

*Present:* Henry Asor (Nigeria, IATI Vice Chair), Acting Governing Board Chair; Joseph Barnes (UNICEF); Melinda Cuzner (Sida); Leo Stolk (Oxfam Novib); IATI Secretariat: Argjira Belegu-Shuku (UNOPS); Carolyn Culey (Development Initiatives); Faiza Effendi, Hanayo Nakano, Annelise Parr, Anna Whitson - Note taker (UNDP); Henriette Keijzers (Consultant, IATI Senior Adviser)

*Not present:* Theo van de Sande (Netherlands, Governing Board Chair); Dilli Lekhak (Nepal); Winnie Kamau (AFJ); Wendy Thomas (Development Initiatives)

## 1. Opening Session

- The meeting was chaired by Henry Asor (Nigeria) in his capacity as Vice Chair of the Board. The Board was informed by the Secretariat that a consultant Senior Adviser is now on board to work through Secretariat tensions and help with strategic oversight of business processes. Consortium Principals have indicated that the initial work has been fruitful.
- The Board welcomed the new Chief of the Effectiveness Group, UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (replacing Margaret Thomas), a member of the senior leadership team at UNDP.
- Conflict Register: no updates.
- Risk Register: Two risks have been added by the Secretariat since the Q2 meeting, relating to the consortium partnership, and recommendations to publishers around handling of sensitive data. The Board agreed with the inclusion, but felt that the two risks added are presented as current problems, and not future risks, and requested that the language should be reformulated. A further risk should be added around financial underspend, in addition to a risk around the relevance of IATI in a rapidly digitalising context (prompted by Covid-19).

### Action points:

- *Rephrase the risks from a risk management perspective, e.g. "from a risk perspective, if we don't XXXX, then YYYY may happen," so that we focus on the management of the issues themselves.*
- *Add risks around delays in activities leading to financial underspend and relevance in rapidly digitalising context.*

## 2. Secretariat Updates

### a) Budget and Spending

- The Board reviewed the dashboard and supporting documentation, and heard that expenditure figures presented captured more than 2 months, but not a full quarter of spending. Spending is below what was budgeted. The Secretariat recognises that levels of spending have been consistently under budget and is examining ways to accelerate spending. Nonetheless, delivery has remained high despite lower spending on activities, and funds are therefore available for investment at the direction of the Board, or to implement recommendations from the IWG.
- The Board took note of the briefing provided and acknowledged receipt of budget revision papers. Since these were circulated too late for a thorough review the Board requested a dedicated meeting be set to review the proposal from the Secretariat. An implementation acceleration plan should be included with a realistic projection of Q4, year end and carry over of resources and activities into 2022.

Action point

- *Secretariat agreed to provide open and detailed analysis of the causes of structural over-budgeting and underspending and have this available for a dedicated meeting on budget revision and acceleration proposals.*

**b) Work Plan Implementation**

- Highlights of implementation were shared in a Board paper and presented by the Secretariat. Board members were keen to understand the reasons behind delays in certain activities, expressing concern about the impact of delay in important activities from Q1-Q3, on planned activities in Q4/next year to eliminate future delays. Specific projects such as CSO training, d-portal 2, publishing statistics and publishing tool projects were referenced. Delays in processes leading to underspend should be monitored in the risk register. In terms of acceleration tactics, the Board felt that preliminary findings from the Results Framework monitoring could inform where to invest unspent funds. Analytics on use of all tools including IATI Connect should be included in the monitoring dashboard.
- A consultant has been hired by UNDP at the request of the Institutional Working Group (IWG), and Board members were keen to know more about this work and to ensure the consultant will not be deferential to UNDP as the contracting organisation. Board members recalled earlier decisions that consultants assisting IWG should be independent, and questioned if UNDP-procured or UNDP-provided assistance wasn't conflicting here. UNICEF as a Board representative on the IWG clarified that work thus far has been to develop a decision matrix and to synthesize the analysis undertaken in the past, and that the consultant will help to flesh out the gaps and analysis for the group. The intention is to bring to the Board options on the overall future institutional arrangements in time for the Board to review in Q4 and take this to the 2021 MA. Contracting of the consultant has ing been led by USAID as Chair of the IWG with procurement support only by the Secretariat, and the risk of preferential treatment has been considered but is not foreseen.

Action points:

- *UNICEF will come back to the Board in writing on the progress of IWG discussions and whether an additional MA is envisaged, or the consultant's work can be concluded in time for MA 2021.*
- *Incorporate analytics for all tools including IATI Connect to the management Dashboard, to monitor uptake of all tools.*

### **3. Strategic Plan**

- UNICEF representative and focal point on the Results Framework (RF) gave some overall reflections on the process of monitoring the RF. He recalled that this is based on the Strategic Plan (SP) and developed by “a coalition of the willing” and signed off by Board and MA - and that the RF is for the *initiative* as a whole, not just for one actor (e.g. the Secretariat or the Board). It is an internal management tool and offers a chance to reflect and adjust and plan future actions, rather than as a public relations tool.
- Some of the indicators are not working as hoped and could be refined. Nevertheless, monitoring work done so far provides a chance to pause and take stock before considering amendment. Data is from 2020 and there is a plan to make this more timely in the future so that the RF can be used more systematically.
- Key reflections:
  - Outcome-level indicators (tied to SP objectives) are more on track than the output-level indicators. If this trend continues past 2022, we may want to go back and look at our theory of change. Of the three strategic objectives:
  - Data quality is not quite there yet: there is weaker feedback on quality of tools and also frequency of publishing.
  - Data use is the area in which monitoring shows more “on-track” progress.
  - Reinvigorated community: we haven't gone “wider,” but we have gone deeper in terms of engagement.

The Board considered possible ways forward to bring the report to the MA as a Board, reconstituting the Results Framework Working Group to take this forward. Feedback from the Board included a desire to see work plan actions taken being aligned with the RF, given that more of the off-track areas seem to be aligned with areas of under-spending.

#### Action points:

- *Ensure RF monitoring findings are incorporated into work planning activities. It should be clear to members that we have these results, and we are changing our actions to align accordingly.*
- *Re-convene the Results WG to review the monitoring report and act as the mechanism for sharing back with the membership.*

### **4. Introduction of new business processes and work planning**

- The Secretariat presented a business process map and timeframe to the Board, outlining a significant change from previous years that will ensure that work planning and disbursement of funds will be finalized before the end of the calendar year. Along with the process, the Board received a high level outline of work plan activities for discussion, which recognises that significant changes have taken place since the approval of the

Strategic Plan and associated five year work plan. The new process sees this a more detailed version in early November for the Q4 Board meeting and approved by 1 December.

- The work plan for 2022 will be informed by a number of sources, including the SP five year plan and the current 2021 plan, and will take into account the findings of the monitoring report of the results framework (item 3 above). The work plan and budget will be presented in a way that shows clear alignment with the three strategic objectives.
- Board members added suggestions such as:
  - Adding a focus on those actors who are holding governments to account and civic space, etc.
  - Adding a focus on humanitarian issues.
  - Explore using some of the resources we have for creating “challenge funds” etc. for bringing in new stakeholders.

#### Action point

- *Secretariat to take this conversation away and come back to the Board with a more detailed work plan for 2022 (early November).*

#### **5. 2021 IATI Events**

- The Secretariat provided an update on planning for the upcoming Virtual Community Exchange (VCE2: 12-13 October) and outlined some of the key sessions and speakers, The Board was encouraged to promote the event within their networks and a draft message would be provided for this purpose.
- The Secretariat has set out a paper with recommendations on the proposed topics for the MA, which could include: work delivered in 2021, working groups as a formal governance mechanism, key discussions that have taken place on IATI Connect; discussion on the question around a possible Standard upgrade in 2023 (requiring consultation in 2022), IWG recommendations, preparation for a mid-term review of the SP including monitoring framework outcomes, outline workplan and budget for 2022, proposal on membership contributions beyond the current period, GB elections in April 2022, and any SOP adjustments required. Community aspects will be covered at the VCE, with the MA reserved for governance matters (Possible dates: 1 and 2, or 8 and 9 December 2021).
- Feedback from the Board included:
  - The need for careful framing on the technical side as a consultation on *whether* a Standard upgrade is needed, rather than announcing that an upgrade is needed and will be major.
  - Careful design of the agenda to avoid that members dig into detail but remain focused on strategic levels.
  - Turn item 4 (Results and stories of change for mid-term review of the Strategic Plan) around to pivot to focus on results and what we are achieving as an initiative, and draw on members to bring stories of change.
- In regard to the initiative’s finances, the Board cautioned that members may bring up the fact that we are underspending, in reference to the high contribution amounts. In response, the Board was advised that UNOPS would be undertaking some significant

analysis on this to be addressed at the MA (also to address concerns raised by MDBs on fee inequity). In this respect it was suggested that this analysis should be used as an input to the IWG next steps on the membership fee issue, which would not be done in advance of the MA. The Board felt that this analysis should not only be looking at options to reduce income, but rather looking at the other side of the coin, which is how to maximise available budget to step up activities. It should nevertheless be acknowledged that business is done differently in a post-pandemic environment and the high costs of in person meetings (as one example) would be different going forward for the foreseeable future. This would have implications on budget and in turn contribution levels.

- 8-9 December was agreed as the date for the 2021 MA, with timings and duration to be determined by the agenda.
- On the question of whether a follow up dedicated MA might be required to take up IWG recommendations at a later date, there was currently no indication of this, however the Board agreed to seek further information through its representatives on the IWG.
- The Board agreed to have its next meeting face-to-face in November, based on current guidance around travel and Covid-19, with the expectation that some members may join remotely according to their own risk assessment and comfort level. Planning should also take into account travel restrictions and capacity restrictions, and the option of reverting to a meeting online should be kept in mind if health conditions or guidance change significantly.

Action items:

- *Check with Chair on requirement for a focused MA in early 2022 based on IWG progress.*
- *Secretariat to provide a draft message for the Board for promoting the VCE2.*
- *Secretariat to plan for in-person board meeting on or around 17 November (CPH as preferred venue)*

**6. AOB**

- While the Board did not have a detailed discussion on the budget revision papers received too late, they provided early feedback that the budget forecast for the end of the year is too optimistic (spending of 1.4 million USD in Q4), and requested the Secretariat to look at this projection more closely, expressing that the detailed adjustments proposed seemed largely within normal managerial discretion, and that higher level analysis and realistic forecast were missing.
- The Board is interested in looking at the underlying trend of underspending and what triggers beyond COVID are contributing to this.
- The meeting closed with a wrap provided by the Secretariat Coordinator, at the request of the acting Chair.