
POLICY BRIEF 2 – OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Based on Case Study Assessments of Local Governance Programmes

Background & Objectives

Local governance projects and initiatives are always designed to induce change at partners' level. Therefore, "measuring" to what extent national/local development partners have been strengthened and to what extent change has happened is of particular interest. This can only be done by clarifying how results measurement in a multi-stakeholder set-up is currently practiced, what tools are developed for that purpose and what experiences have been made with their application.

SDC identified the biggest interest and 'learning field' at the outcome level of their projects/programmes and therefore mandated HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation to analyse six SDC supported programmes (see policy brief 1) in the areas of local governance. The selection of case studies was done along criteria ensuring a combination of diverse outcome monitoring (OM) methodologies and their application in different continents and contexts. This learning project thus puts the focus on measurement of outcomes in local governance programmes.

The objectives of the two briefs are to summarise the recommendations of this learning project and provide development practitioners with short guidance – on strategic and on operational level - to strengthen programme interventions in outcome measurement based on key learnings from the case studies.

Recommendations

The following list of recommendations is not exhaustive and primarily based on the key lessons from the reviewed case studies (for the more detailed analysis and recommendation please refer to the analytical paper). The recommendations from policy brief 1 imply partially directly and indirectly also on the operational level as e.g. the attribution gap and the importance of context analysis and monitoring.

- 1) **Role of the donor in selecting the OM methodology:** The donor needs to take the lead and provide guidance on the selection of the methodology. Many methodologies do exist; all of them have advantages and disadvantages. The design of new methodologies for each project and programme should be avoided. Increased involvement of the donor in monitoring would also allow for continuity in the collection of certain data. It is crucial, that the donor community keeps its commitment from Busan to support and ensure that countries develop their own M&E system particularly in the areas of local governance.
- 2) **Purpose of the OM:** The main purpose of the methodology of outcome measurement must be defined and agreed on from the beginning and be embedded in the theory of change. Most OM methodologies can serve multiple purposes. OM systems should not only focus on the specific narrow project objectives/outcomes and do more than simply collect data. A project/programme should be able to extract its results and learnings, but this should not be the only purpose. Each OM system should also serve to conduct a dialogue with the partners and contribute to the

policy discussions in a country in order to raise awareness on change processes. Such mechanisms need to be planned and defined from the beginning.

- 3) **Involvement and ownership of partners:** An OM system must be developed jointly with the main partners to build trust and mutual understanding. They must take a leading role in the “measurement” of change in order to ensure learning, ownership and a follow-up by specific actions. It is the task of a programme to create and facilitate such spaces, where an open and self-critical discussion is promoted. Depending on the chosen methodology, partners take the lead (self-assessments) or act rather as key informants. This process can be used for capacity building among partners.
- 4) **Consideration of different perspectives and diversified sources of information:** As mentioned, diverse methodologies exist; the selection should be done based on clear criteria and in-depth reflection. A combination of the perspectives (supply and demand side) as well as the application of diverse tools for data/information gathering proved to be most appropriate to ensure reliability and accuracy (e.g. outcome mapping results, beneficiaries’ surveys, focus group interviews, local governance assessments, municipal reports, international organisations indicators, official statistics, individual opinions).
- 5) **Definition of outcomes:** The programme outcomes must be defined as *changes at partners’ level*. They must be *realistic* and agreed with the main partners and specified by measurable indicators (focus on process and agents of change); general definitions of all good governance principles can serve as a framework, they should however be specified and contextualized in order to clearly define what kind of change is expected at outcome level. In general, a less rigid approach towards capturing outcomes should be applied.
- 6) **Resources and time horizon:** Outcome Measurement requires considerable time and resources, if OM is also understood as a learning process (and not only evaluative). Time required, financial implications and responsible persons/institutions should be agreed from the beginning. OM must be designed for several years, in order to be able to measure change over a certain period.
- 7) **Social Inclusion:** If an OM aims at measuring changes relating to social inclusion (gender, minorities, marginalized groups, etc), this must be emphasised during the design of the OM methodology. Specific indicators need to be defined to measure the quantity and the *quality* of inclusion. Disaggregated data collection proved not to be sufficient.
- 8) **Definition of Indicators:** The good governance principles should always serve as conceptual framework for the detailed definition of indicators. Indicators must be defined in close cooperation with the partners in order to ensure their “contextualization”. The focus should be on a few key indicators (must) rather than a broad set (nice to have) indicators. Changes in performance of governance actors (services, budget) are easier to be measured by quantitative indicators, whereas change in quality of processes, behaviours and attitudes of actors in local governance processes can rather be measured by qualitative indicators (perceptions of groups/citizens).

Need for Action & Open Issues

Need identified	Comments
<i>Need to link OM systems with local governance assessments</i>	At the moment of choosing and designing the outcome measurement system, a clear link with local governance assessments (and possibly other baseline assessments such as PEA or similar) must be ensured.
<i>Need to provide guidance to ensure coherent objective systems</i>	A coherent programme objective system must clearly distinguish between activities, outputs and outcomes (and related indicators). Another important element is to ensure the definition of realistic and achievable project/programme goals and outcomes.
<i>Need for guidance on defining outcome indicators</i>	Although each context is specific and a rigid indicator check list would not be appropriate, a clearer framework on “outcome indicators” is needed to ensure

	more consistency and to avoid too heavy data collection. The 5 good governance principles should serve as overall framework.
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