COMBINED OUTPUT & OUTCOME EVALUATION

VOLUME 6

POST MID-TERM REVIEW OF

GPAR SARAVANE PROJECT

GOVERNANCE & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

SUPPORT FOR BETTER SERVICE DELIVERY

LAO PEOPLE’S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Final Report 19th January 2010

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# CHAPTER 1. Background

The Governance and Public Administration Reform Programme Saravane Province Project (GPAR SP) underwent a mid-term review in November 2008.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The terms of reference for the present Combined Output and Outcome Review include a review of the recommendations of the mid term review and recommendations on further re-alignment and strengthening of the GPAR Saravane Project and a possible follow up phase.

This short report is based on a one-day visit to Saravane where the evaluation team met with the Project Manager, Vice Governor, provincial line departments and Vice Governor of one district, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Evaluation team meeting with GPAR SP actors

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Actors**  | **All participants**  | **Women**  | **% Women**  |
| Provincial officials  | 7 | 1 | 14% |
| GPAR Saravane team  | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Meeting with Vice Governor | 7 | 2 | 29% |
| Second meeting with Saravane team | 5 | 2 | 40% |
| Meeting with Line Departments | 10 | 3 | 30% |
| **Total**  | **34** | **10** | **29%** |

The focus of the evaluation team’s work was on the response of the GPAR project to the recommendations of the mid term review and whether actions taken on these recommendations had filtered through to the line departments in practical ways.

Annex 1 sets out the MTE recommendations and the GPAR SP response to them and should be referred to for further details.

# CHAPTER 2. Findings on response of GPAR Saravane to the recommendations of the mid term evaluation

## 2.1 GPAR SP response to MTR recommendations

### 2.1.1 Recommendations 1-2: Targeting capital investment to poorest Kumbans (KBs)

The DDF interventions are now being aligned to Kumbans that are prioritized for services in the national poverty reduction programme.

The project is rethinking a revision of the formula to take into account the new criteria set out in PMO 5, 2009 which classifies districts not only according to population and poverty but also remoteness, language, existence of critical services already present and ethnicity.

A remaining problem is that the current GPAR SBSD managed DDF top-ups are based on a flat figure for all the districts, which is insensitive to the actual distribution of poverty between districts.

The project is thinking through how to establish a mechanism to track expenditures and impacts at village level, based on a recent study visit of the team to Nepal study, where a DDF modality is being applied.

### 2.1.2 Recommendation 3: Improved planning and budgeting procedures

The project is experimenting with the use of statistics and maps to deepen planning processes in Vapi and Laongam districts. These tools could help make prioritization exercises more realistic and targeted.

The project has not obtained Technical Assistance (TA) from UNCDF to revise planning procedures to deepen diagnostic dimension, something that was recommended in the MTR.

### 2.2.3 Recommendation 4: Involvement of women in planning

The SP team stated that this had already been happening at the time of the MTR, but acknowledged a need for more innovation in current efforts to raise the voice of women and marginal groups in planning process.

The evaluation team noted that the SP project made a conscious effort to raise the voice of women at the village and kumban level during the recent Vapi and Laongam districts participatory planning processes and to trace the contribution of women in the district prioritized projects

### 2.1.4 Recommendations 5: Communication mechanisms on planning and budgeting

The SP team reported that community radio is making emissions in ethnic languages.

On the recommendation regarding the use of staff with ethnic language skills, the SP team reported that efforts would be made to develop trainers from ethnic groups, but only during a future phase of the project.

### 2.1.5 Recommendation 6: Gender strategy for planning & budgeting

The SP team reported that it has not been possible to pursue the gender strategy because the gender assessment report, commissioned by UNDP, has not been produced.

### 2.1.6 Recommendation 7: Administrative re-organisation

There has been movement on administrative re-organisation, ESSS and PIMS as recommended by the MTE.

A UNDP TA is currently working on the administrative re-organisation side of this work.

### 2.1.7 Recommendation 8: Administrative and political decentralisation

This recommendation went to UNCDF and has not been followed up.

### 2.1.8 Recommendation 9-10: Human resource management

The GPAR SP’s human capacity advisor passed away. The UNDP has employed a TA to undertake this work and he is currently working on the development of a national HR strategy with GPAR SBSD.

## 2.2 The evaluation team’s findings

### 2.2.1 UNCDF

The team’s recommendations have not yet elicited a response from the UNCDF. This has meant that some important initiatives have not been taken up, which will hamper SP Project performance over the remainder of its term.

UNCDF back-up to GPAR SP remains important in refining some of the weak areas identified by the MTR, notably around O&M, participatory budgeting & planning.

### 2.2.2 GPAR SP response

The evaluation team was impressed by way GPAR SP PSU has responded to those recommendations over which it has a mandate and for which it has resources. It was also impressed with the way the project team is drawing experience of the Nepal study tour into thinking about how to improve DDF work in Saravane.

The SP team is working through areas requiring refinement, such as the budget allocations & participatory planning process.

The SP team has formulated priority areas for a possible future phase, a further demonstration of capacity and commitment to the work of the project.

Some recommendations made by the MTR were unrealistic in the changing Lao DPR policy context. It appeared to the evaluation team that, in retrospect, the recommendation to pursue administrative and political decentralization as a wide ranging national programme was unrealistic in Lao PDR at present.

It is more realistic to build on the emerging local government system within the GPAR provincial pilots and use this to inform a national debate on this larger process.

# CHAPTER 3. Recommendations for further re-alignment, strengthening and a possible further phase of the project

### 3.1 For the UNCDF

Finalise the management response to recommendations and act on the realistic recommendations.

Finalise the O&M guidelines and support their implementation in Saravane.

Revisit the DDF allocation formula to align with the amended PMO 39/05 of 2009.

Provide support to GPAR SP efforts to track DDF impacts at village level based on Nepal study tour experience.

Look into how the Service Delivery Information System (SDIS) developed in Luang Prabang can be incorporated into the Saravane M&E system for a future phase of the project.

### 3.2 For the GPAR SP project 2009-2010

Focus on completing and refining the existing planned activities, already on the workplan, with support from UNCDF TA in the areas recommended in the MTE.

The GPAR SP project should be given the resources to undergo a process of facilitated reflection and assimilation of its experience to draw out and document more fully the lessons this hold for decentralization in Lao PDR.

The results of this process of reflection should form the basis of an adapted project design that builds on the strengths of the current project.

### 3.3 For GPAR SP project 2011-2015

The GPAR SP Project merits a further phase. During this phase it should continue with the adaptations recommended in the Mid Term Review and its work of transmitting its experience to other provinces and to national policy debate and reform processes.

For this phase, the project document should be reformulated to conform with the cut down version of the DDF, as described in the Overall Report in this series of evaluations. The project reformulation should incorporate successful elements from the other provincial projects, notably the Service Delivery Fund, Service Delivery Information System developed inLuang Prabang and Agricultural Development Support Fund in Xieng Khouang.

The reformulation should include a strong focus on measures to improve the environment for farming (?) and other business activities, including not only the regulatory but also the infrastructure and service delivery dimensions of the business environment.

The next phase should be implements in full alignment with the NSEDP objectives of poverty reduction & equitable growth.

# Annex 1. GPAR SP Response to MTR recommendations

**UNDP/UNCDF Management Response**

**GPAR Saravane mid-term review** Date: 25 November – 18 December 2008

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**Initial overall comments:** The GPAR Saravane Project Management, UNDP Lao PDR and UNCDF Regional Office Bangkok generally concur with the recommendations of the Mid-term Review from 19 March 2009. Some recommendations are already being implemented by the GPAR Saravane Project Management supported by UNDP Lao PDR and the GPAR SBAD Programme based in Vientiane. Recommendations for other stakeholders, senior management, central and regional UNDP or UNCDF offices are outlined below. It is assumed that some follow-up actions addressing the recommendations rest on the current efforts and initiatives until project completion in March 2010 as well as on a no cost extension period until September 2010 (.Various policy level lessons and recommendations will be pursued through GPAR SBSD and with central government authorities such as PACSA/PMO, DoF, and DIC/MPI. .

|  |
| --- |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1:** ***Financing and financial management.*** The GPAR SP PST should develop and apply criteria to ensure that its capital investments target the poorest Kumbans (*This should be done in a way that enables the DPCs to take into consideration other sources of expenditure provided for by the NGPRP so that these decisions are made with district development as a whole in mind. The recommendation does not seek spread investment capital more thinly across Kumbans. The action can be taken by the PST with support from UNCDF technical advisors.*) |
| **Management Response:**Under the current NGPRP, the following priority 8 pilot kumbans are aligned and coordinated with DDF interventions given that some of these NGPRP pilot kumbans are deemed overall poor but with select villages (Bans) which are not poor. The provincial government through DPI, has also pro-poor interventions other than DDF in these kumbans: |
|  | Pilot NGPRP Ban & Kumbans |  |  |  |
| Toumlane District | Kumban Kaleng | With DDF |  |  |
|  | Kumban Muang | No DDF |  |  |
| Samouay District | Kumban Asing | No DDF |  |  |
|  | Kumban Atu-awaw | No DDF |  |  |
| Khongsedone | Ban Napong | No DDF (along the highway & not poor) |  |  |
|  | Ban Nanung, Kumban Namuang | With DDF |  |  |
| Lakhonepheng District | Ban Kao Sip | With DDF |  |  |
|  | Ban Bandanh | With DDF |  |  |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking\*** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
|  **1. Development of enhanced DDF selection criteria per kumban and ban for DDF phase II implementation.**   | 2nd Qtr. 2010 | GPAR SP PST, GPAR-SBSD, UNCDF TAs |  |  |
| 1.1 Conduct of evaluative studies  |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 Criteria and policy development |  |  |  |  |
| 2. **Continued Assessments of Kumban Proposals & District Annual Investment Plans for Laongam & Vapi Districts.** | 2nd Qtr-3rd Qtr. 2009 | GPAR PST- PRDS, DPTs & DPCs of Laongam & Vapi | Initially started in Q1 2009 |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2:** ***Financing and financial management.*** As part of national process of fiscal decentralisation, national government should develop a system for the devolution of a growing proportion of its capital expenditure grant to the districts (*This is the government’s intention already. Through GPAR Central and in dialogue with the MoPI, the UNCDF/UNDP, could offer to help the government develop a* ***formula for allocation of capital grants to districts****. The action the UNCDF needs to take is to discuss this with the UNDP in Vientiane first and then, with their agreement, approach the GoL jointly)* |
| **Management Response & Comment*** 1. The reform agenda in which a push for increased devolution of responsibilities has commenced however more in view of administrative reforms than capital allocations. The DDF is a very positive step along this road towards greater decentralization in Laos however this will take time and the evaluation needs to recognize this. Upstream of DDF experience is being discussed and the expansion within SBSD and WB funded Khammuan are very positive results from the experience in Saravane. Through such upstream work UNCDF together with UNDP Lao PDR, through GPAR Programme at central level, can approach the Government in terms of good policy advice based on positive lessons from the DDF programmes. However, the push for larger decentralization should not only focus on capital investments but general revision of functional assignment and required enhanced capacity to the various levels and with these appropriate budgets.
	2. In terms of advising Government in developing a formula for capital grants to the districts a lot of work will need to go into work on assignments of functions rather prior to preparing formulas for capital allocations. We may based on experience in Saravane and SBSD review the present allocations and pilot different allocation formulas, but it should be focused and the “why” needs to be answered before national allocation formulas are designed.
	3. Review of the present formula use for Saravane (and SBSD) should be done by the end of the year to see if any adjustments need to be made for the last year of Saravane
 |
| **Key Action(s):** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1.Draft policy issue paper on lessons and upstream possibilities of the DDF in Laos prepared for discussion by UNCDF | Q3-Q4 2009 | GPAR SBSD, UNDP,  |  |  |
| 2.1. UNCDF to review the need for revision of guidelines on DDF Allocations applicable to the following. a. Current situation in Saravane and  b. New DDF pilot provinces- Sekong, Oudomxay, Xiengkhouang, and Huaphan provinces. | Q1 2010 | UNCDF & UNDP |  |  |
| 2.1.1. Table review and analysis of all allocations made in Saravane Province, | -0- | -0- |  |  |
| 2.1.2 Conduct cost-benefit, cost-efficiency & effectiveness study of the DDF allocations per district and villages considering the abovementioned factors ( in item 1.1.1. above) as criteria besides population and number of poor households. | -0- | -0- |  |  |
|  | Q2 2010 | UNCDF & UNDP |  |  |
| 2.3 Validation visits and workshops in Lao PDR | Q3 2010 | UNCDF, UNDP & GPAR provinces |  |  |
|  | Q4 2010 | UNCDF & UNDP |  |  |
| 2.5 Updating and Monitoring | Q3 2010 | UNCDF & UNDP |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3:** ***Planning and budgeting.*** The UNDCF should consider developing and experimenting with planning tools that promote choices and actions based on diagnosis to promote local understanding of development problems and opportunities that lead to incremental, cumulative and sustainable development. (*The intention in this recommendation is not to burden the existing process with a long-winded and expert-dependent planning process. The challenge is to rather to develop rapid participatory appraisal methods that have a conceptual and pedagogic dimension that enables local actors make choices informed by a deeper understanding of the development process. These choices would then increase the impact and sustainability of the capital investment. This is an area of innovation. Experimentation in this area would have relevance across LDPs in a number of different countries, not only in Lao. This is a recommendation that the UNCDF could pursue within GPAR SP or take up at a global level, or both.)* |
| **Management Response & Comment**1. The PST concurs to the MTR proposal that UNCDF shall develop and include planning tools for deeper diagnosis such as using of village statistics, maps, and other evidenced-based data to provide the participants to have greater understanding of village and kumban needs, issues and opportunities for them. While this will lengthen the period of planning, the PST recognizes the value of ownership of the community of the decisions/choices as well as increase their level of decision making.
2. It must be noted that this instrument can be applied only to those undergoing the DDF planning process (in Vapi district in selected kumbans). These recommendations can be fully implemented if GPAR Saravane will have another round of DDF planning process after its official completion date of March 2010 despite there is a budget and plan allocated until September 2010.The situation is due to the delayed contribution of EUduring its inception period last 2006-2007.
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame**  | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 description activities, then specifics as needed Gathering of PRA literature and draft | 1st week May 2009 | PST |  |  |
| 3.2. Presentation and discussion |  |  |  |  |
| 3.3 Finalization and Presentation in Stakeholders Meeting | Q2 SH Meeting July 2009 | DPTs |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4: *Planning and budgeting.*** The UNCDF should consider developing and experimenting with tools that more effectively empower women and marginalized groups to involve themselves in project planning and implementation. In promoting participatory planning, ensuring good attendance at meetings is an important first step, but there is, in addition, a need to build the capacity of poor people and women to voice their interests, based on an understanding not only of their needs but also of effective ways to tackle problems and take up opportunities.( *This recommendation is addressed in part by 2.1 above. The difference here is that it calls for a specific focus on empowering the women and marginalized groups to participate more meaningfully. The intention is not to burden the planning process by imposing impractical or culturally inappropriate requirements for participation. The call is to experiment with innovative tools that enable these groups to bring their concerns more effectively into the development processes. A simple example of this would be to hold gender-based break-away groups during planning meetings. This is something the UNCDF’s evaluation approach requires during community visits. It has amply demonstrated its effectiveness in a number of evaluations already. The development of participatory planning tools that are sensitive to the needs of women and other marginalized groups is also an area of innovation that would have relevance across a number of countries, not only in Lao. This is something that the GPAR SP team could take up itself, with support from UNCDF technical advisors and/or the UNCDF could take up as an initiative for application across all of its LDPs)* |
| **Management Response and Comment:**1. GPAR Saravane PST also acknowledge the need to be more innovative in its current effort to raise the participation or voice of women and marginal ethnic groups in DDF planning and decision making process. DDF planning process is a complete anti-thesis of previous efforts which do not involve the women in village or community development decision making process.
2. The period of the Mid-Term Review Team visit did not coincide with the planning process calendar . Hence, it was not able to witness, that GPAR Saravane from the inception of DDF implementation since 2006-2007, it has already been doing “gender break-away grouping” during the planning process. The women’s group and men’s group project identification session is a standard operating process in village and kumban planning sessions.
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 Description activities, then specifics as needed.Design a M/E instrument to determine gender participation in DDF planning process. | July 2009 | PST |  |  |
| 3.2 Conduct Monthly M/E sessions with DPTs | August-December 2009 | PST |  |  |
| 3.3 Review the Quarterly Workplan progress of the Lao Women’s Union and National Committee on the Advancement of Women  | July, October 2009 and January 2010 | PST |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation on Issue 5: *Planning and budgeting***. GPAR SP PST should design and introduce communication mechanisms that take into account the cultural and language barriers associated with ethnicity in remote rural areas. (*This is part of the challenge set out in 2.2 above. The official language in Lao is Laotian and the UNCDF obviously needs to respect this. Nevertheless, it is possible to conceive of ways to strengthen the involvement of “ethnic groups” who are unable to follow or contribute to processes that are conducted exclusively in Laotian. These could, for example, include the use of trainers and facilitators who are versed in the local languages. This is something the GPAR SP team can take up itself, especially in the new districts.)* |
| **Management Response and Comment**:1. The first experiment of GPAR Saravane since 2006-2007 was to integrate planning with participatory approach in non-Lao literate ethnic villages. As mentioned in various reports and in different fora, members of GPAR Saravane PST showed the use of visuals, and ethnic instruments which can be associated with the choice of projects. The PST and DPT members even used stones and pebbles to count the number of votes in the baskets showing the drawing or label, in local ethnic language, the possible projects of choice.
2. All DPTs or Kumban facilitators are from the locality and is assisted by the village chiefs/officials who are from the locality and are versed both in Lao and their local ethnic dialect or language. This approach will be further enhanced and monitored for implementation in the on-going planning process in Vapi district. However, the building a pool of trainers from ethnic groups will be possible only should there be another DPT and DPT planning exercise after March 2010 project ending period.
3. Besides and ethnic community school, there is an on-going community radio program with speakerphones (broadcasting in ethnic and Lao language) in Taoy, Samouay and Toumlane districts. GPAR will continue to provide information through the DPTs of the districts in coordination with the Dept. of Information and Culture on program updates.
4. GPAR will continue the updating of the community/project billboards in each district as well as each project site through the DPTs
5. There is an on-going weekly radio broadcast every Saturday morning of the GPAR program by the Provincial DIC in Saravane district.
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. description activities, then specifics as needed a. Review and revise communications plan and strategy for GPAR. | 1st week August 2009 | Communication Specialist & other PST members, DIC & Districts |  |  |
| 2 .Draft finalization, discussion and approval | September 2009 | -0- |  |  |
| 3 .Implementation  | Q4 2009-Q2 2010  | -0- |  |  |
| 4. M/E Sessions (Monthly & Quarterly) on current and new communications interventions | -0- | PST, DPI & OoG |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 6: *Planning and budgeting.*** GPAR SP PST, with technical support from the UNCDF, should assess the gender gaps in its planning and budgeting processes and introduce a develop and implement a gender mainstreaming strategy with clear indicators for monitoring and evaluation.( *This is a call for a more thorough consideration of gender issues from project design, through planning, decision taking and implementation activities and the development of indicators to track progress. This is something that can be done within the existing project framework, but would need to support of UNCDF specialists in gender development*.) |
| **Management Response and Comment:**While gender participation is noted in every RBM quarterly report to UNDP/UNCDF PO in Vte, gender mainstreaming is a major undertaking by the Lao Women’s Union who is a regular partner of GPAR Saravane.. GPAR Saravane would welcome UNCDF TA on this. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. RBM and Gender mainstream strategy work shop | Second week of May 2009 | GPAR Saravane PST & SaravaneLao Women’s Union  |  |  |
| 2. UNCDF TA on gender mainstreaming strategies and action planning with GPAR Saravane. |  |  |  |  |
| 2.1 Draft of TOR of Regional TA on Gender Mainstreaming Process for DDF.  | 4th week of May | UNDP Gender focal person and UNCDF PO, Lao PDR |  |  |
| 2.2 TA Mission to GPAR Saravane | June-August 2009 | UNDP/UNCDF focal person Lao-PDR & Regional Advisor |  |  |
| 3. Follow-up of the results of Gender Awareness Beneficiary Assessment (GABA) Report  | May-Sept. 2009 | UNDP/UNCDF focal person Lao-PDR & Regional Advisor | No report since 2007 by UNDP consultant to GPAR Saravane. | Consultant hired by UNDP Vte. did not complete the report and resigned. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 7: *Administrative re-organisation.***The GPAR SP PST should complete the administrative re-organisation process that is already under way, including the introduction of PIMS. The UNCDF, in collaboration with the UNDP, should review the results of this initiative, using the data from the PIMS as an evaluation tool. (*This is already scheduled for GPAR SP. The UNDP should be encouraged to provide the PIMS software and training already promised to GPAR SP*). |
| **Management Response and Comment:**1. GPAR SP PST is continuing the re-organization process given under the current mandates of the project document and impetus from the national government laws and policies (e.g. COP No. 1 s. 2008 on Office of Governor Structure Reform and PMO No. 39 S.2008 & No.5 S.2009 on District Structure Reform).
 |
| 2. Regarding the PIMS and ESSS, the pending installation of the computer software system to be led by PACSA and the Dept of Labor and Social Welfare has been pending for a year despite completed trainings of staff. GPAR SP has recommended to the PCOP the encoding, update, storage and use of personnel data using available software (MS Word/Excel or in electronic scan file) in the province while awaiting the technical services or linkage to e-government efforts of the national government agencies. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 description activities, then specifics as needed a. Continue current admin. reforms using current personnel data forms and under PMO No. 39 S.2008 & No.5 S, 2009 | On-going May-Dec. 2009 | PST, OoG, PCOP, & Lakhonepheng District | On-going effort | Reports are updated every quarter |
| 3.2. Encoding update and storage of standalone PCs of PIMS & ESSS forms while awaiting PACSA and DoLSW software installation (per Q4 2008 Stakeholder meeting decision with the presence of UNCDF.UNDP PO from Vientiane). | June- December 2009 | PCOP & PST, UNCDF | -0- | -0- |
| 3.3 Follow-up PACSA and DoLSW installation to Saravane province and in all GPAR projects. | May 2009-December | UNDP/UNCDF PO, PACSA & DoLSW | No official statement or update since 2007. No IT contractor company hired for the work. | Staff trained by PACSA were not provided with manuals. Process, procedures were already forgotten. |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 8: *Administrative re-organisation.*** The GoL, drawing on the assistance of PACSA and GPAR Central, and on the experience of decentralisation thus far in the Saravane, should give consideration to undertaking a deeper process of administrative and political decentralisation involving the re-assignment of functions from the provincial to the district level, using its current incremental, piloting approach to reform. The UNCDF should offer to support this process with technical capacity.( *The GoL has toyed with this possibility in the past and there is mention in the PD of the possibility of experimenting with municipal government in Saravane. The UNCDF, with UNDP, could approach the issue from the angle of experimentation with municipal government and/or more representative forms of election to Kumbans or it could raise the issue from the more technical angle of administrative decentralisation to match and support fiscal decentralisation (i.e. rationalising roles, functions and staff complements of national ministries, provincial and district departments to support the planning, implementation & maintenance of decentralised services. The design developed by the DPLSP in Yemen provides a helpful model. This recommendation requires careful discussion with the UNDP and GPAR Central to assess whether it is the appropriate moment to raise the matter with the GoL*.) |
| **Management Response and Comment:**1.The MTR report have assessed the extent of accomplishments or deliverables of GPAR Saravane in terms of its component outputs. However, the deepening of the analysis on qualitative and physical changes brought about by the administrative and fiscal decentralization needs to be documented in detail as some process are still undergoing completion, namely:1.1 The on-going PMO 39 S 2008 and PMO 5 S.2009 reform did not took place in Saravane district but in Lakhonepheng district while the former has completed its functional analysis and re-organization process before the issuance of the said PMOs. 1.2 Development of model offices and One-Door-Service is still on-going. To determine the extent of decentralization (both fiscal and administrative) is still premature at the moment.2. Representative elections is not part of the Kumban pathana concept . Kumban pathana (development) concept is an area development strategy and not a separate political-administrative unit which exercise direct governance over constituents. Political power still rest in the Ban (village) and the next tier is the District. Kumban pathana is an economic as well as political development strategy in response to particular needs within a group of villages which require a certain level of economy of scale. For GPAR Saravane, kumban intervention is through the village statistics gathering, DDF development planning and implementation process as well as the poverty mapping and structure analysis being done by the provincial Dept. of Planning and Investments. The resulting organization structure and specific staffing pattern that emerge were detailed in the GPAR Saravane Q1 2009 Progress Report p.9 which was submitted to UNDP UNCDF PO in Vte . 3. Given the strength and breath of the national government emphasis on kumban pathana, the consensus on the recent Technical Advisors (TA) quarterly meeting last March 18-20, 2009 (which was chaired by the UN RR) on the matter is to generate more reports as well as gather more documented experience in the field, not only in GPAR Saravane but from the whole country experience of LaoPDR. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 description activities, then specifics as needed Assessment of district structural reform under PMO 39 S. June 2008 and PMO 5 S. 2009 (Saravane & Lakhonepheng experience). | Q4 2009 | PST, OoG, & Lakhonepheng & Saravane districts |  |  |
| 3.2 Assessment of kumban pathana experience  | Q1 2010  | PST, OoG, DPI |  |  |
| 3.3 Country Evaluation and Assessment of Kumban Pathana  | Q2 2010 | UNDP PO, UNDP Gov’nce & Poverty.Reduction Units |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 9: *Human resource management.***The GPAR SP PST should undertake a follow-up assessment of the impact of training on the trainees’ work performance and use this to adjust future training, where needed. ( *This recommendation calls for follow up assessment once the HRM work has been implemented. This is something that PST could do with technical support from the UNDP*.) |
| **Management Response and comment:** The PST concurs with the recommendation that the **assessment and follow-up action on training in relation to performance** will be made within the project period. This is currently being addressed by including a requirement to conduct a training needs assessment (TNA) activity as well as after training assessment and follow-up component in the proposals of various stakeholders which has a training assistance/component. TNAs and proposals were reviewed by the Capacity Building Specialist (which was recently vacated). The regular quarterly stakeholders meetings can track the performance of trainings and its results on the trainees. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. Monitoring and evaluation of training effectiveness (preparation, training proper and post-training follow-up).  | Q2, Q3 and Q4 2009  | PST- M/E & Capacity Bldg. Splst. & Stakeholder partners |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 10:** *Human resource management.* GPAR SP PST, with support from the UNDP, should introduce an effective recruiting and staff retention strategies for Saravane province and its districts. (*This would be a logical extension of the work that the PST has already started on HRM.)* |
| **Management Response:**1. The recommendation for the PST and UNDP to develop an effective staff recruitment and retention strategy and program is a welcome move by UNCDF. GPAR SP shall consider this in the next phase of the project or the near future period given the daily and urgent HRD needs of offices and eight districts with enormous coverage of 2,000+ provincial government personnel. This can be lead by the PCOP and the Office of the Governor with the support of the PST and UNDP in the next calendar year.
2. GPAR will continue to monitor and suggest short term interventions to respond to HRD recruitment and retention issues raised by PCOP in general by specific sectoral partner given the adherence to existing statute, PMO 82 issued last 19 March 2003 on civil service personnel development which contains the following policies of personnel movement and retention:
	1. Open and competitive examination as basis of recruitment
	2. Casual/volunteer period of work prior to appointment in a permanent post.
	3. Tour of duty of 3-5 years within a district assignment
	4. A 10% increment in salary level if assigned to remote district/kumban/village.
	5. Assignment in remote district/kumban/village will be a major factor in promotion to position as well as scholarship for higher education.
	6. Staff movement (both vertical and horizontal) is based on request (by staff or higher authority), organizational re-assignment and performance of staff.
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 description activities, then specifics as neededAssessment of provincial recruitment & personnel development intervention | Q2 2010 | PST, OoG & PCOP |  |  |
| 3.2 Organizational Diagnosis | Q3 2010 | -0- |  |  |
| 3.3 Recruitment and personnel development plan | Q4 2010 | -0- |  |  |
| 3,4 Personnel- HRD plan implementation | Q1 2011 onwards | -0- |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 11: *Implementation procedures.*** The provincial line departments should play a greater role in choice and final approval of the contractor, as well as in monitoring of the construction works. (*The intention of this recommendation is to reduce the incidence of design and construction flaws in the infrastructure. It implies that the provincial engineers take on an oversight role. It is an action that the GPAR SP PST should take on.)* |
| **Management Response and Comment:** 1. The PST shall intensify the participation, management and monitoring by the respective department representatives in the DPT and DPCs in the prudent choice of contractors and monitoring of construction. More time will be devoted every quarterly meeting on the progress of each departments on the issue.
2. On the same issue, the quality and standards setting will be emphasized in the impending training on infrastructure service delivery by Q2.
3. This is in view of the fact that there is already a scheduled O/M training by Q2 2009 to be spearheaded by the provincial Dept. of Public Works & Transport (DPWT). GPAR SP can support part of the training activities if funding permits.
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
|  Review of infrastructure design and construction progress | Q2, Q3 & Q4 2009, Q1-Q2 2010 | PST, OoG. Districts with line Depts. As proponents & the Dept. of Public Works & Transport |  |  |
| 3.2 Infrastructure Service Delivery Installation, Operation and Maintenance training  | Q2-Q4 2009 | -0- |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 12: *Implementation procedures.*** The GPAR SP’s PST, with support from the UNDF’s LED Advisor, should introduce planning criteria that ensure that income earning projects are both economically viable and pro-poor. The PST then needs to take steps address weaknesses in the existing projects and to ensure that any future investments of this kind meet viability and pro-poor performance criteria. (*The concern underlying this recommendation is to ensure that income generating projects are viable and pro-poor. The existing physical markets and fish hatcheries are cases in point. For the next two years of the project the focus should be on making the existing project work better and drawing lessons from this. At the end of the life of the project, the UNCDF could give consideration to piloting the UNCDF’s emerging LED approach in Saravane. This is a possibility that could be considered by the team that undertakes the final evaluation of the project.* ) |
| **Management Response and Comment:** 1. Focus on LED is not a part of the programme document nor in the RRF and the project does not have a formal commitment to LED activities during the programme period. The programme will therefore not focus on LED during the remaining part of the programme. Beside that – it does not make sense to introduce such approach so later in the programme cycle. There are still many problems and challenges with the present setup of the DDF in Saravane and we need to focus on getting the basics right before commencing on a new route.
2. In general, for Laos we have largely as - a matter of policy - has opted for social protection (be it in the form of workfare or conditional cash transfers) as the most promising way of tackling issues linked to the ultra poor and their limited income generation opportunities. There is overwhelming evidence from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh that IGA (Income Generating Activities) and "livelihoods" approaches simply do NOT work as ways reaching the very poorest. We are therefore in the process of designing a follow-on to Saravane that focusses in piloting locally managed and adminstered social protection programmes, as the most promising option for reaching the poorest and enhancing their income poverty and inter-generational human development issues. In addition, we are also convinced that the existing core areas of LG service delivery remain in need of improvement - so far, we have largely focussed (through infrastructure development) on improving *access* to services, rather than on the quality of services - and intend to address this through pilots on block grants for non-salary recurrent expenditures (e.g. text books for schools, operating funds for mobile health teams in remote areas, fuel and DSA for agriculture extension services, etc.).
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
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| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 13: *Implementation procedures****.* The GPAR SP PST should undertake a review of O&M arrangements at existing projects, check that roles and responsibilities have been correctly assigned to the relevant district line departments and village representatives and make adjustments to ensure that O&M is adequately carried out in the future. (*A proposal to set up an O&M conditional grant has already been submitted to GPAR SBSD. This provides an ideal opportunity to put this recommendation into effect in the GPAR SP.)* |
| Management Response and comment:1. As mentioned on the above related issue (No. 11) earlier, the quality and standards setting will be emphasized in the impending training on infrastructure service delivery by Q2. This is in view of the fact that there is already a scheduled O/M training by Q2 2009 to be spearheaded by the provincial Dept. of Public Works & Transport (DPWT).
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. Infrastructure service delivery installation, operations and maintenance training. | Q2-Q4 2009 | PST, OoG. Districts with line Depts. As proponents & the Dept. of Public Works & Transport |  |  |
| 2. Draft guidelines, issuance of policies, orientation and actual transfer of O & M Fund for GPAR DDF projects. | Q2-Q3 | GPAR SBSD, UNDP/UNCDF PO | No formal status yet provided to GPAR Saravane by UNDP or GPAR SBSD. |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 14: *Policy reform and replication.***The GPAR SP PST should step up its work on replication and policy reform in the remaining two years of the project’s life. This will require intensified interaction between the National Project Manager and the UNCDF DDF Advisor in GPAR Central. The aim of this interaction will be to ensure that existing and emerging lessons continue to be drawn into the GPAR SBSD programme. At the same time, care should be taken to ensure that the PST in Saravane (see recommendation below regarding further technical assistance) (*This recommendation is essentially an injunction to the GPAR SP PST to continue its good work. The recommendations in the sections above provide it with the opportunity to further refine its approach within Saravane, either through making improvements in the districts that have already benefited from capital investment, or in introducing the suggested adaptations in those that are coming on stream, or both. The next two years provides opportunities for further lesson learning and the sharing of such lessons nationally. With a solid base of experience behind it GPAR SP can turn increasingly to it work on policy reform and replication, but needs to do this without jeopardizing its piloting work which is still very substantial given that ttwo new districts in Saravane are now coming on stream.)* |
| 1. Stepping up the replication and policy reform of GPAR SP experience within the next one-year period is mandated through conveyance of lessons learnt and sharing of its experience. The members of the Project Leading/Steering Committee are the designated champions to relay to the national decision making arenas of the central government.
2. At the central level, PACSA or the GPAR SBSD are currently integrating the efforts of GPAR SP on DDF with other stakeholders or programmes. It is also the current thinking within the UNDP as well as at the province to link up with other Funds bearing anti-poverty outcomes.
3. Generally GPAR SBSD or PACSA and MPI is to take the lead in policy adjustments. GPAR SP can only advocate given its limited to the TOR of accomplishment of its current deliverables under the project document. GPAR SP recognized that DDF policies and guidelines were adapted by GPAR SBSD which were sometimes applied only to the four scaling up provinces or sometimes applicable to GPAR Saravane, such as:
	1. The Technical Support Service (TSS fund) currently 5% for GPAR SP vs. now at 7% for the four provinces implementing the DDF under GPAR SBSD.
	2. A financial accomplishment is uniformly applied as 80% of budget to be liquidated before a new fund request (as an institutional requirement by UNDP but not out of UNCDF experience).
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. Quarterly forum/meeting with PACSA on DDF implementation and reform towards policy change and improvements.
 | Q2 2009-Q1 2010 | GPAR Saravane, PACSA, UNDP, MoPI | There were central level consultations and meetings which GPAR SP were invited.  |  |
| 1. Continue the annual GPAR Retreat and Progress Review (every December)
 | Q4 2009 and Q4 2010 | -0- |  |  |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 15: *Policy reform and replication.*** The UNCDF should consider providing further residential and/or mission-based technical advisory support on administrative and political decentralisation if this is demanded by the GoL (see recommendation 3.2 above) *(This recommendation hinges on acceptance of the recommendation set out in 3.2 above and would come into effect only if the GoL responded positively to that recommendation.)* |
| **Management Response:****GPAR SP** welcome this mode of intervention provided such policy reforms are clearly spelled -out, discussed with all stakeholders and then UNCDF will have to provide concrete technical assistance. Much of the issues of reforms and adjustments have been reported to UNCDF, UNDP Vientiane and central government agencies of Lao PDR that needs further elaboration and support by UNCDF regional technical advisors, such as the following:1. Infrastructure Operations and Maintenance (O/M) Fund establishment, operations and sustainability
2. Replication/expansion of coverage within the province and DDF launching follow-up in the new pilot provinces.
3. Expanding the range of DDF to include other services (e.g. PRF, social protection, village development fund, etc.)
4. Capacity development of kumban and district personnel given a province-wide replication or expansion.
5. Full integration of DDF within the National Accounting System (NAS) and provincial Government Financial Information System.
6. Review and formal revision of guidelines on the following to be enacted into formal policies:
	1. District allocation based not only on population and poverty level of district but on terrain, distance to provincial center, capacity of staff, ethnicity, basic services available. Its noteworthy to review the Minimum Basic Needs Approach and UN Development Indicator to project identification and allocation.
	2. Local community sub-contracting to mostly far-flung areas thereby generating local economy and ensuring success in project implementation rather than waiting for interested contractors and risk of bidding failures or underperformance.
	3. Community or local government counterparting. While GPAR SBSD stood firmly on this at 5% in cash and/or in kind, the ground reality showed otherwise. Some areas showed that people have shown capacity for local management of DDF projects and are willing to provide local counterparts where it is wanting in an atmosphere of transparency, voluntarism and consensus. This can be applied to villages or project whose constituents can afford much counterpart and therefore there will be more funds directly channeled to other villages who are more needy (which might not be requested to provide local counterparts other than their labour time). Even the district or provincial government can contribute given their current budgetary priorities as DDF can leverage the fund for certain types of projects ( i.e. x% of Government funds plus x% of DDF fund for a particular project).
	4. Updated accounting procedures and budgetary release of DDF funds to district accounts
 |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 1. Review of possible areas for TA mission
 | Q4 2009 | UNDP/UNCDF PO and Regional Office in Bkk,Thailand with communications to GPAR SP & SBSD |  |  |
| 1. UNCDF TOR and Mission to Lao PDR
 | Q1 2010 | -0- |  | Possible if with GPAR SP Phase II or project extension in effect. |
| 1. Draft of mission reports and policy presentation & finalization.
 | Q2 2010 | -0- |  | -0- |
| 1. Finalization of policy papers and issuance to all stakeholders
 | Q3 2010 | -0- |  | -0- |
| **Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 16: *Policy reform and replication****.* The UNCDF DDF Analyst, based in GPAR SBSD, should approach the PRF to further explore the synergies between the two approaches and the feasibility of closer cooperation to experiment with a more integrated, sustainable approach to project implementation at district level. (*A fruitful discussion on this possibility took place at the global debriefing. This recommendation here is for the UNCDF DDF advisor to take these discussions further with the PRF, GPAR SBSD and PACSA. It is an issue that the UNCDF management in New York itself could fruitfully take up with the World Bank over its Social Action Fund approach, since the LDPs and Social Action Funds are in competition with each other in several countries and both could benefit from cooperation. The potential benefits of this cooperation are nationally scaled up implementation processes with large scale impacts in terms of poverty reduction.)* |
| Management Response:During the global briefing of the MTR and in the last GPAR Annual Review Meeting, PRF representatives expressed willingness for dialogue and coordination at central level. GPAR SP during the the MTR briefing suggested that PRF field personnel can coordinate at the district level given that decentralized authority were given to the DPTs and DPCs in project identification, prioritization and kumban selection up to final draft of the District annual investment plan. |
| **Key Action(s)** | **Time Frame** | **Responsible Unit(s)** | **Tracking** |
| **Status** | **Comments** |
| 3.1 Initial discussion with PRF officials | Q2 2009 | Central level- GPAR SBSD, UNDP & UNCDF PO and PRF | No report yet since MTR and Dec. 08 APR meeting at Vientiane |  |
| 3.2 Regular quarterly coordination meeting, update and assessment  | Q2-24 2009,  | Central level and district level DPTs (in Taoy, Samouay and Toumlane). |  |  |

1. UNCDF (2008) Mid Term Review of the GPAR Saravane Province Project. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)