

UNDP Management Response

Management response to the Midterm Review of the National Assembly Strategic Support Project 1

Project Title: The National Assembly Strategic Support Project (NASSP)
UNDP Project ID (PIMS) #: 00091022
Midterm Review Mission Completion Date: July 15, 2015
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Context, background and findings

The Project was initiated in July 2014 and expected to be completed by the end of 2016. However, based on several discussions with UNDP, SDC and the National Assembly, a no-cost 7-month extension was requested in order to complete key deliverables and outputs as indicated in the NASSP's Results and Resources Framework. The proposal for extension was raised by several National Assembly officials during the NASSP Mid Term Review on September 5th, 2016. UNDP and SDC agreed to a no-cost extension of the NASSP until July 2017. UNDP initiated the process of implementing the Mid-Term Review with a consultant team, consisted of a national and an international consultant, that was on board on the 1st of June. Their 9 days in-country mission was completed by the 12th of June. The first draft was received on 11 June, and the final report is dated from the 15th July.

¹ This template is in alignment with the [Management Response Template](#) for UNDP project-level evaluations in the Evaluation Resource Centre.

Recommendations and management response

Midterm Review recommendation 1. Make a clear distinction between the National Assembly and NASSP. It is extremely important that all project stakeholders understand and make the distinction between the National Assembly and NASSP. The NA, a permanent State institution, has legislative and representational functions and undertakes a wide range of activities associated with fulfilling those functions. All of these activities are aligned to the role, responsibilities and powers assigned to the NA by the constitution. The project, on the other hand, is designed to provide the NA with support aimed at achieving specific objectives jointly agreed upon by the NA and the project's external donors (SDC and UNDP), spelt out in the project document. NASSP's objectives and its mandate are obviously much more circumscribed than those of the National Assembly itself. While the project's specific objectives and activities should be (and are) consistent with the NA's overall objectives and functions, the latter go well beyond the scope of NASSP and require a much more diversified range of activities than the project is intended or able to support.				
Management response: We (UNDP, SDC) agree with this recommendation in principle while also noting that it is a positive sign to show a strong sense of ownership by the National Assembly. It will help reemphasize the specific objectives jointly agreed upon and clarify how such objectives contribute to the NA's priorities				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking ²	
			Comments	Status ³
1.1 Further clarify the specific objectives of this project through the RRF refinement exercise	2015/09	UNDP & NASSP team	The workshop was organized in July 22-23, 2015	Completed
1.2 Organize awareness-raising sessions targeting the NA members and staff on this project's framework	2016/12	NASSP Team	NASSP organized regular project review meetings (QPRs, ARMs, NA-Development Partners' Forum, etc.) with NA Members and staff, which often included presentation on the project's framework. NASSP also set	Completed

² If the MTR is uploaded to the ERC, the status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

³ Status of Implementation: Completed, Partially Completed, Pending.

				up information corner during NA Intersession Programme for NA Members (June and December 2015).	
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Midterm Review recommendation 2. Coordinate NASSP actions with other support to the NA NASSP activities should be seen as fitting into a wider range of actions aimed at strengthening the NA actions funded both by the NA itself (out of its own budget) as well as by other partners (such as GIZ, other UN organizations, other parliaments). Viewed in this way, ICPMS would first draw up an overall work plan of activities for providing support to the NA, which would then be used as the basis for NASSP and other (e.g. GIZ) work plans. This would ensure that all activities (including those of NASSP) are fully harmonized and coordinated (thus avoiding overlap and maximizing synergies) and that development partner support is used appropriately. Management response: Given that the National Assembly receives support from different DPs, we (UNDP, SDC) fully agree with the importance of coordinating and aligning the NASSP with other support. In fact, that has been the primary focus for UNDP and SDC since the formulation stage where we extensively consulted the NA and ICPMS, and exchanged on different occasions with DPs including CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the NASSP is in line with other stakeholders' support. Since the launching of this project in July 2014, UNDP has assisted the ICPMS in organizing 2 coordination forums with other DPs and has also invited wider participants into our quarterly / annual review meetings to ensure sufficient coordination.					
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking		
			Comments	Status	
2.1. Continue organizing donor coordination meetings among DPs	2016/12	ICPMS	ICPMS organized NA-Development Partners Forum (NA-DPF) on January 16, 2016. Another NA-DPF is being organized either in May and August 2016 (after each Ordinary Session).	Completed	
2.2. Formulate an overall matrix of different DPs support to the NA	2016/12	ICPMS	ICPMS developed a matrix of the overall DPs support to the NA including budget	Completed	

2.3. Continue engaging DPs into quarterly / annual review meetings	2016/12	ICPMS, with support of NASSP Team	ICPMS and NASSP continued to involve DPs in ARM (February 5, 2016) and NA-DPF meetings (January 16, 2016).	Completed
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Midterm Review recommendation 3. Review and re-interpret the NASSP Results & Resources Framework (RRF) One of the main findings of the evaluation has been that the NASSP RRF is not easy to understand, makes it difficult to focus on the intent/purpose of its deliverables, and currently lacks output-level indicators. Given that, the evaluation team strongly recommends that ICPMS and NASSP organize a one to two day internal workshop, with full participation from ICPMS, NASSP, SDC and UNDP, aimed at: - Clarifying the intent/direction of each of the three project outputs and agreeing on what exactly is expected of the project. - Reviewing sub-outputs to make sure that they are consistent with outputs and to ensure that they are clear results statements (and not activities). - If necessary, existing sub-outputs can be modified so as to make their operationalization easier. - Determining appropriate indicators and targets for each output and sub-output, with priority accorded to output-level indicators and targets. Any such indicators should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound). Where appropriate interim (or annual) targets should be specified.

Management response: We (UNDP, SDC) agree with this recommendation. We should revisit the scope of the results and resources framework and ensure that it is aligned with the NA's priorities and gives enough focus for the project. We also agree with the evaluators in that we shouldn't reformulate the RRF's Outputs, as it represents the results of extensive consultations the past few years. In the meantime, we should be all reminded that the results framework should be a realistic one to implement, considering that we have only 1.5 more years to go. Thus, this exercise should be conducted from that perspective. The exercise is also expected to enhance the capacity of the ICPMS and NA staff for effective management and implementation of the NASSP project.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Organize a two-day workshop/exercise to clarify the project's results framework	2015/08	NASSP	The workshop was organized in July 22-23, 2015	Completed
3.2 Finalize and adopt the revised results framework	2015/09	NASSP	UNDP and SDC formally approved the revised RRF	Completed
3.3 Organize refresher sessions on project management	2017/06	UNDP	Presentations on the ICPMS and NASSP provided to the NA staff during the NASSP Project Management refresher	Completed

				course from 12 to 13 May 2016 at the NA Training Center.	
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Midterm Review recommendation 4. NASSP work planning Following clarification of, and agreement, on the project's RRF, the evaluation team strongly recommends that subsequent NASSP work planning takes place in the following manner: - Firstly, in order to avoid delays, the NASSP team should begin its quarterly work planning process at least 1-2 weeks before the end of the active quarter. The final draft of the quarterly work plan and budget should then be submitted to UNDP before the end of the active quarter. - NASSP quarterly work planning sessions should begin with a reminder about the RRF, what are project deliverables (outputs and sub-outputs)? - The next step in NASSP work planning should consist of a review of activities undertaken in the past 2-3 months. - After reviewing activities undertaken in the past 2-3 months, the work planning process should then lead to a discussion of activities to be undertaken in the next quarter. Of fundamental importance here is to ensure that planned activities are fully aligned with the NASSP RRF and prioritized.

Management response: We (UNDP, SDC) fully agree with this recommendation to further improve the work planning process. With that said, we would like to also note that this project was only launched a year ago in July 2014 and that ever since then we have seen positive progress in the way the project team has been approaching the work planning process. Taking it as a learning process, we would expect to see even more improvement from the project team on this matter.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Organize internal meetings well ahead of the work plan deadline	2016/12	NASSP	Aside from the regular monthly meetings, NASSP project team organized internal/special meetings to discuss and monitor the project's workplan. This is usually done almost on a weekly basis.	Completed
4.2 Ensure that all activities are consistent with the NASSP RRF and AWP	2016/12	NASSP	NASSP Project team with regular advice from the STS and MMS ensure that all NA activities are aligned with RRF and AWP when developing the project's	Completed

				workplan activities (quarter and annual basis).	
4.3 Set a planning / timeframe for developing quarterly workplans	2016/12		NASSP	Completed MMS developed guidelines on work planning including timeframe on October 2015.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 5. NASSP Operations; to ensure that project activities are implemented according to plan and on time, the evaluation team recommends that UNDP and the M&RS work closely with ICPMS/NASSP staff to ensure that the latter are fully aware of required (NIM/SOP) procedures.

Management response: UNDP agrees with this recommendation and recognizes the need to continue assisting this newly created ICPMS team with the procedures subscribed in the NIM SOPs.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Continue organizing NIM SOPs refresher training for the ICPMS and selected NA staff	2016/12	UNDP/MPI	The project organizes NIM SOP refresher trainings on a regular basis. The latest NIMSOP orientation seminar was organized on 16 May 2016.	Completed
5.2 Conduct internal spot checks	2015/10	NASSP/UNDP	We conducted an internal spot check on October 27 in preparation for the actual spot check on October 30, 2015.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 6. NASSP Dissemination of Reports and Documents NASSP has produced a considerable number of documents (about NA procedures, about good international parliamentary practice, about the rationale and importance of public hearings, etc.), which are not broadly disseminated in Vicntiane (among Government institutions, among development partners, to the press, etc.). These could be made more widely available or accessible either through a mailing list or by being posted on the NA website.

Management response: We (UNDP, SDC) agree with the need to disseminate the project deliverables more widely.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Finalize the existing project deliverables and discuss the objective (expected results) and plan to disseminate them as widely as possible	2017/06	NASSP/UNDP	An international consultant has been recruited to finalize the four key deliverables to be published by March 2017	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 7. Output 1: strengthening the NA's law-making functions. With respect to NASSP's Output 1 focus areas, the evaluation team recommends the following: (i) Annual State Budget approval and budget oversight Given the importance of budget scrutiny and approval, the evaluation recommends that NASSP explore ways in which it can provide meaningful support to the EPFC and other NA committees so as to strengthen their law-making and oversight functions with respect to the national budget. In doing so, NASSP and ICPMS will need to take into account what other partners (such as GIZ) are doing or plan to do. GIZ, for example, has agreed to provide support to the NA's Economic, Planning and Finance Committee (EPFC) so as to strengthen its oversight of the annual State Budget. NASSP could usefully supplement this by supporting oversight/ scrutiny of the education and health sector budgets by the NA's Social and Cultural Affairs Committee or oversight of State Budget gender-sensitivity by the Women's Caucus. (ii) Implementation of existing laws It is recommended that NASSP explore ways to support NA committees to carry out systematic reviews of legal implementation, with a view towards identifying bottlenecks and constraints that may be addressed in new or revised legislation. Examples of this could include reviews of the implementation of current laws on land, on water resources and the like, focusing especially on subsidiary implementation regulations (such as decrees), to better understand how they have been applied by the Government. This would be a useful input to law-making as a whole and to the review of any amendments, in particular. (iii) Law-Making Manual As soon as the much delayed Law-Making Manual is finalized and approved, it is recommended that NASSP provides support so as to disseminate it within the NA. Dissemination of the Law-Making Manual should be accompanied by a range of other activities, aimed at providing NA members and staff with a full and comprehensive understanding of the NA's role (as prescribed in the Law-Making Manual). Management response: We agree with the overall recommendation to help strengthen the NA's law-making functions. We are keen on taking an issue-based approach as suggested by the evaluators. With that said, however, given the remaining duration in this project (1.5 years), we need to discuss carefully with the NA, ICPMS, DPs, and other stakeholders to determine the feasibility of our support for the budget oversight and systematic reviews of legal implementation. We fully agree with the use of the law-making manual once published.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status

7.1 Circulate the law-making manual as soon as possible (once available) and provide training sessions on law-making	2017/06	NASSP/UNDP	Since the Law-Making Manual from SPLSMP was yet to be finalized and approved by MoJ at the end of NASSP, the National Assembly utilized its own law drafting and review guidelines to carry out the capacity building for new MNAs and PPAs. 100% of new Members (109) of the National Assembly (MNAs) and Provincial People's Assemblies (PPAs) (360) trained on law drafting and review in 2016 and 2017.	Completed
7.2 Explore the feasibility of supporting the NA on budgetary and/or legislative oversight	2016/03	NASSP/UNDP	This proposal has been incorporated in the revised RRF and 2016 AWP to be supported by NASSP under Output 1.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 8. Output 2: strengthening the capacity of central NA support services. With respect to NASSP's output 2 focus areas, the evaluation team recommends the following: (i) Finalization and approval of the NA Capacity Development Plan (or Strategy) NASSP has already provided invaluable and solid support for the assessment of NA capacities and for drafting the NA CD plan (or strategy). This work should be continued in order to finalize the NA's CD plan and to submit it to NA decision-makers for approval. (ii) Implementation of the NA Capacity Development Plan Once the NA CD plan has been approved, NASSP should (within the limits of its own RRF and agreed set of deliverables) aim to assist in the actual implementation of the CD plan. It is important to note that NASSP is not intended to support implementation of all the activities that will figure in the NA CD plan, the latter will be much more wide-ranging than NASSP's scope. (iii) Legislative studies Support can be provided through assisting one or more NA committees in carrying out in-depth reviews of flagship legislation, by engaging consultants, academics and Lao national think tanks to carry out independent research on behalf of the NA and in bringing the results of that research into the deliberations of the NA and/or its committees. This would provide a real-time pilot of the kinds of work that would eventually be done by a future ILS, explore some of the substantive challenges that would probably be encountered and demonstrate the value of this kind of work to NA members. Management response: UNDP agrees with this recommendation. As the evaluators point out, we need to be mindful of the limits of our RRF and agreed set of deliverables in terms of implementing the capacity development plan once finalized.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	

				Comments	Status
8.1 Finalize and adopt the NA Capacity Development Plan	2016/12		NASSP	NA Capacity Development Plan submitted is currently being finalized and is to be published during Q1 2017, along with other key publications.	Completed
8.2 Implement selected recommendations from the Plan	2016/12		NASSP	Some of the recommendations are already implemented such as the induction programme and the staff training on legislative research and the committee level induction programme	Completed
8.3 Pilot the development of an independent research team to provide law-making support services to NA members	2016/12		NASSP	STS has conducted all the legislative research trainings for the ILS staff, has drafted ToRs for the members of the research team.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 9. Output 3: strengthening dialogue between the NA and citizens. With respect to NASSP's output 3 focus areas, the evaluation team recommends the following: (i) Refining the focus of sub-outputs. The evaluation team recommends that NASSP partly re-structure its sub-outputs around specific mechanisms (e.g. Hotline, petitions, NACOs) through which the NA and citizens can engage in dialogue. (ii) Informing the general public It is strongly recommended that NASSP provide support for communicating information to the general public about how citizens can engage with the NA. Ways of doing so could include: developing a more useful "Contact Us" section on the NA's website, providing citizens and others with information on who to contact in the NA with respect to given issues or queries; providing NA ?contact? cards which explain who to contact with respect to particular issues; establishing a visitor-friendly front desk to help citizens ?navigate? the NA buildings and offices. (iii) Making use of existing information about citizens? concerns The NA Hotline and petitions system potentially provide invaluable information about the kinds of issues that pre-occupy citizens. Why are citizens using the NA Hotline? What issues are citizens submitting petitions about? Providing NA members with information about this should be a good way of keeping them up to date on the types of issue that concern citizens. To do this, however, will require working on improvements to the management of Hotline and petition data, and then working to ensure that such information is made available to NA members. (iv) Working intensively to strengthen NA Constituency Offices The evaluation team strongly recommends that NASSP intensifies its activities at the level of NACOs. Now that NASSP has carried out a full assessment of four NACOs, the project should rapidly develop a pilot strategy of support for NACOs.				
Management response: We (UNDP, SDC) agree with this recommendation but within the scope of the limited project duration (only 17 months left until end of SDC's support (Output 3). We need to stay realistic as to how much of this recommendation can be implemented in the next 1.5 years.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
9.1 Refine the scope of Output 3 while keeping the agreed framework (as part of the 2-day exercise), with focus on NA Hotline; NA Petitions; and NA engagement with NPAs & INGOs (outreach missions)	2015/08	NASSP	Workshop organized with NA on July 2015. NASSP and UNDP refined Output 3 deliverables based on several meetings (August-October 2015) and presented/ submitted the final RRF and 2016 AWP to UNDP and SDC for endorsement 9note: revised RRF and 2016 AWP have been endorsed by all parties)	Completed

9.2 Implement selected recommendations from the Public Engagement Assessment Report (including further improvement of the existing public engagement tools)	2016/12	NASSP	The STS drafted the public consultation guidelines and improvements to the public engagement tools which were presented during the NA capacity workshop during Q1 and Q2 2016.	Completed
9.3 Develop a pilot strategy of support for selected constituency offices (based on the Constituency Offices Assessment Report) in ways that provide the NA with better information about public concerns and issues	2016/03	NASSP	STS submitted a draft paper on the NA Public Information strategy.	Completed
9.4 Explore possibility of supporting local councils/assemblies at provincial level (once the NA has approved the Constitution amendment late 2015)	2016/11	NASSP	This proposal has been incorporated in the revised RRF and 2016 AWP to be supported by NASSP under Output 3.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 10. Output 3: strengthening dialogue between the NA and citizens. With respect to NASSP's output 3 focus areas, the evaluation team recommends the following: (i) Refining the focus of sub-outputs The evaluation team recommends that NASSP partly re-structure its sub-outputs around specific mechanisms (e.g. Hotline, petitions, NACOs) through which the NA and citizens can engage in dialogue. (ii) Informing the general public It is strongly recommended that NASSP provide support for communicating information to the general public about how citizens can engage with the NA. Ways of doing so could include: developing a more useful "Contact Us" section on the NA's website, providing citizens and others with information on who to contact in the NA with respect to given issues or queries; providing NA's contact cards which explain who to contact with respect to particular issues; establishing a visitor-friendly front desk to help citizens navigate the NA buildings and offices. (iii) Making use of existing information about citizens? concerns The NA Hotline and petitions system potentially provide invaluable information about the kinds of issues that pre-occupy citizens. Why are citizens using the NA Hotline? What issues are citizens submitting petitions about? Providing NA members with information about this should be a good way of keeping them up to date on the types of issue that concern citizens. To do this, however, will require working on improvements to the management of Hotline and petition data, and then working to ensure that such information is made available to NA members. (iv) Working intensively to strengthen NA Constituency Offices The evaluation team strongly recommends that NASSP intensifies its activities at the level of NACOs. Now that NASSP has carried out a full assessment of four NACOs, the project should rapidly develop a pilot strategy of support for NACOs.

Management response: While we (UNDP, SDC) agree with the overall recommendation on the need to incorporate cross-cutting issues such as gender and social inclusion, we need to be cautious with the feasibility of implementing some of the recommendations

mentioned above. Some recommendations such as gender-responsive budgeting may be beyond the control of the project, while others such as the capacity building of female parliamentarians could pose some challenge as the current Legislature is ending in 6 months and the new one will be formed next June.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
10.1 Discuss and explore realistic ways to incorporate cross-cutting issues (in the 2-day WS for the RRF) Important would be to: facilitate, where possible, greater interaction between the NA and civil society organizations that work closely on ethnic minority issues or that work on issues of particular interest to ethnic minorities (such as land, agricultural policy, education).	2015/08	NASSP/UNDP	This proposal has been incorporated in the revised RRF and 2016 AWP to be supported by NASSP under Output 3.	Completed