

Evaluation Brief

With funding support from development partners (EC and DFID), UNDP facilitated the implementation of a project “*Support to the Development Assistance Coordination Office*” between 2010 and 2013. The overarching outcome of the project was to ensure the effective coordination and management of aid in Sierra Leone. This final draft is a product of the findings by the evaluation consultant of the three-year project. The evaluation was conducted by the National Consultant Dr. Hindowa Momoh under the supervision of the UNDP focal person.

The evaluation assessed, among others, the effectiveness and efficiency of the project with regards to achievement of its planned objectives; the relevance and adequacy of the project; to codify the challenges in project implementation and make recommendations; to assess whether lessons and recommendations of the 2009 evaluation were taken on board. The evaluation used a wide range of data collection methods and tools, which included but not limited to: document review, entry and exit de-briefing meetings, in-depth key informant and group interviews and observations. The evaluation included field visits to the three regional headquarters of Makeni, Kenema and Bo. Key stakeholders who were consulted included: UNDP, MOFED senior officials, DACO, Field Monitors and donors. Data collected was analysed and informed the evaluation results whose highlights are shared in this executive summary.

Looking at the overall project objective and the indicative outputs: strengthened capacity for aid coordination; increased coordination at sector and district levels; improved quality and quantity use of aid information and improved monitoring of aid accountability, there is evidence the project has remained relevant in the overall management of the aid architecture in Sierra Leone. The evaluation acknowledges that the project is aligned to national priorities and policies especially in its support to the preparation of the PRSP, in the preparation of the Development Assistance Report of 2012 that provides the overview of aid flows to Sierra Leone, the New Deal that focuses on national compact for aid effectiveness and its role in the International Dialogue on Peace Building and State Building. The provision of computer and office equipment; the recruitment and capacity development of DACO staff both in the field and at HQ; the alignment of DPs sector strategies with GoSL priorities; the strengthening of the DAD *albeit* with limitations; the establishment of database for donors; the development of the Mutual Accountability Framework among others have remained strategic in contributing to the project outcome.

The evaluation concludes that the fundamental activity to enhance MoFED’s capacity, and by implication, DACO’s capacity for aid coordination has not been fully strengthened during the period under review as mentioned earlier. Discussions held with key Ministry officials and DPs reveal that capacity deficiency remain a systemic problem plaguing national institutions, and therefore, not unique to DACO. This is attributable to two major factors. First, the country has not still fully recovered from the brain drain resulting in institution decay following the

internecine civil war that lasted for 11 years (1991-2002). Second, the pay structure within the civil service is a disincentive for qualified and fully capacitated personnel to work for and be retained in mainstream civil service. To a large extent, capacity building support at national level has not been properly coordinated especially among MDAs to be fully integrated into the aid coordination architecture. District working groups have been established but remain un-operational, which affect the links created and information flow between SWGs, DWGs and DACO.

While DWGs and SWGs were established and the SWG did finally function as envisioned, process management by DACO was not effective in order to ensure that data is continuously entered, analyzed, packaged and disseminated. There is the need to improve upon the DAD system with the objective of improving the quality and reliability of aid information and the development assistance reports. Areas that require improvement in the DAD system include: increasing the level of its user friendliness; expanding and improving the outreach program on data collection/entry by the donor community- including NGOs.

An Aid Information Management System (AIMS) serves as an integral part of the national aid coordination architecture. Ultimately, the main purpose of an AIMS is to support the effective allocation and coordination, as well as transparent and accountable use of foreign assistance in line with national development priorities and respective domestic budget allocations. Consequently, an AIMS should allow tracking of funding flows against the background of the national development plan. Further, it should be linked to the Financial Information Management System used to prepare the domestic budget and to monitor its execution, in order to promote complementarity of domestic and foreign funding in support of the same objectives.

As seen above, not much improvement has taken place regarding the quality and quantity of aid information. One of the success cases mentioned by DPs has been the availability of data on budget support.

The project supported the drafting and production of the mutual accountability framework, which has been discussed and signed; DACO has been producing quarterly and yearly reports on progress made on the operations of the framework; independent monitors produced yearly report on the agreed actions in the framework; first and second ratings on the agreed actions successfully carried out; DACO successfully carried out the 2011 Paris Declaration survey and Fragile States Principles Monitoring survey; all DPs were involved in the drafting of the MAF.

The evaluation acknowledges that the project management structure and implementation modalities were, to a large extent, efficient and in synch with the project stated objectives. In the short and medium term, the placement of DACO within MoFED tended to generate efficiencies in project management. Of particular importance is the collaboration and coordination between DACO and other units within the MoFED such as the EPRU to consolidate effort in aid coordination and management.

UNDP assisted in capacitating DACO by recruiting a Finance Officer to assist in the management and efficient utilization of resources in accordance with UNDP financial

management guidelines and practices. The 2013 Auditors report clearly stated among others that “the procurement activities carried out by the partner were not motivated by purchase orders validated by the Project Coordinator; the contracts between the partner and focal persons are not supported by evidence supporting documents; and the entity does not have all these invoices as mentioned in our report on statement of expenses”. Overall, the project was efficiently executed with the project outputs demonstrating some evidence of good use of resources. Resources were also targeted to planned activities.

Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons learned was the need for the GoSL to strengthen Inter-Ministerial coordination to allow consistency and consensus building especially before DEPAC meetings. It was also discovered that DACO, as a unit in the governance structure, means well and its staff working very hard to meet the challenges of aid coordination and management in Sierra Leone. It was noted that there exist gaps in resource persons with institutional memory on aid coordination and management at UNDP. Frequent changes in personnel working on economic development issues especially at UNDP tend to negatively impact the effectiveness of DACO. Another important lesson was the need for a mechanism for partnership building between DPs and the GoSL with clear defining roles and expectations with regards to financial reporting and updating the DAD.

Impact

The evaluation noted that DACO has always taken the lead and serving as the Secretariat in the preparation of Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (I, II and III), provided support for the preparation of the New Deal and Post-MDG Agenda. In particular, DACO coordinated the preparation and launch of the Agenda for Change and the Agenda for Prosperity. The Agenda for Prosperity serves as the country’s strategic document for poverty alleviation for five years. It outlines all activities the government intends to undertake during that period and it presents a results framework which will be used to monitor these activities effectively and efficiently. DACO organized a ministerial meeting on the Agenda for Prosperity in August 2013 with the view to establishing ministerial pillar working groups and to assign ministerial Chairs and Co-Chairs for each of the pillars. DACO provided the leadership and guidance in the development of these strategic documents.