

Leadership, Effectiveness, Adaptability, and Professionalism

in Myanmar's Civil Service (LEAP) Project

Management Response to the Midterm Evaluation (MTE)

Project Title:	Leadership, Effectiveness, Adaptability, and Professionalism in Myanmar's Civil Service (LEAP)
UNDP Project ID (PIMS) #:	00104318
Midterm Review Mission Completion Date:	December 2020
Date of Issue of Management Response:	June 2021
Prepared by:	Governance and Sustainable Peace Program (GSPP) Team
Contributors:	MTE Team and Project Team
Cleared by:	Team Leader, GSPP

Conclusions and recommendations for LEAP Project MTE were made in a completely different operating context therefore not relevant currently. Yet a broader issue that emphasize on the need of an independent political economy analysis is still relevant.

The current context in Myanmar is rapidly evolving and the rationale underpinning UNDP's Country Programme Document (2018-2022) unfortunately is no longer relevant or even implementable. UNDP now needs to reposition to safeguard development gains and leverage our comparative advantages in responding to crisis contexts. Therefore, UNDP is currently designing and adopting dynamic and adaptive programming to respond to the evolving context and realities. It is in the process of creating a portfolio that is viable under any of the scenarios and can adapt from one to another with relative ease.

Following the military takeover of all government functions on 1 February, to direct programmatic work, UNDP Myanmar developed interim engagement principles that have been aligned to the broader framework of the UN Country Team's (UNCT) engagement principles. The engagement principles direct UNDP to ensure that the benefits of programming accrue primarily and directly to the people or local communities without discrimination; that programming supports the strengthening of the rule of law and the protection and promotion of human rights; and that it contributes to preserving, to the extent possible, the democratic space. At the same time, UNDP will ensure that programming does not pose a risk of legitimizing the de facto authorities; having a potential negative impact on human rights, creating a negative conflict dynamic; or presenting potential reputational damage for the United Nations given current circumstances.

UNDP management immediately paused all ongoing work (strengthening the capacities of Government Institutions, providing policy advice and technical assistance to government counterparts, optimizing public sector operations and performance and building capacities of all ranks of civil servants through trainings, competency-based curricula development, e-learning, and training of trainers) being implemented through LEAP Project because these are focused on institutional strengthening and are not aligned with UNCT's engagement principles.

Therefore, it is also not viable to prepare management response with specific action plans unless there are changes in the overall context that opens space to continue project activities as planned earlier. This document only provides an overview of the MTE process (objective, timeline, methodology), recommendations and management response where feasible.

UNDP's LEAP Project was designed to support the Government of Myanmar to achieve its vision of an 'Ethical, merit based, inclusive and responsive Civil Service promoting public participation and strengthening the trust of the people. The project was designed along three work streams to support the Union Civil Service Board (UCSB) in i. applying ethics, meritocracy, inclusivity and responsiveness in Myanmar Civil Service; ii. enhancing people centered services and iii. strengthening civil service oversight, accountability, standards and capacity at Union and sub-national levels.

The MTE of the project was conducted from 7-24 December 2020 by a team of four international consultants, a national expert and a translator. As stipulated in the project document, the evaluation was conducted in an independent manner and prepared in accordance with UNDP's evaluation guidelines.

Overall, the MTE Terms of Reference gave solid guidance for the conduct of the review. The ToR referred to a review "to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability" of LEAP activities (Aid Effectiveness); as well as to assess the progress of the project against the project document to assess against the context to provide recommendations for any adjustments to the project design, management and implementation.

The MTE team used the following method for data collection:

A mixed-method data collection approach that included, a review of project financial data, and document analysis of project materials, including the periodic reviews undertaken and reports compiled during implementation. External analyses were also used, particularly while attempting to reconstruct an impression of the prevailing political economy of Myanmar at the time the LEAP was designed.

Before the start of primary data collection, an inception report was commissioned, and the scope of work and methodology was clearly mentioned in the report. After collecting primary data, the team presented initial findings of the MTE in late January and the first draft report in early February 2021 which was finalized after incorporating comments and suggestions.

Recommendations and Management Response:

Recommendation 1

In preparation for the next programmatic cycle, UNDP may wish to consider introducing a requirement that preparation of a Project Document must be preceded by an independent political economy analysis of existing conditions. Political economy analysis is a critical component in the design of all manner of development projects, especially those with a strong political orientation. Detailed analyses of political, economic, social, and environmental factors that may impinge upon the successful achievement of the stated outcomes could be undertaken as a part of a country strategy plan and as a prelude to specific project design. A project document should summarize such findings and elaborate how risks and constraints would be mitigated in the proposed design.

Management response

UNDP CO partially agrees to this recommendation. It is in the process of finalizing its medium-term program framework and structure in order to respond to the current needs and priorities more adequately. The proposed new program includes a component 'Myanmar Development Observatory' with a dedicated team to focus on and establish SDG baselines; build a national GIS based database that could go down to the village tract level; monitor socio-economic trends; establish a vulnerability early warning system; and track and analyze legislation, policy and programmes for their potential and actual socio-economic impact. It would also provide a platform to support dialogue on trends and risks bringing together diverse actors to think about structural prevention and early response and agree on ways of working together to make sure that we take viable action on what we observe. This would be an ongoing exercise to better inform projects and programs and make adjustments as and when necessary based on the changing context. The political economy analysis of Rakhine State is being finalized.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
- A new structure is in place including dedicated team to look at socio economic and political trends that feed information to projects and programs regularly.	10 /2021	Senior management		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft Medium Term Framework is ready 2. Draft interim structure is ready.

Recommendation 2

UNDP may wish to consider revisiting the LEAP indicators and results at the Output and Outcome levels. Stipulations should be set in the project document to ensure that monitoring, risk reporting, and lessons learnt at the output level are distinguished from progress towards achievement of indicators at the outcome level. This can be done by engaging the UCSB and other government agencies in a backwards mapping exercise to reconstruct the LEAP

Theory of Change, ensuring appropriate assumptions and indicators are associated with the relevant outputs and outcomes.

Management response

This is no more relevant in the current context. All activities under LEAP Project are paused after February 1 because they do not align with UNCT’s engagement principle. Based on the analysis of possible medium-term scenarios, UNDP do not foresee any possibilities to continue this work in the near future.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 3

UNDP may wish to re-establish the role of a strategic CTA in LEAP. LEAP’s final two years would benefit from the strategic vision of a technically skilled and experienced CTA. The UCSB has also made a strong request for re-establishing this position. The TOR for the international consultants focusses on production of deliverables associated with their technical specialties. The TOR for the project manager focuses on day-to-day-management within the context of the project document. The MTE has noted important improvements in the LEAP implementation strategy since the establishment of a non-resident CTA in late December 2019. A continuation of this more innovative approach will be critical to ensuring LEAP has a lasting impact on the Myanmar civil service in years to come.

Management response

This is no more relevant in the current context.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 4

LEAP may wish to consider experimenting by integrating political (thinking and working politically¹), adaptive (PDIA²), and ‘demand side’/customer service (PSEP³) tools into the preparation of the new UCSB Action Plan and in policy implementation with other line agencies.

These tools could be trialled as the LEAP project assists the UCSB to complete the drafting of a new ten-year action plan to assist in further strengthening the national ownership of LEAP interventions. The initiation of communities of practice across agencies of government will be an excellent opportunity to introduce all these tools to facilitate critical thinking on the part of the civil servants. LEAP should seek additional funds specifically earmarked to procurement of additional modern, digital training equipment to support UCSB in building its capacity to serve

1 https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/pea_guide_final.pdf

2 <https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/building-state-capability-evidence-analysis-action>

3 Republic of the Philippines, Civil Service Commission, ARTA: A Decade of Improving Public Service Delivery, 2018. (arta_photobook.pdf) Workshop manuals are available for each of the Public Service Excellence Program components Basic Customer Service Skills, Service Audit, Service Vision & Service Values, Service Improvement, and Celebrating Accomplishments.

as a platform for knowledge sharing across ministries on CSR/HRM. This should be integrated with guidance on how to engage participants in a non-didactic mode to institutionalise a shift from training to capacity building. An area of focus could be placed on how to shift from corruption risk assessment to risk management in personnel management.

Management response

This is no more relevant in the current context.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 5

UNDP may wish to consider engaging LEAP donors and other development partners in an informal dialogue process to expand its understanding of the changing national setting and to learn about effective means of engaging the government. Invite an informal advisory committee of respected international actors who have lengthy experience in country together with significant civil society/private sector networks and institutes, engage the project CTA as the group coordinator. Eventually this should include national champions for reform to discuss absorbing the project deliverables into the national budget, keeping in mind that civil reform is a long-term, and complex, process.

Management response

This is not relevant now.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 6

LEAP should be mandated to jointly craft an exit strategy with government as a management function in the 2021 AWP. The GOM has many constraints facing it. Budgetary shortfalls play a large role in its inability to deliver on its promises to its people. The non-resident CTA should be tasked to facilitate the dialogue with UCSB to ensure the exit strategy is focused on the elements of CSR the UCSB is willing and able to continue so a successful diffusion of the LEAP-introduced policies and procedures has a high chance of success. This exit strategy should include ways and means of strengthening the demand/customer side as a tool for building trust between state and the public through people centred public service delivery.

Management response

This is not relevant now.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 7

Gender specific recommendations

- Further sensitization to the issues as well as a strategy to ensure that progress is tracked and that the USCB buys in to the results. Specific capacity building on improving women's skills in certain areas as well as adequate tracking of progress is pivotal in order to identify key areas of work as well as possible bottlenecks and challenges to the implementation of gender policies.
- Identification of key champions for promoting women within the civil service, particularly in ministries which are not often populated by women at the higher ranks.
- Informal mentoring sessions of women directors and other women in decision making positions to encourage further traction of gender related policies.
- Further interaction with civil society organizations and training thereof to advocate and promote the importance of women's participation at all levels of decision making in the civil service and to advocate for the implementation and tracking of gender sensitive policies.
- Possible sharing of best practices from other Civil service commission and comparative studies on how other ASEAN members are working on these issues would be useful as well as continuation of the Gender Specialist's work and increased support to the project team to ensure leadership skills and further strategies from other projects/UNDP offices.
- A revision of the indicators to ensure that they are more gender sensitive and denote positive change towards gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Inclusion of more change stories within the annual reports, to demonstrate the type of impact the project has had on women's ability to advance within the civil service both from an attitudinal perspective as well as promotional prospects.

Management response

This is not relevant now.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				

Recommendation 8

Conflict-sensitivity/peacebuilding specific recommendations

- Destigmatize conflict-handling skills to bring them into the civil service curriculum.
- Advocacy for diversity-affirming civil service policies and recruitment
- LEAP should develop training on human rights, corruption risk, and conflict risk in one intensive module.

Management response

This is not relevant now.

Key action(s)	Timeframe	Responsibility	Tracking	
			Comment	Status
NA				