

National GPAR Programme Secretariate Support Project” (GPAR NGPS) and Strengthening the Capacity and Service Delivery of Local Administrations” (GPAR SCSD) Management Response

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Overall comments: This is the management response of UNDP and the GPAR NGPS and GPAR SCSD, MoHA on the recommendations made in the independent Mid-term Evaluation report from December 2014 – January 2015. This evaluation is also considered as final evaluation, given the fact that the overall observations can be applied largely and covered key issues for the remaining of projects cycle.

Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: Under National GPAR Programme Secretariat Support Project” (GPAR NGPS)

- 1.1 The project has enabled the GPAR Secretariat to service various Governance bodies as well as provide, limited but relevant, training and allowed the GPAR Secretariat to draft papers, organize meetings and manage other projects under its responsibility. In the opinion of the Evaluation Mission, a more structured capacity building strategy for GPAR staff should have been envisioned and executed but we recognize the constraints faced.
- 1.2 Based on the previous GPAR Programme Achievements Report drafted by an external consultant in 2011 recommended scaling –up/leverage certain initiatives (Civil Service Human Resources Management System: job descriptions, performance evaluation system, skills inventory etc.) that were developed under the previous phase of the GPAR programme, the Evaluation Mission saw no evidence that this has yet been done, but as can be seen below (refer to initiatives under GPAR SCSD), recommends that the Government and its DPs consider supporting more work along these lines.

Management Response:

- 1.1 While MOHA and UNDP agree with the evaluation team on introducing a more structure capacity building strategy for GPAR staff, we believe that the NPGAR Secretariat housed at MOHA, whose roles and responsibilities are to facilitate all NPGAR activities, including the Governance Sector Working Group on behalf of the Lao Government must receive the priority to show a strong sense of ownership. The two key below actions have been taken seriously as to respond to this particular recommendation.
- 1.2 MOHA and UNDP take note of the importance of Civil Service Human Resources Management System as said by a consultant in 2011 and used again by this evaluation team. However, the scope of work under the NGPS cannot expand to Modernized civil service management systems and practices as it focuses on National Programme Secretariat and sector partnerships. Future support to Civil Service Human Resources Management System can be discussed when time permits between the Government and its DPs.

| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking | |
|---|------------|---------------------|-----------|---|
| | | | Status | Comments |
| 1.1. Identify additional MOHA officials to respond to NGPAR Secretariat work. | Q2 2015 | MoHA | Completed | One additional MOHA official under the Department of Planning and Cooperation was appointed to the NGPAR Secretariat to support the team in responding to the overall NGPAR and GSWG activities. This appointment was announced at the NGPAR Programme monthly meeting held on 3 July, 2015 with UNDP representative attending. |
| 1.2. Bring in an International volunteer, who has strong experience in communicating and reporting. He/she will assist MOHA, NGPAR Secretariat in particular, in developing a strategic communication activities to enhance awareness, convergence of understanding on the potential, role and scope of the GSWG and governance reforms. GPAR staff supporting NGPAR Secretariat will benefit from this recruitment as well. | Q3-Q4 2015 | MoHA and UNDP | ongoing | TOR was developed in the agreement made between NGPAR Secretariat and UNDP. Interview was conducted on 2 Oct, 2015. Other recruitment procedure is being applied based on UNV policies. |
| Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2: Under GPAR Service Delivery of Local Administrations (GPAR SCSD) | | | | |
| 2.1 The Capacity Development and Modernization Fund (CADEM) Fund which has very limited resources, was used for very short term training on very basic skills, in a very wide geographic context and covering many subjects. While there seemed to be a reasonable level of satisfaction with CADEM activities on the part of the officials that were behind the EOIs, given all of the above the mission was not convinced that these activities will make a substantial contribution to Governance in Laos. All of this leads to believe training may have limited impact and sustainability. | | | | |

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2.2 None of the One Door Service Centres (ODSCs) are fully operational or provide uniform, coordinated services. They have no budget, no power to approve locally even the most menial of requests, few or no computers, and no trained staff. No standard fee table, valid across the country, exists for the services they are supposed to provide. Therefore, the impact of the ODSCs to date is practically non-existent. The Mission attributes this to a civil service culture of “compartmentalization” by various Ministries that guard control over their services as well as protects income derived from fees. HOWEVER, the Evaluation Mission coincides fully with the view expressed to it by the Head of the GPAR Secretariat that the concept of the ODSC is a very important one that needs to be piloted again in a more restrained geographic environment.

2.3 The DDF has been and continues to be a very worthwhile investment. Its approach has proven that given a decentralization of untied resources and appropriate training, it is possible to carry out successfully a fully participatory planning model at the district level. However, the Evaluation Mission feels it is time to tie it to other related efforts in the country with a view to “scaling up” both financially and substantively. To do this, the mission suggests also complementing the model with the introduction of other potential development partners such as local civil society organizations, public/private partnership initiatives and others.

Management Response:

2.1 MOHA and UNDP acknowledge that CADEM Fund has very limited resources, was used for very short term training on very basic skills, in a very wide geographic context and covering many subjects. However, this small fund has helped to reduce the burden of the Government in responding to many of administrative practices for local and village level and has helped to increase project management skills. Hence, MOHA and UNDP do not fully agree with the evaluation team on their comment that they are not convinced CADEM will make a substantial contribution to Governance in Laos.

MOHA and UNDP view that the fund does provide a useful mechanism to support demand driven innovation designed to strengthen public services. Hence, both organizations will continue this concept of local development in their future collaboration BUT to provide a clearer focus rather than make it available in a very wide geographic context.

2.2 We partly agree with the evaluation team finding that the ODSCs are not fully operational due to some constraints, such as no budget, no power to approve locally. GPAR SCSD as well as the previous GPAR has helped to raise these issues, especially capacity development to those providing services at the ODSCs. Thus, the ‘no trained staff’ as claimed by the evaluators are not correct. However, both MOHA and UNDP have agreed to conduct an analysis of implementation and operations of ODSCS and then identify an Action Plan.

2.3 We fully agree with the evaluation team suggestion.

| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking | |
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| | | | Status | Comments |
| 2.1. Re-design the CADEM fund into a more focus areas in the new Project Concept and Project Document | Q1-Q4 2015 | MoHA and UNDP | Ongoing | The proposed Project Document includes the CADEM fund into Public Service Improvement facility that will fund specific initiatives designed to |

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| | | | | reinforce the enabling role of local administration in either strengthening service outreach or in promoting local economic development. MOHA and UNDP are in the process of finalizing the new Project Document. |
| 2.2. Develop a TOR to bring in International/regional expert to conduct an analysis of implementation and operations of ODCS, identifying strength and weak points, and core issues that affect the operation of ODCS. | Q3 2015 | MoHA and UNDP | Completed | Advertisement was put on local UNDP website and newspaper. Also it was put up on UNDP global website. The deadline for EOI was 7 Oct 2015. |
| 2.3 Design the new Project concept/Project document with more involvement of Civil Society/Citizen Engagement and try to establish the private sector collaboration. | Q2-Q4 2015 | MoHA and UNDP | Completed | The new initiative is designed to unlock the flow of domestic capital to finance small and medium-sized infrastructure projects needed to accelerate local economic and private sector development. |
| Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3: Cross cutting issues observations | | | | |
| 3.1 There is no coherent gender and ethnic equity strategy in the NGPAR program (both NGPA and SCSD). NGPAR should invest in solid technical support on gender and ethnicity mainstreaming to mentor the GPAR secretariat and facilitate gender affirmative actions within CADEM, DDF and ODSC. It should also mobilize partnerships with parallel gender mainstreaming initiatives such as with the Public Administration Research and Training Institute (PARTI) and the MoHA Sub-CAW, which have a conducted a self-assessment survey of gender needs in MoHA, developed a Strategy for Gender in Public Administration, developed a training module and manual on Gender Mainstreaming and validate this in a training of GAD trainers. It should also involve the Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs of MoHA in developing capacities and tools for ethnic sensitivity, so that field projects can benefit diverse ethnic groups more equitably. | | | | |

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Management Response:

3.1. Although GPAR NGPS and SCSD were not designed to be gender focused initiatives, women and ethnic groups are automatically be co-participants and co-beneficiaries of infrastructure projects (e.g. health centers, school buildings, irrigation projects, drinking water supply, roads) that are set-up in their respective villages.

MOHA and UNDP very much like to take into account this observation and will try our best in addressing gender and ethnic equity in the upcoming design.

| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking | |
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| | | | Status | Comments |
| 3.1 Develop a more gender and ethnic equity into the new project concept note and Project Document. The involvement of women and ethnic population in consultation forum should be clearly explicit. | Q2-Q4 2015 | MOHA and UNDP | Ongoing | In the proposed project document, a special focus on community driven approaches in service delivery will also focus on mobilizing women as active participants in the service outreach is proposed. Women and ethnic group involvement in the provincial plan consultation forum is also stated as a key mechanism. |

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Signature:
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