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Decentralization and Local Governance Network

OUTCOME MONITORING TOOL

SDC LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME IN RAJSHAHI AND SUNAMGANJ - SHARIQUE

Country: Bangladesh

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List of Abbreviations

Capex	Capitalization of Experiences
CBO	Community Based Organisation
LGSA	Local Governance Self-assessment
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
OM	Outcome Monitoring
OMT	Outcome Monitoring Tool
Sharique	Local Governance Programme in Rajshahi and Sunamganj
UP	Union Parishad
UZP	Upazila Parishad

1. Key Features and Learnings

> - The OMT measures performance and governance quality at the local government level along 17 indicators divided into 120 sub-indicators (quarterly OM sheets)
> - Serves to provide a comprehensive picture on the situation "in the field" with the main purpose to measure project progress at outcome level; can serve for benchmarking
> - Qualitative indicators are "quantified" by a scoring system, which is done on quarterly basis
> - Can be harmonized/aligned with other projects, donors and/or the national government, provided they are interested and involved in the definition of the indicators and the system details
> - The OMT should be repeated on a regular basis, to serve as tool to measure changes
> - Partners must be involved in the different stages (design, data collection, results discussion), to ensure context relevance, learning aspects and ownership
> - A combination of methods in data collection is needed to ensure accuracy of data (focus group interviews, local government records, opinions of CBOs and citizens, statistics, reports etc.)
> - Analytical capacities are required to draw right conclusions from the considerable data, external moderation/data collection is needed
> - Stable legal and institutional framework and minimum political stability is required (leadership, core staff continuity), where main structures are settled and existence of local government system is not put into question

2. Fact Sheet

Outcome Monitoring Tool, Sharique Bangladesh	
Developed by	▪ Sharique – SDC' Local Governance Programme in Bangladesh, implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation
Applied in	▪ 130 UPs and 21 UZPs (1st and 2nd tier of local government)
Purpose	1) To measure project progress at outcome level in order to ensure effectiveness (reporting) 2) To serve as a learning tool for the team, partner NGOs and the partner local governments 3) To prepare capex and knowledge management products, serving for policy dialogue 4) To assess performance of partner local governments (basis for providing co-financing) 5) To serve as benchmark among the involved partner local governments
Methodology	▪ The cornerstone of the OMT are quarterly OM sheets, collecting data/information along a list of 17 outcome indicators and 120 sub-indicators for each Local Government Unit ▪ The OMT contains an indicator scoring system to quantify changes ▪ The information from the OM sheets is analyzed and translated into different project and knowledge management reports and products ▪ Data collection by diverse methods (focus groups disc., reports, LG records etc
Products	▪ Quarterly OM sheets for each Local Government ▪ Analysis of data in regular project reports, capex and policy documents
Dimensions / aspects addressed	▪ Comprehensive picture addressing the overall performance and governance situation in the local government units. 17 outcome indicator categories cover aspects as leadership, organisation, capacities, access to services, planning, budgeting, decision making, citizens' participation and inclusion. ▪ Particular emphasis on the role and voice of women and marginalized groups ▪ Does not address the national decentralisation process/policy ▪ Power relations partly addressed (focus on gender and marginalized) ▪ Not designed to measure cost -benefit elements.
Indicators	▪ Quantitative and qualitative indicators: "Measuring" of qualitative indicators is done by a scoring system based on perceptions of persons involved
Attribution	▪ Must be done by analysis of the data
Conditions	▪ The main purpose should be agreed from the beginning ▪ A first round of applying the OMT can serve as baseline assessment (complemented with other tools for specific aspects which are not covered by the tool) ▪ The OMT should be repeated on a regular basis ▪ Partners must be involved in the design, data collection, results discussion ▪ Coherence and a common understanding on the tool and its main indicators is a must (good training and coaching is needed) ▪ The persons collecting data must have a good understanding of the LG system ▪ A combination of methods in data collection is needed (focus group interviews, local government records, opinions of CBOs and citizens, statistics, reports etc.) ▪ Analytical capacities are required to draw right conclusions from the data collected ▪ External moderation/data collection is needed ▪ Stable legal and institutional framework ▪ Minimum political stability; linked to a certain continuity at partners level in terms of leadership and core staff ▪ Relationship based on mutual trust, where issues can be addressed and discussed ▪ Mid- to long term commitment with sufficient resources from project/donor side

Remarks	▪ The OMT is resource intensive, if it is applied in a broad geographic outreach ▪ High potential for harmonisation with other programmes/donors and/or alignment with a national monitoring system ▪ If the tool is aligned with a national monitoring system, national actors should take the lead in defining the indicators and the facilitation of the OMT implementation ▪ The OMT should be linked to project/partners' planning cycle and schedule
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3. Introduction and Background

The project and its main outcomes

SDC' Local Governance Programme - Sharique (since 2006, financed by SDC and implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation) aims at building the capacities and competencies of Local Governments - Union Parishads (UP) and Upazila Parishads (UZP) - to operate in an accountable, participatory, transparent, socially inclusive and effective manner. The project goal is to empower the poor men & women and the disadvantaged to claim their rights and entitlements, and to benefit from more effective service provision by the local governments in Rajshahi and Sunamganj regions. Sharique works along three outcomes:

O1) Supply side: 130 UPs and 21 UZPs manage public affairs and resources in a more participatory and inclusive, transparent and accountable way (defined by 7 specific outcome indicators);

O2) *Demand side*: Poor men and women and disadvantaged groups know their rights and responsibilities and negotiate their interests in local planning and decision making (defined by 4 specific outcome indicators);

O3) *Knowledge Management and Advocacy*: Experiences and lessons are utilized to influence public debate, local governments and related national institutions, policy & regulations (defined by 6 specific outcome indicators);

Main interventions relate to capacity building of local governments and citizens networks; Support to participatory processes of UPs and UZPs; Creating community awareness by local cultural activities, local governance self assessments and participatory gender analysis; Policy advocacy based on knowledge management; Strategic co-financing. The project works in cooperation with 6 local NGOs and the National Institute of Local Government, in closed exchange with relevant national networks.

The Outcome Measurement methodology

Sharique developed in close consultation with the main project partners (donor, NGOs, NILG, local governments) an output and outcome monitoring tool (OMT) during the second year of phase 1. The OMT focuses on a list of 17 outcome indicators and 120 sub-indicators along the 3 project outcomes of the project logframe. The cornerstones of the OMT are quarterly *OM sheets*, which gather the relevant information from the field in the 130 Ups and 6 Upazilas the project works with. The sheets contain a scoring system, where changes and progress can be quantified. The information from the OM sheets is analyzed and translated into different project and knowledge management reports and products.

4. Application of the Outcome Measurement methodology

Main purpose and link to baseline

The OMT was developed by Sharique for the project monitoring. The purpose(s) of the OMT is

1) To enable the project to measure progress at outcome level in order to ensure effectiveness

2) To report to the donor and the project Steering Committee

3) To serve as a learning tool for the team, the partner NGOs and the partner local governments

4) To prepare capitalization and knowledge management products, serving also for policy dialogue

5) To evaluate the performance of partner local governments (basis for providing co-financing)

6) To serve as benchmark among the involved partner local governments

As it is done quarterly and linked to a scoring system, it allows tracking progress/regress of each partner UP as well as benchmarking among the involved partners (also at UZP and district level). Although there was no overall assessment done at the beginning of the project, Sharique could refer to its Local Governance Assessments (Baseline Study) done during phase 1 and the list of final Outcomes measured by its OMT at the end of phase 1 to define present baseline indicators.

The process and actors involved

Sharique is responsible for the design and quality control of the process. Field facilitators from the partner NGOs organize the data and information collection in close consultation with the partners in the field. Partners and beneficiaries act as key informants to fill in the OM sheets. Diverse sources of information are used, such as records of UPs/UZPs, opinions of UPs/UZPs, opinions of CBOs and citizens groups, LGSA reports, participatory gender analysis reports, focus group discussions, special study reports as well as selected secondary sources (Local Government Ministry websites and publications, NILG website and publications). Following are the main steps while applying the OMT:

	Activity	Who
1	Definition of outcome indicators (total 120) along the 3 outcomes and 17 outcome categories and definition of the scoring system, elaboration of the OM sheets	Sharique, partners consulted
2	Quarterly gathering of information (hard data, discussions, group interviews, LGSA etc) and filling-in of OM sheets (130 UPs, 6 UZPs)	NGO FF, partners consulted
3	Analysis of OM sheets/data and transfer into project reports/ (half yearly)	Sharique
4a	Transfer of main learnings in annual work plan	Sharique
4b	Analysis of OM sheets, complemented with other information to produce capex documents	Sharique
4c	Analysis of OM sheets to establish "UP performance list" to rank UPs qualifying for co-financing	Sharique

Indicators

Indicators and sub-indicators are partly quantitative, partly qualitative. The scoring system allows to quantifying these indicators in order to measure changes[1]. For further details on the indicators, see annex 1 (OM sheet) with a partial list of the sub-indicators.

Resources required

No separate structure and staff was required for administering this OMT. Monitoring is the responsibility of all operation staff of the project. But, the geographic outreach and the high number of partners require engaging considerable human resources for OMT data collection: quarterly 4 days per UP (total 480 days) plus 2 days per UZP (total 12 days) for preparing the OM sheet data collection processes. 2 regional coordinators also collect district level information (1 day each quarterly). In addition, the national/deputy coordinator spends at least 1 day/year for collecting national level data. These data are compiled and analyzed at different level (6 Project managers, 12 Project Officers, 2

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[1] E.g. OM Indicator 1: "UP Standing Committees": sub-indicator 1.1 (quantitative) "Total number of existing SCs formed according to guidelines"; Sub-indicator 1.5 (qualitative) "How effective are the SCs in fulfilling their responsibilities *(fully: 4; mostly: 3; some 2; hardly: 1; none: 0).*

Regional Coordinators and National Coordination Unit) requiring 3 days/year an average. A reduction of time efforts is planned changing the sequence from quarterly to half-yearly OM sheets.

Products

The main product of the OMT is the quarterly OM sheets (for 120 UPs and 6 UZPs). They serve as basis for project steering and management, to produce regular project reports, capex and policy documents. In addition a "UP performance list" is established (category A, B, C) to select the UPs qualifying for the project co-financing scheme.

5. Analysis and Main Lessons Learnt

a. The OM methodology

The OMT is a tool developed by the Sharique project to measure performance and governance quality at the local government level along 17 indicators divided into 120 sub-indicators. It serves to provide a comprehensive picture on the situation "in the field" with a lot of information and data, going beyond mere project objectives and working areas. Partners and beneficiaries were actively involved during the main steps (design, implementation, analysis discussion). The tool is resource-intensive, with many data and information collected, which need to be analysed and processed.

b. Purpose(s) of the methodology

The OMT can serve for multiple purposes. The main purpose of the tool is to measure outcomes of the project interventions, i.e. to use in the management of the project and report to the donor and the steering committee. In addition, the OMT is aiming to promote discussion and learning among the project partners and beneficiaries as well as to provide data and information to produce knowledge management products, which can be used for policy dialogue. The tool can also serve for benchmarking among the involved local governments and to measure progress over time. In Sharique, the benchmarking served to categorize UPs for a project related co-financing mechanism. As the tool provides a broad picture about the governance situation in the assessed local governments, it could also serve as national local governance monitoring system and/or as harmonized donor monitoring system.

c. Which aspects can be measured with the methodology?

The OMT provides a comprehensive picture addressing the overall performance and governance situation in the local government units. The 17 outcome categories cover diverse aspects such as leadership, organisation, capacities, access to services, planning, budgeting, decision making, with a particular emphasis on the role and voice of women and marginalized groups.

The methodology does not address the national decentralisation process/policy, although the collected and processed information can provide learnings to identify issues to be brought up in the national reform dialogue and/or for specific sector policy change (capex/policy documents need to be developed). Partners' capacities and the way they are used as well as attitude and behavioural changes are addressed, however again in an indirect way (analysis of data is needed).

Measuring of progress along the five good governance principles is possible, although the indicators are structured differently. Transversal topics like gender and social inclusion are strongly addressed by a particular set of indicators. Concrete improvements for citizens are partly addressed (access to services, information), but to get the full picture complementary tools should be used (LGSA in the case of Sharique). Power relations are also partly addressed, by a set of indicators on gender sensitive and pro-poor planning, service delivery, budgeting and the voice of these disadvantaged groups in decision making processes. Cost-benefit elements are not addressed by the tool.

The OM sheet contains a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Qualitative indicators are "quantified" by a scoring system, which is done on quarterly basis, which allows to measure changes. In how far occurred changes relate to project initiatives (attribution question) can only be

responded by analysing the data. The tool provides information and data about changes, not about the reason why they occurred.

d. Harmonization and integration

Harmonization with other programmes/donors is possible and highly recommendable. Although the main purpose was to measure project outcomes, the tool provides a comprehensive overview of the local governance situation, which can serve different programmes and/or donors provided they are interested and involved in the definition of the indicators and the system details.

The tool is also appropriate for alignment with a national monitoring system (not existing in Bangladesh). In this case, the indicators would need to be defined from the beginning jointly with the national government/actor.

Harmonization with SDC has been done in Bangladesh; the OMT indicators include indicators from the SDC country strategy monitoring system. Still some gaps exist due to a mismatch in the timing of the reporting system.

e. Conditions required and relevance of context

Following elements are important prerequisites for an effective use of the OMT:

- The monitoring system should be designed at an early stage of a programme (or a harmonized initiative) to be able to measure progress over time
- The main purpose should be agreed from the beginning, this will serve to clarify the different actors' roles and their involvement
- Baseline data are needed, a first round of applying the OMT might serve as baseline assessment (complemented with other tools for specific aspects which are not covered by the tool)
- The OMT should be repeated on a regular basis, to serve as tool to measure changes
- Partners must be involved in the different stages (design, data collection, discussion on results), to ensure consideration of context specific indicators, learning aspects and ownership. If the tools is aligned with a national monitoring system, national actors should take the lead in defining the indicators and the facilitation of the OMT implementation
- Coherence and a common understanding on the tool and its main indicators is a must. In particular the persons in charge of data collection must follow similar standards to ensure accuracy and comparability of collected data and information (good training and coaching is needed). They also need to have a good understanding of the local government system.
- A combination of methods in data collection is needed to ensure accuracy of data (focus group interviews, local government records, opinions of CBOs and citizens, statistics, reports etc.)
- Excellent analytical capacities are required to draw right conclusions from the considerable amount of data collected
- The OMT should be linked to the project/partners' planning schedule to ensure that learnings are translated into actions
- External moderation/data collection is needed, as qualitative indicators are measured along self-assessments by the partners. This is particularly relevant for the scoring exercise. The OMT should be kept as lean as possible with a limited number of highly relevant indicators, to ensure getting a comprehensive picture within limited resources.
- A harmonised system (key indicators) with the donor agency (and other key partners as national government indicators) must be sought for smooth reporting and easy aggregation among the portfolios / country progress.
- The OMT should be kept as lean as possible with a limited number of highly relevant indicators to limit the necessary resources and complexity as well as enhance the relevance and use of the system.

Following contextual elements are important:

- Stable legal and institutional framework, where main structures are settled and existence of local government system is not put into question

- Minimum political stability; linked to a certain continuity at partners level in terms of leadership and core staff
- A minimum level of understanding and capacities among partners
- Relationship based on mutual trust, where issues can be addressed and discussed in an atmosphere of sharing and learning. If involved persons feel pressure it will be difficult to get accurate information
- Mid- to long term commitment with sufficient resources from project/donor side
- Key objectives of local governance are defined by government and donor that can be translated into measurable indicators

6. Concluding Remarks

The OMT is a tool providing comprehensive information of the local governance situation and the local governments performance/outcomes "in the field". Defined indicators are relatively simple, easily replicable and adaptable to specific contexts. It can serve as instrument to measure change over a certain period and to benchmark among different local government units. The tool has high potential for harmonized initiatives and/or for alignment with a national monitoring system.

The main challenge of the tool relates to the considerable human resources required for data collection and analysis (using less indicators might lead to a certain reduction). All persons involved must be well trained and instructed, to ensure coherence and similar standards in applying the tool. High analytical capacities are required to draw right conclusions from the considerable amount of data collected. Many elements can be addressed, with certain deficiencies related to cost-benefit and power relations. External moderation is a must, be it from a programme or from an independent national actor, who has a good understanding of the local governance situation in the country.

7. References/Additional Information

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8. Annex: Sharique Outcome Monitoring Sheet (Partial view)

Note: *Altogether, there are 17 categories of questions in the format, as shown below, with specific questions under each heading (e.g. as shown for S/N 1)*

Monitoring Period (quarter):	Date of completion of this report:		Name op UP :			
Name of Upazila:	Name of responsible FF:		Name of PNGO:			

S/N	Issue	Baseli-ne	Q 1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Com-ments
1	**Standing Committees (SCs)**						
1.1	Total number of existing SCs formed according to guidelines						
1.2	Total number of SCs that have held meetings and/or have conducted activities						
1.3	Total number of co-opted Standing Committee members						
1.4	Total number of women co-opted Standing Committee members						
1.5	Total number of poor co-opted Standing Committee members *(poor means belonging to the lowest socio-economic strata of that locality)*						
1.6	How effective are the Standing Committees in fulfilling their responsibilities *(fully: 4; mostly: 3; some 2; hardly: 1; none: 0)*						
2	**Public Meetings organized by Ups**						
3	**Union Parishad Taxes**						
4	**Record keeping and financial management**						
5	**Training on leadership and management skills**						
6	**Project Implementation Committees**						
7	**Project Supervision Committees**						
8	**CBO/CP - UP negotiation meetings**						
9	**Coordination meetings**						
10	**Public information**						
11	**Access to the Union Parishad**						
12	**Decision-making process**						
13	**Safety net measures (VGD, VGF etc.)**						
14	**Procurement**						
15	**Village Court**						
16	**Access to Services**						
17	**UP Plans**						