



The Government of The Gambia/United Nations Development Programme

The First Year of Implementation of the Country Programme (2007-2011)

Report of An Independent Assessment

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	iii
List of Acronyms	iv
1. Introduction	1
The Assignment	1
What the Report Covers	1
2. An Overview of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP	2
3. Main Finding	4
Assessment of Achievements and Progress	4
Constraints and Challenges	7
4. Recommendations	14
5. Conclusion	17
6. List of Annexes	
Annex 1:Terms of Reference	19
Annex 2:List of Person Met	21
Annex 3:Matrix summarising the Implementation Status of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP	23

Executive Summary

This report presents the main findings and recommendations of an independent assessment of the first year of implementation of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP of The Gambia. The assessment was aimed at identifying early lessons and to make recommendations to improve implementation performance.

Overall, the study concluded that performance had been positive and notable progress had been made in terms of UNDP human resources and systems, programme performance and partnership and resource mobilization. Modest achievements have also been registered with respect to UNDP operations and business practices. The progress realized took place in a difficult and challenging transition context arising from a comprehensive re-profiling exercise launched at the time of the initiation of the CPD.

The assessment however, revealed significant weaknesses and challenges, some of which are endemic, particularly in terms of UNDPs business practices and procedures and programme integration. If unaddressed these weaknesses risk to seriously undermine the results and impact of the CPD/CPAP.

The study makes a number of recommendations, in particular in three areas: (i) UNDP to streamline procedures and move rapidly and unreservedly to adopt and fully implement the HACT; (ii) Consolidation of the programme approach by building linkages and synergies between programme activities based on the CPD/CPAP outcomes. This entails a refocusing of programme activities to build a more integrated programme; (iii) Strengthen government leadership and coordination role.

The assessment concludes that a solid foundation had been laid for full and effective implementation of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP.

List of Acronyms

AATG	-	Action Aid The Gambia
APRM	-	Annual Programme Review Meeting
ATM	-	Automatic Teller Machine
AWP	-	Annual Work Plan
BCPR	-	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)
CCA	-	Common Country Assessment
CCF	-	Country Cooperation Framework
CO	-	Country Office
CPAP	-	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	-	Country Programme Document
CSOs	-	Civil Society Organisations
CSR	-	Civil Service Reform
CTA	-	Chief Technical Advisor
DFID	-	Department for International Development
DOSFEA	-	Department of State for Finance & Economic Affairs
EU	-	European Union
FACE	-	Fund Authorisation and Certificate of Expenditure
GEF	-	Global Environment Facility
GFTAM	-	Global Fund for Tuberculosis, AIDS & Malaria
HACT	-	Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfer
HQ	-	Headquarters
HR	-	Human Resources
ICDL	-	International Certified Driving License
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology
IEC	-	Independent Electoral Commission
IP	-	Implementing Partner
IT	-	Information Technology
LPAC	-	Local Project Appraisal Committee
M&E	-	Monitoring & Evaluation
MCT	-	Management Consulting Team
MDG	-	Millennium Development Goal
MoU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	-	National Assembly
NAS	-	National Aid Secretariat
NEA	-	National Environment Agency
NEAP	-	National Employment Action Plan
NEX	-	National Execution
NPC	-	National Planning Commission
OIST	-	Office of Information & System Technology
OP	-	Office of The President
PLWHA	-	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PMU	-	Project Management Unit
PO	-	Purchase Order
PRODOCS	-	Project Documents
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RACDF	-	Rapid Policy/Advisory and Capacity Development Facility
RCA	-	Results and Competency Assessment
RR/RC	-	Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator

RTC	-	Round Table Conference
ToR	-	Terms of Reference
ToT	-	Training of Trainers
TRAC	-	Target Resource assignment from the Core
UN	-	United Nations
UNDAF	-	United Nations Development Assistants Framework
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	-	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	-	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	-	United Nations Childrens Fund
UNIFEM	-	United Nations Fund for Women
UNV	-	United Nations Volunteer
VP	-	Vice President

1. Introduction

The Gambia government and the UNDP Country Office signed the Country Programme Document (CPD) in November 2006, which outlines the country's development priorities to be supported by UNDP during the period 2007 – 2011. The CPD is firmly anchored against The Gambia's second generation MDG-based PRSP, and is focused on creating an enabling policy environment and framework for implementing pro-poor growth, and deepening the democratic processes by establishing a system of transparency and accountability at national and local levels.

An Annual Programme Review Meeting (APRM) is organised between the Country Office and its key implementing partners at the beginning of each year to assess progress and identify priorities. In this context, UNDP has commissioned an independent and rapid assessment of the 1st year of the implementation of the CPD with a view to incorporating the lessons learnt early into the 2007-2011 programming cycle. This is a critical and timely step in view of the recent successful holding of the Round Table Conference (RTC) on The Gambia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2007-2011 (PRSP II). The launch of the Country Programme in 2007 also coincided with a comprehensive re-profiling of the UNDP Country office, an exercise that has had a significant impact on the start-up of the programme.

The Assignment

The main objective of the assignment is to conduct a rapid assessment of the first year of implementation of the CPD, paying particular attention to capacity development activities, and providing recommendations as to how to improve implementation performance for the attainment of the CPD outcomes (see Annex 1 for detailed ToR).

The assessment entailed a review of the capacities of the Country Office, as well as counterpart national institutions, and involved the following activities:

- Review of relevant documents, including the CPD and CPAP, work plans and budgets for 2007, as well as progress reports covering the same period;
- Discussions with staff of the Country Office; and
- Discussions with key government officials and other national implementing partners.

See Annex 2 for the list of persons met.

What the Report Covers

The report presents the key findings and recommendations of the assessment in the following sections:

- Section II: presents an overview of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP;
- Section III: presents the main findings of the rapid assessment;
- Section IV: presents the key recommendations.

The report is not an evaluation of the UNDP Country Office nor of the Implementing Partners, and given the scope, duration and purpose of the assignment, it is also not an in-depth capacity assessment exercise.

The UNDP Country Office underwent an extensive re-profiling exercise in 2007. Undertaken the same year as the start-up of the Country Programme, the re-profiling has had a major impact on the operations of the Country Office and influenced in various ways the start-up and implementation of the Country Programme. This assessment however, did not specifically set out to review directly and in depth the re-profiling exercise.

2. An Overview of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP

The UNDP Country Programme 2007-2011 was developed out of a broad-based consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including Government, Civil Society, Development Partners, Private Sector and United Nations organizations. Reflecting the development priorities of the country, the programme takes into account the long-term strategy and Vision “2020” of The Gambia, and draws upon the CCA and UNDAF. The CPD is fully synchronized with The Gambia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2007-2011 (PRSP II), which is the first phase of a nine-year MDG-based integrated national development planning framework aimed at ensuring that The Gambia is on the path to achieving the MDGs by 2015.

Programmatic Focus and Areas of Support

The 2007-2011 CPD has two main pillars: (i) Poverty Reduction and Achieving the MDGs; and (ii) Governance and Human Rights. These were further developed and elaborated upon in the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) into several support areas.

The Poverty Reduction and the MDGs pillar focuses on the following seven (7) areas of support:

- *MDG-based Poverty Reduction Strategy* aimed at developing a costed MDG-based PRS and integration of MDGs into sector strategies;
- *National Planning Commission and Aid Coordination Management*, aimed at streamlining planning systems, facilitating aid coordination and resource mobilization;
- *Independent Think Tank*, to provide independent research, analysis and advisory services for use by policy makers to strengthen evidence-based planning systems in support of the MDGs;
- *Implementation of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP)*, aimed at strengthening the capacity of relevant public and private institutions to engender pro-poor economic development;
- *Rapid Policy/Advisory and Capacity Building Facility*, as a flexible and rapid response mechanism to assist the country acquire technical assistance, advisory services and strengthen institutional capacities;
- *Strengthened Role of Local Communities and Women in Promoting Sustainable Environmental Management*, by mainstreaming environmental activities into national and local development policies and strategies; and
- *Disaster Preparedness System Established*, aimed at mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and mitigation and building preparedness capacity at national and local levels.

The Governance and Human Rights pillar focuses on the following thirteen (13) areas of support:

- *Local Government Strengthening*, to enhance human resources and systems to effectively improve local government structures for planning, fiscal management and efficient service delivery;
- *Enhanced Public and Civil Society Participation at Local Level*, aimed at building the capacity of non-state actors;
- *Civil Service Reform*, aimed at contributing to the development of a sustainable and professional civil service;
- *Participation of Women in Decision-making*, aimed at enhancing the participation and capacities of women at all levels of decision-making;
- *Implementation of the National Women’s Policy*, to ensure the mainstreaming of gender into national and sectoral policies and build related capacities;
- *Strengthened Capacity of Mass Media to promote Human Rights and Good Governance*, aimed at building the capacity of the mass media;
- *Establishment of Human Rights Commission*, aimed at institutionalizing respect for Human Rights;
- *Improved Access to Justice by the poor*, through support for the establishment of legal aid clinics;

- *Enhanced Institutional capacity of NAS and National Network of PLWHA*, aimed at enhancing coordination and strengthening advocacy;
- *GFTAM Country Coordination Mechanism Enhanced*, to enable effective utilization of GFTAM resources;
- *HIV/AIDS Workplace Code of Ethics*, entailing the formulation of a code of ethics;
- *Capacity of IEC Strengthened*, to ensure the conduct of efficient, transparent, free and fair elections; and
- *Effective participation of CSOs in Electoral Process*, aimed at strengthening civil society participation in the electoral process.

As can be seen from the above, the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP seeks to provide support in some 20 areas, which effectively translates into twenty project activities, clustered into the following seven outcomes of the CPAP:

- MDG-based pro-poor policies developed and partnerships enhanced to achieve MDGs;
- Environmental and disaster prevention and mitigation concerns mainstreamed into national and local development policies;
- Improved capacity for the implementation of local government legislation and policies;
- Improved opportunity for gender equality and integration of gender into development strategies and actions;
- Human Rights protection and promotion initiatives mainstreamed into national policies and strategies;
- Enhanced national capacity to mainstream and sustain national HIV/AIDS policies and interventions; and
- Strengthened key governance institutions and sustainable and transparent electoral processes and systems enhanced to sustain democratic governance.

In addition, the Country Office is implementing a number of activities that do not fall specifically within the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP. These concern several ongoing projects from the previous CCF and/new projects of a regional nature, but which present opportunities for resource mobilization (e.g. the following: GEF/Small Grants Programme; Indigenous Livestock Project).

Programme Management Arrangements and Commitments of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP

The 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP makes several provisions with respect to programme management and implementation modalities, and includes a number of commitments as follows:

- Government to provide leadership, and that as Government coordinating authority, the Secretary Generals' Office to provide overall leadership and guidance for the CPAP, while DOSFEA to provide support for resource mobilization;
- Government institutions and agencies, at both national and local levels, to take a more proactive role to create an environment conducive to the implementation of the CPAP;
- Implementation of the UN reform agenda as a critical requirement for the success of the CPAP. This requires the introduction of new approaches to partnerships and resource transfer mechanisms such as the HACT;
- Monitoring and evaluation in line with the UNDAF results matrix and setting up the necessary M&E mechanisms, tools and conducting reviews;
- A number of commitments by UNDP and Government, the most salient of which include the following: (i) TRAC resources of \$5.022 million and additional resources of \$6.5 million to be mobilized over the plan period; (ii) commitment, in the case of direct cash transfer/reimbursement or direct payment to vendors, to disburse within 30 days; (iii) undertake jointly or coordinate programme monitoring, financial monitoring and auditing where more than one UN agency provides cash to the

same IP; and (iv) the utilization of a standard Fund Authorization and Certificate of Expenditure (FACE) to request release of funds or to report on use of such funds.

- The programme will be nationally executed under the overall coordination of the Secretary General, Office of The President.

The rapid assessment examines the extent to which these programme management arrangements are in place, as well as the extent to which the commitments are being fulfilled.

It is important to highlight the fact that the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP is markedly different from the 2002-2006 CCF with respect to programme implementation modality. The 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP is characterized by an almost 100% turn-around from CTA/Agency execution that marked the past CCF (2002-2006) to national execution. This potentially implies more cost-savings, releasing more resources for programming and enhanced opportunities for a further strengthening of national capacities.

3. The Main Findings

The main findings of the rapid assessment are grouped into two broad categories: (i) Achievements and progress; and (ii) Constraints and challenges. The assessment looked at capacity issues, particularly in terms of human resources/skills, organizational processes and the overall institutional environment. The findings under each of the two categories are discussed under five headings as follows:

- UNDP capacities in terms of human resources and systems in place;
- Programming aspects;
- UNDP Operations and Business Practices;
- Partnerships, Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization; and
- Implementing Partners.

Given the nature of the relationship between UNDP as funder and the Implementing Partners as recipients of that funding, it is evident that UNDP procedures, systems and business practices have a far greater influence on the rhythm, direction and effectiveness of programme activities. More attention is therefore devoted to assessing these systems and processes. In any event, and in line with the UN reform Agenda and the Paris Declaration Principles, development partners have an obligation to make greater efforts to ensure that their systems and procedures are aligned with country systems rather than the reverse. This commitment should be reflected in how country cooperation programmes are formulated and implemented.

3.1 Assessment of Achievements and Progress

The overall picture of the 1st year of implementation of the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP is a positive one, especially given the fact that the UNDP Country Office, because of the re-profiling exercise, was simultaneously undergoing major changes during 2007, in terms of its structures, systems, staffing and equipment. Against this backdrop, the targets for 2007 appeared ambitious but much has been achieved. This is all the more significant given the fact that most of the new staff only started in the second half of the year and many new projects were only signed as of July 2007. In addition, for almost 12 months UNDP has operated without a fulltime Resident Representative.

In general, UNDP continues to be perceived in favorable light, with many partners pointing to its key assets of neutrality (“no turf to protect”) and responsiveness to government priorities, particularly in terms of addressing gaps other development partners may be unwilling or unable to support. There is however,

recognition that these assets would be meaningless if not matched by a well integrated and results-focused programme and good business practices and operational procedures.

For several of the partners, UNDP is now seen to be making greater efforts to respond to the needs of clients, with more consultations, a greater willingness to listen and more regular contacts and visits to the offices of IPs. This is seen as a positive development when compared to UNDP's past attitude of "take it or leave it".

UNDP Capacities - Human Resources and Systems

Human Resources

A major objective of the re-profiling exercise was to enhance substantive capacities of the UNDP Country Office for policy dialogue and to improve programme impact. The exercise has had some positive effects – the staff in place are in general of a sufficiently high caliber and adequate to the task. Thus the level of professionalism and competence has reportedly improved. There is improved interaction and access to senior government officials (including at the highest level – the Office of the Vice President, the Speaker of National Assembly, etc) – as well as interactions with civil society and, to a limited extent, the private sector. The new staff have apparently established good networks that will prove beneficial to the programme. Overall, there is a sense that the new staff have "hit the ground running", despite the fact that there was limited time to sufficiently orient them on UNDP Business practices. When compared to the past, UNDP staff are handling bigger portfolios, thus increasing the staff/portfolio ratio, although there are complaints that the workload has increased and the office has to revert to interns and consultants to ensure that critical programme development tasks are fulfilled. There is also a sense of increased delegation to staff and the feeling that management is more receptive to new ideas. The view was frequently expressed that staff are given a degree of independence to exercise responsibility, and to "run with it". At the level of programme associates, a higher level of qualification is noted which if nurtured can contribute to improved programme effectiveness and quality. Overall, it can be expected that the staff in place will perform well once the situation stabilizes. A key challenge however, is how to sustain this asset. Efforts would be required to strengthen and empower staff (plans are reportedly afoot to declare 2008 staff empowerment year and actions envisaged include: training, new equipment; staff recognition policy beyond RCA; life-work balance; etc), and ensure that the environment and staff are service oriented and results-driven.

The UNDP Country Office has taken commendable steps to further strengthen staff capacities, including the institutionalization of bi-weekly learning sessions and facilitating a number of staff to go on training. The bi-weekly learning sessions held on Wednesdays and Fridays of every week have proved useful in the absence of the structured induction of new staff. It is reported that a more structured training plan based on the 2008 RCAs will be developed and implemented soon.

Systems

The UNDP Country office is making some efforts to systematize planning. Instruments for planning and work management are being put in place, with the new CPD/CPAP as the cornerstone, complemented by an annual programme review meeting held for the first time in 2007. Previous review meetings tended to be limited to an assessment of past activities with little forward planning, and were mostly restricted to consultations with the Office of the President. The current process aims to be open to all partners, and be rigorous. Internally within the UNDP Country Office, there are weekly programme, operations and management meetings with structured agendas and minutes are kept. All staff of the office also meet once monthly. These internal meetings have been found useful by new staff as it has helped them "get up to

speed” on new developments and to share information. Overall, information flow within the office is reported to be improving but still needs further work.

Staff have sufficient facilities to perform their tasks, with the office investing in a major way in new systems and equipment upgrades, placing the office on a higher technology platform and an improved working environment. The estimated cost of investments in systems and facilities amounts to US\$35-40,000 (to purchase new computers, office furniture, vehicles and security-related items) in 2007. Specifically in IT, all staff now have a new computer or one compatible with OIST standards. Software has also been standardized where previously there was no standardization and indeed some may have been illegally installed.

Programming Aspects

The country programme was successfully initiated in 2007 despite many difficulties related to the recruitment and orientation of new staff. A number of quality projects, based on broad stakeholder consultations and buy-in, have been developed. In the past, UNDP was reportedly noted for developing PRODOCS on its own with Government simply being requested to approve. The consultative process has resulted in some delays (projects were only signed in July 2007) but this has to be balanced against the gains in enhanced project quality and greater buy-in.

Moreover, there has also been delivery of specific results in some projects. For example, the Elections project saw the first CSO participation in elections in The Gambia which previously had been a clearly sensitive matter. Several old projects are being closed or the focus shifted (e.g. HIV/Aids from upstream to down-stream grassroots activities with more direct and positive impacts). Examples of UNDP influencing policy development is provided by the work on natural disaster reduction, representing the type of positive and upstream impact at the core of UNDP’s mandate.

Another area worth noting is UNDP’s enhanced role during 2007 to facilitate dialogue and provide “soft assistance”, as exemplified by the preparatory support for the Round Table Conference (RTC) on The Gambia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (PRSP II), and the Civil Service Reform initiative. Indeed, the early development of a proposal to support CSR and the early securing of funding provided Government an opportunity to kick-start such a critical process. This type of “soft assistance” has made important contributions and proved valuable in building good working relationships that go beyond project/programme interventions.

UNDP has introduced innovative programme modalities in some areas. For example, the setting up of a Project Management Board for the RACDF project is described by concerned partners as an innovative mechanism that allows for joint decision-making with stakeholders, eliminating animosities, etc. Similarly, the proposal to set up a Board to spearhead CSR efforts will enhance government leadership and coordinate efforts in an area of critical strategic interest to government. For the first-time, small HIV/Aids support groups are receiving direct support from UNDP which is deemed, by the partners concerned, as a welcome development. However, such developments should represent a real policy shift and not motivated by a desire to improve delivery rates and quickly disburse funds at the end of a particular programme year.

Operational Issues & Business Practices

The UNDP Country Office has taken some significant steps to improve its business practices, which is being gradually felt. These however, need to be consolidated, be more systematic and reliable, and not done on an ad hoc basis or reserved for certain partners only. Several partners pointed to a more

transparent and inclusive recruitment process, although the delays have been specifically singled out for criticism.

The office has registered some notable progress in improving its operations and was recently included in the UNDP Comptroller's "Acclaim List" for the first time, signifying that operations have been certified as 100% financially transparent, complying with all financial requirements of the organization, and that all unregistered and un-reconciled payments have been cleared.

Partnerships, Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization

Improved donor relations is reflected in a highly successful resource mobilization effort during 2007, with cost sharing resources of over US\$3.0 million being raised, the highest on record in the last 3-4 years, and greater than available TRAC resources for the year. This is more than 50% of the resource mobilization target for the entire programme cycle. As a consequence, UNDP has built a significant portfolio, resulting in a 2008 programme that will be much larger than the one for 2007. Also noteworthy is the fact that Government is contributing in a significant way, for the first time, to cost-sharing (US\$ 100,000 to GAMJOBS).

In terms of donor relations, partners such as DFID have expressed appreciation regarding the role played by UNDP, including in the Elections "Basket Fund" arrangement, and are open to further collaboration based on the same approach in other areas - DFID and EU have both reportedly expressed interest in the same approach for supporting CSR. Such initiatives should be consolidated and maintained to enable UNDP to "punch above its weight". According to the IEC (which is very pleased with the results obtained), the "Basket fund", although representing only about 25% of the total resources for funding elections, helped the IEC to successfully organize Presidential, Parliamentary and Local government elections, as the inputs needed were provided in a timely manner.

Another welcome development is UNDP's closer working relationship with Civil Society Organizations, although this entails a learning process for both parties. There is a notable and positive shift in the broadening of the IP-base with more collaboration with CSOs than before, and several MoUs have been signed with partners. UNDP is also in the process of developing strategic partnerships with a number of organizations (e.g. discussions are underway with CONCERN Universal to develop a long-term partnership).

Overall, 2007 saw enhanced consultations with partners and stakeholders and strengthened partnerships, reflected in the first meeting with all IPs held in December 2007 to be followed by a broadened APRM which will institute stakeholder involvement going beyond the traditional consultations with only the Office of The President.

3.2 Constraints and Challenges Identified

Despite the positive progress registered, UNDP faced a confluence of challenges in 2007, many of which are endemic. These challenges and constraints undermine the image of UNDP and distract from the many solid contributions the organization is making and should be addressed decisively. The year 2007 proved to be a particularly challenging context as among other factors, a different team was tasked with implementation other than the one which was involved in the formulation of the CPD, the RTC preparations took much staff time, and finally new projects had to be designed and approved and old ones closed at the same time.

UNDP Capacities – Human Resources and Systems

While, as has been noted, the UNDP Country Office now has capable staff, output has been impeded by a challenging transition period. For example, handing-over to new staff was in many cases almost non-existent as nearly all old staff had left (and with it much “institutional memory”), and documentation was a major issue (a poor filing system, obliging staff to at times refer to their counterparts in government for critical documents!).

The induction of new UNDP staff has been cited by nearly all concerned as a major issue; a situation exacerbated by the fact that the Human Resources specialist, was also new to UNDP. Staff had to “feel their way through” because of the inadequate induction. Efforts made by the office to deploy short-term assistance while commendable, proved inadequate given the scale and scope of work required. The resulting situation was that you had new staff who are relatively strong on substance but weak on corporate procedures and processes, a critical gap when new programmes were being designed and rolled-out. Although some staff have taken the initiative to take mandatory courses such as ICDL, ATLAS, basic security training online, this means time taken away from performing critical programming tasks. New staff have the substantive background needed to do the work but lack experiences in UNDP business practices and that currently appears to be the main bottleneck to improved performance. This must be addressed quickly as it is taking valuable time off strategic issues. The fact that the office simply did not close is a tribute to their resourcefulness and willingness to engage in self-learning. Learning by doing also played a vital part, supported by older colleagues and online learning resources. While training activities are being undertaken, these were generally ad hoc (the office responding to opportunities) and appear to be unplanned.

The recruitment of programme associates in the UNDP is a welcome development but their roles are not clearly understood nor standardized; there is a tension between playing, on the one hand, a substantive role in programme development and management activities, and on the other, assuming responsibility for the nitty-gritty of project management. While the former role is desirable, the primary function should be on providing project management support, as this will free programme specialists to pursue more strategic tasks. This is particularly important given the potentially larger portfolios arising from resource mobilization successes in 2007. It is of course understood that when opportunity and time permit, the programme associates should be encouraged and given the opportunity to increasingly assume more substantive roles in programme development and management.

The re-profiling exercise entailed structural changes meant to create a flatter structure to improve decision-making and enhance staff initiative. However, this has still not yet fully yielded the desired results. This can be attributed, among other things, to the newness of staff, the fact that no cohesive team has been built yet, and no clarity on respective roles and no common set of agreed results. This weakness needs to be remedied so that all the advantages of a flat structure over a more hierarchical one are realized.

With respect to planning and decision-making the perception is that the office is reactive, that activities are fragmented and compartmentalized and the focus is still too much on outputs and inputs. The cross-fertilization between the two programme clusters is weak notwithstanding the weekly programme meetings. There is improved information flow but this has not yet sufficiently enhanced internal planning, which is described as ad hoc (plans are made but usually overtaken by events) and corporate HQ-driven rather than a planning based on partner needs and the realities on the ground. More realistic planning targets are also needed. The weekly management meetings while commendable are reported to be too focused on operational issues rather than on strategic programmatic matters. The relationship between programme and operations is not working well as there are no regular consultations and operations hardly attend the programme meetings - since the beginning of year there have been no joint meetings. Because

of this gap, management meetings become the forum for addressing operational matters rather than strategic issues.

An area of concern noted by partners is that UNDP management often communicates with fairly senior government officials through what the latter deem as junior staff which leads to the “clouding” of the message. This is especially important in a context where staff are new and not familiar with either UNDP or government procedures.

While notable progress has been made with respect to systems upgrading, it appears that in the area of IT, the systems among the various UN agencies are not harmonized making it difficult for the ICT focal points to fill-in for each other. An effort is being made to set up a committee but progress is reportedly slow.

Programming Aspects

Weaknesses observed with respect to programming aspects relate to both the substantive aspects and process related matters.

Substantive aspects

These relate to the following:

- A weak programme approach leading to fragmentation and proliferation of projects;
- Proliferation of PMUs which are poorly integrated within the structures of the IPs;
- Weak programme monitoring and oversight and lack of M&E systems;
- Absence of joint programming with other sister UN agencies despite several opportunities.

The CPD identifies two programme clusters – poverty and achieving the MDGs, and governance and human rights. At the operational level however, this potentially translates into some 20 support areas or projects in the CPAP. The end result is that instead of a tightly focused programme, UNDP in effect has a slew of projects under each pillar which have no systematic linkages; they apparently have been designed and are largely being implemented as stand-alone project activities. The impression created is that although UNDP has two programme clusters, at partner level this is splintered into several disjointed projects which are un-related and poorly connected. This situation appears to be a repeat of a major critique of the past CCF. Furthermore, many projects tend to be small, and there is also a perception that there is a steady increase in project portfolios not directly related to the 20 support areas in the CPAP, adversely affecting the visibility, coherence and impact of the CPD. Some of the new projects being implemented are sub-regional initiatives which although presenting resource mobilization opportunities (e.g. GEF) have the risk of introducing further proliferation of unlinked projects. Given these concerns, efforts should be made to ensure that the advantages of a programmatic approach, designed to reduce the burden of small disjointed projects lacking strategic focus, are not lost. Admittedly, some efforts are being made but programme units should meet more regularly to create synergies between projects, to reflect on emerging priorities, to track and monitor implementation and address larger strategic issues, including contributions to office goals. Development of cluster work plans must go beyond identifying project activities to efforts to build the necessary synergies and linkages. A related down-side to the proliferation of projects is that not enough time is set aside to network with partners and donors, as staff time is taken up by managing many small projects rather than concentrating on a few key programmes with sufficient resources to have the needed impact. A related problem to note is the “baggage” from past projects interfering with the new country programme; there is an urgent need to break with the past CCF, so that energies and attention are fully devoted to the implementation of the new CPD.

The modality of project implementation, in particular the proliferation of PMUs (set up for nearly each project activity), raises serious questions with respect to their cost-effectiveness and impact on capacity building as these PMUs rarely survive beyond a project life time. In some cases, the cost of the PMU consumes much of the project resources leaving fewer resources for the substantive activities. There is an urgent need to consolidate these PMUs and ensure that they are fully aligned within the structures of IPs and that they contribute in a credible manner to the building of capacity of national institutions. A related issue is the fact that there is also a high cost of external expertise in projects (see NA project of \$ 150,000). There is a perceived over-reliance on outside expertise when local talent could be used; the former is not only costly but is also leading to delays in getting projects started.

Project monitoring and oversight is currently weak and there is no discernable M&E system in place for the Country Programme. Staff of both UNDP and IPs did not get up to speed on ensuring project assurance (monitoring, oversight, risk management). This needs to improve during 2008. Hopefully, with further training of programme staff during 2008 this weakness would be taken care of.

A major plank of the UN reform agenda is joint programming among UN agencies to create synergies, reduce duplication and lessen the burden on national systems. While the CCA/UNDAF, as well as the 2007-2011 CPD identifies several opportunities for joint programming, so far linkages and networking with sister UN-agencies is very limited. A case in point is the Women's Bureau which is receiving assistance from four UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNIFEM). These agencies all support similar activities such as capacity building/training activities, but are not only failing to link up their assistance but follow different modalities of programme implementation (UNDP vs. others). UNDP needs to take leadership in moving more aggressively to promote joint programming.

Process related matters

The main process related weakness is the considerable delay experienced in starting up implementation – see Annex 3 for an overview of the implementation status of projects. The delays in project start-up have been considerable which has affected progress during 2007. In many cases the setting up of PMU, the first line of action in getting a project going, is still not complete, leaving project management responsibility to UNDP staff. There is a need to give priority to such critical first steps.

Partners have pointed to additional weaknesses which relate to the following: (i) activities that were not part of an agreed work plan are sometimes funded - changes in programmatic direction need to be fully discussed and agreed; (ii) many of the agreed actions are rather short-term in nature and there is a need to formulate coherent long-term support rather than a piece-meal approach; (iii) programmes are agreed and resources committed, yet UNDP may not have those available which makes planning difficult (e.g. GAMJOBS).

Operational Issues & Business Practices

Almost unanimously, partners continue to lament what they perceived as “cumbersome UNDP procedures” and the “lack of flexibility” - a feeling that undue emphasis is placed on strict interpretation of rules and procedures to the detriment of results; these are criticisms leveled in the past by partners on UNDP operations. The general perception is that UNDP is committed to doing good but, this is not matched by its existing capacities and business practices. Business practices are characterized by partners as long and confusing for what are relatively small amounts of funding. It is frequent to hear UNDP procedures being labeled as “cumbersome and time wasting”. As was succinctly put by one IP “*they (i.e. UNDP) say that they are fighting poverty yet it takes so much time and paper work to process things that by the time you get to the grassroots, things have changed*”. Operational bottlenecks seem to be compounded by lack of clear communication. Problems associated with the business practices of UNDP

at the partner level are also worsened by the fact that many IPs have to deal with multiple donors, often with different procedures and requirements for fund disbursement and reporting. In fairness though, it should be stated that a tightening of management procedures is often perceived as more bureaucracy by some IPs less used to “checks and balances”. However, partners have stressed that “accountability works both ways” – for UNDP and IPs equally. While a confluence of factors (a new programme, new UNDP staff, new project staff, new operations staff) have combined to make 2007 a particularly challenging year, many of the observations on UNDP business practices are not new. The operations unit has generally competent staff who are able to discharge their functions. The challenges therefore do not seem to lie with staff capacities as such but rather with the systems and processes in place to conduct business.

The slow delivery of project inputs, especially recruitment, has come in for special criticism, which it is felt are due to unjustified delays by UNDP. After a year of operations for the new CPD, there are still many projects that are not fully staffed. The lack of project coordinators effectively means that UNDP assumes the role of project management which is inefficient and places the organization in the uncomfortable situation. For some projects, although the PRODOCs were signed in July, it has not been possible to set up the PMUs due to “technicalities” (a euphemism for bureaucratic bottlenecks); as of now, six project coordinators are yet to be recruited. Operational bottlenecks are often ironically followed by an end-of-year rush to spend in order to improve delivery which tends to undermine quality (e.g. 2006).

The consequences of the shortcomings in UNDP business practices are being felt both at the level of the implementing partners and internally within the organization. Perceptions of operational rigidity have resulted in UNDP being compared less favorably with other donors (e.g. Action Aid “*they are more interested in impact and once they have confidence in you, they move fast*”). It is stated that UNDP by allowing “bad performers” to determine how they interact with IPs is penalizing good performers. In a few cases, it has been reported that operational bottlenecks have resulted in some IP pre-financing UNDP project activities, and ending up experiencing difficulties in getting reimbursed. Operational delays cascade beyond project management to whole sectors and beneficiaries as programme and operations are closely intertwined, influence and impact on each other; there is an inherent link between organizational effectiveness and development effectiveness. Such bottlenecks can be particularly injurious to new and young institutions (e.g. NPC) which need to quickly demonstrate results, relevance and credibility.

Because of cumbersome procedures some partners state that they are at times reluctant to work with UNDP as the projects are small when compared to other donors but place an unnecessary and high burden on them to manage. UNDP has been compared unfavorably with, for example, the Global Fund whose activities are characterized as “time-bound and performance-based”. UNDP is also perceived as less obliging than other agencies – reason given for the Department for Water Resources shifting its working relationships on the climate-related enabling activities from UNDP to UNEP.

Internally within UNDP, some staff appear stressed and overworked but this could be more a reflection of unnecessary procedures and bureaucracy than serious workload issues. The finance department of UNDP seems to be over-burdened and this spills over into the responsibilities of programme staff and eats into their time for more strategic engagement with partners. If UNDP moves to implement the HACT and the associated simplified procedures, there is every reason to believe that this stress level would decrease and staff would have more time for creative dialogue and quality assurance, and enhanced productivity would hopefully result.

There is sufficient evidence of improved planning within the UNDP operations unit. The current practice is to hold weekly meetings with different sections of operations but there are, as yet, no overall meetings within the operations unit for planning purposes. This needs to be introduced. There is as yet no significant effort to establish turn-around times for routine operations - for operations related activities,

the perception is that turn-around times (processing payments, procurement, and especially recruitment) are still the same, or, may have indeed worsened. In addition, the internal bureaucratic circuit is characterized by UNDP's own staff as too long, although relatively simple adjustments can cut down the bureaucracy while guaranteeing proper oversight and improving response time. The prevailing situation appears to confirm what many partners see as the over-centralization of management and decision-making within UNDP. This could however be a reflection of this particular transition period and the "thinness" at the UNDP management level.

Admittedly, both UNDP and IPs have to share responsibility for the existing operational bottlenecks. Some lapses are clearly at the door step of IPs, especially with the key problem of unplanned requests, many of which, require overnight batch-processing and obliging finance staff to send frequent requests to HQ Help Desk to expedite action. While unplanned requests cannot be entirely eliminated, there is a need for UNDP to work with partners to keep them to a minimum. For new partners, UNDP is yet to make greater effort to provide the needed training - only guidelines are sometimes sent which are bulky and unfamiliar to most of them. In some cases no training is provided which would have been useful generally, but particularly for new partners. Partners also query that they are not informed when there are changes in operational procedures. Internally, the view was expressed that many new procedures set by management (e.g. the new ceiling established for POs) have the unintended effect of doubling the workload and the lengthening of processing times. While many of these issues were raised during the recently NEX workshop, it is unclear who within UNDP is the custodian for the follow up of the recommendations, or what mechanism is in place to monitor implementation.

A major gap in operational policy is that UNDP is yet to fully implement the HACT as is being already done by some UN agencies. Consequently, UNDP is seen to be following procedures different from other UN agencies even in cases where it is supporting the same government institution as the other UN agencies (e.g. Women's Bureau). The National Environment Agency (NEA) works with several different donors each with their own procedures, but UNDP is reportedly different in the sense that most of the others utilize a quarterly disbursement based on agreed work plans. The apparent reluctance of UNDP to implement the HACT is perceived as a reluctance to cede control and that all other operational adjustments short of implementing the HACT can be interpreted as attempts to still remain in control. The lack of movement in implementing HACT is viewed as particularly troubling given that UNDP, it is claimed, lacks sufficient internal capacity. This is regarded as being counter to the new spirit of UN reform wherein national counterparts are increasingly expected to take charge of programming.

It is evident that staff in operations are in need of further training. For example, the view is expressed that training received in ATLAS is inadequate. The current learning sessions are meant to make up for the lack of induction and more structured in-depth training, especially in HR, reporting and procurement is necessary. A particular gap is the need for further exposure in a country office setting for some key staff (e.g. operations manager, etc). Some staff have to be commended though, for the initiative to network with other Operations units and for taking part in "best practices" networks on HR and finance.

Partnerships, Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization

UNDP has made a commendable start in forging partnerships and strengthening its resource mobilization. However, the following weaknesses should be addressed:

- The underlying rationale for partnership need to change from one based on requirements of project implementation to one driven by longer-term strategic considerations.
- Successes with resource mobilization in 2007 were opportunistic as the office lacks a coherent resource mobilization strategy – one is fortunately now being developed;
- Support to government efforts to mobilize resources and working more closely with DOSFEA.

Implementing Partners

A comprehensive survey of the IPs was not possible given the numbers involved, and the scope and duration of the exercise. However, through interviews and discussions a number constraints and challenges were identified at the partner level. It is important to highlight that partners differ substantially in terms of how they relate to UNDP. They are perceived at two levels: those that are substantive and; those who focus more on resources (counterparts who are more entitlement-driven) and who treat UNDP as an “ATM”.

Overall the following weaknesses were identified through discussions with UNDP and partner staff:

- Government coordination capacity and leadership is weak, with the Office of The President not sufficiently playing the original role envisaged. A choice has to be made as to whether that office should assume this greater strategic role or implement specific projects; it cannot do both. A more prudent policy would be to maintain the Office of The President as the locus for coordination rather than one to implement projects and efforts made to suitably strengthen its coordination and interface, monitoring and quality assurance functions. This calls for a substantial strengthening of the OP capacity (currently inadequately staffed – see UNFPA and Population Secretariat in the Office of the Vice President)
- In general IPs are deemed to be weak on procedures, paying less attention to UNDP guidelines. There is a perception among staff in the Country Office that IPs are often not conversant with UNDP procedures and need their capacity to be built. This could be linked to staff turn-over within the civil service, something UNDP has no control over. Nonetheless UNDP should develop a strategy in the face of such a reality. Knowledge of guidelines is also viewed to be insufficient (e.g. procurement and HR guidelines). Measures being taken to address some of these concerns include quarterly meeting between UNDP and IPs, specialized training sessions (e.g. on treasury management; financial management, cost-recovery workshop planned to provide better exposure to ATLAS) cooperation on monthly project monitoring alongside programme monitoring.
- Small non-traditional partners in the civil society are less structured and although they received direct funding for the first time, there was no training on UNDP procedures –there is a need for better coordination between programme and operations sectors of UNDP on this.
- Staff turn-over in government departments is high, compounded by IPs frequent travels, – but this is not a new phenomenon and UNDP should have a strategy in place on how to deal with it (e.g. broaden the people involved in project implementation, establish clearer and more streamlined procedures, etc).
- For many IPs, projects being implemented are appendages of their structures and are not fully integrated. The commitment made in the CPD/CPAP for government institutions and agencies to be more proactive in creating an environment conducive the implementation of the CPAP is not yet being fulfilled. An exception appears to be Action Aid which is seeking to integrate the UNDP project into its structures (policy dept and Governance manager is focal point who spends 20-30% of his time on the project). AATG feels that governance is a core part of its mandate and hence taken measures to integrate rather than treat the UNDP project as a stand-alone activity. This is more sustainable and the project is perceived to add value to what the organization does, rather than solely as an opportunity to attract project funding resources

For a more detailed assessment of partner constraints please refer to the IP capacity assessment undertaken in the context of HACT implementation and the NEX workshop report and strategy.

4. Recommendations

This section outlines the main recommendations of the rapid assessment exercise. The recommendations are clustered into the following main areas namely: UNDP capacities (human resources and systems); programmatic aspects; business practices and operational issues; and donor relations and partnerships.

UNDP Capacities – Human Resources and Systems

1. Much progress has been made by the UNDP Country Office to strengthen human resources. As a result, the Country Office now has competent staff who are strong on substantive issues. However, a weakness is a lack of sufficient knowledge of UNDP procedures. This has been aggravated by the inadequate induction of new staff. Although some measures are being taken to build staff capacities to fill this void, the actions are slow and appear to be ad hoc.

It is recommended that the office urgently develop and implement a comprehensive training plan for some of its key staff, including possible attachments to other country offices. This should be carefully planned and managed so as not to create serious gaps in staffing. It is further recommended that the training/learning committee be revitalized to provide continuous guidance for training activities. The Office should develop a standardized induction package for orientation of new staff and that measures are taken to put in place a documentation and filing system.

2. The assessment has revealed weaknesses with respect to internal planning and the coordination of work at management, programme and operations levels. The structural changes meant to create a flatter organization in the place of the old hierarchical structure are not yielding sufficient dividends in terms of decision-making, staff empowerment and proactive responsiveness.

It is recommended that efforts be made to streamline planning and decision-making processes within the office through more regular meetings at programme, operations and management levels with clearly defined focus. It is also recommended that the office work in a more coordinated manner and according to plan. Increased efforts should be made to clarify decision-making responsibilities at programme and management levels, in order to improve efficiency, work flows and turn-around times and help counter perceptions of micro-management. Furthermore, the office should endeavor to communicate with partners more effectively and in a timely manner on decisions.

3. The programme associates have a vital role to play but there is currently a tension between their substantive involvement in programmes as opposed to a greater focus on providing project management support.

It is recommended that programme associates focus initially, on routine project/programme management processes thus giving programme specialists the room needed to undertake strategic work and assure programme quality, etc. The involvement of associates in the substance of programming is an added bonus and should be encouraged as it is essential to their understanding of their work. But this should not be seen as their core responsibility, as they cannot undertake both substantive work and have responsibility for fulltime project management activities at the same time.

Programmatic Aspects

4. The current UNDP portfolio consists of some twenty support areas which at partner level presents itself as numerous small and unconnected projects giving the impression of fragmentation and lack of focus. Such a weakness was a major critique of the last CCF, and there is a high risk that if things continue as they are, the same problem would arise. This slide needs to be arrested as soon as possible and efforts should be made to have a more tightly focused programme.

It is strongly recommended that greater efforts be made to ensure better integration of projects within the two clusters of UNDP. The linkages between programmes within a cluster should not be accidental, incidental or ad hoc, but rather should be deliberate, thought through and systematic (e.g. fostering linkages between the work of NPC on developing planning guidelines for regions and wards and sectors and the work of the disaster mitigation project on mainstreaming risk mitigation in planning processes). It is recommended that all existing projects be merged into the seven CPAP outcome areas. Furthermore, UNDP should designate "component leaders" among the implementing partners tasked with coordination and aligning the activities and partners for each of the outcome areas. This process of consolidation will be facilitated by the rapid closure of all outstanding past projects. This will enable the Office to focus on results and outcomes of programmes rather than on managing inputs and budgets of a huge portfolio of stand-alone projects.

5. The proliferation of projects is reflected in a multiplication of project implementation units which are not cost-effective nor do they contribute to national capacity building in a credible and sustainable manner. There is an urgent need to rationalize them.

It is recommended that the current set of PMUs be replaced by seven units aligned with the seven programme areas, reflecting the CPAP outcomes. The proposed units could be hosted within the structures of the "component leaders" proposed above. A second option to consider would be to create only two units, one for each programme cluster and locate them within the Office of The President to strengthen its coordination function. The units will be appropriately staffed and work closely with UNDP Programmes and Operations units.

6. Limited efforts were made during 2007 to assure programme quality and to put in place the required M&E systems, tools and processes. Joint reviews and monitoring visits by UNDP and national counterparts did not take place.

It is recommended that UNDP and partners urgently put in place M&E system in line with the provisions set out in the 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP and the UNDAF results matrix. Furthermore, programme quality could be improved by establishing better linkages with UNDP external resources (e.g. SURF in Dakar) and by building the broader partnerships with centers of excellence outside The Gambia.

7. Substantial and unacceptable delays have been incurred in starting programme activities during 2007. While this could be partly explained by delays in having staff in place, it also points to a lack of clarity on related procedures. Such delays eat into the time required to achieve results the projects are initially set up to achieve. Start-up is very resource-intensive and UNDP may have under-estimated what it takes to do this.

It is recommended that the CO develop some standard guidelines on the steps needed to start up project operations and put in place a system for monitoring such activities.

8. Programme and project development and implementation is at a fairly advanced stage yet no efforts are being made to undertake joint programming with other UN agencies despite the many good opportunities that exist.

It is recommended that joint programming with other UN agencies be pursued more vigorously. A good candidate is HIV/AIDS which is currently receiving support from UNDP/UNICEF/UNFPA/WHO. In addition, there is one national strategic plan, one coordination framework and one M&E framework, and HIV/AIDS is a key UNDAF outcome. Furthermore, there is a need to assess the possibility of collaborating with agencies such as FAO to implement some of the regional projects which are fully within its expertise and competence.

9. The Office of The President has a substantive role to play in providing leadership, coordination and oversight. Unfortunately, it is not fully playing such a role at present. Such a more strategic and policy role will strengthen ownership of the country programme by Government.

It is recommended that the OP assume greater strategic leadership and coordination role, especially with respect to UNDP projects and coordination with the entire UN-system which is fragmented. Such a role will require the OP to relinquish its project implementing role and corresponding efforts be made to adequately strengthen its coordination and interface functions, helping in monitoring and quality assurance through adequate staffing and resources.

Operations & Business Practices

10. UNDP is one of the few UN agencies that have yet to fully implement HACT despite the commitments made in the CPD/CPAP. HACT is designed to ensure that disbursement procedures are simplified and streamlined and is an important plank in the UN reform agenda. There are no conditionalities for its implementation and all agencies are expected to adopt it by January 2008.

It is recommended that UNDP implement HACT fully and without reserve. UNDP is losing out because of a perception of cumbersome procedures. UNDP can learn from the experiences of other COs implementing HACT, as well as from UNICEF and UNFPA in The Gambia. In the Women's Bureau UNICEF and UNFPA are all using HACT, albeit with challenges. When properly instituted, the HACT can provide the built-in flexibility without compromising accountability and transparency.

11. The assessment indicated a significant need for the training of IPs, particularly new ones, but also among established government counterparts in view of high staff turn-overs. A good start has been made through the NEX workshop and other training events organized by UNDP but this needs to be undertaken on a regular basis.

It is recommended that UNDP design and implement a training programme to build the capacities of IPs. The training should be done on a continuous and yearly basis, throughout the current programme cycle.

12. UNDP Business operations are slowly being improved but a major effort is needed to build a service culture in order to enhance performance.

It is recommended that UNDP establish turn-around times for routine operations, set benchmarks and standards and adhere to them more rigorously. These measures should constitute the "Service Charter" of the UNDP Country Office to render it more accountable and transparent vis-à-vis partners.

Partnerships, Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization

13. UNDP has registered substantial achievements in resource mobilization during 2007. The office however lacks a clear strategy. Such a strategy is urgently needed and must also address how over and above its own programmes, UNDP can help Government mobilize resources, especially from non-traditional partners. Some donors have expressed the view that The Gambia does not market itself sufficiently and a coordinated approach, supported by the UN-system, with UNDP in the lead, could help.

It is recommended that UNDP develop a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy and action plan, and work with DOSFEA to identify ways it can support Government resource mobilization efforts. The “Basket Fund” arrangement is first and foremost, an instrument of partnership. UNDP should therefore consolidate the lessons learnt from the approach with a view to extending it to other areas, and paying particularly attention to the relationships between partners and the need to carefully nurture and balance these.

14. UNDP has made a good start in its efforts to build partnerships with IPs and broadening the partners it collaborates with. This should be further developed and consolidated.

It is recommended that UNDP further consolidates its efforts in building strategic partnerships. This requires moving away from the narrow concept of an IP to more strategic longer-term partnerships and alliances within which project/programme support is a tool to achieve common objectives and not the ration d’etre for cooperation. There should be more in-country work with the private sector and UNDP should identify ways or develop a strategy for working more closely with civil society.

15. Agreement was reached between government and development partners at the recently concluded RTC to strengthen development cooperation dialogue and aid coordination as part of the discussions spurred by The Gambia’s Aid Effectiveness Action Plan. This development is likely to yield great benefits for both Government and development partners.

It is recommended that UNDP contributes to the strengthening of in-country coordination and development dialogue and aid coordination by throwing its weight behind the new Aid Effectiveness Action Plan.

5. Conclusion

The main picture to emerge from the assessment is that 2007 has been a particularly challenging year for UNDP, one in which good progress has been made on many fronts but that several challenges, many of which are endemic, remain. UNDP no doubt has good programmes/projects but the way it conducts its business is reducing the impact of these or at the least preventing them from realizing their full potential. On the other hand, Government and partners also need to realize that the CPD is a joint responsibility and all have a stake in ensuring its success, especially the country partners for whom success of the programmes translates directly into improved livelihoods and social space for the country’s citizens.

Among the major areas requiring attention and consolidation for moving forward during 2008 and beyond, are the following:

- UNDP to streamline procedures and move rapidly and unreservedly to adopt and fully implement HACT.

- A greater focus on results and outcomes (by both UNDP and partners) rather than on inputs and routine project management. In this regard, the proposed quarterly meetings with IP should concentrate on results and not on administrative matters.
- Consolidation of the programme approach by building linkages and synergies. This will entail a refocusing of programme activities to build a more integrated programme.
- Strengthen government leadership and coordination role.

Both UNDP and government need to remain alert and flexible to new developments and emerging possibilities during the programme cycle. These include new developments relating to possible donor budget support (likely positive and negative impacts), the new development assistance architecture (in-country and out-country coordination and the opportunities they present) and debt cancellation and release of additional funds for development.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for Rapid Appraisal of Year One of the UNDP Gambia Country Programme

Background

The Gambia government and the UNDP Country Office signed the Country Programme Document (CPD) in November 2006, which outlines the country's development priorities to be supported by UNDP during the period 2007 – 2011. The CPD is firmly anchored against the Gambia's second generation MDG-based PRSP, and fully takes into consideration the Regional Bureau for Africa's Capacity Development for Pro-Poor Growth and Accountability (CD-PGA) document.

The focus of the CPD is on creating an enabling policy environment and framework for implementing pro-poor growth, and deepening the democratic processes by establishing a system of transparency and accountability at national and local levels. The CPD also seeks to promote government commitment to mainstreaming the MDGs into national and sectoral plans, while applying a rights-based approach to development. As such it is divided into two main programme areas;

- i. Poverty Reduction and Achieving the MDGs, and
- ii. Governance and Human Rights

To assess implementation performance and identify the priorities for the upcoming year, an Annual Programme Review Meeting (APRM) is organised between the Country Office and its key implementing partners at the beginning of each year of programme implementation. The APRM thus provides a mechanism for the incorporation of emerging priorities that are in line with the outcomes of the CPD.

Objectives and Scope

The main objective of the assignment is to conduct a rapid assessment of the first year of implementation of the CPD, paying particular attention to capacity development activities, and providing recommendations as to how to improve implementation performance for the attainment of the CPD outcomes. This will involve a review of the capacities of both the Country Office as well as counterpart national institutions. The assignment will therefore involve the following:

- Review of relevant documents, including the CPD and CPAP, work plans and budgets for 2007, as well as progress reports covering the same period;
- Discussions with staff of the Country Office;
- Discussions with key national implementing partners; and,
- Presentation of the findings at the APRM, currently slated for 30 January.

Expected Outputs

1. Work plan for implementation of the assignment
2. Briefing on progress after first week
3. Draft report after two weeks
4. PowerPoint presentation of findings at APRM
5. Final report.

Duration of Assignment

The rapid assessment of the CPD is expected to last for a total of 3 weeks, with the draft report expected after two weeks and the final report a week after comments have been provided.

UNDP Gambia

15 Jan. 08

Annex 2: List of Persons Interviewed

Partners

National Assembly	-	Hon. Fatoumata Jahumpa Ceesay, Speaker
Office of The President/PAU	-	Mr Ebrima Camara, Permanent Secretary I Mr Alhagie Nyangado, Principal Policy Analyst
Women's Bureau	-	Mr Lamin M. Ceesay, Deputy Executive Director Mr Kajali Sonko, Programme Officer
Dept. of State for Trade & Industry	-	Mr Yusupha Kah, Permanent Secretary
Independent Electoral Commission	-	Alh Mustapha Carayol, Chairman & Team
National Planning Commission	-	Mr Alieu Ngum, Chairman
National Environment Agency	-	Mr Momodou Sarr, Executive Director
National Council for Civic Education	-	Mr Dawda Jallow
National Aids Secretariat	-	Mr Alieu Jammeh, Coordinator
National Disaster Management	-	Mr Essa Khan, Project Coordinator
GEF Small Grants Project	-	Mr Ernest Aubee, Project Coordinator
ACDHRS	-	Mr Amadou Ceesay Mrs Yvette Phillot
Action Aid The Gambia	-	Dr Kujejatou Manneh-Jallow, Country Director Mr Lamin Nyangado, Policy & Advocacy Mr Nyakassi Jarju, Coordinator, CEF
WANEP – Gambia	-	Ms Pamela Cole, National Network Coordinator Mr Murtala Touray, Zonal Coordinator (zone 1)
Santa Yalla	-	Mr Momodou Lamin Bah, Admin Secretary Mr Baba Jammeh, Project Manager

Donors

DFID	-	Mr Colin Clarke, Head of Mission
UNFPA	-	Dr Reuben Mboge, Asst Resident Representative

UNDP

Mr Vitalie Muntean, Deputy Resident Representative
Mr Mamour A. Jagne, Programme Specialist, Poverty and Environment
Basirou Jahumpa, Programme Specialist, Governance and Human Rights
Elliman Jagne, Operations Specialist
Almamy Camara, Programme Analyst, Poverty and Environment
Sirrah Ndow, Programme Analyst, Governance and Human Rights
Sainabou Jaye, Programme Associate
Alieu Nyang, Finance Analyst
Adama Sanyang, IT Associate
Binta Jabang, Administrative Associate
Muhammadou Jallow, HR Associate
Emily Joof, Programme Associate
Abdou Sallah, Finance Associate
Alhagie Janneh, Finance Assistant

Others

Mr Seikou Sanyang, Consultant

Annex 3: Matrix Summarizing the Implementation Status of 2007-2011 CPD/CPAP

Programme Cluster	Areas of Support/Projects	Implementation Status	Bottlenecks if any
Poverty Reduction and Achieving the MDGs	<i>MDG-based Poverty Reduction Strategy</i>	Signed early 2006. In progress. MDG-Based PRSP prepared, RTC conducted. Next steps – prepare national MDG progress report, support Millennium Village project establishment, extend needs assessment and costing to 2015, prepare annual PRSP monitoring report	Issues of coordination and sustaining the momentum, not helped by lack of a PMU and a poorly functioning Steering Committee
	<i>National Planning Commission and Aid Coordination Management</i>	Signed July 07. In progress. Equipment and vehicle procured. Consultancy on institutional framework for NPC in progress	Implementation performance affected by delays in establishment of PMU, and recruitment of NPC staff
	<i>Independent Think Tank</i>	Consultant identified to develop institutional framework	Seems more like a UNDP led initiative. Possibly greater involvement needed from other stakeholders
	<i>Implementation of the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP),</i>	Signed July 07. Gamjobs project formulated and in progress. Draft report on economic growth, poverty and employment prepared, awaiting validation. Vehicle and equipment procured	Lack of a PMU, due to recruitment delays. Possibly need for greater leadership from DOSTIE
	<i>Rapid Policy/Advisory and Capacity Building Facility</i>	Signed July 07. Established and in progress. Several activities, including training, provision of equipment and vehicles, undertaken	Need for regularized Board meetings. Delays in putting in place PMU. Need for clear eligibility guidelines, monitoring and feedback
	<i>Strengthened Role of Local Communities and Women in Promoting Sustainable Environmental Management</i>	Not much has happened in this area	Need to develop a project specifically addressing this output, or to expand current environment mainstreaming project with NEA (signed July 07), which looks more at institutional strengthening
	<i>Disaster Preparedness System Established</i>	Project in operation since 2006 (Signed Sept 05). Local disaster committees established, policy framework prepared, legislation for establishment of national disaster office drafted, awaiting enactment, and national Avian Influenza contingency plan developed	Need for greater government leadership and institutionalization, as well as bringing in other players such as BCPR

Governance & Human Rights	<i>Local Government Strengthening</i>	Refer to programmes for 2008	
	<i>Enhanced Public and Civil Society Participation at Local Level</i>	Not done. Should be embraced within the programme on Local Govt strengthening.	
	<i>Civil Service Reform</i>	Project document endorsed by LPAC (Aug 2007) and hqs. Based on project results framework and 2008 AWP, \$770,000 issued to CO. TOR for CSR Board submitted to Cabinet.	Govt leadership/ownership is key for accelerated implementation given late start of project/late disbursement of funds.
	<i>Participation of Women in Decision-making</i>	Nationwide public sensitization campaign raised social benefits of women in leadership positions. Impact evident in the increased female candidates for the local Govt elections. Female candidates were trained in advocacy, leadership and confidence building. Capacity assessment of women in decision making carried out and report with recommendations validated in a participatory manner. A strategy paper on Gender Empowerment developed for the RTC	Training was instrumental in building confidence and empowering women. Need to further increase participation of women in electoral processes both as voters and candidates.
	<i>Implementation of the National Women's Policy</i>	Refer to 2008 programmes	
	<i>Strengthened Capacity of Mass Media to promote Human Rights and Good Governance</i>	Project Cooperation Frameworks with two implementation partners signed in December 2007. First tranche of funds disbursed to AA in Jan 2008. Two sensitization seminars for Media Houses and CSOs completed. Call for expression of interest for press and CSO and application forms to be sent out by AA first week of April. Recruitment of PMU started late 2007 and process completed by end March.	Serious delays in recruitment of project staff delayed implementation. Recruitment should be fast-tracked.
	<i>Establishment of Human Rights Commission</i>	See programmes for 2008	
	<i>Improved Access to Justice by the poor</i>	Refer to programmes for 2008	

<i>Enhanced Institutional capacity of NAS and National Network of PLWHA</i>	Capacities of support groups enhanced through various trainings on home-based care, counseling and income generating activities. provided to three groups. MOU signed with Nova Scotia Gambia Association for a Baseline Survey on Long Distance truck drivers. Issue paper on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the PRSP prepared and developed into an ACTION PLAN to be funded in 2008. South-South cooperation enhanced through regional TOT on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in national development plans. Local trainings to be conducted in 2008.	Capacity constraints of support groups require on-going and rigorous monitoring of activities. Need to explore possibility of local UNVs to work with support groups. Feminisation of epidemic calls for mainstreaming of gender issues in HIV/AIDS interventions.
<i>GFATM Country Coordination Mechanism Enhanced</i>	Several meetings held and development of proposals for Round 8 of the Global Fund is in progress.	
<i>HIV/AIDS Workplace Code of Ethics</i>	Some CO Learning Sessions focus on HIV/AIDS as a way of sensitizing staff .	
<i>Capacity of IEC Strengthened</i>	Advisory services and operational support effectively and timely provided to the IEC to conduct technically sound National Assembly and Local Govt elections. IEC staff and electoral officers trained in effective election management. IEC capacity further strengthened through study tours to Ghana and South Africa. Three regional consultations held and long-term strategy for strengthening electoral process is being finalized to be validated by all stakeholders	Delays in Retirement of imprest/Financial reporting. Voter turn out shows downward trend despite large amounts of money disbursed for voter education campaigns. IEC needs to be more pro-active in dialogues with Govt and other stakeholders on policy/legal amendments to Electoral Act/Decree.
<i>Effective participation of CSOs in Electoral Process</i>	Capacities of CSOs and NCCE were enhanced and CSOS played key roles in voter education, observation and monitoring of elections	Need to create/expand space (advocate for) increased role of CSOs in voter education under the supervision/guidance of the IEC.