**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

**Uzbekistan**

**Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation (SMART)**

**Evaluation Report**

**Artemy Izmestiev, UNDP Seoul Policy Centre**

**Farhod Sagatov, Independent Consultant**

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**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

CESS Center on Economic and Social Studies (project)

CER Center for Economic Research

CIS Commonwealth of Independent States

CO Country Office

CPAP Country Programme Action Plan

ECOSOC UN Economic and Social Council

ESCAP UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

GCF Green Climate Fund

HLPF High Level Political Forum

IFI International Financial Institution

KFI Key Informant Interview

MDGs Millennium Development Goals

MOU Memorandum of Understanding

PTTF Poverty Thematic Trust Fund

SDGs Sustainable Development Goals

SMART Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation (project)
SRPU Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan (project)

SSC South-South Cooperation

TOR Terms of Reference

TTI Think-Tank Initiative

UNDAF United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WIS Welfare Improvement Strategy

**Executive Summary**

In the early 2010s when the project “Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation” (SMART) was formulated, Uzbekistan was entering an important stage of its socio-economic development. On the one hand, the World Bank’s re-classification of Uzbekistan as a middle-income country was showing that the gradualist export-oriented approach promoted by the Government was paying off. On the other hand, the economy’s continued dependence on commodity exports, combined with a number of social and environmental challenges put country in a high risk of heading towards a middle-income trap.

Building on a long track record of support to and collaboration with the Centre for Economic Research (CER), the UNDP’s SMART Project took this partnership to a new level, recognizing that the new-found ambition (reflected in the government’s new goal of reaching higher middle-income country status by 2030) and the resulting complexity of Uzbekistan’s economy will require long-term support by think tanks and more broadly by knowledge institutions. Although SMART generally maintained the strategic focus of the previous project[[1]](#footnote-1) (including support to high-quality policy research), the novelty consisted in the substantive focus of CER on transformation (economic, social, institutional, spatial) and the stronger focus on the CER’s institutional and financial sustainability. The project also aimed at connecting CER with broad South-South networks, as a way to both acquire relevant knowledge and positively contribute to CER’s international image.

The project was designed with the following objectives:

* Support to policy analysis and policy formulation to accelerate policy reform process;
* Support to policy formulation process through participatory policy dialogue and policy communication
* Strengthen institutional and financial sustainability of the CER.

The initial project’s timeline was from January 2013 to December 2015, but the project was extended until the end of 2016. To ensure the focus on outcomes, the assessment covers the entire duration of the project.

Current assessment of the SMART project results was initiated primarily with the following objectives:

* Assess the project’s contribution to the declared outcomes (including progress made in support of policy analysis and policy formulation to accelerate reform process in Uzbekistan in social, economic, institutional, and spatial transformation; the degree to which the policy formulation process has been carried out through participatory dialogue and policy communication with the stakeholders; the extent to which the SMART project has contributed to institutional and financial sustainability of CER);
* Assess the efficiency of resource use in the context of the project;
* Assess the quality of the knowledge management and communication infrastructure and practice;
* Propose an outline of a conceptual framework (new project concept) for cooperation with CER and, possibly, provide recommendations for cooperation with other think tanks under a new UNDP project in support of national research capacities for evidence-based policy making (including but not limited to planning for national SDGs, as well as cooperation with new emerging initiatives, e.g., with the Green Climate Fund).

The evaluation process was designed to respond to the objectives and consisted of gathering evidence on the outcomes through document review, verification and triangulation of data collected as well as in-depth discussions on the stakeholder expectations about the future of the project. The key areas of assessment of the outcomes were: relevance, efficiency and sustainability. During the mission to Tashkent, the consultation process included focus group discussions (e.g. CER) and key informant interviews (KFIs) – comprising a representative cross-section of project stakeholders (users, contributors to research, project staff, development partners). A de-briefing was organized with the Government focal point for the project and the UNDP country office.

**General Findings**

The project provided a significant contribution to the stated outcome of the CPAP: “Capacity of the central and local authorities enhanced to develop and implement economic and social security policies aimed at welfare improvement of vulnerable groups”. Over the years, CER carved itself a unique niche in the area of policy analysis in Uzbekistan. Its distinct features are practice-oriented policy research, an implementation approach (for research projects) focused on dialogue and consensus building as well as extensive use of technology and tools for knowledge sharing as well as comprehensive presentation of research findings aiming at greater inclusiveness of the process. The project enabled continuation of the CER support during the time of the implementation of the second Welfare Improvement Strategy (WIS-II) of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2013-2015 and beyond. It also helped UNDP to contextualize some of its focus areas, such as Millennium Development Goals and human development, in Uzbekistan.

The Project supported a large number of research outputs addressing key dimensions of Uzbekistan’s transformation. In dozens of cases, its targeted research, focused on the needs of end users informed the government regulation and reform process. Owing to the demand by the end-users and capacity of the Centre, the number of research outputs exceeded the amount originally planned in the project document. Evidence shows that in many cases, policy recommendations made significant impact on government policy and the reform process. However, the project’s contribution to the government’s capacity transcends the sheer number of the relevant outputs and includes the modality of research implementation. The CER’s modality for financing and managing applied research is highly effective. It considers each research as a separate project managed by a research coordinator and implemented by a select team of national experts. The team composition depends on the project specifics and needs, enabling production of tailor-made research outputs. Involvement of national experts facilitates access to relevant information and data and supports the eventual uptake of policy recommendations. Capacity of relevant institutions is further enhanced through participation in the follow up activities (such as Development Dialogue et al).

The flexible approach to team composition constitutes a significant strength of the CER modus operandi, but also has weaknesses, as the quality of the outputs largely depends on the abilities of the team members. As a result, the stakeholder perception of the quality and relevance of the CER projects differs on a case by case basis.

CER also positioned itself as an important hub for socio-economic data gathering, analysis and dissemination. Its publication Uzbekistan Economic Trends became a useful source of data and sectoral analysis.

The evidence on the effective synergy with UNDP programmatic work appears to be patchy. The project document committed to the identification of “one-two research projects per year… as flagship UNDP policy initiatives” and further included the goal of a total of “7 flagship research initiatives implemented”. While CER and UNDP CO collaborated actively and a few joint initiatives have been identified with UNDP regional and global programmes, the stakeholder perception of the synergy differs widely. Overall, such synergy has been under-utilized. At the same time, CER actively supported UNDP corporate initiatives in the area of knowledge management, being an active contributor to the thematic knowledge networks as well as an early adaptor and loyal user of the Teamworks virtual platform. Through these means CER could enrich various areas of UNDP corporate policy, for example, feeding results of its research to the early discussion on the UNDP urban agenda[[2]](#footnote-2). Programmatic collaboration with UNDP also faced a number of practical challenges – for example UNDP did not have access to metadata from the surveys that it commissioned to CER, on the basis of conditions under which Government gave its consent to the survey.

CER’s Economic Review played a significant role in promoting the inclusiveness of policy dialogue. In accordance with the commitment made in the project, the magazine increased the share of its content dedicated to business, while reducing the share broader socio-economic analysis. While this change went against expectations by some of the stakeholders, it also increased the magazine’s broad appeal and gained it some additional audience. In addition, CER has been successfully using its websites, blogs and profiles on social networks as tools for stakeholder engagement in Uzbekistan and abroad. The extensive use of infographics also became a part of CER’s signature style – presenting trends or research outcomes in an easy and comprehensive manner. One-pagers and two-pagers were helpful in the international positioning of CER and making practices from Uzbekistan known outside of its borders.

During the years of the Project implementation, CER increased its partnership base. The project received a very high share of Government cost-sharing. A series of initiatives have been implemented with other partners, including ADB, JICA, UN ESCAP and various parts of UNDP. CER strengthened its position beyond the executive branch, forging a strong working relations with Oliy Majlis, and conducted joint initiatives with private sector, while also increasing the private-sector related content of its research portfolio. In some cases, the project effectively acted as a channel of communication between the UNDP and various parts of the Government.

CER has built a rather solid reputation as a modern public policy think tank and a credible, effective partner. Analysis of the uptake of the policy recommendations generated by CER played an important role in gathering evidence on the effectiveness of CER work[[3]](#footnote-3). Communication was and remains one of the most important determinants of visibility, partnership-building and resource mobilization. The CER Communication Strategy was designed to ensure good visibility of its products and services while employing an individualized approach to each target group. At the same time, the communications strategy remained largely static and failed to respond to challenges (such as accessibility of research outputs or better management of revenue-generating activities). This is particularly important in view of the fact that such areas are central for increasing financial and institutional sustainability of CER.

Overall on the issue of sustainability, the project highlights a few important elements, but does not contain a comprehensive vision of what it is intending to achieve in terms of sustainability.

South-South Cooperation (SSC) appears as one of the cross-cutting elements of the SMART project document, in relation to all outcomes. It provided an important direction for various CER initiatives. At the same time, ad hoc initiatives (such as partnership with institutions based in the global South, using examples from the Global South as a reference in CER’s research work) stopped short of converging into an integrated approach that would allow making best use of SSC in research, networking and strategic positioning.

Similarly, while gender was integrated into the project as a cross-cutting element, concrete provisions included into the project document (e.g. “number of beneficiaries of opposite sex” for various activities of CER) failed to provide a strategic guidance in line with the UN programming principles.

**Highlights of the Analysis on Evaluation criteria**

The evidence collected during the evaluation, shows that through SMART, UNDP has been doing the right things, and has been, largely, doing things right in achieving its strategic objectives of strengthening government capacity in critical areas.

**Relevance:** The relevance of this project can be assessed from the viewpoint of its role in support of Government priorities, as well as UNDP programmatic objectives in Uzbekistan. Activities of the project were greatly appreciated by many parts of Government, as having an important strategic impact. The project’s strategy focused on transformation was in line with the government vision expressed in the Welfare Improvement Strategy.

The project was also in line with the priorities of the CPAP with its focus on capacity and inclusive policy processes. Finally, the project had a particular relevance in the process of localizing the MDGs and developing the country’s position on post-2015 activities, policies and events.

**Effectiveness:** The project was found to have been effective. One of the major indicators of project effectiveness is the uptake of the policy recommendations by the government and legislature. Although this process is not linear and is difficult to monitor, self-monitoring by the Centre identifies a large number of cases where the policy recommendations had a direct influence in the government policy. Information presented in the CER’s monitoring on the uptake of policy recommendations has been generally confirmed by a number of stakeholders. Even the stakeholders that put in doubt quality or relevance of some CER products, highlighted the effectiveness of its model for building consensus and advocacy.

Most research projects indeed included communications and advocacy component. Its advocacy work was important, for example, for introducing MDGs into the national debate. It also gave visibility to a number of important issues for Uzbekistan’s development, including energy efficiency of buildings, trade regime etc. Most research projects were supported by the advocacy events, including thematic round tables, articles, as well as targeted engagement with the Oliy Majlis.

**Efficiency:** This project had an overall operational budget of USD 1.850.000 USD for a period of 3 years. It was later extended for 2016 with a government contribution of over USD 400.000. This was the largest proportion of Government co-financing in a UNDP project. Data on the total amount of CER funding is not available, but all stakeholders indicated that the project provided the bulk of Centre’s resources. Overall, the project annual budget remains relatively low (even though it is difficult to access comparative data on the annual budget of the think tanks in similar category, most operate on larger budget).

The project not only attracted government co-financing, but also mobilized additional resources.

The project undertook an audit and following the audit recommendation, the project implemented a number of measures to streamline financial management and enhance sustainability (e.g. support staff transitioned to government contracts).

The project showed good results on value for money; for example, it produced on average approximately 16 major reports and numerous additional policy products, along with many outreach activities with the annual budget slightly above USD 600.000. The project management paid attention to efficiency. The scheme by which government officials could take part in research project receiving remuneration provided the project access to data and information, while ensuring efficiency. Some government officials participated in the research projects on a pro-bono basis.

**Sustainability:** CER enjoys great level of support by various government institutions. During the time of implementation of SDGs, the Centre’s institutional relevance as a platform for cross-sectoral collaboration can further grow.

CER has great potential to attract additional resources, however, it requires some degree of predictability in core funding to ensure effective resource mobilization.

The Centre attracted a solid team of talented professionals, with complimentary skills, allowing it to deliver research on various subjects. Talent retention will be critical for sustainability of CER’s current model of work.

Financial sustainability of the Centre is a major challenge. In 2016 the project extension was fully financed by the Government. The management of CER took measures to ensure the leaner structure of the SMART project, shifting some costs not directly related to research towards direct government co-financing.

Additional attention should be given to commercial activities (online sales of the CER products, sales of the magazine etc.) to further advance financial sustainability (even though the focus on commercial activities should not derail organization’s focus).

It is also important to have a holistic approach towards sustainability – e.g. making sure that the measures geared towards better financial management at the same time ensure talent retention and institutional positioning of CER.

**Recommendations**

In view of the internal nature of the assessment, the recommendations are primarily directed to UNDP:

It is recommended that the project continues beyond its current phase with similar scope, but some changes in focus. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs provide an opportunity for strengthened engagement with knowledge institutions such as CER. The relevance and synergies with UNDP country programme should be well defined both at strategic and operational levels. The next stage of cooperation should build on the achievement of the SMART project – consolidation of the unique position of the Centre as a source of tailor-made policy advise and a platform for collaboration and consensus building. Below is the list of more concrete recommendations related to the specific areas of focus of the new project based on the lessons learnt:

*Position CER within the SDG implementation/monitoring framework:* Think tanks are broadly recognized as a catalyst for analysis and innovation in the context of the SDG framework. UNDP can build upon the cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder approach of the CER to address challenges of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals. CER could be called upon to provide specific suggestions on Mainstreaming and Acceleration of SDGs; on devising specific policies to ensure their implementation; on the interaction of various SDGs and considerations of sequencing/prioritization that follow from this; on Uzbekistan’s role in SDG 17—both to take into account the impact of other countries’ actions on the policy space available to Uzbekistan; and to consider international externalities, public goods (examples include climate change, social spillovers and the transboundary water issue), and work with other countries as a responsible member of the international community. CER can play a significant role in preparing the National Voluntary Reviews at the ECOSOC High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and, possibly, contribute to the thematic reviews and participate at various HLPF multi-stakeholder initiatives.

*Identify strategic focus areas:* Currently, CER has broad focus on social, economic and institutional transformation. The broad focus allowed CER addressing a wide range of research topics and meet demand from its diverse clients. At the same time, lack of clearly identified and communicated flagship initiatives contributed to the perception of fragmentation of efforts among some stakeholders.

*Enhance synergies with UNDP country programme:* CER’s research work and its function as a policy platform can be instrumental for UNDP in various areas. Potential for synergies could be identified from the outset. While the areas for potential synergies abound, it is important to define areas for joint work, based on the understanding of where such work is desirable and possible. It is also important to leave CER the freedom to operate independently in the areas where collaboration can be problematic (e.g. issues related to access to data, etc.). Such differentiation is important to ensure productive collaboration, as opposed to usurpation of research agenda. It will also help making sure that the joint standards of data verifiability apply to joint projects. CER engagement could be particularly important in the thematic areas 1, 2 and 4 of the new UNDAF[[4]](#footnote-4). CER’s contribution could potentially go beyond policy research to include collaboration on communications and advocacy.

Among thematic areas, climate financing represents a new area with big potential for both synergetic work between CER and UNDP and external resource mobilization for CER. Thanks to its track record in research on green economy, CER is well positioned in the area of climate financing, potentially including capacity building for GCF national designated authority, advocacy and policy analysis related to various modalities of climate financing.

*Upgrade CER’s communications capacity:* Addressing the existing communications gap would not only require a comprehensive framework covering public relations, external communications and information disclosure, but also capacities for its implementation. The Project should make the full use of UNDP resources to seek, explore and exploit new partnerships, synergies and, of course, funding opportunities. Staff-members in charge of fundraising should work more closely with UNDP Resource Mobilization unit to better coordinate their efforts. It will also be important for UNDP to work with the staff in charge of public relations (currently on government contracts) to build capacity and ensure that public relations are a part of a broader strategic approach.

*Agree on comprehensive guidelines for research team composition and management:* It is important to make sure that all research outputs used by the government are robust and of high quality. This requires strengthened process of research team selection and ensuring the consistent quality of outputs. As each research project requires from the CER coordinators to work with a diverse group of practitioners, it is important to establish and clearly communicate expectations and standards of performance. Team members should also understand the existing mechanisms of quality control. In selected cases, UNDP can take part in the review of CER research outputs or provide quality assurance, particularly in cases where the research tackles a subject that is within UNDP’s core area of expertise, or where such expertise can be easily accessed through UNDP’s global network. It will be impossible and unreasonable to be engaged in all outputs, therefore it would be more practical to delineate a taxonomy of outputs – inter alia specifying those that would require UNDP engagement and those that would not.

*Enhance work on socio-economic data:* CER’s work on data and statistics fills important voids and fosters dialogue around data quality. It is important to continue this work, particularly in the area of SDG-related indicators; and further improve data interpretation and analysis. In particular, CER can improve analytical component of its publication “Economy of Uzbekistan”. UNDP could engage CER in the dialogue on data for SDGs, including on issues related to access, capacity and resources required to strengthen statistical capacity, ways of working with non-traditional sources, etc.

*Adopt strategic approach to South-South Cooperation:* strategic and substantive linkages with Southern networks could position CER within important global processes, enhance professional networks and increase demand for CER’s products. UNDP, operating through its network of country offices and regional hubs has a role to play in fostering this connection. The major factor contributing to renewed interest in South-South cooperation in Uzbekistan was the rise of China and increasing impact of its regional and global initiatives on the country. In view of the geo-political nature of this subject, CER’s limited its involvement in producing confidential briefs. There is a significant scope to scale up collaboration with think tanks in China and beyond, through facilitation by relevant UNDP offices. Southern networks, such as Southern Voices on Post-2015 not only provide opportunity for networking and substantive collaboration, but also potentially open avenues for obtaining additional financing.

At the technical level, engagement in SSC can be mutually beneficial for Uzbekistan and for its cooperating partners. At the strategic level, it could help Uzbekistan be a part of global coalitions, addressing various issues.

As a staunch advocate for Uzbekistan’s engagement in the SSC, CER will be in a good position to become an implementing agency for knowledge sharing projects with other countries. Some of such projects could be tested by UNDP under triangular cooperation arrangements.

*Define sustainability:* Sustainability of the Centre will depend on the number of factors including demand for its research and effective use of its policy recommendations, solid team of professionals, good financial management and appropriate accountability mechanism (allowing CER sufficient independence while maintaining its policy influence). While there could be no universal agreement on what sustainability should mean, defining a medium-term vision is possible. It would allow prioritizing activities that are indeed key for sustainability. There is a number of quick wins in this regard. Simple interventions could significantly increase capacity of the CER to generate its own resources and contribute towards its fiscal autonomy. These include improvement of the sales of the magazine, increasing paid access to various Centre products online and offline, etc. Such measures could also become a part of a communications framework. Collaboration with the private sector is being explored, but should not undermine the main focus of CER’s work. Solid team holds key for Centre’s capacity to deliver quality research, as well as for its professional network and outreach. It will be important to ensure sustainability of the team that defined CER’s school of thought – arguing for strategic and multi-disciplinary approach in analysis of socio-economic and environmental issues. It is equally important to continue CER’s tradition of creating space for young researchers to learn and express themselves.

1. **Introduction and Background**

By the end of the 1990s, the Government of Uzbekistan articulated the need for more in-depth research of economic reform process and recommendations on further economic liberalization.[[5]](#footnote-5) To shape and refine its policy agenda in line with the changing context, decision makers required advice on assessing policy options and proper sequencing of development programs. This called for a new player on the local research market.

Established in accordance with the Presidential decree in 1999, Center for Economic Research (CER) – a joint initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP – initially focused on economic issues. Thematic scope of its studies gradually expanded and diversified to cover a much broader range of development issues. Over the years of its operation, CER managed to become the leading national think-tank and accumulate – to certain extent – unique expertise and policy advice capacities.

The first phase of UNDP collaboration with CER was implemented in 1998–2003 (UZB/97/008 Center on Economic and Social Studies project (CESS)). One of its objectives was to develop and pilot a modality for financing and managing applied research. This modality views each study as a standalone research project, whereas the responsible research coordinator acts as a project manager, selects and manages an effective team of national experts, ensures participatory approach and adequate product quality, and renders all necessary support and follow-up. Another part of CER’s mandate – raising public awareness on socio-economic issues – was and is being secured through publication of a monthly “Economic Review” journal, and other online and offline information and communication tools. In addition, the activities of the CER with UNDP support contributed to building relevant capacities of both representatives of government agencies and research institutions.

The focus of the second phase (00045192 Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan (SRPU) project) broadened the thematic scope of CER’s work. It also places emphasis on inclusive dialogue. The Center continued enhancing its policy advice capacities, and was acting as a liaison between the government and UNDP offering an effective dialogue platform. The range of CER’s products further expanded to include policy briefs, one-pagers on the most pressing development issues, open lectures, databases and web-based products. In the implementation, CER’s management placed particular emphasis on sustainability of the Centre, both institutional and financial. To this end, CER employed a more aggressive resource mobilization strategy and managed to implement a multitude of projects and initiatives in cooperation with various international donor agencies. Certain steps were also made to pilot revenue-oriented activities.

Phase three – (00068986 Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation (SMART) project) – is a logical continuation of the previous phases. The Project was expected to provide relevant support to CER in facilitating economic, social, institutional and spatial transformation. More specifically, Project activities were to concentrate on a) elaborating policy recommendations with active participation of all stakeholders at all stages; b) building awareness on the reform process, and promoting “South-South” cooperation; and c) strengthening CER’s sustainability to improve reliance on its own resources. Once again, financial, institutional and human resources sustainability was recognized as a core issue for Centre’s viability in the medium and long run.

1. **Purpose and objectives of the evaluation**

The Terms of Reference (TOR) developed by UNDP in consultation with the national counterparts (i.e. the Office of the President and the Ministry of Economy) and relevant stakeholders articulates the background, purpose and methodology. With the overall purpose of analyzing lessons learnt and making suggestions for the next stage of collaboration, the evaluation comprises the following tasks:

* To conduct an impartial and expert assessment of the outcome-level results of UNDP’s cooperation with CER under SMART project
* Provide a review of achieved results and lessons learnt against the expected targets, outputs and indicators laid down in the project document
* Meet with and gather substantive feedback from project stakeholders, including among the SMART/CER’s key beneficiaries both on the project’s impact and SMART/CER’s role and contribution to economic and social research and policy development. The stakeholders’ groups should consist of:
	+ Government Agencies (i.e., Office of the President, ministries and agencies)
	+ Academic and Research Community (i.e., national research institutions, academia)
	+ International Community (i.e., IFIs, donors, UN agencies, bilateral cooperation agencies, etc.)
* Assess the project’s contribution to the progress made in support of policy analysis and policy formulation to accelerate reform process in Uzbekistan in social, economic, institutional, and spatial transformation
* Assess the degree to which the policy formulation process has been carried out through participatory dialogue and policy communication with the stakeholders
* Evaluate the extent to which SMART project has contributed to institutional and financial sustainability of CER
* Assess the degree to which the resources and funding for the above project directions have been used effectively and efficiently, by providing an analysis of lessons learned
* Assess how effectively the knowledge base, information technology, and communication means (i.e., social media, web blogs, regular publications, Development Dialogues, etc.) are being used to expand the outreach and knowledge-sharing by CER
* Based on the recommendations and feedback from the stakeholders, propose an outline of a conceptual framework (new project concept) for cooperation with the think tanks under a new UNDP project in support of national research capacities for evidence-based policy making (including but not limited to planning for national SDGs, as well as cooperation with new emerging initiatives, e.g., with the Green Climate Fund)
* Present and discuss the findings and recommendations to UNDP, and beneficiaries
* Review and elaborate the comments presented with regard to the daft final report
* Review and incorporate the inputs provided by UNDP and stakeholders into the final report
* Provide quality assurance and ensure timely submission of the final evaluation report in a format agreed by UNDP.

In consultations with the national partners, UNDP was requested to reference its experience in managing policy centres during the evaluation of the project.

1. **Evaluation approach and methodology**

The UNDP SMART Project is a part of the broader collaboration continuum between UNDP and CER. The evaluation, therefore, is to look back and plan the way forward. The initial project’s timeline was from January 2013 to December 2015, but the project was extended until the end of 2016. To ensure the focus on outcomes, the assessment covers the entire duration of the project.

The process included the review of background documentation (these included the project document, evaluation reports on previous collaboration phases, selected outputs by CER, tables on uptake of policy recommendations by CER, government regulations that were adopted using CER recommendations), discussion with the UNDP CO on the main expectations from the exercise and development of the draft questionnaire. It was followed by a one-week mission to Tashkent to meet main stakeholders. During the mission, the key informants interviews with selected stakeholders were conducted to ensure triangulation of selected data and information. Evaluation therefore included analysis of information provided by various stakeholders (Project staff, UNDP CO, Government of Uzbekistan, private sector and others). It gave an opportunity to compare different perspectives. The agenda in Tashkent also included active interaction with UNDP CO and a debriefing with the government focal point and UNDP management.

The evaluation had a number of limitations:

*Access to relevant stakeholders and decision makers:* The mission to Tashkent included meetings with selected stakeholders. Scheduling meetings with some of the project beneficiaries appeared to be difficult. The authors had limited access to the project stakeholders. The full list of stakeholders consulted is in the attachment. As a result, for instance, project governance was not analyzed in this evaluation, even though it might have played an important role in some aspects relevant to this evaluation.

*Access to CER products:* Some work produced by CER is confidential in nature. Authors of the evaluation did not have access to some of the products, including the ones considered for case studies within the report. Conclusions presented at the report are based on the secondary data (from stakeholder perspectives).

*Limitations of analysis at outcome level:* The evaluation did not address the important issues related to quality of research. This would require much more time and much more significant effort. Whilst the document reviewed by the authors included selected outputs of CER’s work, the review has been patchy at best. Instead, it looked at stakeholders’ perspectives of the quality. Such perceptions are subjective and this may influence conclusions of the evaluation. The evaluation of the impact by different government regulations based on CER recommendations was equally conducted mostly on the basis of stakeholder perception.

*Attribution of impact to the project:* As indicated, UNDP SMART Project represents a phase in the long-standing collaboration between UNDP and CER. Whereas the focus of the evaluation is on the project, it is sometimes difficult to attribute concrete outcomes to the project itself. Some outcomes could be achieved as a result of work done in the previous phases of collaboration. Some activities implemented within the project will show outcomes within several years. Some policy changes could also take place as a result of other factors, while coinciding with the research by CER.

1. **General Findings: Review of project results in relation to the main outcome**

Analysis of the main activities of the project and stakeholder perspectives confirm that the project made a significant contribution to the stated outcome of the CPAP: “Capacity of the central and local authorities enhanced to develop and implement economic and social security policies aimed at welfare improvement of vulnerable groups”. This section provides a review of project outputs and analyses their contribution to the outcome.

1. **Elaborating policy recommendations with active participation of all stakeholders at all stages**

Provision of relevant and high quality policy products was the key project deliverable. In accordance with the CER’s strategic direction, the thematic activity of CER was broadly subdivided into several categories: economic, social, institutional and spatial transformation. During the project life span, CER delivered over 50 major reports on various subjects related to Uzbekistan’s transformation. Besides, it produced over 30 one-pagers in addition to other policy and communications products (briefs, blog posts, infographics). A number of research products directly concerned the vulnerable groups, including, for example, labor, food security, social protection, MDGs, as well as the issues related to the fledging middle class.

One of the areas explicitly identified in the project document was the issue of data gathering and analysis, as well as “development and piloting of the system of indicators for monitoring reform progress in socio-economic area”. One of the CER publications was Economy of Uzbekistan (financed by contributions by various donors). Its objective, among others, was to improve data management in view of new economic standards. Latest issues of the publication were supported by JICA. The product occupied a unique niche in Uzbekistan’s socio-economic analysis – by offering a credible source of holistic sector analysis. Some stakeholders indicated that the publication could benefit from a greater analytical component. CER also worked with UNDP on MDG indicators (Statistical Capacity Building for MDG Monitoring and Reporting project). In addition, CER mastered the techniques for data presentation developing over 20 infographic products in 2015 alone.

However, the overall productive collaboration between UNDP and CER included episodes of contention. The case in point, most often quoted by stakeholders was related to Family Asset Mobilization survey. Following the survey administration, UNDP did not get access to the primary data from the survey; CER cited the conditions under which the Government gave its consent to administer the survey. Even though this was outside CER’s control, the situation contributed to tensions. It will be important to define where CER adds value in the area of data gathering and presentation. UNDP’s work on data could benefit from a more coordinated approach, bringing in Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, the Institute for Social Research and other important players. This would allow combining the CER’s comparative advantage (such as long track record in gathering of regional data as well we data visualization) with advantages of other institutes.

Based on the experience of UNDP collaboration with CER in the previous phases, SMART project had an explicit focus on participatory research approach. CER offered a platform for cross-sectoral collaboration engaging the representatives of the academia along with the government practitioners, policy makers and experts in various fields. The details on the CER’s participatory research approach are provided in Box 1.

**Box 1: CER research approach: platform for cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration**

Cooperation of CER with UNDP enabled the use of a potent modality for financing and managing applied research. It was developed and piloted within the framework of CESS project. According to this modality, each research is viewed as a separate project managed by research coordinator and implemented by flexible team of national experts. The team composition depends on the project specifics and needs. A research group would normally include higher rank representatives of key government ministries/agencies, private sector and other relevant experts, including lawyers for drafting legal documents, sociologists – for conducting surveys, and journalists – for promulgation and awareness-raising needs.

Reliance on national experts allows addressing several acute issues, including access to first-hand information and statistical data. In addition, involvement in research projects helps enhance capacities of government officials and civil servants, which is a part of CER’s mandate. Moreover, such approach dramatically increases the chance that findings and recommendations would find reflection in respective policy decisions, i.e. it has a certain lobbying effect.

The research itself is considered as an interim product and complemented by an array of follow-up activities, including but not limited to pilot initiatives, round tables, seminars, training, and publications in local and foreign media.

CER research agenda is demand-driven and formulated based on wide consultations with government agencies, parliament, international organizations, private sector, research community, academia and other interested parties – to ensure participatory approach and take into account the interests of various target groups. Every year, CER approaches its partners to gather suggestions on the most relevant research topics. The pool of received inputs is processed, analyzed and channeled to the draft agenda to be brought to the attention of the CER Steering Committee.

For example, “Uzkimyosanoat” state association reacted to the inquiry proposing a study on development prospects of chemical industry which was subsequently approved by the Steering Committee. The research “Main Directions of the Transition towards “Outstripping” Model of Chemical Industry” relied on the expertise of several representatives of “Uzkimyosanoat”, including its deputy chairman, and the Ministry of Economy. The study suggests re-orientation towards products with higher added value, considering that hi-tech polymers, colorants and pigments have a greater multiplier effect than fertilizers. This means a different approach to investing in the sector, as well as cross-sectoral cooperation, more effective value added chains and productive employment. Some of the study findings were reflected in two presidential resolutions (PP-2547 and PP-2614) on measures to increase production of finished export-oriented products from mineral and hydrocarbon resources. The main message of the resolutions is to start focusing on the goods with higher added value, not just mineral fertilizers, but paints, varnishes etc. The main idea of the project was to show that it is essential to refocus from fertilizers to more sophisticated goods. It is too early to consider policy implications of the resolutions, however CER’s estimates not only predict increased aggregate demand, but also higher demand for science and technology. The new structure of the industry could increase its demand for science 9-fold comparing to the existing structure. Development of the industry can be an important generator for job creation. One of the most important by-products related to CER modus operandi was the fact that collaboration on the project effectively led to the transformation of the mindsets of policy makers. The project managed to shift the focus of the policy makers from traditional focus on the fertilizers to thinking on the chemical industry as a driver of other industries. As indicated below, it introduced the discussion of the multiplier effect from the development of chemicals into the sector policy discourse. It also considered potential effects on spatial development.

Notably, the research results benefited another state association – “Uzbekneftegaz” – as one of the resolutions (PP-2614) concerns oil-and-gas industry and deep processing of hydrocarbons.

While it is early to make conclusions about the policy impact of CER research work in this area, the case shows that the model of cross-sectoral collaboration employed by the Centre was helpful in overcoming sector silos and was conducive for adoption of policy recommendations. According to some stakeholders, such collaboration was also instrumental to build capacity both within CER and of external counterparts.

The flexible approach to team composition and implementation of research projects constitutes a significant strength of the Centre’s modus operandi, however, it is also marked by inherent weaknesses. The quality of the outputs largely depends on the abilities of the members of the team. As a result, the stakeholder perception of the quality and relevance of the CER projects differ on a case by case basis.

In some cases, stakeholders indicated that, as a part of the team, they were all given similar tasks, without adequate division of labor. Some of the team members did not agree with the collated result and the policy recommendations presented in the final report. Their recommendation was to improve the management of the process, making sure that research coordinators select the right experts, ensure adequate division of labor and achieve mutual understanding of the task ahead. Some stakeholders highlighted inadequate depth of analysis of certain issues, where policy recommendations largely relied on international best practices and ignored various contextual aspects specific to Uzbekistan. They explain CER’s alleged inability to come up with relevant policy recommendations by the lack of thematic expertise in Uzbekistan. This mostly applies to the instances where CER tacked innovative themes such as green economy. While most stakeholders perceived CER’s active use of international good practices as a reference for research as positive, some highlighted that the approach could undermine original research content.

CER made effective use of Development Dialogues (round table meetings) for engagement of international experts and international organizations based in Uzbekistan. During the implementation of the project CER conducted at least 9 Development Dialogues.

The project implied identifying at least two flagship projects per year, where particular synergy could be gained with UNDP. According to the project document, such projects could also contribute to South-South cooperation. The evaluation found a somewhat uneven understanding of the flagship projects among the stakeholders of the project. It is unclear to what extent various projects identified as “flagships” (examples include Social Protection, Urbanization, Energy Efficiency, Development Vision, Overcoming Transport Sector Limitations, Food Security, Portrait of an Enterpreneur, Trade) were perceived as such by all stakeholders. With regards to the overall synergies between the CER and UNDP, evidence seems to be patchy. From one side, most stakeholders highlighted positive experience in collaboration on MDG reports etc. From the other side, contentions over data described above also left a negative mark. Some other examples of synergy projects include collaboration on low-emission development, on energy-efficient buildings. Besides, CER worked with the regional UNDP hub, as well as BPPS in New York on social protection. In 2015 there was a project with both UNDP and World Bank offices on energy subsidies; a project in such format has been implemented for the first time. Overall, joint work has been conducted in 15 to 20 projects.

The project document made a recommendation for CER to be actively engaged into UNDP corporate knowledge management platforms as a means of improving the quality of research and “ensuring greater involvement of the Centre into global development dialogue”. Indeed, CER’s substantive involvement in the UNDP corporate tools was exemplary and it made significant contributions on thematic networks and later on UNDP Teamworks. To what extent such tools could contribute to both the quality of CER’s work and networking is difficult to determine, but it seems that the effect has been relatively small in view of the low uptake of the tools within UNDP itself.

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| **Some key outputs and project performance targets for 2013-2015** | **Status of implementation**  |
| At least 60 policy products developed contributing to formulation of national policy agenda while some of the products include analysis of gender empowerment issues | CER produced more policy products than planned within the project document. These include over 50 major reports and over 30 one-pagers in addition to other policy and communications products (briefs, blog posts). |
| At least 7 flagship research initiatives implemented within “South-South” cooperation modality.  | CER implemented at least 7 flagship initiatives (Social Protection, Urbanization, Energy Efficiency, Development Vision, Overcoming Transport Sector Limitations, Food Security, Portrait of an Enterpreneur, Trade), however the definition of “flagship initiative” varies across stakeholders. The initiatives including strong South-South component were often different. These include Urbanization and Industrialization in Central Asia (with ESCAP), analysis of the Chinese strategic initiatives such as One Belt One Road, Trade Regime (exploring possible diversification towards South-South trade), Transport (reference to Vietnam-China), Social Transformation.  |
| At least 20 synergy initiatives implemented  | “Synergy initiatives” were not defined and the goal does not appear at the Results and Resources Framework. |
| More than 45000 recipients informed about the research projects’ results (that include at least 30% of recipients of the opposite gender) | CER maintains a large database of regular contacts, in addition it conducted active outreach through round tables, Development Dialogue meetings, trainings, master classes etc. It is reasonable to believe that the goal has been reached. |
| Minimum 60% of recommendations are reflected in policy decisions  | Overall, it would be superficial to build a linear connection between the recommendations and decisions. CER self-monitoring identifies a number of cases that are discussed in the report.  |
| Minimum 70 dissemination and outreach events conducted | Results and Resources Framework mentions 50 events instead. Data shows that around 70 events have been conducted.  |
| Training sessions on modern methods of policy analysis conducted for more than 180 trainees (that include at least 30% of participants of the opposite gender)  | Training events included master classes, training sessions in the Oliy Majlis and joint trainings with the Chamber of Commerce. More than 180 trainees took part at the sessions.  |

1. **Building Public Awareness about the New Stage of Reform in Uzbekistan as well as promoting the Uzbek development model within South-South Cooperation modality**

One of the purposes of the UNDP SMART Project was to foster a more participatory policy dialogue that could give a voice to the interests and concerns of broad groups of population outside of the usual policy circles. This part of CER’s work primarily implied effective use of its existing communications infrastructure and expanding into new areas of outreach (e.g. strengthening CER’s position in “south-south” networks).

The stakeholders are unanimous about relevance of monthly “Economic Review” magazine, which served as a main tool for wide outreach. Most view it as the only publication of adequate quality that provides analytical content for broader audiences. At the same time, some stakeholders noted several issues related to its affordability and accessibility. Opinions about the optimal percentage of analytical and business content vary, whereas a target of 15% of analytical vs. 85% of business content was set as part of the journal’s business-oriented strategy. The figures contained in the project document directed the content of the magazine towards business circles, which might have been among the factors behind the increase of its popularity. Meanwhile, a greater extent of flexibility is warranted to meet the evolving needs and expectations of its readership. In line with this, currently there is trend towards more analytical content.

The project was unable to launch the Uzbek version of the magazine in light of the high cost of its production and resource intensity of this endeavor. Quality control of the Uzbek version would also be an issue that would require recruitment of additional staff. As a partial solution, CER could start with a pilot section of its e-version of the Economic Review and, optionally, publish the most successful and resonating materials in the printed version. Another practice that may prove its effectiveness is strengthening cooperation with other local media editions in Uzbek language that could translate and publish selected articles from the Economic Review.

Visibility events, including roundtable discussions, seminars and workshops, organized by CER on a regular basis were well attended and usually attracted a large number of participants from the expert community. Most events organized by CER were participatory, organized in an inclusive manner as a discussion platform.

Importantly, CER developed an active outreach with the private sector through various means. Its work on the Business Environment Index (which started before the project, but continued during the period of its implementation) brings together inputs from over 1000 entrepreneurs in the country. In Uzbekistan, this was a pioneer work in applied econometrics in analysis of business environment. Since then, several government agencies launched their own similar indices (for example the State Competition Committee). Although the stakeholders highlighted some problems with the timing of data release, their overall assessment of the exercise has been very positive. The index was also used for further research – for example, the Chamber of Commerce analyzed its correlation with various other economic trends.

Development Focus publications were also instrumental to facilitate CER’s outreach to the international community. CER produced over 30 one-pagers during the time span of the project. One-pagers were useful for engaging the Uzbekistan-based international organizations, their international network and the wider network of international partners. Participation of the CER staff at the international conferences usually implied distribution of relevant one-pagers.

Besides CER’s own media outlet, the Centre worked actively with the local media, distributing press releases on the results of major research initiatives, conducting training for journalists and occasionally involving communications experts in the research teams.

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| **Some key outputs and project performance targets for 2013-2015** | **Status of implementation** |
| 36 issues of Economic Review magazine published in Russian language with 15% of analytical and 85% of business oriented content. | 12 issues of Economic Review were published per year, so during the original Project timeline 36 issues were produced. In 2016 the practice continued although some delays were experienced. The content is approx. 25% analytical and 75% business.  |
| 12 issues of Economic Review magazine published (on quarterly basis) in Uzbek language with 20% of analytical and 80% of business oriented content. | Not implemented, although it is still in plans. It is difficult to find quality translators and editors.  |
| The number of subscribers of Economic Review magazine increased by 100% by 2015. | No data on magazine subscriptions is available for the original project timeline, however, in 2016 subscriptions increased 3-fold. |
| 72 issues of digest of foreign press published. | 72 digests of foreign media were produced. The practice was discontinued in May 2016. |
| Minimum 7 outreach products developed. | At least five new outreach products were developed including info-graphics, blogs, website (mezon.uz), timeline, Transformation blog.  |
| At least 45 visibility and outreach events conducted including series of “Development Dialogue”.  | During the implementation of the project CER conducted at least 9 Development Dialogues.  |
| At least 10 publications in foreign mass media made. | 9 publications were made in the foreign media. |
| At least 45 research One-or-Two-pagers produced reaching extended audience. | Over 30 One-Pagers and Two-pagers were produced. |
| Training sessions on mass media development conducted for more than 120 trainees (that include at least 30% of participants of the opposite gender). | Extensive trainings to the mass media were conducted for over 120 trainees. |

1. **Institutional and financial sustainability of CER is strengthened**

With the partnership between UNDP and CER spanning for over a decade, an issue of institutional and financial sustainability comes to the forefront in the SMART Project. In fact, sustainability challenge is one thing that CER has in common with most think tanks in developing and transition countries. The issues of institutional and financial sustainability are closely interlinked and improving a think tank sustainability profile would usually be a function of several factors, including: its capacity to deliver policy analysis (directly depending on the human resources), sound financial management, as well as accountability mechanism.

The SMART project suggested addressing the issues of sustainability through a series of measures including, but not limited to: pursuing innovative strategic partnerships with various groups of stakeholders (including through more structured approach such as MOUs), resource mobilization strategy, communications strategy and documenting the policy changes that materialized as a result of Project’s advice and support.

CER continued building on its unique relationship with the Government of Uzbekistan. Its substantive contribution is greatly valued by many ministries.

With UNDP support, CER managed to build a rather solid reputation of a modern public policy think tank, a credible partner and, in many senses, a pioneer. During the implementation of the project, CER’s partnership base significantly expanded. Two projects were implemented jointly with the World Bank, including a first of its kind joint project with UNDP and World Bank on energy subsidies in 2015. CER became a partner of ESCAP for official launch of its annual report. Besides, one project (on urbanization in Central Asia) was implemented jointly. A number of projects were implemented with various parts of UNDP (including, for instance, collaboration on aid for trade). JICA office in Tashkent financed the printing of Economy of Uzbekistan statistics digest. Importantly, SMART Project received a significant Government cost-sharing contribution. Overall, CER has been successful with the resource mobilization and its current capacity and reputation open numerous additional opportunities. The experience of 2016 showed that the unclear situation in the core budget significantly undermines its ability to attract additional resources even when the opportunities abide.

The project recommended CER to create synergies with other think tanks. Indeed, as it has been earlier indicated CER pursued an active strategy of engagement of other think tanks in Uzbekistan and abroad. Sometimes, the regular tool that CER used for such engagement (survey) was not adequate to solicit interests from other knowledge institutions in Uzbekistan.

CER Communication Strategy was designed to ensure good visibility of its products and services while employing individual approach to each target group. Despite the ability to maintain a positive image, there are areas with significant room for improvement. On the one hand, the core research products – policy papers and briefs – are well communicated to the government and other stakeholders through outreach events or mailing lists. On the other hand, beyond the regular dissemination challenges, availability and accessibility of certain products becomes an issue. Many stakeholders pointed out that it was very difficult to purchase the products they were interested in. For instance, some printed publications are hard to buy and the purchase involves excessive paperwork. Development Resource Center & Library (DRCL) is open only during office hours which limits access of most potential client groups.

A series of meetings with CER staff and external partners, and a review of available background materials helped identify some issues pertaining to communication. For instance, Communication Strategy does not seem to evolve and adapt to the changes in the external environment. In the short run, the risk of adverse effect on CER’s image is minimal, but the Center could miss some important opportunities. This reflects in some of the CER’s products. CER’s website is one of such examples: at the moment of writing of the report blogs appear to be offline. Hence, despite the abundance of high quality content, many stakeholders were unaware of any interactive features of CER’s website.

Currently, there are no qualified staff-members to work on the CER’s image and render much-needed support to research coordinators in terms of partnership building and resource mobilization. Building this capacity will require some time. Meanwhile, entrusting a CER specialist with public relations was a forced but rational step. At this point, the newly recruited specialists can perform less complex PR related duties – like site content update, basic coverage of events and maintenance of contacts with local media – and provide nominal assistance to research and editorial staff. Understaffed Project is unable to tackle resource mobilization. CER’s image is one of the few remaining entry points. To this end, image supporting and visibility activities can indirectly support access to funding.

Generally, the project seems to have advanced on most of the activities related to the institutional and financial sustainability, including fostering new partnerships, attracting additional resources, implementing communications strategy and building the evidence of successful policy impact. However, the project did not provide clear guidance on how exactly all these measures should be related to sustainability. For example, partnerships are very important for Centre’s work, but don’t guarantee its sustainability; unpredictability in core funding can easily jeopardize efforts of attracting additional non-core funds. Whilst the key outputs selected by the project seem to be related to Centre’s sustainability, they are not informed by a broader vision. The project accountability framework under Activity Result 3 included many areas that were not directly relevant to the institutional and financial sustainability. Moving forward, it is important to better define sustainability and select the key elements and indicators for measuring advancement in the next period of collaboration. The factors of sustainability may include financial (such as percent of government contribution and percent of funds raised) as well as strategic (such as inclusion in various policy processes at national and international levels). Experience of various think tanks in Asia can be used to define the sustainability objectives for the next stage of cooperation.

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| **Some key outputs and project performance targets for 2013-2015** | **Status of implementation** |
| Updated CER Communications strategy 2013-2015 implemented.  | Communications strategy was implemented; detailed comments provided above. |
| Vision for CER development strategy beyond 2015 formulated. | Scenarios for CER development were built, however, the vision document has not been formulated. |
| At least 4 knowledge management initiatives developed and launched. | More than 4 knowledge management initiatives have been launched including Teamworks, knowledge space on national strategic visions – Looking Beyond the Horizon (including a database in CD format), Intranet; a number of internal initiatives included Global Expert Database as a part of the Intranet, training for CER employees and newcomers on the logical framework approach. |
| At least 20 research projects are implemented via project-based financing modality, minimum 700K attracted using such modalities as cost-sharing, parallel financing, grant financing and sub-contract.  | Most research projects were implemented in synergy with various UNDP projects (Transformative Social Protection – funded by UNDP PTTF; Portrait of an Entrepreneur, Assessment of sustainable financing options for the national HIV response in Uzbekistan, national MDG reports, etc.). Additional research projects included collaboration with the World Bank, JICA. |
| At least 20 research projects are implemented within revenue oriented activity framework while some of them include analysis of gender empowerment issues. | Some activities were implemented as a service to other projects – such as infographics. In addition, a number of marketing reviews have been conducted.  |
| Local network of research institutions – Development Research Consortium (DRC) – is established. | The concept for collaboration of various research institutions has been mooted, but the DRC has not been established.  |

1. **Cross-cutting issues**

*South-South Cooperation (SSC):* SSC on became one of the cross-cutting areas of the SMART project. The new priority set by the project document of positioning the CER within the South-South networks got a limited traction in the implementation phase. CER contributed original ideas for the Uzbekistan’s vision on South-South Cooperation[[6]](#footnote-6). Besides, it engaged Southern partners for collaboration on some areas of its substantive agenda: including the vide Southern network of the UNRISD that became its partner in the project on transformative social protection; it also traditionally participated in the meetings of the network of Asian think tanks. Participation in the regional initiatives (e.g. Urbanization in Central Asia) also made a contribution in this regard. However, collaboration with Southern networks remained irregular and ad hoc. Undoubtedly, this is an out-of-ordinary task for an Uzbek think tank. Uzbekistan does not have deep roots in the “global south”; it is not a member of G77 and does not have a “southern” identity. The discovery of the opportunities offered by the Global South is primarily driven by the rise of China and resulting eastward orientation of the Government of Uzbekistan. In this sense, the initial steps made by the CER in the past years can become a good basis for building more systematic engagement with relevant networks in the global south. It could not only enrich it substantively, but also enlarge the range of services offered by the Centre as well as potential finding sources. Box 2 contains some selected examples of Southern networks potentially relevant for CER work.

**Box 2: Selected examples of Southern Networks relevant to CER work:**

*Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals (Southern Voice)[[7]](#footnote-7)* is a network of 48 thinks tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which serves as an open platform to make contributions to the international discourse on what should succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Southern Voice initiative addresses the existing “knowledge asymmetry” and “participation deficit” in the ongoing post-MDG debate by disseminating evidence-based policy analyses by researchers from countries of the Global South. All members of the network are or at some point were awardees of the multi-donor Think Tank Initiative (TTI). One of Southern Voice’s core activities since its inception in June 2012 has been facilitating the generation of original research studies by Southern experts on various aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, such as the missing dimensions of the MDGs, ways to mitigate previously encountered challenges in delivering on aspired goals, and new issues, goals, targets and indicators that are crucial for the next global development framework. The current Chair of the Steering Committee of the Southern Voice is Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow from the
Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh.

*Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST)[[8]](#footnote-8)* is a largely informal network established to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks to collaboratively generate, systematize, consolidate and share knowledge on South-South Cooperation (SSC) approaches in international development. The Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) was established on the sidelines of the first high-level meeting (HLM) of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) in Mexico in April 2014, and as a follow-up to the Conference of Southern Providers held in Delhi in April 2013. The network has committed itself to ‘generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South−South co-operation (SSC) approaches to international development’. A collaborative initiative for the South by the South, NeST is primarily a think tank and academic forum that provides policy inputs into the arena of SSC. NeST welcomes inputs from a diversity of Southern stakeholders, through the open engagement of governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), private sector institutions and various Southern practitioners, to contribute towards creating a unified understanding and framework for debates around SSC.

T20:[[9]](#footnote-9) The Think-20 was initiated by the Mexican G20 presidency. The first Think-20 meeting took place in February 2012 in Mexico City, where think tank representatives from 15 countries came together to discuss the Mexican G20 Presidency in the run-up to the leaders' meeting in Los Cabos. It was later picked up by Russian, Turkish and Chinese presidencies of G20 respectively. The T20 events organized in China also featured participation by the think tanks from non-G20 member countries. The Think-20 is not an advocacy platform that campaigns around specific issues, nor does it seek to negotiate an agreed set of recommendations on the issues to be progressed. Instead, the Think-20 serves as an "ideas bank" for G20. For this purpose, T20 organizes the analysis of global think tanks and high-level experts in order to provide analytical depth to ongoing G20 discussions and produce ideas to help the G20 on delivering concrete and sustainable policy measures. In 2017 one main concern for the German presidency of G20 is “to make progress on realising the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change”[[10]](#footnote-10). Even though this is not a Southern-led process as such, it involves many relevant Southern think tanks in the work of issues that are of direct relevance to CER.

*Gender:* Gender was another cross-cutting element of the SMART project, with gender-related indicators appearing under all activities of the project accountability framework. Gender issues are mentioned in relations to the project beneficiaries, thematic focus of CER’s substantive work as well as partnership building. Attention given to gender shows the importance attached to its mainstreaming in UNDP programming. However, the choice of objective was such that mainstreaming appears to be an end in itself, rather than a strategy for promoting gender equality. An emphasis on the gender of the CER beneficiaries might have influenced an overall awareness by CER staff in selecting trainees etc. However, the project did not explicitly promote substantive collaboration between UNDP and CER on the gender issues. At the same time, some collaboration took place. For example, the infographics produced by CER on the “Portraits of a Businesswoman” built on CER’s expertise in this area.

1. **Brief Analysis of Evaluation Criteria**

The expected CP Outcome of the SMART Project is: “Capacity of the central and local authorities enhanced to develop and implement economic and social security policies aimed at welfare improvement of vulnerable groups”. Besides, the project aimed at supporting CER in “facilitating economic, social institutional and spatial transformation in Uzbekistan”. This section analyzes contribution of the project towards the strategic outcomes. Overall, the evidence collected during the evaluation shows that through SMART, UNDP has been doing the right things, and has been, largely, doing things right in achieving of its strategic objectives of strengthening government capacity in critical areas.

**Relevance:** The relevance of this project can be assessed from the point of view of its role in support of Government priorities, as well as UNDP programmatic objectives in Uzbekistan. Knowledge and innovation are key to country’s transformation as well as to Government’s capacity to guide the transformation process. Uzbekistan was ranked 95th in the World Bank Institute’s Knowledge Economy Index[[11]](#footnote-11) in 2012, particularly in view of the relatively low “economic and institutional regime to provide incentives for the efficient use of existing and new knowledge”. In general, think tanks are among stakeholders that are expected to play a significant role in the rise of knowledge economy. In this sense, the SMART project played important role in continuing the long-standing partnership with CER and supporting its unique role in policy research, policy dialogue and advocacy.

Activities of the project were greatly appreciated by many parts of Government, as having an important strategic impact. The project’s strategy focused on transformation was in line with the government vision expressed in the Welfare Improvement Strategy.

The project was also in line with the priorities of the CPAP with its focus on capacity and inclusive policy processes. Finally, the project had a particular relevance in the process of localizing the MDGs and developing the country’s position on post-2015 activities, policies and events. Through the project, UNDP has been doing the right thing, making a tangible contribution to the quality of the policy processes in the country.

As the evaluation was underway during the peak of the presidential campaign in Uzbekistan, the authors of the report could observe the demand for CER products (many of them produced during the project) by stakeholders in the government, private sector and Oliy Majlis.

Similar to the previous phases of UNDP cooperation with CER, the SMART project is expected to have a lingering relevance on the policy processes in Uzbekistan, as the demand for policy research is expected to increase.

**Effectiveness:** The effectiveness of the SMART Project was assessed looking at how many objectives in its Results and Resources Framework have been achieved. Besides, the evaluation looked at how effectively the project contributed to enhancing government capacity. On this basis, the project was found to have been effective. Overall, the project was able to implement most of the outputs from its Results and Resource Framework and did reach the targets set on many indicators. In some cases, scaling up has taken place (in view of government demand and available capacity at the Centre) and in those instances results were above target; only in limited cases results proved to be below expectation.

In view of the project’s overarching focus on producing good quality policy outputs, one of the major indicators of project effectiveness is the uptake of the policy recommendations by the government and legislature. Although this process is not linear and difficult to monitor, self-monitoring by the Centre identifies a large number of cases where the policy recommendations had a direct influence in the government policy. Information presented in the CER’s monitoring on the uptake of policy recommendations has been generally confirmed by a number of stakeholders. Even the stakeholders that put in doubt quality or relevance of some CER products, highlighted the effectiveness of its model for building consensus and advocacy.

Most research projects indeed included communications and advocacy component. Its advocacy work was important for introducing MDGs into the national debate and raise a number of important issues for Uzbekistan’s development, including energy efficiency of buildings, trade regime etc. Most research projects were supported by the advocacy events, including thematic round tables, articles, as well as targeted engagement with the Oliy Majlis.

One of the areas where the effectiveness of the project (in terms of its contribution to the government capacity) is evident is the localization and the implementation of the international development goals in Uzbekistan. For example, its contribution to policy analysis significantly increased Uzbekistan’s ownership of Millennium Development Goals and informed its position on some areas of the Agenda 2030.

CER’s unique working model (see box 1) promoted the culture of coordination across government and non-governmental sectors – from identification of the problem, to facilitating collaborative work on identification of solutions to building joint strategies for action.

The question remains to what extent the project benefited the vulnerable groups in Uzbekistan, and the opinions differ.

**Efficiency:** Project efficiency was assessed as a measure of how resources were used for achieving the outputs and the extent to which funding was effectively used. The evaluation did not address the issues related to administrative efficiency. The main question asked was whether different type of interventions could achieve similar results at lower costs.

It is difficult to assess the project efficiency, as the project budget provides very general figures. ATLAS reporting on results was very good in the first part of the project implementation, but later became much less detailed, making it difficult to connect resources to results.

At the macro level, the project has been effective. It has an overall operational budget of USD 1.850.000 USD for a period of 3 years. It was later extended for 2016 with a government contribution of over USD 400.000. This was the largest proportion of Government co-financing in a UNDP project. Data on the total amount of CER funding is not available, but all stakeholders indicated that the project provided the bulk of Centre’s resources. Overall, the project annual budget remains relatively low (even though it is difficult to access data on the annual budget of the think tanks in similar category, most operate on larger budget). The project not only attracted government co-financing, but also mobilized significant additional resources.

The project undertook an audit and following the audit recommendation, the project implemented a number of measures to streamline financial management and enhance sustainability (e.g. support staff transitioned to government contracts).

The project showed good results on value for money; for example, it produced on average approximately 16 major reports and various other policy products with the annual budget slightly above USD 600.000. The project management paid attention to efficiency. The scheme by which government officials could take part in research project receiving remuneration provided the project access to data and information, while ensuring efficiency. Some government officials participated in the research projects on pro-bono basis.

The comparison of budget allocated per year and the outputs achieved provide evidence that resources were used efficiently. As indicated earlier, in some cases, CER produced more products than initially envisioned by the project document.

**Sustainability:** With institutional and financial sustainability of CER being one of the focus areas of the SMART project, the issue has already been discussed above. The analysis under this evaluation criterion therefore mainly concerns the extent to which activities of the project had catalytic effects as well as the future of support to CER.

The long-term sustainability of the “support to transformation” in general, and the role of think tanks and CER in particular depends on the policy directions by the Government of Uzbekistan. As maintaining financial stability, diversifying the economy and creating jobs will remain high on the national political agenda, the country will require good quality policy analysis.

The monitoring of uptake of policy recommendations conducted by CER indicated 11 cases where recommendations from the earlier times were adopted in 2016. It is therefore reasonable to expect that a number of policy recommendations will be adopted in the future. Active engagement of numerous public and private institutions in research projects of CER will ensure further catalytic effect from project’s work.

CER enjoys great level of support by various government institutions – showing the strength of its institutional position within the government. Existing and future research products by CER will continue to be in high demand among government practitioners and policy-makers. During the time of implementation of SDGs, the Centre’s institutional relevance as a platform for cross-sectoral collaboration can further grow.

CER has great potential to attract additional resources, however, it requires some degree of predictability in core funding to ensure effective resource mobilization. Experience of various think tanks shows that attracting funding is related to strategic planning and building coalitions around the same strategic goals. This aspect has so far been largely overlooked within CER.

The Centre attracted a solid team of talented professionals, with complimentary skills, allowing it to deliver research on various subjects.

Financial sustainability of the Centre is a major challenge. In 2016 the project extension was fully financed by the Government. The management of CER took measures to ensure the leaner structure of the SMART project, shifting some costs not directly related to research towards direct government co-financing.

Prioritizing a number of quick wins, UNDP has a potential to take CER to a new level of sustainability. Additional attention should be given to for-profit activities (online sales of the CER products, sales of the magazine, etc.) to further advance financial sustainability.

It is also important to have a holistic approach towards sustainability – e.g. making sure that the measures geared towards better financial management at the same time ensure talent retention and institutional positioning of CER.

1. **Conclusions and Recommendations**

SMART Project carried forward a unique relationship that UNDP established with CER. Besides the direct outputs of the project: good quality policy research, greater inclusiveness of public policy formulation process and a set of measures improving CER’s sustainability, the project also improved UNDP’s insight into the policy process in Uzbekistan. In addition, the project emphasized the value of knowledge in learning in the policy process. While CER clearly positioned itself as an insider of the policy process in Uzbekistan, prioritizing policy relevance, it also kept reasonable degree of objectivity. The project continued testing the concept of a “think tank” in Uzbekistan’s context, demonstrating the value of independent knowledge, consensus building and diffusion of knowledge to influence public discourse and government priorities. As the policy process in Uzbekistan faces new challenges of increasingly complex economy, this concept can be in great demand.

This section provides recommendations to UNDP on the basis of analysis of the project results and lessons learnt. In relations to the future collaboration, the recommendations focus on improving relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. In view of the internal nature of the assessment, the recommendations are primarily directed to UNDP:

It is recommended that the project continues beyond its current phase, in view of the positive results, unrealized potential for collaboration between UNDP and CER, particularly in the context of the implementation of SDGs and the need for a policy think tank at the current stage of Uzbekistan’s reforms. The next stage of collaboration will however require a change in focus. The collaboration can build on the achievements of the CER during the SMART project, among other things, consolidation of its position as a policy platform for multi-stakeholder and cross-sector cooperation. The new stage of collaboration will, need to take CER to the next level, particularly in relation to a clearly defined sustainability model. Current staff of the CER sustain the school of thought that enabled the Centre’s trademark multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to analytical tasks; it will be important to retain the talent, while also creating opportunities for young people (e.g. traineeship). Below are selected recommendations on the particular aspects of the future collaboration:

*Position CER within the SDG implementation/monitoring framework:* CER was an active participant of the MDG monitoring in Uzbekistan. Its analytical support was highly appreciated by the Government. The MDG Report 2015[[12]](#footnote-12) was the result of the work conducted throughout the duration of the SMART project. The inclusive and participatory format of its implementation demonstrated the strength of the CER’s modality of work. Such inclusive modality would be well fit for the follow up and review process of the new Agenda 2030. First of all, the SDG framework is much more complex, with the total of 230 indicators, not only requiring significant work on data collection, but also opening up opportunities for analysis of nexus or tradeoffs between various goals and targets. In addition, the reporting process currently lacks clarity on such issues as reporting modalities and connection between reporting at global, regional and national level.

In this context there is a need for innovative approaches on the follow up and review process, and therefore think tanks are broadly recognized as a catalyst for analysis and innovation in the context of the SDG framework. UNDP can build upon the cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder approach of the CER to address challenges of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals.

The first challenge for UNDP will be to ensure Uzbekistan’s effective participation in the formal intergovernmental mechanism. CER could be called upon to provide specific suggestions on Mainstreaming and Acceleration of SDGs; on devising specific policies to ensure their implementation; on the interaction of various SDGs and considerations of sequencing/prioritization that follow from this; on Uzbekistan’s role in SDG 17 — both to take into account the impact of other countries’ actions on the policy space available to Uzbekistan; and to consider international externalities, public goods (examples include climate change, social spillovers and the transboundary water issue), and work with other countries as a responsible member of the international community. CER can play a significant role in preparing the National Voluntary Reviews at the ECOSOC HLPF and, possibly, contribute to the thematic reviews and participate at various HLPF multi-stakeholder initiatives.

Besides, CER could play a significant role in encouraging public debate on the SDGs, using its communication infrastructure and ability to promote public dialogue. It will be important for building ownership of the SDGs and their public brand recognition and awareness. It could also be instrumental in linking the national discourse on development priorities to the discourse on the SDGs. The Centre can also conduct additional policy research on various areas that are relevant for Uzbekistan and beyond: this particularly related to the SDG17 on global development partnership to discuss how Uzbekistan and the broader region are affected by the external stakeholders.

*Identify strategic focus areas:* In countries hosting numerous think tanks (such as US or the Republic of Korea) only a few number of think tanks have an agenda covering a broad and diverse range of issues; most think tanks are highly specialized. Currently, CER has broad focus on social, economic and institutional transformation. The broad focus allowed CER addressing a wide range of research topics and meet demand from its diverse clients. At the same time, lack of clearly identified and communicated flagship initiatives contributed to the perception of fragmentation of efforts among some stakeholders.

Given the wide range of demands from the Government, CER needs to keep an open approach towards its research agenda. At the same time, as it prepares to collaborate (and compete) globally, it will require stronger specialization for effective positioning. This is largely in line with the global, and particularly Asian trend, as “think tanks are embracing specialization as a means of distinguishing themselves from the competition”[[13]](#footnote-13). Think tanks discover that greater specialization facilitates fund raising. This is particularly necessary in the context of a shift towards more project-based financing. Such increased specialization does not mean that CER should sacrifice its cross-sector approach. Nor does it imply the departure from the demand-driven model of determining CER’s policy agenda. Above all, it can imply valorizing the areas where CER has significant track record in definition of the flagships and applying an integrated and longer-term approach to research and advocacy work in these selected fields.

*Enhance synergies with UNDP country programme:* UNDP has a long history of collaboration with CER. CER’s research work and its function as a policy platform can be instrumental for UNDP in various areas. While there were numerous cases of effective collaboration between UNDP and CER on various programme areas, it has still largely been ad hoc and most projects did not mature to become “flagships” envisioned in the project document.

Potential for synergies could be identified from the outset. While the areas for potential synergies abound, it is important to define areas for joint work, based on the understanding of where such work is desirable and possible. It is also important to leave CER the freedom to operate independently in the areas where collaboration can be problematic (e.g. issues related to access to data, and other areas where joint work did not result in positive outcomes). Such differentiation is important to ensure productive collaboration, as opposed to usurpation of research agenda. CER engagement could be particularly important in the thematic areas 1, 2 and 4 of the new UNDAF[[14]](#footnote-14). CER’s contribution could potentially go beyond policy research to include collaboration on communication and advocacy (see, for example, the first recommendation on positioning CER within the work on the SDGs).

Among thematic areas, climate financing represents a new area with big potential for both synergetic work between CER and UNDP and external resource mobilization for CER. Thanks to its track record in research on green economy and the wide network with the international experts in this area, CER is well positioned in the debate on the climate financing. CER initiated the contacts with the GCF and is exploring additional work in this area. Its research can concern financing modalities, public-private partnerships, new instruments of financing, overall sustainable financing strategies (based on the CER track record in this area) and various areas related to capacity of Uzhydromet as the national designated authority.

*Upgrade CER’s communication capacity:* It is highly recommended to revisit and properly adjust CER/Project Communication Strategy on a regular basis. Among other things, there is an urgent need in bridging the communication gaps with UNDP, and the project can facilitate the work between relevant teams within UNDP country office and within CER. For instance, the Project needs to ensure better participation of relevant UNDP CO representatives at peer reviews and visibility events, as well as more active involvement of UNDP in formulating the CER research agenda. This would, to some extent, help address the issues pertaining to oversight. It will also be important to make full use of UNDP resources to seek, explore and exploit new partnerships, synergies and, of course, funding opportunities. Staff-members in charge of fundraising should work more closely with UNDP Resource Mobilization unit to better coordinate their efforts.

Public Relations could continue relying on government-funded CER staff, while the Project’s PR Specialist could have broader terms of reference to concentrate on mobilizing additional funds. Since the risk of brain-drain under such scenario – when there is a significant difference in remuneration of CER and Project staff – is much higher, project-based financing can provide incentives for better performance. Knowledge repository can further help mitigate the risk. Case-based learning modules presented as “how-to” would allow training new staff-members in a matter of weeks.

*Agree on comprehensive guidelines for research team composition and management:* It is important to make sure that all research outputs used by the government are robust and high quality. This requires strengthened process of research team selection and ensuring the consistent quality of outputs. As each research project requires from the research coordinators to work with a diverse group of practitioners, it is important to establish and clearly communicate expectations and standards of performance. Team members should also understand the existing mechanisms of quality control. In other words, it will be important to make sure that the team is composed of the people with adequate expertise and matching skillsets. The team members should also share common commitment and goals. In some cases, they should also be concerned with the disseminations of the results of their research (to make it easier for the communication team to support this aspect of the work).

The guidelines could address the basic criteria for selection of experts, as well as the role of the coordinator. It will be important to make sure that the coherent work plan is well understood by all team members. They can also address the issues of access to data and information. In addition, the guidelines may consider openness of the process – including contacts with other research institutions in Uzbekistan and abroad. The issue of incentives can also be considered.

In selected cases, UNDP can take part in the review of CER research outputs or provide quality assurance, particularly in cases where the research tackles a subject that is within UNDP’s core area of expertise, or where such expertise can be easily accessed through UNDP’s global network. It will be impossible and unreasonable to be engaged in all outputs, therefore it would be more practical to delineate a taxonomy of outputs – inter alia specifying those that would require UNDP engagement and those that would not.

*Enhance work on socio-economic data:* The discussion on the SDGs was accompanied by a call for a data revolution that will be necessary to have SDGs (with their large and complex indicator framework) implemented and monitored. The importance of data is growing.

CER’s work on data and statistics fills important voids and fosters dialogue around data quality. It is important to continue this work, particularly in the area of SDG-related indicators; and further improve data interpretation and analysis. In particular, CER can improve analytical component of its publication “Economy of Uzbekistan”. UNDP could engage CER in the dialogue on data for SDGs, including on issues related to access, capacity and resources required to strengthen statistical capacity, ways of working with non-traditional sources, etc.

Work on data is one of the areas where the integrated approach (including cooperation with the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, and the Institute of Social Research) could potentially be considered.

Previously, UNDP experienced challenges in its collaboration with CER on data. Those could potentially be addressed through the use of various proxies. Alternatively, it would be important to learn the lessons and work with CER only in jointly agreed areas of data collection and analysis.

*Adopt strategic approach to South-South Cooperation:* Strategic and substantive linkages with Southern networks could position CER within important global processes, enhance professional networks and increase demand for CER’s work. UNDP, operating through its network of country offices and regional hubs has a role to play in fostering this connection.

While CER’s work included a number of South-South initiatives, it is clear that despite the prominent reflection at the project document and the recognition of importance of SSC by CER and UNDP management, the work in this area has not reached its potential. More proactive approach will be required, that would ensure inclusion of dedicated initiatives on SSC into the new project, or allocation of appropriate resources.

The major factor contributing to renewed interest in South-South cooperation in Uzbekistan was the rise of China and increasing impact of its regional and global initiatives on the country. In view of the geo-political nature of this subject, CER limited its involvement to producing confidential briefs. There is a significant scope to scale up collaboration with think tanks in China and beyond, through facilitation by relevant UNDP offices. Southern networks, such as Southern Voices on Post-2015 not only provide opportunity for networking and substantive collaboration, but also potentially open avenues for obtaining additional financing. Some information on the relevant networks is provided in Box 2.

At the technical level, engagement in SSC can be mutually beneficial for Uzbekistan as well as for its cooperating partners. At the strategic level, it could help Uzbekistan be a part of global coalitions, addressing various issues.

As a staunch advocate for Uzbekistan’s engagement in the SSC, CER will be in a good position to become an implementing agency for knowledge sharing projects with other countries. Some of such projects could be tested by UNDP under triangular cooperation arrangements.

*Define sustainability:* To become sustainable CER will need to be able to sustain itself financially, continue producing valuable work that remains relevant in the changing national context and survive over time.

Sustainability of the Centre will therefore depend on the number of factors including demand for its research and effective use of its policy recommendations, solid team, good financial management and appropriate accountability mechanism (allowing CER sufficient independence while maintaining its policy influence). While there could be no universal agreement on what sustainability should mean, defining a medium-term vision is possible. Such vision would contain a financial model that the Centre could adopt in the coming years, as well as its delivery model and provisions to retain its position in the national policy processes.

Having such vision would allow prioritizing activities that are indeed key for sustainability. There is a number of quick wins in this regard. CER could regularly monitor all available information sources for grant opportunities, calls for proposals, competitions and program documents with potential entry points. “Donor audit” – regular profiling of donor agencies should become a routine. These profiles containing strategies, program documents, project portfolio, proposal templates and other relevant materials could help design a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy and provide better precision when approaching the donors. CER could develop a custom-tailored training on resource mobilization for junior research, public relations and other support staff. Along with theory, the module should include demonstration cases, project proposal templates, samples of letters, etc. Practical exercises could involve drafting proposals on real research projects to various donor agencies. Such approach can help building effective task forces, where research staff is responsible for the main content, methodology and other research related sections; operations – for budgeting, logistics, etc.; PR / Resource Mobilization specialist – for justification, visibility, compliance and general polishing of the proposal. CER should more actively involve representatives of donor agencies in its visibility events and dialogue mechanisms. Direct or indirect coverage of donor activities and their best-practices in Economic Review, targeted dissemination of relevant products and/or publications, and regular informing and updates are some of the tools that can help maintain good contacts with the donors.

CER should look into more convenient ways of selling their publications and products. This is particularly relevant in light of wider proliferation of online services – like e-libraries – and payment systems. Some of the options to consider are app stores, virtual libraries, paid subscription, and mobile payment options, e.g. an ability to buy an e-version of Economic Review from an app store or order a hardcopy using a smartphone and paying through Click or Paynet. Another option is to make arrangements with bookstores, supermarkets and any other networks which could facilitate sales of publications.

In terms of other revenue-generating activities, CER could consider developing and offering various paid training modules and courses, including training for trainers. Most Research Coordinators have teaching experience and excellent public speaking skills, and could use them for delivering courses and open lectures. The latter can serve as an image-strengthening tool or samplers of available paid training programs.

Annexes

Annex 1: TOR

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|  | **UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME****TERMS OF REFERENCE** |

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| **I. Job Information** |
| Position Title: Project Title:Department:Type of Contract:Duration of the service:Work Status:Duty station:Reports To: | International Consultant (Project Evaluator of ‘SMART’ project)“Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation” (SMART, Project ID: 00083822)Economic Governance UnitIndividual ContractNovember 2016 (15 days, tentative)* 5 w. d. desk work in country of residence (Nov 7 - 11, 2016)
* 5 w. d. mission to Tashkent (Nov 14-18, 2016);
* 5 w. d. desk work in country of residence (Nov 21-25, 2016);

Full timeHome based and Tashkent city, UzbekistanHead of Sustainable Development Cluster |

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| **II. Background Information**  |
| Established by a presidential decree as a joint initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP in 1999, Center for Economic Research (CER) is one of the leading national think tanks of Uzbekistan. CER has been mandated to provide economic analyses, assessments, forecasts and policy advice, to facilitate dialogue and build broad consensus over socio-economic reform agenda and development in Uzbekistan. The Decree also specified that the establishment of CER was a joint initiative of UNDP and the Government where UNDP’s role was to provide technical assistance in institutional development of CER with particular focus on elaboration of a new modality for management and financing of applied economic research. Over the years the thematic scope of CER research and policy advice has significantly broadened going far beyond purely economic issues and including a broader range of development issues such as governance and spatial development, energy and environment, social protection and food security, civil society and corporate governance development. Nowadays CER serves as a unique platform for broad policy consultations and dialogue involving various development stakeholders on a wide range of complex issues related to social, economic and institutional transformation. It is an inviting platform for scientists, practitioners, economists, sociologists, lawyers, journalists as well as for civil servants, private sector representatives, international experts and consultants. The Support to Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation (SMART) is a latest joint initiative between the Government of Uzbekistan and UNDP in support of institutional strengthening of CER. The SMART project has aimed to support CER in facilitating economic, social, institutional and spatial transformation in Uzbekistan while expanding research areas thematically and geographically, promoting participatory policy dialogue, issuing wider range of products for various types of audience and facilitating “South-South” knowledge sharing. In particular, the project’s activities were focused on the following three directions: 1) Elaborating policy recommendations with the participation of all stakeholders to facilitate economic, social, institutional and spatial transformation; 2) Building public awareness about the new stage of reform in Uzbekistan as well as promoting the Uzbek development model within “South-South” cooperation modality; and 3) Strengthening institutional and financial sustainability of CER.In light of the upcoming closure of the project in December 2015, UNDP project implementation procedures require that SMART should undergo an external evaluation to take stock of the project’s progress, its successes and weaknesses. The results of the evaluation will be used to provide the project stakeholders with an unbiased outcome-level assessment of project results, while also providing lessons learned and directions for a possible next-stage cooperation framework between UNDP and the government in the area of evidence-based policy making. In this regard, UNDP needs the service of an external evaluator to conduct the assessment of the SMART project results and formulate recommendations on exploring the new avenues of cooperation between the government, CER, and UNDP. |

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| **III. Duties and Responsibilities** |
| The International Consultant will work under the general guidance of the Head of Economic Governance Unit and direct supervision of Programme Coordinator. The Consultant’s main mission will consist of the following duties and responsibilities:* To conduct an impartial and expert assessment of the outcome-level results of UNDP’s cooperation with CER under SMART project
* Provide a review of achieved results and lessons learned against the expected targets, outputs and indicators laid down in the project document
* Meet with and gather substantive feedback from project stakeholders, including among the SMART/CER’s key beneficiaries both on the project’s impact and SMART/CER’s role and contribution to economic and social research and policy development. The stakeholders’ groups should consist of:
	+ Government Agencies (ie, Office of the President, ministries and agencies)
	+ Academic and research community (ie, national research institutions, academia)
	+ International Community (ie, IFIs, donors, UN agencies, bilateral cooperation agencies, etc.)
* Assess the project’s contribution to the progress made in support of policy analysis and policy formulation to accelerate reform process in Uzbekistan in social, economic, institutional, and spatial transformation
* Assess the degree to which the policy formulation process has been carried out through participatory dialogue and policy communication with the stakeholders
* Evaluate the extent to which SMART project has contributed to institutional and financial sustainability of CER
* Assess the degree to which the resources and funding for the above project directions have been used effectively and efficiently, by providing an analysis of lessons learned
* Assess how effectively the knowledge base, information technology, and communication means (ie, social media, web blogs, regular publications, Development Dialogues, etc.) are being used to expand the outreach and knowledge-sharing by CER
* Based on the recommendations and feedback from the stakeholders, propose an outline of a conceptual framework (new project concept) for cooperation with the think tanks under a new UNDP project in support of national research capacities for evidence-based policy making (including but not limited to planning for national SDGs, as well as cooperation with new emerging initiatives, eg, with the Green Climate Fund)
* Present and discuss the findings and recommendations to UNDP, and beneficiaries
* Review and elaborate the comments presented with regard to the daft final report
* Review and incorporate the inputs provided by UNDP and stakeholders into the final report
* Provide quality assurance and ensure timely submission of the final evaluation report in a format agreed by UNDP
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| **IV. Deliverables and Deadlines** |
| The following tentative schedule of deliverables is expected under the current assignment. The Economic Governance Unit of UNDP Uzbekistan reserves the right, if necessary, to amend the terms of reference of an expert upon a written agreement. The final schedule will be agreed upon in the beginning of the assignment. All deliverables should be submitted to UNDP project in electronic form by the Consultant in English.

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| **Outputs/Deliverables** | **Due date** | **Installments** |
| **Stage I:*** Background information on the project results and progress received and reviewed
* A Skype call held with UNDP CO to discuss the assignment and agree on the evaluation strategy
* Questionnaires for the meetings with project stakeholders prepared
* First draft of the evaluation report prepared and submitted to UNDP
 | November27,2015 | 1st installment(50%) |
| **Stage II:*** Mission to Tashkent completed, with meetings with the project stakeholders;
* A pre-final draft evaluation report is submitted, presented and discussed in UNDP
* Evaluation report containing in-depth outcome-level assessment of the project results, including the review and summary of stakeholders’ feedback, lessons learned, and recommendations on the next stage cooperation between the UNDP and Center for Economic Research
 | December 10,2015 | 2nd instalment(50%) |

This is a lump sum contract that should include costs of consultancy and other related costs, if any, required to produce the above deliverables.**Monitoring and control:**Contract will be completed after the submission of final drafts of deliverables defined by the current TOR in two stages and upon acceptance by the Head of Economic Governance Unit, UNDP Uzbekistan. |

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| **V. Competencies** |
| * Strong data collection, communication, analytical, research, and writing skills;
* Extensive experience in evaluating technical assistance projects in Europe and CIS region, and/or in Uzbekistan in particular;
* Experience in managing, advising, or evaluating technical assistance projects with think tanks and research institutions will be an asset;
* Knowledge and practical application of RBM principles in programme and project evaluation;
* Client-orientation and excellent interpersonal and cross cultural communication skills;
* Ability to use information and communication technology as a tool and resource.
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| **VI. Qualifications Requirements**  |
| Education: | Advanced university degree in economics, business/public administration, management, social or related studies |
| Experience: | Proved record of solid work experience minimum 3 years (or conducting minimum 5 project evaluations) in evaluating technical assistance projects in the region and/or Uzbekistan |
| Language: | Fluent English, knowledge of Russian will be an asset |

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| **VII. Signatures - Post Description Certification** |
| Incumbent *(if applicable)*Name: Signature Date |
| SupervisorName / Title: Signature Date |
| Chief Division/SectionName:  Signature Date |

Annex 2: List of Documents Consulted

Algorithms of project-based financing modality

Bhattacharya Debapriya, Ordonez Llanos Andrea, Southern Perspectives on the Post-2015 International Development Agenda, 2015

Brief Information about CER

Brief report for 2013 and inputs for CER Development Strategy for 2014–2016

Brinkerhoff Derick W., Goldsmith Arthur A, Institutional Sustainability in Agriculture and Rural Development, 1990

CER Communication Strategy 2009–2010 (framework document)

CER Communication Strategy 2011–2012

CER Development Strategy 2006–2009 (draft)

CER Development Strategy 2008–2010 (draft, October 2007)

CER Development Strategy 2013–2015 (draft)

CER Knowledge Strategy 2011–2012

CER Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015

CER Tentative policy research agenda 2011–2015

Creating a Sustainable Future for African Think Tanks in Support of SDGs and Agenda 2063, Concept Note, Third Africa Think Tank Summit

Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On establishment of the Center for Economic Research”, R-982, April 07, 1999

Echt Leandro, Communications and fundraising: a close relationship, On Think Tanks, 2016

ESCAP Annual Report 2014

Government of Uzbekistan, United Nations in Uzbekistan, United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2016-2020)

Hailu Degol, Centre for Economic Research, SPRU, Fact Finding mission, 2011

List of CER policy papers

List of CER policy briefs

List of one- and two-pagers

List of peer reviews 2015–2016

List of digests of foreign press

List of infographics

List of products, publications and services

List of web resources and additional publications

Lopez Edward, [Ranking Think Tanks: The Challenge of Specialization](http://politicalentrepreneurs.com/ranking-think-tanks-the-challenge-of-specialization/), Political Entrepreneurs, 2013

McGann [James](http://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/author/james-mcgann/), Think Tank challenge: Surviving the competition, Asia Pathways, ADB, 2013

Monitoring of CER policy recommendations 2011–2015

Nair Kavitha, How think tanks attract, engage and retain its human resources: CSTEP’s HR Unit, Politics & Ideas 2016

Polishchuk Leonid, Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan, Recommednations Towards Sustainable Development of the Centre for Economic Research 2008

Reports on PR activities 2013–2015

Sidel Mark, Quang Nam Pham, External Mid-Term Review of the Project on Strengthening the Capacity of the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA) and Recommendations to the United Nations in Vietnam for Programming to Strengthen Civil Society

SMART Project’s ATLAS Annual Project Reports 2013–2015

SRPU Tripartite Project Review Report 2009

Think Tank Initiative, Think Tank-University Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa A Synthesis Report on 10 Country Studies, 2015

Toritsyn Arkadi, Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels, Evaluation Report, 2014

UNDP Center on Economic and Social Studies (CESS) Project Document

UNDP Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan (SRPU) Project Document

UNDP Supporting Modernization, Accelerated Reform and Transformation (SMART) Project Document

Welfare Improvement Strategy of Uzbekistan 2008-2010

Welfare Improvement Strategy for Uzbekistan, 2013-2015 (WIS II)

World Bank, Building Knowledge Economies, Advanced Strategies for Development, 2007

Young John, 21st Century Think Tank, ODI 2008

Young John, Hauck Volker, Engel Paul, Final Report of the External Evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative 2013

Selected research products:

* 1. 2013/03 – Урбанизация в Центральной Азии: вызовы, проблемы и перспективы
	2. 2013/06 – Индексы деловой активности и деловой среды Узбекистана: январь-март 2013 года (текущий) и апрель-июнь 2013 года (ожидаемый)
	3. 2013/12 – Совершенствование системы управления в нефтегазовом секторе Республики Узбекистан
	4. 2014/03 – Трансформация системы социальной защиты в условиях трансформации экономики и общества
	5. 2014/13 – Формирование условий для развития среднего класса в Узбекистане: системы социальных лифтов
	6. Повышение энергоэффективности зданий в Узбекистане: направления реформ и ожидаемые эффекты
	7. Узбекский химпром на пути к 2030: фокус на опережение
	8. [Development Dialogue on "Transport and Transit in Uzbekistan and Central Asia" (Vision-2030)](https://www.facebook.com/events/662870353845462/?ref=1&action_history=%5B%7B%22surface%22%3A%22permalink%22%2C%22mechanism%22%3A%22surface%22%2C%22extra_data%22%3A%5B%5D%7D%5D)

Annex 3: List of people consulted

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| **Name** | **Title** | **Contact email** |
| *Tuesday, November 15* |
| **Center for Economic Research** (11:00) |
| Sharofiddin Nazarov | Director | sharofiddin.nazarov@cer.uz  |
| **SMART Project** (14:30) |
| Nishanbay Sirajiddinov | Senior Research Coordinator | nishanbay.sirajiddinov@cer.uz |
| Janna Fattakhova | Senior Research Coordinator | janna.fattakhova@cer.uz |
| Tal’at Shadybaev | Research Coordinator | talat.shadybaev@cer.uz  |
| Bakhtiyor Ergashev | Research Coordinator | bakhtiyor.ergashev@cer.uz |
| Khusnia Muradova | Research Coordinator | khusnia.muradova@cer.uz |
| Alisher Azamatov | Research Associate  | alisher.azamatov@cer.uz  |
| Umida Islamova | Research Associate | umida.islamova@cer.uz |
| *Wednesday, November 16* |
| **SMART Project** – meeting on RRF matrix (11:00) |
| Bekhzod Djamalov | Assistant Project Manager  | bekhzod.djamalov@undp.org  |
| **JICA** (15:00) |
| Bakhodir Mardonov | Program Officer | bakhodirmardonov.uz@jica.go.jp |
| **ISR** (16:30) |
| Tursun Akhmedov | Director | institute@isr.uz |
| **“Uzkimyosanoat” Association** |
| Farrukh Tashmatov | Head of Investment Department |  |
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| … |  |  |
| *Thursday, November 17* |
| **Ministry of Economy** (09:30) |
| Yulduz Abduganieva | Head of Department |  |
| **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (11:30) |
| Oleg Rijichenko | Head of Department for Foreign Relations | o.rijichenko@chamber.uz |
| **Oliy Majlis, Legislative Chamber** (15:00) |
| Polyante Sveshnikov | Member of the Committee on Industry, Construction and Trade |  |
| Shokhrukhjon Ismoilov | Member of the Committee on Industry, Construction and Trade |  |
| **Ministry of Finance** (16:30) |
| Ziyod Mirakhmedov | Director of Aid Coordination Department | zmirakhmedov@mf.uz |
| **Central Bank** (17:30) |
| Ilkhom Norkulov | Director of Monetary Policy Department | norqulov@cbu.uz |
| Dilbar Abduganieva | Head of Department for International Relations |  |
| *Friday, November 18* |
| **Office of the President** (14:00) |
| Avazbek Sadikov | Chief Consultant, Designated National Project Coordinator of SMART Project  |  |

1. Support to Reform Process in Uzbekistan [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Discussion at <https://www.unteamworks.org/node/453814> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ЦЭИ, Внедрение рекомендаций ЦЭИ (свод) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See <https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Uzbekistan_DPDCPUZB3_UNDAF_FNL_signed.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On establishment of the Center for Economic Research”, R-982, April 07, 1999 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.cer.uz/en/hot\_topics/1939 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See: http://southernvoice.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See http://southernthinktanks.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See http://t20germany.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See https://www.g20.org/Content/EN/Artikel/2016/11\_en/2016-11-30-g20-kernbotschaften-im-kabinett\_en.html [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge\_Economic\_Index [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/library/mdg/millennium-development-goals-report--uzbekistan-2015.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. [James McGann](http://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/author/james-mcgann/),  “Think Tank challenge: Surviving the competition” http://www.asiapathways-adbi.org/2013/08/think-tank-challenge-surviving-the-competition/ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See <https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/Uzbekistan_DPDCPUZB3_UNDAF_FNL_signed.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)