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UN Transitions Project

Mid-Term Evaluation



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List of Acronyms

A4P:	Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping Initiative.	MINUSCA:	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic.
AAR:	After-Action Review.	MINUSMA:	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
AFPs:	Agencies, Funds and Programmes (of the United Nations Country Team).	MONUSCO:	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo.
BINUH:	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.	M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
CAR:	Central African Republic	MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding.
DC:	Deputies Committee.	MPTF:	Multi-Partner Trust Fund.
DCO:	United Nations Development Coordination Office.	NWOW:	'New Way of Working'.
DDRCs:	Demobilisation, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilisation.	PBF:	United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund.
DOS:	United Nations Department of Operational Services.	PBSO:	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office.
DPO:	United Nations Department of Peace Operations.	PIP:	Project Implementation Plan.
DPPA:	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.	PPDB:	DPPA-DPO Policy and Practice Database.
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo.	PKO:	Peacekeeping Operation.
DSMPC:	United Nations Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance.	Project:	United Nations Transition Project (inc. Project Management Team and Project Steering Committee).
DSRSG:	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General.	QCPR:	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.
EC:	Executive Committee.	RC:	Resident Coordinator.
EOSG:	Executive Office of the Secretary-General.	RCO:	Office of the Resident Coordinator.
GDLSG:	Guidance Development and Learning Steering Committee.	SDG:	Sustainable Development Goals.
HC:	Humanitarian Coordinator.	SLFs:	State Liaison Functions.
HDP Nexus:	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.	SOP:	Standard Operating Procedure.
HDPP Facility:	Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding and Partnership Facility.	SPCU:	Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit.
HQ:	Head Quarters.	SPM:	Special Political Mission.
IAP Policy:	2013 Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning.	SRSg:	Special Representative of the Secretary-General.
IC:	International Consultant.	UNAMID:	United Nations - African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur.
IFI:	International Financial Institution.	UNCT:	United Nations Country Team.
IOT:	Integrated Operations Team.	UNDAF:	United Nations Development Assistance Framework.
ISF:	Integrated Strategic Framework.	UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
ISSSS:	International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy	UNITAMS:	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
ITC:	Integrated Transition Calendar.	UNMISS:	United Nations Mission in South Sudan.
ITF:	Integrated (Mission) Task Force.	UNSCOL:	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon.
KMOLP:	2020 DPPA-DPO Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning Policy	UNSCR:	United Nations Security Council Resolution.
		UNSDCF:	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
		UNSMIL:	United Nations Support Mission in Libya.
		UNSOM:	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.
		UNVMC:	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Executive Summary

This report is a mid-term evaluation of the Joint Programme ‘UN Transitions Project – Sustaining Peace and Development Beyond Mission Withdrawal’ (hereafter ‘the Project’). It reviews the Project’s delivery, relevance and efficiency, and provides recommendations on the future of the Project beyond 2023 based on an assessment of future demand for integrated support to UN transitions, the needs and challenges of the Project’s stakeholders, and existing capacities in the Organisation to meet those demands. In making its recommendations, this report recognizes the extra-budgetary donor-funded modality of the Project and offers suggestions for its mainstreaming into the system. All recommendations are intended to be actionable during the final year of the Project’s third cycle and within 12 months of the date of the report.

This evaluation finds that the Project has delivered substantively over 2019-22, notably in its support to relevant policy development and to transition arrangements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However these policy developments now require the Project to revise/update its strategy and scope, and the design and prioritisation of in-country support. It recommends that workplanning for any further project cycle should prioritise ‘mainstreaming’ the Project’s intended functions in the direction of a ‘surge capacity’ support function for integrated planning arrangements, for in-country senior leadership and planners to draw upon during critical moments such as transitions. It offers 11 recommendations clustered under 4 ‘Action Points’:

Action Point 1: Clarify strategic objective, scope, and ‘mainstreaming’ vision.

1. Update the Project’s strategic objectives to reflect current UN policies and reforms,
2. Clarify the Project’s use of the term ‘transition,’ particularly in countries not in ‘active transition’, and update the Project’s branding and communications accordingly.
3. Articulate the Project’s vision for ‘mainstreaming’ its capacity support functions.

Action Point 2: Consult senior planning stakeholders systematically across agreed countries.

4. Agree from the outset the criteria for a ‘long-list’ of countries in which the Project may work, and differentiate the Project’s ‘downstream’ offer supporting planning for active transitions with specified end dates, from its ‘upstream’ offer supporting early integrated planning arrangements,
5. Set priorities for the Project’s budget/resource allocation by creating a regular consultation and feedback loop with senior and working-level stakeholders in its ‘long-listed’ countries during annual work planning.

Action Point 3: Prioritise Project towards meeting in-country UN planning capacity needs.

6. Focus the Project’s results framework on supporting five planning ‘capacity needs’ that the UN frequently encounters during times of ‘peak’ demand such as transitions:
 - a. Capacity for integrating ‘core components’ of early transition planning into current interagency assessment and planning tools, improving communication and coherence

- between missions and the UN Country Team, and strengthening feedback to Integrated (Mission) Task Forces and Integrated Operational Teams on interagency planning issues,
- b. Capacity for strategic transition-related joint programme design and its integration with strategic UN and regional plans,
 - c. Capacity for financial planning/analysis and supporting funding frameworks, including where applicable development of pooled funding mechanisms, and early coordination with international financial institutions,
 - d. Capacity for ensuring stronger communication and connectivity with national counterparts, particularly at the technical and working level,
 - e. Capacity for individual UNCT entities to scale planning and programming proportionate to the political and strategic changes introduced during mission transitions.
7. When designing modalities for in-country support, move forward from the conception of a single Transition Specialist as 'one stop shop' towards a differentiated slate of functions addressing needs of senior leadership:
- a. Strategic and integrated mission-UNCT coordination at the level of a DSRSG/RC/HC, with communications relationships with mission SPUs, and HQ ITFs and IOTs,
 - b. Support for Resident Coordinators to integrate transition planning into Cooperation Frameworks,
 - c. Advisory support on recalibrating country programmes and operational footprints for UNCT Country Offices,
 - d. Advisory secondments embedded into government Executive Offices.
8. Create a plan for rationalising the Project's knowledge products into established organisational learning products aimed at the needs of planning stakeholders, that can be branded, published and distributed online.

Action Point 4: Adjust planning and working tools to ensure scope of work is achievable within current governance and/or management structures.

- 9. Encourage fuller strategic engagement of the Project Steering Committee outside of the quarterly review process,
- 10. Use project implementation plans (PIPs) to create clarity of vision around individual workstreams and goals, enable input from / coordination with HQ-level stakeholders outside the Steering Committee, and streamline the Project's decision-making processes,
- 11. Reduce bandwidth consumption on the Project Management Team by streamlining the overall number of activities utilising staff time, delegation, assigning 'country leads' at the country level, and bringing SOPs out of draft form.

Introduction: Scope and Methodology

Scope and Purpose

1. The Project was created in 2014 to support improved and integrated planning of mission transitions across three areas: proactive and integrated transition planning, transition financing and programming, and strengthening national ownership and regional engagement. It has been renewed in triennial cycles upon the third quarter of each financial year. The Project is now in its third cycle; its first cycle ran from July 2014 - July 2017, its second from July 2017 to July 2020, and its third from July 2020 to July 2023. The evaluation's scope covers the last year of the Project's second cycle, and the first two years of its Project's third cycle (July 2019 – June 2022). As per the terms of reference, it reviews the Project's delivery, relevance, and efficiency, and provides recommendations to inform discussions on the future of the Project beyond 2023 based on assessment of the following:

- (a) Demand for integrated support to UN transition processes in coming years,
- (b) Needs and challenges of the Project's stakeholders in country,
- (c) Existing capacities in the organization to meet those demands,
- (d) Linkages between transitions and work on UN integration,
- (e) Ways of strengthening/streamlining Project work modalities.

Methodology and Limitations

2. **Inception.** Scope of work was clarified during the inception phase with 'lines of enquiry' and initial list of interviewees suggested by the Project Management Team and submission of proposed table of contents from the evaluator [Annex 1]. These were approved by the Project Steering Committee by the end of fourth week. In the interim, the evaluator conducted a desk review of project documentation, monitoring and evaluation records, donor reporting, workplans, budgets, log frames, and relevant UN policies, knowledge products, and studies conducted by affiliated research institutions.

3. **Data Collection.** 53 primary interviews were conducted during the data collection phase, with a 98% response rate. All interviews were 'Key Informant Interviews', i.e., qualitative and in-depth with interviewees selected specifically for their first-hand knowledge and as being representative of the Project's stakeholders. Interviewee selection aimed at securing a full and accurate representation of the following clusters or groups, with the final list (on file with the author as confidential annex) approved by the Project Management Team:

- (a) Senior leadership and planning officials who were direct recipients of Project support in country settings, and their relevant backstopping regional divisions),
- (b) Policy and planning units belonging to each of the Project's partners,
- (c) Relevant departments of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General,
- (d) UNHQ focal points on planning, joint programming, surge capacities, and trust funds,
- (e) Project donors, governance, management and consultants.

4. **Interview Methodology.** Interviews were conducted bilaterally and under 'Chatham House' rules of non-attribution to ensure an unfiltered and candid representation of views. Quantitative

surveying techniques or questionnaires were not used, because the multiple country and HQ contexts represented and wide variety in Project workstreams limited the utility of ratings scales, and because questions were open-ended in structure. Questions were designed to allow interviewees time to explore or articulate issues without acquiescence bias or excessive prompting from the interviewer and offer unprompted or unanticipated lines of discussion.

5. **Validation.** Several methods of triangulation were used for data validation and triangulation. Qualitative or value statements were verified through data triangulation, meaning at least three interviewees, preferably from different professional contexts, expressed same or similar views. Project documentation such as Transition Specialists' exit interviews, M&E frameworks and donor reports were also used to triangulate views. The evaluator also sought confirmation from Project management that interviews were fully representative of Project stakeholders. The evaluator also utilized 'theory triangulation' by consulting with officially designated focal points in HQ for certain policy and programming support tools, and with senior planners on UN planning capacity needs.

6. **Recommendation Design.** All recommendations are the author's own, using the data validation techniques above, and not attributable to specific interviewees. Consultations on initial findings were held with the Project¹ in late April 2022 to solicit inputs and sensitise, and a written draft circulated on the week of 10 May for written feedback. On 18 May, the evaluator conducted an in-person presentation and workshop with the Project Management Team and Steering Committee, during which the evaluator facilitated dialogue between Project partners and management. This fed into the second draft of recommendations, along with 10 further interviews conducted in June for validation purposes. A second draft of the full evaluation was subsequently circulated for comment.

7. **Limitations.** While some 'lines of enquiry' imply full assessment capacity across missions and UN Country Teams (UNCTs),² interview sampling was confined to recipients of Project support, providing three transition case studies – Mali, Sudan, and DRC. This limitation was prescribed by the time allowed and parameters of interview selection. The evaluator therefore triangulated recommendations with all available relevant assessments of UN planning capacity. A Secretary-General's report (S-2022-522, published 29 June 2022) evaluating UN capacities in transitions was also in production during the evaluation timeframe with access to a broader set of stakeholders outside the parameters of the Project, allowing for an 'investigator triangulation' regarding the identification of planning capacity gaps. Finally, the evaluator included a recommendation for full consultation of senior leadership and P5 planners across all current and future priority countries (see Recs. 2-4). The recommendations themselves may also be validated by the Project through surveys using a quantitative agree/disagree scale (e.g. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), if so desired.

¹ 'The Project' is used to refer to the Project Secretariat, Management Team and Steering Committee. References to one particular component of the Project's governance, where intended, are specified in the text.

² 'UN Country Teams (UNCTs) refer to the country offices of all UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) under the leadership and coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator.

Assessment of Project Delivery

Overview of Project Activities

Results Framework

8. The Project's results framework is framed around a theory of change that emphasizes the ability of the UN system in-country to reconfigure itself at the point of a mission's withdrawal, and the ability of the host government to lead and own the reconfiguration process.³

9. The Project Document also identifies five 'lessons learned' it derived from previous transition processes that 'guide' the design of the 2020-23 cycle. These are: that transitions are 'complex, inherently political and strategic processes', that political engagement is required during and after mission withdrawal, that transition planning should be proactive and integrated, that the 'financial cliff' is a major risk, and that national leadership and ownership are 'critical'.

10. The results framework's outcomes split the Project's activities according to 'country-level results' or 'UNHQ and global policy level results',⁴ with each area of focus having two outcomes respectively addressing UN and non-UN entities. The Project provided a comprehensive M&E framework providing outputs and activity-level indicators against each outcome:

'Country-level results':

- **Outcome 1:** 'The UN in transition settings adapts its strategy and footprint in a more proactive, integrated, and forward-looking manner to support transitions',
- **Outcome 4:** 'Host governments, CSOs (including women and youth networks), regional and subregional organisations, and bilateral partners increasingly collaborate with the UN on transitions in priority countries.'

'UNHQ and global policy level results':

- **Outcome 2:** 'UN Transitions are increasingly prioritized and institutionalized within the UN system and among Member States in a manner reflecting a more effective approach to transition processes',
- **Outcome 3:** 'Key member states, regional organizations, IFIs & other partners increasingly collaborate with the UN on transitions.'

11. Activity distribution between the four outcomes was found to be somewhat uneven, with a far greater proportion of spending and activity allocated against Outcome 1, and lesser against Outcomes 3 and 4. This may be due to the framing of the latter in terms of changing the behaviour of non-UN actors. The division of outcomes into HQ and country levels also left implicit the connection of some HQ-level activities to the theory of change, which emphasised targeting UN and host government management / collaboration on transition processes at the country level.

³ The full wording of the theory of change is as follows: 'When the UN – during and after mission withdrawal – reconfigures its full range of peace and development capacities to provide more coherent and effective support, aligned to national priorities and needs, and in a manner that is nationally-led and owned, then host nations in transition settings are better equipped to address root causes of conflict, consolidate peacebuilding gains and take a lead in achieving sustainable peace and development.'

⁴ Project Document 2020-23, p. 15.

Activities

12. The Project acknowledged that its delivery rate over its third cycle, currently forecast to be 76%, is lower than anticipated. However the evaluation notes several mitigating factors in this regard. The COVID-19 pandemic substantially affected the Project's ability to deploy in-country support over 2020-21. The Project's projections of in-country support to Mali were also delayed as the deteriorating security situation in that country led to a pause in the mission's 'early transition planning' arrangements. The Project also experiences frequent rollover of funds allocated to activities which remain at the concept note stage or in development which it attributes to slow internal decision-making procedures.

13. The Project also experienced what it felt to be limited visibility across mission senior leadership and AFPs, with correspondingly fewer requests for its support. It has taken steps to address this during the current cycle, including through part-time secondment of a member of the Project Secretariat to the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Strengthening Programmatic Integration, and participation in senior leadership retreats. Further remarks are provided under Recommendations 4 and 5.

14. The following paragraphs 15-26 list activities contributing to each outcome and the modality used, and was validated as full and complete by the Project Secretariat as of June 2022. Modalities used are indicated in brackets after each activity. Being a mid-term evaluation, some activities against which Project resources were allocated were yet to commence. This list should therefore be compared with that of any forthcoming end-of-project evaluation.

Outcome 1

15. Outcome 1 is supported by one output: 'UN missions and Country Teams are increasingly engaged in proactive and integrated transition processes'.

16. The Project engaged in three activity workstreams in support of this outcome, using a mixture of Project Secretariat staff time, and international consultants (ICs):

- (a) Support for implementing the 2019 Secretary General's Planning Directive for the development of consistent and coherent UN transition processes (Staff time),
- (b) In-country trainings and support conducted directly by the Project Secretariat (Staff time),
- (c) Provision of 'operational support and technical expertise' in countries with missions undergoing transition (Various ICs and staff cost-sharing agreements).

Outcome 2

17. Outcome 2 was supported by one output: 'UN stakeholders at HQ level are increasingly engaged to prioritize transitions planning in policy and guidance'.

18. For this outcome, the Project produced practice-oriented knowledge and guidance products either directly or using ICs. In most cases the requesting body was the UN Executive Committee (EC) and/or the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), although some products were produced at the Project's initiative. The Project Secretariat also contributed its own time in the form of advisory support to UNHQ staff on transition planning and supporting training initiatives on request. Knowledge products were in varying stages of completion during the evaluation timeframe; this is indicated in brackets, alongside the modality used and requesting entity):

- (a) A report conducting a Review of UN Integration (Two ICs, EOSG request, completed),

- (b) Contracting of a third-party consultancy, Ideas42, to supply additional insights and recommendations on behavioural change to the Review of UN Integration (Third-party vendor, Project initiative, completed),
 - (c) A paper on 'Guidance on Funding and Financing Opportunities for UN Transitions' (Staff time, Project initiative, completed),
 - (d) Review and update of official UN guidance:
 - (i) Review of existing guidance on liquidation of mission assets and handling of national staff arrangements at/upon mission drawdown, to clarify protocols around AFP engagement and asset disposal processes (One IC, ongoing),
 - (ii) Review of / support for DPO-DPET guidance on transfer of child protection from missions in drawdown (One IC, ongoing).
 - (e) A 'Lessons Learned' analysis of the transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH (2017) and MINUJUSTH to BINUH (2019) in Haiti (One IC, EC request, complete pending validation exercise),
 - (f) An After-Action Review of the closure of State Liaison Functions from UNAMID to UNITAMS and of knowledge transfer from UNAMID to UNITAMS and UNCT in Sudan (Two ICs, EC request, complete),
 - (g) An After-Action Review of the transition of UNIOGBIS functions to UNOWAS and UNCT (One IC, EC request, completed),
 - (h) A series of peer-to-peer exchanges between practitioners in UNAMID (Sudan) and MONSUCO (DRC) on transfer of 'protection of civilians' elements of mission mandates, with the aim of distilling information and recommendations from UNAMID for use by MONUSCO (One IC, Project initiative, ongoing).
19. The Project also earmarked resources (indicated in brackets) towards the following activities which were yet to commence or were deprioritized at the time of the evaluation:
- (a) Development of a 'Planning Resource Hub' (One IC, Project initiative),
 - (b) Development of 'strategies' for the transfer of UN mission energy sources and utilities for AFP or local use following mission drawdown (One IC, Project initiative),
 - (c) A 'lessons learned' exercise for gender responsive transitions (One IC, Project initiative),
 - (d) Establishment of a professional cadre of UN transition experts (Secretariat staff time, Project initiative).
20. The Project also produced internal 'non-papers' and other documents as inputs into HQ planning processes which were not published or distributed, and delivered comments and inputs into knowledge products developed by other UN departments. For further remarks, see paras. 59-60.

Outcome 3

21. Outcome 3 was supported by one output: 'Non-UN Stakeholders at HQ level are increasingly engaged on UN transitions.'
22. The Project engaged in three activity workstreams in support of this outcome:

- (a) Organisation of two Security Council debates on transition planning issues in December 2020 (led by Tunisia) and September 2021 (led by Ireland), forming part of the negotiations leading up to UNSCR 2594 (Staff time),
- (b) Support to the drafting of the Security Council report pursuant to UNSCR 2594 'Transitions in United Nations peace operations: Report of the Secretary-General'⁵ (One IC),
- (c) A series of workshops promoting greater EU-UN cooperation in mission transition settings (One IC).

23. The Project also earmarked resources towards the following activities which were yet to commence at the time of the evaluation:

- (a) Develop and disseminate guidance for host governments on transitions (staff time),
- (b) Provision of training on transitions for host governments (staff time),

Outcome 4

24. Outcome 4 is supported by one output: 'Non-UN stakeholders are increasingly engaged in proactive and integrated transition planning processes in priority countries'.

25. The Project expressed intent to undertake the following activities in support of this outcome, which had yet to commence at the time of this evaluation:

- (a) Deployment of National Transition Specialists within host governments where feasible,
- (b) Development of a practice note on national ownership in transitions.

26. Though not described by the Project as contributory to this outcome, the evaluation would like to note that the second Transition Specialist deployed in DRC (November 2021 onwards) may be considered to have contributed substantively to the UN's efforts to engage the host government on transition planning in DRC through the chairing of technical working groups mapped to the UN-government Joint Working Group (see para. 37).

Findings

Implementation of 2019 Secretary General's Planning Directive

Impact

27. The following activities supporting implementation of the 2019 Planning Directive on UN transitions (hereafter '2019 Planning Directive'),⁶ were conducted directly by the Project Secretariat, with additional support from 'Transition Specialists' in Mali, Sudan and DRC:

- (a) Drafting of a supplementary 'Explanatory Note' articulating the purpose itself of the calendar/roadmap and the six requested planning products (Oct 2019),
- (b) Provision by the Project Secretariat of in-country trainings for missions / UNCTs on implementation of the 2019 Planning Directive's 'transition calendars' in Guinea-Bissau

⁵ This support was undertaken during the process of the evaluation, and published on 29 June 2022 under S-2022-522.

⁶ The Directive's full title is 'Secretary-General's Planning Directive for the Development of Consistent and Coherent UN Transition Processes, in line with Executive Committee Decision 208/38.'

(April 2019) and Mali (October 2019), and (remote) guidance on same to DRC, Iraq, Lebanon, CAR, and Mali,

- (c) (through Transition Specialists) Support to production of roadmaps in Sudan and DRC including through facilitating in-country trainings,
- (d) Debriefing of Executive Committee and 'stocktaking' survey, requested by the Executive Committee, on uptake of the Calendar/Roadmap initiative (conducted March-May 2021),
- (e) An 'Early Transition Planning Workshop' (22-24 June 2022) with missions and UNCT colleagues from CAR, Iraq, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan.

28. The 2019 Planning Directive was issued in April 2019 pursuant to the 2013 Policies on UN Transitions and on Integrated Assessment and Planning, following a six-monthly review of challenges in transition settings conducted by the Project in January 2018 at the request of the Executive Committee. It applied to all heads and deputy heads of all integrated missions, clarified the responsibilities of mission leadership for transition planning in response to lessons learned from prior transitions, and requested certain changes to staffing policies. It also requested from missions the following;

- (a) Provision of an 'Integrated Transition Calendar' 'upon completion of the mission's start-up phase' or (for missions already established),
- (b) Provision of a 'detailed transition plan' 24 months before a set date for mission withdrawal or reconfiguration, to include 'possible realignment of resources and a strategy to mobilize any additional resources'.

29. The Project's sponsorship and sharing of lessons learned provided impetus for the creation of the 2019 Planning Directive, and the Project was subsequently integral to the development of the 'Integrated Transition Calendar' (hereafter 'ITC'). The Project also articulated 'core components' of the ITC, which were elaborated in a supplementary Explanatory Note to the Directive, and provision of workshops by the Project.

30. Following the Project's provision of the explanatory note and subsequent trainings and advisory support to mission planners and their IOTs, 11 of the 16 integrated missions addressed by the Directive submitted ITCs.

Challenges

31. Field counterparts responded slowly to early iterations of the ITC, upon which the Project followed up with issuance of the 'Explanatory Note', engagement of leadership and clarification/evolution of some of the conceptual language used. The interview testimony gathered by the evaluation, correlated with the conclusions generated by the Project's own stocktaking exercise which it initiated in response (para. 27d), suggested several reasons as to why this was the case. The intended planning function of the ITC was obscured firstly by the relationship of the suggested 'components' of the ITC to existing mission and RC integrated planning functions, and secondly by the implications of the terminology used – i.e., that the Calendar should serve as a fixed and dated timeline for a mission drawdown, even if an end date were as yet undefined, against which missions would be held accountable. Some missions, particularly those without a Security Council directive or host government request to plan for withdrawal, felt that engaging the host government on transition planning distracted from existing challenges in country, the mission's mandate to address them and could give rise to political sensitivities.

32. The relationship of the Calendar's components to existing planning functions was clarified in the Explanatory Note as being either 'part of existing assessment and planning processes' or

‘build[ing] on existing work.’⁷ The Note left it to mission leadership to determine the precise assessment and planning processes in question, and whether they were to be located at the mission level,ⁱ required revision to the Mission Conceptⁱⁱ or Integrated Strategic Framework,ⁱⁱⁱ or alternatively within UNCT interagency planning tools recently strengthened under the newly-reformed^{iv} UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)^v and Resident Coordinator system, such as Common Country Analysis, Funding Framework, and UNCT capacity mapping⁸ - although the Project subsequently collaborated with DCO on developing a methodology for the latter (see para. 46). The code cable was also not distributed to Resident Coordinators outside integrated mission contexts, despite the Project’s Transition Specialists being deployed into two non-integrated Resident Coordinators Offices (Guinea-Bissau and Sudan),⁹ and the systemic engagement of UNCTs on ITCs remains an ongoing objective for the Project (see para. 50).

33. Queries regarding terminology were addressed through renaming the ITC as an Integrated Transition Roadmap and forecasting tool.¹⁰ Requirements for timelines/milestones for the ‘components’ were relaxed so as not to imply specific dates, a linear process, or use of the roadmap as an accountability tool. In some quarters, terms such as ‘benchmarking’ were felt to be used outside their original context of drawdown of uniformed components of peacekeeping operations (see endnote ix), raising questions as to how ‘Roadmap’ components employing such terms should build on Security Council decisions using the same conceptual language.¹¹ Such observations however likely reflect ongoing discussion over and evolution of this terminology in the Organisation in a strategic context, as opposed to the Project’s usage of such terms.

34. Despite these challenges, the Project succeeded in encouraging the submission of Calendars/Roadmaps from 11 of the 16 integrated missions, and in doing so raised awareness of encouraged discussion and contribution to ‘early transition planning’ both at HQ and in Mali, DRC and Sudan see para. 52. The Project also evaluated and adapted itself to these challenges post rollout, conducting a ‘stocktaking’ analysis over March-May 2021 including a surveying exercise, from which the Project identified a lack of endorsement from field leadership as a particularly strong contributing factor to slow uptake.¹²

⁷ Integrated Transition Calendar: Explanatory Note p. 1.

⁸ The Explanatory Note suggested, for example that peacebuilding priorities ‘could be identified in the context of CCAs or the development of ISFs’, the first of which is the responsibility of an SRSF, the second of an RC. The Directive itself can be read as somewhat equivocal on the extent to which Calendar planning components should be embedded in UNSDCF planning processes, requesting only that ‘the Development Coordination Office, jointly with the relevant entities from the Secretariat, generate options on how the repositioning of the UNDAF and strengthened Resident Coordinator’s Office can be used to better leverage transition planning’. Any such equivocation can likely be ascribed to the fact that the development system reforms were only beginning to take effect when the 2019 Planning Directive was drafted.

⁹ In Sudan, for example, the Transition Specialist noted that while the deputy head of UNAMID, a non-integrated mission, received the relevant code cables, the RC/HC did not.

¹⁰ ‘Rather than being a plan itself, the Integrated Transition Calendar should be understood as a roadmap for transition planning that forecast key timelines and milestones related to transition planning’ – as such they serve as a first step towards the eventual development of a detailed transition plan.’ Explanatory Note, p. 1.

¹¹ E.g., ‘transition benchmarks can build on Security Council mandated benchmarks but they should neither be as comprehensive nor as ambitious’ (Explanatory Note, p.2).

¹² A number of reasons were given by survey recipients as to why senior leadership were initially hesitant to endorse submission of the ‘Transition Calendar’. Several responses noted that preparation of a transition calendar was inappropriate to the mission’s current mandate, because e.g., (a) mission mandate itself had been changed by Security Council directive or was otherwise no longer valid, (b) long term mission with no context of extension, or (c) the Security Council itself was divided over the mission’s future or withdrawal. Other responses included the fixed timeline for withdrawal implied by the term ‘Calendar’, a lack of prior engagement or awareness of senior leadership in the ‘lessons learned’ processes underpinning the design of the Calendar, and a lack of internal capacity within missions/UNCT coupled with insufficient guidance on calendar implementation provided from HQ.

Country Support: Transition Specialists

Impact

35. The Project's primary country support modality was deployment of P4 Transition Specialists into the Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO) in countries where missions were in active transition (Sudan, DRC, Guinea-Bissau)¹³ or planning for transition (Mali). Four countries were provided with Transition Specialists from 2019-22,¹⁴ all of whom were in situ prior to the start of its third cycle in July 2020.

- (a) DRC (Mar 2018 – Jul 2021). A second Specialist was deployed on a three-month rolling basis from November 2021 onwards, after the previous Specialist resigned,
- (b) Sudan (Mar 2019 – Sep 2020),
- (c) Mali (Nov 2019 – June 2020),
- (d) Guinea-Bissau (Feb 2020 – Oct 2021).¹⁵

36. Specialists participated in transition planning processes largely by providing inputs to technical-level documentation and advisory to senior management:

- (a) In Mali, the Specialist backstopped production of the Integrated Transition Calendar and produced an integrated reporting template (though the latter was not approved by senior leadership), and inputted into terms of reference for a review of the Integrated Strategic Framework and for a gender-responsive conflict analysis.¹⁶
- (b) In Sudan, the Specialist provided inputs for the design of phases four and five of the State Liaison Functions including its COVID response, and attended 5+5 technical committee meetings with government counterparts. Upon arrival of the UNITAMS start-up team, the Specialist organised several ad-hoc briefings to its various thematic surge teams and consolidated UNCT inputs into UNITAMS' Cluster 3 ('Peacebuilding').
- (c) In DRC, the first Specialist also drafted the Integrated Transition Calendar, and collated UNCT inputs for the 2019 MONUSCO Strategic Review. Following the endorsement of the 'Joint Strategy for the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO' ('Joint Strategy') in December 2020, the Specialist participated in the setup of the Joint Transition Plan by providing inputs for the terms of reference for a Joint Working Group¹⁷ and its Joint Commission. She also participated in the setup of the Integrated Transition Team and its

¹³ The phrase 'active transition' in this report refers specifically to the 24 months prior to a mission's withdrawal or reconfiguration (e.g. from PKO to SPM), during which the mission, under explicit directive from the Security Council, makes arrangements for and executes its own closure, up to and including withdrawal of all staff and liquidation of all assets. The 2019 Planning Directive requires missions to produce a 'detailed transition plan' prior to this 24-month phase (see para. 28).

¹⁴ At the time the evaluation was conducted, two further Transition Specialists were under negotiation for deployment into Sudan (UNITAMS) and Mali (MINUSMA). These negotiations were ongoing at time of writing.

¹⁵ The evaluation was unable to evaluate the performance of the Guinea-Bissau Specialist due to nonavailability of a sufficient number of interviewees sufficient for data to be triangulated.

¹⁶ Both processes began after the end of the Specialist's assignment.

¹⁷ The Joint Strategy provided for a UN-government Joint Working Group with technical-level subcommittees to focus on transfer of certain functions. The Joint Working Group is co-chaired by the Prime Minister and SRSG and oversees the UN Integrated Transition Team and the transition process generally. This arrangement forms part of the UN-government Joint Transition Plan which was requested by the Security Council in December 2020, and approved in September 2021.

provincial-level branches in Tanganyika and Kasai, and provided inputs to project documentation for three joint programmes.

37. The second Transition Specialist deployed into DRC from November 2021 onwards was singled out for praise by DRC stakeholders for being able to deliver strategically and meet gaps in planning capacity during implementation of the UN-government Joint Transition Plan, due in part to her experience across different UN entities, familiarity with mission and UNCT ways of working, and strategic and political awareness. The Specialist devised an operational-level Action Plan for the Integrated Transition Team complete with M&E Framework and chaired technical-level working groups mapped to the individual subcommittees of the UN-government Joint Working Group.¹⁸ She developed working relationships with the expanded RCO partnerships and communications functions, and travelled to provinces to flesh out operational planning arrangements at the provincial level. The Specialist's role was particularly integral in allowing working-level planning arrangements to continue proactively despite political obstacles in the convening of the Joint Working Groups' subcommittees.¹⁹ The Specialist was reportedly also instrumental in maintaining a continuity of communication between the Resident Coordinators and UNCT while the former was subsumed into the MONUSCO Integrated Office.

38. Transition Specialists also convened occasional mission-UNCT workshops and peer-to-peer exchanges which were used to facilitate responses to the 2019 Planning Directive and encourage working relationships and knowledge transfer between mission and UNCT planners.

- (a) In Mali, the Specialist organised a three-day MINUSMA-UNCT workshop in November 2019 on a strategic vision for transition and response to the 2019 Planning Directive,
- (b) In DRC, the first Specialist organised an exchange between the MONUSCO and UNAMID deputy leaderships (January 2021), and supported a MONUSCO-UNCT Strategic Policy Group meeting in April 2021. She provided 'sensitisation sessions' for individual mission components and AFPs, and co-led 'lessons learned and best practice' workshops for provincial Integrated Transition Task Force subsidiaries in Tanganyika and Kasai.²⁰

39. Specialists also contributed to Project activities conducted elsewhere. For example, all Specialists contributed to briefings and background notes produced for the Executive Committee, and to development of a 'criticality assessment' for future Specialists. The first DRC Specialist also facilitated inputs into EU workshops organized by the Project in Brussels (see para. 63).

Challenges

40. Transition Specialists deployed into Sudan (Mar 2019 – Sep 2020) and DRC (Mar 2019 – July 2021) were deployed early into the missions' drawdown phase,²¹ with transition plans still acquiring

¹⁸ The three subcommittees underneath the Joint Working Group focus respectively on Protection of Civilians & Human Rights, DDRCS, and Institutional Reform.

¹⁹ At time of writing, while the work of the Joint Working Group itself is proceeding, its subgroups are not, with the Human Rights group having met twice, the DDRCS group having met once, and Institutional Reform group not at all. The primary capacity issue for planners is connectivity and cooperation between government focal point counterparts in different cabinet line ministries, and the capacity of the Prime Minister's Office to oversee and synthesise the work of its focal points across different ministries and provinces. See further remarks under Recommendation 6d.

²⁰ The Specialist also organized three MONUSCO leadership team meetings on transition planning in July 2020, and February and March 2021.

²¹ In part this reflected lessons learned from the Project's own previous deployments as well as its espousal of the importance of early transition planning. See for example Kluyskens (13 December 2017), 'Evaluation of the UNDP/DPKO-DFS/DPA Project on UN Transitions in Mission Settings, p. 15, para. 28: 'When the project started, in some of the countries

definition at the Security Council, and fluid political situations. This placed additional demands on Specialists to deliver above a technical and operational level, adapt Project planning tools to the country context, and work strategically across missions and UNCT. In Sudan, changes in the Sudanese government over April-August 2019 - led to negotiations over the ensuing year towards mandating a special political mission (UNITAMS) which substantially changed the trajectory of transition planning and introducing new stakeholders²² with whom the Transition Specialist had no formal relationship.²³ In DRC, the Transition Specialist was deployed in March 2019 following the 2018 independent strategic assessment of MONUSCO, which recommended a phased withdrawal. However, the first two years of the Specialist's deployment coincided with complex and close-hold negotiations over the 'Joint Strategy' between the SRSG of MONUSCO and the Congolese government, which itself was in a power-sharing arrangement between the incumbent government and its opposition. Work on a Joint Transition Plan did not begin in earnest until December 2020, while the Specialist resigned for personal reasons in June 2021.

41. Stakeholders and Transition Specialists alike suggested that the recruitment and deployment processes for Transition Specialists in Mali, Sudan and DRC should be accompanied by a fuller consultation exercise with mission and UNCT in-country planning stakeholders. These issues arose prior to, but were exacerbated by, the 'delinking' of the Resident Coordinator's UNCT leadership function from the UNDP Resident Representative in the 2018 development system reforms.^{vi} While the two pre-delink Transition Specialists (Mali, the first DRC Specialist) were deployed into the UNDP Country Office with a 50%-50% timeshare between UNDP and the Resident Coordinator,²⁴ immediate post-delink Transition Specialists (Sudan, Guinea-Bissau) reported to the Resident Coordinator, befitting the Specialist's intended function as supporting UNCT coordination with missions. However, the administrative arrangements for funding, recruiting and deploying Specialists remained with UNDP.^{vii} Recruitment therefore followed UNDP administrative procedures, with positions filled internally with little consultation with senior mission leadership or planning officers or with IOTs at HQ. Several of these stakeholders reported being unaware of the Specialist's function or existence until they had arrived in-country or in some cases later.²⁵ Country-level intra-mission

the transition process was already underway. As a result, in some cases the Transition Specialists came in later than the actual start of the preparation for the transition. This meant that the start-up of their work, mobilizing support and getting commitment to jointly produce a transition plan and related documents was challenging. Interviewees consider the timing of deployment, along with other types of support, to be critical.'

²² Previously, responsibility for UNAMID transition planning was assigned jointly to the UNAMID Deputy Joint Special Representative and the RC/HC. In March 2020, overall responsibility for the elements of UNAMID functions that would transition to the incoming SPM was transferred to the Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Sudan. See United Nations Secretary-General, March 2020, 'Planning Directive on Sudan.'

²³ The Transition Specialist was deployed close to the beginning of the 24-month window for drawdown of UNAMID to support a transition plan including transfer of joint programmatic arrangements from UNAMID to UNCT, named 'State Liaison Functions.' (SLFs). Though the UNAMID drawdown timetable did not alter, planning arrangements were significantly disrupted by the April 2019 coup d'état which removed then-President Omar al-Bashir from power, and installed a technocratic transitional administration under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok al-Kinani. This changed political considerations at the Security Council, which— following a year of negotiations with the Sudanese administration and a joint UN-AU special report – mandated a new mission, UNITAMS, in June 2020, though appointment of an SRSG was further delayed until January 2021.

²⁴ While not all pre-delink Specialists were deployed into UNDP Country Offices or with a time-sharing arrangements, the practice was somewhat common. However in many instances pre-delink Specialists were also deployed fully into Resident Coordinator Offices, such as in Liberia.

²⁵ One Transition Specialists' own recommendations in exit interview noted that: 'The leadership of the transition process by the most senior UN officials (SRSG, DSRSGs, UNCT heads, etc.) is a critical factor for broad buy-in and engagement at all levels within the UN System. Therefore, informing these key actors of the presence and support offered by the UN Transitions Project and the deployed Transition Specialist is of paramount importance for ensuring that key project resources and knowledge are actively tapped into and utilized by the UN System in-country.'

and mission-UNCT communications barriers also contributed to a lack of awareness of the Specialist's function or existence in some mission components and AFPs.²⁶

42. The Project addressed these concerns by drafting a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on recruitment of Transition Specialists in 2020, including stipulation that the DSRSG/RC/HC as the Senior Transition Planning Lead must originate the request for deployment of a Transition Specialist and joint arrangements for developing terms of reference, candidate shortlisting and interviewing. At time of writing, the SOP is being used for the first time regarding future Transition Specialist deployments to Sudan and Mali, and as such could not be assessed.

43. These same deployment modalities for Transition Specialists also led to situations in which Transition Specialists had limited communications and reporting/accountability relationships to senior leadership and planning capacities in missions. Where Specialists were deployed using the pre-delink time-sharing arrangement, mission stakeholders reported general lack of awareness of the Specialist's activities, lack of ability to evaluate performance or provide feedback, occasional difficulties in securing time commitments when the Specialist was required to work on other matters, and general confusion as to whether the Specialist was working 'for UNDP' or for the RCO at any given time. For the relevant HQ regional divisions backstopping missions (e.g. IOTs), the lack of firm working relationships with mission planning structures also led to inconsistent communications between themselves and the Specialist. Mission stakeholders also reported similar issues with Transition Specialists deployed immediately post-delink, with the extent to which missions were 'integrated' with RCO functions – not only at the level of leadership and organisational structure, but also as regards more practical concerns such as physical distance – having a great bearing on the Specialist's accessibility and accountability to missions.

44. Conversely, missions with newer 'Integrated Offices' in which RCO functions are physically and operationally subsumed underneath a Head of Integrated Office reporting to the DSRSG/RC/HC allow for a clearer organisational and reporting relationship of the Transition Specialist to mission stakeholders. In the case of the second DRC Specialist, her placement in MONUSCO's 'Integrated Office' allowed her to contribute more effectively and proactively to transition planning arrangements, with the added advantage of her function being recognised and understood within both mission and RCO organograms and chains of command. While the use of Integrated Offices is still in its early stages and not yet available in missions with weaker integrated arrangements, this modality should continue to be used by the Project where possible.²⁷

45. The skillset and tools possessed by Transition Specialists must be commensurate to the planning capacity gaps they are intended to fill. In placing Transition Specialists earlier into politically fluid contexts, and in strengthening their accountability to mission/RCO strategic planning functions, the Project places an accordingly higher level of expectation on Specialists to perform at a strategic level. Many country level senior planners interviewed felt that Specialists deployed prior to 2021 offered planning tools and solutions that were not sufficiently customized to the country context, required close supervision, and could not address planning capacity issues at a systemic level.²⁸

²⁶ One Transition Specialist noted that one particular mission component 'pillar' was not informed of her existence until very late in the development of a relevant planning product. Another noted that poor communication between the RCO and mission severely impacted her ability to deliver.

²⁷ This remark should not be taken as rigid in its application in all contexts however. In the case of some categories of Special Political Mission, or integrated missions with unique arrangements, deployment of the Specialist underneath the mission Chief of Staff may also be a relevant consideration

²⁸ The systemic planning capacity gaps described by stakeholders are discussed in detail under Recommendation 6, and include caused by poor communication between UNCT and missions, poor alignment of strategic planning frameworks,

While Transition Specialists were proactive in offering tools and solutions, these were sometimes not endorsed by senior leadership or left pending completion in handover notes. Further remarks are provided under Recommendations 6 and 7.

Other Forms of Country Support

UNCT Capacity Mapping and Comparative Advantage Assessment

46. In 2020 the Project financially supported a consultant to develop a methodology for UNCT capacity assessments for DCO, reporting directly to DCO's Policy and Programming Branch. The initiative came in the wake of both the 2019 Planning Directive, which had explicitly stipulated such assessments as a component of transition planning (see para. 32), and of the development system reforms which also emphasised such assessments as important to the development of the strengthened Cooperation Framework as an interagency planning tool. The Project's contribution thus served the twin purposes of 'mainstreaming' one element of the 2019 Planning Directive, and strengthening integrated planning arrangements more generally.²⁹ The Project subsequently employed this methodology in conducting UNCT capacity assessments for Resident Coordinators in 2020 in Sudan (which the Project Secretariat participated in directly) and Guinea-Bissau (by deploying a short-term consultant in the Resident Coordinators Office).

UNDP Planning and Programming Capacity Support

47. The Project also provided planning and programming support to UNDP Country Offices, financing two consultants in Guinea-Bissau, one in DRC (June 2021 onwards), and cost-sharing two fixed-term staff in Sudan. In all cases, the capacity support offered was intended to provide advisory support to the UNDP Resident Representative for the strategic positioning of UNDP in the transition process, represent UNDP in joint UN transition planning processes, design UNDP joint programmes with mission counterparts,³⁰ and propose operational reconfiguration ('footprint') plans for the Country Office. In Guinea-Bissau, the Project also 'seed funded' \$150,000 for the reprogramming of gender support programming.

48. The Project also plans to commission a consultant to produce a research paper on the 'business case' and broader socioeconomic benefits for offsetting the impact of mission drawdown on energy consumption in the local area with renewable energy projects. In this case, the paper is

incompatibility of missions' and AFPs policies and procedures related to mission drawdown or joint programming arrangements, fragmentation of mission and development financing, or improving host government coordination. The full range of skills required to meet such challenges is admittedly broad in scope (see Recommendation 7a), reflecting a systemic absence of joint planning capacities in parts of the UN system. Skills mentioned as desirable by country-level stakeholders in the Transition Specialist function included, inter alia: thorough knowledge of both mission and UNCT working cultures, policies and procedures; knowledge of development and Secretariat funding mechanisms and ability to improve country-level funding mechanism; facility with various joint programming arrangements and ability to find ways to synthesise disparate and piecemeal projects.

²⁹ The methodology provided specifically for scenarios in which UN missions were transitioning from a UN mission to a UNCT context, and for two other scenarios (deteriorating country contexts, and opening of opportunities). It was partly informed by previous UNCT capacity assessments conducted by the Project in Haiti and Liberia, prior to the 'delinking' of such functions from UNDP.

³⁰ In Sudan, the two staff are governance and rule of law specialists brought in to scale up Country Office capacity in 2019 in anticipation of additional programming needs arising from the phasing in of UNITAMS such as joint election programming, although political turbulence in that country has complicated both donor commitments and Cooperation Framework planning arrangements. In DRC, the consultant was deployed specifically to develop a joint programme on stabilisation and resilience under discussion with MONUSCO's Stabilisation Support Unit within the strategic framework of the International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSSS). In Guinea-Bissau, one consultant was deployed to reprogramme the Country Office's project work on gender support in the wake of the drawdown of UNIOGBIS.

not necessarily intended for external distribution but as an ‘implementation roadmap’ or options paper for UNDP and DOS for pilot projects in Mali and Somalia. It is unclear whether the Project intends to contribute funding to said pilots.

49. Unlike the work of Transition Specialists or UNCT capacity mapping, the planning and programming capacity support offered to UNDP is not a component of the 2019 Planning Directive or of mission-UNCT-wide planning processes. Instead, it addresses some of the unique planning capacity needs that arise at the level of country offices, among which is the ability to pre-emptively ‘scale up’ planning capacity or thematic expertise in response to a mission’s commencement of transition planning or to act as a focal point for such planning. Similarly, UNCT entities can lack spare office capacity to proactively address operational reconfiguration needs, particularly where they are reliant on mission’s physical security or transport assets – i.e., the ‘physical security cliff.’

50. The Project lacks sufficient visibility among other AFPs to have addressed similar needs across all UNCT Country Offices and seeks to address the question of how this can be redressed. Further remarks are presented under Recommendations 6e and 7.

Project Secretariat Missions

51. The Project Secretariat also carried out several country support activities directly. Three missions were conducted over the evaluation timeframe: a three-week mission to Sudan in October 2020 to conduct the above-mentioned UNCT capacity mapping see para. 46 ; a one-week mission to DRC in July 2021 to conduct a transitions-focused Senior Visioning and Planning Retreat and week-long Transition Planning Workshop; and a three-month mission to Sudan from October 2021 to January 2022 to refine an integrated UNITAMS-UNCT programmatic framework.

52. The June 2021 Senior Visioning and Planning Retreat and Transition Planning Workshop was undertaken by request from the recently-appointed SRSG of MONUSCO, with the aim of capturing the present understanding of senior leadership. The Retreat was intended to assess and develop upon senior leadership understanding of strategic goals regarding the MONUSCO transition, was commended by the SRSG, and according to one participant contributed tangibly to clarifying participants’ conception of transition as a ‘reconfiguration’ of the UN system, rather than a ‘handover’ of tasks from MONUSCO. The technical workshop comprised UN section chiefs and planners, articulated areas of focus for the transition, and facilitated common understanding between participants on conditions-based benchmarks for withdrawal.

53. The Project’s three-month UNITAMS mission was undertaken by request from UNITAMS to help implement a programmatic ‘UN in Sudan Transitional Framework’ developed during the UNITAMS start-up phase over Q1-Q2 2021, including a proposed Peace and Development Working Group formed to conduct joint peacebuilding assessments in six states. The work, planned to run from October 2021 to January 2022, was severely stalled by the unexpected dissolution of the transitional government and its administration over November 2021-January 2022, which substantially disrupted previously-agreed programmatic engagement up to and including the Transition Framework itself. The Project mission continued under these circumstances, but worked primarily from outside Sudan, and was redirected to provide daily reporting capacity for UNOCC following crisis coordination meetings between mission-UNCT leadership. The Project continued some aspects of its work on the Framework, including project document drafting, and development of proposals for a Multi-Partner Trust Fund and some engagement with the PBSO HDDP Facility, but the political situation limited further progression in transition planning arrangements.

Knowledge Products & Policy Support

Impact

54. Many stakeholders noted and appreciated the Project's effort to sustain research and review into transition processes and the integrated planning arrangements underpinning them, and build awareness and disseminate knowledge across the UN system. Its preparation of executive-level briefings and papers contributed significantly to development of the 2019 Planning Directive and to the preparation of Security Council debates leading up to UNSCR 2594.³¹ It presently financially supports the writing of the Secretary General's report pursuant to that resolution on transitions in UN peace operations, which captures lessons learned throughout the system.

55. The Project also gave essential financial and advisory support to a significant systemic review, mandated by Executive Committee decision 2017/15, of the implementation of the 2013 Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy (IAP Policy) – and by extension policies and reforms relating more generally to the 'Integrated Approach' dating back to the early 2000s (hereafter 'Integration Review').³² The Integration Review produced a series of recommendations to the Executive Committee, Integration Steering Group, and Secretariat on the efficacy of the IAP Policy and other policies related to integrated mission arrangements, including several case studies drawn from mission transitions. During this evaluation, the Project has been requested to financially support a consultant to review the IAP Policy itself in line with the Review's recommendations.

56. The Project's peer-to-peer exchanges and workshops have also played a significant tangible and intangible role in improving the Organisation's awareness of transition challenges and providing opportunities not otherwise available for working-level collaboration between departments and agencies. The most recent update of the Project's annual internal monitoring and evaluation framework estimate that as of July 2021, 334 separate staff members had engaged in Project-organised exchanges and workshops. A list of these exchanges has been provided in Annex 2.

Challenges

57. In line with the findings of previous evaluation cycles,³³ the Project felt that it continued to experience challenges relating to lengthy production processes and effective distribution of its knowledge throughout the UN system. These challenges have had implications for the Project's stated knowledge management goals and strategy, which under paragraph 4.2.1 of its 2020-23 project document are 'aimed at creating a 'one-stop-shop' on transition planning and management with a centralised distribution mechanism.'³⁴

58. The Project produces four types of knowledge product: inputs or supplementary contributions to official UN policies and directives,³⁵ After-Action Reviews, Lessons Learned

³¹ At time of writing, the Project's role in the follow-up to the passage of UNSCR 2594 took the form of pursuing senior leadership consultations at the SRSG and DSRSG level with and through the Project Steering Committee and the EOSG, but further work was pending the completion of the Secretary-General's report requested by that resolution.

³² The Review (hereafter 'Integration Review') was led by former ambassador Jordan Ryan from July 2020 to February 2021, and the Project also provided for a consultancy firm, 'Ideas42', to contribute recommendations for organisational behavioural change.

³³ The evaluation of the Project's first cycle (2017-20) highlighted this point in its Finding 12: 'Lessons learned documents are useful, contribute to Knowledge Management but the evaluation found limited evidence that they are effectively used or that they provide relevant information to its readers. This is partly due to an ineffective dissemination mechanism.' Several interviewees during the current evaluation also reported that they found it difficult to access the Project's repository of knowledge.

³⁴ The Project possesses a draft Knowledge Management Strategy which expands upon these goals as articulated in the Project Document. However, due in part to the challenges outlined in this section, the strategy remains in draft form, and it is unclear which if any of the solutions it proposed form part of the Project's current strategy for dissemination.

³⁵ E.g., the Explanatory Note to the 2019 Planning Directive, or Briefing Papers to the Executive of Deputies Committee.

Studies,³⁶ and 'guidance' documents. The first three of these products are clearly situated within relevant knowledge management policies and SOPs of its Secretariat.³⁷ For example, the Project's After-Action Reviews and Lessons Learned Studies are initiated at the request of the Executive Committee and utilise the templates, SOPs and clearance procedures provided in the 2020 DPPA-DPO Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning Policy (hereafter 'KMOLP').³⁸

59. Project-initiated products making use of the label 'guidance' or 'guidelines', appear highly similar to the purpose of 'practice notes' and 'surveys of practice' as defined in the KMOLP (though not labelled as such), as in some ways is the Project's use of peer-to-peer exchanges to encourage knowledge sharing between missions and UNCT. However, Project 'guidance' does not always consistently relate to terms employed in the KMOLP, instead relating variously, often implicitly, to different partners' policies and products on guidance products. For guidance/guidelines falling within the purview of the DPPA-DPO joint Policy and SOP on guidance development and the associated Guidance Development and Learning Steering Committee (GDLSC),³⁹ Project contributions take the form of inputs into those official processes. Conversely, the Project-authored paper 'Guidance on Funding and Financing Opportunities for UN Transitions' appears to use the term consistent with UNDP Guidance on Knowledge Product Production and Quality Assurance Policy, while other products initiated and written by the Project which carry the label 'guidance' exist as draft 'non-papers' and appear not to be distributed through any mechanism.⁴⁰ There is also no clear relationship of the above to guidance produced for Resident Coordinators and UNCTs under the UN Sustainable Development Group. 'Training materials' are also more akin to presentations or briefings on the lessons learned from prior transitions and the Project's policy tools, rather than handbooks or toolkits produced corporately with Project partners to illustrate best practice.

60. Similarly, the Project's efforts towards a centralised distribution mechanism, articulated in its project document as a cross-pillar online Sharepoint distribution mechanism or 'Transitions Dashboard' is bound by the various rules and procedures of its partners concerning distribution. All products are uploaded separately to the Peace and Security Pillar Policy and Practice Database (PPDB), the DCO Gateway Platform and the UNDP Intranet. Sharing or access authorisation with in-country planning stakeholders from outside the Secretariat or UNDP is voluntary on a case-by-case basis, and if classified as confidential (as may be the case with Lessons Learned and After-Action Reviews) must be cleared at director level by the relevant mission and its lead department.⁴¹ For guidance products that are not classified (i.e. not internal learning exercises such as AARs and LLs)

³⁶ As per the KMOLP Annex 3, p. 16, Lessons Learned Studies are in-depth analysis of a specific effort, process, theme or functional area with the objective of drawing lessons to improve relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of subsequent processes or efforts in field missions or at Headquarters.' After-Action Reviews differ from Lessons Learned (LL) Studies in that the scope and timing of an AAR is usually more limited and more immediate, following the action, activity or project under review.

³⁷ It has been noted elsewhere that the UN's various knowledge management policies are not fully aligned or integrated with each other. See, e.g., UN Joint Inspection Unit, 2016, 'Knowledge Management in the United Nations System.'

³⁸ See Annex 2 and 3.

³⁹ The GDLSC was established in 2019 to set priorities for strategic guidance development/revision and institutional learning across the UN peace and security pillar. It is convened bi-annually and is co-chaired by the Directors of DPET and PMD.

⁴⁰ For example, two guidance notes on 'Mission-to-Mission Transitions' and 'Integrated Planning in Sudan' were provided to the UNITAMS planning team, but have not been widely published or distributed.

⁴¹ The Project also encounters issues beyond its control regarding internal sharing of organizational learning products. Although the KMOLP notes amongst its core principles that 'personnel should share knowledge and engage in joint lessons learning with partners across the UN system', widespread sharing of Lessons Learned and After Action Reviews is in practice complicated by personal and professional sensitivities around performance, and reluctance to share material labelled as classified.

and intended to reach a wider audience, the Project does not utilise report production and publication facilities of its Partners or public-facing distribution mechanisms..

61. Lengthy product development processes, combined with the number of knowledge products undertaken, impose substantial time and bandwidth costs for the Project Management Team for editorializing, quality control, and consultation within departments. The Project has no SOP for editorship and quality control, although the Project's draft knowledge management strategy indicates that products are: prepared and drafted first by the Project Secretariat, circulated individually for departmental inputs by each of the four Project's departmental focal points; consolidated by the Project Secretariat into a second draft; circulated again to each departmental focal point for final input; copyedited and 'rounded off' by the Project Secretariat; circulated a third time to the focal points for approval; then presented to the Steering Committee for clearance. Furthermore, consultation with Steering Committee members and partner departments' thematic leads and focal points was sometimes undertaken only on production of a draft, rather than at the planning and design stage, and take the form of responses to content rather than collaboration in design and production. This appears in certain cases to have exacerbated the number and length of input rounds for each focal point. Finally, Steering Committee clearances themselves were found to become lengthy where products when not clearly situated within any one of the partners' knowledge management policies. There are few provisions for streamlining input or clearance requirements according to the category of each product, or which if any Partner policy governs it.

62. The Project drafted an SOP for knowledge management in February 2022 to address issues surrounding labelling and length of production, which was viewed by the evaluation in draft form. The SOP sets basic parameters for Project-initiated product proposals, stipulating that they have a clear purpose, a target audience, and that they are clearly labelled using the conventional nomenclature for internal UN knowledge products, which then also govern the correct clearance procedures used. It requests authors to classify products as 'unclassified' and separate confidential material into a classified annex. It also sets a time limit of two weeks for departmental circulation for inputs and one week for Steering Committee approval, except in cases where classification and clearance procedures dictate otherwise.

External Partnerships with International Institutions

Impact

63. From July 2020 to July 2021 the Project seconded a consultant to the United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security (UNLOPS) in Brussels, Belgium, to facilitate workshops building upon the September 2018 UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management, which stated improved UN-EU cooperation on mission transitions to be a priority. The initiative, which sought to improve cooperation politically, operationally and programmatically, led to virtual consultations in June 2021 on the MONUSCO drawdown in DRC and a UN-EU Note on Joint Outcomes articulating partnership priorities for 2022-24. The Project and consultant also participated in UN-EU webinars and exchanges with EU development actors. The Project felt that particular value was achieved in bridging the two organisations' different understandings of each other's value-add in transition contexts, and though not a substitute for direct communication between UN-EU leadership in field, the importance of nurturing such communication at the technical and policy level in crisis/transition countries was noted.

64. Aside from the EU, the Project possesses two proposals at the project level that relate to the UN's institutional partnerships with the World Bank and African Union.

- (a) The Project has contributed inputs and committed \$10,000 in funding to a concept note for an HDPP-funded feasibility study of a public expenditure review of the security sector in

DRC, conducted by the World Bank with and through the good offices of MONUSCO, drawing upon the technical advisory capacities of MONUSCO mission components, DPO-SSRU, DPPA-PBSO, and the UNDP Crisis Bureau, who is also the administrative agent.

- (b) Separately, the Project has established a research partnership with an affiliated policy research institution, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana, on the role played by the African Union and ECOWAS in UN transition countries. The findings of this research are expected to be presented during a validation workshop with relevant actors in Q4 2022 - Q1 2023.

Challenges

65. The EU workshops' goals were ambitious in scope, including closer political-level cooperation through joint identification of 'shared goals'⁴² in countries with UN mission transitions, operational engagement and collaboration with EU CSDP missions and the EUFOR Crisis Response Operation Core on 'post-transition needs' such as SSR and police training, and closer involvement of the EU in UN transition planning processes.⁴³ While the 'Note on Joint Outcomes' was an important step towards these goals, further work was constrained by the limits within which liaison through EU partnerships and policy units could address questions of programmatic and operational and engagement decided at the EU mission level or with EU mission planning units.⁴⁴ Efforts to fulfil the workshops' goal of joint analysis and alignment of political objectives were similarly constrained by the different nature and types of mandate of UN and EU CDSP missions, and by the parameters of each organisations mutual interest.⁴⁵

66. The breadth, complexity, and multiple policy/decision-making focal points of the EU's political, security and financial architecture challenged the capacities of a single liaison point, even one with considerable expertise. The liaison did not have a firmly-established working relationship with Project partners' partnerships and engagement units, which may have substantially alleviated this problem. Consequently, efforts to improve connectivity between EU trust funds and financing of UN integrated planning arrangements was not pursued for lack of time, since such work required engagement simultaneously across the EU's External Action Service, its Directorates-General for International Cooperation & Development and for Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operation, and country-level EU Delegations and Special Representatives offices.

⁴² Proposed examples given in the workshops' inception note included 'safeguarding achievements, sustainability of investments, and multilateral solutions.'

⁴³ Regarding, e.g., EU Integrated Approach and EU foreign policy mechanisms financed and implemented through the EU Foreign Policy Instrument Service, European Development Fund and its African Peace Facility, and the 2021-27 EU budget's Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Framework

⁴⁴ Efforts to engage field missions through surveys, for example, experienced a lack of uptake.

⁴⁵ While the Project sought to engage the EU as a participant in the design, funding and capacitating UN transition arrangements, the EU sought to engage the UN for the same purpose in drawing down and transitioning its own hard power deployments during the 2000s and 2010s.

Recommendations

Overview

67. This evaluation was commissioned to provide recommendations on the future scope and direction of the UN Transitions Project, based on an assessment of current UN challenges regarding transition planning, its capacities to meet those challenges, progress in transitions- and integration-related policy development, and the extent to which the Project meets outstanding needs.

68. In making its recommendations, this evaluation recognizes the pros and cons of the Project's finite extra-budgetary, donor-funded modality. While it can neither replace nor subsidise core UN planning functions funded through regular budgets in the UN system nor indefinitely conduct said functions on its behalf, it can offer those functions temporary support, give them the ways and means to improve, create tools and solutions, and catalyse change. It offers a way to deploy resources flexibly and gives the UN system the means to innovate and experiment in circumstances where core UN staff may have neither the time nor risk tolerance to do so. However, it must do so with a firm eye on the long-term sustainability and 'mainstreaming' of the improvements to transition planning that it seeks to make.

69. In this context, this evaluation finds that the Project has delivered substantively over 2020-23, particularly in its support to relevant policy development and supporting transition arrangements in DRC. The Project has made use of lessons learned from transitions derived over previous project cycles to inform the creation of policy-level initiatives such as the 2019 Planning Directive and UNSCR 2594. It has articulated what the core 'components' of transition planning may look like, and demonstrated a relationship to early integrated planning arrangements. Through sponsorship of the Integration Review, the Project has assisted diagnosis of root-level challenges to implementation of the 2013 Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP Policy). It has brought these lessons to the attention of senior UN leadership and Member States through support to Security Council debates, Lessons Learned Studies and After-Action Reviews, peer-exchanges and workshops. The in-country planning support it has provided to MONUSCO in the DRC is also notable for its contribution to the development of an Integrated Transition Team and an Action Plan operationalizing the mission's transition plan, and its provision of extra capacity and bandwidth to senior planners for mission-UNCT coordination and host government engagement.

70. This evaluation also finds that these same achievements leave the Project in need of revising/updating its strategy and scope, and the design and resource prioritisation of its in-country support functions. The Project is entering the final year of its third cycle and has existed in its current form since 2014, when it was established following the introduction of the UN Transitions Policy to support transitions and drawdowns of large-scale multidimensional peace operations. Since that time, substantial changes and reforms have been made to the UN peace and security and development architectures, with newer missions possessing more integrated structural arrangements with strengthened Resident Coordinator Offices (RCO), and increasingly fewer peace operations with major uniformed components facing large-scale drawdown and liquidation. The Project's in-country support has accordingly decreased over the present country cycle from four countries to one (DRC).⁴⁶ However, at the same time, the lessons learned from UN transitions over the past decade have highlighted significant deficits of planning capacity and particularly of

⁴⁶ It should be noted that at time of writing, the Project is in discussion with stakeholders in Mali (MONUSCO) and Sudan (UNITAMS) to deploy expertise supporting 'early transition planning' arrangements there. These discussions do not substantively affect the recommendations.

integrated strategic planning arrangements between UN missions (hereafter ‘missions’)⁴⁷ and the UNCT. Consequently, while the number of missions in or facing active transition is decreasing, recent policy directives such as the 2019 Planning Directive, UNSCR 2594 and Integration Review are making ‘early transition planning’ incumbent upon *all* multidimensional missions / peace operations,⁴⁸ even those not in receipt of a specific UN Security Council directive. In ‘upstream’ contexts such as these, support for eventual transition planning is a subset of a much wider scope of work supporting said integrated planning arrangements. While this is a mark of the Project’s success, it also places the Project at a critical juncture in which it must redefine both its scope and purpose, without either becoming indefinite.

71. This evaluation therefore recommends that any further project cycle beyond the Project’s current phase prioritises ‘mainstreaming’ the Project’s intended functions. Some functions can be mainstreamed with existing resources (see Recommendation 8), while those in Recommendation 7 require special arrangements for a ‘surge capacity’ for planning support, either on the model of existing standing capacities or through a UN trust fund funding window, for senior planners and leadership in country settings to draw upon during critical moments such as transitions. These recommendations are made on the premise that senior leadership and in-country planners will continue to experience significant bandwidth and capacity issues when attempting integrated planning and programming, particularly at moments of ‘peak’ or acute demand such as transitions. They are designed to be actionable within 12 months in the current status quo, and do not force the Project into pre-emptive commitments without necessary internal and Member State consultations. They are, however, designed to enable the Project to prepare the groundwork and build the case for a future systemic solution for planning capacity demand, into which it can subsequently be ‘mainstreamed’. The recommendations are grouped into 4 ‘action points’ as follows:

- (a) **Clarify strategic objective, scope, and ‘mainstreaming’ vision,**
- (b) **Consult senior planning stakeholders systematically across agreed countries,**
- (c) **Prioritise resource allocation towards meeting in-country UN planning capacity needs,**
- (d) **Adjust planning and working practices to ensure the scope of work is achievable within current governance/management structures.**

Action Point 1: Clarify strategic objective, scope, and ‘mainstreaming’ vision.

1) Update the Project’s strategic objectives to reflect current UN policies and reforms. The multiple policy processes that the Project has supported over 2020-23 have led to stronger policy consensus on the strategic need for long-term planning and preparation for a mission’s ‘active transition phase’. According to the formulation adopted in UNSCR 2594, ‘sustainable political

⁴⁷ The word ‘mission’ is used in this evaluation to refer to all types of UN peace operation, whether peacekeeping operation (PKO) or one of the various categories of special political mission (SPM). It does not refer to non-UN missions.

⁴⁸ ‘Multidimensional’ peace operations are so termed because they consist of a range of components with diverse specialisations including military (in the case of peacekeeping operations), civilian police, humanitarian affairs, political units, human rights, gender, specialized units on rule of law and security institutions, and more. While UNSCR 2594 addresses multidimensional peace operations, not all peace operations are multidimensional. Some (usually older) peacekeeping operations are military operations supporting a political activity such as patrolling buffer zones, military observer missions, or monitoring ceasefires. Special political missions, of which approximately 40 are presently active, are categorized under three clusters: (I) offices of special and personal envoys (or advisers, representatives) of the Secretary-General; (II) sanctions monitoring teams and similar entites/mechanisms; and (III) regional offices and missions supporting political processes. Of these, only missions supporting political processes (cluster III) are considered ‘multidimensional.’

solutions and building peace’ require ‘integrated planning and coordination’ between a peace operation, the Resident Coordinator (RC), and United Nations Country Team system ‘from the earliest possible stage’ of a mission’s life cycle, along with consultations with the host government and relevant national, local and international stakeholders. While the language used raises important questions of detail about what constitutes ‘early transition planning’ and what obligations it places upon mission and UNCT planners in relation to existing mission/development planning structures, there is relative consensus within the Project on the strategic purpose of ‘early transition planning’, namely to allow sufficient time for execution of a mission’s transition plan,⁴⁹ and enable ‘the reconfiguration of the strategy, footprint and capacity of the United Nations presence’^{viii} up to and at the point of transition. Equally, there is relative consensus within the Project that the fundamental principle or reason for aligning/integrating missions and UNCT is that the host government must be able to ‘own’ or carry forward the resulting activities at some point – and therefore should be consulted or engaged in planning at a technical as well as political level where possible and given sufficient time to build up its own national capacities. The Project’s strategic objectives therefore need to be updated to clarify its relationship to the aforementioned policy initiatives, and the extent to which it implements them.

2) Clarify the Project’s use of the term ‘transition,’ particularly in countries not in ‘active transition’, and update the Project’s branding and communications accordingly. With the 2019 Planning Directive making ‘early transition planning’ incumbent upon *all* multidimensional missions, not just those in receipt of a relevant Security Council directive, the Project has endeavoured to adapt its offering ‘upstream’ to missions at earlier stages in their life cycle. In the process, the term ‘transition’ has been deployed with an increasingly larger and more ambiguous scope, covering both the 24-month ‘active transition’ phase itself, the political preparations and lead-up to that phase, and integrated planning arrangements prior to that. This has led to confusion as to the Project’s offering, with different understandings from mission planners and their backstopping regional divisions as to whether the Project offers its support solely to missions in or preparing for ‘active transition,’ and a significant expenditure of time and effort by the Project Management Team in engaging said stakeholders. The Project’s history of country support over 2020-23 has consequently been largely confined to increasingly fewer countries with missions (primarily the few remaining large UN peacekeeping operations) in or preparing for ‘active transition’. This is increasingly at odds with the Project’s policy objective of providing in-country support on ‘early transition planning’ to *all* multidimensional missions as per the wording of the 2019 Planning Directive. If the Project is to succeed in the latter, it must accordingly tailor its offering in ‘upstream’ countries containing missions whose mandate does not refer to ‘early transition planning’, or which are not in receipt of a relevant Security Council directive.⁵⁰ This entails that the Project is sufficiently clear in its use of language and concepts such as ‘end state’, ‘benchmarking’ or ‘transition’ which were developed in the context of debates on the drawdown of large UN peacekeeping operations in the 2000s and early 2010s,^{ix} and if and how it acknowledges differences in planning approaches between peacekeeping operations and special political missions.^x Indeed, given these considerations, the

⁴⁹ Lessons learned and after-action reviews from transitions in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, and Haiti, sponsored by the Project, were emphatic in highlighting that the 24-month window for mission drawdown and liquidation did not allow sufficient time for both political agreement with the government and technical-level interagency planning, the latter of which requires systemic preparation such as alignment with planning and donor funding cycles. Consequently, operational planning was either not finalized (Haiti and Côte d’Ivoire) or very late in emerging (Liberia).

⁵⁰ Although the 2019 Planning Directive states that early transition planning is incumbent upon all missions, the Directive makes no mention of whether corresponding language in a mission mandate is also required, nor if there should be Security Council consensus on the mission’s end state/date. These considerations were reviewed during the Project’s ‘stocktaking’ exercise on the ‘transition roadmap’ and are discussed in this evaluation’s assessment of Project activities.

Project's very title of 'UN Transitions Project'⁵¹ and the naming of core support functions such as 'Transitions Specialist' are likely to need reconsideration if the Project is to repurpose itself for working in 'upstream' contexts outside 'active transitions' for clear communications to occur. Above all, any integrated planning functions and solutions offered by the Project – and the language used to describe them – must be sufficiently non-linear⁵² and flexible enough to acknowledge the many ways in which the UN Security Council may debate, amend or change UN mandates and how conflicts and/or political processes can fluctuate, regress, pause, or transform.

3) Articulate the Project's vision for 'mainstreaming' its capacity support functions. As noted above (see para. 71), while some Project functions can be mainstreamed with existing resources, the recommended solution for 'mainstreaming' the Project's core value-add of in-country planning support is as a 'surge capacity' for planning support that can be drawn upon by senior UN leadership and P5-level planners to meet commonly-encountered planning needs (see Recommendation 6). This evaluation recognises that such a recommendation requires senior-level internal UN consultation and a Member State engagement strategy to be fully 'actionable.' The recommendations therefore do not precommit the Project to this path, and are intended to be actionable in the next 12 months within the status quo. However the Project should, in any case, take active steps towards articulating a 'vision' for its mainstreaming when preparing for any future project cycles, such as an options paper and consultation exercise with its core stakeholders, elaborating the various models for standing capacities, the funding structures and solutions offered by those models,^{xi} or possible alternatives such as UN trust funds and their funding windows.

Action Point 2: Consult senior planning stakeholders systematically across agreed countries.

4) Agree from the outset the criteria for a 'long list' of countries in which the Project may work, and differentiate the Project's 'downstream' offer supporting planning for active transitions with specified end dates, from its 'upstream' offer supporting early integrated planning arrangements. A 'long-list' of countries sets the parameters for the Project's planning budget, and outreach. Without clear agreement from the outset on which countries are within the Project's scope of work, there can be no systematic consultation of senior country leadership on needs, and no clear parameters for planning and budgeting. The PMT also expends substantially greater effort and bandwidth when persuading and engaging senior leadership, DPPA-DPO desks and other relevant backstopping divisions for each country individually. This evaluation suggests the development of a long-list that groups countries into categories differentiating between:

- Group A – Countries where missions have received a Security Council directive to transition by a specified date and are in 'active transition',

⁵¹ The Project's subtitle, 'Sustaining Peace and Development Beyond Mission Withdrawal', carries even greater implication that the Project's scope is focused on facilitating mission withdrawal, rather than e.g. closer integrated planning arrangements prior to the 'active transition' phase.

⁵² Among the lessons learned in the Project's own stocktaking exercise following rollout of the 2019 Planning Directive was that the description of the Project's proposed transition planning tools as a 'transition calendar' was intended – as briefed to the EC/DC in 2021 – to 'forecast key timelines and milestones related to transition planning', implying a sequential and linear progression towards a predetermined 'end state.' By 2021, the Project had rebranded the 'transition calendar' as a 'transition roadmap' to avoid this implication.

- Group B – Countries where ‘early transition planning’ is referenced in a mission mandate or where the UN Security Council has requested an ‘exit strategy’, but not applied a specified end date/state,⁵³
- Group C – Countries with integrated missions that have received no specific Security Council directive for transition planning, but which fall within the scope of the 2019 Planning Directive,⁵⁴
- Group D – Countries which have recently experienced a mission drawdown and are now in ‘post-transition’, with ongoing programming and funding arrangements related to transfer of residual mission functions.

The diagram below suggests how a long-list of twelve countries might be divided between these groupings.⁵⁵ As per the remarks under recommendation 2, these groupings have very different needs, and the Project’s offering should be tailored accordingly, avoiding a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

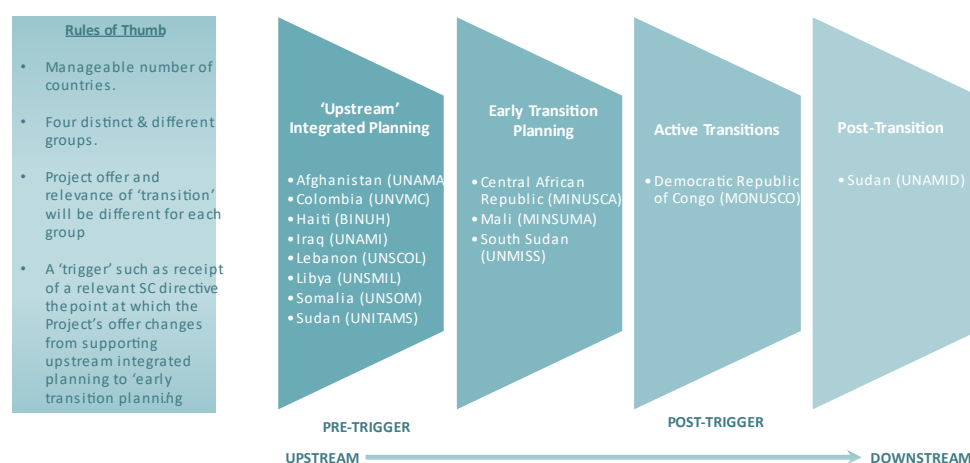


Figure 1: Suggested ‘long list’ of countries by the four groupings

5) Set priorities for the Project’s budget/resource allocation by creating a regular consultation and feedback loop with senior and working-level UN stakeholders in its ‘long-listed’ countries during annual work planning. This evaluation has identified⁵⁶ the Project’s primary stakeholders to be:

⁵³ Missions under categories (a) and (b) include many remaining large multidimensional peace operations such as MONUSCO (DRC), MINUSMA (Mali), MINUSCA (Central African Republic).

⁵⁴ This category includes many of the ‘Cluster III’ grouping of Special Political Missions with integrated arrangements, e.g. UNSOM (Somalia), UNSMIL (Libya), UNVMC (Colombia), UNSCOL (Lebanon), BINUH (Haiti), and UNITAMS (Sudan).

⁵⁵ One country, Sudan, appears twice on the list as the circumstances of its two missions could lead it to be placed in either the ‘upstream’ or ‘post-transition’ category. Its PKO, UNAMID, was closed on 31 December 2020, and the UNCT in Sudan experiences ‘post-transition’ needs related to the transfer of its State Liaison Functions. UNITAMS, the successor SPM, did not adopt these residual functions, but is itself also under directive to engage in early transition planning.

⁵⁶ This evaluation has taken a ‘needs-oriented’ approach to defining the Project’s stakeholders as being those who interact with the Project and its resources directly and directly benefit from its products. These, in turn, are considered in the first instance to be those functions and positions where the UN’s strategic planning capacity ultimately resides. Although the Project is intended more generally to benefit the entire UN system and host government, the report’s recommendations on remit, use of resources, and institutionalisation require a more precise understanding of where the UN’s planning functions lie, and the Project’s relationship to them.

- SRSGs, DSRSs, and Resident Coordinators (RCs),
- Mission Heads of Front Offices or Integrated Offices,
- Mission Strategic Planning & Coordination Units (SPCUs).
- P5 working-level members of Integrated Offices and Resident Coordinators Offices responsible for strategic planning, programming, and funding tools, including team leads, strategic planning and partnerships officers, Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) secretariats, senior Peacebuilding Advisers, and Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) advisers. In some cases, heads of pillar on multidisciplinary cross-pillar mission functions such as ‘Protection of Civilians’ mandates^{xii} and lead technical advisers also qualify.
- In cases where UNCT entities support such planning and programming mechanisms, or where such plans entail significant changes for a UNCT entities’ own country programme planning or alignment of operational footprint, then heads of said entities should also be considered as stakeholders. See further remarks under Recommendation 6e.
- HQ-based integrated coordination mechanisms and backstopping regional divisions such as Integrated (Mission) Task Forces (ITFs), and Integrated Operational Teams (IOTs).

The Project itself feels that it lacks visibility amongst such stakeholders in many of the countries in which it aspires to work. It needs to create a strong annual consultation and feedback loop with these stakeholders in its long-listed countries from the outset of the Project cycle and during annual work planning to support and inform the Project’s decision-making on allocation of budget and resources to in-country support, and to allow for a more responsive monitoring and feedback relationship between the Project and its stakeholders.

Action Point 3: Prioritise Project towards meeting in-country UN planning capacity needs.

6) Focus the Project’s results framework on supporting five planning capacity needs that the UN frequently encounters during times of ‘peak’ demand such as transitions. Overall, the Project should be prepared to decrease the extent to which it relies on providing HQ- and policy-level tools as solutions and increase the proportion of resources it allocates to problem-solving at the country level. The Project’s current results framework is framed around the Project’s own policy objectives, two outcomes of which focus on HQ-level work, and two of which focus on the Project’s external partnership goals. This obscures the Project’s focus on the UN planning capacity needs that the Project aims to fulfil, as expressed in its three ‘pillars’ and by the fact that most delivery and resource allocation is logged against Outcome 1. A results framework framed around capacity needs rather than policy goals would simplify the Project’s ability to focus on and demonstrate delivery against said its stakeholders’ needs, enable clearer resource prioritisation and allocation against them, and consequently reduce risks of underdelivery, rollover or reallocation of resources.

6a) Capacity for integrating ‘core components’ (see para. 29) of early transition planning into current interagency assessment and planning tools and peacebuilding programming tools, improving communication and coherence between missions and UNCT, and strengthening feedback to ITFs and IOTs on interagency planning issues. ‘Transition Roadmaps’ to UN missions were originally presented to missions as a supplementary planning tool to fulfil the requirements of the 2019 Planning Directive, raising questions around the Roadmap’s relationship to conventional UN planning mechanisms. While the 2019 Planning Directive was addressed to heads of missions (SRSGs and DSRSs), Roadmap components such as

capacity/comparative advantage assessment and funding strategies are not functions of mission-level planning tools such as Results-Based Budgets, but of reformed UNSDCF planning and assessment tools (see endnotes iv, v) which like the Roadmap components have the same aim of reconfiguring the UN footprint flexibly and responsively with a 'Nexus approach'.⁵⁷ This is indicated by the Project's collaboration with DCO on capacity mapping methodology (see para. 46), which the Project may consider extending to other interagency planning components. Other roadmap components, such as joint mission-UNCT analysis of benchmarks and peacebuilding priorities, relate to efforts to align UN peace and security activities with the 'Nexus approach' via peacebuilding programming. These are still somewhat separated from core mandate-oriented mission planning documents,⁵⁸ with the principle of peace operations' inclusion within the 'Nexus approach' still much debated,^{xiii} but offer the Project a way to 'mainstream' its transition approaches within the criteria used for transition-related programming and support for joint analysis.⁵⁹ Implementation and 'mainstreaming' of the Roadmap beyond the suggestions given above is more a question of capacitating stakeholders at the country level in improving the way in which these tools accommodate transitions, which entails fostering the requisite collaboration and coordination between UNCT and missions, over and above the level required by their respective plans and programmes. As regards the responsiveness of Mission Concepts and ISFs towards such integrated transition planning, a communication channel between such capacity and HQ-level ITFs and IOTs during times of mandate renewal and creation of Mission Concepts, may serve to improve calibration of the latter with respect to interagency coordination and other related national and regional plans.

6b) Capacity for strategic transition-related joint programme design and its integration with strategic UN and regional plans. Mission and RCO stakeholders face a complex and interlinked set of problems ensuring that an adequate level of sufficiently resourced programmatic support is available for a country's national capacities to weather the changes brought by mission drawdown without the country relapsing into conflict. Joint programming arrangements are often used for this purpose and can be effective tools for integrating mission components with individual UNCT Country Offices at a working level on thematic issues. However, they are often developed and 'housed' at the level of an individual mission component and individual UNCT Country Office, and the standing capacities and support mechanisms such as the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law are focused narrowly and thematically. Newer programming tools introduced following the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiative^{xiv} encourage joint programming to be operationally integrated across mission components and the UNCT system under an

⁵⁷ The 'Nexus approach' describes four areas which can be used to assess the extent of planning collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, devised at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and termed 'The New Way of Working.' The four areas are joint situation and problem analysis to identify 'collective outcomes', 'better' joined-up planning and programming to achieve those outcomes, leadership and coordination of the RC/HC, and use of funding tools that align programmes towards said outcomes. At the summit, the largest donor members of two key donor coordination mechanisms – INCAF and DAC – committed to including the 'Nexus approach' in their funding criteria, and consequently most development and humanitarian programming now refers to it.

⁵⁸ The PBSO-managed HDPP facility, in the words of the Integration Review' employs criteria 'separate from and additional to other analysis and planning frameworks, and the risk exists that projects designed and financed under the Fund are not aligned with or prioritized as part of an integrated United Nations vision for a particular country.' (Integration Review, p. 36, para. 93).

⁵⁹ The Peacebuilding Fund, for example, includes provisions in its funding windows and criteria to ensure its supported programmes facilitate joint analysis, planning and programming, both within the UN, and with partners such as the World Bank and EU. It has targeted 35% of its total disbursements for facilitating UN transitions under its 2020-24 Strategy. The PBSO-managed HDPP facility explicitly aims to catalyse joint assessments, planning frameworks, and evidence bases for programming.

overarching strategic or regional plan adopted by the SRSG.⁶⁰ However these are still rare examples, and more frequently, efforts to bring disaggregated joint programmes together under a single framework result in a collection of disparate, individually-agreed mission component-Country Office working arrangements. At the individual activity level they can become misaligned and fragmented amid different programmatic and funding relationships with individual AFPs and donors, particularly if the financing of said programmes is not aligned. If aligned under a mission's transition plan, such as the State Liaison Functions in Darfur, they can encounter important structural challenges when peacekeeping operations transition into SPMs while also transferring joint programming on residual parts of its own mandate to individual UNCTs, since SPMs face their own difficulties framing residual peacekeeping activities within their mandate.⁶¹ SPMs present additional difficulties in housing joint programming arrangements since the role of integrated components is more likely to be framed as advisory or advocacy-related, access to programmatic funding through standing budgets is limited, and the attention of senior leadership is often focused on the political aspects of mandate implementation. With UNCTs, joint programming arrangements can suffer if the aforementioned coordination between UN missions and UNCTs is weak; if results frameworks are framed around mission mandates without clear reference to the UNSDCF or SDG goals (or vice versa); if the Resident Coordinator is insufficiently engaged; and/or if early arrangements are not made for the loss of mission-based programmatic funding, for transfer/colocation of personnel, and for differences in the operational footprint (including physical security 'cliff' considerations) of UNCT entities compared to missions. Programme design is something habitually requiring 'surge capacity', and strategic-level joint programming, with its unique considerations regarding donor and UNCT coordination arrangements and relationship to successor missions, are an emergent area of expertise which could be usefully served by dedicated planning surge capacity.

6c) Capacity for financial planning/analysis and supporting funding frameworks, including where applicable, development of pooled funding mechanisms and early coordination with international financial institutions. Transitions and transition-related programming create unique funding challenges as the UN's need to ensure continuity in peacebuilding and peace-sustaining activities drives up the UN's internal demand for financing to replace mission-based funds and standing budget, staff capacity, and physical security protection and transportation assets. Addressing these challenges can require capacity as financing and programme funding arrangements for peacekeeping and special political missions, and the UNCT, are not harmonized. This hinders strategic coordination at the planning level, alignment of funding behind system-wide plans, and of donor coordination mechanisms. This in turn contributes to the aforementioned 'fragmentation' of joint programming in missions where each programme's funding and governance arrangements are arranged separately with individual AFPs and donors.⁶² Secretariat-administered global trust funds,

⁶⁰ In Somalia, the Community Recovery and Extension of State Authority and Accountability Programme (CRESTA/A) under UNSOM, is such an example. Many key donors also cooperate in a pooled funding mechanism that is better able to synchronize joint programming arrangements (see Rec 6c). However, even in this case several joint programmes in Somalia predate CRESTA, and remain unsynchronized.

⁶¹ This issue can be particularly challenging in cases where the host government and/or Security Council are clear in their wish for peacekeeping activities to cease. In such cases, the transfer of residual programmatic activities from a peacekeeping operation to another mission, if not carefully managed, create the perception of a peacekeeping mandate being continued in another form. Often, the distinction between different categories of mission – or even between missions and UNCT – is not always fully clear outside the UN system.

⁶² This was the case, for example, with UNAMID's State Liaison Functions.

notably but not only⁶³ the Peacebuilding Fund (which), have endeavoured to address the issue by creating a role as ‘seed’ or ‘startup’ funding for programmes. Although transformative for the UN’s ability to initiate peacebuilding programming, the relatively small size of their funding envelopes relative to the size of the development sector means that in-country planners and partnerships officers must transition to other discretionary funding sources to supplement this ‘seed’ capital.⁶⁴ Another solution that has emerged in recent years is the creation of pooled Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs) in country, which are solely dedicated to funding and underpinning all programmes implementing a strategic plan or even a government’s national development policy.⁶⁵ Their design and implementation, however, requires negotiation with the host government and donors,⁶⁶ and sometimes integration with the secretariats of other UN global trust funds at the country level may also be desired.⁶⁷ Finally, another capacity requirement entailed by transition planning is the need for early coordination with IFIs in countries where national development planning is funded through loan agreements with e.g. the World Bank, to allow for coordination of UN transitions with national development planning and programming, and better utilization of funding tools such as the PBSO-managed HDPP Facility.

6d) Capacity for ensuring stronger communication and connectivity with national counterparts, particularly at the technical and working level. Transitions of mission activities, whether from one mission to another, or to UNCT, are in principle undertaken until such a time as national capacities can take on and carry forward the end result. UN planning arrangements, however, are often internal UN affairs, and aligning such plans to host government goals and activities to enable a transition can be challenging without sufficient host government engagement. Host governments are not unitary entities and can, indeed should, be engaged at a number of levels⁶⁸ – among them political-level Executive

⁶³ Other examples of UN Secretariat-based trust funds include the Joint SDG Fund, Trust Fund for Human Security, and Peace and Development Trust Fund, and thematic funds such as Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action, Trust Fund for Counterterrorism, and Trust Fund for Global and Regional Disarmament.

⁶⁴ In countries where UNCT coordination is poor or funding sources highly fragmented, this has a sizable impact upon capacity, as planners must coordinate with individual AFPs on individual programmes regarding resource mobilization, access to UN mission funds (which UNCT entities struggle to effectively access), donor engagement and coordination, and the alignment of donor, mission and UNCT funding/planning horizons

⁶⁵ MPTF governance and administration mechanisms are highly flexible and can be adapted to each specific context example related to joint programming in a current transition country is the DRC Stabilisation Coherence Fund, which supports the ISSSS. The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Somalia is another notable example of a trust fund that coordinates aid and financing of a national development policy, in this case Somalia’s National Development Plan. MPTFs can also be created at the regional level, e.g. the Great Lakes Region Cross-Border Fund, which funds programming supporting the 2016-17 UNDG and Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

⁶⁶ In some cases either party may be reluctant to abandon separated arrangements. This situation emerged in Sudan during the UNAMID transition, with the consequence that the pooled fund created remained underfunded. Apportioning funds from underfunded MPTFs can promote rather than reduce competition due to the scarcity of resources, which also can incentivize distributors to try and promote fairness by giving AFPs equal shares, rather than according to programmatic needs or comparative advantage.

⁶⁷ There are limits to the extent that UN-based trust funds serving a particular country or issue can be financially integrated, since governance arrangements rarely permit a fund to ‘fund other funds.’ However, integration can be achieved at the planning level e.g., on criteria for submission of projects, and avoids the need for each fund to maintain its own separate secretariat in-country. The PBF has adopted this approach in Colombia, by integrating with the in-country secretariat of the Colombia Peace UNMPTF.

⁶⁸ The political executive is sometimes treated as of one mind with its civil service, but particularly in post-conflict environments, political executives may be transitional and/or lack full sovereignty. Conversely a host country’s civil service, executive functions support, its public works entities, and similar traditional ‘development partners’ are important points of continuity during times of political transition or turbulence, and crucial sources of insight into the realities of governance or planning in their country that even its political executive may not provide.

Offices (of e.g., a president or prime minister); cabinet line ministries; policing, defence, and security establishments, central banks, quasi-autonomous public works entities, subnational or local authorities, etcetera. In very few cases, it may not be tenable for the UN to work closely with the host government for political reasons such as imposition of UN sanctions, ideology, legitimacy concerns, or ongoing war.⁶⁹ Yet in most cases host governments see themselves as primary stakeholders in mission drawdowns and UN planning in general and – even though different political or social constituencies within a government or country can sometimes hold substantially different views – do engage through multiple entry points⁷⁰ in UN planning and funding mechanisms both at the national and subnational level. That said, governments themselves also often experience planning capacity and bandwidth issues and if there is no connectivity between focal points on the government side,^{xv} then transition planning and programming must provide specifically for arrangements such as joint working groups to ensure coordination and communication between focal points occurs. Such arrangements, again, make additional time and capacity requirements of planners. They also require a close coordination relationship with senior UN leadership, since political roadmaps and agreements on transition brokered by e.g. an SRSG must be matched from the start by planning for the long-term capacitation of the host government (particularly as regards rule of law) rather than being sequenced linearly, to prevent the emergence of a ‘capacity cliff’ similar to the well-known ‘financial’ or ‘physical security’ cliffs. Where there are substantial issues concerning planning/oversight capacity and internal communications on the government side, many international entities – IFIs, development partners, and policing or military entities – often employ surge capacity in the form of advisory secondments embedded into the Executive Office or at cabinet level, who can play a critical role in bolstering and incentivizing cross-pillar communication within the government itself [Recommendation 7d]. The capacity for UN planners to coordinate early and closely with IFIs is important for this reason too, as IFIs engage in their own planning processes with host governments to identify, cost out and finance development needs. These are in many cases co-sponsored with UNDP and other UNCT entities.

6e) Capacity for individual UNCT entities to scale planning and programming proportionate to the political and strategic changes introduced during mission transitions. While not all of the UN’s 30-plus Agencies Funds and Programmes directly support transition processes,⁷¹ those that do – a significant minority including but not only UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UN Women, and the World Bank – take on significant additional operational and programme risk and delivery commitments in areas such as national and local capacity development, service delivery support and community assistance. The Project’s capacity support to UNDP in Guinea-Bissau and Sudan (see paras. 47-50) highlights some of the capacity challenges

⁶⁹ ‘Legitimacy concerns’ may arise from the international community, other national entities claiming sovereignty, or even from the host government itself. The first instance may include cases where any or all parts of a government are complicit in major human rights abuses against its population. The second might include cases where an internationally-recognised government is in exile. The third can arise in countries where a post-war settlement are not yet established and where a political executive considers itself a ‘transitional’ or ‘caretaker’ government.

⁷⁰ Such ‘entry points’ include the signing process of the UNSDCF itself, the governance arrangements for Multi-Partner Trust Funds, the work of the INFF and World Bank in articulating and funding national development priorities within national development plans, the long-standing relationships of UNDP and other UNCT entities with national development partners (normally a government ministry concerned with planning) and national implementing partners (which may be governmental or part of the broader public sector), the use of Stabilisation Units and core government functions support to capacitate governments, and finally the networks of national staff and advisers employed within missions and UNCT.

⁷¹ Many, if not the majority, of AFPs are highly specialized agencies with very little relationship to mission transitions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, or World Meteorological Organisation. A Project strategy may arguably prioritise its engagement accordingly. Some Humanitarian agencies working in transition countries also limit participation in transition-related activities out of a need to preserve ‘humanitarian space.’

that are unique to UNCT entities during transitions. Where country programmes are majority-funded through project and discretionary funding, much office capacity is similarly project-funded and project-focused. Therefore, when events such as transitions call for the proactive and strategic design or redesign of projects, operational redeployment of office space assets and personnel (including project staff themselves), or even changes in donor coordination mechanisms (such as introduction of pooled funding arrangements), UNCT leadership often lack the spare in-house capacity to do so.⁷² Fostering the requisite collaboration and coordination with other UNCT entities, and missions, can also require going above and beyond the requirements of a country office programmes and incurring ‘transaction costs’^{xvi} that disincentivize cooperation in practice even when it is desired in principle. This capacity deficit can substantially affect the ability of a UNCT entity to engage proactively and strategically in joint planning with missions and other UNCT entities. For example, country programmes whose budgetary structures and delivery timeframes are tied to discretionary funding can lack the flexibility to adapt to pooled funding arrangements. It also substantially affects the viability of innovative projects without regional or HQ support, such as the Project’s initiative on energy transitions, even if such projects meet identifiable needs.

7) When designing modalities for in-country support, move forward from the conception of a single Transition Specialist as ‘one stop shop’ towards a differentiated slate of functions addressing needs of senior leadership. The Project has already undergone a *de facto* revision of the ‘Transition Specialist’ modality in the context of recent UN reforms, and has tailored recent consultancies to the different needs of mission Integrated Offices, Resident Coordinator Offices, and UNDP Country Offices. The Project should go further in framing its support offering to its various stakeholders less as a ‘one-stop-shop’ delivery point for policy frameworks and toolkits, and more as a flexible support function that can identify challenges such as those outlined above as they arise, and move proactively and with initiative to meet them. As a general principle, all deployments must possess skillsets that are strategic as well as sufficiently technical. They should be able to work confidently both in securing buy-in at a senior leadership level and problem-solve at the working level, understanding and using the language and toolkits of both mission and UNCT as needed. Emotional intelligence, the ability to find ‘mutual wins’, knowledge of language and social dynamics, and willingness to adapt material outside one’s technical expertise and learn unfamiliar material should be considered essential, not desirable, qualities. Finally, while deployments must establish a direct reporting and accountability relationship to their primary stakeholders, the Project should also establish sufficient monitoring and oversight relationship to backstop its deployments and ensure that they are not ‘repurposed’ to serve other needs of a mission or UNCT entity without prior agreement.

7a) Strategic and integrated mission-UNCT coordination at the level of a DSRG/RC/HC, with communications relationships with mission SPUs, and HQ ITFs and IOTs. The Project has already used this modality in DRC with some success, and is consulting on similar deployments in Mali and Sudan. Deployment at this level is most recommended for mission-UNCT coordination and strategic-level joint programming work, which require integration into both mission and RCO chains of command. The Project may also consider using such modalities for more strategic short-term needs, such as creation of integrated and colocated offices and working arrangements between missions, UNCTs and RCOs, and the creation or alignment of funding frameworks and pooled funding mechanisms at a strategic level. The general principles regarding strategic skillsets outlined above are particularly

⁷² Even where the staff of individual projects have relevant skillsets, delegation of such tasks to project staff can create conflicts of interest.

applicable here. Remarks on the future ‘mainstreaming’ of such work can be found under Recommendation 3.

7b) Support for Resident Coordinators to integrate transition planning into Cooperation Frameworks.

The Project has collaborated with DCO on developing a methodology for capacity mapping that incorporates good practices and lessons learned from prior transitions, and is recommended to explore further ‘mainstreaming’ of the Project’s knowledge base into relevant methodologies and practices notes for other UNSDCF planning components. It has also demonstrated that it can provide short-term capacity to country RCOs to support discrete and defined planning tasks using short-term (3 month) consultancies. Given that UNSDCF guidance and planning components are becoming increasingly annualised and responsive to changing conditions, the Project may explore broadening its offer with RCOs to other such planning tasks to meet urgent transition-related UNSDCF planning needs as required. Unlike the above this modality need not be integrated fully into mission chains of command. It is also highly recommended that any future such deployments are aligned with the ‘Nexus approach’ (see endnote xiii) and utilise the inputs of Nexus advisors. Remarks on the future ‘mainstreaming’ of such work can be found under Recommendation 3.

7c) Advisory support on recalibrating country programmes and operational footprints for UNCT Country Offices.

The Project has deployed advisory functions into UNDP Country Offices (see para. 47) so that the latter can proactively ‘scale’ planning capacity in advance of transitions and develop strategies for realigning operational ‘footprints’, country programmes, and resource mobilisation. However, it lacks visibility with UNCT entities with similar needs. The Project is recommended to use the convening capacity of DCO and the knowledge of Nexus advisors where possible to prioritise those who are most risk-exposed to transfers of mission functions and drawdowns of physical security assets, and perhaps consider conducting dedicated needs assessments of UNCT country offices as part of capacity mapping activities outlined above. This would enable the Project to offer similar such support more equitably at the Country Office level, with a commensurate SOP for the submission and evaluation of support requests. It may also incorporate a plan for developing and sharing ‘lessons learned’ on AFP-specific issues such as competition over pooled funding arrangements into its plan for mainstreaming knowledge management [Recommendation 8]. If the Project does elect to continue offering support at the UNCT Country Office level, it is strongly recommended to develop a specific strategy for ‘mainstreaming’ such advisory support, either at a global level into AFPs’ own core funding windows, or those of global-level Secretariat trust funds. This applies also to Project ‘seed funding’ or cost-contribution to projects, the parameters of which should in the short term be clarified through an appropriate SOP with appropriate submission and evaluation criteria.

7d) Advisory secondments embedded into government Executive Offices. As noted above, IFIs and UN AFPs utilise secondments within a government’s national planning or executive decision-making instruments to assist governments with limited capacity in aligning with coordinated cross-pillar planning. Such arrangements are conventionally underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which in the case of UNCT is usually based upon the cosigned UNSDCF, and for the World Bank and IFIs as part of obligations undertaken when financing a national development plan.⁷³ Though such mechanisms are rarely found with UN missions, due to the political nature of their mandates, the same principles of integration

⁷³ A government can also host secondments from another mutually-recognised government, such as for example in the policing and defence worlds, where secondments are regularly used as a planning coordination mechanism.

that enable mission mandates to be coordinated with the UNSDCF and other internal planning mechanisms would also enable the Project to use this modality through existing UNCT arrangements to better align UN transition planning with host governments' national capacity development planning.

8) Create a plan for rationalising the Project's knowledge products into established organisational learning products aimed at the needs of planning stakeholders, that can be branded, published and distributed online. Many of the Project's existing products are fragmented between its partners' internal-access intranets and the Project's internal Microsoft Teams files sharing space, and many in their existing form are only distributed on an individual basis. This is in part due to the ambiguous labelling of products such as Lessons Learned and After-Action Reviews, which under the 2020 KMOLP have restrictions on clearance and distribution. The Project will likely continue at Executive Committee request with Lessons Learned and After-Action Reviews on remaining drawdowns of multidimensional peacekeeping operations forthcoming in DRC, and in time Mali, CAR and South Sudan. To address its aspirations for the wider distribution of knowledge gained, firstly the Project is recommended to compile its knowledge into a handful of clear and concise 'practice notes' or 'surveys of practice' for use by mission planners, Resident Coordinators and heads of Country Offices, using the unclassified elements of its Lessons Learned etcetera as source material. While the original products may remain accessible in internal-access databases, the notes should be in principle accessible through public-facing forums such as the UN SDG Resources Library, UN Peacekeeping Hub, or Dag Hammarskjöld Repository. Secondly, the Project should also identify in its plan the remaining requirements for updating or clarifying operational guidance that have been identified in the Integration Review, 2019 Planning Directive, and its own analyses – consulting with DOS and DSMPC as needed.⁷⁴ These requirements should be similarly consolidated into a concise set of operational practice notes or guidance revision processes. Finally, the Project is recommended to work with the Partners' policy units to identify remaining updates to policies and guidance,⁷⁵ and also find ways to capture the value add of peer-to-peer exchanges between missions and RCOs, and encourage such exchanges to continue.

Action Point 4: Adjust planning and working practices to ensure scope of work is achievable within current governance/management structures

9) Encourage fuller strategic engagement of the Project Steering Committee outside of the quarterly review process. Given the Project's strategic scope, several of its activities and objectives over the 2020-23 cycle have required engagement at the director level and above to achieve. The Project's future strategic scope and 'mainstreaming' is also a process that will require engagement and support from the Project Steering Committee (PSC). While the quarterly PSC meeting cycle is sufficient for periodic review of progress against goals, troubleshooting, and review / authorization of quarterly budget spending, it alone does not provide sufficient time or space for articulation of

⁷⁴ For example, the Integration Review has highlighted the need for operational practice notes on asset liquidation and data/knowledge transfer and archiving, and to incentivize staff mobility between pillars and other integrated working arrangements. The 2019 Planning Directive calls upon DMSPC and DOC to make a number of adjustments to administrative policies and processes (including MOUs) to make placement arrangements for staff between UN Secretariat and AFPs more flexible, enable mission-based national staff to provide services to UN entities post-transition, and ensure that downsizing policies provide a clear framework for post-transition staffing arrangements.

⁷⁵ This includes e.g. the Project's ongoing work with DPO-DPET on guidance issues pertaining to transfers of child protection functions. The Intervention Review also recommends updating the Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions, which is over fifteen years old in its current form and consequently does not address issues raised subsequently such as the function of UNSDCFs vis-à-vis ISFs, the functional and financial integration of RCOs and Integrated Offices into structurally integrated missions.

strategy, in-depth planning, interdepartmental consultation or troubleshooting for the PSC to be able to 'lean forward' with strategic support and solutions for 'unsticking' of problems that emerge at the working level. The recommendations offered above suggest several ways in which the PSC can be engaged more strategically – for example via a strengthened annual planning and stakeholder consultation process, or during development of strategic objectives and mainstreaming strategies. The following recommendations also suggest some useful processes and tools that could also enable the PSC to offer advice and be strategically engaged without placing unrealistic burdens on time.

10) Use project implementation plans (PIPs) to create clarity of vision around individual workstreams and goals, enable input from / coordination with HQ-level stakeholders outside the Steering Committee, and streamline the Project's decision-making processes. A PIP is a short one- or two-page document that sets out the steps the Project needs to take to achieve a particular goal/objective. It breaks the goal down into actions (though the level of detail required can be flexible), and clarifies if and where partners lead or are responsible, the modality of resources to be used, and the envisaged timeline. As PIPs are internal management documents, they can be flexible in what nature of 'goal(s)' they address, how granular or 'binding' they are, and can leave space for decisions to be taken or reviewed 'downstream'. As a tool, they offer several advantages for a project of this nature. Instead of several disconnected, activity-level decisions and approvals, a PIP will allow the Project to offer a simple, 'one-pager' solution to understanding how individual activities connect to its overall strategic goal(s) with one streamlined input and sign-off process that engages all PSC partners. This can potentially save substantial time in subsequent intra-partner consultation and coordination. It could also serve as a convenient tool for coordination consultation and feedback on relevant workstream with UNHQ partners such as the EOSG, or at a technical level depending on the activity in question with DOS, PBF or individual AFPs, without creating additional cumbersome governance structures or membership arrangements

11) Reduce bandwidth consumption on the Project Management Team by streamlining the overall number of activities utilising staff time, delegation, assigning 'country leads' at the country level, and bringing SOPs out of draft form. For any project working across multiple UN entities, multiple countries and multiple thematic pillars, consumption of the bandwidth, energy and attention of its management and steering committee represents a risk that must be managed. The Project must perforce maintain numerous activity workstreams at HQ, regional, and country levels, and must also dedicate a proportion of its time to reporting requirements to its stakeholders and donors. Consequently, the time and focus of the Project Management Team should be considered a finite resource with opportunity costs in how and where it is deployed. The Project has a large number of ongoing and incomplete activities all utilising staff time. Activities pending clearance or approval should be addressed in order to free up Project resources. Delegation of workstreams to project staff should be considered. Delegation of country-specific activities to 'country leads' is one such option, but should be delegated to Project staff at the country level wherever possible. The Project should ensure its SOPs are finalised and out of draft form, strengthened so as to streamline and reduce frequency and number of decision-making steps that need to be taken any given point, minimise circuitous and time-intensive consultation processes within departments, and overall improve efficiency of communication between departments.

Annex I: Lines of Enquiry

Review of current UN demand and capacity.

Key questions: What is the envisioned demand for integrated support to UN transition processes, noting recent reforms to the peace and security pillar, development system, and new directives from the Secretary General and Security Council? How are key and recurrent challenges (e.g. early planning, financing and the ‘financial cliff’, integration between missions and UNCT) being addressed, and where does the project meet outstanding needs? Does the project complement other thematic and country-specific support mechanisms that have developed in HQ, and do present resources, capacities and support modalities in the system require support from the project? Has the project met needs and challenges expressed by UN and national stakeholders in transition countries themselves? What transition processes will be ongoing or on the horizon beyond 2023 and are predictive/early warning capacities sufficiently flagging such needs?

Assessment of project delivery.

Key questions: How effective and efficient were the project’s contributions regarding its four main areas of focus: providing direct country support to transition processes; enhancing policy coherence and implementation support; strengthening organizational learning; and building and strengthening partnerships with UN and non-UN stakeholders? What are the project’s most important achievements? What are the most important challenges that the project encountered? Are project activities sustainable and is the project taking the right steps to ensure its efforts will be sustained beyond the existence of the Project itself? How does it contribute to ongoing work on UN Integration?

Assessment of project functioning and capacity.

Key questions: Does the project’s current staffing, structure, and working modalities fit the needs of the Organisation? How effectively does the project engage with planning functions and interlocutors in HQ, missions and the Resident Coordinator / UNCT system? How effectively does it engage with /support national stakeholders? Does it make effective use of non-UN partnerships where needed?

Annex 2: Internal UN Briefings, Workshops and Peer-to-Peer Exchanges Organised by the Project Secretariat and Consultants (July 2019 – March 2022) and Consultants

Date	Description	Type	UN Representation	Number of attendees
Jul 2020	Ad-hoc meetings between Thematic Teams of UNITAMS Start-up and UN Transitions Project	Briefing	UNITAMS	35
Sep 2020	Guinea-Bissau Integrated Task Force exchange on "Lessons Learned on Operational Issues in UN Transitions"	Exchange	UNIOGBIS, UNCT (Guinea-Bissau), UNMIL, MINUSTAH	30
Nov 2020	Session on UN Transitions during OROLSI's Annual Meeting of Senior DDR/CVR Officers across UN Peace Operations	Workshop	DDRCS components of missions	41
Jan 2021	MONUSCO-UNAMID Leadership-to-Leadership Exchange to facilitate exchange of lessons and best practices between UNAMID DJSR and MONUSCO's DSRGs.	Exchange	MONUSCO, UNAMID	15
Mar 2021	Virtual briefing to UN Mission and UNCT staff in the DRC, Sudan, South Sudan and Mali on the State Liaison Functions and the UN-DCAF Study "UN/AU Transition in Darfur: Lessons from Assistance on Rule of Law and Human Rights through the State Liaison Functions".	Briefing	UNAMID, MONUSCO, UNMISS, MINUSMA	71
May 2021	Virtual event in the context of UNDP's Development Dialogues Forum, on "Beyond UN Transitions: Sustaining Peacebuilding and Rule of Law" to highlight main lessons and challenges to sustaining peacebuilding and rule of law in UN Transitions.	Briefing	UNDP (HQ, Sudan, Haiti), RCO (Liberia), DPPA	97
Nov 2021 onwards	Series of peer-to-peer exchanges between missions, AFPs, and UNHQ stakeholders on protection issues in UN transitions	Peer-to-peer exchange	TBD	TBD
Jul 2020, Feb 2021, Mar 2021	MONUSCO Leadership Team meetings on the UN Transition and support to the MONUSCO-UNCT Strategic Policy Group meeting on the UN Transitions.		MONUSCO SRSG, DSRSG and components, 25 AFPs (DRC),	45

ⁱ Missions produce plans at the component level. Each component produces a multi-year strategy from which annual workplans are derived. Certain costs such as staffing are integrated into the Results-Based Budget (RBB) by the Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit (SPCU), while programmatic activities may be supported either through standing budgets, UN trust funds or as quick-impact projects. Component-level planning is prominent in PKOs but not required in SPMs, where components are primarily advisory or advocacy-related with considerably greater restrictions on costs and programmatic activities, being primarily advisory or advocacy-related. They do not generally conduct or refer to UNCT-wide capacity mappings or comparative advantage assessments, nor require resource mobilization strategies in the sense understood by UN AFPs.

ⁱⁱ Mission plans and log frames align towards the Mission Concept, for which the SRSB is primarily responsible. The Mission Concept's primary point of reference is the responsibilities assigned by the Security Council in its mandate. The Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy (2013) expanded these reference points to include an Integrated (Mission) Task Force (ITF), established by order of the Secretary General or Executive Committee, as a director-level forum for intra-UN assessment, discussion, information-sharing, and coordination. The ITF is intended to provide political and operational priorities at the outset of mission planning in the form of Strategic Assessments and Integrated Technical Assessments, and through issuance of a directive to the SRSB setting out the UN's strategic direction and priorities, structural coordination arrangements, and planning parameters. Mission Concepts are compulsory for PKOs, but are considered optional for SPMs.

ⁱⁱⁱ In addition to the Mission Concept, the IAP Policy also tasks the SRSB, RC and HC with production of an Integrated Strategic Framework – an articulation of agreed priorities between a mission and UNCT intended to ensure a common understanding of the crisis and what a sustainable peace or solution entails. However, in practice, the IAP affords great flexibility in how its requirements are interpreted, to the extent that an ISF may be substituted entirely by – or indistinguishable from – the UNSDCF, or relevant parts of a mission concept. It neither replaces, nor compels alignment with, conventional mission and UNCT planning structures, and as such does not materially affect the different financial systems, budget cycles, programme documents and policies that in practice guide the activities of missions and UNCT field entities. In the words of the Integration Review, 'the imperative of developing an ISF in as inclusive a manner as possible creates a tendency to draft a document that simply lists all of the activities already underway by all parts of the UN system. (Integration Review, page 18, para 28).

^{iv} In 2016, the General Assembly called for a thorough 'repositioning' or reform of the UN development system in its Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), which was adopted by member states in General Assembly Resolution 72/779 in June 2018. Subsequent references to '2018 QCPR development system reforms' or 'development system reforms' refer primarily to these documents. See also UN General Assembly Resolution 72/279. 9 May 2018. 'Repositioning of the UN development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system.' (A/72/L.52), United Nations, New York.

^v The UNSDCF and its predecessor, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is the central planning framework describing the contribution of all UNCT activities to host government national development priorities (or more precisely, those which are articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda), and is conventionally produced and co-signed with the host government once every 5 years. The 2018 QCPR development system reforms updated the UNDAF to provide greater strategic direction to UNCT country programmes by connecting UNCT activities to the Member State agreed Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda, which are applied equally to all UN Agencies Funds and Programmes. All UNCT entities' plans must demonstrate alignment with the UNSDCF, and, increasingly, are aligned in the timing of their renewal cycles. As such, the UNSDCF and SDGs are also important tools for coordinating development and humanitarian work via the 'Nexus approach' [ref para]. By contrast the UNDAF was at times seen as a 'list' of UNCT activities with fewer clear connections to each other.

^{vi} The 2016 QCPR development system reforms centralised and strengthened leadership and coordination of all UN development activities at a global and country level, in the process 'delinking' these functions from UNDP. At the HQ level, the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, assumed this leadership and coordination function. At the country level, the function of Resident Coordinator (RC), previously held by the UNDP Resident Representative, was also 'delinked', and provided with support staff headed by a P5 Strategic Planning Officer or Team Leader. The 'delinking' removed the RC's reporting line to the UNDP administrator in New York, which was seen by some Member States as counteractive to the RC's leadership and coordination role vis-à-vis other UN agencies, funds and programmes.

^{vii} Part of the reasoning for this arrangement concerns the funding arrangements for Resident Coordinators Offices (RCOs). The Secretary-General's plan for funding the strengthened RCOs, presented in the 2018 Funding Compact, estimated \$281m per year including a \$35m fund for supporting joint initiatives and activities with UNCT and host governments. Proposals that this sum would be met through assessed contributions were rejected by some Member States. Instead, the Resident Coordinator system is funded through cost-sharing staff, and a 1% levy on donor-funded development activities

and discretionary project funding from Member States which is administered at the level of individual agencies funds and programmes. Thus additional capacities in RCOs, such as Transition Specialists, are funded and administered by UNCT entities such as UNDP.

^{viii} ‘Reconfiguration... of the UN presence’ is a phrase designed in part to avoid construing transitions as a linear ‘handover’ of residual mission functions at the end of a mission’s life cycle, which is an approach that has been critiqued in lessons learned from previous transitions. The full context for the phrase from UNSCR 2594 is as follows: ‘[The Security Council] stresses the crucial role peace operations play in the pursuit of sustainable political solutions and building peace, and, in this regard, *emphasises* the need for peace operations to engage at the earliest possible stage in integrated planning and coordination on transitions with the Resident Coordinators, United Nations Country Team, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the host State and other national stakeholders’ (UNSCR 2594 para. 1); and ‘*requests* the Secretary-General to plan for United Nations peace operations transitions which are integrated within the wider country-specific transition to peace and to elaborate mission transition strategies which build towards the reconfiguration of the strategy, footprint and capacity of the United Nations presence’ (para 2).

^{ix} Much of the terminology surrounding transition planning emerged during Security Council debates and Secretary General reports in the 2000s and early 2010s as Member States sought to debate and clarify the conditions for drawing down peacekeeping missions, which had grown in number, size, and complexity since the 1990s – as indeed had the frequency of transitioning such peacekeeping operations into special political missions. The debate was in part ideological but predominantly budgetary, given that the overall peacekeeping budget ballooning from \$1.3bn in 1999 to nearly \$8bn by 2013 as modern conflicts became increasingly harder to resolve with traditional political settlements. Concepts such as ‘exit strategy’, ‘benchmarking’ (first requested by the Security Council in Liberia in 2006, though in use informally at least since 2002) and ‘end state’ emerged not only as planning tools, but for use in the UN’s negotiations with Troop Contributing Countries. Further Security Council debates and requests for clarity on transition planning occurred in the early 2010s, following host government requests for the departure of peacekeepers in Burundi (2005), Eritrea (2008), Congo (2009) and Chad (2010), and were framed explicitly in the context of ‘ending or reconfiguring peacekeeping missions, or for their transition to other kinds of UN presences.’ (S/2010/67).

^x Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs) exist as different budgetary categories in the UN system but otherwise have access to similar planning and programming tools and project financing through standing budgets and Secretariat funds. However, SPMs have considerably greater latitude in the extent to which they employ certain planning and programming tools. As a result, differences in planning and programming arrangements between PKOs and SPMs have emerged over the past decade, partly cultural in origin, and in part due to some planning tools’ origins in the context of debates over peacekeeping in the 2000s and 2010s.

^{xi} There are several models for the funding of standing capacities, each with strengths and weaknesses. Present standing capacities in policing and rule of law involve placing deployable expertise on contracts funded primarily from Secretariat support accounts, which is a relatively costly option. A second model, currently being explored by DOS, is a standing capacity that enables full-time staff within the Secretariat to be placed on detailed assignment, although this leaves open the question of whether expertise from AFP, non-staff contract modalities, and external sources would be included in this approach.

^{xii} The phrase ‘Protection of Civilians’ is used here in the sense defined in the UNDPO Policy on Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping (2019.17). It is a slightly problematic phrase given that it refers to aspects of peacekeeping operation mandates conducted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter since at least 1999, when the phrase was first used by the Security Council in Sierra Leone (S/RES/1965). ‘Protection’ is not a term normally used by UN development and humanitarian agencies; in some cases, alternative phrasings such as ‘protection of the population during transitions’ is employed to describe transfer of non-Chapter VII residual functions.

^{xiii} The ‘Nexus approach’ and New Way of Working, as originally expressed at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, strictly speaking refers to analysis/planning cooperation within the humanitarian and development sphere, with the addition of the ‘Peace’ pillar occurring subsequently at the initiative of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. However, as with earlier UN efforts to integrate these sectors’ planning arrangements, the humanitarian sector’s operational need to preserve strictly non-political affiliations in the field – along with long-held concerns by Member State members of the G77 about the potential for politicizing humanitarian and development aid – prevented any linkage of humanitarian planning to Security Council mandates or host government policies. Even the linkage to development actors reflected a compromise wrought by the spiralling costs and length of humanitarian interventions by the mid-2010s. Consequently, Security Council mandates do not compel missions to adopt ‘Nexus approaches’, and even though deputy heads of mission have assumed the role of humanitarian coordinator since the early 2000s, many planning aspects of this role are delegated to the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

^{xiv} Formulated In 2018, the Secretary General’s Initiative on Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) included a political expression of support in its Declaration of Shared Commitments (Article 16) for ‘strengthen[ing] national ownership and capacity; in

doing so, ensure[ing] integrated analysis and planning, particularly for transitions; and to seek greater coherence among UN system actors.’ The implementation of A4P, while stopping short of fully integrated joint analysis and planning with UNCT, has enabled more integrated planning collaboration between mission components within missions through the rollout of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) which gathers data and analytics against objectives that are agreed between mission components. Tools such as CPAS, as well as the programming frameworks used by the Peacebuilding Fund itself, have enabled mission components to collaborate internally and with the host government on joined-up stabilisation programmes such as CRESTA/A in UNSOM (Community Recovery and Extension of State Authority and Accountability Programme). However, these tools do not integrate with UNCT analysis and planning, instead engaging AFPs on an individual level.

^{xv} For example, while focal points within cabinet line ministries may (though not always!) report such arrangements ‘vertically’ up to an Executive Office or similar, they may not possess protocols or incentives to communicate ‘horizontally’ to their counterparts in other ministries. Executive Offices themselves can also lack the official protocols or staff capacity to receive, analyse and synthesise multiple communication channels from said focal points. A separate, related issue is that when governments attempt to resolve this issue structurally by routing communication through e.g. an international cooperation or liaison office, that such liaison offices can become ‘gatekeepers’ preventing effective and responsive communication between the UN and a government’s actual stakeholders. Such issues are particularly acute in countries possessing few resources, that are highly fragmented along social or political lines, have limited means of extending state authority or are highly federalized or decentralized.

^{xvi} As noted in the Integration Review’s analysis of behavioural barriers to integration, which was contributed by the Project, a lack of communication and cooperation is often assumed to be a symptom of a lack of goodwill (Integration Review, p. 28, para. 63). However, even if closer integration is desired, ‘transactional costs’ can disincentivize cooperation within UNCT for more practical reasons. The geographic dispersal and separation of field offices across cities or even countries, for example, along with limits on transport availability imposes physical transaction costs – dramatically so in countries such as DRC or Sudan. UNCT entities also encounter financial transaction costs in making use of mission-based funds, where the small size of funding envelopes relative to the total value of a country programme is often offset by the operational resources consumed in applying and administering the funds. Alternatively, alignment of programming objectives with political mandates incurs a political ‘transaction cost’ of sorts, while entering pooled funding arrangements can entail a mix of political and financial costs, since the preferences of donors and the host government, who must be engaged in donor coordination mechanisms, must be broached.