

UNDP Management Response

Management response to the Midterm Review of Midterm Evaluation Governance and Public Administration Reform - Strengthening Capacity and Service Delivery (GPAR SCSD) And National GPAR Programme Secretariat Support Project (NGPAR)¹

Project Title: Governance and Public Administration Reform - Strengthening Capacity and Service Delivery (GPAR SCSD) and National GPAR Programme Secretariat Support Project (NGPAR)

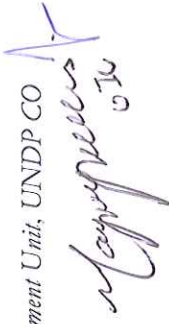
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Context, background and findings

Public administration reform has been a priority activity of the Government of Lao PDR from the early 90's. The GPAR Programme, established in 1997, has been implemented through projects at the national and provincial levels. The focal point for public administration reform is now the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). Given the wide scope of governance reforms, related activities have been taken up in several ministries and offices of the Government, which include the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Planning and Investment. The GPAR Programme provides leadership and guidance for governance reforms and directly supports the high level Leading Committee on Governance, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Strengthening the administrative machinery of the Government to execute the core functions of the state is a key to achieving the country's socio-economic development goals including the MDGs. Under the draft Strategic Plan on Governance 2011-2020 the Government of Lao PDR identified a number of reforms which are reflected in the 7th NSEDP as key areas underpinning the capacity of the state to

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

deliver basic public services. These policy actions focus on developing the state administrative regulatory framework, state machinery, civil service management, and central-local relations. The Government, through the GPAR Programme, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), has made steady and significant progress in developing the foundation for an effective, accountable and responsive public administration. . This is central to consolidating the impressive national development progress already achieved in many areas and ensuring that growth benefits all people in the country and does not harm the environment.

UNDP and UNCDF are the main partner of the Government in developing the GPAR Programme. The Programme draws on UNDP's recognised core mandate in the areas of capacity development, democratic governance and policy development, which synergises with UNCDF's specialized expertise in local development, improved access to social services, investment capital, and fiscal decentralization. Other key partners currently supporting the GPAR programme include, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Republic of Korea, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, European Union, and ADB. The GPAR programme is expanding to accommodate new reform initiatives and currently the overall UNDP support to the Governance Strategic Plan is delivered through 7 projects, as detailed in the Annex. UNDP also serves as the key agency in coordination and dialogue on governance issues through the Round Table process.

While within the National GPAR programme there are a number of projects, the overall purpose this assignment is to assess progress towards achieving expected outcomes, key benefits, achievements and possible gaps in the current GPAR Programme. The specific evaluation targets of this assignment are the two core GPAR projects; - the National GPAR Programme Secretariat Support Project (GPAR NGPS, February 2012- December 2016) and the Strengthening Capacity and Service Delivery of Local Administrations (GPAR SCSD, February 2012 – March 2017).

GPAR-NGPS Project enables the MOHA to coordinate and implement relevant component of the Strategic Plan on Governance (2011-2020). The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of public administration to deliver efficient, effective and accountable services to citizens through high level oversight and leadership, strategic management and support to all components of the national GPAR Programme in Lao PDR. The project helps to coordinate with development partners for policy dialogue through the Governance Sector Working Group, and assists MOHA in resource mobilization to support the NGPAP programme.

GPAR-SCSD project is a joint programme between UNDP and UNCDF, in partnership with MoHA. This project aims to strengthen the capacity in local administration leading to better delivery of services, which improve the lives of the poor, especially in rural areas of Lao PDR. The project aims to strengthen the capacity and service delivery of local administration through 6 inter-related outputs: (i) Policies and regulatory frameworks for effective local administration at provincial and district levels; (ii) Improved capacity of local administration to fulfil its service delivery mandates; (iii) Improved MDG focused service delivery provided through formula-based and equity focused block grants to districts; (iv) Improved Access to Citizen Services through One Door Service Centres; (v) The GPAR Capacity Development and Modernization Fund (CADEM) supports strategic innovations in public administration reforms; and (vi) Citizen feedback and district mechanisms.

The mid-term evaluation was conducted for both GPAR SCSD and NGPS projects in November 2014 to January 2015. The country mission in started in mid-October. The final report is dated January 2015.

Recommendations and management response

Midterm Review recommendation 1. Under National GPAR Programme Secretariat Support Project? (GPAR NGPS) 1.1 The project has enabled the GPAR Secretariat to service various Governance bodies as well as provide, limited but relevant, training and allowed the GPAR Secretariat to draft papers, organize meetings and manage other projects under its responsibility. In the opinion of the Evaluation Mission, a more structured capacity building strategy for GPAR staff should have been envisioned and executed but we recognize the constraints faced. 1.2 Based on the previous GPAR Programme Achievements Report drafted by an external consultant in 2011 recommended scaling up/leverage certain initiatives (Civil Service Human Resources Management System: job descriptions, performance evaluation system, skills inventory etc.) that were developed under the previous phase of the GPAR programme, the Evaluation Mission saw no evidence that this has yet been done, but as can be seen below (refer to initiatives under GPAR SCSD), recommends that the Government and its DPs consider supporting more work along these lines.				
Management response: 1.1 While MOHA and UNDP agree with the evaluation team on introducing a more structure capacity building strategy for GPAR staff, we believe that the NPGAR Secretariat housed at MOHA, whose roles and responsibilities are to facilitate all NPGAR activities, including the Governance Sector Working Group on behalf of the Lao Government must receive the priority to show a strong sense of ownership. The two key below actions have been taken seriously as to respond to this particular recommendation. 1.2 MOHA and UNDP take note of the importance of Civil Service Human Resources Management System as said by a consultant in 2011 and used again by this evaluation team. However, the scope of work under the NGPS cannot expand to Modernized civil service management systems and practices as it focuses on National Programme Secretariat and sector partnerships. Future support to Civil Service Human Resources Management System can be discussed when time permits between the Government and its DPs.				
Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking ²	
			Comments	Status ³
1.1. Identify additional MOHA officials to respond to NPGAR Secretariat work.	2015/06	MoHA	One additional MOHA official under the Department of Planning and Cooperation was appointed to the NPGAR Secretariat to support the team in responding to the overall NPGAR and GSWG activities. This appointment was announced at the NPGAR Programme monthly	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.

				meeting held on 3 July 2015 with UNDP representative attending.	
1.2. Bring in an International volunteer, who has strong experience in communicating and reporting. He/she will assist MOHA, NNGPAR Secretariat in particular, in developing a strategic communication activity to enhance awareness, convergence of understanding on the potential, role and scope of the GSWG and governance reforms. GPAR staff supporting NNGPAR Secretariat will benefit from this recruitment as well.	2015/12	MoHA and UNDP	UNV on board since Q4 2015 for 9 months.	Completed	

Midterm Review recommendation 2. Under GPAR Service Delivery of Local Administrations (GPAR SCSD)

2.1 The Capacity Development and Modernization Fund (CADEM) Fund which has very limited resources, was used for very short term training on very basic skills, in a very wide geographic context and covering many subjects. While there seemed to be a reasonable level of satisfaction with CADEM activities on the part of the officials that were behind the EOIs, given all of the above the mission was not convinced that these activities will make a substantial contribution to Governance in Laos. All of this leads to believe training may have limited impact and sustainability.

2.2 None of the One Door Service Centres (ODSCs) are fully operational or provide uniform, coordinated services. They have no budget, no power to approve locally even the most menial of requests, few or no computers, and no trained staff. No standard fee table, valid across the country, exists for the services they are supposed to provide. Therefore, the impact of the ODSCs to date is practically non-existent. The Mission attributes this to a civil service culture of compartmentalization by various Ministries that guard control over their services as well as protects income derived from fees. HOWEVER, the Evaluation Mission coincides fully with the view expressed to it by the Head of the GPAR Secretariat that the concept of the ODSC is a very important one that needs to be piloted again in a more restrained geographic environment.

2.3 The DDF has been and continues to be a very worthwhile investment. Its approach has proven that given a decentralization of untied resources and appropriate training, it is possible to carry out successfully a fully participatory planning model at the district level. However, the Evaluation Mission feels it is time to tie it to other related efforts in the country with a view to scaling up both financially and substantively. To do this, the mission suggests also complementing the model with the introduction of other potential development partners such as local civil society organizations, public/private partnership initiatives and others.

Management response:

2.1 MOHA and UNDP acknowledge that CADEM Fund has very limited resources, was used for very short term training on very basic skills, in a very wide geographic context and covering many subjects. However, this small fund has helped to reduce the burden of the Government in responding to many of administrative practices for local and village level and has helped to increase project management skills. Hence, MOHA and UNDP do not fully agree with the evaluation team on their comment that they are not convinced CADEM will make a substantial contribution to Governance in Laos. MOHA and UNDP view that the fund does provide a useful mechanism to support demand driven innovation designed to strengthen public services. Hence, both organizations will continue this concept of local development in their future collaboration BUT to provide a clearer focus rather than make it available in a very wide geographic context.

2.2 We partly agree with the evaluation team finding that the ODSCs are not fully operational due to some constraints, such as no budget, no power to approve locally. GPAR SCSD as well as the previous GPAR has helped to raise these issues, especially capacity development to those providing services at the ODSCs. Thus, the “no trained staff” as claimed by the evaluators are not correct. However, both MOHA and UNDP have agreed to conduct an analysis of implementation and operations of ODSCs and then identify an Action Plan.

2.3 We fully agree with the evaluation team suggestion.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Re-design the CADEM fund into a more focus area in the new Project Concept and Project Document	2015/12	MoHA and UNDP	N/A	Completed
2.2. Develop a TOR to bring in International/regional expert to conduct an analysis of implementation and operations of ODSCs, identifying strength and weak points, and core issues that affect the operation of ODSCs.	2015/09	MoHA and UNDP	Advertisement was put on local UNDP website and newspaper. Also, it was put up on UNDP global website. The deadline for EOI was 7 Oct 2015.	Completed
2.3 Design the new Project concept/Project document with more involvement of Civil Society/Citizen Engagement and try to establish the private sector collaboration.	2015/12	MoHA and UNDP	The new initiative is designed to unlock the flow of domestic capital to finance small and medium-sized infrastructure projects needed to accelerate local economic and private sector development.	Completed

Midterm Review recommendation 3. Cross cutting issues observations

3.1 There is no coherent gender and ethnic equity strategy in the NGPAR program (both NGPA and SCSD). NGPAR should invest in solid technical support on gender and ethnicity mainstreaming to mentor the GPAR secretariat and facilitate gender affirmative actions within CADEM, DDF and ODSC. It should also mobilize partnerships with parallel gender mainstreaming initiatives such as with the Public Administration Research and Training Institute (PARTI) and the MoHA Sub-CAW, which have a conducted a self-assessment survey of gender needs in MoHA, developed a Strategy for Gender in Public Administration, developed a training module and manual on Gender Mainstreaming and validate this in a training of GAD trainers. It should also involve the Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs of MoHA in developing capacities and tools for ethnic sensitivity, so that field projects can benefit diverse ethnic groups more equitably.

Management response: 3.1. Although GPAR NGPS and SCSD were not designed to be gender focused initiatives, women and ethnic groups are automatically be co-participants and co-beneficiaries of infrastructure projects (e.g. health centers, school buildings, irrigation projects, drinking water supply, roads) that are set-up in their respective villages. MOHA and UNDP very much like to take into account this observation and will try our best in addressing gender and ethnic equity in the upcoming design.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Develop a more gender and ethnic equity into the new project concept note and Project Document. The involvement of women and ethnic population in consultation forum should be clearly explicit.	2017/06	MoHA and UNDP	This will be further developed during the inception phase of the new GID project to be conducted in the beginning of 2017	Completed