Making the most of the DCED Standard in a small programme in a fragile context - Lessons in applying the Standard amongst the constraints

Mena Gul Hemat, MRM Officer, Road to Jobs

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International Labour Organization

Road to Jobs
راه برای اشتغال

SWEDEN

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- Applying the Standard – what we could and could not do
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The Road to Jobs (R2J) Project

- Road to Jobs (R2J) is a Sida-funded three-year project (2015-2018) operating in Northern Afghanistan

- Uses M4P approach in 6 agriculture sectors to improve better employment outcomes and contribute to improved livelihoods and poverty reduction.

- Fostering more and better jobs in the rural and urban centres in its target areas.

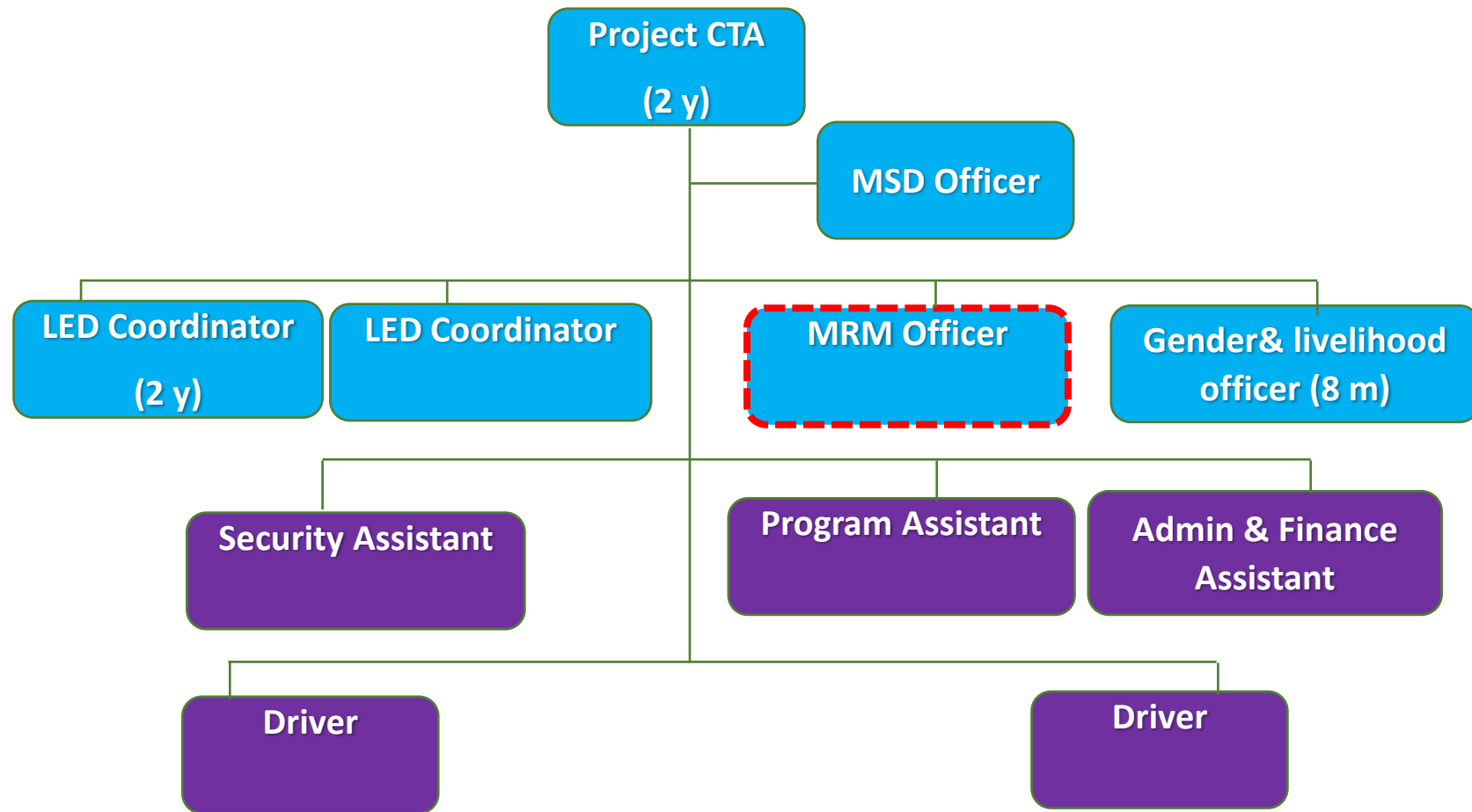Promoting solar water pumps for irrigation (grape orchard)

Local skill develop for cotton processing (fabric and yarn)

Grape processing into locally made grape juice

Working in a small team... in 6 sectors!

Project CTA
(2 y)

MSD Officer

LED Coordinator
(2 y)

LED Coordinator

MRM Officer

Gender& livelihood
officer (8 m)

Security Assistant

Program Assistant

Admin & Finance
Assistant

Driver

Driver

And the fragile context adds constraints too:

1. Lack of secondary-historical data

2. Not safe and secure for regular staff field visits

3. Low capacity of research institutions for measurement

4. No previous experience by the project staff (or in country) with the DCED Standard

5. Difficult for internationals (consultants) to access – lack of interest in coming, difficult to obtain visas

6. Limited opportunities for in-country learning and knowledge sharing

7. Private sector actors want and expect grants and so they will not disclose info.

What does this mean for MRM and the Standard?

- Given the project size and fragile context, could the project expect to implement to the DCED Standard?

- Yes... Sort of

- The project used the Standard as a guide though subjecting it to the limitations of its own constraints. Efficiency and collecting decision useful data were the focus.

Processing chicken litter into organic fertilizer

Linking milk producers with high-end markets

Training to milk producers on hygiene and milk quality

Promoting vet services-Technical training to Para-vets

MRM process overview

Steps in Intervention MRM

```
Articulate the          Define
results chain &   →     indicators
assumptions
                           ↓
Develop impact    ←     Develop a
projections             measurement
                        plan
   ↓
Assess and        →     Continuous
track risks             measurement,
                        review and
                        attribution
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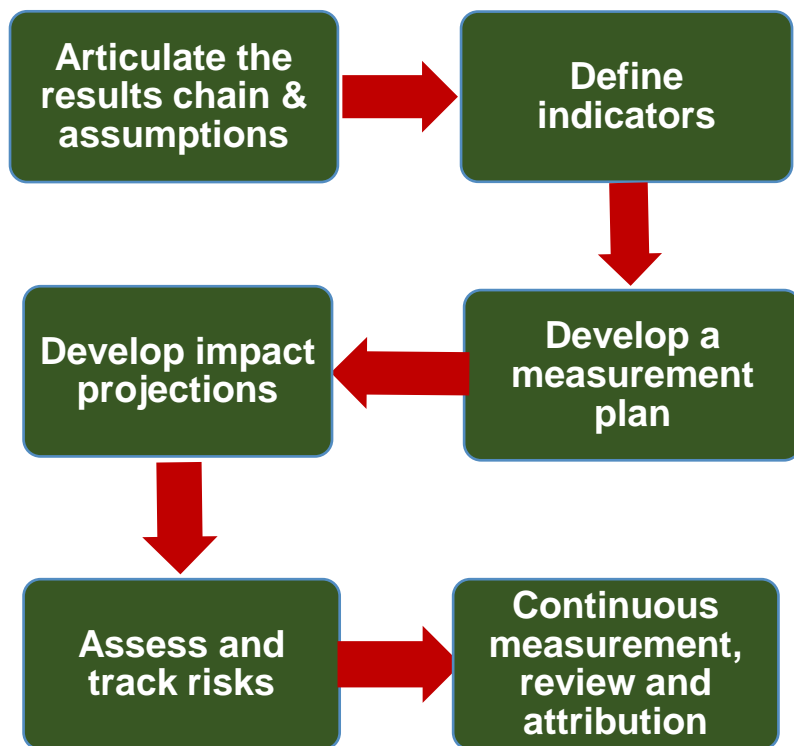
Using MRM for decision making

Intervention guideline

- Elaboration Business Model (MRM Officer)
- Consultation coordination (LED/MSDO)
- Sharing draft (CTA-LED-MSDO)
- Sharing draft LAB
- Finalization (MRM officer)
- Sharing final version (CTA-LED-MSDO)
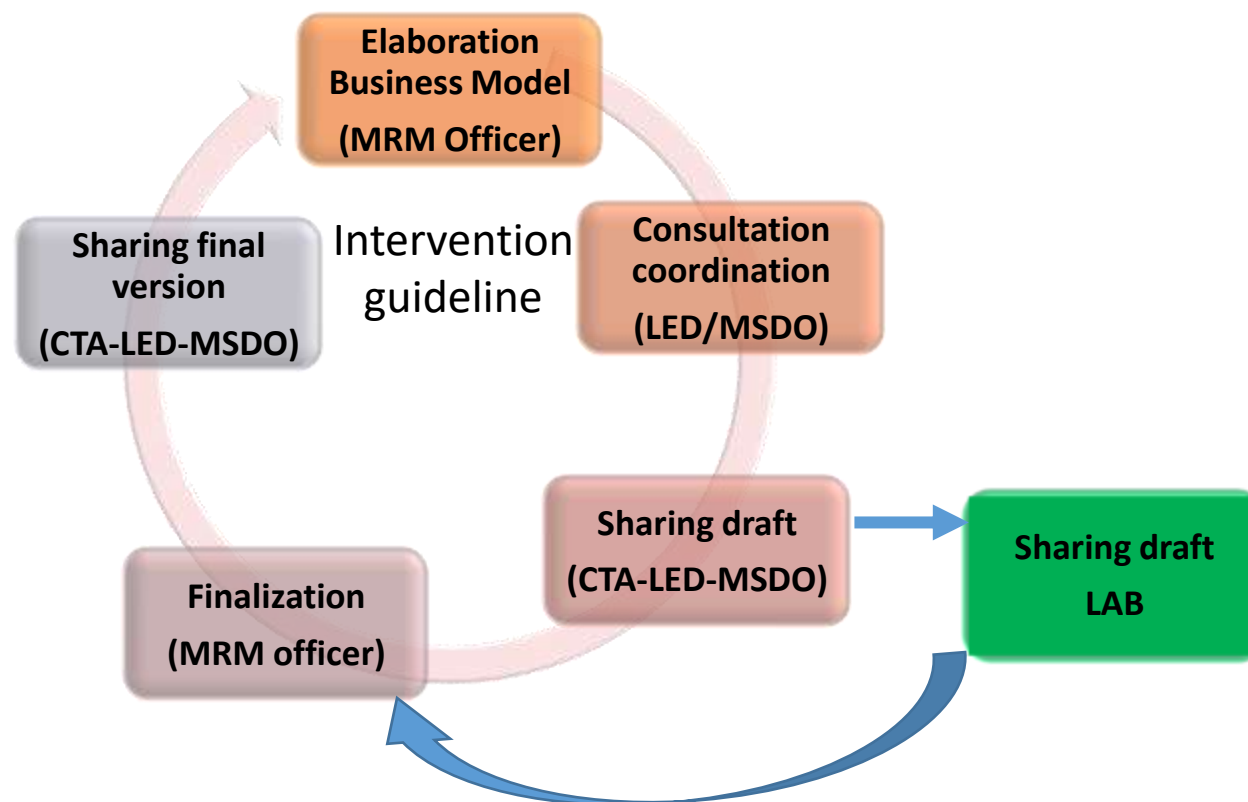
What was most challenging?

1. Lack of prior knowledge about DCED standard – needed to find our way
2. 21 interventions (VCs and QWs) and 6 sub-sectors with only 2 IM to draft them
3. Lack of available information on context, players and market place

How did we get around it?

1. Staff training at the outset and on demand backstopping; trial, error and adaptation
2. MRMO helped draft indicators, MP, baseline projections and overall IG development
3. Left RCs vague initially as a structured guide, filling in details with primary research, when available
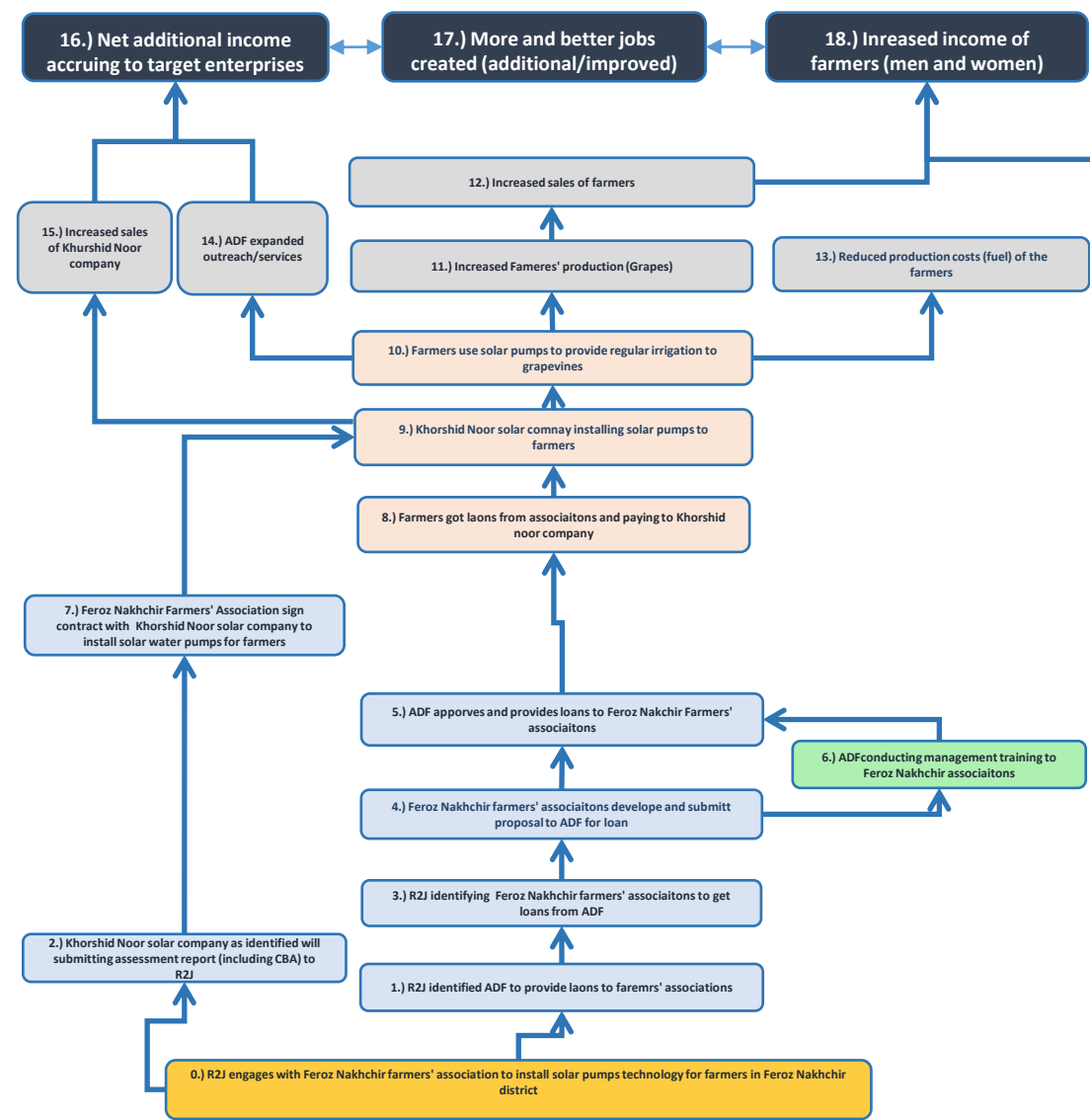
The Result
Results chains don't quite meet the Standard (pre-audit report), but still guide the team in interventions and measurement in a "fit-for-context".

Articulating RCs

Initial result chain...

Goal

More and better jobs and Increased incomes for women and men

Farm/core market level

Grape farmers increase income and work from grapes

Grape farmers increase productivity of grape farming

Grape farmers use trellising

Grape farmers access finance for trellising

Support market level

MFIs, Credit Union, offer finance for trellising on Islamic principles

MFIs/Credit Union promote financial product, including through media

DAIL, trellising constructors promote trellising and financial product

Pilot trellising demonstrations show farmers advantages of trellising

MFIs, Credit Union develop an Islamic financial product for trellising

Mobile phone platform include information on trellising and finance

DAIL and other partners implement a pilot trellising programme with access to finance

Intervention activities

7. May include: Support development of financial product

8. Include promotion in intervention with phone platform and DAIL

9. Discuss with construction firms to develop their role in promotion, delivery

10. Negotiate and come to an agreement with DAIL, RADP-N. MFI/Credit Union, construction firms on pilot

11. Run the pilot

1. Discuss with RADP-N, explore collaboration

2. Develop a business case for MFIs/Credit Union to offer islamic finance for trelising

3. Discuss with MFIs/Credit Union

4. Develop an offer of support

5. Negotiate and come to a partner agreement

6. Due dilligence assessment of the partner

Poverty Reduction (Impact)

Enterprise Level (Outcomes)

Market Systems Change (Outputs)

Activities

Pre-Activities

... and what it evolved into

16.) Net additional income accruing to target enterprises

17.) More and better jobs created (additional/improved)

18.) Inreased income of farmers (men and women)

12.) Increased sales of farmers

15.) Increased sales of Khorshid Noor company

14.) ADF expanded outreach/services

11.) Increased Fameres' production (Grapes)

13.) Reduced production costs (fuel) of the farmers

10.) Farmers use solar pumps to provide regular irrigation to grapevines

9.) Khorshid Noor solar comnay installing solar pumps to farmers

8.) Farmers got laons from associaitons and paying to Khorshid noor company

7.) Feroz Nakhchir Farmers' Association sign contract with Khorshid Noor solar company to install solar water pumps for farmers

5.) ADF apporves and provides loans to Feroz Nakchir Farmers' associaitons

6.) ADFconducting management training to Feroz Nakchir associaitons

4.) Feroz Nakchir farmers' associaitons develope and submitt proposal to ADF for loan

3.) R2J identifying Feroz Nakchir farmers' associaitons to get loans from ADF

2.) Khorshid Noor solar company as identified will submitting assessment report (including CBA) to R2J

1.) R2J identified ADF to provide laons to faremrs' associations

0.) R2J engages with Feroz Nakhchir farmers' association to install solar pumps technology for farmers in Feroz Nakhchir district

Identifying Indicators

What was most challenging?

1. Lack of available human resources limit measurement of multiple indicators – "What gets measured gets managed"
2. Cannot use secondary data to support benchmarking
3. Security concerns limit ability to interview rural beneficiaries and sight observation

How did we get around it?

1. General rule: only one indicator per RC box – thinking hard about what can be measured and how useful it is to understanding the intervention
2. Search and use of proxy indicators to help define HH size, education, etc.
3. Indicators to be more focused on measurement through companies with some limited triangulation

The Result
Simplified indicators not capturing robust details, but still able to give the project a picture of what's happening and a (somewhat) plausible way for attribution.

Measuring Indicators-Results

What was most challenging?

1. Both security and limited human resources severely limit field data collection for all interventions

2. Research institutions lacking capacity to do god quality data collection

How did we get around it?

1. Mostly do pre-post comparison with recall, using simplified analyses (basic counting)

2. Focus on understanding process collecting Activity/Output indicators less resources on Outcome/Impact

3. Trained local BDS companies and stakeholders to collect data –blend into the communities to collect data in insecure areas

The Result
Results are neither free from bias nor completely rigorous, but we can understand if the process is working and it the intervention model is sustainable for companies.

Attribution

What was most challenging?

1. A lack of robustly collected data leads to a challenge in understanding how and to what extent the programme has had an impact

How did we get around it?

1. We do our best to identify how and why changes occurred on the ground/market place through interviews with beneficiaries, market players and observation from the field where applicable.

The Result

Attribution remains a challenge, the team is now following-up with partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders to see what can be attributed to the programme, but there still much to do.

It's been a journey, and there is much to improve, but here are some areas where we got better along the way:

- Reaching out for technical backstopping when needed
- Training and continuous capacity building of stakeholder representatives and local BDS companies who can work in hard to reach areas to collect data.
- Applying default monitoring approach rather than MRM for some of the interventions. It means that still we do monitoring where we don't have the IGs (RCs, Measurement plans, projections, etc.).
- Simplifying attribution measurement (without quantification)
- Making the most of proxy indicators

What's our assessment on the process?

1. System has helped staff understand and more clearly focus on the overall objective (expected results)

2. Provided better understanding of the market context and improved business models/proposals (VfM, projected results)

3. Improved decision making, intervention/project management and ability to identify where to scale-up

4. Improved internal-external coordination and collaboration

5. The Standard pre-audit has helped identify areas for MRM improvement

Key takeaways!

1. There is need for very intensive capacity building for the project team at the project start to reduce MRM "loss time" during implementation.

2. Support from the top of the project team helps foster a strong need for MRM.

3. Capacity building of the local institutions (research, analysis) and implementing partners is worth the investment

4. Adopting default monitoring approach wherever applicable

Follow-up with us!

Want to know more about MRM in small or fragile sensitive contexts?

Mena Gul Hemat, MRM Officer
hemat@ilo.org