![ACET logo — African Center for Economic Transformation]

Functional Review of the Strategy and Policy Unit

SIERRA LEONE

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1.0   Executive Summary

The UNDP engaged the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) to undertake a functional review of the Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU) of the Office of the President of Sierra Leone. The SPU was set up to serve as the technical arm and delivery unit for the presidency and to be the core champions for the president's *"Agenda for Change."* The objective of this exercise is to assess the effectiveness of the SPU's performance during the first year of its existence, identify challenges and provide concrete recommendations to strengthen the SPU's support to the presidency in delivering on the *"Agenda for Change."*(Refer to Appendix I for full engagement background and context)

This assessment was undertaken as part of a broader ACET engagement commissioned by the President of Sierra Leone to help strengthen decision-making at the center of government. The review is consistent with the ongoing public sector reform program aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service. Thus, while focusing on the SPU, this report makes references to the broader context of the situation at the Office of the President (OoP) where relevant and therefore should be seen as an integrated part of an overall assessment of the functionality of the (OoP). (Refer to Annex II for analytical framework for OoP review).

The review focused on the following drivers: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability-and the ability to fully leverage partnerships with other actors. (Refer to Annex III for overview of tasks performed and details of the various phases of the engagement). Its findings are summarized here, along with recommended changes and immediate next steps.

Overall, the most significant achievements of the SPU in its one year of existence are the introduction of a Results Based Management Culture (RBM) for performance management and the timely completion of the Bumbuna electricity project. The latter is one tangible result of the SPU's positive influence on project delivery. However, some missteps in the SPU formation process, confusion among stakeholders on its role and its value addition, coupled with the lack of sustainable funding, threatens the group's effectiveness and sustainability.

Below are the highlighted range of issues and opportunities for improvement.

Organizational Setup

1. The perceived lack of transparency in the SPU selection process has undermined its credibility with Stakeholders.
2. The fact that the SPU was set up as a project and not anchored in the civil service structure raises concerns of sustainability.
3. Lack of collaboration between the SPU and other units with overlapping functions creates confusion and deprives the unit of much needed synergies, in particular with the Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit (COMU) and the Private Sector Advisor.

Administration and Management

4. The current SPU reporting arrangement (direct report to the president) limits intra unit collaboration and the necessary day-to-day support needed by the group.

5. The SPU Project Manager (PM) role has not been effective.
6. There is no clear formal performance evaluation of SPU itself.

SPU Role

7. Stakeholders (within both government and the donor community) expressed concern that there is no clear competent technical arm advising the president on the issues they present to him.
8. The SPU's exclusion from cabinet proceedings isolates it from a key policymaking platform with far reaching implications for its ability to deliver on policy analysis and coordination.
9. Line ministries expressed disappointment in the limited role played by SPU in implementation support.
10. There is significant stakeholder discontent with the SPU-led performance review process, hindering effectiveness and leading to low buy-in.

Financing

11. The lack of a clear plan for weaning the government off SPU funding and to sustainable government funding poses a critical challenge to SPU's sustainability.
12. The high remuneration for SPU staff poses sustainability issues for the Government of Sierra Leone and has created discontent among some government officials.

ACET proposes a number of institutional and operational recommendations to address these challenges.

Based on these principles, recommendations have been outlined that address the SPU organizational setup, administrative management, role and funding. Foremost among them are:

Organizational Setup

1. Institutionalize the role of the SPU and fully integrate it into the OoP.
2. Promote civil service representation in the SPU to ensure sustainability.
3. Conduct a transparent recruiting exercise to hire new SPU staff.
4. Convey strong endorsement of the SPU by the president to all stakeholders.

Administrative Management

5. The head of the SPU should report to the chief of staff instead of reporting directly to the president.
6. Abolish the Project Manager role.
7. Consolidate the SPU, Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit and private sector advisor functions into the SPU.
8. Structure the SPU so there are two clear groups within the unit, one group focused on analytical support and the other on delivery.
9. Introduce rigorous performance management of the SPU to ensure that the unit learns from direct stakeholder feedback and also to provide an incentive for high performance.

SPU role

10. SPU's implementation support role should be strengthened to proactively facilitate implementation in addition to tracking performance.

11. The SPU should facilitate strategic thinking at the presidency and provide advice to the president by undertaking policy analysis and research to ascertain the feasibility and sustainability of strategic options under consideration by the government.
12. The SPU should play a key role in policy coordination, harmonization and monitoring and evaluation across sectors. Feedback mechanism should be established to ensure lessons learned inform future policy formulation and implementation.

Financing
13. Concrete measures should be taken to shift the SPU to full government funding as soon as possible, but in the interim a joint donor funding pool should be solicited to fund the unit.
14. SPU remuneration should be aligned with Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) pay structure to make it sustainable.

These recommendations were made in conjunction with the broader functional review of the Office of the President (OoP). The recommendations are to be presented to the president of Sierra Leone for validation in Jan 2010. Upon finalization of the recommendations and the president's approval on the way forward, the ACET team will develop a detailed implementation plan with cost estimates, working closely with the Public Sector Reform Unit, for implementation to begin early in the new year. Subsequent to the president's sign-off, we will also work with the donor community in Sierra Leone to mobilize resources for implementation.

To ensure effectiveness and sustainability the above recommendations should be guided by the following basic principles:

- Recognition of the role of the ministries as the primary decision/policymaking and implementation organs of the state.
- Maintaining consistency with the Public Sector Reform agenda.
- Emphasizing a clear and commonly understood set of channels and mechanisms for coordination and collaboration of SPU's mandates.
- Ensuring effective implementation of deliverables.

2.0   Our Understanding of the Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU)

The team had extensive interactions with the SPU and the UNDP on the history, mandate, role and operations of the SPU in order to understand the original vision for the unit and the alignment of the ground realities with the initial objective. Presented below is our understanding of the SPU's History and Mandate, Role, Structure and Operations.

2.1 History and Mandate

The SPU was established by the president, (with an initial one-year funding from the UNDP), to enhance policy analysis and coordination at the presidency. As part of the government's efforts to rationalize functions and institutions in the civil service, the SPU was set up to be the technical arm in the presidency. In addition to serving as the president's technical experts and strategic advisors, the SPU's mandate was to ensure effective coordination and harmonization of policies across government as well as monitoring and evaluation of performance and outcomes.

2.2 Role

The role of the SPU was to be the technical arm of the presidency, the champion of the implementation of the president's *"Agenda for Change"* (The term used to describe the president's vision document) and the overseer of the performance management process of ministers. In executing this role the SPU was to serve as an advisory unit with monitoring and evaluation responsibilities. The SPU's mandated roles are;
- Strategic policy advice.
- Policy analysis and coordination.
- Implementation support.
- Monitoring and Evaluation.

STRATEGIC POLICY ADVICE
As a strategic policy advisor, the SPU's role was to serve as an "in-house think tank" of the president, initiating and coordinating policies, and ensuring coherence between the president's vision/policies and effective action on the ground. In short, combining strategic vision and monitoring delivery.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND COORDINATION
The SPU's role in policy analysis and policy formulation is to provide the president with rigorous policy analysis to ensure he has an informed position to effectively lead cabinet discussions and make effective decisions. The SPU was expected to play this role by collaborating with the various line ministries to develop and assess policy options and present a well-articulated position. Subsequent to cabinet decisions, the SPU is to play a key role in policy coordination and dissemination given its strategic position of having interactions across all ministries and agencies.
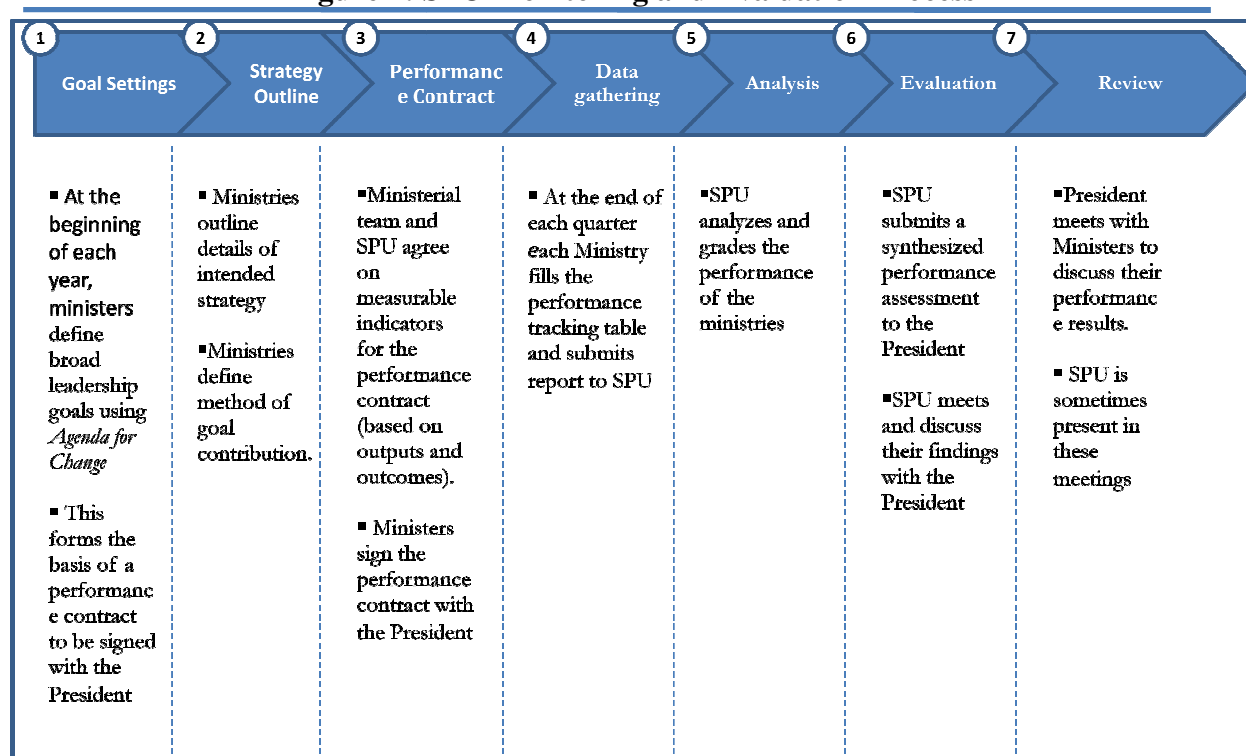
IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT
Implementation coordination is a major component of the SPU value proposition. This work involves facilitating prompt, effective and efficient execution of government policies and

programs. Using the authority of the Office of the President, the SPU brings various parties together on policy and program implementation to identify issues causing delays or non-performance, act as facilitators in resolving such issues and enforce collaboration between the respective parties. This function may involve working with Central Management Agencies, Sectoral Agencies and the Development Partners.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The "*Agenda for Change,*" and the resulting Poverty Reduction Strategy Program (PRSP), has been translated into relevant sectoral targets with the ministers charged with the responsibility to ensure the vision is realized. At the beginning of each year the ministers sign a performance contract with the president on their targets and deliverables for the year. Ministers work with the SPU in developing these targets and deliverables. In the performance management of ministers, the SPU gathers data on a quarterly basis on the status of line ministry's deliverables, synthesizes these findings, evaluates the performance and presents the president with an assessment of its findings. These findings form the basis of the president's performance conversation with the ministers. Figure 1 captures the full Monitoring and Evaluation process.

Figure 1: SPU Monitoring and Evaluation Process

| 1 Goal Settings	2 Strategy Outline	3 Performance Contract	4 Data gathering	5 Analysis	6 Evaluation	7 Review
▪ At the beginning of each year, ministers define broad leadership goals using *Agenda for Change* ▪ This forms the basis of a performance contract to be signed with the President	▪ Ministries outline details of intended strategy ▪ Ministries define method of goal contribution.	▪Ministerial team and SPU agree on measurable indicators for the performance contract (based on outputs and outcomes). ▪ Ministers sign the performance contract with the President	▪ At the end of each quarter each Ministry fills the performance tracking table and submits report to SPU	▪SPU analyzes and grades the performance of the ministries	▪SPU submits a synthesized performance assessment to the President ▪SPU meets and discuss their findings with the President	▪President meets with Ministers to discuss their performance results. ▪ SPU is sometimes present in these meetings

2.3 Structure

The SPU is led by a unit coordinator who reports directly to the president. The coordinator has six advisors reporting to him with the advisors in turn supported by four analysts. Each advisor is assigned a cluster of ministries. The clustering system is aligned with the president's priority areas to ensure synergies. The advisors are the experts who serve as focal points of the unit for their respective clusters, often meeting with the ministers as well as the president to address

cluster issues. The analysts are in charge of analyzing data and updating the performance tracking tables. Analysts work under the guidance of the advisors in executing their role.

In addition to the core technical staff, there is a Project Manager (PM) in charge of the administration of the unit responding to UNDP. The PM manages the administrative support staff composed of an administrative assistant and IT specialist. In addition, the PM is tasked with submitting periodic reports on the SPU's progress to UNDP. Figure 2 below shows the SPU organogram and highlights the cluster alignments.

Figure 2: SPU Organogram
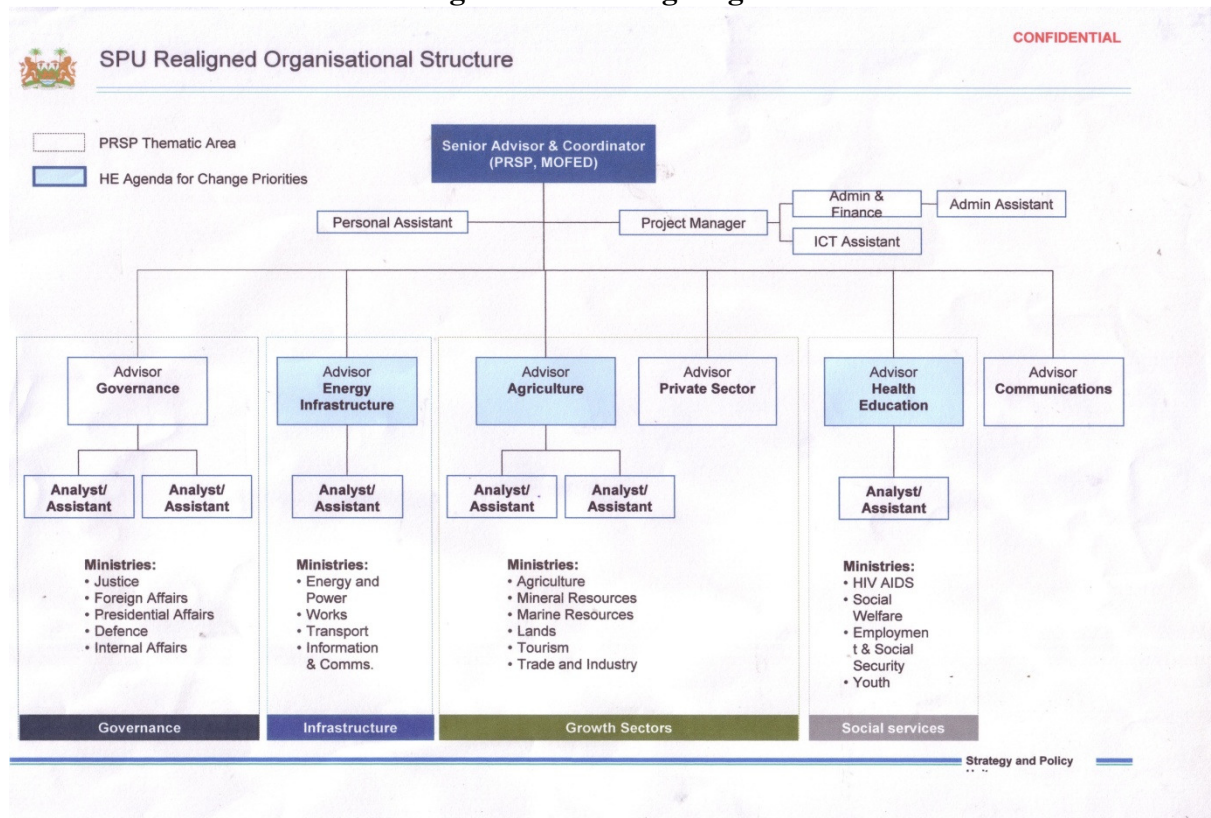
3.0   Findings

The findings are presented in terms of the SPU organizational setup, role and financing. They highlight the strengths and weaknesses under each of these areas.

3.1 SPU Organizational Setup

Observed Strengths

The assigned coverage areas for SPU advisors are well aligned with the pillars of the *Agenda for Change,* **thus enabling the unit to benefit from synergies in enforcing the implementation of the vision.** Each SPU pillar represents a clustering of relevant sectors for the *Agenda for Change* thematic areas. This affords the advisors the opportunity to be relationship managers for all the key players directly impacting the realization of the goals for their respective thematic areas.

The collaboration with Office of Tony Blair (OTB) has strengthened the SPU skill-set. The OTB analysts are highly savvy at developing tactical measures to improve operational efficiency, e.g., developing metrics and creating tracking tables. As a result of the collaboration with OTB, the SPU analysts have learned soft skills that have greatly enhanced their operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Challenges to be addressed

The perceived lack of transparency in the SPU selection process has seriously undermined its credibility with stakeholders. At the root of this perceived lack of credibility is the manner in which the SPU recruitment and establishment was handled. Few key stakeholders were consulted in shaping the unit's agenda and mandate. The perceived lack of transparency in the recruitment of the advisors has led to stakeholders questioning the unit's competence. Our review of the advisors' background and experience uncovered that the advisors are a group of highly experienced individuals, most of whom have held high offices in diverse areas, including government, international development and academia. The disconnect between stakeholders and the architects on the onset contributed to the questioning of SPU competency.

The fact that the SPU was set up as a project and not anchored in the civil service structure raises concerns of sustainability. The SPU encountered institutional resistance from the civil/public service not only because of lack of understanding of the reason for its formation, but also due to the lack of civil service representation in the group. This is further exacerbated by the absence of a clear strategic plan for civil service inclusion in the near future or a rotational program to facilitate temporal civil service secondment with the unit. The failure to invite permanent secretaries to the president's first retreat at Bumbuna, which was organized by the SPU, is an oversight that worsened the disconnect between the SPU and the civil service.

Lack of collaboration between the SPU and other overlapping units creates confusion and deprives the unit of much needed synergies, e.g., The Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit (COMU) and the Private Sector Advisor. The COMU is a unit with legal backing (currently under the MPPA) at the presidency with a mandate to follow up on cabinet decisions

and monitor projects arising from cabinet decisions. The COMU reports directly to the president. The SPU and the COMU have no formal relations, though both units at the presidency are involved in performance monitoring of ministers. Similarly, the Private Sector Attaché, who is also under the OoP, advises the president on private sector matters and reports directly to him with no formal relations with SPU. This lack of collaboration between overlapping functions is not optimal and deprives the government of synergies.

3.2 Administrative Management of the SPU

Observed Strengths

The SPU's direct access to the president gives a strong indication of their importance to the president. The SPU director reports directly to the president with no buffer in between. The SPU advisors also have frequent easy access to the president to provide him with firsthand information as needed. This direct access to the president is a strong form of endorsement that enables the SPU executes their daily activities. In addition, the direct access ensures that the president gets information from the source and avoids the possible dangers of filtered information.

Challenges to be addressed

The current SPU reporting structure is not optimal for getting the necessary administrative and operational day-to-day support needed by the group. The SPU coordinator reports directly to the president. The coordinator is not considered by some ministers as a peer and someone with the clout to question their performance. The lack of a ministerial level official to oversee the SPU's agenda on a daily basis poses a challenge to the unit's operational influence. With the president's busy schedule his availability to tackle SPU's day-to-day issues is minimal. In the president's absence it is not clear who in the executive is providing SPU the necessary support.

The SPU Project Manager (PM) role has not been very effective. The PM's role is to prepare Project Quarterly Progress Reports on the SPU to UNDP. The PM position is an artifact of donor funding and has not gained ground with the SPU. The PM's role is undermined as advisors hold meetings without his involvement. Any information received by the PM is through individual discussions with the advisors, and consequently, monthly project management reports are not comprehensive. This administrative lapse has impacted the SPU's ability to keep up with the periodic obligation to update the UNDP on its progress and performance. The UNDP is yet to receive any of these updates which were a basic requirement as part of the UNDP funding arrangement.

There is no clear formal performance evaluation of SPU itself. The SPU is not holding itself accountable and there is no formal evaluation process and feedback system for its members. The SPU responsibility to produce reports to UNDP on its activities has not been fulfilled. Thus, the UNDP's oversight role to ensure that SPU adheres to its goals and objectives has not fully materialized. With no clear accountability for the group there is no incentive for performance to be optimal.

3.3 SPU Role

Confusion about SPU's role and value addition to the MDAs has undermined the perception and reception by external stakeholders. With the shift in SPU's focus to performance tracking and the limited role in strategic advice, policy analysis and implementation support, many MDAs see it as a watchdog rather than as a strategic partner. The SPU's role was evaluated along the four main functional areas in its original mandate; Strategic Advice, Policy Analysis and Coordination, Implementation Support and Monitoring and Evaluation.

STRATEGIC ADVICE

Observed Strengths

The SPU has accomplished some successes in enhancing governmental strategy, but these have been marginal and not pivotal roles of the unit. Some of the SPU inputs in these areas include; SPU's involvement in developing the PRSP, development of policy papers (e.g. role of city councils in Sierra Leone, which has been well received by the stakeholders), its active participation in the preparation of the Consultative Group Meetings in London 2009 and technical assistance and implementation support to the MDAs.

Challenges to be addressed

The SPU original mandate was two-fold, to provide strategic advice and delivery support, but in practice the role has been focused on the latter to the detriment of the former. The focus on delivery has translated into a focus on performance tracking and there is some resistance from some members of the SPU and from external stakeholders to this narrowly defined role. The SPU advisors perceive this emphasis on performance tracking as misplaced and believe they would be more useful if it also involved in strategic and analytical work. Externally, the MDAs also expressed a need to strengthen the strategic role of the SPU so they truly serve as the technical arm of the president. In the absence of the SPU performing this strategic advisory role there were no clear players identified in the OoP to be filling this gap.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND COORDINATION

Observed Strengths

The SPU in conjunction with the Office of Tony Blair (OTB) has offered line ministries support in developing analytical and communicative tools to enhance the effectiveness of their work. The SPU itself, particularly the analysts, has benefited from OTB skill transfer in enhancing their operational effectiveness and learning effective assessment tools. Through OTB coaching, the SPU analysts have learned how to prepare briefing notes, set tracking tables and develop follow-up issues. These enhancements have augmented the ministries operational and managerial activities.

Challenges to be addressed

Stakeholders (within both government and the donor community) expressed concern that there is no clear competent technical arm advising the president on the issues they present to him. MDAs do not see the SPU actively performing the role of the technical arm of the government. When issues are presented to the president it is not clear that there is a Statehouse

in-house technical expertise providing him with an informed view to enable him effectively engage the stakeholders on the issue.

The SPU's exclusion from cabinet proceedings isolates it from a key policymaking platform with far reaching implications for its ability to deliver on policy analysis and coordination. The SPU does not have access to cabinet memos beforehand to brief the president and provide him with talking points to engage the other members in the discussion. The fact that not a single advisor sees cabinet memoranda before submission is seen by advisors as a weakness in the screening process to ensure policies presented in cabinet have a direct alignment with the "*Agenda for Change.*" Similarly, after cabinet meetings SPU is not privy to the cabinet conclusion and this affects their ability to effectively impact policy coordination and dissemination. On the performance management side not having access to cabinet conclusions hinders the SPU's ability to have a holistic view of pressing issues that drive ministers' actions and performance.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Observed Strengths

The collaborative platform afforded SPU makes it well positioned to offer implementation support and remove bottlenecks faced by individual ministries. The successful completion of the Bumbuna project by the ministry of energy is cited as one of the notable achievements of the unit in this regard.

Challenges to be addressed

Line ministries expressed disappointment in the limited role played by SPU in implementation support. There is a huge disparity in the implementation support ministers are getting from the SPU. There is a perception that only a few high priority initiatives are getting support. Although SPU emphasis is supposed to be on delivery there is a perception that the unit is more interested in tracking performance and grading than offering implementation support. Many ministers interviewed do not see the SPU relationship as a two-way street but rather a one–sided interaction, with the unit just interested in gathering performance data and grading.

SPU cited lack of resources as a limitation to their ability to effectively provide implementation support. The limited capacity and access to resources hinders their ability to visit the project sites and assess the situation first-hand.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Observed Strengths

The development of a Results Based Management culture (RBM) is cited as one of the main accomplishments of the SPU. Before the introduction of the RBM, performance management was not based on measurable targets aligned with key indicators for success. With RBM's commencement and the introduction of measurable targets, ministers are forced to prioritize and focus on tangible results. One of the most visible successful outputs of this SPU-led results-

driven approach is the timely completion of the Bumbuna electricity project. The SPU has significantly leveraged the skills and insights of the OTB in executing its Performance Management role and instilling a Results Based Management culture.

Challenges to be addressed

There is some stakeholder discontent with the SPU-led performance review process, hindering effectiveness and leading to low buy-in. Many ministers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of dialogue in the current performance evaluation process. The SPU sends ministers the tracking templates to be filled and to serve as the basis for evaluation. These templates are standard for the most part, (i.e. one-size-fits-all) and do not necessarily address the peculiarities of the various ministries. This approach is criticized by many ministers since it limits their ability to highlight the specifics of their particular ministry. The over-reliance on templates as opposed to an interactive process and increased dialogue has reduced stakeholder confidence in the process.

Many ministers also frown on SPU's presence in the actual review meetings with the president. This practice is rejected since they do not consider themselves accountable to the SPU but to the president who hired them. This has created an animosity which has marred the working relationship between the ministers and the SPU.

3.4 Financial Issues

Observed Strengths

Attractive SPU remuneration greatly helped the government's ability to attract highly experienced and skilled professionals into the unit. The provision of funds by UNDP to support the creation of the SPU eased the immediate financial burden on the government for this initiative.

Challenges to be addressed

The lack of a clear plan for weaning the SPU off UNDP funding to sustainable government funding poses a critical challenge to SPU's sustainability. First year funding for the SPU was to be provided by the UNDP. With the year over and UNDP funding depleted, the future of SPU financing is uncertain. Currently, there is no clarity on the funding arrangements for the medium to long term, and there appears to be no provision in the current budget for the unit. Given the importance of the SPU to the presidency, continued external financing of the unit is not sustainable.

The high remuneration of SPU staff poses sustainability issues for the Government of Sierra Leone and has garnered animosity from other government officials. With the initial salaries set above the civil service standard there is a challenge for government to sustain this from its coffers once weaned off donor support. Also, many government officials and civil servants express serious resentment to this high SPU remuneration and consider it without merit in light of SPU's perceived ambiguous value addition.

Inadequate financing for IT, supporting facilities and training have been cited as impediments in the SPU's performance. The SPU does not have a local area IT network to share information internally or a wide area IT network to facilitate information sharing with the MDAs. This lack of reliable IT services has a direct impact on their work since it slows their email communication and weakens research capabilities. This issue of inadequate IT infrastructure is not only limited to the SPU and is also prevalent in the OoP and the wider civil service. In addition to the IT handicap, the SPU does not have vehicles to enable the unit to undertake field trips to monitor performance for the M&E process and investigate emergency issues and provide the appropriate implementation support. Furthermore, the SPU offices and meeting rooms are in deplorable conditions which do not augur well for their stature and position when meeting relevant stakeholders.

4.0   Framework to Guide Recommendations

The Office of the President of Sierra Leone promotes a national development agenda, driven by national priorities and specific objectives. Its structure needs to guide implementation of that agenda at the highest level. A few critical principles influence the recommended restructuring of the SPU and the Office of the President at large:

- **Drive effective implementation**. After two years in office, the president is putting a strong focus on implementation of the *Agenda for Change* for rapid results. Rapid implementation, however, also calls for a flexible organizational structure so that information sharing is timely and broad, and decisions are made rapidly.

- **Maintain ministries as the primary organs for developing and implementing policy.** Ministries have responsibility for formulating and implementing sector policies. The SPU or any other organ of the Office of the President is established to support the ministries in achieving sectoral objectives, among other roles. Any restructuring effort within the Office of the President should further strengthen the roles of the ministries.

- **Maintain consistency with the Public Sector Reform agenda.** Sierra Leone already has a public sector reform effort under way. The Secretariat for the reform should maintain a bird's eye view of all reforms, and address the repercussions throughout the public sector and beyond. Two critical issues need to be considered in reviewing the functioning of the Office of the President:

    o Reforms must be conducted in the context of the public sector reform agenda.
    o The secretariat should be fully engaged in the functional review and restructuring process.

- **Emphasize the critical importance of a clear and commonly understood set of channels and mechanisms.** The review will strive to gain commitment to the work channels that stem from the exercise. Consistent dialogue has been an important factor in the study. The meeting with key stakeholders in November was an effort in this direction, with channels and mechanisms established from the review exercise open to all key stakeholders for comment. But decisions will need to be written and disseminated so that all parties work under the same clearly defined guidelines.

5.0   Recommendations on the SPU

A back to basics approach is needed to: (i) redesign the organizational setup of the SPU, (ii) reform the administrative management of the unit, (iii) Strengthen the role of the SPU to deliver on its mandate and (iv) identify sustainable sources of financing, all in an effort to improve SPU's effectiveness and sustainability.

Organizational Setup
1. Institutionalize the role of the SPU and fully integrate it into the OoP.
2. Promote civil service representation in the SPU to ensure sustainability.
3. Conduct a transparent recruiting exercise to hire new SPU staff.
4. Convey strong endorsement of the SPU by the president to all stakeholders.

Administrative Management
5. The head of the SPU should report to the chief of staff instead of reporting directly to the president.
6. Abolish the Project Manager role.
7. Consolidate the SPU, Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit and private sector advisor functions into the SPU.
8. Structure the SPU so there are two clear groups within the unit; one group focused on analytical support and the other on delivery.
9. Introduce rigorous performance management of the SPU itself to ensure their unit learns from direct stakeholder feedback and also to provide an incentive for high performance by members.

SPU role
10. SPU's implementation support role should be strengthened to proactively facilitate implementation and not just track performance.
11. The SPU should facilitate strategic thinking at the presidency and provide advice to the president by doing analysis and research to verify the practicality and viability of strategic options under consideration by the government.
12. The SPU should play a key role in policy analysis and options development as well as coordination and monitoring across sectors.
13. Interfaces should be created to ensure that the feedback gathered from the ministerial M&E exercise is looped back to the respective players so the lessons learned inform future policy formulation.

Financing
14. Concrete measures should be taken to shift the SPU to full government funding as soon. as possible, but in the interim a joint donor funding pool should be solicited to fund the unit.
15. SPU remuneration should be aligned with GoSL pay structure to make it sustainable.

Detailed rationales for each of these measures are provided below, along with other supporting recommendations that are part of the proposed integrated OoP reform effort.

5.1 Organizational Setup

Institutionalize the role of the SPU and fully integrate it into the OoP. From the functional review, it is clear that the role of the SPU is not formalized, either through a government decree or act. As soon as practicable, the SPU needs to be given legal backing within the setting of a Presidential Office Act to make the unit a permanent feature of the presidency. Without that, the Unit would not only be open to manipulation of administrations but may not exist at all in the future. We recommend a mix of the Ghanaian, Canadian and UK systems where each administration comes in with a few selected persons to work in the SPU but supported by experienced civil servants who are entrenched in the unit and are conversant with issues of policy analysis, monitoring and evaluation, policy coordination, cabinet decision tracking, results based management.

Promote civil service representation in the SPU to ensure sustainability. Selected civil/public servants known for excellence in their respective fields in the MDAs should be offered the opportunity for secondment to the SPU for a defined period. These could be complemented by external recruitment on a contractual basis of a few highly experienced individuals for specific technical areas. Based on experience from Turkey and Lebanon, recruiting young dynamic analysts and grooming them to become advisors, build a sound policy class within the presidency and champions this concept across the civil service/public service.

Conduct a transparent recruiting exercise to hire new SPU staff in conjunction with proposed new roles and structure. We envision a revision of the SPU role in conjunction with the functional review of the OoP. As part of this restructuring we recommended that all positions be opened for competitive recruitment and current staff given the option to reapply. Critical factors for success and ideal profile of desired candidates should be clearly articulated to ensure an effective recruiting process. Once a decision is made on the restructuring, ACET will support the development of the staffing plan and detailed job description, including facilitating the recruitment process.

For effective integration into the OoP, the SPU needs to be fully endorsed by the president both in word and deed. Its mandate and roles in the areas of strategic policy advice, policy analysis and coordination implementation support, including monitoring and evaluation, need to be clarified by the president in writing to all stakeholders. These should include staff of the presidency, ministers, the MDAs and the development partners.

5.2 SPU Administrative Management

Reporting Structure

The head of the SPU should report to the chief of staff instead of reporting to the president. (The introduction of the chief of staff role is a recommendation made in the OoP report to create a central authority under the president to oversee the substantive matters of the presidency while the secretary to the president oversees the administrative.) As part of the chief of staff role, he/she will oversee the day-to-day operations of the SPU to ensure the group gets the necessary oversight to deliver on its mandate. This arrangement also ensures that the SPU itself undergoes performance evaluation and is held to task for achieving its own deliverables as a unit. This arrangement does not preclude the president from having direct access to the advisors if he so

desires. However, it relieves the president from being the administrative head of the unit and the day-to-day pressures that come with it.

The role of project manager should be abolished. Any residual functions should be transferred to the head of the unit. With the migration from a donor project organizational structure to an institutionalized framework there is little need for the PM role in addition to the coordinator role.

Organizational Structure

Consolidate the SPU, Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit and Private Sector Advisor functions into the SPU to create one single unit for technical advisory, implementation support and performance monitoring. To better capture synergies and ensure proper coordination, the Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit and Private Sector Advisor functions should be formally tied to the SPU. These two functions could remain as separate units under the SPU or be fully integrated into the SPU.

Structure the SPU so there are two clear groups within the unit, one group focused on analytical support and the other on delivery. There are two key functions of the SPU: *Technical Arm* (policy analysis, coordination, research and advisory) and *Delivery* (implementation support and monitoring and evaluation). Currently advisors handle both for their assigned ministries and functional areas. Realistically, there are two very different skill-sets necessary to perform each function, the likelihood of finding individuals who excel at both is rare and Sierra Leone's capacity issues only exacerbates the limitation. Thus there is a strong inclination for the individual to gravitate towards one area to the detriment of the other. Splitting into two clear groups and recruiting based on the necessary skill set for each respective group strengthens the unit's ability to deliver on its full agenda. Strong collaborative links should be created to forge constant interactions between the two groups. The coordinator should provide a strong interface for the two groups to collaborate and ensure a vibrant forum for the feedback from delivery to feed into analysis and vice-versa.

Introduce rigorous performance management of the SPU itself to ensure that the unit learns from direct stakeholder feedback and also to provide an incentive for high performance. The SPU members should be reviewed by both their peers and the external stakeholders with whom they work. Such a review process will provide the unit with direct feedback to strengthen its operations and better serve stakeholders. The peer review component also fosters a strong collaborative spirit within the SPU.

5.3 Role

It was apparent through this diagnostic from internal SPU perspective as well as external stakeholders, that while Performance Management is important the SPU needs to play more significant roles in the other functional areas of policymaking and execution, namely; Strategic Advisory, Policy Analysis and Coordination and implementation support.

STRATEGIC POLICY ADVICE
The SPU should facilitate strategic thinking at the presidency and provide advice to the president by doing analysis and research to verify the practicality and viability of strategic options under consideration by the government. As part of the OoP-wide review it was

recommended that the President set up a Strategic Advisory Council, a group of seasoned advisors (pro bono and not full-time, meeting periodically) who provide the initial strategic direction with the SPU providing secretariat for this council. In that role the SPU will be doing the analytical work to support or challenge the strategic considerations suggested by the council for GoSL. The unit should be encouraged to coordinate and work with think tanks and MDA representatives to develop ideas for the consideration of the president and subsequent implementation at the MDA level.

In addition, the advisors may generate long-term position papers, which would be discussed with the president and the MDAs for strategy development and implementation. Although the SPU is not involved in monitoring cabinet proceedings, having access to the proceedings is essential to ensure consistency with the work of the SPU.

POLICY ANALYSIS AND COORDINATION

The SPU should play a key role in policy analysis, options development and coordination and monitoring across sectors. The ability to develop and implement robust policies is a critical to the success of the government's agenda for change. This does not mean that the PSU replaces the planning and policy units within ministries but rather that their in-depth technical knowledge should be leveraged to complement the SPU's efforts in providing robust analysis to the president.

Within the presidency, the relevant SPU advisors should be in meetings with the president to follow up on issues (as is practiced in the United States White House's Assistants to the President). They should also travel with him in order to capture strategic and technical issues that require follow through-on the president's return.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

SPU's implementation support role should be strengthened to proactively facilitate implementation and not merely track performance. The SPU, as the unit in the office of the presidency responsible for policy analysis and monitoring, is strategically placed to provide support to the MDAs in achieving their implementation targets through facilitation of collaboration among MDAs. The SPU is in a unique position to create such a collaborative platform given its wide coverage across all sectors and the authority vested in it by the president. Through its monitoring of deliverables, SPU is in a position to identify bottlenecks and facilitate solutions. The SPU performance on implementation support should one of the metrics of evaluation in their own performance management, to ensure they provide appropriate support to their assigned ministries.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Interfaces should be created to ensure that the feedback gathered from the ministerial M&E exercise is looped back to the respective players, so that the lessons learned inform future policy formulation. At the macro level and across MDAs, the SPU needs to head a Monitoring and Evaluation oversight structure which brings together groups such as Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (for feedback on financial reporting and management), Statistical Service (for economic growth indicators and short-term pricing research), Local Government (local governance issues), and Central Bank (monetary issues and economic targets).

In addition, the current M&E process needs to be strengthened. For the monitoring and evaluation of ministers to be effective, the requisite conditions for execution must be in place. These include having systems and work plans in place at the various MDAs. The data gathering process for the Performance Tracking Tables should also be interactive and the tables themselves should be customized to the respective ministries in order to address their pertinent drivers and indicators.

5.4 Financing

Funding
Concrete measures should be taken to shift the SPU to full government funding as soon as possible, but in the interim a joint donor funding pool should be solicited to fund the unit. The biggest and most immediate challenge is solving the funding problem facing the SPU. The uninterrupted sustenance of the SPU is important. To address the funding needs for the continuation of the SPU (funding will expire in or around January 2010), the government should seek funding from Sierra Leone's donor community. This funding should cover at least one year of operations while the SPU is integrated into the civil service tissue. Within a year the SPU should be integrated into the civil service and fully funded by the government.

SPU remuneration should be aligned with GoSL pay structure to make it sustainable. SPU remuneration should be competitive to ensure that it attracts the best. However, this should be driven by GoSL pay structure. The current pay structure, which is currently aligned to the UNDP payment scheme, far exceeds the GoSL payment scheme and will pose sustainability challenges for government funding.

6.0   Conclusion

The drive by many democratic governments in Africa to deliver on their development and transformation agendas has brought to the fore the importance of strengthening decision making at the center of government. Strategy and Policy units have become a key element in achieving this objective. The Government of Sierra Leone took the right decision two years ago, with support of the development partners, to establish such a unit. The review by ACET, while highlighting a number of concerns regarding progress during its first year of existence, reaffirms the importance of the unit as integral part of the Office of the President.

To address the challenges raised in the review, three key strategic decisions, derived from the recommendations, need to be taken as soon as possible:

a) SPU needs to be formally and fully integrated into OoP. Continued existence as an externally funded project is unsustainable. An exit strategy for external funding should be defined, with clear time-bound commitments from both the development partners and the government.

b) SPU's organizational setup and reporting relationship should be revised to better position it to deliver on its mandate. A thorough organizational restructuring is needed to rectify errors from the past. A requisite foundation for the SPU's success will be a newly structured SPU with a clearly communicated mandate, roles and responsibility combined with a competitive and transparent recruiting process to staff the unit.

c) A performance review system for SPU needs to be introduced to directly capture feedback on the group's performance and incentivize good behavior.

Annex 1. Engagement Background and Context

The UNDP engaged the African Center for Economic Transformation ACET to undertake a functional review of the Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU) of the office of the president of Sierra Leone. The objective of this exercise is to assess the effectiveness of the SPU's performance during the first year of its existence, identify challenges and provide concrete recommendations for how to strengthen the SPU's support to the presidency in delivering on the *"Agenda for Change."*

This report conveys the findings of an ACET mission to Sierra Leone to: (a) understand the perspectives of internal and external stakeholders of the SPU; (b) recognize what is working well; (c) identify the pressing issues that need to be addressed; and (d) share in the stakeholders' perspectives on potential opportunities for improvement.

This assessment was undertaken as part of a broader ACET engagement commissioned by the president of Sierra Leone to help strengthen decision making at the center of government. Thus this report does not just review the SPU in isolation but as an integrated part of an overall assessment of the functionality of the Office of the President (OoP). Therefore, while focusing on the SPU, it refers to the broader context of the situation at OoP where relevant.

The SPU review, together with that of the other units in the OoP, was based on the following dimensions:

- **Relevance**: the extent to which the activities, implementing structures and systems designed and put in place by various pillars of the presidency are suited to Sierra Leone's priorities as defined in the *Agenda for Change*, as well as to the country's context.

- **Effectiveness**: the extent to which the various structures of the Office of the President are achieving their intended outputs and objectives.

- **Efficiency:** the measurement of the outputs from the different structures of the presidency, in relation to inputs such as funding, competencies, technical assistance and capacity building support, and other such investments.

- **Sustainability:** the assessment of the long-term viability of structures based on their current and anticipated resource needs relative to available resources.

- **Partnerships:** the extent to which current structures effectively utilize available support from traditional development partners and from more recent actors such as the Office of Tony Blair, under its Africa Governance Initiative; and the extent to which the structures of the Office of the President collaborate with each other and leverage their strengths to maximize the dimensions listed above.

Annex 2. Analytical Framework for the OoP Review

Several considerations influence the organizational design of any structure—from the substance of the vision to the personalities and management styles that make up the organization. In the political context, the influencing factors are even broader and more complex. Despite these complexities, the organizational apparatus to manage the affairs of a nation still align closely with those of any organization. So, the functional review of the Office of the President was based on the analytical framework pictured here, which takes into account four key dimensions that are central to the efficiency and effectiveness of any organization.

Figure 3. Analytical framework
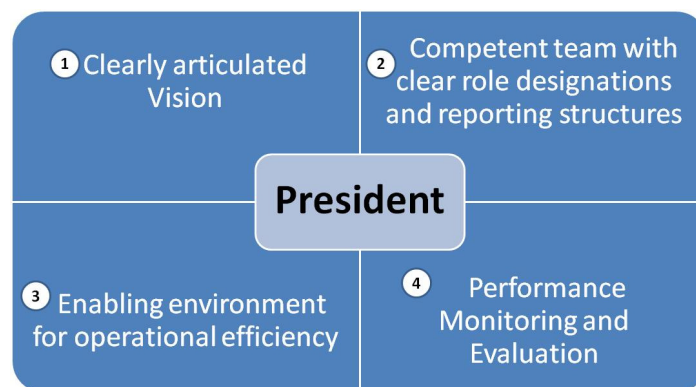
- **A clearly articulated vision**: This anchors the types of activities required for economic transformation and development, as well as the functions and organizational set-up needed for their implementation. The vision must be shared and socialized by all key stakeholders so that its implementation is structured and cohesive.

- **A competent team with clear role designations and reporting structures**: Economic transformation calls for knowledgeable, creative and energetic human resources committed to national development and willing to work in highly collaborative environments. Transformation also calls for strong accountability frameworks, based on clear roles and responsibilities, as well as collaboration and reporting lines.

- **An enabling environment that promotes operational efficiency**: Effective public management systems and structures that stand the test of time are essential for developing and implementing long-term development objectives. These systems include simpler tools such as templates and information technology. They also require reforming the civil service, providing strategic and policy advice, and building capacity and incentive systems that bring the best resources to bear.

- **A performance monitoring and evaluation function**: Monitoring and evaluation, at the heart of well-functioning organizations, is an essential tool to assess implementation

against objectives, and to continually inform visions, strategies, policies and implementation effectiveness.

The Government of Sierra Leone has made commendable strides along all four dimensions. This progress is particularly impressive given the post-conflict context, the protracted long years of war and the resulting limitations of human capital and infrastructure.

Some key issues hinder effective execution. These include ambiguous roles, sub-optimal reporting structures and a lack of collaboration within teams, compromising the environment for smooth operations. Some structural and operational issues undermining the effectiveness of the Office of the President are attributable to its history, carrying forward functions and processes no longer responsive to current needs. In addition, there is a need for the functions and work styles in the Office to adjust to the needs and management style of the current president while maintaining core values around effectiveness and delivery. These challenges have brought forward several functional issues captured in our diagnostic findings.

Annex 3. Brief Overview of Tasks Performed

The SPU was conducted concurrently with the broader review of the OoP and was executed in four phases:

- The **first phase** (August–September 2009) was focused on data collection drawing heavily on in-depth interviews with relevant GoSL players. The ACET team interviewed all the advisors and analysts of the SPU as well as key leaders of the Office of the President, including the president, the vice president, key ministers, the Public Sector Reform Unit and the donor community. Annex 4 has a full list of interviewees. The ACET team also undertook extensive document reviews of both the SPU and the Office of the President as well as previous studies on the latter and government reform at-large. This first phase served to understand the mandate and role of the SPU and the various players in the Office of the President, their strengths and challenges, and to identify the opportunities for improvement.

- In the **second phase** (October–November 2009), the ACET team conducted an in-depth analysis and design to develop options to address the challenges identified. The team also reviewed the organizational set-up of the executive office and policy advisory bodies in some African and Asian countries. The more relevant ones were contrasted with the Sierra Leonean context and background to make the comparisons credible and realistic. The team weighed the dimensions listed above (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and partnerships) to assess the pros and cons of various options. The culmination of this exercise was the proposal of structural and operational enhancements to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the SPU and the Office of the President at-large.

- In the **third phase**, two stakeholder meetings were organized—one with government representatives (November 2009) and one with donor organizations (December 2009)—to provide a forum to debate the proposed recommendations and for them to provide insights to further enrich the recommendations and assess their feasibility and sustainability.

- Finally in the **fourth and final phase** (December 2009), inputs from the stakeholder meetings were incorporated to fine-tune and prioritize the recommendations. The final report on the SPU review is to be presented to the UNDP in January 2010. Similarly, the broader assessment of the OoP recommendations and implementation plan will be presented to the president in January 2010.

Subsequent to the president's approval of the final recommendations, the ACET team will work with the government team to develop an implementation plan and budget, and arrange for the technical expertise to execute the plan alongside the Public Sector Reform Unit. In the implementation phase, ACET will continue to provide implementation support, particularly around senior leadership coaching and overall engagement management. At the end of the engagement, ACET will facilitate the retention of an independent evaluator to assess the impact of the changes.

Annex 4. Comprehensive List of Interviewees

- *Office of the President*
  - His Excellency the President of Sierra Leone
  - His Excellency the Vice President of Sierra Leone
  - Minister of Presidential and Public Affairs
  - Secretary to the President and staff
  - Executive Secretary to the President
  - Personal Assistant to the President
  - Secretary to the Vice President
  - Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service
  - Presidential Press Secretary
  - State Chief of Protocol
  - Head of the Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary
  - Secretary of Office of National Security
  - Political and Social Unit advisors
  - Secretary of the Petroleum Unit
  - National Commission for Democracy
  - Chairman of the National Commission for Privatisation
  - Executive Director of the Attitudinal and Behavioural Change Unit
  - Human Resources Management Office staff
  - National Coordinator, African Peer Review Mechanism Unit
  - Head of Cabinet Oversight and Monitoring Unit
  - Director of the Public Sector Reform Unit
  - Coordinator of Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

- *Ministers*
  - Minister of Finance and Economic Development
  - Minister of Energy and Water Resources
  - Minister of Trade and Industry
  - Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security
  - Minster of Works, Housing and Infrastructure
  - Minister of Information and Communication

- *Strategy and Policy Unit (SPU)*
  - Coordinator of the SPU
  - SPU Advisors for Growth Sectors, Governance, Social Sector and Communication
  - SPU Program Manager
  - SPU Analyst for Infrastructure and Governance Cluster
  - SPU Analyst for Growth Sectors
  - Strategic Planner of the ERSG Multi-Donor Trust Fund

- *Donors*
  - Country Director of UNDP
  - UNDP Public Sector Reform
  - Deputy Executive Representative of the Secretary General and UN Resident Coordinator
  - EU Representative
  - World Bank Country Representative

- *Others:*
  - Human Rights Commission
  - Office of Tony Blair