Lessons learned from evaluations

Series 2

MAY 2022

Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation

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Acronyms and abbreviations

OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PPME	Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit
REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
ROI	Return on Investment
UN CC:Learn	One UN CC:Learn Partnership
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Executive summary

The Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit (PPME) has developed this lessons learned series to provide valuable insights for learning and improved decision-making related to future programming. This paper uses the rapid evidence assessment (REA) methodology to analyse and synthetize lessons learned from past UNITAR independent and self-evaluations undertaken since 2016.

This second edition focuses on lessons related to knowledge sharing and networking, local and national ownership, monitoring tools, new technologies and local support. Fifty-one lessons were analyzed, resulting in 13 meta-lessons. A short survey was also deployed to UNITAR managers and directors to better understand the use of lessons learned at UNITAR.

The following meta-lessons were found:

Knowledge sharing and networking

1. **Multisector and multidisciplinary groups help establishing a diverse network of professionals and deepen the learning experience.**

2. **Alumni networks and local coaches create a local support system for participants after the training.**

3. **E-learning is an effective tool for knowledge sharing and networking.**

New technologies

1. **Social media can be very advantageous to reach out to new beneficiaries and position participants' projects.**

2. **Providing guidance to navigate digital learning platforms can help in reducing dropouts in digital learning.**

Local and national ownership

1. **Engagement of the community and local partners can improve project ownership.**

2. **Sustainability of project results relies largely on local factors.**

3. **Incorporation of cultural and local insights into the project/programme design can foster local ownership.**

4. **Ownership in country projects can be reached when the project goal is aligned with national priorities, although timespan should be flexible to potential delays.**

Local support

1. **Lack of political will and support from supervisors can hinder behaviour change.**

2. **Local support can be constructed from inside the training programme.**

Monitoring tools

1. **Log frames are important but need to be complemented with regular monitoring for effect.**

2. **Monitoring attainment of learning objectives is a recurrent and significant process.**

Results from a survey deployed to directors and managers suggest that formulation and incorporation of lessons learned at UNITAR are a common practice that can occur through formal documentation and be formally recorded, e.g., in narrative reports after conducting self-evaluations and incorporated into the UNITAR lessons learned repository or more informally as internal discussions of the project management team. This practice is, however, mostly done internally and there is less opportunity to exchange lessons with other UNITAR programmes and divisions.

As next steps, a lessons learned forum will be organised to discuss findings from this assessment and invite colleagues from Programme Units to share and exchange. Moreover, this paper series will be continued, and future editions will focus on different categories of lessons learned. The Lessons Learned database and this assessment shall inform new programming development.

Introduction

According to UNITAR's Evaluation Policy (2021a), evaluation at the Institute serves accountability, organizational learning, quality improvement and decision-making purposes. Lessons learned from evaluations provide an evidence-based source of information on what has (and what has not) worked well from UNITAR programming, with results from such exercises contributing to the creation and uptake of knowledge. This paper series aim to contribute to management and dissemination of knowledge generated from previous evaluations that can also contribute to quality improvement of programming.

Using the REA methodology, the series analyzes and synthetizes lessons from UNITAR independent and self-evaluations undertaken since 2016. Each issue of the series contains lessons from different categories. This second issue focuses on lessons related to **knowledge sharing and networking, local and national ownership, monitoring tools, new technologies and local support**. Fifty-one lessons were analyzed, resulting in 13 meta-lessons. Furthermore, a short survey was deployed to UNITAR managers and directors to better understand the use of lessons learned at UNITAR.

After this introduction, the purpose and methodology are presented, followed by the findings, take-away messages from the process and a description of the next steps.

Methodology

This paper uses the definition of lessons learned proposed by the OECD/DAC Glossary (2010). Lessons learned are defined as *"Generalizations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programs, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact."* (OECD/DAC, 2010, p.26).

The guiding questions proposed for the analysis are the following:

- What can we learn from past programming to guide future design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases?
- What factors can be identified as drivers of success or reinforcing challenges towards the achievement of project/programme goals?

The REA methodology provides a balanced assessment of what is known (and not known) from evaluations about an intervention/programme/project by using a systematic methodology to search and critically appraise evidence (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017).

The lessons analyzed derive from independent and self-evaluations available in the UNITAR repository of lessons learned as of March 2022. Lessons in the repository are classified under 19 categories of lessons according to their type. This series focuses on five of these categories: knowledge sharing and networking, local or national ownership, local support, monitoring tools, and new technologies. *Data availability* was also considered for inclusion in this series, but there was not enough information for its appraisal, and was then omitted.

Excluding duplicated or miscategorized lessons, 51 lessons were analyzed for this paper. *Knowledge sharing and networking* was the category with the largest number of lessons (21) followed by *local or national ownership* (17).

The distribution per category is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Number of lessons per category

Lesson category	Number
Knowledge Sharing and Networking	21
Local or National Ownership	17
Local Support	6
Monitoring Tools	4
New technologies	3

The analysis of the lessons learned followed a two-step procedure: first, lessons under each category were reclassified in sub-categories; and second, lessons are extracted derived from their respective subcategory. Annex 1 presents the full list of lessons with their respective categories and sub-categories.

Besides the analysis of lessons learned for the selected categories, a survey to directors and managers was deployed to collect experiences on lessons learned formulation and inclusion along the programme/project cycle. Eight responses were received, with only one UNITAR division not being represented in the results.

Limitations

In order to be 'rapid', an REA necessarily needs to compromise on the breadth, depth and comprehensiveness of the search and, in this case, it does not allow for an in-depth study of the context of each project in which a lesson learned was formulated (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017). Another limitation is an unequal distribution of lessons by UNITAR division, with more than half of the lessons (60 per cent, or 31 lessons) gathered from the Prosperity Division. The remaining lessons belong to evaluation exercises from the divisions for Peace, Planet and Satellite Analysis and Applied Research Divisions. Moreover, some of the categories selected contained only a few lessons, which question their generalizability to the whole Institute.

Findings: Using lessons learned

Eight responses were obtained from directors and managers. The formulation of lessons learned is done in all UNITAR programmes captured in the survey. Lessons are usually **formulated** for large projects (e.g., country programming or long-term projects), and to a lesser extent for small projects. Lessons learned are **documented** both formally and informally. Formally, lessons learned are included in narrative or project completion reports or in internal documents and repositories. They can also be documented more informally as project notes obtained throughout project implementation, e.g., feedback from participants, resource persons and staff, or in meetings hold at the end of a project to discuss lessons learned either with UNITAR staff involved in the project or with donors and partners. The small-scale and size of most projects was mentioned as the main factor that hampered the identification and formulation of lessons learned.

Moving forward, almost all programmes represented in the survey (seven out of eight) have **incorporated** lessons learned from past projects/programmes into new ones during 2020 and 2021. Four of them have used lessons from their own programme units and three have also applied lessons from other programmes or divisions. These reflect diverse areas, such as training content and delivery modality, strategic planning, budgeting or monitoring tools, and may inform future phases of the same project or the design/development new projects. Box 1 below contains specific examples on how lessons have been integrated.

The Institute's decentralized structure of project management has facilitated the application of lessons learned, where internal sessions dedicated to learning can be held to brainstorm on and strategize from lessons that have been identified. On the other hand, the knowledge on the existence of the centralized lessons learned repository and limited time disincentivize its use.

Findings: Lessons Learned from evaluations

Knowledge sharing and networking

1. **Multisector and multidisciplinary groups help establishing a diverse network of professionals and deepen the learning experience**

The first issue of the lessons learned series highlighted the importance of balancing theory and practice (including group activities) and participants' gender for successful training. Similarly, an interactive methodology in a culturally diverse group of participants is important for participants to deepen their learning experience and strengthen their professional networks.

UNITAR evaluations suggest that having participants from different backgrounds (e.g., nationalities, organizational affiliations, areas of work) help creating a safe space for knowledge sharing, where participants can exchange their good practices and common challenges faced in their different contexts. This has proved very valuable in regional training for countries with similar contexts and challenges in which formal knowledge sharing hubs and platforms are not established or are not well known by the relevant stakeholders or there are other barriers for information exchange, e.g., geography. In these cases, the UNITAR training are an opportunity to connect participants to fill these gaps by facilitating South-South learning, exchange and cooperation.

"[…] One key benefit of the programme, reported by a number of participants, was the ability to engage face-to-face with counterparts from far-distant countries, facing similar issues with regards tsunami and DRR."

"The knowledge sharing among the participants from other countries provided invaluable knowledge and good practices that are not readily available elsewhere."

Moreover, many professional and personal networks have been formed as a result of the training programmes. In these cases, participants have recognized the value added of being connected to professionals in other fields for their career development, especially for mid-career and senior professionals. Likewise, this is mostly observed for national or regional training programmes. Examples of networks sustained after the training are those derived from the "Entrepreneurship and Leadership Youth Training Fellowship Programme" in Iraq and South Sudan, where the fellows created a space to exchange their experiences and connect to each other for working opportunities.[1]

"The multi-sector approach enriched the entire programme and proved essential and effective in building trust, friendship, and a network of like-minded Iraqi youth."

2. **Alumni networks and local coaches create a local support system for participants after the training**

Benefits and uses of alumni networks include social relations, career advancement and job searches, group work, dissemination of information (formal and informal) and improved organizational leadership (Fredricks, 2003). Alumni networks can also build a local support system for participants, creating a reliable and comfortable space where they can share professional information and experiences. UNITAR alumni is also a valuable resource for the Institute. Former participants are also potential participants for future trainings. UNITAR alumni can bring their own expertise and knowledge to improved future training editions and they can be the first promoters of UNITAR events and activities, extending beneficiary reach with limited resources.

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[1] Further reading with the Impact Stories for the programme in South Sudan (UNITAR, 2021b) and Iraq (UNITAR, 2021c).

"The FAO/UNITAR partnership has created a network of development practitioners who are relying on the joint initiative as their trusted source of knowledge and information relating to agriculture and trade."

Incentives to enter and participate in an alumni network and continuous follow-up are key to maintaining an alumni network.[2] Another key ingredient for maintaining alumni networks is the inclusion of local coaches, who are former participants of the training being delivered. Local coaches are not only knowledgeable on the training delivered but also carry the practical experiences shared by their colleagues during their programme cycle. Moreover, they can serve as a bridge to connect current with former participants, maintaining the network alive. Although alumni network experiences at UNITAR have been more common in programmes with multiple cycles, thematic networks can also be promoted.

"Building an alumni network creates a local support system for fellows even after the programme ends. The presence of coaches helps connect current Fellows with Fellows from previous cycles."

3. E-learning is an effective tool for knowledge sharing and networking

While multicultural groups are important for knowledge sharing, bringing together a network of professionals is not always a feasible option, e.g., constrained monetary resources do not allow for traveling, health restrictions, etc. In these case scenarios, e-learning is an efficient option for connecting professionals. It can be relatively cheap compared to face-to-face events and give the advantage that participants are already familiar with online means.

"Using innovative tools such as eLearning have been demonstrated as an effective and efficient approach to share knowledge and strengthen networking of like-minded officials from different countries and government ministries."

New technologies

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[2] More information is available on UNITARnet on good practices to build an alumni network and online community of practice.

1. **Social media can be very advantageous to reach new beneficiaries and position participants' projects**

While dissemination of information is well known to be one of the benefits of social media, this does not only need to occur from the UNITAR platforms, but participants can be instrumental to disseminate UNITAR's work to new beneficiaries, especially for programmes targeting youth. Participant interaction in social media platforms when sharing training experience can be a key communication tool to incentivize new beneficiaries' enrolment.

Moreover, the use of social media to improve participants' projects visibility need to be consider since the training design. This is of particular interest in those training involving social entrepreneurship or, more generally, project development.

"Throughout the 2019 programme cycle, UNITAR experienced first-hand how participants utilized social media to spread awareness of the programme and of their own related activities. Social networks are also highly relevant to entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, where disseminated information about an organization or service, as well as interaction with the community an organization is servicing, is critical to an enterprise's effectiveness and success"

2. **Providing guidance to navigate digital learning platforms can help reduce dropouts from digital learning**

Online training formats have represented an alternative to continue delivering training under conditions of limited mobility and security. However, formative and substantive digital divide[3] is not always considered or addressed to assure that all stakeholders can access and participate in the training under the same conditions. Whilst some participants might be very familiar with online learning platforms (e.g., Moodle, mobile applications, etc.), others may find difficult to navigate them, to the point of not feeling adequate for the training and resulting in high attrition rates. Having a preliminary session or providing detailed guidance, as well as making ourselves available to assist on how to use the digital platforms/tools required for the training can be important to maintain participants interest in the training.

"[…] Future iterations of the Programme will need to include more hands-on introductory training on how to use the platform. Access to online training is still limited in some countries. Many participants may not have a stable internet connection or even access to the internet – especially as UNITAR works with people in least developed countries and fragile states. Since this Programme focuses on "leaving no one behind," we must further consider easier and lower-bandwidth tools, be they a mobile-learning platform or other technologies that fit such environments."

UNITAR leaning solutions have developed a guidance on how to make online events more inclusive, including matters on accessibility and technological literacy levels.

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[3] The digital divide occurs at three interdependent levels: i) digital access divide meaning lacking access to materials and digital tools (formative); ii) digital capability divide when users are limited in practice with digital tools and equipment (substantive); and iii) digital outcome divide where users lack belief and self-efficacy that further inhibits their interaction with digital tools (substantive) (Mathrani, Sarvesh & Umer, 2021).

Local or national ownership
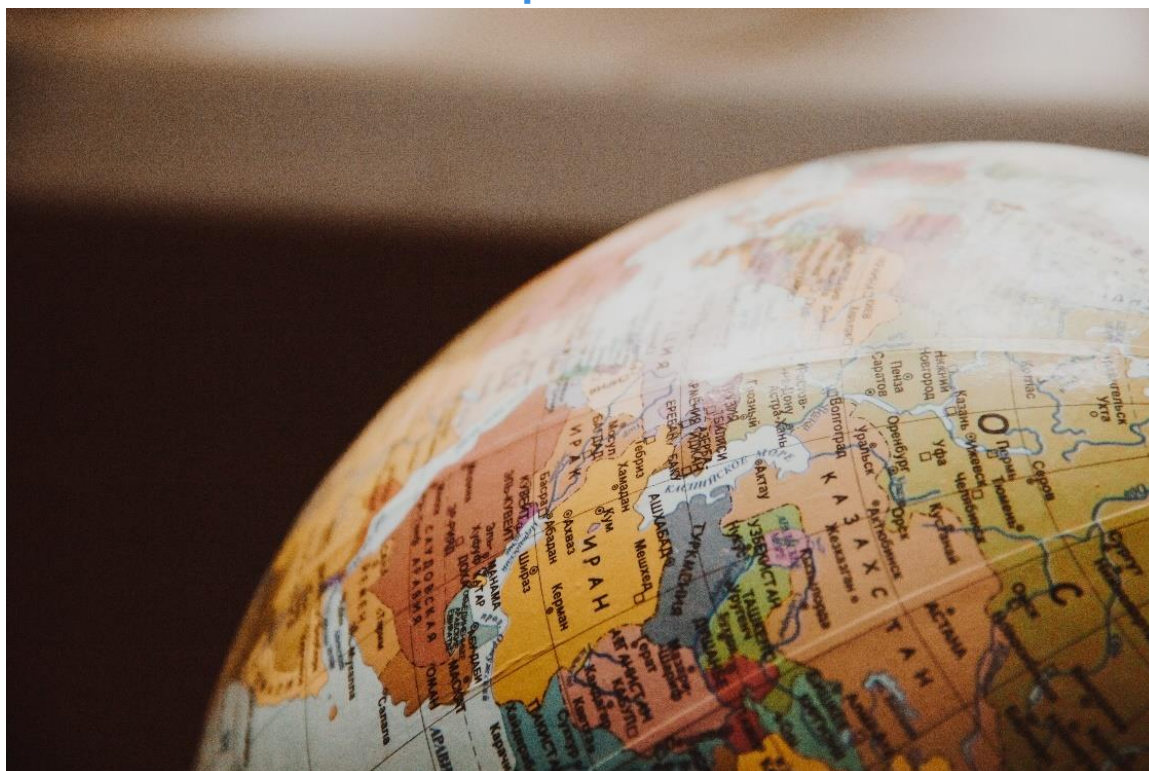
1. **Engagement of the community and local partners can improve project ownership**

One of the challenges of projects developed by actors external to the community (or the local setting) is creating local ownership, which may be determinant for project sustainability.

"[…] Engaging local staff and institutional partners is instrumental to support effective project delivery and ensure ownership and sustainability of results. This is particularly important for projects implemented in geographic regions distant from the location of the main project partners."

Engaging local stakeholders can help build ownership by:[4]

i)   Ensuring that the *project accurately reflects local needs and priorities*. A project tackling needs that are a priority for the community may increase their interest in project participation and continuation of its implementation. Moreover, it reduces overlooking any unintended impact of the project that may deter further beneficiaries engagement.

"Community-based DRR and social inclusion concepts were well received and relevant. Participants recognized and understood very well the concept of community-based DRR, as most of their countries' populations live in villages and settlements. Community-based DRR is based on a system of cooperation with a diverse group of social actors. It must include the most vulnerable, including women, persons with disabilities, youth, the elders, minorities and others."

ii) *Securing local support*. This factor is of great importance in contexts with marked community decision making power in broader organizational structures where legitimacy of the project falls broadly on the communities. A question to be asked

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[4] Based on Community Ownership Support Service (2020), Caribbean Development Bank and Social Development Commission (2019), and own analysis of lessons learned.

is who do you need to engage to build a conducive environment to local conditions? Adapting the project to the established local organizational structures can ease ownership engagement.

iii) *Identifying new (adequate) partners and collaborators*. Local stakeholders have the greatest knowledge of "who does what" in their local communities. Collaborating with the right people can assure that understanding of the project and the roles assigned to each stakeholder are not obstacles for project ownership. Moreover, they are also the most knowledgeable about, and sometimes the ones owning, the channels to increase beneficiaries outreach.

"Rural educational institutions and school professionals (teachers, social workers) have a key role as liaisons in connecting the [master trainers] and master organizations with youth and their families in vulnerable communities"

2. Sustainability of project results relies largely on local factors

As described above, community and local stakeholders' engagement is a vehicle to improve not only ownership but also project sustainability and greater outreach. Other local factors that can also contribute to sustainability of project results are:

i) *Stakeholders dialogue and local networks*. Engaging different stakeholders since project inception and promoting a dialogue among them is key to prepare the grounds for future project phases where multiple actors need to work together to deliver and sustain project results. Creating a space for dialogue can also strengthened local networks, which might create a value added for stakeholders to remain active in the project.

ii) *Formal agreements*. Creating formal agreements, when possible,[5] to embrace the project spirit after project completion has proved useful to assure its sustainability.

"It is possible to say that GHS implementation is now fully "taken up" (institutionalised) and sustainable in the target countries. This result would not likely have been possible without both phases of the GHS work: [… i)] ground work of bringing together the key stakeholders in a continuing dialogue, preparing initial analyses of the existing situation and preparing draft regulatory instruments; and Phase 2, which solidified this preparatory work via finalising and bringing legislation in to force and conducting broad technical training and continued awareness raising."

iii) *Bringing stakeholder assets into the project*. Stakeholders, including beneficiaries, came with new skills, knowledge and experiences that may be beneficial for the project in the long run. These assets should be accounted for during project design when building a successful sustainability strategy.

"National training institutions were selected as training beneficiaries because they are well placed to integrate new content on climate policy and public finance within their ongoing training programmes and because these programmes already target Ministry of finance officials."

iv) *Continuous support for long-term expected outcomes*. Sustainability can turn a challenge when project activities and expected outcomes are "on-going" processes instead of steady results to be expected after project implementation. In these cases, project impacts and sustainability should be thought in a realistic manner, so that continuous support can only be provided from local sources.

3. Incorporation of cultural and local insights into the project/programme design can foster local ownership

Incorporating cultural insights into the project or programmes is important to make sure that the new knowledge being transferred has validity and practical value when applying

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[5] It is worth noting that lessons highlighting this factor came mostly from projects involving training on international agreements/procedures/regulations. However, non-institutionalized local commitments can also produce analogous experiences.

knowledge and skills and in achieving expected results. For training-related projects, inclusion of practical examples from local realities are also very valued by participants and facilitate them taking ownership for transferring/applying the new knowledge. Similarly, experts that were familiar or have some practical knowledge with the local situation was a success factor for attaining the new technical competencies and planned actions.

"Many participants mentioned the importance of cross-country communication in the forums and how local examples helped them to understand theoretical concepts."
"Over the years, research shows that conflict sensitivity, cultural and taboos sensitization and the basics of the language and communication skills are critical for strengthening the peacekeeping efforts and the safety of the civilians and the FPUs themselves."

4. **Ownership in country projects can be reached when project goal is aligned with national priorities, although timespan should be flexible to potential delays**
For country projects, ownership is easier to build when the project goals are aligned with national priorities and strategies which usually carries with it the existence of a national apparatus with experience on the regard or willing to take over responsibilities that contribute towards the project goal (and national strategy).

"Effective capacity development focuses on longer-term outcomes and impacts. Therefore, the content of the programme's curriculum need to be driven by national priorities and guided by strategic national partners."

However, the project timeframe should be flexible expecting some delays in processes of consultation or even approval. An example of flexibility to construct national ownership is the UN CC:Learn project, as described in Box 2 below.

Box 2. National priorities and strategies in UN CC:Learn project (2014-2017 Phase)

The One UN CC:Learn Partnership (UN CC:Learn) is a collaborative initiative involving more than 36 multilateral organizations which are involved in the development and/or delivery of climate change related learning. The project's 2014-2017 implementation phase aimed to creating sustainable individual and institutional capacities in developing and transitional countries to plan and implement effective climate change actions.

The mid-term evaluation of the 2014-2017 phase assessed the initiative as having a high degree of relevance and ownership from national partners (partner countries). Strategy development processes were always highly participatory and inclusive, drawing on the experience and resources of institutions from across the economy (government, academia, private sector, CSOs / NGOs etc.). This was related to the high relevance of the project to national priorities and strategies concerning climate change.

The evaluation recognized that highly participatory processes, however, may cause some delays in the project implementation timeframe, which should be considered since project design.

> […P]rojects that support the development of national-level strategies (regardless of thematic focus) will commonly be subject to 'delay', particularly where a high degree of consultation, participation and political ownership is sought. However, if 'delays' are the price of obtaining genuine national ownership, then this will invariably be a price worth paying. As such, it is important that the length of time allocated to national strategy development is generous and flexible, supported by project plans and activities that are not overly dependent on formal strategies being in place. (UNITAR, 2016, p. 27).

Local support

1. **Lack of political will and support from supervisors can hinder behaviour change**

UNITAR applies the Kirkpatrick/Phillips approach to evaluate training. This approach categorizes evaluation data based on five levels, including Level 1 (reaction and planned action), Level 2 (learning and confidence), Level 3 (application and implementation), Level 4 (impact/organizational change) and Level 5 (Return on Investment-ROI), as shown in the figure below. From Level 3,[6] the aim is to gather evidence on participants' application of knowledge, skills and competencies to indicate changes in behaviour, i.e., whether participants are doing things differently after the training programme that will lead to organizational change or other results (Level 4) and, ultimately, demonstrate good value for money with a return on investment (Level 5).

However, evidence from evaluations have indicated that expected changes might be difficult to achieve when there is no immediate support from beneficiaries' line managers or decision makers. This lack of local support can come from top leadership or from other stakeholders in the leadership/command chain. Building trust and relationships necessary to obtain support and create interest is possible but takes time, for which we should not expect to see immediate results in these particular cases.

"Lack of political will and attention from line managers and supervisors makes it difficult for Fellows to win the support of their organizations and ministries."

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[6] Guidelines on evaluating application of knowledge and skills, can be found in UNITARnet.

Along the same lines, lack of interest from decision makers renders stakeholder engagement difficult and may lead to a lack of coherence across actors (e.g., duplication of efforts with little impact from each of the actions implemented).

"[… A] lack of engagement between civil society and government was highlighted a number of times during the Programme as a key impediment to the incorporation of lessons learned and changes in behaviour."

2. Local support can be built from inside the training programme[7]

Local support cannot only be expected from stakeholders outside the training programme, but it can also be built from the inside, taking into account the human capital of participants and resource persons. Linked to the lessons derived in the "knowledge sharing and networking" section above, alumni networks are key instruments to develop local support systems besides connecting participants with potential partners, namely former beneficiaries and colleagues.

"Building an alumni network creates a local support system for participants even after the programme ends".

Monitoring tools

1. Log frames are important but need to be complemented by regular monitoring for effect

Logical frameworks are useful instruments to support results-oriented project planning and management and have positioned as the main monitoring tool in projects. Despite its strengths, log frames can be too rigid to monitor external and contextual factors. In these

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[7] Lessons under these meta-lessons were all referred to programmes with learning components. Therefore, we prefer to not generalize for project with other development outcomes.

cases, complementary tools, such as mapping and qualitative feedback, are useful to better monitor project results.

"Log frames are a useful day-to-day monitoring tool, but they are not always sufficient for expressing the full-range of influences, contextual factors and assumptions that underpin a project, particularly where work is primarily focused on attaining qualitative changes."

2. **Monitoring achievement of learning objectives is a recurrent and significant process**

Assessment of achievement of learning objectives is mainly done by obtaining feedback from participants at the beginning and end of the training programme through self-assessments or objective assessments of learning (e.g., end-of-course quizzes or other instruments). Nonetheless, achievement of learning objectives can also be monitored throughout programme delivery. Monitoring accomplishment of learning objectives on a regular basis, e.g., at the end of each module (e.g., check for understanding and end of module quizzes) facilitates the identification of learning barriers that may hindered participants learning process, resulting in shortcomings on results.

Tools to monitor achievement of learning objectives include completion rates after each module (high dropout rates or delays in completion can give signs of learning difficulties), individual grade records or pre-post quizzes and tests (OECD, 2019).

"The training conducted online ensured that the participation of each participant can be monitored, and the achievement of the learning objectives is measurable. Monitoring progress of each participant on a weekly basis allowed the available course slots to be fully optimized and to provide support and encouragement to those lagging behind."

Key take-aways

Lessons can help inform drivers of success and address challenges upfront for future programming. This issue has highlighted five categories with 13 meta-lessons that can be used as drivers for successful future programming. The rapid evidence assessment has led to the following take-away messages:[8]

- Formulation and incorporation of lessons learned are a common practice at UNITAR, but the knowledge obtained through this process is not always shared with other programmes and divisions. More effort needs to be undertaken to also learn from practices of other divisions and programme units.
- Training sessions can be a good opportunity to engage in knowledge sharing and strengthen participants' social and professional networks when the groups are diverse and when local resource persons are present.
- Use of digital tools and platforms bring many advantages but the appropriate guidance to participants who are less familiar with them needs to be provided.
- Local ownership can be strengthened through the engagement of the local community and partners, incorporation of cultural and contextual insights and ensuring that projects are relevant to national (local) priorities and strategies. At the same time, improved ownership can also contribute to the sustainability of project results.
- Behaviour change can be difficult to occur when there is lack of political will and support from line managers, hindering impact achievement.

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[8] Some key messages from the last exercise are still applicable and can be found on UNITARnet, but were not included in this document to avoid redundancy.

- Monitoring participants' achievement of learning objectives and ensuring the presence of a well-built log frame are good practices to help understand final project achievement. Log frames should, however, be complemented with other information for explaining contextual factors affecting project results.

The way forward

As next steps, the following actions are foreseen:

- A lessons learned forum will be organised to discuss findings from this assessment and invite colleagues from Programme Units to share and exchange experiences.
- This series will be continued, and future editions will focus on different categories of lessons learned.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Lessons compilation

Lessons	Category	Sub-category
Fellows highlighted that they were working in multi-sector teams for the first time and noted that the programme presented an opportunity to work together for a common goal. The multi-sector approach proved essential and effective in building trust, friendship and a network of like-minded South Sudanese.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
Building an alumni network creates a local support system for Fellows even after the programme ends. The presence of coaches helps connect current Fellows with Fellows from previous cycles.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Alumni network; Coaches and mentors
Access to the network of like-minded field practitioners would have been difficult to replicate in a face-to-face environment.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
Collaborative learning exposed the learners to different experiences of participants from different CIS countries, thus enhancing and deepening the learning experience and placing the content modules in a practical context.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
The active involvement and effective mentoring of the international experts created an environment that encouraged the sharing of experiences.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Coaches and mentors
The diverse, multi-sector group of Fellows encouraged peer learning and collaboration. Afghans and other regional experts also facilitated South-South Learning.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
The regional components (e.g. regional workshops, consumer campaigns, etc.) played a key supporting role to keep other regional countries involved and acted as platforms for knowledge sharing amongst the whole region and a variety of concerned stakeholders.	Knowledge sharing and networking	knowledge sharing channels
Training fostered a dialogue between government and CSO representatives from the same country and helped to forge working relationships at country and regional level which are likely to continue beyond the programme.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
Global projects offer a platform to engage in south-south cooperation activities, either between project countries or by tapping the larger network of UNDP and UNITAR partners to seek the best possible synergies.	Knowledge sharing and networking	knowledge sharing channels

The FAO/UNITAR partnership has created a network of development practitioners who are relying on the joint initiative as their trusted source of knowledge and information relating to agriculture and trade.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Alumni network
Access by the participants with the Mentors through the weekly discussion forums was an enriching experience for them. Interaction with the Mentors allowed the participants to get additional insights that have not been previously considered.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Coaches and mentors
Using innovative tools such as eLearning have been demonstrated as an effective and efficient approach to share knowledge and strengthen networking of like-minded officials from different countries and government ministries	Knowledge sharing and networking	knowledge sharing channels
The lively involvement and effective mentoring by FAO experts resulted in an encouraging environment in terms of sharing experiences and allowing individualized advice to participants.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Coaches and mentors
Collaborative learning enabled the participants to learn more about the topic through other participants' opinions, facts, and experiences from different countries within the region. As a result, this led to a richer learning experience involving a healthy balance of theory and practice.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
Several participants mentioned they had already established contacts and there are future collaborative projects in sight. Due to the engaging environment provided by the discussion forms, some initiatives were brought to life such as writing articles and research papers.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Alumni network
The knowledge sharing among the participants from other countries provided invaluable knowledge and good practices that are not readily available elsewhere.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
The multi-sectoral background of the beneficiaries means that learners have access to a much wider access to good practices and experiences by other practitioners from other regions. In addition, the participants were also exposed to a network of like-minded officials and professionals as well as potential partners.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team

THE DIVERSE, MULTI-SECTOR GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS ENCOURAGED PEER LEARNING AND COLLABORATION	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team

THE DIVERSE, MULTI-SECTOR GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS ENCOURAGED PEER LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

Participants came from various organisations and sectors and brought diverse knowledge and experiences to the programme. Many highlighted that, through group work and assignments, they were working in multi-sector teams for the first time and that they would continue to utilize a multi-sectors perspective after they finished the programme. They noted the programme presented an opportunity to work together for a common goal: to create a better future for the people of Iraq.

The multi-sector approach enriched the entire programme and proved essential and effective in building trust, friendship, and a network of like-minded Iraqi youth. Furthermore, the promotion of public-private partnerships is essential to the long-term economic stability of Iraq, as the public sector is responsible for creating an environment in which entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship can flourish; such an environment can then have a tangible positive impact on the socio-economic development of Iraqi society.

Although participants did not all begin the programme with the same level of knowledge about entrepreneurship, which could have hindered teamwork and small group dynamics, in practice participants cooperated as they undertook practical exercises; they helped each other contextualize the learning to their various professional experiences.

The learning needs of both those who already had entrepreneurship skills and those with less experience needed to be incorporated in the programme's design; UNITAR Staff and our Resource Persons rose to the challenge and created a nuanced programme that addressed participants' needs and facilitated communication between participants from diverse sectors and professional experiences.

Knowledge sharing plays an important role for small island developing states where some for the good practices applied by one country can be relevant for many others.	Knowledge sharing and networking	knowledge sharing channels
DEVELOPMENT OF ALUMNI NETWORK	Knowledge sharing and networking	Alumni network

Knowledge sharing plays an important role for small island developing states where some for the good practices applied by one country can be relevant for many others.

DEVELOPMENT OF ALUMNI NETWORK

2018 marked the Programme's third cycle, bringing the total number of graduates of the Programme to 95 to date. Given this growing network, UNITAR launched an official alumni network to allow participants to share their ideas on the events and activities they are carrying out

Physical distances within the Pacific make collaboration more difficult It must be remembered when discussing these entities that the Pacific Ocean covers some 165 million square kilometres, or 46% of the earths water surface, and approximately one-third of its total surface area. Participants in the programme hailed from Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia - locations separated at times by enormous distances - with Palau and the Cook Islands for example, separated by over 7800 kilometres. One key benefit of the programme, reported by a number of participants, was the ability to engage face-to-face with counterparts from far-distant countries, facing similar issues with regards tsunami and DRR.	Knowledge sharing and networking	Multisector/multidisciplinary team
THE IRAQI CONTEXT IS CONDUCIVE TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP Compared to other conflict-affected countries, where patchy internet access and other communication issues often hinder organisations' ability to function, Iraq has thriving social and business networks, both online and offline. Throughout the 2019 programme cycle, UNITAR experienced first-hand how participants utilized social media to spread awareness of the programme and of their own related activities. Social networks are also highly relevant to entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, where disseminated information about an organisation or service, as well as interaction with the community an organisation is servicing, is critical to an enterprise's effectiveness and success. Iraq's young population suited to utilize the new technologies and social networks present in the country to address their communities' numerous and evolving needs through social entrepreneurship.	New technologies	Social media and social networks
VARIOUS LEVELS OF TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES TO ENHANCE PREPAREDNESS The participants observed various high-tech facilities and technologies to prepare for potential disasters, such as satellite warning system, emergency control rooms, sea level measuring devices, seacoast surveillance cameras, and tsunami evaluation towers. While such facilities and technologies are not readily available in many countries, alternative tools which can be relatively quickly applied were also introduced, such as smart phone applications, home emergency kit, customized Go-Bags, playing cards and handkerchief for children to learn preparedness, DRR Songs and Diorama. Participants discussed how these tools can be customized so that it fits to their countries' context.	New technologies	Alternative technologies

Technical fragility and the digital divide need to be addressed While online training is, in some aspects, more efficient than conventional in-person training and can help increase the total number of beneficiaries, there is concern that it exacerbates the digital divide. Participants were relatively favourable to EdApp since it did not require a large bandwidth. However, some participants dropped out of the training because they were not familiar with EdApp and had difficulty using it. Future iterations of the Programme will need to include more hands-on introductory training on how to use the platform. Access to online training is still limited in some countries. Many participants may not have a stable internet connection or even access to the internet – especially as UNITAR works with people in least developed countries and fragile states. Since this Programme focuses on "leaving no one behind," we must further consider easier and lower-bandwidth tools, be they a mobile-learning platform or other technologies that fit such environments.	New technologies	Digital divide
Effective capacity development focuses on longer-term outcomes and impacts. Therefore, the content of the programme's curriculum need to be driven by national priorities and guided by strategic national partners.	Local or national ownership	National Priorities and strategies
Projects that support the development of national-level strategies will commonly be subject to delays, particularly where a high degree of consultation, participation and political ownership is sought.	Local or national ownership	National Priorities and strategies
GHS implementation is an on-going activity and not one that is quickly "completed" within any given timeframe. All project countries identified need continued training and awareness raising as the GHS continues to be "rolled out."	Local or national ownership	Sustainability
It is possible to say that GHS implementation is now fully "taken up" (institutionalised) and sustainable in the target countries. This result would not likely have been possible without both phases of the GHS work: Phase 1 that did the ground work of bringing together the key stakeholders in a continuing dialogue, preparing initial analyses of the existing situation and preparing draft regulatory instruments; and Phase 2, which solidified this preparatory work via finalising and bringing legislation in to force and conducting broad technical training and continued awareness raising.	Local or national ownership	Sustainability
The selection of the host country for the major regional events/conferences can provide important incentives for those countries.	Local or national ownership	Country incentives
National training institutions were selected as training beneficiaries because they are well placed to integrate new content on climate policy and public finance within their ongoing training programmes, and because these programmes already target Ministry of finance officials.	Local or national ownership	Sustainability

Cultural Context on the conflict of the peacekeeping operation is critical. According to interviews, desk research and group discussions, police officers are often trained on police's standard operating procedures, and other operational requirements but less on the cultural context and the drivers of the conflict where they will be deployed. Over the years, research shows that conflict sensitivity, cultural and taboos sensitization and the basics of the language and communication skills are critical for strengthening the peacekeeping efforts and the safety of the civilians and the FPUs themselves.	Local or national ownership	Cultural and local context
Using a global project approach does not seem most appropriate to the development of national MIAs, particularly given variations in capacity among targeted countries, and such projects should consider a longer period of time for implementation.	Local or national ownership	Implementation frame
With country projects it is important to involve local partners and engage with a wider community as much as possible to ensure local ownership and participation.	Local or national ownership	Community and local organizations engagement
Strengthening networks of local organizations and agents of change is essential to achieving sustainable impact in individual and communities that leads to peaceful conflict resolution and reconciliation	Local or national ownership	Sustainability
Rural educational institutions and school professionals (teachers, social workers) have a key role as liaisons in connecting the MT and master organizations with youth and their families in vulnerable communities	Local or national ownership	Community and local organizations engagement
Importance of local staff and partners in consortia. Engaging local staff and institutional partners is instrumental to support effective project delivery and ensure ownership and sustainability of results. This is particularly important for projects implemented in geographic regions distant from the location of the main project partners.	Local or national ownership	Sustainability
The joint FAO and UNITAR initiative has created hope from the course participants that similar initiatives will continue considering that the development challenges they face on the ground continue to evolve.	Local or national ownership	Cultural and local context
Many participants mentioned the importance of cross-country communication in the forums and how local examples helped them to understand theoretical concepts.	Local or national ownership	Cultural and local context

EXPERTS FAMILIAR WITH THE LOCAL SITUATION CONTRIBUTED TO CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING UNITAR's Iraq-based Staff, Coaches and Mentors were helpful in relating programme content to the current local situation in the country through contextualisation of the discussion with local examples and knowledge. It helped the learning atmosphere greatly by focusing on individual exercises, group activities, role play. By applying what they have learned through their projects and in real life scenarios have improved the knowledge retention and contributed to rich learning experience. Local expertise is indispensable when working in conflict-affected areas, and the inclusion of said expertise helped make the programme highly relevant to the participants' needs. Partnership with Zain Telecommunication, The Station and KAPITA, which run incubators and facilities inside Iraq that provides aspiring young entrepreneurs with resources and space to work free of charge, introduced participants to current entrepreneurship opportunities that exist close at hand.	Local or national ownership	Cultural and local context
Community-based DRR and social inclusion concepts were well received and relevant Participants recognized and understood very well the concept of community-based DRR, as most of their countries' populations live in villages and settlements. Community-based DRR is based on a system of cooperation with a diverse group of social actors. It must include the most vulnerable, including women, persons with disabilities, youth, the elders, minorities and others. The 2020 Programme put ever more focus on social inclusion and addressed meeting not only the needs of women in the communities but of the elderly and people with special needs. Participants responded that these were new areas that they were eager to consider in their communities.	Local or national ownership	Community and local organizations engagement
Save yourself first The importance of all stakeholders was stressed by a number of the study visits and engagement with local partners. Everyone, from school children to the elderly, should be empowered and encouraged to make the decision to evacuate themselves, without waiting for official warnings. This component figured heavily in participant discussions regarding evacuation planning and implementation of lessons learned	Local or national ownership	Community and local organizations engagement
Lack of political will and attention from line managers and supervisors makes it difficult for Fellows to win the support of their organizations and ministries.	Local support	Political will and hierarchies
Building the relationships and trust necessary to receive honest feedback to an Organizational Needs Assessment takes time.	Local support	Social relations and trust
INTRODUCING LOCAL COACHES FOR THE 2017 AND 2018 CYCLES Coaches are standout graduates from previous cycle who are assigned with providing daily coaching during workshops, as well as regular mentoring and overall guidance on the programme's assignments and requirements to participants. Coaches play an important role to help contextualize the learning to local realities. Coaches receive additional "Coaching for Coaches" training as a contribution for their further personal and professional development.	Local support	Coaches

BUILDING AN ALUMNI NETWORK CREATES A LOCAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR PARTICIPANTS EVEN AFTER THE PROGRAMME ENDS With each cycle of the programme, the network of alumni in South Sudan grows. Along with the knowledge and skills gained through UNITAR's programme, former Participants have experience working and developing projects in South Sudan, making every single alumni – not just Coaches or local Staff – a valuable resource to both future Participants and their local counterparts. Furthermore, the multi-sector nature of the programme means that Participants have access to a much wider network of resources and potential partners than if they only had contacts in their own sectors. The presence of Coaches also helps connect current Participants with Participants from previous cycles through Coaches' participation in both groups.	Local support	Alumni newtork; Coaches
Participants discussed concerns and reservations that their organizations and institutions currently pay less attention to timely Organizational Needs Assessments (ONA) that could potentially improve the organizations' goals as well as overall performance. This is particularly relevant for public-sector organizations and ministries where lack of political will and attention from the line managers and supervisors makes it difficult for Participants to win the support of their organizations and ministries. Although there is no culture of conducting regular ONA in many organizations, part of the problem is a lack of supervisor support and a lack of communication between supervisors and an organization's top leadership. Linked to this are general problems such as of lack of funding, financial fiscal stability, equality between public sector organisations, and the overall political environment. Participants noted the idea of cultivating champions within organizations and ministries to win over supervisors' support and to bring the ONA to the attention of the top leadership. Participants should be encouraged to suggest regular ONAs to their organization, to improve said organization's service delivery and overall performance.	Local support	Political will and hierarchies
A FURTHER NEED FOR COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING RELATING TO ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT While this is not unique to SIDS, a lack of engagement between civil society and government was highlighted a number of times during the Programme as a key impediment to the incorporation of lessons learned and changes in behaviour. Linked to this is the wasting of resources due to parallel and duplicative systems, processes, and training by government and civil societies, particularly within remote communities as encountered by many SIDS.	Local support	Coherence and hierarquies
Logframes are a useful day-to-day monitoring tool, but they are not always sufficient for expressing the full-range of influences, contextual factors and assumptions that underpin a project, particularly where work is primarily focused on attaining qualitative changes.	Monitoring tools	Logframe

The training conducted online ensured that the participation of each participant can be monitored, and the achievement of the learning objectives is measurable. Monitoring progress of each participant on a weekly basis allowed the available course slots to be fully optimized and to provide support and encouragement to those lagging behind.	Monitoring tools	Measurement of LOs
The training conducted online ensured that the achievement of the learning objectives is measurable	Monitoring tools	Measurement of LOs
TRUST-BUILDING IS KEY TO CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL A DATA COLLECTION THROUGH CUSTOMERS INTERVIEWS AND INSIGHTS To compliment what participants learn during workshop II, one of their assignments is to conduct a robust and objective needs assessment through customers insights and observation in the field. Participants highlighted challenges to conducting customers centred interviews due to many challenges including the prevailing political and security environment in Iraq. Building the relationships and trust necessary to receive honest feedback takes time and patience. In future iterations of the programme, UNITAR Staff and Resource Persons will make sure participants understand the time required to thoroughly carry out data collection, as well as provide advice for building relationships with a target community.	Monitoring tools	Measurement of LOs