1. Introduction

1.1 Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) is one key component of the SSHF’s Accountability Framework, as described in the SSHF Operational Manual. The Accountability Framework aims to ensure transparent, effective and accountable use of resources.\(^1\)

1.2 The purpose of monitoring and reporting is essentially to collect, organise and ensure the quality control of information submitted by fund recipient organisations, which, when analysed, is used to inform decision making by different stakeholders to optimise overall Fund performance.

1.3 This M&R Framework elaborates on practical arrangements for monitoring and reporting. It has been developed through consultation with different stakeholders involved with the SSHF, and with reference to global guidance and practices in other Country-based Pooled Funds. It is endorsed by the Humanitarian Coordinator in consultation with the SSHF Advisory Board, and may be updated from time to time as considered necessary in line with evolving experience and learning.

1.4 The M&R Framework is based on the premise that fund recipient organisations have adequate internal mechanisms for project management, monitoring and reporting, commensurate with the nature of the organisation and its approved projects, to submit accurate and timely reports to the SSHF Technical Secretariat (TS). The capacity and performance of each implementing partner in relation to monitoring and reporting is assessed during an initial capacity assessment and subsequently throughout the life-cycle of approved projects.

2. Definitions

2.1 Monitoring is seen as taking place at two levels;

   a. Monitoring by partners: for partners to successfully implement approved projects and submit accurate and timely project reports to the SSHF TS, each fund recipient organisation is expected to have adequate internal monitoring mechanisms in place, including for programmatic and financial monitoring.

   b. Independent monitoring by the SSHF: the SSHF TS will undertake monitoring to verify the status of projects undertaken by implementing partners and the veracity of information contained in project reports. This independent monitoring may be carried out by different methods, described in section 3 below, and may assess the implementing partner’s own internal monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

2.2 Reporting is seen as taking place at two levels;

   a. Reporting by partners at the project level: reporting at the project level refers to the periodic collection of programmatic and financial reports from each fund recipient organization. All implementing partners must submit reports describing project progress and achievements, in

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\(^1\) The accountability framework operates at two complementary levels: (1) in relation to the SSHF in pursuit of its broad goals as a humanitarian funding instrument; and (2) in relation to individual implementing partners in pursuit of the specific objectives of their projects funded by the SSHF. It entails four main elements: (i) Fund-level risk management; (ii) partner capacity and performance assessment, partner risk rating and due diligence; (iii) monitoring and reporting; and (iv) audit and evaluation.
line with reporting conditions specified in the Grant Agreement\(^2\). This includes both programmatic and financial reports.

b. Reporting by OCHA at the Fund level: in its role as Fund manager OCHA, through the SSHF TS, will produce aggregated and synthesised Fund-level information for stakeholders and decision-makers in order to optimise the governance and operation of the Fund. Such Fund-level information products are the overall outputs from the M&R Framework.

3. Monitoring

**Monitoring by partners**

3.1 All implementing partners are expected to have adequate internal mechanisms for the oversight of projects funded by the SSHF, including programmatic and financial monitoring systems. Capacities for monitoring will be verified during the capacity assessment process. Partners’ monitoring systems may also be observed during independent monitoring activities conducted by the SSHF TS, with support and advice provided as appropriate.

**Independent monitoring by SSHF TS**

3.2 Independent monitoring is undertaken by the SSHF with the aim of providing assurances that funds are being used for the purposes for which they were allocated, and of verifying general progress towards agreed project targets. Monitoring may also identify problems and challenges being faced during project implementation, triggering engagement and decisions for their resolution. While independent monitoring will not attempt to make evaluative assessments of projects, the approach intends to go beyond project activities and outputs and consider higher level outcomes.

3.3 Following each allocation round the SSHF will develop a monitoring plan, identifying a sample of funded projects to be monitored, the monitoring methods to be used, and an indicative schedule. The plan will be subject to periodic review with the purpose of identifying gaps, contextual changes, best practices or other issues that may require its refinement or adjustment.

3.4 Factors taken into account in determining the sample of projects to be monitored under each allocation round will include:

a. the risk level assigned to implementing partners, as determined through capacity and performance assessment processes;

b. the number of projects funded, their amounts, and distribution under different clusters;

c. the geographical locations in which activities are being undertaken, and the applicability of different monitoring methods.

3.5 The monitoring plan will be developed in consultation with relevant cluster to take into account additional points of concern or areas of interest – however its final determination plan rests with the SSHF TS. Partners will be notified of the intention to conduct a monitoring exercise, and will normally be expected to participate.

3.6 Monitoring methods which may be used include the following:

\(^2\) *For allocations to UN Agencies, the Grant Agreement consists of the signed Allocation Letter and the project documents. For allocations to NGOs, through UNDP as the Managing Agent of the SSHF, the Grant Agreement consists of the PPA (Project Partnership Agreement) and the project documents.*
a. Field site monitoring by SSHF TS staff. Cluster representatives may accompany visits by mutual agreement in order to support joint learning. As there are limitations to what can be observed through site visits, additional information may still need to be collected through other means. Using defined guidelines and checklists a physical verification of project outputs can be performed, to monitor progress against agreed targets and indicators, and assess the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation. Key activities during field site monitoring include:

- Observation, using generic and cluster-specific templates and check lists
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to obtain information directly and candidly from the beneficiaries. The composition of the Focus Group should reflect the different constituencies and interests within the beneficiary population, including but not limited to men, women, boys and girls.
- Key Informant Interview with, for example, representatives of the implementing partner, local authorities, community committees and other relevant parties to obtain information about the project and its management, and other technical issues.
- Desk-Review of project related documentation, for example weekly/monthly/mid-term progress reports, minutes of meetings and financial reports, as well as documentation demonstrating the way in which the implementing partner has monitored the project using measurable indicators and means of verification stated in the approved project proposal.

b. Remote monitoring. Where conditions do not allow for field site visits, or where further monitoring is required in addition to field site visits, remote monitoring may be conducted using the telephone and other means of communication to engage with key informants. Based on defined guidelines and templates, triangulation will be achieved by engaging with a cross section of stakeholders, for example local officials, community members, cluster state focal points and OCHA field staff. A variation within this approach may be the use of call centres, whereby members of the public can provide spontaneous feedback regarding project performance.

c. Third party monitoring. Where appropriate in view of operating conditions on the ground and constraints to access for OCHA staff, a third party may be contracted to undertake site visits.

d. Peer monitoring. Under this approach, implementing partners agree to support the monitoring of each other’s projects under the overall coordination of OCHA, in order to increase capacity for undertaking site visits and promote peer support and learning.

e. Financial spot checks. A financial spot check is a technical assessment of financial procedures and systems, and of actual transactions made under the Grant Agreement. Financial spot checks for a sample of projects may be included in the monitoring plan, or may be triggered on an ad hoc basis by particular events such as the findings of another monitoring exercise, or an allegation of fraud. They may be undertaken by third parties.

3.7 Each monitoring exercise, regardless of the particular method used, will generate a report outlining the monitoring activities undertaken and the key findings and recommendations. In general the draft report will be shared and discussed with the implementing partner prior to finalisation in order to corroborate findings and eliminate factual errors. However, where there is disagreement, ownership and final wording of the report rests with the SSHF TS.
3.8 Monitoring reports and supporting documentation will be uploaded to the GMS for archiving and knowledge management. They will be available to the relevant cluster to promote learning and engagement in the resolution of any problems or challenges faced. Monitoring findings will contribute to the on-going assessment of the partner’s performance and have a bearing on future funding decisions, and may in exceptional cases result in the partner being deemed ineligible to receive funding.

4. **Reporting by implementing partners at the project level**

4.1 Self-reporting by implementing partners is the foundation of the M&R Framework. During the process of project selection and approval for funding, and acknowledging the fact that data quality is not assured through self-reporting, the SSHF TS and the relevant Cluster Coordination will, to the extent possible, ensure that the coherence and quality of project proposals is good.

4.2 When signing the Grant Agreement, all implementing partners commit to the timely submission of accurate narrative and financial reports in line with an agreed schedule, and are presumed to have the requisite skills, systems and integrity in place to do so.

4.3 Through capacity and performance assessment, a risk level is assigned to each implementing partner which is then used to determine the reporting schedule for any given project, taking into account the grant amount and implementation period. This risk-based approach to establishing partner reporting requirements is set out in the Operational Modalities contained in the SSHF Operational Manual.
   - To be eligible to receive funds from the SSHF, capacity assessment procedures must be completed. Where the capacity assessment reveals that internal arrangements for monitoring and self-reporting are inadequate, the partner may be deemed ineligible to receive funding.
   - The timeliness and quality of partner self-reporting will contribute to the on-going assessment of partner performance. Poor reporting will have a negative impact on the assessment of performance and on future funding decisions. In exceptional cases it may result in the partner being deemed ineligible to receive funding.

4.4 All self-reporting by implementing partners is carried out through the on-line Grant Management System (GMS). The SSHF TS will activate the reports according to the agreed reporting schedule, and the implementing partner will submit the required information and supporting documents on-line.

4.5 In liaison with the relevant Cluster Coordination, the SSHF TS will review the reports and may return them to the implementing partner for further clarifications and resubmission. Data quality assurance will be strengthened by triangulation with project proposals, findings of monitoring activities and previous reports submitted. Once of an acceptable quality the reports will be cleared. In line with the conditions set out in the Grant Agreement, the clearance of an interim financial report may trigger the next disbursement.

5. **Fund-level reporting**

5.1 Based on reporting by implementing partners as well as independent monitoring and verification conducted by the SSHF TS, as described in sections 3. and 4. above, the SSHF TS will compile Fund-level information to meet the needs of different stakeholders for effective governance and operation of the Fund. This requires close coordination and alignment between the monitoring and reporting activities undertaken by OCHA HFU and the UNDP SSHF Unit, to ensure that programmatic and financial information is complementary and consolidated to strengthen the overall analysis.
5.2 Stakeholders include, inter alia, the Humanitarian Coordinator and the SSHF Advisory Board, donors, clusters, humanitarian organisations (both SSHF implementing partners and others), OCHA and UNDP management, and the public at large.

5.3 The evolving use and refinement of the GMS offers increasing capability to aggregate information across the funded project portfolio in real time, by aggregating and analysing information related to:
   a. allocations (for example by cluster, cluster objective, geographical location, partner type etc.);
   b. programmatic results (for example by cluster, cluster objective through aggregation against standard indicators, allocation round, calendar year etc.);
   c. expenditures / utilisation rates (for example by allocation round, by cluster, by partner type etc);
   d. the performance of individual implementing partners.

5.4 The information provided may be used, inter alia, to:
   a. understand the performance of the SSHF-funded portfolio under a particular allocation round, or under a particular cluster, or in relation to a particular emergency or other event;
   b. provide evidence on how the SSHF has contributed to the broader outcomes as set out in the HRP and associated cluster strategies;
   c. inform future allocation strategies and approaches to prioritisation;
   d. inform the on-going assessment of partner performance, which in turn will inform the recommendation of partners and projects for funding under future allocation rounds, and in exceptional cases may lead to the partner being deemed ineligible to receive funding;
   e. support resource mobilisation and the engagement of donors with the Fund;
   f. promote learning and good practices amongst implementing partners and, where applicable, across the wider humanitarian system in South Sudan.

5.5 Information products will be tailored to, and made available for, specific audiences and may include, inter alia:
   a. The SSHF annual report;
   b. Periodic SSSHF dashboards with data related to particular allocations and related results;
   c. Expenditure / utilisation rate summaries;
   d. Case studies and other promotional and resource mobilisation materials;
   e. Lists of eligible partners, performance ratings, assigned risk levels.

5.6 As appropriate, information products may be placed in the public domain through the OCHA website and/or disseminated through dedicated e mail distribution lists (for example to Advisory Board members, donors, Cluster Coordinators/Co-coordinators, implementing partners).

6. **Roles and responsibilities**

6.1 In support of the different processes that contribute to this M&R Framework, the following roles and responsibilities apply:
   a. Humanitarian Coordinator
      - Approves the M&R Framework in consultation with the SSHF Advisory Board, with overall oversight of its design and implementation
      - Issues the SSHF annual report.
b. OCHA Head of Office / UNDP Country Director
   - Oversee the overall performance of the joint SSHF TS in relation to M&R.

c. SSHF TS (OCHA HFU and UNDP SSHF Unit)
   - Participates in the Technical Review of project proposals prior to their final approval, ensuring that project documents contain robust M&R related elements with indicators appropriate to the intended purpose of the project, and clear linkages between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes;
   - Oversees the process of self-reporting by partners, ensuring quality standards and giving final clearance to submitted reports;
   - Coordinates monitoring efforts and ensure that monitoring of projects is carried out;
   - Develops and maintain a monitoring plan for each allocation round;
   - Ensures appropriate monitoring templates and tools are in place, updating these from time to time as appropriate;
   - Develops terms of reference and contract third parties to undertake monitoring, if required;
   - Manages the GMS and customises reports that can be generated, aggregating and manipulating data from across the funded project portfolio;
   - Produces and disseminates Fund-level reports and information products to stakeholders;
   - Uses information generated through monitoring activities and partner’s self-reporting for continuous assessment of partners’ capacities and performance, to inform assigned risk levels and future allocations.

d. Cluster Coordinators
   - Ensure quality of projects during their Technical Review as part of the allocation process, promoting the use of standard output indicators in order to aggregate results across the cluster project portfolio and understand the contribution of the SSHF to wider cluster achievements under the HRP;
   - Inform the monitoring plan developed by the SSHF;
   - Participate in monitoring activities as appropriate;
   - In collaboration with the SSHF, review reports from monitoring activities, following up with the implementing partner as appropriate;
   - In collaboration with the SSHF, review and clear reports submitted by implementing partners.

e. Implementing partners
   - Ensure that adequate internal monitoring mechanisms are in place for sound project implementation and the submission of accurate and timely reports to the SSHF;
   - Collaborate with the planning and undertaking of monitoring exercises as requested by the SSHF TS.
   - Submit accurate and timely reports in accordance with the schedule established in the Grant Agreement.