LESSONS LEARNED

Independent Assessment of the Closed Projects under the Special Programme Report (December 2024)
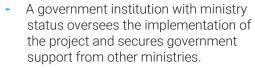
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Having **high-level coordination** by a top-ranking government institution - such as vice president's office, minister's office or national committee - contributes to the efficient project implementation. Possible examples are:
- A Project Steering Committee composed of senior officials from relevant government ministries oversees the project progress and endorses the annual work plans.
- A government institution with ministry status oversees the implementation of the project and secures government support from other ministries.

Creating a **Project Management Unit** supports having an effective implementation of the project activities and of the associated domestic measures.

Having a **project team comprising staff drawn from different entities** ensures that different skills, knowledge, and expertise for SMCW are covered. It contributes to overcoming the siloed approach of institutions, confers ownership and strengthens sustainability.

Having a project team with **well-defined realistic responsibilities** based on their area of expertise is critical to avoid having activities not being implemented or implemented with delays.

COORDINATION

Multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms facilitate the alignment of national efforts with the requirements and expectations of MEAs and reinforce the achievement of MEA objectives.

Establishing a **coordination mechanism** for the implementation of the BRS Conventions and Minamata Convention enables policy makers and other stakeholders to effectively monitor and support the implementation of the conventions at the country level.

Bringing diverse governmental stakeholders together for **joint work** and capacity building events helps to build partnerships and inter-governmental cooperation, understand each other's challenges and jointly find possible solutions.

Highly **participatory processes** with wide participation of government and non-government actors ensure that the project activities respond to the needs of the users and promote the sustainability of results.

For SP projects with an external implementing agency - be it an UN entity, an NGO or a public association - **close collaboration** between the government and the implementing agency strengthens effectiveness, ownership and sustainability.

Coordination bodies can function well even without formal legal backing in the presence of projects, though **legal backing is essential** for their sustained functioning beyond project timelines.

COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

Developing **customized communication materials** jointly with NGOs/associations can help to better reach the target audiences.

Adapting communication strategies to **local contexts**, by incorporating traditional knowledge, local languages, and culturally relevant methods, enhances public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and support for implementing proposed policies and measures.

Raising awareness not only of **legislators** but as well of **the private sector** and the general public about the importance of the SMCW can:
- Increase the likelihood of being able to pass a law on the SMCW.
- Increase the public involvement in the sustainable chemicals production and consumption.
- Reduce health risks caused by the use of chemicals.

PROJECT ELEMENTS

The simpler and more straightforward the results are formulated in the **logframe**, the clearer it is to make the connection between the different project activities and outputs and the easier it becomes to monitor and report on the results.

Training government officers on the SMCW and on how to report to the MEAs contributes to having the country better meeting its MEA obligations. It also contributes to enhancing the quality of project outputs and to the overall sustainability of the project.

Preliminary studies and baseline assessments are useful to identify capacity and policy gaps and to propose tailored capacity building plans and institutional and legislative changes.
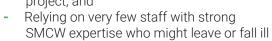
Legislative and policy work within a project's timeframe requires **realistic expectations, persistence and advocacy**, as drafting and adopting policies often extend beyond project timelines11, highlighting the need for **sustained post-project engagement.**

Fostering local ownership by **encouraging local stakeholders** to lead initiatives ensures long-term sustainability. In Kenya the Responsible Care Program promoted industry-led efforts, with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers taking ownership of implementation, mobilizing resources, and expanding activities.

Flexibility in project implementation and adaptive management help mitigate, and where possible, overcome unforeseen challenges. For example, in North Macedonia, COVID-19-related restrictions led to reallocating funds to develop a portal for chemical management.

Trust-building and inclusivity enhance project outcomes: In Iran, collaboration with community and religious leaders fostered trust and improved project acceptance.

In order to properly address the specific **risks and needs of women and vulnerable groups** - such as indigenous peoples – the projects need to ensure adequate participation in project activities of these social groups and tailored content needs to be developed.

The likelihood of a project being implemented in a timely manner is increased when clear **mitigation measures** are included at the planning stage, considering among others how to overcome:
- Administrative delays for setting up the project, and
- Relying on very few staff with strong SMCW expertise who might leave or fall ill affecting the continuity of the project.

Including in each activity how its results will be maintained is decisive to have a strong overall **exit strategy** and to be able to ensure sustainability of the project. Early integration of tools and frameworks into government systems is essential for continuity. For example, in Tajikistan, the planned integration of the information portal into the Ministry of Environment's website would have sustained its functionality, but delays underscored the importance of securing early buy-in.

Dedicated maintenance is essential for digital platforms. Integrating them into national systems, securing resources, and establishing clear roles for upkeep ensures they remain relevant tools for stakeholders.

FINANCING

Public awareness campaigns and **capacity building activities** contribute to enhancing the likelihood of being able to mobilize private funding for the SMCW.

Enforcing new laws and regulations on the SMCW can be used to create a new source of funding for the SMCW.

Implementing SP projects in **parallel** or in **partnership** with other internationally funded projects **creates synergies**. This contributes to the efficient use of financial resources and to maximize the impact.

When the technical capacities or financial means of a government are not sufficient, **support from stakeholders and development partners** can play an important role to sustain project results.

Diversification of funding mechanisms is the key to sustained results. Leveraging partnerships, enforcing regulations (e.g. permits, licenses, fines), and generating revenue through capacity-building initiatives, such as accredited fee-based training courses, can create sustainable funding sources for SMCW initiatives. For example, accredited fee-based training courses for chemical dealers and prosecutors could provide a reliable source of revenue in Nigeria. Similarly, **collaborative efforts between governments and private sector stakeholders**, combined with cost-recovery systems, could ensure the continuity of results beyond the funding period.

SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

LITTLE NATIONAL EXPERTISE AVAILABLE

In the specific circumstances when national experts cannot be found, access to international expertise and technical assistance can be important to:
- **Ensure the soundness of certain project deliverables**, such as chemicals and waste databases or strategies/policies for the SMCW;
- **Strengthen the capacities of national staff** to implement the BRS Convention and Minamata Conventions and/or become national trainers.

External expertise, when applied collaboratively (leveraging international and national expertise) can **strengthen project deliverables, enhancing local ownership and impact**: in Nigeria, UNITAR's involvement in training and strategy development strengthened project outputs and tailored deliverables to align with national priorities.

Well-organized study visits to other countries and projects can foster learning and gives incentives to replicate successful practices.

POLITICAL CHANGES OR POLITICAL/SOCIAL INSTABILITY

In the context of political changes and social or political unrest, **the involvement of an established NGO** in the country or an **international organization** can be beneficial to secure institutional legacy of the project and to build upon the project results.

In contexts where there is high turnover of high-ranking officials, **the involvement of mid-level government staff** is essential to ensure continuity, ownership and sustainability of the project results.

PROJECT FACING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

During the implementation reaching out regularly to the SP Secretariat - beyond just submitting the annual progress reports - is useful to **obtain possible guidance** when projects face difficulties.

RELATED TO SPECIAL PROGRAMME SECRETARIAT

Turnover of Special Programme Secretariat staff affected in some cases the fluidity of the communication between the project teams and the Special Programme Secretariat.

Learning from the achievements of other SP projects could be useful for tapping into previous successful experiences, especially in technical areas such as:
- Methodologies for databases
- Knowledge Toolkits about SMCW
- Policies and action plans
- Strategies for ratifying the MEAs

Having **the achievements of projects accessible online** could be a very efficient way to share best practices and showcase results.

The monitoring of results could be improved when project focal points are introduced on how to best monitor them and how to use the Core Indicators.

For more information visit our website or contact us by email

UN environment programme

CHEMICALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME