

RMK 13 SUMMARY: Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MIER)

by MIER

1. The 13th Malaysia Plan (RMK13) similar to all previous 5-year development plans is comprehensive. It brings together all the components of development – the economy, social and environment as well as provides the framework for governance. It presents 4 pillars and 27 priority areas and a whole range of specific targets to guide implementation and monitor the progress of initiatives towards achieving the outcomes.

2. With the Plan done, the attention must now shift to the most important aspect that is execution to realise all the goals and aspirations of the Plan. This will need to be supported by an effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting system. The Plan acknowledges the need to address issues related to project planning and implementation which have previously caused delays, increased cost and under achievement of outcomes. The Plan has also identified several factors that have impeded monitoring in the past including the lack of data, weakness in reporting progress by implementing agencies and cross ministry coordination.

3. The 13th Malaysia Plan accords due importance to monitoring and reporting as presented in Chapter 6.

To provide the basis for monitoring, the Pelan Pelaksanaan Dasar (PPD), that is a Policy Implementation Plan will be developed. The PPD is to set out the strategies and initiatives that will be implemented by the lead and implementing ministries and agencies to translate the RMK13 policies into action. Each strategy and initiative will have its respective key performance indicators (KPIs) with clear outcomes, outputs and timelines.

4. The monitoring mechanism as proposed under the Plan will involve coordinating existing monitoring mechanisms under ministries and central agencies including MyBelanjawan under the Ministry of Finance, MyProjek under the Implementation and Coordination Unit (ICU) in the Prime Minister's Department, Unit Pantau Madani, Performance Acceleration Coordination Unit (PACU) and Pusat SDG Negara. In addition, to facilitate monitoring and reporting, the MyRMK system is being developed by the Ministry of Economy. The MyRMK system is to 'provide a well-structured workflow to align planning update implementation progress and generate monitoring reports.' Ministries, agencies, state governments and local authorities will report implementation progress quarterly through this system based on their role as a lead or implementing agency.

5. In terms of institutional framework for monitoring, the Plan proposes the use of existing committees. It is to commence with quarterly reporting of progress by the lead and implementing agencies through the MyRMK to the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), and through MyBelajawan and MyProjek to the Inter agency Planning Groups (IAPGs). The TWGs and IAPGs will in turn report quarterly to the National Development Planning Council (NDPC). The NDPC will report bi-annually to the National Economic Action Council (NEAC). And, the NEAC will report annually to the Cabinet.

COMMENTARY

6. The monitoring framework proposed in the RMK13 is commendable. It encompasses the basis for monitoring through the PPD, the mechanism for monitoring through existing monitoring mechanisms and the MyRMK system, and the institutional framework for monitoring using existing committees. The following are some thoughts and views on the proposed Monitoring Framework.

7. Implementation capacity. Project planning and implementation capacity is critical to support the effective implementation of the Plan. RMK13 in the chapter on Public Service Reform Agenda states that a new and holistic development project management mechanism will be introduced, and in this respect a strategic planning team with the required skills for project management will be established in every ministry and a module on strategic planning will be developed to enhance the competency of the civil service. Project management has been a weak link in the civil service for some time. In order to ensure the policy outcomes are achieved in an efficient, timely and cost-effective manner, project management capability and capacity within the civil service has to be strengthened and the process must be accelerated.

If there is inadequate capability, in the interim, the Government should consider engaging professional project managers to get the job done. The use of ICT tools must also be deployed where appropriate to strengthen project management capability.

8. Third sector. The third sector including, NGOs, CSOs and cooperatives have been identified as the key drivers of the social economy in the Plan. To accelerate implementation and achieve impactful outcomes particularly for socioeconomic programs, the Government must create and facilitate the pathway for greater third sector participation. It is always not necessary that ministries and its agencies be directly involved in implementation of programs. In many instances, especially for programs such as related to poverty alleviation, youth development, rural enterprise development, women empowerment, elderly care and welfare programs, the third sector is better placed, equipped and more effective in delivering these programs. The third sector in many cases has a greater understanding of the social issues on the ground, the requirements of the target groups and the experience to interact with greater ease with the target group. The ministries and agencies should therefore be encouraged to work through the third sector to deliver these programs while monitoring the outcomes. To support third sector participation, a proper framework needs to be formulated to ensure proper governance in terms roles and responsibilities, accountability, performance and capacity building.

9. Legislation. The recently enacted Government Service Efficiency Commitment Act 2025 should be used as a legal basis to ensure effective delivery of the RMK13. Various provisions of this Act can be utilised to secure greater efficiency and overall improved performance of the lead and implementing ministries and agencies in delivering policy outcomes of the RMK13.

10. PPD. The PPD is a very important document as it provides the very basis for execution and monitoring of the Plan. The PPD is basically a translation of the policies in the Plan into strategies and initiatives backed by KPIs and timelines. In some domains, it is referred to as the implementation book. The preparation of the PPD will also provide the opportunity for a reality check where the proposed initiatives and timelines will have to be aligned with implementation capacity, availability of financial and other resources, and legal and procedural requirements. The PPD also provides the avenue for sequencing and prioritising policies and strategies. While keeping the PPD simple, it may be useful to consider the financial implication of the initiatives at this stage as well as identify risks to implementation and possible mitigating steps to minimise implementation failures. In addition to the PPD, it may be useful for the implementing agency to formulate its internal working action plans which maps detail actions or steps to be taken for each initiative based on timelines to tighten implementation and tracking.

11. Monitoring mechanism. The proposed monitoring mechanism looks a bit complex with so many players and systems involved in the process. There will be the MyRMK monitoring and reporting mechanism running parallel to several other mechanisms such as the MyBelanjawan, MyProjek, Unit Pantau Madani and Pacu. Coordination with the other monitoring mechanisms is not going to be an easy task. Further, multiple monitoring mechanisms will cause confusion, possible duplication and make reporting by implementing agencies burdensome. The best option will be a single dedicated monitoring and reporting mechanism for RMK13 to make the system simple, clear, efficient and transparent.

12. Institutional framework. With respect to the institutional framework for monitoring, the proposal to use existing committees is a good way to go. To serve as an effective institutional monitoring framework the committees must be adequately empowered. While the NDPC and NEAC are formally institutionalised and empowered, the TWGs and IAPGs do not have similar stature and command the necessary statute to satisfactorily monitor implementation. Empowering the TWGs and IAPGs adequately through appropriate means will be essential to strengthen the proposed institutional framework.

13. Evaluation. One element that is prominently missing is evaluation. Evaluation is an important component of the whole planning and implementation process and effective project management. We are not sure if it is taken as a given. However, explicit requirement for evaluation is important to assess the impact of a policy or program. A full-fledged evaluation report could be considered as a requirement particularly for high priority policies and programs such as Poverty Eradication, Rural Development and TVET to assess its impact, outcome and provide feedback for policy and programme realignment, where necessary. The evaluation can be undertaken internally or by an independent third party. Some domains institute the requirement for full-fledged evaluation reports based on the financial value of the program.

14. Reporting progress. The reporting process stops at the Cabinet. RMK13 must offer space for greater accountability. High level progress of the Plan which is reported in the Mid-term reviews and in the subsequent five-year plan is inadequate and a bit too late. The Plan contains a wide spectrum of policies and strategies but there is no regular feedback on progress to all development stakeholders including the people.

The Plan underscores that it is people-centric, and therefore it is only right to periodically inform them how it is progressing and how it is improving their life. To increase accountability and simultaneously improve the visibility of the Plan, the Government could consider presenting an annual public report card of the Plan which lays out the progress and outcomes achieved. This annual public report card will also allow the Government greater flexibility to make timely policy and strategy adjustments, if required, particularly given the more dynamic and uncertain economic and global environment. Improving communication to keep the Plan alive over the -5- year period is certainly a must and the annual report card will also provide the platform.



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