Inception and Training Workshop of the Project
Minamata Initial Assessment
Istanbul - Turkey

26 - 27 March 2019

Background document: <u>Discussion on lessons-learned</u>

This document is intended to serve as an initial overview of lessons-learned by UNITAR throughout the Minamata Initial Assessment projects, across our portfolio. It includes information from the UNDP global project, as well as MIA projects in collaboration with UNIDO and UN Environment.

Please consider whether or not you agree with these, whether you have interesting examples of these lessons, or good examples of overcoming these.

Initial stages of the project

- A tendency to start each project slowly
    - Development of legal agreement with each partner can be slow, including signature
    - Establishment of a suitable entity to receive the funds and conduct activities was sometimes difficult
    - Establishment of a mechanism to gain access to the funds was sometimes difficult
- Responsibilities not well defined from the outset
    - Including identification and hiring of consultants/ area leads
- Understanding of the MIA process was not clear from the outset
    - Was the MIA template published and made available?
    - UNITAR shared Terms of Reference for each major project activity- were these used, clear enough, helpful?

Starting activities

- Too much focus on all the individual components, sometimes provided in a different template to the final MIA
- Should have established a clear hierarchy of necessary components as a first stage
  - **Inventory**, and **legal and institutional assessment** as the first priorities
- Did inventory experts follow the MercuryLearn e-Learning course before/ shortly after the inventory training, to ensure sufficient understanding?
- Were legal and institutional assessments done in coordination with national committees, to ensure broad knowledge of different laws, authorities and programmes?
  - In order to ensure that the assessment is useful to support implementation planning, all relevant laws or institutions need to come with comments on how they are relevant, how they can be utilised, and what may need to be adapted, modified or created in order to be compliant with the Convention.
- Was the inventory done in coordination with partners to ensure access to appropriate information?
- Was the assessment on the identification of populations at risk and potential gender dimensions developed in consultation with governmental and non-governmental entities that work on the subject matter?

Sectoral and Stakeholder engagement

- All MIAs in this global project were designed with ministries of environment (or equivalents) – did was there significant inclusion of other sectors and stakeholders in the planning and drafting of the final MIAs?
- MIAs tend to lack specific information for health impact assessments beyond global health knowledge – were specific health/research representatives engaged?
- MIAs tend to lack specific information for environmental impact assessments beyond global environmental knowledge - were specific environment/research representatives engaged?
- Components on health impacts, environmental impacts, populations at risk, awareness-raising and training could all be undertaken as a second priority

"Finalising" an MIA takes time

- Important to factor in time to finalise the MIA, and retain funds for such final activities-workshops, services of an expert to continue drafting/ fielding requests for further details, and a final process for validation among stakeholders
- "Working weeks" have been useful in tidying up final issues, and engaging with stakeholders to ensure access to necessary information.

- Implementation plans, priorities for action and mainstreaming can be done in the final stages of the project
    - Once all the preceding information has been gathered and organised, picture of required actions becomes clearer; important to check back with previous section to ensure specific knowledge gaps are addressed in priority actions
    - Costing of intervention plans- do the MIAs have enough funding in them to conduct cost assessments of each plan?
- A closing workshop can represent a final consultation with many stakeholders to verify such implementation plans and priorities for action (and can be included in such a "working week")
- MIAs (like all national assessments) are ongoing processes. To bring one assessment to a conclusion and published, external review by an acknowledged international expert lends credibility to any final MIA; UNITAR has engaged Mr. David Piper in this process (ex-Deputy Head of the Chemicals Branch, UN Environment)
- Lack of (or no) information should not be ignored in the MIAs. The MIAs are initial assessments of the current situation; if there is not currently enough information, a legitimate priority would be to undertake research on the topic.
- Intervention plans are a good opportunity to integrate with other national development plans of programmes, using the national committees to access different resources

Prompts/ guiding questions to participants – comments from participants on what they think for these, or if they have any good examples of overcoming these?

- Some countries have needed visits or letters to attain support to overcome initial difficulties; is there enough high-level support for the projects? How could it be ensured/ facilitated?
- Was there enough engagement of relevant stakeholders and sectors?
    - General input through workshops and committees?
    - Were specific inputs/sections provided by certain stakeholders?
- Did the national coordinating committees for the MIAs build on previous committees, or were processes started anew?
- First time developing a national mercury assessment – was it clear enough what it is, were templates in place early enough?
- Were inventory consultants experienced in inventories from previous, similar inventories? How will they remain engaged in future inventory work? Those countries that did level 1, do they see a need to get to level 2?
- Were media agencies involved to raise awareness?
- What other lessons have you taken from the projects?
    - Legal
    - Administrative

- Technical
- Project management
- Other