

MIF's Project Status Report Monitoring Tool

1 The Project Status Report as a Monitoring Tool

The Project Status Report (PSR) is a tailored online tool used by the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) to monitor its grant projects. It is part of MIF's project monitoring system, which was designed with an emphasis on risk management and results. The PSR serves three purposes: (i) it allows MIF's grantees or clients to enter project information directly into the system; (ii) it incorporates milestones for disbursement; and (iii) it takes into consideration component indicators (output indicators), purpose indicators (outcome indicators), and risks that affect the execution of a project.

The process for completing a PSR for each project goes through several phases and is undertaken by different users, who either input information or validate it according to their role in the process. There are three categories of users: a specialist in charge of design, a specialist in charge of supervi-

sion, and the executing agency. The first step is for the design specialist to enter all project design information—including project goals, indicators and risks—by the approval date into the system. Once this information is populated into the system, the supervision leader updates the information based on discussions with the executing agency and project coordinator. Over the course of the project life cycle, the system automatically notifies the executing agency to enter information about the project implementation and accomplishments. Once the executing agency uploads the required documents, the supervision leader reviews and validates the submitted documents. After validation by the supervision leader, the information is then shared with MIF's headquarters for review and publication on the website. The system essentially walks users through the flow of the normal MIF project cycle.

2 A Valuable Tool based on MIF's Experience

A fundamental part of the PSR is that it allows MIF's grantees to actively participate in reporting progress during the project implementation phase, together with MIF specialists and project supervisors. Another important feature is the system's agility, which expedites work flow and communication among members of the management team. Apart from ensuring accountability, this tool also provides project status summary reports and facilitates the extraction of lessons learned for portfolio management.

MIF also uses PSRs for effective project supervision as an ongoing process, which is facilitated by a score flagging system. The PSR scoring model enables MIF to automatically identify at-risk projects at a glance for further investigation. In order to obtain a project's final score, the PSR tool takes into consideration the progress made in achieving its milestones, component indicators, purpose indicators, and risks. These variables feed into the PSR scoring model to yield a score in a range from 0 to 4, with scores between 1.01 and 2.00 raising the "yellow flag" and below 1.00 raising the "red flag".



Current score: Satisfactory: 3.068
MIF Average: 2.474

3 Challenges and Successes

Direct interaction with clients is one of the important features of the PSR. The system enables the delivery of “real-time” information and interaction with MIF’s clients, allowing data to be easily accessed and reviewed by MIF project management staff to ensure data accuracy and to enhance decision making.

Beyond monitoring, the PSR system improves institutional learning by allowing for easy data consolidation in order to compare projects by performance results, risk, and milestone achievements

within and across projects and according to MIF’s strategic objectives.

One challenge is mining the considerable data produced by the system to inform performance by country or within strategic focus areas for the MIF. To date, project scoring is based on individual project performance; additional calibration of the scoring formula may be necessary to produce portfolio reviews of similar projects, which would enhance standards setting and institutional learning.

4 Results

To date, the PSR has been very useful in supporting the monitoring function of MIF’s technical cooperation projects in the Latin America and Caribbean region. A total of 3,481 project status reports have

been posted on MIF’s intranet, which is available to executing agencies and to MIF staff. This has resulted in greater transparency and accountability throughout the project cycle.

5 Learning and Recommendations

PSRs serve as a platform for important management functions within MIF such as monitoring, contracting, and knowledge management. The data collected on selected indicators enables MIF to see trends across the various variables, allowing for sound monitoring of the portfolio. The use of milestones within the PSRs provides the basis for developing strong performance-based agree-

ments. In light of this, milestones should be chosen carefully in coordination with specialists and executing agencies. Finally, the information gathered in the PSR provides MIF with the information needed to develop knowledge products, which can facilitate learning and decision making throughout the organization.

The CGAP SmartAid 2013 Report for MIF can be downloaded at: http://www.cgap.org/sites/default/files/MIF_Smart_Aid2013.pdf

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