A CHECKLIST FOR Multi-stakeholder Process (MSP) DESIGNERS

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http://www.minuhemmati.net/msp/msp_book.htm

This checklist sets out a number of questions which can be answered either by a Yes or a No. However, the important point is to then ensure that there is real reflection (what is described as 'meta-communication' in the checklist) about what the answer really means.

General points
- Are you prepared to learn and change? (Ask yourself why/why not)
- Are you in danger of imposing your ideas, eg agenda, time lines, issues, participants, goals?
- Could others perceive you as imposing? With whom should you communicate, and how, to address that?
- Are you sure you are keeping records of all that you are doing, including how the process was developed?
- Are you making sure that all procedures are designed to ensure the core principles of MSPs?

Context
Process Design
- Have you found all the best people to design the process together?
- Have you got a core coordinating group of representatives of all relevant stakeholders? (Reflect on the criteria you are using)
- Are those you are working with formally representing their groups; are they well connected within their groups?
- Have you consulted with stakeholders who else should be involved?
- Is the coordinating group developing suggestions regarding issues, objectives, scope, time lines,
- procedures of preparation, dialogue, decision-making, rapporteuring, documentation, relating to the wider public, fund-raising?
- Have you dealt with issues around confidentiality?
- Is there conflict over the issue you have in mind or is it likely to develop in the process?
- Do you know how to resolve possible conflict?
- Have you considered abandoning the MSP idea for the time being due to too much conflict?
- Have you considered developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Terms of Reference (TOR) for the MSP?
- Have you decided on the language(s) of your process?
- Have you considered translation services?
- Are you keeping the process flexible?

Linkage Into Official Decision-making
- Is your process linked with any official decision-making?
- If yes, have you established continuous communication links with officials?
- Has the institution issued a document that clearly states the purpose, the expected outcomes, deadlines, and status of the outcome in the official process?
- Do you have an MOU with the institution? (If not, consider suggesting it)
- Have you considered suggesting more than an informing role for your process? (eg implementation; monitoring; reporting back) If not, do you know how officials will perceive your process
- Do you want to include officials somehow? Or try to keep them out?

Issue Identification
- Are you making decisions on issues and agenda in a coordinating group of stakeholder representatives?
- Are you deciding upon issues in a transparent manner?

- Are you conducting the process of issue identification to an agreed timetable?
- Are you sure that those you talk to are consulting within their groups?
- Is support available for stakeholders to engage in the process of issue identification?
- Are you scoping the area of interest carefully?
- Have come across information gaps? If yes, how can you fill them?
- At the end of issue identification, have you developed a clear agenda and precise definitions of the issues?
- Are agenda and issues understood and agreed by everybody?

Information base
- Have you established mechanisms for sharing information and a common knowledge base within the process?
- Do all participants have equitable access to it?

Stakeholder Identification
- Have you issued an open call for participation?
- Are you dealing creatively with problems of numbers and diversity?
- Have you identified all high-impact groups? (Scoping the issue area and consulting with stakeholders will tell you. Think outside the box)
- Are all those who have a stake in the issues involved? (If substantial parts of a sector don't want to participate, reconsider your MSP idea)
- Do you know how to approach them?
- Do you think all participants need to be 'experts'?
- Have you assembled a diverse group?
- Are you keeping the group open in case the need arises for other stakeholders to be involved?
- Do stakeholders need support to be able to participate effectively?
- Do suggested goals, time lines, preparations, communication channels, etc, meet their needs and interests?
- Could people feel coerced into participation?
- Does your process require government action? (Then involve officials)
- Have you made decisions through consultation?

Identification of Participants
- Are stakeholder groups themselves selecting their representatives?
- Do you know how they do that? (Aim to make this known to everybody)
- Have you ensured that there is an equal number of participants from each stakeholder group?
- Do you want them to meet balance criteria within their delegations? (gender, region, age?)
- Have you ensured that representatives will remain the same persons over the course of the process?
- Do you have a briefing mechanism for newcomers?
- Are governments or intergovernmental institutions involved? (Then make sure it is high level)

Facilitation/Organizational Back-up
- Is it clear who is providing organizational back-up, and is that acceptable to all participants (eg a UN agency; a multi-stakeholder organization)
- Do you need to create a facilitating body?
- If yes, have you considered bylaws and other legal requirements? Have you considered the necessary time lines and funding?
- Are logistics and infrastructure agreed and funded?

Funding
- Have you developed a realistic budget for the process?
- Have you included external communications, translations, capacity-building, and follow-up activities?
- Have you agreed to fund-raising targets and strategies within the coordinating group?
- Have you informed all participants about the funding situation, sources, etc?
- Is the process independent, eg through mixed funding and donors who will not try to impact on the process?

Framing
Group Composition
- Is your group diverse enough?
- Are all the high-impact categories involved?
- Are all groups equally represented?
- Do you have at least two representatives of each group?
- Do you expect anybody to represent more than one stakeholder group?
- Do you have overall gender and regional balance in your group?

Goals Setting
- Is the goal of your process clear?
- Is it: a frank exchange of views; agreeing upon disagreements; exploring common ground; achieving consensus; making decisions; joint action; joint monitoring and evaluating; impacting official decision-making?
- Are your goals understandable and achievable?
- Does everybody agree with them?
- Have you made sure that the first goal and issue on the agenda will be for participants to clarify their respective understanding of the issue(s)?

Agenda Setting
- Have you developed a concrete agenda?
- Have you ensured that participants agree upon logistical and substantive aspects of the process?

Setting the timetable
- Have you developed a precise timetable for your process?
- Does it meet the needs of all participants?

Inputs
Stakeholder Preparations
- How shall stakeholders prepare for the process/meetings?
- Have you considered the various options within the coordinating group (eg initial position papers; developing a common vision first; preparing strategy papers based on a common vision, etc?)
- Have you ensured that preparatory papers are disseminated well in advance?
- Have you considered analysing them to point out commonalities and differences, and disseminate that as well?
- Have you ensured that all have equitable access to all information?
- Does everybody agree with the preparatory process?
- How will participants relate to the stakeholder groups they represent (if they are not there in their individual capacity)?
- Do they have enough time for consultations within their constituencies during preparations?
- Are you providing support for such consultations?
- Are participants informing each other on how they consult within their constituencies?

Communication Ground Rules
- Have you agreed a set of ground rules for communication?
- Do these rules foster dialogue?
- Do they encourage people to listen, learn, be open, honest and considerate?
- Have you agreed on a facilitator (or several facilitators)?
- Does s/he enjoy the trust of all participants?
- Will s/he be competent to enhance the creativity of the group, deal with potential conflict, avoid premature decision-making?
- Do you know what to do when people don't play by the rules?
- Have you agreed that this will be brought to the group through the facilitator and in a constructive manner?

Power Gaps
- Are there any power gaps within the group?
- Do you know how you want to deal with them?
- Has the group talked about power gaps?
- Have they talked about what constitutes power in this setting? (eg money; decision-making; moral ground)

Capacity-Building For Participation
- Have you identified the capacities, skills and knowledge that are necessary to participate effectively in your process?
- Do all participants have them?
- Has the group talked about capacity-building?
- Have potential capacity-building measures been designed by those receiving and those offering them?

Dialogue/meetings
Communication channels
- Have you considered the various options of communication channels (eg face-to-face meetings, email, telephone, fax, letters, interactive websites)?
- Has the group talked about this question?
- Have you decided which ones you want to use at which stage?
- Are they easily accessible for all participants?

Facilitating/Chairing
- Have you decided if you want an outside professional or an insider?
- Have you involved the facilitator in the design process?
- Are your facilitators committed, f lexible, responsive, balancing, inclusive, encouraging, respectful, neutral, problem-solving oriented, disciplined, culturally sensitive, capable of meta-communication and comfortable with their role?
- Have you decided which kind of facilitation techniques you want to use (eg f lip-charts, meta-plan, brain storming, scenario workshops, future labs, and so on)?
- Have you talked with the coordinating group and the facilitator which would be best and when?

Rapporteuring
- Have you identified rapporteurs to take minutes?
- Have you identified who is to draft outcome documents?
- Are they acceptable to everybody?
- Are minutes and reporting done in a neutral fashion?
- Do they reflect the breadth and depth of discussions?

Decision-making
- Do you have agreement on what constitutes a good decision?
- Will a decision be based on consensus?
- Does consensus mean unanimity?
- Does consensus mean compromise ('being content with the whole package')
- Will a decision be taken by majority vote?
- Are you recording minority voting?
- Do the decisions on your MSP have consequences outside the space covered by participants?
- Are you involving those affected?
- Is it clear that everybody has the right to walk away or to say 'No'?
- Are you taking enough time before making decisions?
- Could the group be more creative and integrating before making a decision? (How?)

Closure
- Does the process have a clear, agreed cut-off point (for success or failure)?

Outputs

Documentation
- Are you putting draft minutes and reports to the group for review?
- Have you built time for reviewing into your schedule?
- Have you clarified the status of your documents: minutes by rapporteurs; facilitators' summaries; endorsed
- consensus documents? (They require different consultation procedures and time)
- Are you disseminating the outcome documents to other stakeholder groups and the public?

Action Plan/Implementation
- Have you agreed a precise, concrete action plan: who will do what, when, and with whom?
- Have you considered how to monitor implementation and how to deal with non-compliance?
- You planned a dialogue, now they want to continue and explore possible joint action: Is the group engaging in an MSP design process, agreeing objectives, scope, structures, time lines, funding, etc?
- Are you managing such a transition carefully?

Throughout the process
Mechanisms of meta-communication
- Do participants have space to reflect upon the process?
- Do you have regular feedback mechanisms so that everybody can raise concerns and suggestions?
- Is the facilitator bringing this up?

Relating to Non-participating Stakeholders
- Have you kept the process open for input from non-participating stakeholders?
- Are you sure the arrangements for that will work?
- Have you made clear how any input from outside will be used?
- In case of opposition to the process from the outside, are you addressing this in the MSP group as a whole?

Relating to the General Public
- Does the public know about your process?
- Are you effectively communicating its objectives and outcomes? Have you found the right language and media?
- Are you releasing information throughout the process?
- Should members of the general public be able to contribute? (How?)
- Are you using professionals to relate to the public? (Why/why not?)
- Are you relying solely on the internet? If yes, can you do more?
- Have you discussed these questions in the MSP group?