

# Define success criteria and indicators

## Why is this important for MSPs?

As MSPs can take many different forms, a successful MSP is defined as one that is created, maintains itself over time and realises activities related to its goals. In order to track whether an MSP is achieving these elements, it is important to **develop a set of criteria to monitor progress and define clear indicators with which to measure that progress.**

It is important to define what success looks like, otherwise how will you know if you have achieved your goals? By this stage you will have defined the goals of the MSP (See Identify actions and responsibilities) and developed terms of reference. To help you progress towards these goals, it is helpful to break each goal down into a set of criteria. Success can be determined for different parts of the process: success with your management structure, success in developing stakeholder partnerships, success in maintaining commitment, success in equity of participation, and so on.

It might be useful to develop a simple Theory of Change which is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of **how and why a desired change is expected to happen** in a particular context. It does this by first identifying the desired goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur.

Once you have defined your criteria, you should then think about **how to track your progress.** MSPs are complex and you shouldn't try to measure everything. However, by measuring some indicators you get an idea of what is changing,

worsening, improving etc and thus an indication of whether you are being successful. Using indicators to gauge your progress will determine if and when you need to change either the way you currently do things or how you are planning to do things.

**Be clear about what you need to monitor in order to provide the objective information required for gauging progress.**

- Depending on what you are monitoring you need to select indicators for **inputs, outputs and outcomes**.
- Indicators need to be **SMART: Simple, Measurable, Accessible, Relevant and Timely**.
- Moreover, they should be: able to provide a representative picture; easy to interpret and show trends over time; responsive to changes; capable of having their significance assessed by users; analytically sound; available at reasonable cost; and able to be updated.

To effectively monitor an MSP, various systems need to be in place. For example, there must be procedures for monitoring various indicators, ways of storing and analysing this information and meetings to discuss the implications of the results. Very often monitoring fails because the basic elements of the system have not been put in place.

## **How does this work in practice?**

Between late 2012 and 2014, **Uganda's** Office of the Prime Minister, Nutrition Secretariat and its partners oriented 112 districts on the mandate of district nutrition coordination committees (DNCCs), as outlined in the Nutrition Action Plan. However, because the plan did not include benchmarks for performance or provide details about their broadly defined roles and responsibilities, DNCCs did not know what was expected of them. In addition, there was no way to determine if they were performing satisfactorily or meeting a minimum standard of quality. To address these issues, stakeholders

worked together to clearly define roles and responsibilities and to further clarify DNCC membership to ensure consistency across the country. The decisions agreed upon through this stakeholder consensus-building process, undertaken as part of the DNCC Initiative, have since been applied to NCCs at all levels of lower local government.