

United Nations Development Group

Building Capacity and statistical literacy for MDG monitoring at the country level

The objective of the project is to build national capacity to improve monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals. By strengthening the role of the National Offices of Statistics to develop a Central Repository of MDG data and to disseminate these data; and by improving access to data and building statistical skills within a large number of users across Government and Civil Society, the project will contribute to improve use of evidence-based methodologies for the management of development policy.

Capacity Development for MDG Monitoring

Introduction

All UN member states have endorsed the consensus reached during the Millennium Summit for coordinated action around clearly defined objectives. These objectives have been summarized in the MDGs, consisting of 8 goals, 18 targets and over 40 indicators that will help to monitor and track progress through the year 2015.

Successful implementation of development policies at the country level requires improved systems of accountability to make reform sustainable, a culture of management by results and greater participation of main development actors in the monitoring of public policy. The objective of this project is twofold: (i) to strengthen the National Offices of Statistics (NSO) by providing the means to make MDG data easily accessible to the public and (ii) to build skills among government officials, civil society organizations and academic institutions to use development data effectively in the design, implementation and reporting of public policy.

The programme will cover two types of activities:

1. Enhance the capacity of the NSO to develop and maintain a central repository of data to be used for reporting on progress of MDGs and national development strategies.
2. Provide broad-based training programmes to make better use of MDG data and indicators to improve evidence-based management of development policy.

The project will strengthen the role of NSO's and will help bridge the gap between producers and users of data. On the producers' side, the project will assist in the development of a database to be used as a single repository of MDG and national planning data, and on the users side the project will develop the capacity for better and wider use of this data, for monitoring of progress, advocacy and policy development.

To assist the development of a database for MDG and national planning indicator data, the project will assist the NSO and national poverty monitoring system, to identify and assess the function and use of any existing national database, which is or could be used as a Central Repository of MDG and PRSP indicator data (CRD). The project will facilitate analysis of the database to identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of data coverage, communications links, and access by users, and will develop the capacity of the NSO to develop and maintain this database for monitoring MDGs.

Where an existing database does not facilitate easy access to data by users, and a user-friendly interface for analysis and presentation of data, the project will assist the development of links to download the data from the software of choice to DEVINFO.

Where a national database does not exist, or is not functional, and where an NSO would like to adopt new software to develop a CRD, the project will develop the capacity of the NSO to build, use and maintain a CRD using the DEVINFO software, and help the NSO promote more effective analysis of data using the software.

The project will provide training to the database managers and users of the data. The initial training will focus on training trainers to understand MDG indicators and the different sources and definitions used, and to analyse the data for more effective advocacy and for more informed policy development and debate. The project will provide training for up to 10 users/ trainers per country from both Government and Civil Society.

To develop the capacity for better and wider use of MDG and national planning indicator data, countries will receive seed resources to assist the funding of training courses in country. Country training will be provided to current and potential users of data, to raise the technical skills of main stakeholders; to enable easy access to the data and the meta data; to use the database to carry out analysis of the data more effectively; and to identify gaps in existing data required for further analysis.

To develop the capacity of users' further, training will be provided on the interpretation of trends and relationships across indicators, including but not limited to MDG and PRSP indicators, and including cross cutting issues such as gender, environment and HIV/AIDS, to assist in the design and monitoring of development policy and for information based advocacy.

Back up Managerial and technical support to the project

Technical support has been and will continue to be provided by the United Nations Statistics Department (UNSD) at the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the project. UNSD will assist in the development of training modules, and the training of trainer's workshops and provide advice based on lessons learned from MDG training facilitated by UNSD in the regions.

The project will be anchored, at a global level, by a Devinfo Project Manager, who will be funded by multiple UN agencies through the UN Development Group. The Project Manager will be responsible for establishing a system of technical support for DevInfo users and channeling users' suggestions for software improvements into new versions of DevInfo. Technical support will be provided first through a DevInfo focal point within the UN Country Team as appointed by the UN Resident Coordinator and secondly, through a global helpdesk. In addition a network of Devinfo focal points around the world will be established to share lessons and provide technical support. This network will be facilitated by the Project Manager. The Project Manager (PM) will also establish a DevInfo 'field reference group' composed of country level users across the UN, Government and civil society, who will work in conjunction with the HQ based UNDG DevInfo Steering Group to decide on appropriate improvements in the software

design. The PM will oversee DevInfo trainers and the training strategy, initiate troubleshooting and guide efforts for software development.

Coordination across the UN system

The UN system as a whole is shifting its focus behind the operationalization of the MDGs. This project neatly follows other UN initiatives to develop capacity in UN country teams on understanding the MDGs and their use for focusing support and influencing policy development. Within the current UNDG project to provide training to UN country teams on MDGs, outputs will include a CDROM containing information on the MDGs and issues pertinent to the UN system, and better-informed UN staff. This project will be able to gain from this in-country knowledge, by encouraging UN country teams to participate in the country training of members of Government and Civil society. Two members of country teams will be invited to join members of Government and Civil Society at the regional training provided within this project, and following the training they will be encouraged to participate as trainers, for the in-country training courses.

UNSD are currently carrying out regional training courses for NSO and other statistical technicians, on the statistical definitions and methods used to calculate the MDG indicators. There are strong complementarities between the UNSD work and this project. The UNSD initiatives advises NSOs of the technical issues of generating the indicators from raw data, this project will help develop the capacity of the NSO to hold the data for the indicators in one database and to make both the data and indicators more accessible to the users. Further, this project will develop the capacity of users, to analyse the indicators and to use them for advocacy and policy development.

To date UNSD have provided regional training in Nairobi and there are plans to cover the Arab states and West Asia, however there are limited funds available for this work. For countries and/or regions where UNSD (or other agencies and donors) have not provided this training, an additional module will be introduced to the training provided within this project, to provide technical advice on the calculation of MDG indicators.

To enhance coordination, the Devinfo Project Manager will initiate and maintain communication with UN agencies, the World Bank and other organisations working on statistical capacity building to ensure that statistical capacity building initiatives are not duplicated and synergies are created where possible. The scheduling of country level activities will be tracked to maximize resources and support MDG related activities.

The Rationale of the Project

In coordination with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and through collaboration with the UN country teams, UNDP is promoting and supporting the preparation of MDG Reports (MDGRs) by national or sub-national authorities. MDGRs are a vehicle to keep the national focus on agreed development priorities, to keep the public informed on progress, to foster debate and dialogue, and to trigger needed activities to meet the MDG targets. The preparation of MDGRs helps to initiate a national dialogue to tailor targets to reflect national circumstances and development priorities,

providing the opportunity to build national ownership around well-defined and pertinent targets. MDGRs help to benchmark indicators, identify national achievements and address challenges and obstacles. A new updated guidance note for UNCTs on the MDGRs is about to be issued by the administrator of UNDP on behalf of UNDG.

Monitoring of the MDGs is constrained, not only by the lack of information in the country but also by difficulties in accessing relevant information on a timely basis. More critical for the achievement of the MDGs is the lack of capacity to use information in the design and implementation of development policy. This project will help reduce these constraints by improving access to relevant MDG data, together with national planning indicator data, at the country level and building capacity to improve use of results-based management methodologies among the main development actors.

Derived from a UNICEF initiative called ChildInfo, DevInfo is software developed by UNICEF for monitoring indicators towards country programme goals. DevInfo has been offered by UNICEF as a tool for MDG monitoring at the country level and has been enhanced to reflect the requirements of a UNDG interagency group. The UNDG Programme Group has endorsed this use of DevInfo and has approved an interagency steering committee to guide future software development.

Training activities under this proposal intend to expand the opportunities to improve coordination and partnership across projects in the region, especially those in the field of Statistical Capacity Building. Close coordination and collaboration will be promoted with relevant projects within Paris21, the World Bank, UN agencies, bilateral donors, and other regional initiatives in an effort to avoid overlap and duplication. The preparation of training material will benefit from close collaboration with the working group within UNDG that is developing MDG training modules with participation from the World Bank.

Paris21, the World Bank and UNDP are currently carrying out country case studies in 6 pilot countries; Malawi, Cambodia, Burkina Faso, Bolivia, Yemen and Moldova; to identify actions and changes that will improve the availability and use of data for monitoring development goals. These case studies include a review of existing mechanisms to make information available to current and potential users in a timely and accessible format and the reports will include options to develop a central repository of MDG/national planning indicator data. The findings from the case studies will help refine the work to be carried out at the country review stage of this project.

Devinfo is not restricted to monitoring only MDG indicators, and the project will encourage the use of the software to monitor indicators identified for the monitoring of national development plans including indicators set out within PRSP monitoring and evaluation systems. This extended use of Devinfo will help consolidate national and international PRS monitoring data.

Strategy

In summary, the strategy comprises of:

- (a) Reviews of existing country systems MDG/PRSP/national planning monitoring systems and use of data for advocacy and policy development. Identification of countries which can benefit from this project.
- (b) Providing technical assistance to NSOs in selected countries to assist in the development of a Central Repository of Data to hold data and indicators for the monitoring of MDGs and PRSPs. Where no database currently exists, Devinfo, an easy to use database management software, will be issued to NSOs and the database will be developed using this software.
- (c) Where NSOs are comfortable with an existing database, which does not facilitate easy access to data by users for analysis, assistance will be provided to develop the capacity to link data from the existing database to Devinfo, and Devinfo will facilitate easy access by users.
- (d) Regional training of trainers will be provided to 12 members of each country, 2 from NSOs , 2 from UNCTs and 8 users from Government and Civil society. Training will cover:

- 1: MDG training

What are the MDGs? Background, goals, indicators, concepts and definitions, sources.

Linking MDG and PRSP indicator data

Importance of Metadata

Issues of different sources and different definitions, both within countries and national vs. International

Differences in timeframes of different sources

Levels of disaggregation

Cross cutting issues including Gender, Environment and HIV/AIDS

- 2: Technical training on use of software (Country software/Devinfo/Getting data out of the database for use in further analysis.

- 3: Use of data

Analysis of indicators to monitor progress

Analysis of indicators for evidence based advocacy

What data are required for Lesson learning and policy development?

Identifying gaps in data for MDG monitoring and identification of new data required for more effective understanding of poverty and MDGs

4: How to develop a training program including the customization of training materials for each country (and ways to customize Devinfo)

- (e) Initial technical assistance to provide training to a wide variety of users in country and seed resources to continue training.
- (f) A help line to provide technical assistance for up to one year following the initial in country training courses.

Review of existing country monitoring systems, accessibility and use of data

At a country level, technical assistance will be provided by UNCT to the NSO to review any existing databases and to assess how functional the databases are for holding MDG data and metadata, and for facilitating easy access by users, for further analysis and dissemination of data.

Development of an effective and accessible central repository of data

Technical assistance will be provided to support the NSO to develop an existing database to incorporate MDG indicators, and develop a Central Repository of Data (CRD). Where the existing database does not facilitate easy access and use of data, assistance will be provided to develop links between the country's database and DEVINFO, to allow data to be downloaded easily. Where no suitable database exists, the project will provide DEVINFO to the NSO and technical assistance to set up the database for MDG indicators.

During this first phase of support, CRD managers will work with a technical adviser to learn how to develop communication links to access relevant data, input data, maintain the database and other aspects of the technology. This training in country will last 2 weeks.

NSOs will be expected to manage the DEVINFO system. This management will include ensuring that regular updates of MDG and PRSP indicator data are carried out, quality control, and dissemination. The NSO will also have the mandate to ensure that copies of DEVINFO to a wide variety of users, during or immediately following in country training.

Adoption of DEVINFO

DevInfo software is an interactive solution for storing and displaying development data. It enables to produce charts, graphs and geographical maps of health, education and other key social indicators. Data can be displayed at national, provincial, district, and sub-district levels and disaggregated by gender, age, urban/rural, ethnicity etc. to reveal disparities and to facilitate inter-sectoral responses. DevInfo interfaces with Microsoft products.

Data is displayed in a manner that is attractive and meaningful. The software can be adapted to local languages and customized to look and feel like a national product. Common UN software managed by national offices of statistics will facilitate data

consistency. Data integrity will be improved, as data is not accepted unless specifically sourced. It will create a basis for national development practitioners to learn from and build on the work of other countries.

DevInfo is in use in a number of countries – including government statistical offices in Tanzania, Benin and India – where it provides planners and policy makers with a common resource for timely and quality development data. By creating a shared, easily accessible and visible source of national development data, gaps in data, data inconsistencies and uncertainty can be effectively communicated to advocate for improvements.

Statistical and Analytical Capacity

Without adequate training and country level support, DevInfo's potential for advocacy and statistical capacity building will not be realized. Experience in Tanzania and elsewhere has shown that one of the largest challenges to adopting DevInfo are inadequate skills to use data for evidenced-based policy decision-making. To address this challenge, the project will hold sub-regional training courses that will bring together the managers of the Central Repository of Data, or those inputting the data, and a variety of users from across Government, civil society and the UN. The CRD managers and users will be trained to be trainers, and as a group, will be responsible for training users in country. For training on MDGs and managing the CRD, preference will be given to staff from national statistical offices, or personnel working under their supervision to guarantee sustainability of the process. For training on the use of DEVINFO to present data in different ways, to use data for advocacy and policy development, preference will be given to line ministry employees, and CSO members, currently involved in monitoring and evaluation, advocacy and/or policy development.

DevInfo Trainers will learn how to use DevInfo in addition to complementary tools for analysis. Training will include: i) methodological approaches to data collection to better enable them to judge the quality of data and ii) methodologies for the effective use of data as an input in the design and implementation of results-oriented development policy. Training sessions will last 12 working days.

This group of people will be trained as trainers for the creation of programmes for capacity building at the national level. Too many countries remain trapped in a vicious circle of low demand for and poor supply of data. In order to break that cycle, the project intends to enhance the demand for relevant data among specialists, policy-makers, media, parliamentarians, CSOs and other stakeholders by raising their technical skills to use development data effectively. The MDGs provide an opportunity to create a consistent, long-term demand for good quality, timely and relevant data to make policy decisions, to improve policy coordination, to improve results based management of public resources, to identify financial and institutional constraints to achieve results, and to use statistics for keeping the general public informed and interested. But basic statistical literacy must be enhanced among key actors.

This project will provide seed resources for countries interested in initiating their own training programmes covering the understanding of MDGs; understanding the definitions of indicators used to monitor progress, the use of the CRD; and the use of DevInfo to analyse the data and to improve advocacy and policy development.

Resources from this project will fund the following activities: i) assistance for the development of a Central Repository of MDG data within the National Statistical offices; ii) adoption of DevInfo as a repository and/or a tool to improve access and analysis (linking DEVINFO) within the national statistical offices; iii) DevInfo training of trainers; iv) training methodology and guidance for the adoption of training modules to reflect the context of each country; iv) support to cover a proportion of the operational cost of training programmes for the first 6 months.

People eligible for training on MDGs and the use of data, will represent a wide range of persons, including a variety of government officials (especially those in charge of designing and implementing policies relevant to the MDGs), leaders of national NGOs, academics in universities and national training institutes, as well as UN Country Team focal points. Users will learn how to use DevInfo to effectively display data and to enhance decision-making processes and/or advocacy efforts.

Those who participate in the training courses will be connected through e-mail networks to exchange advice and suggestions and vet technical or statistical questions.