

**REPORT OF MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR) FOR GOVERNANCE  
AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT SUPPORT (GEMS)  
PROJECT 2018-2022**

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## Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 MTR Purpose.....	9
1.2 Intended Use and Users of the MTR .....	10
<b>2.0 Country Context and Project Background.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1 Country Context .....	10
2.2 Project Description .....	12
<b>3.0 MTR Methodology and Process .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Overall Approach .....	15
3.2 Data collection methods and Sources.....	15
3.3 Quality assurance .....	17
3.4. Ethical considerations.....	17
3.5 Gender and Human Rights .....	18
3.6 Study limitations .....	18
<b>4.0 Mid-Term Review Findings.....</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Overview .....	19
4.2 Relevance .....	19
4.3 Project Coherence and Ownership .....	26
4.4 Effectiveness .....	28
4.5 Efficiency .....	36
4.6 Mainstreaming gender equality .....	39
4.7 Impact .....	40
4.8 Sustainability .....	42
4.9 Factors affecting performance and risks .....	42
4.10 Project Management and adaptive Management .....	46
<b>5.0 Lessons Learned.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6.0 Conclusions .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>7.0 Recommendations.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>8.0 Annexes.....</b>	<b>54</b>

## Acronyms

CA	Change Agent
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CRA	Compensation and Repatriation Authority
CTRH	Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing
EFMA	Economic Financial Management Authority
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FDs	Former Detainees
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMS	Governance and Economic Management Support
HCSS	Hybrid Court of South Sudan
HLRF	High-Level Revitalized Forum
HR	Human Resource
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITGoNU	Incumbent Transitional Government of National Unity
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MOCA	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs
MOFedA	Ministry of Federal Affairs
MOGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MOL	Ministry of Labor
MTC	Multi Service Training Center
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NDS	National Development Strategy
NPTC	National Pre-Transitional Committee
NRA	National Revenue Authority
OPP	Other Political Parties
PFM	Public Finance Management
PPC	Political Party Council
R-ARCSS	Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RTGoNU	Revitalized Government of National Unity
RCF	Rapid Credit Facility
RJMEC	Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
RSS	Republic of South Sudan
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic and Time-bound
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SRF	Special Reconstruction Fund
SSE	Special Skills Expert
SSOA	South Sudan Opposition Alliance
SSPD	South Sudan Development Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCF	United Nations Cooperation Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) South Sudan contracted two consultants to conduct a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP Project “Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS)” (August 2019 – December 2022). The Project was funded by the Government of Norway, with a total budget of USD 28,429,550. The Project was designed to support the implementation of Chapter IV (Resource, Economic and Financial Management) of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). GEMS Project aims to contribute towards setting the country on a path to sustainable peace, development and improved well/being for citizens through: a) strengthening capacity of key national institutions for effective and accountable implementation of the R-ARCSS; and b) bolstering key economic governance and accountability functions with attention to Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS, which furthers key economic and financial reforms for effective public resource management.

The purpose of the MTR was to assess: a) whether the project as originally formulated can achieve the intended results in the time remaining, and b) whether a strategic capacity injection focusing on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms) is advisable given the current time constraint. The review covered the period from August 2019 to July 2021. The intended users of the findings and recommendations are UNDP South Sudan, Government of Norway (donor), the RTGoNU of South Sudan, national partners and other stakeholders.

### **MTR methodology and process**

The MTR used a mixed-methods approach involving the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The main sources of data were i) interviews with 42 stakeholders from UNDP; government, donor, project staff, SSEs, and other partners); ii) national and project documents, Framework Agreements and other Specific Project Agreements, publication and relevant literature; iii) UNDP Project financial data; and iv) observations made during the visit to targeted institutions.

**Limitations:** The MTR was constrained to some extent by the COVID-19 pandemic that restricted travel and face-to-face interviews and discussions. The Lead Consultant could therefore not travel to South Sudan for field work, thus relied on virtual data collection mode. The National Consultant’s movement was also restricted, but managed to visit some stakeholders for interviews and small group discussions. The December festive season also created competing demands among the targeted respondents to create enough time for interviews and FGDs. The MTR period had to be extended, at no additional cost, for three months to allow for additional time for data collection, production of the review report, and stakeholder review and validation. Discussion between the GEMS project team and reviewers on project data and to build consensus on the review findings also took some time, resulting in delay in submission of final draft report to the donor and other stakeholders.

## Findings

**Relevance:** Overall, the GEMS Project is relevant to South Sudan development context in general, and transformation of public service institutions in particular. The Project focus is on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms) through capacity injection into targeted public service is appropriate and useful.

**Effectiveness:** The total number of SSEs recruited for the project since inception to end of 2021 was 17 out of the targeted 70 in Governance, Service and Economic cluster MDAs. Three (3) of the recruited SSEs were women while the rest were men. By the time of the MTR, a total of 114 senior civil servants (Change Agents) were trained/mentored out of 800 targeted in Governance, Service and Economic cluster MDAs institutions. The use of South Sudanese SSEs was found to be excellent and an effective strategic model of capacity building in public institutions.<sup>1</sup> The project has also supported the review and development of relevant policy and legal frameworks in targeted political and economic governance institutions, including the national curriculum for training civil servants, capacity building plans, Finance Management and Accountability ACT 2011 (amendment) Bill 2020, communication and networking mechanism for Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) among others. The Project has also strengthened dialogue among political parties. The Political Party Council(PPC) was established to facilitate the role of registering political parties in the country and regulating the competitive multiparty democracy.

The GEMS project performance was affected by a number of factors. These include the slow pace of the implementation of the R-ARCSS, delay of the formation of the R-GoNU and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The donor conditionalities/decision to revise the project as originally designed because of the slow progress of the transition process and an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU not being in place also affected the project performance/results.<sup>2</sup> The Project management structures and approaches were found to be appropriate and together with the technical competence and experience, contribute to the effective implementation of the project in the 12 months it has been in operation.

**Efficiency:** The Project had a good budget of USD28,429,550 for the Project period. A significant portion (79.2%) of budgeted funds have not been delivered to UNDP by the donor as planned.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a 'system-wide' institutional strengthening through a cascade approach, as opposed to "twinning" strategy - where experience professional is paired with an individual staff in an institutions for training.

<sup>2</sup>The original Project Document states that "... in view of the unique, transitional setting in which the GEMS project is designed and implemented, there is clear understanding that key continuity criteria remain fundamental to its success.... Project progression will continuously be subjected to clear and demonstrable context criteria of i) progress of the transition process, ii) under an effective, inclusive and accountable R.TGoNU, iii) committed to its counterpart obligations and iv) agreed project governance and oversight arrangements. Of these, only condition number iii) was in place and effective.

The Framework Agreement and Specific Agreements signed by the Donor and UNDP, gives the donor the rights to withhold disbursement in full or in part and to have annual consultation on UNDP. The By the time of the MTR, as per the Revised Project Document (October 2021- 31 December 2022), the GEMS project scope had been revised, through the agreement between the donor and UNDP, where the support of intended 38 national political and economic governance institutions (as originally anticipated) had now been revised to focus on only 4 economic governance and 2 other political governance institutions, and deploying 15 SSEs instead of the planned 70 in Governance and Economic Clusters.

This is because the planned activities were delayed for two years because of delay in the formation of the R-GoNU and plan by the donor to revise and change direction of GEMS in early 2021 (see Footnote 2). By the end of 2021, only \$5,934,939.93 had been transferred by the donor to UNDP. Out of this, \$4,561,495.60 had been spent on project activities during the same period. MTR established that in 2021, the original project budget was revised from USD28,429,550 to 5,901,233.44. This is because, the donor had decided that it is going to fund only the project activities in the Economic cluster. The slow progress to political transition and not having an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU, seems to have made the donor arrive at the decision that project results in governance cluster is untenable as was originally planned. Thus, had discussions with UNDP to develop a new project document with a reduced budget (and a new agreement between the parties was signed).

***Sustainability:*** The Project Document identify the issue of sustainability as being part and parcel of the Project Strategy. The review of the GEMS Project and its capacity building strategies points out some sustainability measures. Currently, there is no capacity building programme that exist. However, there are signs that the success of the GEMS strategic approach has motivated other development partners, like World Bank, Africa Development Bank to become interested to support capacity building efforts in South Sudan, in particular at the PFM and Sectorial level, including support to Ministries of Health and Education.

## **Lessons Learned**

1. Capacity building in public institutions needs advocacy and awareness raising, consensus on its meaning/scope, and effective management of stakeholders' expectations.
2. Success of a capacity building project, in a fragile state like South Sudan, requires more than just 'one time' (short-time) capacity injection in public institutions, but a "whole system" long term transformation, taking into consideration changing political and economic context of a country.
3. Once it is discovered that the original theory of change and assumptions are not true/realistic, it is critical for parties to consult and have open dialogue with key project stakeholders and partners, and revise the project design as soon as possible.
4. In a fragile environment, like in South Sudan, a continuous review and renewal of work plans is essential to ensure their relevance to program/project context. There is also need to have deeper understanding of the core drivers of peace and conflicts (risks) that could affect a project's success.
5. A transitional capacity building project or programme in public institutions through capacity injection approach requires strong political will and government ownership and leadership, commitment of financial resources and effective monitoring (creating an enabling environment for training and mentorship).
6. Recruiting and deployment of national professional and experienced technical experts (Special Skills Experts) is an effective capacity injection approach into public institution compared to 'jump-in' external/foreign short- and long-term consultants. The approach improves a sense of ownership and respect among the local civil servants.

## Conclusion

Overall, the GEMS projects as originally formulated cannot achieve the intended results in the remaining period because of the factors beyond UNDP. The main factor is that the donor has already made a decision to revise (scale) down the project. As mentioned earlier, this is because of the slow progress of the transition process and an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU not being in place as originally anticipated during the project design. The project results, in governance cluster in particular, were dimmed unsustainable by the donor. Rather than support all 38 national political and economic governance institutions as stipulated in the original document, the revised PRODOC signed in November 2021 will focus only on 4 economic governance and two other political governance institutions. The MTR team notes that the achievement of intended results in the revised grant agreement could be attained only if there is fast-tracking of project interventions/activities and effective creation of enabling environment in the targeted MDS.

Second, the strategic capacity injection focusing on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms) is still advisable, even with the time constraint. This is because the South Sudan pathway to sustainable peace, development and improved well-being of citizens still require, to a large extent, strengthening capacity of key national institutions for effective and accountable implementation of Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS (resource, economic and financial Management reforms). However, the MTR has provided useful lessons that should inform the continuation and effectiveness of capacity injection into MDAs in South Sudan.

The risk of the revised project not delivering results, as was in the original phrase, remains high. This is because of non-full implementation of R-ARCSS (Charter I and IV in particular), and dwindling political will and commitment to the project.

### **Recommendation 1. Continuation with the Project focus and depth from a holistic and future looking perspective:**

The objectives of the GEMS project are still valid, and capacity building of public institutions in South Sudan is still a priority for sustainable development. It is therefore recommended that strategic capacity injection in political and economic governance institutions should continue in the remaining GEMS Project period and continuity/sustainability is planned from a difference forward looking perspectives, including the following:

The Project needs to go back to both political and economic governance institutions as originally planned. This is because the achievement of project results in the economic cluster requires policy and legal frameworks/actions that fall under governance cluster MDAs.<sup>3</sup> Besides, government stakeholders in the governance cluster, which is now not part of the revised project, feel “short-changed” and strongly recommended that the donor and UNDP should rescind their decision to change the coverage of the GEMS project. The MTR, therefore, recommends that there is need for a cost extension of the Project for about 3 – 5 years. Specifically,

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to Mapping the Readiness and Functional Capacities of Governance Institutions for R-ARCSS Report, 2020, pg.2

- The Government of Norway and UNDP should initiate talks with other donors and development partners to support the revised and revamped GEMS Project (or a new capacity building programme).
- Engaging the government, on how best to proceed with the project implementation (including its contribution) and developing a tight, clear and informative implementation plan, signed off by all parties.
- Putting in place advocacy strategy for public education about the revised GEMS project and the role the government and targeted MDAs should actively play.
- Fast-tracking of hiring and placement of SSEs accordingly.
- Develop a Project Exit Strategy/Plan and build consensus with the government and targeted MDAs on its implementation.
- Use lessons learned in the earlier implementation of the GEMS project to promote effectiveness and efficiency, monitoring & evaluation and reporting.

**Recommendation 2. Mainstreaming transformative institutional capacity building in the next UN Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development:**

With continued political and institutional context, peace and security in South Sudan, UNDP should work with other UN agencies, government, and other development partners to design a joint programme on capacity building, which should be mainstreamed in the next UNSDF for South Sudan. This should support a “whole system” capacity building and transformation of public service institutions for quality service delivery – going beyond just capacity injection. UNDP should move away from implementing capacity building project as a single entity and work with other UN agencies and other development partners on this strategic area. However, UNDP should take a leading role.

**Recommendation 3. Rehabilitation of the National Public Service Training Centre.**

The government should be supported to rehabilitate the National Public Service Training Centre. The continuation and success of training of public service officers for quality service delivery will be effective/efficient through a revamped national training Centre.

**Recommendation 4: GoSS prioritizing capacity building in its national plan:**

The government should be encouraged and supported to mainstream institutional capacity building into its development agenda (the next five-year national development plan), including clear articulation of resources required, government contribution, effective training model, and effective identification of strategic partners and the role of the private sector.

**Recommendation 5: Developing adaptive management and exit strategy**

Based on the political, peace and security fragility of South Sudan, and on lessons from best practice, UNDP, in consultation with other stakeholders, should develop a clear comprehensive adaptive management plan and an exit strategy, which would assist UNDP and the donor in making informed decision about what adjustment to make, and the future of the project in South Sudan.



## 1.0 Introduction

In December 2021, following a competitive selection process, UNDP South Sudan contracted Okwach Abagi (International Consultant/Team Leader) and Simon Lado (National Consultant) to conduct a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the UNDP Project “Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS)” August 2019 – December 2022. The project was to be funded by the Government of Norway, with a budget of USD28,429,550 for a three-year period. The resources were to be used for implementation of Project activities in South Sudan, including hiring of experts, training, project management, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

This draft report is presented in 7 chapters.

Chapter 1 - MTR background including its purpose and specific objectives

Chapter 2 - Country context and Project background

Chapter 3 - MTR methodology and process

Chapter 4 - MTR findings (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and factors affecting performance)

Chapter 5 - Lessons learned

Chapter 6 - Conclusions

Chapter 7 - Recommendations.

### 1.1 MTR Purpose

The purpose of the GEMS review was to assess: a) whether the project as originally formulated can achieve the intended results in the time remaining and b) whether a strategic capacity injection focusing on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms) is advisable given the current time constraint. The MTR is also to provide lessons that can inform/improved the revised/refocused project in the remaining period.

The MTR covered the period from **August 2019 to July 2021** to draw lessons learnt and targets for the proposed Chapter IV institutions of R-ARCSS. The MTR reviewed the effectiveness of project activities to date including the selection and placement of SSE, project governance and management. The MTR Team assessed the following, among others: Project design (review if the problem addressed within the country’s development context and priorities and assumptions made; relevance of the project strategy; decision-making processes; gender mainstreaming; project log frame; clarity of project objectives and activities.). The focus included reviewing the following:

- Progress towards results (Review the log frame indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets; populate the Progress Towards Results Matrix; barriers to achieving the project objectives; successful project component).
- Project implementation and adaptive management (review management arrangement; work planning; finance and co-finance).
- Gender equality (extent of mainstreaming gender equality and women’s empowerment).
- Risk factors (review the extent to which the project activities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other risks).

## 1.2 Intended Use and Users of the MTR

As per the ToR, the MTR findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be used by UNDP South Sudan, the Government of Norway, the RTGoNU of South Sudan, national partners and other stakeholders to contribute to the evidence base on effective approaches to fast-track the implementation of the GEMS project in the remaining period; support advocacy, programming, and resource mobilization efforts to sustain capacity building of public institutions; and generate strategic reflection and lessons learned for UNDP, donor and government with respect to capacity building of public service institutions across sectors, and inform any future similar projects in South Sudan.

## 2.0 Country Context and Project Background

### 2.1 Country Context

The design of the Governance and Economic Management Support Project, and the MTR, took place at a complex transition phase of South Sudan. Renewed conflicts in December 2013 and July 2016 undermined the development gains achieved since independence. As a consequence, South Sudan remains caught-up in a web of fragility, economic stagnation and instability a decade after independence.<sup>4</sup> South Sudan has significant oil wealth, which if effectively used to drive development, could provide the basis for progress in the coming years.<sup>5</sup> However, years of conflict has put the country off its development trajectory to 2030 and beyond.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, for a long time South Sudan faced severe economic crises in light of persistent oil price volatility and oil production shocks, perpetual corruption, lack of transparency and accountability in management of the economy, which further heightened conflicts and human suffering.<sup>7</sup>

South Sudan has significant oil wealth, which if effectively used to drive development, could provide the basis for progress in the coming years. However, years of conflict has put the country off its development trajectory to 2030 and beyond.

South Sudan's economic recovery – driven by the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), rising oil prices, and a resumption in oil production – was derailed in 2020 by locust invasions, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy had picked up strongly before the pandemic, with the gross domestic product (GDP) real growth reaching 9.5 percent in the FY2019/20.<sup>8</sup> World Bank country diagnostics indicates that the oil sector, which accounts for 70 percent of GDP and more than 90 percent of public revenues, was negatively affected by the collapse of global oil prices. However, the oil sector has continued to be the primary driver of growth, with estimated oil production of 62.1 million barrels in the FY2019/20, representing a 26.5 percent increase on the 49.1 million barrels realized in FY2018/19. In the agricultural sector, cultivated area increased by 6 percent in 2020 compared to the previous

<sup>4</sup> Republic of South Sudan, National Development Strategy, 2018-2021

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Cooperation Framework for the Republic of South Sudan, 2019-2021; AfDB South Sudan Economic Outlook, 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/file:https://www.afdb.org>

<sup>7</sup> Worldbank.org: South Sudan Overview, 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org/>

<sup>8</sup> Worldbank.org: South Sudan Overview, 2020. <https://www.worldbank.org>

year, but it is still far from reaching the pre-conflict levels.<sup>9</sup> Floods and locusts impacted negatively on the agriculture sector, which accounts for 15 percent of GDP and employs 80 percent of the population. The service sector, which accounts for 6.1 percent of GDP, was particularly hard hit by the pandemic due to lockdowns and travel restriction. Public and private consumption, the key growth drivers on the demand side in 2019, were also hurt by the COVID–19 pandemic. As a result, real GDP growth declined by 3.6 percent in 2020 after expanding by 7.4 percent in 2019. Supply shocks induced by flooding, locust invasions, and COVID–19 disruptions coupled with monetization of the government budget deficit and currency depreciation, increased inflation to an estimated 31.1 percent in 2020 from 24.5 percent in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Falling global oil prices have reduced government revenues by 40 percent, increasing the fiscal deficit to 4.9 percent of GDP in 2020 from 2.5 percent in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Reduced oil export receipts and a slowdown in financial inflows, mainly remittances and foreign direct investment, widened the current account deficit to 4.5 percent of GDP in 2020 from 2.7 percent in 2019. High-frequency surveys conducted in June 2020 showed that 51.2 percent of respondents reported reduced earnings from their main income source.<sup>12, 13</sup>

The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) took place in September 2018. However, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) had just been formed (after one year’s delay) in February 2020. The formation of the Government of National Unity provided hope for recovery and peace building in South Sudan.<sup>14</sup> A resumption of oil production in oil fields previously shutdown due to conflict had raised hopes for an oil led recovery. However, the country faces the risk of reversal of these gains, with increasing incidents of sub-national violence in 2020 and Covid-19 pandemic exacerbating an already dire situation.

The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) took place in September 2018. However, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) had just been formed (after one year’s delay) in February 2020. This provided hope for recovery and peace building. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated an already dire situation.

In South Sudan because of political, security and institutional fragility, coupled with limited institutional capacity, public expenditure has, for a long time been characterized by gross mismanagement emanating from lack of clear public expenditure frameworks, including lack of public procurement law (bill was passed in 2018 and awaits the president’s ascent) and application of the Public Financial Management and Accountability Act, 2011, among other laws, that are not implemented. Public financial management (PFM) is in a state of flux<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, reforms to

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 2020

<sup>10</sup> AfDB South Sudan Economic Outlook, 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/file:https://www.afdb.org>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 2020

<sup>12</sup> AfDB, 2020

<sup>13</sup> Worldbank.org: South Sudan Overview  
<https://www.worldbank.org>

<sup>14</sup> Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), 2018

<sup>15</sup> AfDB, 2020; World Banks, 2020

deliver efficient and transparent public procurement systems and enhance accountability in the use of public funds, among others are necessary to ensure that public resources are spent effectively and efficiently in line with strategic priorities outlined in the R-ARCSS. Strategic capacity injection in key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) is crucial for implementation of the public expenditure and accountability frameworks and build institutional capacities for adoption and application of PFM principles. The 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) provided an important window toward positive trajectory to national development and transformation (Refer to Annex X for the summary of R-ARCSS).

## 2.2 Project Description

The Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) project<sup>16</sup> is a multi-year project implemented by UNDP and funded by the Government of Norway for a three year period from August 2019 to December 2022, with a total budget of USD28,429,550. The project was designed to support the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) in implementing Chapter IV of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The GEMS project was conceived in the context of the signed R-ARCSS, which provided for governance and economic reforms, justice, accountability, reconciliation, permanent ceasefire and security sector reforms and arrangements for unification of the necessary forces. The project, was therefore, designed to support Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS (Resource, Economic and Financial Management). The GEMS project aims to contribute towards setting the country on a pathway to sustainable peace, development and improved well-being for citizens through: a) strengthening capacity of key national institutions for effective and accountable implementation of the R-ARCSS; and b) bolstering key economic governance and accountability functions with attention to Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS, which furthers key economic and financial reforms for effective public resource management.

The work of GEMS is primarily executed through the placement of SSEs into key MDAs. The SSEs train, coach and mentor senior MDAs staff, known as the Change Agents (CAs) who are senior civil servants already in employment (or to be recruited/appointed) by the respective MDAs. These CAs are meant to be trained and occupy positions central to institutional mandate and delivery of the provisions of R-ARCSS.

According to the Project Document (original), GEMS projects target 38 key MDAs and 24 government institutions under the Economic, Governance and Services clusters for capacity enhancement whilst coordinating support to other two clusters: Infrastructure and Gender and Youth. The project was to support five ministries in the Economic Cluster, Seven ministries in the Governance Cluster, and two ministries in the Services Cluster.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The GEMS) Project builds on the experiences and successes of Phases I & II of the Republic of South Sudan/Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (RSS/IGAD) Regional Initiative for Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan Project (2010-2019).

<sup>17</sup> Ministries targeted: i. **Economic Cluster** – Ministries of Investment; Mining; Petroleum; Trade & Industry; and Finance & Economic Planning. ii. **Governance Cluster** – Ministries of Cabinet Affairs; Parliamentary Affairs;

The implementation of GEMs project was delayed due to the slow pace of the implementation of the R-ARCSS. The situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The project implementation and progression was delayed by the slow pace and progress of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in the South Sudan. The situation was exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Besides, an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU had not been put in place as anticipated at the time of the design of the original GEMS project. Thus, most of the planned project activities to be implemented between October 2019 to end of 2022 were not implemented because of these factors. The project progress in the governance cluster institutions in particular was slow and dimmed untenable by the donor. Given the delays and the changing context, the donor and UNDP agreed to revise the project and use the opportunity to re-focus the project for greatest impact during the limited implementation period remaining.<sup>18, 19</sup> To this end, a revised GEMs project was agreed upon. Rather than support all 38 national political and economic governance institutions as stipulated in the original project, the revised version will focus on 4 economic governance and 2 political governance institutions (refer to Final Revised GEM Project Document, October 2021 – 31 December 2022). In the meantime, other actors, including the World Bank, have entered the arena for institutional development in South Sudan.

### Envisaged Outcomes and Outputs

The GEMS project was designed with 2 Outcomes and 4 outputs (Exhibit 2.1). There were no changes or revisions made before the MTR.

**Exhibit 2.1: The GEMS Project Outcomes and Outputs**

Impact: Sustainable peace and accountable governance			
Outcome 1 Effective implementation of R-ARCSS			Outcome 2 Improved economic management
Output 1.1.1  Functional and Technical capacity provided to key national governance institutions.	Output 1.1.2  Public service employees' skills enhanced	Output 1.2.1  Dialogue among political parties strengthened	Output 2.1.1  Functional and technical capacity provided to key national economic and accountability institutions.

Interior; Peacebuilding; Federal Affairs; Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation. iii. **Services Cluster** - Ministries of Public Service, and Human Resource Development; and Labour.

<sup>18</sup> The MTR could not establish the real justification for this decision. The answer lies with the donor for UNDP could also not give reasons why the revision was made but had to accept what the donor was ready to fund.

<sup>19</sup>

## Project Logic

**Theory of Change:** According to the original Project Document, the Project is based on UNDP's basic concept and experience in capacity building, where improving individual's skills and knowledge leads to organization and work accountability, and then enhanced institutional performance, stability and adaptability. Thus, **IF** key national institutions are provided with expertise/competencies, and capacities, they will be able to formulate vibrant policies that delineates national versus subnational government roles, consequently better implementation of R-ARCSS, **IF** economic and governance institutions are enabled to manage public resources in an accountable and inclusive manner and national integrity systems **supported** to deliver their mandates, **THEN** the country will be set on a pathway for sustainable peace, development, improved state citizens relations.

The Project also developed Results Framework, with clearly stated expected results, indicators, baseline, and targets for 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. Activities under each expected output is also stated in the Framework. The Project design anticipated that, by the end of the Project (December 2022), the four outputs (expected results) would be achieved and that there would be positive progress towards achievement of two outcomes (1. Effective implementation of R-ARCSS and 2. Improved economic management).

**Assumptions:** Various assumptions underlying the Project's theory of change and design were identified and articulated in the Project Document. These include:

- Actors' sustained good will for the scrupulous implementation of the R-ARCSS.
- The political and security situation remains stable with no foreseeable shocks that may lead to government collapse, further population displacement and/or undermine implementation of the project.
- The government continues to show the political good will and national ownership necessary to strengthen institutional capacities that can withstand periodic volatility and tension.
- Financial resources made available to operate those key-targeted institutions.

While these assumptions are theoretically reasonable, in practice, they were not all valid for the two outcomes. This has affected the GEMS Project implementation and performance (see Section 4.4). In addition, as noted in the Country context above, the delay in the formation of the R-TGoNU and the global oil crisis (reducing public resources for government expenditures including salaries) have had adverse setbacks in the timely implementation of the Project.

### **3.0 MTR Methodology and Process**

#### **3.1 Overall Approach**

The MTR was undertaken according to the UNEG Norms and Standards. It upheld human rights and gender equality approaches of respect and confidentiality, fairness, inclusivity and paying attention to broader stakeholder participation including beneficiaries. The MTR was based on the TOR and guided by the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The MTR also took into consideration cross-cutting principles of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, resilience and sustainability, accountability, economic transformations and growth.

The MTR design consisted of the following components: i) Country development context assessment – focusing on the relevance of the Project in the country's political and socio-economic development and how it relates to the Project and ii) Project level assessment – reflecting on the performance of the project in terms of achievements as per the Results Framework. Overall, the MTR used a mixed-methods approach involving the use of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. Stakeholders' participation was fostered through individual interviews and focus group discussions, using standardized tools.

#### **Evaluation question and matrix**

During the inception phase, the MTR Team developed a set of assessment matrix that outlined the key questions, sub-questions, methods of data collection and sources of data (See Annex IV and V). The respective lines of inquiry/methods of data collection for each question and sub-question are outlines in the review Matrix.

#### **3.2 Data collection methods and Sources**

The four main sources of data for the MTR were: i) stakeholders (people from UNDP, Government, donor and other partners); documents, files, publication and relevant literature, iii) UNDP Project financial data and iv) observations made during the visit to some targeted institutions. The MTR included both primary and secondary data types. The data collection methods included a document and literature review, interviews and focus group discussions, and institutional visits, as described below:

#### **Document and Literature Review:**

Guided by questions in the review matrix, the MTR Team reviewed relevant documents including the following:

- The GEMS Project documents (Original and revised), Framework Agreement and other Specific Agreements and Addendum, and data, monitoring and evaluation reports, progress reports, financial reports, and background documents



- Project Implementation documents, including implementation plans, project output reports, monitoring reports, implementing partners' reports, and project output reports, such as capacity/institutional assessment reports
- Documents and literature on South Sudan development context, peace, security and reconciliation and the status of implementation of R-ARCSS.

A list of documents reviewed is presented in Annex II.

## Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with Stakeholders

The MTR Team consulted a total of 38 stakeholders (Exhibit 3.1 below), identified primarily through purposive sampling strategy. They were consulted through a semi-structured individual interviews and small focus group discussions (in person, virtual meeting, or by phone<sup>20</sup>). Interview and FGD guides are annexed. The Team conducted KIIs and FGDs from the following categories: Government (project targeted MDAs/institutions), UNDP Project Staff, Donor Focal Point, and SSEs, and CAs (beneficiaries)..

**Exhibit 3.1: List of Stakeholders (Informants) by Data Collection Method**

Stakeholder	# of persons interviewed (Number/Gender)			Data Collection Method
	Male	Female	Total	
Political Party Council	1	0	1	KII
Ministry of Interior	4	0	4	KIIs
Ministry of Cabinet affairs	6	1	7	KIIs/FGD
Ministry of Finance and Planning	4	1	5	FGD/KII
Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development	2	3	4	KII
Ministry of Foreign affairs and International Cooperation	1	0	1	KII
UNDP South Sudan Leadership	0	3	3	KII
UNDP (Project Manager)	1	0	1	KII
UNDP (Project Staff)	4	1	5	KII
Donor Focal Point	1	-	0	KII
Special Skills Experts (SSEs)	9	0	6	KII/FGD
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>42</b>	

All the KII and FGD used interview and FGD protocols that were approved by UNDP and MTR Reference Group, and that had been tailored to the respective stakeholder group and aligned with the MTR framework.

<sup>20</sup> Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Lead Consultant did not travel to South Sudan. Thus, most of the interviews and FGD were conducted virtually using appropriate platforms. Where visits were made to various institutions, health protocols were followed.



## **Analysis**

Data analysis involved triangulation between different data sources. The MTR tools asked similar questions to different stakeholders and complemented this with a review of documents, which allowed for the assessment of performance against the MTR criteria. Qualitative responses were reviewed and compared to answer the overarching review questions. The main forms of analysis were content and narrative, as well as comparative analysis. Content and narrative analysis were used for data gathering through document reviews, interviews, and institutional visits involving KII and FGDs with informants. Content analysis provided the framework for classifying qualitative information, including documents and interviews, according to particular themes and issues. Comparative analysis made it possible to highlight best practices and/or lessons learned in relation to different Project interventions and approaches.

Validity of the data was ensured through data triangulation (i.e., convergence of multiple data sources), the use of standardized instruments, and compliance with the standard practices in evaluation. The results of the analysis were synthesized in the development of the review. These formed the basis for the draft MTR report.

### **3.3 Quality assurance**

The MTR Team consists of senior experienced consultants, led by the team leader, with over 27 years of experience and competency/capacity to conduct independent and objective evaluation of the GEMS Project. The inception report with the evaluation design, work plan and tools were developed in a consultative and participatory manner and approved by Project Management Team and MTR Reference Group (ERG). The Project context provided the field guide and assessment standard. Additionally, MTR Reference Group and the Project Management Team provided guidance and inputs to sign off the inception report and draft MTR report. The UNEG and the UNDP Monitoring and Evaluation Standard Guidelines provided the evaluation standards. The MTRRG), comprising officers from UNDP, Government MDAs, and the Donor focal persons participated in reviews and validation of inception and draft reports.

### **3.4. Ethical considerations**

The UNEG code of conduct provided key guidance on ethical standards; including the respect and protection of the rights and welfare of women and men, and the communities evaluated as per UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. The respect for dignity and diversity; anonymity and informed consent<sup>21</sup>; data protection and confidentiality; fair representation including women and men in powerless, ‘hidden’, or otherwise excluded groups; compliance with codes for individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against; stakeholders shall be given information on: a) how to seek redress for any perceived disadvantage suffered from the evaluation or any projects it covers and b) how to register a complaint concerning the conduct of an implementing or executing agency. Evaluators minimized risks to those participating in the evaluation; and maximized the benefits and reduced any unnecessary harm that could occur due to negative or critical evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation.

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<sup>21</sup><sup>2121</sup> <https://oprs.usc.edu/files/2017/04/Informed-Consent-Booklet-4.4.13.pdf>

### **3.5 Gender and Human Rights**

The evaluation integrated analysis on how the GEMS project advanced the rights of the targeted population(s) (the rights holders), particularly women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against and supported or empowered them to claim for their rights; identified and analyzed the inequalities, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations that are central to development problems.

### **3.6 Study limitations**

The MTR was constrained by some challenges:

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions affected project processes and caused delays in data collection because of travel and gathering restrictions. The Lead Consultant could therefore not travel to South Sudan for field work, thus relied on virtual data collection mode, and continuous discussion with the National Consultant and Project Teams through email and virtual meetings. The National Consultant's movement was a bit restricted, but managed to visit some stakeholders for interviews and small group discussions.

- The December festive season created competing demands among the targeted respondents, to create enough time for interviews and FGDs. By the time of MTR, the original Project Document was revised, at the request of the donor who felt that the progress and results in the governance cluster institutions was slow and dimmed untenable. Some Special Skills Experts (SSEs) whose contracts had come to an end (and not renewed) were not available to participate in this review in the MTR.
- MTR period had to be extended, at no additional cost, for three extra months to give evaluators more time for data collection and the production of the report t; and to provide enough time for stakeholder review and validation of the draft report. Consultations, review and discussions between the GEMS Team and the reviewers on some project data and building consensus on the findings and gaps also took some time, resulting in delay in submission of final draft report to the donor.

However, the resulting data gaps from the noted limitations did not negatively affect the overall soundness of the MTR findings. The reviewers and the GEMs team had several discussions and consensus building during data collection and the production of draft report. This was to make sure that the data collected, the preliminary findings and the MTR report have inputs from the project team. To mitigate the limitations, the MTR Team adopted a number of strategies: i) In order to assess progress, it relied on open and deep discussions (probing) with respondents on their self-assessment of the Project, ii) the team engaged with the Project Manager and GEMs project staff to provide insights into the Project results on several occasions, iii) It drew from existing annual project reports and iv) It had separate extensive engagement with senior government officials (Undersecretaries) whose ministries are beneficiaries of the Project.

## 4.0 Mid-Term Review Findings

### 4.1 Overview

The results discussed in this chapter are based on a synthesis of data from documents and literature reviews, interviews with various stakeholders (key informants) and consensus build between the International Consultant (Team Leader) and the National Consultant. The draft will be shared with and presented to UNDP, MTR Reference Group and other relevant stakeholders for inputs/comments before a final report is produced.

Section 4.4 below present findings on the performance of GEMS Project in line with the OECD evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Findings on the factors affecting performance are presented in Section Z and include assessment of project design, project context, and project implementation.

### 4.2 Relevance

Relevance is defined as “the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirement, country needs, global priorities, and partners’ and donor policies.”<sup>22</sup> This section presents an analysis of relevance of the GEMS project in relation to the context and stakeholder needs and priorities; and alignment to UN system and other global frameworks.

**Finding 1: The GEMS project’s is relevant to the needs and requirement of the targeted public political and economic governance institutions in South Sudan. The targeted institutions have limited capacity (in terms of skills, number of employees, lack of equipment & financial resources, legal frameworks) for effective delivery of quality services, and require support and capacity injection of experts to ensure transformational environment for quality service delivery.**

The End-line Evaluation for the Support to Public Administration Project –RSS/IGAD Regional Initiative for Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan - Phase II Project shows the capacity gaps in the public institution and what needs to be done. The report gave various recommendations including the following, among others: Key project partners, including in particular the Government of Norway, IGAD and UNDP should continue to support civil service capacity building in South Sudan. The GEMS Project document included an assessment of Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) through the selected public institutions.<sup>23</sup> The assessment identified realistic, feasible and time-bound capacity gaps as well as strengths within the selected public institutions. It used a SWOT analysis tool for deciphering the data obtained from reviewed literature, face-to-face interviews and dire

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<sup>22</sup> OECD-DAC (2002). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Paris, OECD, pg. 32.

<sup>23</sup> Functional Mapping Assessment of Selected Public Institutions of South Sudan at National Level by CSPS, January-March 2020.

observation by the research team. The GEMS Project was designed to fill some of these capacity gaps. The Project's focus is on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms through capacity injection - placing SSEs in public service ministries/institutions is appropriate and useful. The context of the GEMS project offered both opportunities and challenges. The Project was implemented at the time when RTGoNU had just been formed (after one year's delay).

The stakeholders interviews confirmed that the GEMS project is relevant to South Sudan's development needs in general, and public institutional capacity needs in particular.

This is because: “many institutions were destroyed during prolonged past conflicts”, “inefficiency and ineffectiveness due to corruption”, and “lack of training/mentoring opportunities”.

Interview with Stakeholders, 2021

By using SSEs, and targeting senior civil servants, as CAs, the GEMS project is addressing capacity gaps within the public service sector in South Sudan.

However, discussions with targeted senior staff and other professional from various ministries and targeted institutions raised the issue of beneficiaries' having limited understanding of the GEMS project and its scope/role. Although UNDP cannot be fully responsible for the limited understanding of the project, many department heads at different levels within the ministries that the project targeted felt disengaged. As one of the members put it: *“UNDP did not comprehensively and inclusively consult the Ministry. The Minister just introduced the SSE, which made it hard for us to engage him as we don't understand his mandate. More consultations could have been done. And we hope it will be done in future”*. As much as there could be in such sentiments, such stakeholders could have not been there during the project inception where there were adequate consultation with all MDAs. GEMs did consult with Ministries at the Minister level for all targeted MDAs and engaged with other senior staff accordingly. One of the challenge is high turnover (changeover) of senior staff in various ministries across the public service. This affects how project is communicated and understood by new ministries' leadership.

## **Finding 2: The Project is aligned to national policies, priorities and needs of South Sudan needs, policies and vision.**

The design of GEMS project was informed and based on the 2018 R-ARCSS. The R-ARCSS provides an opportunity to strengthen governance systems, management of public funds, optimize service delivery and stabilize the economy.<sup>24</sup> The signatories to the R-ARCSS prioritized key institutions' capacity building and legislative reforms to enable delivery of institutional mandates and conversely, successfully implement the R-ARCSS. It is reported that UNDP received many requests from relevant stakeholders—National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC),

<sup>24</sup> IGAD. 2018. Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). 2018

Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), IGAD and African Union—to assist them technically and financially in order to implement the R-ARCSS in time.<sup>25</sup>

The Project Outcomes and Outputs; are aligned to relevant South Sudan national development priorities, policies and strategies, as articulated in the National Development Strategy (NDS) (July 2018 – June 2021).<sup>26</sup> The NDS identified the following core government functions as strategic to deliver the NDS:

- a) Take practical steps to identify, review, strengthen and implement policies and ensure they are consistent and coherent in overcoming technical and political barriers. Policies that have a multiplier effect in consolidating peace and stabilizing the economy will take precedence.
- b) Take practical steps to communicate policies more effectively at the level of The President and Council of Ministers. This will create a predictable environment in which citizens, the private sector, and the development partners are able to contribute meaningfully to peace consolidation and economic stabilization.
- c) Take practical steps to coordinate policy at national and state levels. The clusters (and the sector working groups) will be an essential mechanism for coordination. However, other inter-agency mechanisms will be revived (e.g., governors’ forum, Undersecretaries forum) or designed.
- d) Take practical steps to support stakeholders to align to the strategy at various levels, including departments and agencies, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders.

### **Findings 3: Project relevance and aligned to international and regional commitment.**

The content and orientation of the GEMS project, while being anchored in national and government needs, perspectives and realities, draws inspiration from the national, regional and global development frameworks, including South Sudan Vision 2040<sup>27</sup>, R-ACSS 2018-2023, The Africa Agenda 2063, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, the project is aligned to:

- a) The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal16: “Peace, justice and strong institutions.”

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25 Report by CSPS, 2020. Functional Mapping Assessment of Selected Public Institutions of South Sudan at National Level

26 NDP is the first national planning document providing strategic guidance since the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP) expired in 2016, following a three-year extension.

27 The following seven pillars of Vision 2040 are therefore reflected in the NDS Cluster and sector priorities to facilitate a smooth process of implementation: a) building an educated and informed nation, b) building a prosperous, productive and innovative nation, c) building a compassionate and tolerant nation, d) building free, just and peaceful nation, e) building a democratic and accountable nation, f) building a safe, secure and healthy nation; and h) building a united and proud nation

- b) UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) Signature Solution 1: Keeping people out of poverty, and Signature solution 2: Strengthening effective, inclusive and accountable governance.”
- c) The South Sudan Vision 2040 key objectives of “building a prosperous, productive, and innovative nation” related to “improving efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector.”
- d) South Sudan National Development Strategy (2018-2021): “Consolidate peace and stabilize the economy-strengthen core government functions.”
- e) The the United Nation’s Cooperation Framework (UNCF 2019 – 2021) Pillar 1: “Strengthened peace infrastructure and accountable governance”, Pillar 2: “Inclusive and risk informed economic development” and Pilar 3: Strengthened institutions and community resilience.”
- f) The UNDP Country Programme Document (2019-2021) Pilar 1: “Strengthened peace infrastructure and accountable governance”, Pillar 2: “Inclusive and risk informed economic development.”
- g) South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience Pilar 1: “Rebuild trust in people and institutions”.

All the stakeholders talked to during the MTR were unanimous that despite various challenges that the GEMS project has faced, it is relevant to national priorities and needs. And stakeholders expect the project to contribute towards institutional strengthening and effective service delivery in the governance and economic clusters. Some government stakeholders see the Project as one of the strategies towards building trust in the government, fighting corruption and promoting enabling working environment in the public service in South Sudan, and fast-tracking the achievement of SDGs.

#### **Finding 4: The Project design was found to be appropriate, overall.**

In general, the design of the Project appears to be largely relevant and good with a clearly articulated Theory of Change (ToC)<sup>28</sup> and results framework. Exhibit 4.1 indicates the public institutions targeted by the Project (PRODOC). These public institutions are central to reconciliation, recovery, and promotion of peace-development-humanitarian nexus in South Sudan.

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28 ToC Statement: **If** key national institutions are provided with expertise/competencies, and capacities, they will be able to formulate vibrant policies that delineates national vs subnational government roles, consequently better implementation of R-ARCSS, **If** economic and governance institutions are enable to manage public resources in an accountable and inclusive manner and national integrity systems supported to deliver their mandates, **THEN** the country will be set on a pathway for sustainable peace, development, improved state citizens relations.

**Exhibit 4.1: The GEMS Project targeted Institutions**

CLUSTERS	INSTITUTIONS
<b>Economic Cluster</b>	Ministries of Investment; Mining; Petroleum, Trade and Industry; and Finance and Economic Planning
<b>Governance Cluster</b>	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs; Parliamentary Affairs, Interior; Peacebuilding, Federal Affairs; Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
<b>Services Cluster</b>	Ministries of Public Service and Human Resources Development; and Labour.
<b>Department and Commissions</b>	
<b>Economic</b>	Bank of South Sudan; National Bureau of statistics; National Bureau of standards; National Audit Chamber; National Petroleum and Gas Commission; Fiscal, Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission; Procurement and Asset Disposal Authority
<b>Governance</b>	National Transitional Legislative Assembly; Parliamentary Committee on legal affairs; Parliamentary committee on Finance and Economy; Peace commission; Law Review Commission; Judicial service commission; Human rights Commission; National election Commission; Demobilization and Disarmament Commission; Independent Boundary Commission; Anti-corruption commission; National Constitutional Amendment Committee; Political Parties council; Truth Reconciliation and Healing; Compensation and Reparation Authority

If their capacity is well enhanced and the culture of provision of quality service and accountability build/rebuilt, then transformational institutional environment could be created and sustained in South Sudan.

Although the GEMS Project design was largely appropriate, MTR indicates that the project's ToC and assumptions, although theoretically sound, were not practically realistic within the time frame of 3 years. This was compounded by the late formation of R-GoNU and COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the country's political, peace, security and socio-economic context, the project's goal and expected results were too ambitious in two fronts: first by targeting 38 national political and economic governance institutions, and second by planning to achieve project results in three years. Under the prevailing political, socio-economic and institutional circumstances in South Sudan, achieving the Project results in three years was ambitious. The Project underestimated the political and economic complications and undercurrents of the fragile state and transformational institutional environment.

As much as the GEMS Project is relevant and the objectives and components / activities largely clear, the MTR Team's opinion is that more comprehensive political economy analysis could have been done, in addition to "Mapping the Readiness and Functional Capacities of Governance Institutions for R-ACSS"<sup>29</sup> to inform the project design and make it viable and manageable within a reasonable time frame. The project did not anticipate that there could be delay in the formation of the R-GoNU; and that political will and commitment could not be sustained for long. The assumption that the R-GoNU have adequate fiscal resources to create enabling environment and fund logistical requirement for the implementation of the GEMS intervention could have been clearly explained and coordinated with the government. Even with the revised Project focus, the risk – lack of political good will and commitment to fast-track the implementation of the R-ARCSS is still very high.

**Finding 5: The GEMS Project strategy was relevant and spot-on to the needs of beneficiaries.**

The work of GEMS Project is primarily completed through the placement of SSEs into key MDAs. The SSEs are expected to provide sustained mentorship and capacity building/training to selected South Sudanese senior civil servants (technocrats), labelled Change Agents (CAs), in various MDAs. These CAs are meant to be trainable and occupy positions central to institutional mandate and delivery of the provisions of R-ARCSS. This is a 'system-wide' institutional strengthening through a cascade approach, as opposed to "twinning" strategy - where an experienced professional is paired with an individual staff in an institution for training - used in IGAD.<sup>30</sup> The SSEs are qualified and experienced professional South Sudanese who are in the country or in the diaspora as opposed to common practice in some projects where mentors/trainers are usually foreigners placed in various government MDAs. The Project builds on the experiences, successes and lessons learned from Phases 1 & II of the Republic of South Sudan/Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (RSS/IGAD) Regional Initiative for Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan Project (2010-2019).

The MTR finds the GEMS Project capacity building model/strategy of enabling transitional through capacity injection, using SSEs, to be sound and promoting ownership and individual confidence and trust for effective delivery of services in the targeted MDAs. The strategy also demonstrates that there are experienced professional South Sudanese who are willing and ready to work and be part of institutional reconstruction and development of their country.

However, the plan to spread capacity injection through SSEs in 38 key MDAs in a duration of three years was a bit ambitious overlooking the fragile transformational politics, institutional environment and limited skills and financial resources in the public service in South Sudan. The capacity building through SSEs focused on technical support in various MDAs. SSEs deployed to various ministries continuously worked (coached/trained/supervised) with various ministry staff (Change Agents) to promote better

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<sup>29</sup> See Mapping the Readiness and Functional Capacities of Governance Institutions for R-ACSS Final Report, April 23, 2020

<sup>30</sup> Support to Public Administration Project –RSS/IGAD Regional Initiative for Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan- Phase I and II Project



understanding of their roles in the ministries but also support /establish systems that promotes and quickens accountability. The model also focuses on review and/or development of MDA's policy, legal and strategic plan frameworks for effective delivery of quality public services. This is relevant and critical for a system-wide capacity enhancement of a ministry or agency

The strategy also demonstrated that there are experienced professionals South Sudanese who are willing and ready to work and be part of institutional reconstruction and development of their country. However, the spread of capacity injection was too ambitious overlooking the fragile

While the GEMS project's focus and interventions is confined to technical capacity training/mentorship of senior civil servants (as clearly articulated in the PRODOC), there is a different perception and understanding from the government officers (beneficiaries) of what the project should cover and the role of SSEs. As originally planned, the GEMS project was not designed to address both 'soft- and hard-ware' capacity gaps, including salary and infrastructure gaps, faced by targeted MDAs. All the stakeholders talked to during the MTR were generally happy with the Project model/strategy.

However, most government stakeholders, because of misperception about the GEMS, were more concerned about internal capacity gaps ministries are facing (low and unpredictable salaries, no offices, no communication and transport support etc.). Issues were also raised that *"UNDP did not comprehensively engage technical people in various ministries at the design and focus of the GEMS Project."* Besides, *"they brought already made products and sold it to some ministers. Since we were in need we could not refuse even if the Project did not address many of our basic needs as far as capacities of ministries are concerned for effective delivery of services"* (Interview with Public Service Stakeholder, 2021).

*"The project is relevant. But, one of the main challenges include being very ambitious in scope and duration. Also, not enough advocacy and mobilization was done on the project, leave alone launching it. Therefore, many stakeholders including government staff below ministers are not aware of the mandate of the project or have wrong perception of what the GEMS should do".* (Civil Servant Stakeholder, December 2021).

*"Enough advocacy and mobilization have not been done. Many institutional beneficiaries and individuals are not clear about the scope and mandate of the GEMS project. For example, they think that the project should cater for various capacity needs of institutions and individuals including supporting infrastructure/equipment, paying salaries and logistic costs like transport among others...."* (Civil Servant Stakeholder, December 2021).

The MTR has established that at the inception/launch, there was adequate advocacy, consensus building and mobilization about the GEMS project at MDAs leadership – Ministers and Undersecretaries, with an assumption and expectations that they were to use existing government communication system to sensitize other civil servants in their ministries on the project. This communication probably was not effective. Besides, there was time gap (almost 2 years) between project inception and project substantive start, coupled with many changes in Ministries, that could explain the misperception of the role of the GEMS project. The institutional memory could have been lost/forgotten or the people in the ministries leadership are new.

### 4.3 Project Coherence and Ownership

Coherence is defined as “how well the intervention fit (is logical) with the existing policies, strategies and programmes. The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. The extent to which other interventions (particularly policies) support or undermine the intervention and vice versa. This includes internal coherence and external coherence.

**Finding 6: The Project intervention is aligned with targeted MDAs strategic plans and compatible with other UNDP & UN South Sudan and partners are working towards the common results among partners.**

The MTR found that all stakeholders (government MDAs, UNDP, donor) talked to believed that the GEMS Project is not only relevant to South Sudan peace and development. But, the project is also aligned to the targeted institutions strategic plans. The MTR indicates that the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resources has worked with the GEMS project Team and SSEs to develop a national curriculum for capacity building of not only senior civil servants but for all public sector employees. This is to increase delivery of quality services to the citizens. The GEMS project is coherent with other on-going support to South Sudan, and they are working towards the same goal of “sustainable peace and accountable governance.” Guided by the R-ARCSS, the TGoNU is committed to sustainable peace and accountable governance. UN agencies, through UNCF 2019-2021 have two pillars targeting strengthening peace infrastructure/accountable governance, and their part, have strengthening institutions and community resilience. The overall project goal looks to be largely shared among stakeholders.

In addition, the GEMS Project is a reflection of UNDP’s comparative advantage in capacity building and strengthening of good governance. The Project complements ongoing capacity building initiatives implemented at the subnational level within the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience framework with support from other development partners. The GEMS project also benefits from UNDP’s existing projects – i.e., Access to Justice and Rule of Law, Recovery and Stabilization; Peace and Community Cohesion; Public Financial Management and the Global Fund. Although collaboration allow for experience sharing among partners, there is no clear evidence of cost-sharing, reduced transaction costs and avoidance of duplications, for the benefit of the GEMS project.

The MTR assessment indicates that because of the design context, the linkage and coherence of the 4 Output areas is largely established. However, in terms of thematic coherence, it is not clear how the Outputs contribute to the Project goal in a complementary manner. Efforts to create coordination and linkages among the political governance and economic governance interventions were not observed. For example, no clear coordination or linkages were seen and/or deduced in Output 1.2.1: “Dialogue among political parties strengthened” activities and Output 2.1.1 “Functional and technical capacity provided to key national economic management and accountability institutions” activities.

The MTR assessment indicates that because of the design context, the linkage and coherence of the 4 Output areas is largely established. However, in terms of thematic coherence, it is not clear how the Outputs contribute to the Project goal in a complementary manner.

Also, there is no evidence that Project activities were implemented in a mutually re-enforcing or complementary manner. In addition to the design issues, various MDAs have tended to focus on their own interest (capacity building within their institution) which have resulted in a tendency to go solo, which is against attempts to work towards common results for a one national government. Lack of adequate attention to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment is another example of this gap. The level of appreciation of gender equality and women's empowerment is stated by some key stakeholders to be low, even within the Project Team itself.

**Finding 7: There is development partners' collaboration at UNDP and UN System in South Sudan creating an enabling environment for the GEMS project.**

The level of conceptualization, commitment and ownership of the GEMS project within the UN system in South Sudan (RCO, UNCT), UNDP and other agencies with programme/projects on peace, security, resilience, and peace-development-humanitarian nexus is high. From the review of documents and discussions with various key stakeholders, it is evident that the GEMS project is mainstreamed within the UNCF 2019-2021 and UNDP Country Programme, and contributes towards the achievements of targets within these frameworks. UNDP takes advantage of its comparative advantage in capacity building globally and regionally to implement the GEMS Project. Therefore, there is adequate commitment and ownership among various UN Agencies and UNDP staff. UNCT and UNDP have put in place clear guidelines and standards of designing, implementing and reporting on such project.

**Finding 8: Project ownership by government is strong in theory but average in practice, with limited practical strategies put in place to create enabling environment for effective implementation of the GEMS Project and to sustain the project results.**

The MTR indicates that generally there is ownership of the GEMS Project by the R-TGoNU because of the project design and focus. The national political and governance institutions that are the beneficiary of the Project have shown some ownership and commitment by actively participating in project interventions since implementation started. MTR indicates that most MDA's leadership (Ministers and Under-Secretaries) provide leadership and mobilizes their staff to take part in the project.<sup>31</sup>

However, the government commitment and ownership seem to be strong in theory rather than in practice in terms of creating enabling environment to support the Project. For example, budget allocation and spending on various activities in targeted MDAs that could support and create enabling environment to fast-track and sustain the achievement of project results; the challenge of delayed salaries; limited equipment and logistical support services in targeted MDAs inhibit the achievement of the Project results. The MTR established that there is also feelings from some stakeholders in targeted MDAs that the Project should cover logistic costs such as transport, communication, per diem etc., as they are perceived to be part and parcel of institutional capacity building (a misunderstanding/misinterpretation of what GEMS should cover). There is an assumption by most stakeholders that the Project was designed to cover such costs – *"We are wondering how we can talk of capacity building and organize workshops without providing transport and communication allowance; or expecting us to learn and be effective with delayed salaries, and no internet among, other operational challenges..."* (Civil Servant Stakeholder, December 2021).

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<sup>31</sup> This is affected by constant changes of ministries' leadership (i.e. ministers and undersecretaries) that inhibit understanding and continuity of the Project interventions.

The level of participation in the development of annual workplans is a significant step for most government stakeholders. This has resulted in the development of a level of ownership of Project approach and its objectives. The development of a sense of ownership among government institutions leadership was helped by the fact that the GEMS project outputs and results are aligned with major policy documents and strategic documents. As already been mentioned, the GEMS project was conceived and designed in the context of R-ARCSS, which was negotiated, launched and publicized at high-profile levels. This provided opportunity for alignment with national needs and development plans.

#### 4.4 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is defined as “extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.”<sup>32</sup> As noted in section 2.2, the Project’s Results Framework specified that the expected outcomes and outputs (specific objectives) and impact (overall objectives) would only be fully achieved within the Project period. The findings in this section assess the extent to which the Project has made progress towards achievement of its stated results. Progress is assessed in terms of how the Project activities are contributing towards its two Outcomes (i.e., specific objectives) and four outputs (i.e., expected results) as shown in the Project Results Framework. The effectiveness section is thus organized around the following level of change:

- Functional and technical capacity provided to key national governance institution
- Public sector employees’ skills enhanced
- Dialogue among political parties strengthened, and
- Functional and technical capacity provided to key national economic management and accountability institutions.

The MTR notes that, and as mentioned earlier, the implementation of the GEMS project hinges on the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Therefore, the delay in the formation of the RTGoNU which delayed the commencement of the implementation of the R-ARCS has had significant impact on the implementation of the Project and achievement of results. Besides, the plan by the donor to revise and change direction of GEMS in early 2021 (including instruction to stop hiring SSEs and rehabilitating the National Training Institute for Civil Servants) also affected the implementation and performance of the project. Since there was slow project progression due to, among others, the slow progress of the transition process and an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU had not been put in place as anticipated at the time of the design of the GEMS project, the donor dimmed the achievement of project results, in the governance cluster institutions in particular, untenable. The situation was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recruitment of qualified SSEs remains a challenge and as a result, implementation of the project remains slow with the set targets not being realized at the set time. In essence, the project is estimated to have been implemented for only one year despite the documented period of 3 years. Thus, assessment of progress towards achievement of results will take these realities into consideration.

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<sup>32</sup> OECD-DAC (2002). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Paris, OECD, p.20

#### **4.2 Output 1.1.1: Functional and technical capacity provided to key national governance institution**

The result area focuses on providing functional and technical capacity in the form of 52 SSEs Governance and Services Clusters institutions to provide sustained training and mentorship to 546 senior civil servants - Change Agents (CAs); providing 14 ministries with networking, coordination and information sharing capacity; and building capacity of 546 South Sudanese senior civil servants in 26 institutions to deliver on institutional mandates and the peace agreement.

**Finding 9:** The recruitment/placement of SSEs to the Governance and Service Cluster MDAs was at 9 (17.3%) (from originally targeted 52 SSEs). Out of the 9 SSE, two are female. Following the revision of the project however, both Governance is left with one SSE and Service cluster having 2 SSEs, of which 1 is a lady.

Out of the 9 SSEs, one passed on and two (2) became members of parliament automatically ceasing from being UNDP employees. In December 2021 contracts of three (3) Governance and Service cluster SSEs ended and were not renewed. By the time of MTR, the Governance and Service cluster had 3 SSEs (with Governance having 1 and Service cluster remaining with 2 SSEs, 1 of whom is a lady.

The strategy for recruitment and deployment of national SSEs in MDAs is a brilliant idea, promoting a ‘sense of ownership and respect among the nationals’ civil servants being supported. This has created positive energy at the ministries concerned, and all the stakeholders talked to appreciate this strategy and the role of SSEs, whom they describe as “professionals”, “experienced” and “committed” to their work. Individual ministries talked to cited initial plans for the Project to facilitate external visits by civil servants to countries such as Rwanda for the purpose of sharing experiences and learning. However, such plans just remain plans, and stakeholders indicate that “we remain optimistic that it will happen.”

MTR notes that the performance of the GEMS project in this output is positive but low because of factors beyond UNDP and the GEMS project team. First, the implementation of the project was delayed for two years because of the delay in formation of the R-GoNU and emergence of COVID-19 in 2020. Discussions with the GEMS team indicated that the donor had instructed that the project interventions could not start until the formation of the Government of National Unity. This is because the implementation of the project was designed to support the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) in implementing Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (Resource, Economic and Financial Management). Two, the project Technical Team was recruited in Jan 2020 and the Project Manager arrived in July 2020. Three, the recruitment of the team (special skills experts) took time due to restrictions by the government following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even after UNDP Team kicked off the implementation of project activities and developed a robust Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2021), the donor in January 2021 stopped the recruitment of any additional SSEs, pointing out that they wanted the GEMS project revised since there was a likelihood that the project results were unattainable, especially in the governance cluster because of slow progress of the transition process and an effective, inclusion and accountable R-TGoNU

had not been put in place.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the 2021 workplan was not fully implemented. Donor later stopped the Governance Advisor from being in the project as this was no longer a priority.

#### 4.3 Output 1.1.2 Public sector employees' skills enhanced

The primary target of the project was to strengthen capacity of the public servants through mentorship, training and one-on-one learning. The project through SSEs was to reach, coach and mentor 546 and 254 civil servants as Change Agents (CA) in Governance and Economic Cluster MDAs respectively.

**Findings 10: By the time of the MTR, the SSEs coached/mentored a total of 114 senior civil servants (CAs) in both the Governance & Services Cluster and Economic Cluster MDS.** Overall, this is a good achievement bearing in mind that the project has just been implemented in the last 12 months.

Training/coaching by SSEs was used as a key project strategy to empower individual civil servants with necessary capacity to enable them delivery quality services. Capacity building involved trainings, workshops, twining, and strengthening systems among others. The table below shows indicative number of CAS trained so far in targeted MDAs. By the time of the MTR, the Project, through SSEs had reached, coached and trained over 114 (28.1% female) civil servants. Exhibit 4.2 indicates the CAs by cluster and Exhibit 4.3 indicates the CAs by gender and cluster.

**Exhibit 4.2: CAs trained by Cluster**

Cluster	Target Change Agents	Actual number of change agents coached
<b>Governance and Service Cluster</b>	546	61
<b>Economic Cluster</b>	254	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>114</b>

Exhibit 4.3 shows CAs reached and trained by MDAs and gender.

<sup>33</sup> This coincided with the arrival of a new team at the Norwegian Embassy in South Sudan, who were not part of the negotiation and signing of the original GEMS PRODOC. They appear to have been impressed by PFM or had instruction that the project coverage should be reviewed to cover only the 'low-lying fruits' – the Economic Cluster i.e. PFM.

**Exhibit 4.3: CAs Trained/Mentored by Gender and Clusters**

	MDAs	Change Agents (CA)		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP)	27	6	33
2	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource (MoPS&HR)	17	7	24
3	Ministry of Labour (MoL)	10	7	17
4	Ministry of gender Child and Social Welfare	2	2	4
5	Ministry of Investment /South Sudan Investment Authority	2	0	2
6	Ministry of Petroleum	3	1	4
7	South Sudan Police Service (SSPS)	3	0	3
8	Ministry of General Education and Investment	2	3	5
9	Ministry of Interior ( Border Police)	2	0	2
10	SSNPS	1	0	1
11	Traffic	2	0	2
12	CID	1		1
13	DNPI	2		2
14	PSU	1		1
15	Customs	1		1
16	Office of the Minister (Ministry of Interior)		1	1
17	PPC	6	5	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>114</b>

Although the implementation started late, all the stakeholders talked indicated that good efforts have been put in place by the SSEs to strengthen the skills of the public servants. Capacity enhancement (training) have been through one-on-one learning, workshops, and mentorships.

As mentioned above, the slow pace in performance in this result area, again, is a result of the late formation of R-GoNU. Besides, at the time of this assessment, the rehabilitation of the service training Centre had also not started as originally planned. The donor had requested UNDP to stop this intervention because of cost implications.<sup>34</sup> The Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development indicated that a national curriculum for training of civil servants has been developed through the Project. However, what remain is the modality of rolling it out and the implementation of the curriculum.

<sup>34</sup> The MTR has established from UNDP Project Management that this intervention did not take place because after the assessment the institution needed not just rehabilitation but putting up new building which were destroyed during the conflict. However, the donor did not provide resources for such major activity. However, UNDP indicated that talks are under way with other partners to raise additional resources for this important activity.



Stakeholders, including civil servants, in particular those in the Ministries of Public Service and that of Finance, talked to during the MTR pointed out that although the project has been in operation just for under 12 months, the project is enhancing their technical capacities and gaining confidence in their work and fully understanding their various duties and responsibilities. As some beneficiaries put it:

Sample of Stakeholder ‘voices’:

*“Enhancing the technical and functional capacity of the targeted ministries is work in progress and positive signs of change have been observed in the ministries and institutions where SSEs have been posted and training workshops organized... even if they are few”.*

*“Training to ministry staff by SSEs has helped decentralize the ministries, i.e., various staff now understands their roles and responsibilities and do not have to depend on an individual to guide them on what to do. Complaints and other concerns now go to the relevant desks instead of the Undersecretary. So far, we have seen positive change in terms of work ethics, commitment and motivation among staff.”*

*“By attending workshops and working together with SSE, there is better understanding of our job requirements, improved service delivery. There is better understanding in areas of planning having worked with SSEs to put together strategic planning documents. There is also better focus on jobs our jobs and motivation due to support through the project.*

*“Although the Project implementation has just started, one big achievement of the Project is that it is changing the culture and procedures of work in my Ministry. Before everything was coming to my desk. Now senior employees who are benefiting from the Project are aware of chain of command and line of service. By working with and observing SSEs, their attitudes and work ethics have changed and staff are very committed to offer quality service and in time...”).*

Interview/Discussion with Stakeholders, December 2021).

As indicated in the Challenges/Arising issues section below, the stakeholders talked to report that the Project has shown that capacity building through SSEs could have greater impact in enhancing the technical skills of civil servants if the training environment and logistics are made more conducive. For example, government paying salaries in time, and meeting transport and communication costs, and providing infrastructure like office space, computers and airtimes that could be used by officers to promote learning by doing.

#### **4.4 Output 1.2.1 Dialogue among political parties strengthened**

The Project target was to improve relations among political parties by strengthening dialogue among political parties, through capacity building and organized workshops and conferences.

#### **Finding 11: Through the Project, a platform for management and dialogue among political parties enhanced was established**

The Political Party Council (PPC) was established to facilitate the role of registering political parties in the country and regulating the competitive multiparty democracy. The project deployed



the SSE in the Council who specifically supported this process.<sup>35</sup> The PPC secretariat, with the support of the (SSE) and (CAs) developed a concept note to organize the meetings, dialogues, and exposure visits in the region. Ten (10) Change Agents (3 female) from the PPC were coached and mentored on strategic planning, political party's registration processes and the functional areas of the council, including its mandate as stipulated in the Political Party's Act of 2012. Initially, the CAs were unable to independently register a political party. This is because they did not know the procedures and thus needed support to carry out this work. After the coaching and mentoring, CAs can register political parties without guidance from PCC Senior Officials (Registrars).

Worth noting, as part of capacity building, a two-day interparty dialogue national workshop was conducted. The focus was on interparty dialogue, comparative best practices and capacity building for consolidating R-ARCSS implementation with a focus on technical aspects. A total of 69 participants attended (29 female/40 male) drawn from active political parties across the country.

#### **4.4. Output 2.1.1 Functional and technical capacity provided to key national economic management and accountability**

The result area focuses on providing functional and technical capacity in the form of 18 SSEs in 12 Economic Cluster MDAs to train 254 CAs, support review of legal frameworks, enhance capacity in management and implementation of Extractive Industries Transparencies Initiative (EITI), capacitate national statistical system, among other interventions.

**Finding 12: The recruitment and placement of SSEs in Economic Cluster MDAs was 8 (44.4%) by the time of the MTR. As mentioned above, 53 out of targeted 254 senior civil servants have been trained (see Exhibits 4.2 & 4.3 above).**

The recruitment and placement of SSEs by the time of the MTR stood at 8 out of 18 which made 44.4% of the target recruitment. In the economic cluster, only 1 SSE became a member of parliament and with all contracts of the economic cluster's SSEs renewed following project revision. By the time of the MTR, the project was operating with 7 SSEs whose contract were active and supporting the implementation of the GEMS project.

Again, as mentioned above, the slow performance of the project was because of factors beyond UNDP and the GEMS project team including the delay of the formation of the R-GoNU, lock-down due to COVID-19 pandemic , and the instruction of the donor to UNDP to stop recruiting SSEs until the project is revised slowed down/affected project performance.

**Finding 13: The MTR established that there were reviews/development of various strategic planning documents and work processes within the Ministry of Finance and Planning.**

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<sup>35</sup> Due to the refocus on the Project, this particular SSE's contract is ended and may not be renewed.

Sample of achievement:

- **Through the PFM – SSE Team supported National Audit Chamber to conduct an audit** last year and published the report. The audit report highlights various sources of income to government, including oil income, and the expenditure of various ministries.
- **Established a communication and networking mechanism for Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP):** The PFM and SSE team at the MoFP established a communication and networking platform that resulted in improvement in the attendance of the PFM Secretariat (PFM-S), PFM Technical Committee (PFM-TC), and PFM Oversight Committee (PFM-OC) meetings.
- **Finance Management and Accountability ACT 2011 (amendment) Bill 2020 reviewed:** The SSEs and Change Agents conducted a review of Public Finance Management and Accountability Act 2011 (amendment) Bill 2020. As a result, they recommended that the Loans' Committee, which is based in the Office of the President be moved to the MoFP.
- **The SSEs and CAs developed capacity building plans and coordinated all PFM-S meetings including the PFM-OC, PFM-TC, part-time and full-time secretariat meetings, and working groups consultative meetings.** The Virtual Economic Support Team (VEST) delivered a development economic course to 13 (7 females) staff of MoFP and BoSS. The course focused on analytical frameworks that analyses market and government failures using empirical evidence.
- Through the PFM Team support to the Ministry of Finance and Planning, an audit was conducted in 2021 and published, highlighting various sources of income to government, including oil income, and the expenditure of various ministries.

The project was to support the coordination mechanism for compilation of administrative and recruitment data, prepare NBS strategic plan, support the undertaking of HH budget survey and support build/renovate NBS office. By the time of the MTR, these were not yet realized. The relevant stakeholders, however, reported having worked with the national revenue authority to streamline the revenue collection and the National Audit Chamber of South Sudan. The other areas not yet realized include: Facilitation of regional missions for learning and experience sharing; and revitalizing the development aid management system as per Clause 4.3.2.6 of the R-ACSS

Stakeholders in public institutions targeted reported that the SSEs are very effective in steering the agenda of transparency and accountability within the Ministry of Finance in addition to capacity strengthening within different ministries. The PFM team deployed in the Ministry of Finance and Planning are the backbone of this project. However, the MTR was unable to establish how many civil servants have been reached/capacity built as Change Agents, and how many other civil servants in the Economic Governance Cluster have been reached. This is because there is no appropriate data.

The MTR has established that stakeholders are largely satisfied with the Project contribution so far, although more could have been done. Stakeholders, including Under-secretaries, have high expectations of the GEMS Project. However, most of them feel that the Project needed to provide more infrastructure/hardware, for example relevant equipment like computers, to compliment the capacity building component provided by the SSEs. This is because each of the public institutions targeted *“have specific needs and challenges which include infrastructure, equipment like computers/laptops, limited/lack of offices, which are important for effective training by SESs; and they are not catered for in the project”*.

## Effectiveness of project monitoring, log-frame and indicators

**Finding 14: The Project monitoring and evaluation framework was developed to standard required. However, its implementation, especially on capturing project data in a comprehensive manner and reporting on results could be enhanced.**

The GEMS project developed a monitoring and evaluation framework in 2019, and recruited Reporting Officer and Monitoring & Evaluation officers and one Gender Analyst. According to relevant documents and discussion with the project management Team, the guidelines are largely being followed. The Project Document also articulates the project Monitoring Plan. The Project Document indicates that the project outputs, outcomes and impacts will be monitored and evaluated through a range of activities, including: Tracking results progress; Monitoring and Manage Risk; Learn; Annual Project Quality Assurance; Review and Make course Corrections; Project Report; and Project Review by the Project Board.

Since the start of implementation of project activities, quarterly and annual reports are compiled and submitted accordingly. The organization of narratives generally follow the result framework and Monitoring Plan articulated in the Project Document.

The Project monitoring is at two levels: 1. Where UNDP tracks the performance and actual implementation of activities through the SSEs bi-monthly reports which are submitted to UNDP management office. 2. At the ministry level, monitoring is conducted by the Ministry's leadership who are members of the project board through board meetings.

*Other issues raised by MTR in relation to effective Project monitoring include the following:*

- *There was no actual baseline conducted for this Project which affected actual determination of gaps within the ministries and capability to generate right indicators to track exact gaps within the ministry:*
- *No formal linkage between the Project M&E framework and the Revitalized Peace Agreement monitoring mechanisms to inform progress and determine the contributions of the project:* although the project is supporting the R-ARCSS, there is no linkage between the monitoring frameworks i.e., from the design, RJMEC is not included in the picture even though, the project intends to work with major government ministries and structures under the peace agreement. As such, RJMEC is not mandated to share information and the project is not able to see wholistic linkages and impact as project monitoring focuses on inside out with a blind eye to a wholistic picture of the revitalize agreement.
- *Standard measure to determine capacity measurement:* although the project focuses on capacity building, there is not standard measure set in place to determine the various levels and extend of effectiveness for the various capacities being provided to various ministries. The different types of capacities to be provided by the project are somewhat captured but the extent to which they have to go to determine their effectiveness is not clear thus, measurement remains a challenge

## 4.5 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to how well a programme uses its resources to meet its objectives. The OECD DAC defines efficiency as “a measure of how economically resources/inputs such as funds, expertise, time, etc. are converted into results.” The type of data required to conduct an analysis of efficiency include information on the costs of inputs (such as project staff time, travel and logistics, materials, workshops etc.) required to produce the services that comprise the first level in results chain.

With data gap in this area, the assessment in efficiency is based on data presented in annual reports of 2019 and 2020 (the 2021 report was not ready), and review of annual implementation reports.

**Finding 14: The Project had a good budget of USD28,429,550 for the Project period, and by end of 2021, the amount spent on Project activities was only 14 percent**

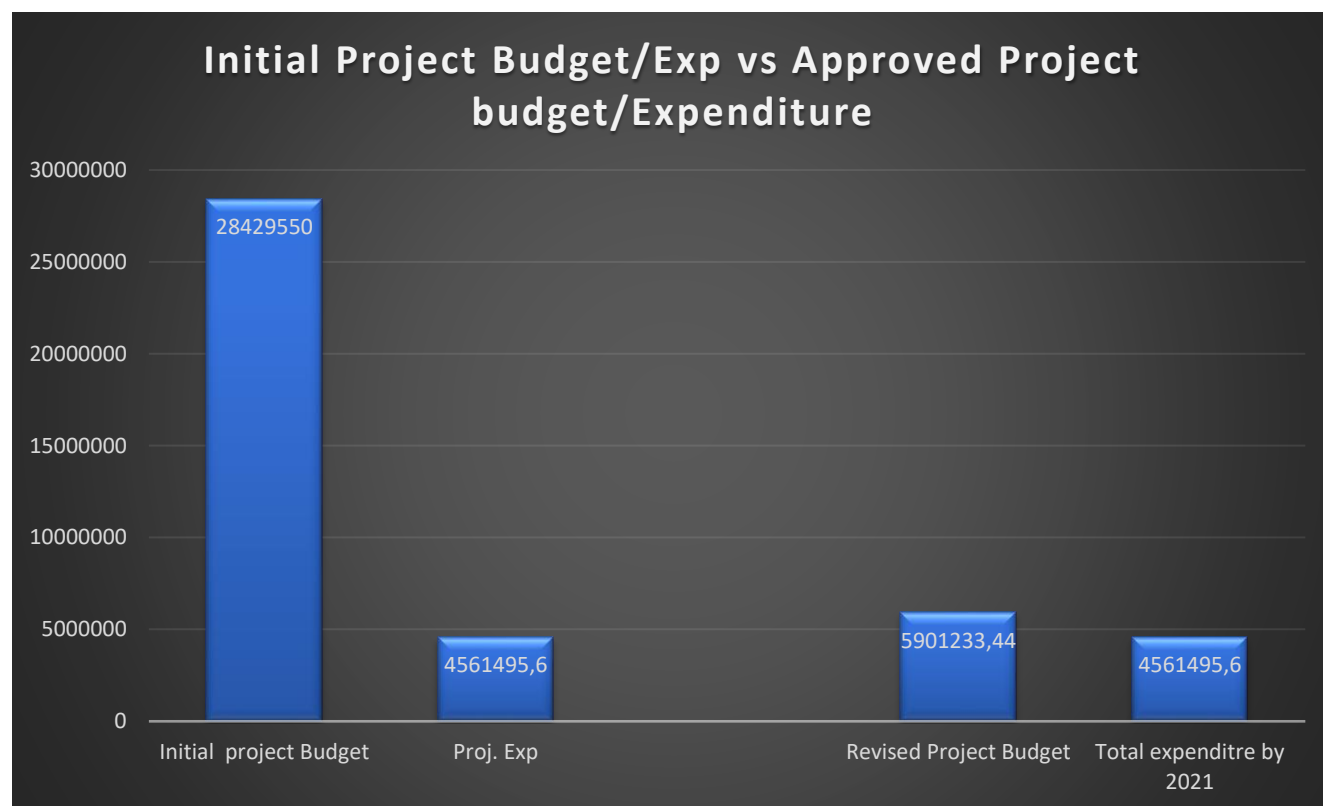
The GEMS Project funded by the Government of Norway was allocated 28,429,550 US dollar to cover the planned activities, August 2019 to December 2022. Due to late formation of R-TGoNU and the impact of Covid-19, the implementation started late and only about 15.4% of the funds has been utilized (Exhibit 5.1).

The initial total budget for GEMS project during inception was \$28,429,550 (Twenty eight million, four hundred and twenty nine thousand five hundred and fifty US Dollars). MTR established that in 2021, the original project budget was revised from USD28,429,550 to 5,901,233.44. This is because, the donor had decided to fund only the project activities in the Economic cluster. This is probably because the project progress criteria, as articulated in the original Project Document (see page 17) including progress of the transition process and an effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU, were not trainable as was originally anticipated. Interventions in the governance cluster in particular were therefore dimmed problematic by the donor.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> According to Framework Agreement on the Field of Development Cooperation between the Government of Norway and UNDP December 2015 (Article XV – Reservation), and implied in other Specific Agreements, Norway reserves the right to withhold disbursement in full or in part if, among others conditions, “the programme/projects develops unfavorable in relation to goals and objectives while paying due attention to the risks of not achieving results in complex development situation.” (pg. 13).

**Exhibit 5.1 Summary of the Project Budget breakdown before and after the Revision.**



**Finding 15: The bulk of the Project funds were not delivered because the implementation of the planned activities were delayed. Thus, significant portion of planned activities and funds have not been delivered as planned.**

A significant portion (79.2%) of budgeted funds have not been delivered to UNDP by the donor as planned. This is because the planned activities were delayed for two years because of delay in the formation of the R-GoNU and plan by the donor to revise and change direction of GEMS in early 2021. By the end of 2021, only \$5,934,939.93 had been transferred by the donor to UNDP. Out of this, \$4,561,495.60 had been spent on project activities by the end the end of 2021. This is 16.045 percent of the original resource envelope for the project. The low uptake of the project resources was due to the delay in the implementation of project activities. As mentioned above, this was as a result of delay in the formation of the R-GoNU and the instruction of the donor that no planned project activities were to start until the government of national unity was formed.

Apart from the delay in implementation and financial disbursement, various stakeholders, particularly beneficiaries, indicated that “UNDP financial and operation systems are tedious, taking time to approve and process payments.” For example, SSEs highlighted the fact that “*our payments sometimes get delayed even though, there is already an allocated budget to facilitate our work*”. Besides, “*procurement of equipment and services under this Project remains a challenge and takes a long time to implement due to “too much bureaucracy, too much paperwork,*

*cross-checking and being over-careful... on UNDP side”. And “the procurement processes at UNDP is too slow and takes time to process clients’ demands and or requests.... There are too many processes and steps to have requests approved and while these processes are being followed, some of the recruited SSEs and beneficiaries loose interest.”*

#### **Finding 16: The Project put in place good framework to maximize value for money**

The GEMS project adopts the 3-E framework – economy, efficiency, effectiveness/cost-effectiveness. Review of relevant documents and interviews of key informants/stakeholders indicate that the Project undertook the following measures to maximize value for money:

- Leveraging partnerships and comparative capacities/expertise. The Project works with key strategic partners at national level, consisting of government institutions, UNMISS, UN agencies, INGO/CSOs, and academic/research institutions. These partnerships leverage existing capacities within specific institutions that have a direct expertise, capacity and /or a leading stake in achieving one or more common development outcome of UNDP.
- Using competitive procurement processes. The core governing principle of procurement in UNDP is to obtain value for money. The procurement process in the GEMS project was guided by the principle of obtaining “best value for money”, which means selection of offers – services and goods, which present the optimum combination of “life-cycle costs and benefits”, which meet the needs of beneficiaries.
- Investing in up-front planning, documentation and evidence-based programming. Although the Project Document indicates that the “Project will invest in evidence-based planning to allocate target resources as strategically and efficiently as possible including identifying and addressing main drivers of costs”, in reality this principle was largely not adhered to. With all the evidence of delay in project implementation, it took two years for the Project scope and focus to be reviewed and reduced, and resources allocated accordingly.

#### **Finding 17: The Project built strategic partnerships that could promote the effectiveness and sustainability if used effectively**

UNDP established partnerships with a broad range of national, regional and international stakeholders including:

- Key government institutions including targeted MDAs, which provided platform for SSEs to effectively coach and mentor civil servants.
- Higher learning and research institutions and private sector nationally, regionally and globally. These availed qualified and committed skilled personnel who were deployed as SSEs in various MDAs.
- Bilateral and multilateral development organizations, including supporting the implementation of the R-ARCSS and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Africa Development Bank delivering institutional capacity building at national level.

In terms of planning, there is evidence that there were significant efforts for UNDP and the MDAs to jointly plan the GEMS project activities. Moreover, Annual Work Plans (AWPs) have been developed jointly, with participation of all targeted MDAs. However, these efforts for joint planning and reporting were constrained by the level of existing capacity in various MDAs. The COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in restriction of face-to-face meetings and travels also had negative effects on the extent of joint training, consultation, planning and reporting.

The GEMS project worked as ONE in terms of leadership, administration and reporting. The Project was designed to have one leader – UNDP as the management/coordinating agency. Moreover, the establishment of the project team led by the Project Manager enabled the Project to work towards efficiency in implementation and reporting. The project team is of the appropriate size for work undertaken. If project activities were to be at its fullest, the project team may have been over- stretched for the tasks required.

#### **4.6 Mainstreaming gender equality**

**Finding 18: The GEMS project has taken some steps to mainstream gender in this project although it faces challenges. A Gender Advisor has been hired and is playing a key role in this area**

The Project Document articulates GEMS commitment to mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) in targeted public institutions, through support of the national gender coordination mechanism in the Ministry of Gender. This is meant to support institutional reform and capacity development in selected government agencies to increase capacity in addressing relevant gender equality issues, providing technical support to relevant MDAs by ensuring capacity and skills transfer benefit up to 35 percent women, and ensuring the integration of gender sensitive results and indicators in policies and programme /projects analysis and performance measures including relevant research and analytical skills development.

The GEMS project staff are nine (9) and only one is female. The Project Results framework output indicators are gender blind and thus not showing gender disaggregation where appropriate. In current staff structure, there exists only one female representative with the role of a gender analyst. So far, of the total 17 SSEs recruited only 3 (12%) are female.<sup>37</sup> Apart from that not much in terms of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that was envisaged during project design and articulated in Project Document, is happening.

**Using the Gender Advisor as an expert and advocate:** One of the good strategies the Project used was to hire a Gender Advisor to mainstream gender in project activities, and support targeted MDAs in identifying gender gaps and strategies to address them. Overall, the Gender Advisor was considered a good strategy. Apart from reviewing of Project reports (like quarterly and annual reports) for gender responsiveness she also attended training sessions and developed training materials.

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<sup>37</sup> Discussions with UNDP Management and Project Team indicates that efforts were made to recruit more female SSEs but in vain. This is because not many women applied. The South Sudan context of peace and security could have contributed to this.

A key informant reported that there are concerted efforts to mobilize women civil servants to attend Project funded capacity building workshops although the efforts are inhibited by gender related factors in South Sudan. For example, very few women are in leadership and in technical position in the targeted MDAs, and the few who are there are restricted by gender related factors to freely attend capacity building workshops away from their stations.

A review of the results areas and implemented activities of the GEMS project shows that the Project is focused indirectly on the supply side of gender equality and women's empowerment, as compared to the demand side. And the project document is gender neutral (which could also mean it is gender blind). Although the project primary targets groups that are duty bearers (institutions technical staff, out of 10 specific result areas, there is no mention of women SSEs or. For example, in Project Document under Key activities are stated as: 1.1.1.1 "Deploy 52 SSEs to 26 Governance and Service Clusters...."; 1.1.1.3 "Identify and build capacity of 546 South Sudanese civil servants (CAs) in 26 institutions..." 2.1.1.1 "Deploy 18 SSEs to 12 Economic Cluster MDAs...", and 2.1.1.2 "Identify and build capacity of 254 South Sudanese civil servants (Change Agents) in 12 Economic Cluster MDA..." Besides, no single areas or activity talks about women's empowerment nor the relationships and complementarity between the supply and demand side interventions.

Relevant gender issues in South Sudan, such as discrimination against women, cultural and traditional factors that hinder women participation in leadership position and employment, cultural and traditional practices like early/child marriages, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), that have impact on capacity building in government institutions is not a key area of focus in the GEMS project, thus gender issues are not addressed directly or indirectly.

#### **4.7 Impact**

UNDP projects, like the GEMS, do not assess impact. Such projects, as part of UNDP CDP, would contribute to the UNSDCF outcome 1: "Sustained peace and accountable governance." The MTR therefore, only attempts to highlight already apparent changes (signs) likely to have medium and long-term effect as a result of the GEMS project based on the overall focus of the project. These are policy and structural changes in targeted MDAs and in skills development among civil servants that lay foundation for impact in the targeted MDAs (Exhibit 4.7):

Overall, the GEMS Project has played a key role in drawing attention of the R-TGoNU's senior officials and political parties on the importance of capacity building/technical inputs in moving the R-ARCSS forward through institutional reforms and sustained training of civil servants.



#### Exhibit 4.7: Some Examples of the difference the Project has made in targeted institutions

1. GEMS Project has through PFM interventions put South Sudan in international development partners' map, indicating that the country is committed to good governance, including effective/efficient management of public resource, and rationalizing public expenditure.
2. In Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the SSE coached and mentored the CAs to organize the first conference on Extractive Industries Initiative (EITI) in coordination with the Secretariat of this Initiative in Oslo. The required information and conditions were shared and explained on how to speed up the process for South Sudan to join the EITI as provided in article 4.8.1.14.11 of the R-ARCSS. The event attracted publicity on numerous Websites, Twits, TVs and Radios in South Sudan and abroad (see [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/iceland/97498/ambassador-bader-calls-more-transparent-management-oil-resources\\_ko](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/iceland/97498/ambassador-bader-calls-more-transparent-management-oil-resources_ko), and <https://audioboom.com/posts/7857139-government-and-stakeholders-commit-to-improve-transparency-in-south-sudan-extractive-industries>).
3. In the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development, the SSE reactivated the Under-Secretaries' Forum to discuss the technical aspects of running the RTGoNU, improving public administration performance, and coordinating with Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as with the three clusters of government on technicalities of planning and executing the annual budgets for the MDAs.
4. In the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Economic Specialist and the 6 SSEs - who constitute the permanent Secretariat of Public Finance Management (PFM) governance structure - contributed to increased confidence between the government and donors by implementing PFM reforms in line with Chapter IV of the RARCSS. GEMS provided technical support for the PFM reform process, thereby helping to close the credibility gap between the government and donors. GEMS support contributed to the government's successful application for emergency funding through the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Rapid Credit Facility (RCF).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, GEMS support to PFM reforms coordinated by the MoFP contributed to macroeconomic stability, including convergence of the official exchange rate and downward trend in inflation.
5. Contributed to steady progress of PFM Reform Agenda. As a contribution of this project, the secretariat has significantly contributed and continues to influence the improvement in the economic recovery. As a result, there is witness of good will from funding and development partners including the world bank and IMF. Today, more partners are willing to do business with South Sudan compared to a year ago.
6. Renewed confidence by the international Development partners, general population and stakeholders. Conducting of an audit for government expenditures and making it public is a positive step towards trust. This has renewed confidence of the international partners and the local population to start trusting the government again and support the peace initiatives at different levels.
7. Stabilizing of foreign currency exchange rates; through support from this project, the bank of South Sudan (BOSS) has built currency reserves and put a stop to deficit financing through issuance of over-drafts. This in turn has stabilized especially the dollar rate in the local market contributing to detection and control of process for common items.
8. Contributed to validating of the National Revenue Authority (NRA) which continues to further her efforts in PFM-Reforms by steadily increasing the collection of domestic taxes, the ongoing e-tax development with modules already being implemented (Registration, payments). Development of a customs management system interfaced with an electronic cargo tracking system, strengthening financial management of the non-oil revenue, steady focus on clean revenue reconciliation function is among the indicators in the sustainability of the economy.

## 4.8 Sustainability

The Project Document identify the issue of sustainability as being part and parcel of the Project Strategy. The review of the GEMS Project and its capacity building strategies points out to some sustainability measures. Accordingly, alignment of the Project with national policies/priorities on capacity building, consultation and joint planning with targeted MDAs, and implementation of project activities in selected government institutions through SSEs and working with CAs could be considered to be sustainability strategies and measures adopted by the Project. Yet, explicit exist strategies and adequate measures for sustaining the gains and scaling-up of good practices and outcomes of the GEMS project were not discussed between UNDP and the R-TGoNU. This equally has not been discussed with the current donor and any other donor.<sup>38</sup> The MTR established that currently there is no substantial know capacity development project that would replace GEMs. Many stakeholders talked to indicated that they are worried that good activities initiated by the project may come to a stop when the Project ends in 2022, unless a practical comprehensive plan for continuity is put in place as articulated in the GEMS project exist plan.

‘Voices’ of various stakeholders talked to raises the issue of sustainability of gains of the GEMS project:

“We are not seeing the government allocating money for capacity building in the civil service. For any sustainability of gains created by the GEMS project, the government must set aside adequate resources for continuity.”

“Already there is revision (reduced scope and focus) of the project. Is UNDP and other development partners going to continue funding capacity building and reforms in the public institutions in South Sudan? Otherwise, all the investment done will be in vain.”

“Sustainability of what the Project has put in place means the government and other development partners has to put adequate resources in place for the next 3 to 5 years. This is assured way of continuing and completing sustainable reforms in public institutions, for continued effective service delivery. South Sudan still needs support as a development priority.”

Stakeholder Interviews/FGD, 2021.

## 4.9 Factors affecting performance and risks

This section reports on factors that affected the implementation of the GEMS Project in both positive and negative ways with regard to project design, project management, capacity injection through SSEs, managing changes in MDAs leadership and Monitoring & Evaluation. The findings draw from common themes emerging from interviews and focus group discussions, as well as the review of documents.

**Finding 18: The implementation of the Project was affected by several factors, some beyond the control of UNDP/Project implementors and beneficiaries, including the delay in the formation of RTGoNU, Global Oil crisis, donor conditionalities on implementation and plan/instructions to revise the project, and COVID-19 pandemic.**

<sup>38</sup> The current donor has already pushed for the revision of the project not to cover Governance Cluster MDAs, a move which is not does not stand well with the Government leadership, and appear to ‘embarrass’ UNDP and lower moral of the GEMS project staff.

## **Project design and implementation challenges**

The Project was designed to support the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) in implementing Chapter IV of R-ARCSS. Project implementation even though scheduled to start in 2019 could not start without formation of R-TGoNU and in addition, Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted the implementation of the project. Even if the RTGoNU was formed as planned, and R-ARCSS implemented in total, it could have been difficult for the Project to achieve the intended results within 3 years. Regrettably, most of these R-ARCSS benchmarks got delayed and pushed into the second phase. This necessitated the extension of the end of transitional to 2023.

Trust deficits and lack of political goodwill, coupled with insufficient financing by the government, (to meet the cost of creating enabling environment for the project, including policy and legal frameworks, salaries of CAs, relevant infrastructure /equipment, transport and communication allowance) hindered the smooth progress in the implementation of the GEMS project. The delay of the formation of RTGoNU and fulfillment of the R-ARCS and the government having limited fiscal resources due to global oil crisis had major consequences in the implementation of the GEMS project. It caused the delay of implementation of the project by over 12 months. The donor had put a condition that the project implementation could not start until the R-GoNU is formed (see Footnote 1 and 2). Even with the formation of the GoNU, it took UNDP and the Government about 6 months to agree on, for example the TOR for SSEs. Another issue is that in early 2021 (just months after kick-off of project activities), some project activities did not continue as expected because the donor instructed UNDP not to continue with, for example, recruitment of SSEs and rehabilitation of the National Public Service Training Centre, this is because it had planned to revise the project to only focus on the Economic cluster MDAs.

In early 2021, UNDP had a comprehensive plan to commence enlargement of the GEMS project activities as the second phase of SSE recruitment/ deployment (see GEMS AWP 2021). However, the plan was not implemented for there were plans to revise the coverage of the project. Therefore, from then onwards, the focus of the project was mainly on Output 2 (Economic Cluster (with some support from Output 1 MDA to focus on PFM)).<sup>39</sup>

Considering the changing context and factors related to Revitalized Peace Agreement, expectations of both the project and the donor kept changing which significantly affected the decisions leading to project revision and changes as we see it. The impact of Covid-19 and continuous conflict significantly affected the progressive implementation of the project as planned affecting the expected results. At the donor level, there was a possible anticipation of the GEMS project facilitating the fast tracking and effective implementation of Revitalized Peace Agreement. But, this was not the case. The GEMS had no direct mandate nor authority to effectively influence the tremendous changes and or tilt the direction of the revitalized peace agreement. As such, although there existed expectations for significant influence to the project, this was not possible because the project is strategically focusing on enhancing capacity of senior officials/decision-makers (Change Agents) with responsibilities of providing strategic direction/guidance/ensuring good performances of the stated MDAs/institutions.

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<sup>39</sup> Revised Project Document. The GEMS October 2021-31 December 2022

R-ARCSS remains a key guiding document for the GEMS project. Thus, advocating for and supporting its effective implementation, in total, and Chapters I, and IV in particular, is a challenge and an area of concern for the government, UNDP and other development partners and friends of South Sudan. Sustained political good will and commitment is required from all parties to the agreement, and mobilization of citizens including the Diaspora. Otherwise, there is high risk of stagnated reconciliation, peace and security, and institutional reform and development, sliding back to the pre-Agreement period. If R-ARCSS is not effectively implemented, the risk of GEMS project not achieving the intended results is high.

### **Managing expectations of the MDAs (Beneficiaries) and the Donor**

The GEMS project is a capacity building project that uses capacity injection approach, through SSEs, to train and mentor senior officials/decision-makers (Change Agents) in the targeted MDAs. However, there is a misunderstanding/misconception of the project by both the donor and government leadership/ beneficiaries. The GEMS project is confused with the typical classical UNDP capacity development programme (which is usually multidimensional covering enabling policy and legal environment, provision of infrastructure, human resource injection, and provision of equipment and other tools).

Therefore, despite a clear PRODOC articulating the focus and scope of GEMS and several meetings and workshops organized by the UNDP/GEMS team, some stakeholders continues to raise questions/issues/expectations about what the GEMS project should do/is not doing, and the role of SSEs in particular. Government representatives still believe that the GEMS project should do more – including providing equipment and meeting relevant costs such as transport and communication, and even salaries.<sup>40</sup> Going forward such expectations need to be effectively managed.

### **Capacity injection through SSEs in targeted public institution**

The use of skilled and experienced SSEs was appropriate and was aimed at empowering targeted civil servants. Being South Sudanese in diaspora or locally based, helped them get acceptance in the public institutions they were posted, thus worked effectively with the civil servants they were expected to train and mentor. Besides, they had experience about gaps, changes and risks facing the country at large and public governance and economic institutions in particular. This has promoted trust and ownership among the targeted civil servants in the public service.

### **Complexity of moving from individual to broader institutional transformation**

The Project did not develop theory of change at institutional level but was targeting/addressing only the ‘supply’ of institutional capacity building environment. The types and focuses of activities emphasized were from ‘supply’ perspective, and institutions were seen as ‘passive’ recipients of technical services (for example ToC states: If the key national institutions are provided....; If economic and governance institutions are enabled..., and national integrity system supported...”

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<sup>40</sup> As articulated in the PRODOC, the GEMS project is a technical project focusing on empowering individual civil servants to effectively delivery quality services.

The role of government or targeted institutions was not articulated/or assumed. However, this has been addressed in the draft revised Project Document.

Mainstreaming institutional reforms, coaching and mentorship programme into the public service, at national and regional/local levels into government development agenda and budget remains a challenge. Without comprehensive and clear strategies for comprehensive and effective capacity building/training of civil servants' public institutions in South Sudan will continue offering poor services due to limited capacity. The GEMS project has laid a good foundation and provided useful lessons. The MDAs institutions and staff require enabling environment and conditions including adequate salaries that is paid in time, office space, necessary equipment and logistics support e.g., transport and communication to effectively participate in capacity building interventions under the GEMS project. However, neither the government nor the Project had budgets to meet such costs. This brought frustration, low morale and in some cases limited/no participation among the targeted civil servants.

Without commitment and political good will, and adequate financial resources, operationalization and implementing MDAs plans that have been developed through the project life remains a mirage.

### **Managing the changing government institutional (MDAs) context**

Leadership and coordination of capacity building and institutional reforms at MDA level is challenging in South Sudan's frequently changing institutional leadership, i.e. Ministers and under-Secretaries. The frequent changes affect the smooth implementation and monitoring of project activities in that the new leaders who come have to be taken through such projects, and be convinced that the nature of capacity building and reforms are necessary, and thus should be a priority for funding, bearing in mind that MDAs have limited resources allocated to them by the government.

While the adoption of the Peace Deal was unique and a significant event, the potential for re-structuring and re-wording (some not rationale and politically driven) in public institutions is likely to persist following the election cycle. And must be taken care of by any project or programme targeting public institutions and civil servants.

### **Monitoring, reporting and evaluation**

Creating an effective monitoring and evaluation system for a project like GEMS is a challenge but critical because it is a flagship project that is expected to deliver in its mandate, in time. In a changing socio-economic and political environment, including peace and security fragility in South Sudan, effective and joint monitoring and evaluation is critical to report on status of implementation and progress made towards results. However, UNDP continuously reported the GEMS project's situation and performance to the donor.

UNDP made efforts to continuously monitor and report on the project. As much as the project activities were conducted on an on-going basis towards envisaged results, there are data gaps on efficiency of the project - financial records on the cost of inputs etc.(refer to Section 4.3). Besides,

some stakeholders pointed out that UNDP and the project implementers “should review the M&E strategy, project logframe, in particular” to make it robust and practical for effective project’s monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

#### 4.10 Project Management and adaptive Management

**Finding 19: The Project staff structures and approaches are appropriate and, together with the technical competence and experience, contributes to the effective implementation of the project in the 12 months it has been in operation. However, the Project Executive Board has not been put in place.**

Human Resource management: The project employed almost all the planned team experts except the Senior management Advisor (Economic). The Project continue to struggle with recruitment of female qualified individuals to join the Project technical team. Out of 9 technical project staff, only one is a female (as a Gender Advisor). The Project Executive Board, to provide strategic direction of the project has not been put in place. The reason for the board not being in place was not given to the MTR team.

#### Exhibit 4.9: GEMS Project Team#

GEMS Project Team			
Projected GEMS team	No	Actual Project team	No
Project manager (P4) responsible for managing the project for achievement of results	1	Project manager	1
Management specialist (SB5) to support project manager throughout the project period.	1	National Project Management Specialist	1
Data management specialist (IUNV) attached to the aid coordination unit of the MoFP, technically support revitalization of the aid information management system (AIMS), data collection, analysis and dissemination of reports to stakeholders	1	National Programme Officer	1
Gender analyst (SB4) to provide technical support on gender mainstreaming in R-ARCSS institutions.	1	National Gender Analyst	1
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	2	National M&E Analyst	1
Admin/finance associate (SB3) to provide logistical support related to travels	1	Admin and finance Associate	1
Drivers	2	Driver (SB1)	2
UNDP Staff Assigned to Progrmmactic Activities of GEMS			
Senior programme advisor (Governance) P5	1	Governance Advisor ##	1
Senior Programme advisor (Economics) P5	1	Economic Advisor##	1
P 3 economic specialist to support economic management and aid coordination function in MoFP	1	International Economic Specialist@	1

*#The MTR noted that due to delay in the formation of the GoNU and donor instructions, the GEMS project team was fully constituted by July 2020 when the Project Manager was in office.*

*## These two are not project management team but are programme team members at 50% support. Donor requested that the Economic Advisor not be replaced and later stopped the Governance Advisor as this was no longer a priority.*

*@ Also not project management team but are programme team members.*

**Finding 19: Overall , the project implementation and coordination model and approaches were appropriate. This could be enhanced by giving targeted institutions more responsibility and accountability.**

The GEMS Project is implemented directly by UNDP using the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), through existing leadership structure of the agency.<sup>41</sup> As a good practice, the Project has a “Governance and Management” structure. The project is managed under the UNDP Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). The structure, that is to promote national ownership of the project activities, processes and results, consist of:

- a) **Project Executive Board (PEB)**, responsible for providing strategic direction to the Project and ensuring the quality of project results and outputs, and their contribution to the relevant outcomes. The PEB is composed of “Senior beneficiaries (Key MDAs)”, “Senior Executives (MoPSHRD, MoFP, MFA&IC)”, and “Senior suppliers (project donors) – Norway and UNDP”.
- b) **Project Technical Committee (TC)**: The TC consist of the MoPSHRD, MoFP, MFA&IC, and Donors.
- c) **The Project Assurance** team provides quality assurance and M&E services to the project. It comprises the Senior Programme Advisor; Senior Economic Advisor; Team Leader of Management Support Unit.
- d) **The Project Manager**: oversees the project and is responsible for the day to day running of the project as well as project results.

One of the basic principles of the aid effectiveness enshrined in the Paris Declaration is alignment to or use of government systems in programmes and financing management. This principle is practiced in countries with advanced Delivery as One (DaO) system and is found to be key in enhancing government ownership and leadership. However, the GEMS was not designed to use government systems for the project interventions and financial management. The Project Document indicates in 3.2 Project Management that “*The Project will be implemented directly by UNDP using the Direct Implementation Modality. A dedicated Project Manager under the guidance of the Democratic Governance and Stabilization Unit Senior Programme Advisor..., will directly oversee technical implementation of the project...*” (Project Document, 29-20).

A Project Executive Board (PEB) has not been established. The Board is supposed to be co-chaired by the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development (MoPSHRD), Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFA

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<sup>41</sup>As a good practice, the project is supported by all relevant units within UNDP Country Office, including Human Resources, Finance, Procurement, Common Services, Communications, Partnerships and Management Support, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

&IC) and UNDP. The main management and coordination of the Project, as per the Project Document, is the Project Manager under the guidance of the Democratic Governance and Stabilization Unit Senior Programme Advisor, in coordination with the Senior Economic Advisor and DGSU Team Leader, who directly oversee technical implementation of the Project. The Project Manager liaise with the SSEs deployed in targeted MDAs to ensure a closely coordinated approach to identifying, planning for, and delivering capacity support to key institutions implementing the R-ARCSS. The responsibilities of each of these management, coordination and implementation structures are defined with a level of clarity in the Project Document. Responsibilities and reporting lines are clear and working effectively.

The key informants, including government focal persons, consider the management, coordination and technical structure of the Project in terms of promoting ownership, efficiency and accountability of the management system as being appropriate. In particular, the stakeholders emphasized that the decision to create the Project Technical Team, headed by the Project Manager, is contributing significantly to the effective management and coordination of the Project. The management and coordination structure, apart from providing strategic guidance to the implementation of the Project, its structure and support have been essential in promoting the participation of key stakeholders in various MDAs and UN system in South Sudan.

The MTR indicates that, apart from the delay of Project implementation due to factors beyond the parties, UNDP and donor largely complied with the Project Specific Agreement signed on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2021, including adhering to the additional provision (re. item 15) as per the risks assessment that “in the event that political and security situation in South Sudan worsens, or other external factors as outlined in the risk assessment endangers or makes the implementation of the Project not possible, both parties in consultations shall have the possibility to revise, or if necessary, terminates the project, (ref. item 22 of this Agreement.)” The Project has since been revised and scaled down and a new Revised Project Document signed by UNDP and the Donor.

Although the GEMS project benefits from a wealth of technical and managerial expertise and experience from the UNDP South Sudan, regional and HQ offices, and from recruited SSEs and leadership of participating MDAs, the Project Executive Board was not put in place. The Governance advisor departed Juba and was eventually not replaced to support the project at request of the donor. Temporary staff to fill-in this position for support was not authorized by the donor. The Economic Advisor was also not replaced. As mentioned earlier, and according to information from various stakeholders, it is the donor who called for the re-focus of the project for the remaining 12 months and not UNDP and government counterparts.<sup>42</sup> There is also a potential risk of a backlash and limited support from Political Governance Cluster MDAs (and officials) who feel “let down” by UNDP.

### **Review of execution of partners/beneficiary MDAS**

The MTR established that support, commitment and execution of project activities were effective. This is as reflected in the ‘voices’ of stakeholders below:

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<sup>42</sup> It is therefore not surprising that both UNDP and MDAs got surprised that the donor has decided to fund only the Economic Cluster (low lying fruits) of the Project in the remaining period.



*“MDAs leadership from the start recognized the benefits of the GEMS project interventions, which targeted capacity building and mentorship of civil servants for effective delivery of services.”*

*“The MDAs staff realized that the GEMS project interventions could address the capacity limitations MDAs are facing. This is not only at personal level as technical staff but also at institutional level. Staff needs training and mentors and institutions require effective systems and operation guidelines to delivery effective and quality services...”*

*“Conflicts and war negatively affected public service institutions and delivery of quality services. The GEMS project provides opportunities for capacity building, training and mentorship that strengthen governance systems, management of public funds and effective service delivery by MDAs. This reality makes targeted MDAs and staff committed to participate in the project and support it to achieve its objectives... The GEMS project is God’s sent for the people of South Sudan, who would like to see sustained peace, reconciliation and development in their country.”*

The MTR established that even with the support of the GEMS project to the targeted beneficiary, there exists a challenge on the conceptualization and understanding the mandate and scope of the Project. Government leadership in general, and targeted MDAs in particular, still have different expectation about the project, as indicated in sample of stakeholder views below:

- *The Project is a panacea for ending conflict thus promoting peace, security and reconciliations;*
- *Apart from coaching and mentorship, the Project is expected to address infrastructure, equipment and other challenges affecting the targeted MDAs.*
- *The Project is also expected to address the issue of low salaries and delays, logistical costs like transport and communication, and other benefits like health insurance to civil servants.*
- *Why is UNDP focusing only on Chapter IV of R-RCSS, Chapters I and II are even more critical and a foundation for peace and security. Stakeholders expect UN to support these areas.*
- *The GEMS project should make sure that the government does not create many MDAs to reward their friends and cronies; and change ministers and Ps all the time. This is one of the key challenges South Sudan is facing.*

The misconception of the GEMS project indicates that more public education and communication about the Project to the public is required to promote common understanding and ownership. This would also promote effective implementation and monitoring of the project.

## **5.0 Lessons Learned**

The initial GEMS implementation and the RSS/IGAD initiatives offer useful lessons.

1. Capacity building in public institutions needs advocacy and awareness raising, consensus on its meaning/scope, and effective management of stakeholders’ expectations.

2. Success of a capacity building project, in a fragile state like South Sudan, requires more than just ‘one time’ (short-time) capacity injection in public institutions, but a “whole system” long term transformation, taking into consideration changing political and economic context of a country.
3. Once it is discovered that the original theory of change and assumptions are not true/realistic, it is critical for parties to consult and have open dialogue with key project stakeholders and partners, and revise the project design as soon as possible.
4. In a fragile environment, like in South Sudan, a continuous review and renewal of work plans is essential to ensure their relevance to program/project context. There is also need to have deeper understanding of the core drivers of peace and conflicts (risks) that could affect a project’s success.
5. A transitional capacity building project or programme in public institutions through capacity injection approach requires strong political will and government ownership and leadership, commitment of financial resources and effective monitoring (creating an enabling environment for training and mentorship).
6. Recruiting and deployment of national professional and experienced technical experts (Special Skills Experts) is an effective capacity injection approach into public institution compared to ‘jump-in’ external/foreign short- and long-term consultants. The approach improves a sense of ownership and respect among the local civil servants.

## 6.0 Conclusions

This section summarizes a number of conclusions based on the main evaluation findings.

**Conclusion 1:** Overall, the GEMS projects as originally formulated cannot achieve the intended results in the remaining period because of the factors beyond UNDP. The main factor is that the donor has already made a decision to fund only a revised (scale) down the project, with a focus on the economic cluster institutions. This is due to the slow pace in the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

As mentioned earlier, the implementation of the project developed in 2019 has been delayed due to slow pace of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan. An effective, inclusive and accountable R-TGoNU had not been put in place as anticipated at the time of the design of the GEMS project. The achievement of project results, in governance cluster in particular, was dimmed to be unattainable by the donor. Rather than support all 38 national political and economic governance institutions as stipulated in the original document, the revised PRODOC signed in November 2021 will focus only on 4 economic governance and two other political governance institutions. However, the MTR team notes that the achievement of intended results in the revised grant agreement could be attained only if there is fast-tracking of project interventions/activities and effective creation of enabling environment in the targeted MDS.

**Conclusion 2:** The strategic capacity injection focusing on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resources, economic and financial management/reforms) is still advisable, even with the time constraint. This is because the South Sudan pathway to sustainable peace, development and improved well-being of citizens still requires, to a large extent, strengthening capacity of key national institutions for effective and accountable implementation of Chapter IV of the R-ARCSS (resource, economic and financial Management reforms). However, the MTR has provided useful lessons that should inform the continuation and effectiveness of capacity injection into MDAs in South Sudan.

The use of South Sudanese SSEs was found to be excellent and an effective strategic model of capacity building in public institutions.<sup>43</sup> The GEMS Project strategy of capacity injection in public institution is relevant and spot on to the needs of beneficiaries. It also shows a true value of strategic partnership, between the Government of Norway (the Donor) and UNDP on one hand, and UNDP and Government MDAs on the other hand. For the short time of the project implementation, SSEs provided sustained mentorship and capacity building/training to targeted civil servants and supported development of some policy and planning documents. The Project, through SSEs, has created some catalyst reforms into some targeted public service institutions for improved service delivery, especially in the Ministries of Finance: PFM, Ministry of Public Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior.

The risk of the revised project not delivering results, as was in the original phrase, remains high. This is because of non-full implementation of R-ARCSS (Charter I and IV in particular), and dwindling political will and commitment to the project. Thus, UNDP and Government and Norway and other development partners/donors have to strategically and in collaboration/coordinated manner mitigate the existing development risks, and continue strategically supporting the transition and transformation in South Sudan.

**Conclusion 3: Although there appears to be government support/ownership, and willingness of targeted MDAs to participate in the project, there are limited financial and logistical support from the government. The government (leadership targeted MDAs and CAs) expect the project to support all the needs of the targeted institutions including meeting equipment, salary, communication and transport costs.**

A capacity building project like GEMS requires an enabling environment created by government or institutions support. For active participation in the project, targeted civil servants require salary to be paid in time, allowances for transport and communication, enabling infrastructure e.g. offices, desk, stationery etc. However, such basic requirements were generally not provided for by the government, nor covered by the Project. However, the targeted MDAs' leadership and employees expect the project to cover such cost. The effective implementation of capacity building projects, like the GEMS, requires enabling environment, including relevant policy/legal framework and additional capacity building funding from the government/MDAs to cater for basic requirements not catered for by the project. This promotes beneficiaries' ownership, commitment and motivation to participate in planned capacity building interventions including workshops.

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<sup>43</sup> This is a 'system-wide' institutional strengthening through a cascade approach, as opposed to "twinning" strategy - where experience professional is paired with an individual staff in an institutions for training.

## 7.0 Recommendations

The MTR team offers the following recommendation for UNDP (and the donor) to consider as it works in fast-tracking the achievement of project results in the remaining 12 months (before end of the project period). The recommendations are based on the evaluation findings and conclusions above. The deliberate broad formulation reflects the current uncertainty regarding and surrounding the complete implementation of R-ARCCS and implementation of the revised project in the remaining 12 months. The recommendations are provided in five main areas: continuation of project activities in the revised/refocused form, mainstreaming transformative institutional capacity building in the next UN Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development (UNSDCF) for South Sudan, rehabilitation of the national civil servant training center, prioritization of capacity building by the GoNU in its next national development plan, and strengthening future programming in the context fragility and risks in South Sudan.

### **Recommendation 1. Continuation with the Project focus and depth from a holistic and future looking perspective:**

The objectives of the GEMS project are still valid, and capacity building of public institutions in South Sudan is still a priority for sustainable development. It is therefore recommended that strategic capacity injection in political and economic governance institutions should continue in the remaining GEMS Project period and continuity/sustainability is planned from a difference forward looking perspectives, including the following:

The Project needs to go back to both political and economic governance institutions as originally planned. This is because the achievement of project results in the economic cluster requires policy and legal frameworks/actions that fall under governance cluster MDAs.<sup>44</sup> Besides, government stakeholders in the governance cluster, which is now not part of the revised project, feel “short-changed” and strongly recommended that the donor and UNDP should rescind their decision to change the coverage of the GEMS project. The MTR, therefore, recommends that there is need for a cost extension of the Project for about 3 – 5 years. Specifically,

- The Government of Norway and UNDP should initiate talks with other donors and development partners to support the revised and revamped GEMS Project (or a new capacity building programme).
- Engaging the government, on how best to proceed with the project implementation (including its contribution) and developing a tight, clear and informative implementation plan, signed off by all parties.
- Putting in place advocacy strategy for public education about the revised GEMS project and the role the government and targeted MDAs should actively play.

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<sup>44</sup> Refer to Mapping the Readiness and Functional Capacities of Governance Institutions for R-ARCCS Report, 2020, pg.2

- Fast-tracking of hiring and placement of SSEs accordingly.
- Develop a Project Exit Strategy/Plan and build consensus with the government and targeted MDAs on its implementation.
- Use lessons learned in the earlier implementation of the GEMS project to promote effectiveness and efficiency, monitoring & evaluation and reporting.

**Recommendation 2. Mainstreaming transformative institutional capacity building in the next UN Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development:**

With continued political and institutional context, peace and security in South Sudan, UNDP should work with other UN agencies, government, and other development partners to design a joint programme on capacity building, which should be mainstreamed in the next UNSDF for South Sudan. This should support a “whole system” capacity building and transformation of public service institutions for quality service delivery – going beyond just capacity injection. UNDP should move away from implementing capacity building project as a single entity and work with other UN agencies and other development partners on this strategic area. However, UNDP should take a leading role.

**Recommendation 3. Rehabilitation of the National Public Service Training Centre.**

The government should be supported to rehabilitate the National Public Service Training Centre. The continuation and success of training of public service officers for quality service delivery will be effective/efficient through a revamped national training Centre.

**Recommendation 4: GoSS prioritizing capacity building in its national plan:**

The government should be encouraged and supported to mainstream institutional capacity building into its development agenda (the next five-year national development plan), including clear articulation of resources required, government contribution, effective training model, and effective identification of strategic partners and the role of the private sector.

**Recommendation 5: Developing adaptive management and exit strategy**

Based on the political, peace and security fragility of South Sudan, and on lessons from best practice, UNDP, in consultation with other stakeholders, should develop a clear comprehensive adaptive management plan and an exit strategy, which would assist UNDP and the donor in making informed decision about what adjustment to make, and the future of the project in South Sudan.

In future programming and support to government institutions, UNDP should adapt best practices and lessons learned from reconstruction of fragile states and formulate robust and practical monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks as part of programme management. This include allocating more resources for knowledge management and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

## 8.0 Annexes

### Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for ICs and RLAs through /GPN ExpRes Services/Work Description: Mid Term Review

Project/Programme Title: Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS)

Consultancy Title: Mid Term Review (MTR) for Governance and Economic Management Duty Station: Juba, South Sudan

Duration: 30 days Expected start date: 1 September 2021

#### 1. BACKGROUND

South Sudan is still working towards building coherent core institutional structures. The Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) project is a multi-year project implemented by UNDP and funded by the Government of Norway for the period August 2019 to December 2022, and is designed to support the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) in implementing Chapter IV of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS Chapter IV of the RARCSS aims at: a) strengthening capacity of key national institutions to ensure effective and accountable implementation of the R-ARCSS; and b) bolstering key economic governance and accountability functions. The work of GEMS is primarily completed through the placement of Special Skill Experts (SSEs) into key Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The SSEs mentor MDA staff, known as Change Agents (CA) who are senior civil servants already recruited/appointed (or to be recruited/appointed) by the respective MDAs. These CAs are meant to be trainable and occupy positions central to institutional mandate and delivery of the provisions of R-ARCSS.

A complex set of issues have intervened, between signing of the agreement between UNDP and the Government of Norway and the present. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. This declaration resulted on a quick and sudden global chain of events that did not spare South Sudan. The COVID-19 pandemic represents “a crisis on top of crises” for South Sudan. COVID19 negatively impacted the multiple transitions that are ongoing in South Sudan, from war to peace to stability, humanitarian to development, and from pre-transition to transition phase. In addition, the consequence of climate change, flooding, a deteriorating exchange rate, and a lack of political will and commitment have all contributed to serious delays in implementation of the R-ARCSS. 2 of the 3 years 4 months long project period have already expired, and the project results are minimal. In the meantime, other actors, including the World Bank have entered the arena for institutional development in South Sudan. This evolving situation and the limited time remaining indicates the need for recalibration of the GEMS project in order to obtain the greatest impact in the short time remaining.

The purpose of the MTR is to assess: a.) whether the project as originally formulated can achieve the intended results in the time remaining b.) whether a strategic capacity injection focusing on Chapter IV of R-ARCSS (resource, economic and financial management/reforms) is advisable given the current time constraint Page 2 of 7 .

## **2. SCOPE OF WORK, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK**

The MTR will cover the period from August 2019 to July 2021 to draw some lessons learnt and target the proposed chapter IV institutions of R-ARCSS. The MTR reports must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. The MTR team will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (Project Document, UNDP Social and Environmental Screening, project reports, annual consultations, project budget revisions, national strategic and legal documents), and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review.

The MTR team will assess the following categories of project progress.

### **Project Design:**

- Review the problem addressed by the project and the underlying assumptions. Review the effectiveness of assumptions or changes to the context to achieving the project results as outlined in the Project Document.
- Review the relevance of the project strategy and assess whether it provides the most effective route towards expected/intended results. Were lessons from other relevant projects properly incorporated into the project design?
- Review how the project addresses country priorities. Review country ownership. Was the project concept in line with the national sector development priorities and plans of the country (or of participating countries in the case of multi-country projects)?
- Review decision-making processes: were perspectives of those who would be affected by project decisions, those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the process, taken into account during project design processes?
- Were relevant gender issues (e.g., the impact of the project on gender equality in the programme country, involvement of women's groups, engaging women in project activities) raised in the Project Document? • If there are major areas of concern, recommend areas for improvement.
- Undertake a critical analysis of the project's logframe indicators and targets, assess how "SMART" the midterm and end-of-project targets are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound), and suggest specific amendments/revisions to the targets and indicators as necessary.
- Are the project's objectives and activities or components clear, practical, and feasible within its time frame?
- Examine if progress so far has led to or could in the future catalyze beneficial development effects that should be included in the project results framework and monitored on an annual basis.

### **Progress Towards Results**

- Review the logframe indicators against progress made towards the end-of-project targets; populate the Progress Towards Results Matrix, make recommendations from the areas marked as "not on target to be achieved".
- Identify remaining barriers to achieving the project objective in the remainder of the project.
- By reviewing the aspects of the project that have already been successful, identify ways in which the project can further expand these benefits Page 3 of 7

### **Project Implementation and Adaptive Management**

#### **Management Arrangements**

- Review overall effectiveness of project management as outlined in the Project Document. Have changes been made and are they effective? Are responsibilities and reporting lines clear? Is decision-making transparent and undertaken in a timely manner? Recommend areas for improvement.
- Review the quality of execution of the Executing Agency/Implementing Partner(s) and recommend areas for improvement.

#### Work Planning

- Review any delays in project start-up and implementation, identify the causes and examine if they have been resolved.
- Are work-planning processes results-based? If not, suggest ways to re-orientate work planning to focus on results?
- To what extent was the described procedures/approach in project document followed?

#### Finance and co-finance

- Consider the financial management of the project, with specific reference to the cost-effectiveness of interventions.
- Review the changes to fund allocations because of budget revisions and assess the appropriateness and relevance of such revisions.
- Does the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allow management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for timely flow of funds?

#### Gender equality

- To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the project?
- Is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality? • How does the project mainstream gender in terms of gender equality in terms of Inclusion, participation, discrimination, numbers, among others.
- To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women?

#### Were there any unintended effects?

- What is the gender balance of project staff? What steps have been taken to ensure gender balance in project staff?
- Review the extent to which relevant gender issues were raised in the project design.

#### Risk factors

- To what extent has the project activities been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and other risk factors identified?

**Conclusions & Recommendations** The MTR consultant/team will include a section in the MTR report for evidence-based conclusions, in light of the findings. Page 4 of 7.

The review will be carried out in accordance with UNDP evaluation guidelines and policies, United Nations Group Evaluation Norms and Ethical Standards; OECD/DAC evaluation principles and guidelines and DAC Evaluation Quality Standards. The MTR will review the effectiveness of project activities to date, including the selection and placement of SSEs, project governance and management. The assessment should employ a combination of both qualitative and quantitative assessment methods including but not limited to:

1. Document review of all relevant documentation. This would include a review of inter alia; project document (contribution agreement); theory of change and results framework; programme and project quality assurance reports; annual workplans; consolidated quarterly and annual reports; results-oriented monitoring report; highlights of project board meetings; and technical/financial monitoring reports.
2. Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders including key government counterparts, donor community members, representatives of key civil society organizations, UNCT members and implementing partners:



- Development of assessment questions for different stakeholders to be interviewed around relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in the current context.
- Key informant and focus group discussions with men and women, beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- All interviews should be undertaken in full confidence and anonymity. The final assessment report will not assign specific comments to individuals.

3. Surveys and questionnaires including participants in development programmes, UNCT members and/or surveys and questionnaires involving other stakeholders at strategic and programmatic levels.

4. Data review and analysis of monitoring and other data sources and methods.

5. Capturing Case histories and success stories.

The final methodological approach including interview schedules, visits to the targeted institutions to collect data should be clearly outlined in the inception report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders, and the MTR Team.

The MTR team is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts, the UNDP Country Office, direct beneficiaries, the donor and other key stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to the targeted institutions.

The specific design and methodology for the MTR should emerge from consultations between the MTR team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the MTR purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The MTR team must, however, use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that Page 5 of 7 gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the MTR report.

The final MTR reports must describe the full MTR approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the review.

Considering the travel limitation, the MTR team should develop a methodology that takes into account the conduct of the MTRs either virtually or remotely/physically. In which case, the use of interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and review questionnaires is recommended. This should be detailed in the MTR Inception Reports and agreed with UNDP. The consultant will be home-based and provide leadership to the review process.

This MTR will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the review and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the assessment process must also be solely used for the assessment and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

The MTR should follow the following guidelines: 1.

<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#handbook> 2. Ethical guidelines

[http://www.unevaluation.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc\\_id=102](http://www.unevaluation.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=102) 3. OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm> 4. Code of conduct. <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

### **3. Expected Outputs and deliverables**

The MTR team shall prepare and submit:

- MTR Inception Reports: MTR team clarifies objectives and methods of the MTR no later than 5 days after the commencement of the MTR.
- Presentation: MTR team presents initial findings to UNDP and stakeholders after 25 days.
- Draft MTR Report: MTR team submits the draft full reports with annexes within 25 days of commencement.
- Final Report: MTR team submits the revised report with annexed and completed Audit Trail detailing how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final MTR reports. To be sent to the Commissioning Unit within 5 days of receiving UNDP comments on draft.
- Additionally, the MTR consultant/team is expected to make recommendations to the Project Team. Recommendations should be succinct suggestions for critical intervention that are specific, Page 6 of 7 measurable, achievable, and relevant. A recommendation table should be put in the report's executive summary. The MTR consultant/team should make concrete recommendations.

The assessment will be carried out over a period of 30 working days (remotely for international consultant guiding the national consultant who will be in-country)....

### **4. Institutional arrangements/reporting lines**

Implementation Arrangements UNDP will be responsible for the management of the consultant and will in this regard designate an assessment manager and focal point. Project staff will assist in facilitating the process (e.g. providing relevant documentation, arranging visits/interviews with key informants). The project manager and Project Quality Assurance team will - will convene an assessment reference group comprising of technical experts from partners and UNDP to enhance the quality of the MTR. This reference group will review the inception report and the draft assessment report to provide detailed comments related to the quality of methodology, evidence collected, analysis and articulation of findings and approve the final report. The reference group will also advise on the conformity of processes to UNDP and UNEG standards. The consultant will take responsibility, with assistance from the project team, for setting up meetings and conducting the review, subject to advanced approval of the methodology submitted in the inception report. The consultant will report directly to the designated assessment manager and focal point and work closely with the project team. The consultant will work full time, based in UNDP South Sudan (remotely for international consult) and will be required to travel to the project locations as part of the assessment. Office space and limited administrative and logistical support will be provided. The consultant will use her/his own laptop and cell phone. UNDP will develop a management response to the assessment within 4 weeks of report finalization.

### **5. Experience and qualifications**

i. Academic Qualifications: i) Minimum Advanced/ Masters' degree in International Development, Public Administration, Socio-Economic Development or other related fields.

ii) Qualification in monitoring and evaluation (certificate/ diploma)

Years of experience: iii) At least 10 years' professional experience in the fields of governance and/or economic institutional capacity building, gender mainstreaming and human rights promotion. iv) At least 7 years (and recent – latest should have been conducted within the past 2 years) in conducting studies/ reviews/evaluations/assessments in governance and/or economic management capacity building

III. Language: v) English I

V. Competencies: i) At least 7 years (and recent – latest should have been conducted within the past 2 years) in conducting studies/ reviews/evaluations/assessments in governance and/or economic management capacity building ii) At least five years in planning, implementing, and monitoring governance and/or economic management projects, or capacity building projects in governance or economic management. iii) Excellent writing skills with a strong background in report drafting (to provide sample or similar reports. iv) Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with people of different cultural, ethnic and religious background, different gender, and diverse political views.

## **Annex 2: International Evaluator Profile**

Prof Okwach Abagi is an international consultant who has worked regionally in 24 African countries including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Nigeria, Somali, The Gambia, Lesotho and Eswatini. He holds a PhD in Sociology/Development Studies from McGill University, Canada.

Okwach is a social Development and M & E Specialist, with over 30 years of professional experience, conducting policy analysis and research in the social sector/issues; and developing and managing work programmes, conducting basic and policy-oriented research, evaluating programmes/projects, organization capacity assessment, gender analysis and training, and coordinating work programmes. Okwach is an experience researcher, strategist and evaluator who uses human rights approach and gender equality frameworks in his work.

For the last two decades, Okwach has offers technical support and consultancy services to various governments and organizations in SSA including UN Agencies among others UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF and UNESCO. For two years, Okwach was a Senior Policy Advisor and Head of Social Sector programs at the Strategy and Policy Unit in the Office of the President, Rwanda. He is an academic, who has published widely and participated in policy debates in social issues, including gender equality and women/s empowerment, poverty, education and capacity building/skills development in the region.

### Annex III: Annex III: List of SSEs Interviewed/in FGDS in the Project

Lists of institutions visited and Key stakeholders/key informants

Stakeholder	# of persons interviewed (Number/Gender)			Data Collection Method
	Male	Female	Total	
Political Party Council	1	0	1	KII
Ministry of Interior	4	0	4	KIIs
Ministry of Cabinet Affairs	6	1	7	KIIs/FGD
Ministry of Finance and Planning	4	1	5	FGD/KII
Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development	1	3	4	KII
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	1	0	1	KII
UNDP South Sudan Management	0	3	3	KII
UNDP (Project Manager)	1	0	1	KII
UNDP (Project Staff)	4	1	5	KII
Donor Focal Point	1	-	0	KII
Special Skills Experts (SSEs)	9	0	6	KII/FGD
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>38</b>	

List of SSEs in the Project				
Serial Number	SSE Index	Official Designated Title in South Sudan	UPDATED ON 12 MAY 2021	Ministry Deployed
			Gender	
1	SSE001	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	M	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
2	SSE002	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Labour	M	Ministry of Labour
3	SSE003	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare	F	Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare
4	SSE004	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Cabinet Affairs	M	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs
5	SSE005	Special Skills Expert, Political Parties Council	M	Political Parties Council
6	SSE006	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Federal Affairs	M	Ministry of Federal Affairs

7	<b>SSE007</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Coordinator Cluster)	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
8	<b>SSE008</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Social Cluster)	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
9	<b>SSE009</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Interior	M	Ministry of Interior
10	<b>SSE010</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Security Cluster)	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
11	<b>SSE011</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Economic Cluster)	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
12	<b>SSE012</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Gender Cluster)	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
13	<b>SSE013</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (Governance Cluster)	F	Ministry of Finance and Planning
14	<b>SSE014</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development (Administration and Planning)	F	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development
15	<b>SSE015</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development (Human Resource Development and Training)	M	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development
16	<b>SSE016</b>	Special Skills Expert, Ministry of Finance and Planning (GATC Sectoral Planning, AIMS, and Macroeconomic Analysis )	M	Ministry of Finance and Planning
17	<b>SSE017</b>	Special Skills Expert, Office of Vice President, Economic Cluster	M	Office of VP for Economic Cluster

#### **Annex IV: List of Documents consulted/ reviewed**

- UNDP South Sudan, 1 January – December 30, 2020 annual work plan (AWP)
- UNDP South Sudan, 1 January – December 30, 2021 Annual Work Plan (AWP)
- Marona, Justin, April 2021; Back ground paper on reconsideration and Discussion on PFM working group, Ministry of Finance and Planning
- Koyongwa, Ayali, September 2021; Bi-monthly Report; Governance and Economic Management Support, Ministry of Finance and Planning.
- Thiik, Giir, March 2021; Bi-monthly Report, Ministry of Interior; Governance and Economic Management Support Project
- Longar, Dau, August 2021; Third Bi-monthly Report; Governance and Economic Management Project (GEMS) – PFM Reform Strategy, Ministry of Finance
- Marona, Justin, March 2021; Bi- monthly Report and Work plan; Governance and Economic Management Support, PFM Secretariat , Ministry of Finance and Planning
- UNDP, 14 May, 2021; Minutes of the Annual Consultations Meeting; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP- South Sudan 2019; Revised PD for August 2019 – October 2022; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP South Sudan, Jan – Mar 2020 Quarterly Report, Governance and Economic management Support Project
- UNDP South Sudan, March 2020; 2019 Annual Report; Governance and Economic management Support Project
- UNDP South Sudan, February 2020; Minutes of Annual Consultation Meeting; Governance and Economic management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP February, 2021, 2020 Annual project report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP 2021; 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Progress report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP 2021; 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter progress report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Report
- UNDP South Sudan; 2021 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan; Governance and Economic Management (GEMS) Project
- UNDP South Sudan; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project document
- UNDP South Sudan, June 2020; Quarter 2 Progress report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Report
- UNDP South Sudan, September 202; Quarter three Progress Report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP South Sudan April 2020; Quarter one Progress Report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP South Sudan, July 2020; Minutes of the Monthly Technical meeting; Governance and Economic Support (GEMS) Project
- UNDP South Sudan, April 10, 2020; Evaluation Report: End-line Evaluation for the Support to Public Administration Project; Regional Initiative for Capacity Enhancement in South Sudan Phase II Project

- UNDP South Sudan, 30 Aug 2021; Bi-monthly report; Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) Project, Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development
- Republic of South, 2018; National Development Strategy, Consolidated Peace and Stabilize the economy
- UNDP South Sudan, 2018; Country Programme Document for South Sudan (2019-2021)
- UNDP South Sudan, 2021; Bi-monthly Report Sept-Nov, 2021
- United Nations Sustainable Development Group (2019); United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
- UNDP South Sudan, 2017; UNDP Strategic Plan – 2018-2021
- Independent Evaluation Office (2019) UNDP Evaluation guidelines, United Nations Plaza, 20<sup>th</sup> floor NY, USA.



## **Annex IV: MTR Framework**

### **Relevance:**

- To what extent was the GEMS project in line with the national development priorities, the UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
- How relevant was the project strategy in the context of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and - problem identified? Was this the most effective route towards expected/intended results? the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU)
- To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's design?
- To what extent were perspectives of those who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, taken into account during the project design processes?
- To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?
- To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to political, legal, economic, institutional, etc., changes in the country?
- Are there major area of concerned in GEMS project design (originally)?
- If the GEMs project is to be redesigned, what should be taken into consideration and how should it look like (probe for focus, scope, depth and width)

### **Effectiveness**

- To what extent has the GEMS project achieved each of its X planned outcomes and results under them?
- What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving intended project outputs and outcomes?
- To what extent were the project outputs achieved?
- How was the quality of the outputs or benefits delivered by the programme, including the satisfaction of beneficiaries?
- To what extent has the GEMS project approaches and strategies been effective in building national ownership
- Has the programme put in place and implemented effective monitoring mechanisms to measure progress as well as to identify and address challenges faced during implementation?
- To what extent has the UNDP partnership strategy been appropriate and effective in the GEMs project?
- What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness?
- In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project (and UNDP) build on or expand these achievements?
- In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?
- To what extent have key stakeholders (Government counterparts in targeted MDAs) been involved in project implementation?

- To what extent are project management and implementation participatory and is this participation contributing towards achievement of the project objectives?
- To what extent has the project been appropriately responsive to the needs of the national constituents and changing partner priorities?
- To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights?

### **Efficiency**

- To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
- To what extent have the UNDP project implementation strategy and execution been efficient and cost-effective?
- To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?
- To what extent have resources been used efficiently and accounted for? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective?
- To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
- To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?

### **Sustainability**

- Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs?
- To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?
- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project's contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?
- What is the risk that the level of stakeholders' ownership will be sufficient to allow for the project benefits to be sustained?
- To what extent do mechanisms, procedures and policies exist to allow primary stakeholders to carry forward the results attained on gender equality, empowerment of women, human rights and human development?
- To what extent do stakeholders support the project's long-term objectives?
- What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability?

### ***Management and Coordination:***

- Was the management and coordination arrangement set out in the project document appropriate and realistic? Were the responsibilities of the management structures clearly defined and understood by all?
- How well the coordination functions have been fulfilled? What were the challenges and how can these be addressed in future?
- Were management and implementation capacities adequate?
- Has the project made strategic use of coordination and collaboration with other?
- relevant partners within and outside UN system?
- What is required to increase the effectiveness and impact of the GEMS project?

## **Evaluation cross-cutting issues sample questions**

### **Human rights**

- To what extent have poor, indigenous and physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefited from the work of UNDP in the country?

### **Gender equality**

- To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?
- Was gender maker assigned to this project? If yes, is the gender marker data assigned to this project representative of reality? If no, why?
- To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Were there any unintended effects?

**Annex V: Summary of GEMS SSEs by cluster**

Cluster	No. of SSEs	Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Governance Cluster	5	5	0	5
Service Cluster	3	2	1	3
Gender and Youth Cluster	1	1	0	1
Economic Cluster	8	7	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

**List of Trained CA**

	Ministry/Agents/Categories	Change Agents (CA)		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP)	27	6	33
2	Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource (MoPS&HR)	17	7	24
3	Ministry of Labour (MoL)	10	7	17
4	Ministry of gender Child and Social Welfare	2	2	4
5	Ministry of Investment /South Sudan Investment Authority	2	0	2
6	Ministry of Petroleum	3	1	4
7	South Sudan Police Service (SSPS)	3	0	3
8	Ministry of General Education and Investment	2	3	5
9	Ministry of Interior ( Border Police)	2	0	2
10	SSNPS	1	0	1
11	Traffic	2	0	2
12	CID	1		1
13	DNPI	2		2
14	PSU	1		1
15	Customs	1		1
16	Office of the Minister (Ministry of Interior )		1	1
17	PPC	6	5	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>114</b>