

DRAFT Minutes Q2 2021 29 April Board Interim Meeting

(updated based on Board feedback in Yammer)

Attendees (Virtual):

Theo van de Sande (Chair); Joseph Barnes, UNICEF; Melinda Cuzner (Sida); Henry Asor (Nigeria); Winnie Kamau (AFJ); Leo Stolk (Oxfam Novib); Annelise Parr, Hanayo Nakano (UNDP, Secretariat); Wendy Thomas, Carolyn Culey (DI, Secretariat); Argjira Belegu-Shuku (UNOPS, Secretariat).

Absent: Dilli Lekhak, (Nepal);

Note taker: Sarah McDuff, UNDP

Secretariat representative Kate Hughes (DI) joined for relevant items.

1. Agenda

Board members held an additional meeting to their usual quarterly schedule for a focused discussion to agree next steps following completion of a review of the IATI datastore looking at performance issues. The second agenda item was to determine next steps in relation to the proposed Institutional Working Group, now that the period for submissions from members had closed.

2. Datastore Review

Board members had previously received the external reviewer's report and recommendations, along with a Secretariat paper setting out three options on the way forward that had been drafted following an initial discussion with a core group of Board members.

The Secretariat's Technical Lead gave an overview of the primary reasons for the external review including performance (speed, inconsistency of search results, and proposed supplier price increase), and flagged the urgency for taking action, given that the current contract expires on 30 June. The Secretariat walked the Board through the findings and recommendations from the report, presenting its paper outlining the following three options for Board consideration, together with associated risks for each option.

1. Procure a new vendor;
2. Bring the tool in-house and use internal developers to resolve the issues identified; or
3. Rebuild from scratch.

The Board expressed appreciation for the rigour of the consultant's review and agreed that it was good to receive confirmation that the early investment made in this software had resulted in a viable product, albeit requiring further work for optimised performance. Board members understood the rationale for not continuing with the current arrangement, based on the detailed findings of the report.

During a lengthy discussion, the Board considered the pros and cons of each option, including the consultant's recommendation for Option 1. However, the Board agreed on **Option 2** from the options presented, noting that this proposed approach was close to the architecture decisions from the 2020 Technical Stocktake and would have advantages for greater integration with the Validator. The Board accepted the Secretariat's reassurance that internal arrangements were already in place to ensure the management issues identified in the report with the current Datastore management could be avoided through an in-house approach. The meeting agreed on the urgency of securing the code base and as practical next steps, the Board heard that the Technical Team could resource this work immediately through its Senior Developer and the recruitment of another developer to backfill on other work. Work should also begin immediately on developing Terms of Reference and roadmap for future work on the Datastore, to inform the Board's longer-term strategic roadmap. While these initial steps are underway, a meeting should be held to inform the existing supplier of the outcome of the review and decision of the Board on the immediate way forward.

Board members were keen to ensure that an urgent decision taken now was strategic and based on long term desired outcomes for the initiative, noting that taking these critical stabilising actions at this stage would not preclude the possibility to outsource management of the tool over the longer term. The Board reiterated its commitment to full transparency (including in procurement) to its members throughout the subsequent stages of developing the Datastore.

The Secretariat's review of lessons learned from the process of procurement and project management, ownership and TOR development process were shared with the Board and discussed in a separate meeting. The Board was assured that lessons learned are already in place in relation to other ongoing processes and will be rigorously applied for the proposed datastore next steps.

Action points

- *Board agreed to initiate option 2*
- *DI to copy code base the following week*
- *Hold a meeting with datastore supplier, external reviewer, Technical Lead, and UNOPS Legal Advisor in the following 10 days (avoiding May 5, Dutch holiday).*
- *Keep option for escalation open pending the outcome of this meeting, with follow-up Board meeting if required.*
- *Immediately start improving / adjusting the ToR to inform work needed for the datastore; draft to be completed in 1-2 weeks for approval by Secretariat and the Board*
- *Share Secretariat's lessons learned with the Board and invite feedback.*

3. Institutional Working Groups

The Secretariat presented the outcome of the open call for expressions of interest from members to join the proposed Institutional Working Group taking up questions of Theory of Change, Institutional Arrangements and Financial sustainability.

The Board heard that twelve expressions of interest had been received, with an even spread across all constituencies, unequal gender representation (9 M, 3 F) and fair regional representation (3 Americas, 3 Africa, 5 Europe, 1 Asia). Of submissions, one flagged a conflict of interest in the element of discussions around future institutional arrangements but was available to support other discussions. One other

presented challenges around English as the working language of the WG, and one that may need to be excluded due to current external political pressures.

The issue the Board faced was that these numbers were insufficient to cover the three sub-groups proposed for taking the range of this work forward. Nonetheless the Board agreed on the critical importance of having a clear set of recommendations on future institutional arrangements for members by the time of the 2021 MA. With this in mind the Board considered sequencing of topics; combining the work of these groups differently; and participation by the Board itself. The Secretariat clarified that the formulation of the submission form allowed for volunteers to express a preference for one area of work over another but that the Board may ask them to serve on another topic.

Discussion focused on sequencing of the work of proposed sub-groups A (ToC) and B (Institutional Arrangements), with C (Financial Sustainability) being less urgent at this time. The Board recognised there was overlap between A and B discussions but that ToC was more linked with the Strategic Plan's mid-term review and therefore has a longer horizon. Discussions within the Institutional Arrangements group may lead to questions on ToC and form the basis for the scope of that work, to begin later.

The Board agreed to initiate work as quickly as possible as a single working group (B), recognising that there may be overlap and questions of ToC coming up within that group that may be addressed within the group as they arise, so that 'form may follow function' in the development of options for future institutional arrangements. The Board would participate as focal points in accordance with their usual FP structure, without chairing.

Action points:

- *Secretariat to contact all WG volunteers to announce the Board's decision to proceed initially with a single group on institutional arrangements and seek their continued interest in working on this one.*
- *Secretariat to set up the first WG meeting as soon as possible (proposing two weeks from now)*
- *Theory of Change and Financial sustainability discussions would begin later, with that timeframe yet to be set, in order to ensure the priority question of institutional arrangement was addressed expeditiously.*