INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION

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Summary: This document provides some basic definitions of monitoring as a management tool and internal mechanism for both regular and continuous oversight of work progress or lack thereof. It also gives a brief description of the various reporting options and requirements, identifies the areas of responsibility for project monitoring within IOM, explains the accountability of project managers to apply well-defined mechanisms within those responsibilities and aims to facilitate prompt reporting whenever a problem arises, so that timely corrective action can be taken.

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Distribution: All Missions Worldwide, All Departments at HQ
The enclosed document on “Monitoring” was prepared by the Office of the Inspector General and is distributed to all Field Missions and HQs Units for consideration and implementation.

This General Bulletin will help achieve greater clarity on who does what in the field of project monitoring, will heighten accountability of project managers to apply well defined mechanisms within the framework of monitoring responsibilities, and will lead to prompt reporting to Headquarters whenever a problem arises so that timely corrective action can be taken.

Richard Perruchoud
for the Director General
1. **Definition and General Background**

Monitoring is an essential aspect of project management; in that context, UNDP defines it as a ‘continuing function that aims primarily to provide managers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indicators of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results. Monitoring tracks the actual performance or situation against what was planned or expected according to predetermined standards. Monitoring generally involves collecting and analysing data on implementation processes, strategies and results and recommending corrective action’. (UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results UNDP Evaluation Office, 2002)

Monitoring enhances the effectiveness of the implementation of IOM projects and programmes by establishing clear links between past, present and future activities and results. Monitoring helps IOM to extract relevant information that can subsequently be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and planning, in agreement with the donor(s) and/or governments. Furthermore, monitoring can promote organizational learning and accountability, ensure informed decision-making and guarantee effectiveness of the Organization as a whole.

Monitoring is an established practice of **internal** oversight and provides management with an early indication of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results, in both operational and financial activities. It is primarily the responsibility of the Project Manager, who monitors the timely progress of project activities towards their intended goals, as defined in the project document and budget. To better assess progress towards outputs and/or outcomes, the Project Managers and/or Developers must make an effort to improve the performance measurement system by developing indicators and baselines.

As an **external** instrument, monitoring provides donors, partners, stakeholders and governments with clear, detailed information on the progress made towards the achievement of objectives and project purposes.

A well-developed project document and budget is the starting point for successful implementation and monitoring. If a project is poorly designed, based on faulty assumptions, promises unrealistic results, falls outside the Organization’s mandate and the donors’ interests or the budget is not commensurate with the level of activities involved, success is unlikely.

2. **Monitoring Activities and Tools**

Monitoring activities include:

- Establishment of work plans and periodic revision of planned vs. actual activities;
- Validation of the progress made by verifying if an assumed or reported progress actually was made or not, through physical inspections, spot checks, field visits, etc.;
- Verification of progress through third parties by seeking out the feedback provided by project partners, stakeholders and, project beneficiaries.

Basic monitoring tools include:

- **Monthly Financial Reports**
  This tool enables the project manager to monitor the project’s cost according to the schedule of expenditure. These monthly reports are requested by some
donors and should be prepared with the perspective of being shared externally – also for transparency of funds management. This does not mean, however, that data should be ‘adapted’ accordingly.

- **Budget Revisions**
  These provide the Project Manager, as well as various HQ departments, with a clear picture of the necessary modifications in the planned expenditure, level of activities and project time frame. Any required budget revisions should be coordinated with donors and Budget Division (BUD) at Headquarters.

- **Monthly/Quarterly/Bi-annual/Annual Activity Reports**
  These reports serve as the bases for assessing the performance of a project in terms of its contributions towards the intended goals. As with the self-assessment efforts, these reports should reflect the achievements, challenges, problems, solutions and alternative strategies arising during project implementation.

- **Donor(s)/Final reports**
  These reports, which can be similar in terms of content to the monthly/quarterly/bi-annual/annual reports, serve the Organization and the Donor(s) for:
  
  (a) Performance assessment and justifying the overall costs of implementation;
  (b) Learning, or the main lessons learned, in terms of best and bad practices, the likelihood of project continuation and the recommendations for follow-up actions;
  (c) Decision making or planning for future funding, actions and implementation strategies.

- **Self-evaluation Reports**
  Self-evaluation reports are often considered as a monitoring tool, being in fact an evaluation of the intervention by the Programme Manager himself/herself. They contain evaluative elements that add another dimension to a traditional activity report. They can be an annex to the final report or mid-term activity report. More information on self-evaluation can be found under the IOM Evaluation Guidelines.

It should also be noted that specific monitoring guidelines have been issued for IOM emergencies with fewer requirements than normally applicable for the majority of IOM’s projects. This is mainly due to the specificity of emergency interventions in an unplanned context. Post-conflict and post-emergency interventions are not considered as an emergency and the above reporting requirements must be followed.

3. **Monitoring of Monitoring**
   As already stated, the primary responsibility for project monitoring lies with the Project Manager.
   Monitoring of monitoring is an oversight function, performed by the Office of the Inspector General to assess the implementation of selected IOM projects. It is a systematic and objective comparison of project performance against project plans, in a single exercise, examining the prevailing situation of a project and giving an independent opinion on the project’s current status.
   The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has been mandated by the Director General
to perform the monitoring of monitoring function within its general oversight role. See in this respect G.B.1259 Functions of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of 24 July 2000 which, *inter alia*, describes this function in greater detail.

Monitoring of monitoring is a purely internal IOM process and the resulting reports are not shared with persons or bodies external to IOM.

The exercise looks for ‘what is going well’ and ‘what is not functioning’. It examines the project design and the planned chain of outcome, output, costs and activities. It also involves reviewing documentation on the achievements and challenges as well as analysing reports. The practice requires visits to the implementation site(s) and involves meetings and interviews with the project management, various counterparts, the donor(s), project beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

It asks critical questions about the continued relevance of project activity to the mandate/policy/needs of the various stakeholders, the achievements of objectives and the appropriateness of the costs incurred and the sustainability of the project.

Monitoring of monitoring actively generates lessons learned and makes recommendations in order to correct deviations and adapt strategies for preventing similar mistakes in the future. At the same time, whenever the project merits, it spotlights best practices with a view to introducing and strengthening such practices throughout the Organization.

Not all projects undergo monitoring of monitoring by OIG. A selection process similar to that of the evaluation function is applied to determine which projects should be targeted for such a scrutiny, into which all of IOM’s organizational units may provide input.

### 4. Monitoring functions performed by other organizational units within IOM

Apart from the Project Managers and OIG, other organizational units are also involved in monitoring and tracking the progress of projects towards achieving their results.

**ACO** monitors the project’s disbursements according to the budget and schedule of expenditure. Any obscurities are periodically addressed and resolved with the project managers concerned.

**PTU** seeks to assist in clearly defining reporting needs, as expressed in project documents. Together with the project manager and on the basis of the specifications contained in the project document and the exigencies of the donor, PTU establishes a Project Parameters Agreement (PPA), which is an agreed outline of reports due from the project manager at specific times and of a specific quality. PTU’s tracking function subsequently consists of ensuring that these reports are issued as per the PPA. PTU posts these reports on the Project Compendium (ProCom) as a reference to anyone dealing with similar project activity types and ensures that other ‘need-to-know’ organizational units receive copies of these reports (e.g. forward financial reports to ACO, donor reports to DRD, etc.)

**FDS/MMD** is the unit which receives movement-related statistics on a weekly/bi-weekly/monthly basis and which tracks the timely submission of these reports.

**DRD** ensures quality control of donor reports and compliance with donor reporting specifications. It also reviews and edits the narrative of the donor reports and coordinates relevant financial reports with ACO. DRD also ensures adequate submission of reports to donors, either directly in the field by the field, by DRD to Permanent Missions in Geneva, or directly to donor capitals.
MMS informally monitors projects falling under its purview, to see how certain activity types are developing, with the aim of incorporating the results of such reviews into its project development strategising, planning, review, endorsement and training approaches.

MRFs monitor activities within their region, especially those with a financial support function as per DBF’s e-mail Financial and Administrative Support under MRFs of 11 December 2002 and keep close watch over the financial performance of each project implemented in their region and give guidance as needed.

Project managers are expected to keep the relevant organizational units apprised of any irregularity which arises and when the project is no longer on track. Delays in project inception, inability to meet reporting timetables, necessary substantive changes in the project concept and/or budget and major financial or operational difficulties should be reported to HQ, so that corrective action can be taken on a timely basis and problems do not worsen. Project managers should be in contact with Services in the earliest stages of project planning and development, given that the Services perform strategic project and programme planning with missions, in addition to the technical PD support, review and endorsement. Services, in cooperation with ACO, are ultimately responsible for endorsing projects prior to implementation. Project managers are required to submit information on any project implementation difficulty to the unit they believe best suited to assist with dealing with the issue, e.g. ACO for financial issues, DRD for donor related issues, etc.

The organizational unit receiving the information on project-related problems is responsible for ensuring that other appropriate organizational units also receive that information.

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