Making the most of the DCED Standard in a small programme in a fragile context - Lessons in applying the Standard amongst the constraints

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Nairobi, 21-22 Feb, 2018
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The Road to Jobs (R2J) Project

- Road to Jobs (R2J) is a Sida-funded three-year project (2015-2018) operating in Northern Afghanistan

- Uses M4P approach in 6 agriculture sectors to improve better employment outcomes and contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction.

- Fostering more and better jobs in the rural and urban centres in its target areas.

- Promoting solar water pumps for irrigation (grape orchard)

- Local skill development for cotton processing (fabric and yarn)

- Grape processing into locally made grape juice
Working in a small team... in 6 sectors!

- Project CTA (2 y)
  - MSD Officer
    - LED Coordinator (2 y)
      - Security Assistant
        - Driver
    - LED Coordinator
      - Program Assistant
      - Admin & Finance Assistant
        - Driver
  - MRM Officer
  - Gender & livelihood officer (8 m)
    - Driver
And the fragile context adds constraints too:

1. Lack of secondary-historical data
2. Not safe and secure for regular staff field visits
3. Low capacity of research institutions for measurement
4. No previous experience by the project staff (or in country) with the DCED Standard
5. Difficult for internationals (consultants) to access – lack of interest in coming, difficult to obtain visas
6. Limited opportunities for in-country learning and knowledge sharing
7. Private sector actors want and expect grants and so they will not disclose info.
What does this mean for MRM and the Standard?

• Given the project size and fragile context, could the project expect to implement to the DCED Standard?

• Yes... Sort of

• The project used the Standard as a guide though subjecting it to the limitations of its own constraints. Efficiency and collecting decision useful data were the focus.
MRM process overview

Steps in Intervention MRM

- Articulate the results chain & assumptions
- Define indicators
- Develop impact projections
- Develop a measurement plan
- Assess and track risks
- Continuous measurement, review and attribution

Using MRM for decision making

- Elaboration Business Model (MRM Officer)
- Consultation coordination (LED/MSDO)
- Sharing draft version (CTA-LED-MSDO)
- Finalization (MRM officer)
- Sharing draft LAB

Intervention guideline
Articulating RCs

What was most challenging?
1. Lack of prior knowledge about DCED standard – needed to find our way
2. 21 interventions (VCs and QWs) and 6 sub-sectors with only 2 IM to draft them
3. Lack of available information on context, players and market place

How did we get around it?
1. Staff training at the outset and on demand backstopping; trial, error and adaptation
2. MRMO helped draft indicators, MP, baseline projections and overall IG development
3. Left RCs vague initially as a structured guide, filling in details with primary research, when available

The Result
Results chains don’t quite meet the Standard (pre-audit report), but still guide the team in interventions and measurement in a “fit-for-context”.

International Labour Organization
Articulating RCs

**Initial result chain...**

1. R2J identified ADF to provide loans to farmers' associations
2. Khorshid Noor solar company identified will submit assessment report (including CBA) to R2J
3. Feroz Nakhchir farmers' associations developed and submitted proposal to ADF for loan
4. ADF approved and provided loans to Feroz Nakhchir Farmers' associations
5. DAIL, trellising constructors promote trellising and financial product
6. Due diligence assessment of Feroz Nakhchir associations
7. Feroz Nakhchir Farmers' Association signs contract with Khorshid Noor solar company to install solar pumps for farmers
8. Farmers got loans from associations and paying to Khorshid Noor company
9. Khorshid Noor solar company installing solar pumps for farmers
10. Farmers use solar pumps to provide regular irrigation to grapevines
11. Increased farmers' production (Grapes)
12. Net additional income accruing to target enterprises
13. Reduced production costs (fuel) of the farmers
14. ADF expanded outreach/services
15. Increased sales of Khurshid Noor company
16. More and better jobs created (additional/improved)
17. More and better jobs and increased incomes for women and men
18. Increased income of farmers (men and women)

**... and what it evolved into**

1. ADF approves and provides loans to Feroz Nakhchir Farmers' associations
2. Feroz Nakhchir Farmers' Association signs contract with Khorshid Noor solar company to install solar water pumps for farmers
3. More and better jobs created (additional/improved)
4. Farmers got loans from associations and paying to Khorshid Noor company
5. Khorshid Noor solar company installing solar pumps for farmers
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## Identifying Indicators

### What was most challenging?

1. Lack of available human resources limit measurement of multiple indicators – “What gets measured gets managed”
2. Cannot use secondary data to support benchmarking
3. Security concerns limit ability to interview rural beneficiaries and sight observation

### How did we get around it?

1. General rule: only one indicator per RC box – thinking hard about what can be measured and how useful it is to understanding the intervention
2. Search and use of proxy indicators to help define HH size, education, etc.
3. Indicators to be more focused on measurement through companies with some limited triangulation

### The Result

Simplified indicators not capturing robust details, but still able to give the project a picture of what’s happening and a (somewhat) plausible way for attribution.
# Measuring Indicators - Results

## What was most challenging?

1. Both security and limited human resources severely limit field data collection for all interventions
2. Research institutions lacking capacity to do good quality data collection

## How did we get around it?

1. Mostly do pre-post comparison with recall, using simplified analyses (basic counting)
2. Focus on understanding process collecting Activity/Output indicators less resources on Outcome/Impact
3. Trained local BDS companies and stakeholders to collect data – blend into the communities to collect data in insecure areas

## The Result

Results are neither free from bias nor completely rigorous, but we can understand if the process is working and if the intervention model is sustainable for companies.
What was most challenging?
1. A lack of robustly collected data leads to a challenge in understanding how and to what extent the programme has had an impact

How did we get around it?
1. We do our best to identify how and why changes occurred on the ground/market place through interviews with beneficiaries, market players and observation from the field where applicable.

The Result
Attribution remains a challenge, the team is now following-up with partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders to see what can be attributed to the programme, but there still much to do.
What’s helped us improve along the way?

It’s been a journey, and there is much to improve, but here are some areas where we got better along the way:

- Reaching out for technical backstopping when needed
- Training and continuous capacity building of stakeholder representatives and local BDS companies who can work in hard to reach areas to collect data.
- Applying default monitoring approach rather than MRM for some of the interventions. It means that still we do monitoring where we don’t have the IGs (RCs, Measurement plans, projections, etc.).
- Simplifying attribution measurement (without quantification)
- Making the most of proxy indicators
What’s our assessment on the process?

1. System has helped staff understand and more clearly focus on the overall objective (expected results)

2. Provided better understanding of the market context and improved business models/proposals (VfM, projected results)

3. Improved decision making, intervention/project management and ability to identify where to scale-up

4. Improved internal-external coordination and collaboration

5. The Standard pre-audit has helped identify areas for MRM improvement
Key takeaways!

1. There is need for very intensive capacity building for the project team at the project start to reduce MRM “loss time” during implementation.

2. Support from the top of the project team helps foster a strong need for MRM.

3. Capacity building of the local institutions (research, analysis) and implementing partners is worth the investment.

4. Adopting default monitoring approach wherever applicable.
Follow-up with us!

Want to know more about MRM in small or fragile sensitive contexts?

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