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Sudan Country Office eTools Team: One Vision – One Team to achieve better results for children

Dina Ali
Knowledge Management Specialist

Maali Babiker
M&E Officer

Elshabi Mahmoud
ICT Manager

Olga Basurmanova
Partnership Specialist

NEW YORK, 8 June 2016 - Recently, Abhijit Shanker spoke with the team responsible for adopting the eTools platform in UNICEF Sudan, and asked them how it has impacted their office in terms of output and in what ways eTools can be used to help address the needs of children in the hardest to reach areas.

How have you been involved with the eTools initiative?

Following the development of the application called "iMonitor" and the collaboration with UNICEF Lebanon in the creation of Equitrack online monitoring system, the Sudan Country Office was identified as one of the pilot countries for "eTools" Release 1.

In response, Senior Management tasked a core team with diverse backgrounds and experience to adopt the "eTools" and participate in MENARO "eTools" workshop Release 1 in December 2015. The team compromised the following members:

· Dina Ali (Knowledge Management Specialist – Etools focal point /Vision ToT/ imonitor developing team, Equitrack SME).
· Elshabi Mahmoud (ICT Manager/ Vision Coordinator, imonitor developing team & ToT)
· Olga Basurmanova (Partnership Specialist (Partnerships, /Vision ToT).
· Maali Babiker (M&E Officer field based)

The team developed adoption and training plans for the roll-out of the system. The diverse skills set and competencies of the team enriched and ensured greater efficiency in addressing all issues faced during the development and roll-out of the system. With technical support from and regular follow up with HQ "eToolers", the core team managed to set up the "eTools" platform in Sudan with the main components to enable its functionality for roll-out through:

· Verification of data Integration with VISION/RAM (Partner Information, FR/FC/

Grants, Results Structures, RAM Indicators)
· Refinements to Civil Society Organization (CSO) Partnership Management Features
· Verification of Partner Cooperation Agreements (PCA) migrated from "Equitrack" as being "Equitrack" users.
· Provision of technical feedback to the core team on newly developed functionalities
· Analysis of issues related to data matching between manual records and partnerships management via "eTools".

How would you say "eTools" has improved your work outputs?

The "eTools" with the newly introduced features and functionalities will reinforce planning, monitoring and reporting results for children, and would definitely enhance efficiency and effectiveness in programme response through:

· Better result-based planning and reporting.
· Addressing the high demand for real time information and its availability.
· Strengthening the CSO management and providing statistics on country level partnership.
· Better planning and management of field visits.
· Synchronizing available data in VISION, RAM and other corporate system in one platform.
· Reducing manual work in order to save staff time, efforts and reducing potential for data loss or inaccuracy.
· Minimizing staff time on processing and allowing more focus on achievements and monitoring results.
· Streamlining work processes under one platform.

Do you think using eTools can help UNICEF reach the "hardest to reach children"?

"eTools" as a suite of applications in one platform, will definitely help UNICEF to reach the 'hardest to reach children' in many ways including:

· Addressing the high demand for real time information related to children especially in humanitarian situations.
· Facilitating information gathering and disaggregation of data/information at different levels to analyze the situation of hardest to reach children.
· Supporting partners to timely and directly report on projects implementation in the hard to reach areas.
· Assisting programmes to remotely monitor projects in the hard to reach areas.
· Supporting partnership management to provide analysis of partner's availability in the hard to reach areas and how UNICEF can increase its partnership to better deliver for results.
· Assuring supplies distribution and confirmation from beneficiaries in the hard to reach areas.
· Visualizing interventions: mapping of partnerships up to the village level, mapping achievements.
· Incorporating HACT: aggregated information on micro-assessments, audits and risks from VISION, and sets minimum set of assurance activities (programmatic visits and spot-check) based on the signed programme documents by implementing partner. While, trips module will ensure that no information on 'hardest to reach children' will be missed.

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