

**REPORT OF THE NEX ORIENTATION WORKSHOP FOR  
STAFFS OF UNDP AND ITS IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS  
HELD 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2007 AT PARADISE SUITES HOTELS**

**Introduction:**The workshop was held coinciding with a transition period in two areas, i) the inception of a new programming cycle (2007 – 2011) and/or the commencement of a number of new projects based on the Country Programme Document (CPD) and the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), ii) recruitment of UNDP and project staffs in response to the outcome of a recent re-profiling exercise and approval of new projects respectively. These two major developments called for an orientation workshop for the new staff with a view to put every body on the foundation for improved project planning and management.

The purpose of this report is to document and keep in records the proceedings and recommendations of the workshop for follow up actions. The objective was to brief the participants about National Execution (NEX) as it is recommended to be the dominant execution modality in the approved CPAP 2007 - 2011. The report outlines topics of the presentations and issues brought up by the participants during the various sessions. It will serve as a reference document for the day-to-day operations of staffs of UNDP and the Implementing Partners. Also, it can serve as a useful reference document for organizing similar and/or follow up workshops.

The workshop has given the participants the opportunity to be briefed about the various aspects of national Execution and to freely express their opinions about shortcomings in project management and make suggestions as to how to improve the situation.

Mr. Bashirou Jahumpa, UNDP Programme Specialist who introduced the members of the high table as well as the workshop programme, chaired the workshop.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ebrima Camara, Permanent Secretary Office of the President, informed the gathering that his office is presently coordinating a Country Programme recently signed between the Government of The Gambia and UNDP. He reminded the participants that now management of programme resources is entrusted to nationals, therefore, each and every one is urged to do their utmost to use them wisely. In conclusion, he called all to understand that the Government is accountable to its donor partners.

Mr. Vitalie Muntean, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, delivered his opening statement in the form of a power point presentation. According to Mr. Muntean, the objective of his presentation is to give an overview of Programmatic and Legal frameworks for National Execution and provision of support services by the UNDP Country Office. Consequently, in his presentation, he dealt with issues such as definition of National Execution, 2007-2011 Country Programme Document (CPD), 2007-2011 CPAP, Project Document, Agreement for the Provision of Support services, and UNDP Financial Rules and Regulations (see copy of the presentation attached).

# Workshop Sessions

## Session I

### Implementation Arrangement for the Country Programme Action Plan (2007-2011)

Mr. Seikou Sanyang, a Private Consultant, took charge of this session and made his presentation on the following subject areas:

- i) Implementation Arrangement for the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP 2007-2011). Mr. Sanyang gave an overview of issues as reflected in the following sections of the CPAP: VI. Programme Management, VII. Monitoring & Evaluation, VIII. Commitments of UNDP, IX. Commitments of Government.
- ii) Guiding Principles for National Execution. In this session, Mr. Sanyang gave a rundown of the principles under the following subheadings: a) The objective of National Execution, b) Definition of National Execution, c) NEX as a National Undertaking Under the Government Leadership, d) Accountability: Whose Rules and Procedures, e) Flexible Implementation, f) Capacity, g) Financial Management.
- iii) Direct Country Office Support: Making reference to the relevant section of the CPAP participants were informed about areas where UNDP has made commitment to provide support.

### Issues Raised After the Presentation

- One of the participants raised concern about why UNDP Country Office is not held liable in the use of Request for Direct Payment. It was however clarified that UNDP is just providing a serve to make payment on behalf of an Implementing Partner. In this regard, it was informed that a new form is being designed to replace Request for Direct Payment Form; it is envisaged that the issue of liability will be cleared.

## Session II

### Budgetary/Financial Management

- i) Finance Section: Representing the UNDP Finance Session, Mr. Abdou Sallah made a presentation on the subject "Transactions on ATLAS" covering the following subject areas: a) Ineffective use of Accounting Codes, b) Effective use of Accounting Codes, c) Consequences of Ineffective use of Accounting Codes, d) Recommendation – Effective use of Accounting Codes. He gave a case study in one or two areas and noted the inconsistency in the Request for Direct Payment forms submitted to Finance Unit, in that while indicating chart fields the figures are usually incomplete.

#### Issues Raised After the Presentation

- UNDP Deputy Resident Representative made clarification about the definition of budget category and code.
- ii) Procurement Unit: Ms. Binta Jabang, UNDP Administrative/Procurement Associate, made her presentation on the subject, "Principles of UNDP Procurement and Best Practices". Ms. Jabang gave details in each of the following subject areas: a) Procurement Defined, b) Procurement Authority, c) "Principles of Procurement". Here she explained further issues like "Best Value for Money", "Fairness, Integrity and Transparency", and "Effective Competition", d) "Contracting Strategy", "Exceptions to Competition", e) "Waiver of Competitive Process", f) "Disadvantage of Single Source Selection", g) "Procurement Methods" h) "Contract Format", i) "Advisory Committee on Procurement (ACP)", and j) "Procurement Ethics".

#### Issues Raised After the Presentation

- Concern was raised about the statement made that emphasized the protection of UNDP interest, but at the same time UNDP should be neutral in dealing with procurement. In response, it was explained that the emphasis is on the fact that UNDP rules take precedence over any other rules where there is contravention.
- Where there is need for a waiver for competitive bidding, it is required to seek clearance of CAP and ACP.
- Copies of the Procurement Manual, on a CD, to be supplied to Implementing partners and the projects.
- Copies of UNDP Financial Rules and Regulations to be provided to the Implementing Partners and projects.

- iii) Human Resources Section: Mr. Muhammadou Jallow, UNDP HR Associate, introduced the subject and gave an overview of the following HR areas of function: a) Who are the people involved in UNDP recruitment process, b) Programme Officers/Budget Holder, c) Human Resource Unit, d) Procurement Unit, e) UNDP Recruitment Process, f) Recruitment Panels, Short-listing Panel, g) Written Test, h) Interview, i) Appointment and Promotion and Appointment Panel, and j) Contracting.

#### Issues Raised After the Presentation

- Signing and/or approval of minutes: sometimes securing signature(s) of panel members is a problem due to frequent travel of officials.
  - An enquiry was made about the average/minimum number of panelists required. In response, it was informed that Panelist for both shortlisting and interview panels should not be less than 3 whilst minimum number of candidates for shortlisting and interview should not as well be less than 3.
  - There is always a general delay in hiring/recruitment processes. HR Unit needs to guide panel members about the requirements to avoid delays and in some cases leading to a repeat of the process.
  - It was informed that there exist written guidelines, which should be given to panel members prior the commencement of the hiring process.
- iv) System on Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer: Mr. Seikou Sanyang was expected to make a presentation on this subject matter, but due to time constraint it was decided to defer the presentation and only distribute copies to participants.

## Session III

### NEX Audit Requirements

- i) “Recurrent Issues From NEX Audits”: Mr. Seikou Sanyang introduced the subject of NEX Audit and the criteria used to select a project(s) for an audit exercise. Consequently, Mr. Sanyang gave a run down of issues that keep on featuring in the annual NEX audit reports as outlined in the following sections of the said Report(s): a) Financial Management, b) Project Progress and rate of Delivery, c) Procurement of Goods and/ Services, d) Human Resource Selection and Administration, e) management and Use of Equipment/ Inventory, f) Record keeping System and Controls, g) management Structure.
  
- ii) Recommendations “Perspective of Implementing Partners (Experience & Capacity Assessments)”
  - Ø Disbursement process or access to funds for activities needs some improvement. UNDP insists on completion of one activity before funds can be disbursed for the other.
  - Ø It's cumbersome to deal with UNDP as compared to other UN agencies.
  - Ø No feedback about payments is received from UNDP unless there is a follow up. Need to improve communication by providing feedbacks.
  - Ø UNDP staffs are difficult to get due to frequent meetings they attend.
  - Ø Need to improve project start up dates, that is, to ensure that projects commence on the planned dates.
  - Ø UNDP Country Office needs to understand the working environment of their Implementing partners and on the other hand partners also should understand the accountability aspect and concern of UNDP.
  - Ø UNDP Programme Officers need to regularly provide information about status of expenditure to enable Programme Managers to reconcile with their records.
  - Ø Need for regular projects and programme meetings.
  - Ø Need for ATLAS access to some Implementing Partners.
  - Ø It's important to build the capacity of IPs.
  - Ø Need for the establishment of a unified/common software for accounting purposes, but ensure that it is inline with existing Government rules and regulations.
  - Ø To establish open channels of communication and regularize meetings between UNDP and partners.

- Ø Need to improve on the timeliness of information to National Audit Office during audit exercises.
- Ø Need for improvement in the role of the Office of the President in coordinating matters for the NEX audit.
- Ø Need to take note of the pressure on the National Audit Office due to the coincidence of the audit exercises required for other UN agencies all at the same time.
- Ø To devise a way to simplify processes and procedures without compromising accountability.
- Ø UNDP needs to assist IPs by involving them in their activities.
- Ø Training of this nature for higher level of staffs of implementing partners is important and useful.
- Ø The onus is on UNDP to get back to partners on issues through establishment of an open line of communication.
- Ø Increased/regular formal and informal meetings between UNDP and project partners and on bilateral basis.