies at the centre of the MSP process model, embedded in the other phases. In other words, reflective monitoring is something **the MSP should do**

continuously in all phases. People tend to think of monitoring as something to do when it's time to prepare a report, often at the very end of the project. But monitoring can be one of your most valuable resources – the best way to learn about what is working and what isn't, and what you should change. Reflective monitoring is an integral part of adaptive planning and management and **is critical for building learning loops into activities.**

Adaptive planning means developing plans based on the present situation, and adjusting them as the situation changes. Essentially it is 'responsive' rather than 'prescriptive'. Planning for your MSP involves engaging stakeholders to work out what change is needed, and exploring how to bring that change about. You build a joint Theory of Change with stakeholders as you go along, with the assumptions made explicit (it is important to ensure that diverse stakeholders are involved at this stage representing multiple perspectives and ideas). This Theory of Change will act as a roadmap to be reviewed during the reflective monitoring process.

In order to establish a monitoring mechanism, the MSP will need to develop a shared strategy and action plan for data collection and processing; analysis, critical reflection, and decision-making; communication and reporting; capacities and conditions; incentives for monitoring and evaluation (M&E); a management information system; and financial resources. The lessons learned should lead to changes being made in the various aspects of the MSP, including process, structure, management, reporting, and communicating. Is the story being told of how you have adapted or are encouraging people to adapt? Has learning been fed back into the practices you are currently undertaking or planning for the future? Are you using the lessons learned to fine tune both the initiative/project, and the actual process of monitoring and evaluation?

How does this work in practice?

The SUN MSP in **Indonesia** recently underwent a reflective process, along with other MSPs, as part of a project led by international research and consultancy organisations and funded by an international donor. The country had recently launched a Road Map guiding their nutrition activities for the next five years. However, they did not have a country-specific theory of change or monitoring plan developed. The government had a national action plan on food and nutrition which aligned with SUN's vision, emphasising common nutrition goals and integrated nutrition interventions across sectors. The collaborative process engaged all stakeholders in the MSP with interviews, and held several meetings with the SUN management team in Indonesia. The result was a document that explores how relevant, credible evidence can be identified, used and improved to understand the effectiveness of the SUN Movement against its own theory of change. It was intended as a self-reflection document to SUN members: To what degree are SUN's activities in Indonesia enabling the expected behaviour change, commitment to common nutrition goals, resource mobilisation and alignment of implementation? Are these results putting the country on a track to eliminate malnutrition? Is the current evidence adequate to make these assessments?