

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In response to increased requests from UN field presences for transition-related support, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) initiated a joint project in 2014 that seeks to ensure that UN transition processes are planned and managed in a proactive, gradual and integrated manner, thereby supporting the sustainability of peacebuilding achievements.
2. The project identified an overall project outcome: UN transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient with reduced transaction costs, and more effective through better support to host countries. It subsequently identified four outputs:
 - The transition process in Liberia, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire and DRC well managed including through the use of integrated coordination mechanisms, and the UN team positioned to implement medium and long-term peace consolidation activities;
 - Transition planning and management capacities of UN leadership and staff strengthened;
 - Integration of transition-related lessons and best practices into guidance; and
 - Briefings to Member States consistently include references to UN transition guidelines, principles, lessons learned, and good practices.
3. The evaluation examined the work undertaken between 2014 – 2017 and assessed:
 - i) Whether key project deliverables were met;
 - ii) The demand for integrated support to UN transition processes,
 - iii) The project infrastructure and how it supported project implementation; and
 - iv) The impact of the project on UN transition processes in priority countries, as well as at Headquarters.

Findings

4. The project is not a standard 'development' project and one of very few joint projects between UNDP, DPA, and DPKO. In its spirit and function it is thus in line with the thinking of the new Secretary-General (SG), as well as the recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO, 2015) and the Report of The Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (AGE, 2015), which call for more integrated responses across the political, security and development pillars. The project has worked on the assumption that if the three entities involved were to work together both at Headquarters and in the field, transition processes would improve and in particular to enhance the joint analytical and planning capacity in country.
5. There is empirical evidence that technical and operational support to UN transitions in the field is relevant and effective. Learning from such support has been beneficial to those involved, particularly at country level.
6. The project was timely and has helped raise awareness that support to transitions increase the likelihood that they run smoother, experience less resistance and increase sustained support to peacebuilding in country - laying the ground for future sustainable development.

7. In particular its support through Transition Specialists (TS), surge capacity and expert field visits has led to concrete results such as the elaboration of transition plans and other documents that support transitions. Such support has been catalytic in drawing attention to, and enabling the conversation on, transitions both from a planning and a programmatic perspective. Transition plans bring to the fore the critical peacebuilding gaps that result from mission drawdown or closure.
8. At times it has been challenging to find the right capacity to support countries and deploy TS in a timely manner, but the project team managed to find alternatives to ensure that support to the transition planning would not slow down. The actual placement of the TS in a country can pose a dilemma: Is the person best placed in UNDP, which given its mandate has the largest peacebuilding portfolio in country, or should this person be part of the Resident Coordinators Office who leads the UN Country Team?
9. Through its different activities the project has contributed to raising awareness and facilitating discussions on the need to start planning for transitions at an early stage and respond to or anticipate Security Council resolutions. Transition planning needs to be better aligned to, and positioned in, integrated planning processes both in terms of substance and in sequencing activities of the transition plan. This means that the TS needs to receive strategic support and buy-in from the UN leadership in country in order to succeed.
10. The organization-wide UN policy on transitions (2013) and the UNDP guidance on transitions (2014) are relevant, but need to be updated to reflect results from this project.
11. The project suffered from insufficient visibility within the three entities at Headquarters, including their leadership and the UN at large, including the Member States. The effectiveness of its information sharing with Member States needs to be improved.
12. Lessons learned documents are useful, contribute to Knowledge Management but the evaluation found limited evidence that they are effectively used or that they provide relevant information to its readers. This is partly due to an ineffective dissemination mechanism.
13. Training courses and capacity building efforts have been relevant and useful to increase transition-related expertise in the organization. They created a first level of critical mass within the UN where staff and management acquire knowledge and skills, which they can apply to improving transition planning and tackle the challenges inherent in transition planning.
14. Project implementation has been flexible and the project steering committee, in consultation with the project management team, has adapted the project to adjust to challenges and opportunities. The project management team has adequately fulfilled its tasks and has been flexible in responding to the demands from countries and Headquarters. Transition processes are, however, not limited to the three entities and the project's strategic relevance will increase if the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBSO, PBC, PBF) and the EOSG are more directly involved.
15. The advisory role of project staff and TSs have raised awareness of the complexity of UN transitions as a process (political, operational and technical) and reduced the perception that UN transitions equal a 'handover' between mission and the UNCT.

16. Gender as a concept, including a methodology to apply it to transitions, has been absent from the work. There are, however, gender sensitive elements in transition plans. There is little guidance or understanding how gender can be addressed.

Recommendations

17. SIDA has agreed to extend the project beyond the end of 2017 for another two years with the same focus and in order to ensure that integrated transition planning and management is firmly anchored in the organization in the longer term. Achieving this requires the creation of operational support to countries preparing a UN transition and ensuring that UN transition planning is integrating in policy, planning and reform processes as recently elaborated by the SG. The latter creates an important window of opportunity to enhance the strategic relevance of the work and ensure that UN transition planning will be reflected in regular UN structures and budgets.

18. On the operational side the second stage of the project needs to:

- a. Continue support to countries if and where required. In Haiti, a new two-year mission has started and support for the duration of the new mission would allow the project to collect evidence on how operational support to a transition for the entire duration of a mission can consolidate planning processes and contribute to a smoother transition.
- b. Create a talent pool of staff/consultants that can support transitions, including through rapid short-term deployment. This would reduce the time of deployment, increase the expertise levels of those deployed, and ensure more types of skills are readily available. The project should consider TS to serve several countries at a time.
- c. Expand the tool box in support of UN leadership in transition countries and reserve time to conduct research, or contribute to research, on transitions including in response to new themes that emerge from the SG's initiated reforms.
- d. Consider tailor-made trainings to a broader audience that contribute to UN transitions, including other entities that are working in country.
- e. Develop a proactive, coherent, and flexible advocacy and outreach strategy to disseminate results of the project and broaden the audience to target strategic offices in the UN, the UNCT, development partners and other interested parties. This could include UN transition notes for different audiences at different levels in the UN to increase the visibility of the project and contribute to strategic discussions. A communications strategy could help effective targeting.
- f. Given the above, UNDP needs to create a window of support to transition planning in the Strategic Policy Team in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support by increasing staff time and agree with other project partners on the human and financial resources needed and develop a cost sharing model.

19. On the strategic side the second phase of the project needs to:

- a. Review the UN Transition Policy and consider incorporating all aspects of UN transitions, including start-ups and scaling up. Consider how the EOSG office can reflect this policy in Planning Directives and strategic decision making. Review the UNDP guidance document and consider how it can be made relevant for the wider UNCT.

- b. Lobby for the anchoring of dedicated transition capacity at the strategic, as well as the operational levels, and financed through regular budget mechanisms.
- c. Undertake research and seek support to introduce gender in the project outputs and in the substance of the work on UN Transitions.
- d. Initiate discussions with UN training institutes to enable a handover of the training in order to make the training sustainable and part of the institute's curriculum. Consider how learning and support can be organized interactively among different staff and management.
- e. Explore the capturing, sharing, and use of knowledge on transitions through the development of a knowledge management strategy on transitions.
- f. Develop a communication strategy to provide UN transition information upstream to the UN EOSG, other UN strategic bodies, including those that are part of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.