

Minutes of Meeting

Project Board Meeting: UNDP's Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16

Date: 28 May 2019

Venue: Conference Room A, UN Compound

Time: 09.00 am – 11.00 am

Background

The First Project Board meeting for UNDP's Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16 aimed at: finalising the SDG 16 Portfolio, focusing primarily on the changes that have been incorporated following feedback from the local project appraisal committee (LPAC) meeting held on 19 March 2019; providing an overview of the Project Board functions and approving work plans to support implementation of these projects. The agenda for the meeting is enclosed as Annex A.

The meeting was co-chaired by the UNDP Resident Representative and Mr. V Sivagnasothy, Secretary, Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation, Northern Province development, Vocational Training & Skills Development and Youth Affairs. As per the Agenda, presentations were made by the Policy & Design Specialist, Programme Manager and Programme Quality & Design Analyst. The relevant presentations are annexed. A complete list of participants is attached as Annex B.

Welcome Address - Mr. Jorn Sorensen, Resident Representative, UNDP

Resident Representative, UNDP welcomed and thanked Mr. V Sivagnasothy, Secretary, Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation and all participants. In his welcome address, he emphasised that the long design phase of the SDG 16 Portfolio has helped in the development of a solid Portfolio of activities and suggestions from partners during the design phase and from today's meeting will help to further strengthen the Portfolio prior to starting immediate implementation.

The Portfolio will come under the oversight of a Project Board / Project Steering Committee, which will be responsible for making management decisions, reviewing and approving workplans and project progress. In addition to the Project Board, UNDP may periodically convene coordination meetings with contributing donors and government partners to discuss strategic direction, progress and challenges, as and when required.

The Resident Representative also welcomed guidance from participants on the frequency of Project Board meetings – i.e. either on a biannual or quarterly basis. He clarified that there would also be ample opportunities for adhoc and follow-up meetings as required to secure successful implementation of activities.

The SDG 16 Flagship Portfolio on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, aims to support key institutions and in doing so help to increase public trust in institutions and contribute to achieving sustainable peace

and inclusive socio-economic development. UNDP Resident Representative stressed that UNDP and partners will need to be able to work with the everchanging political constellations to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges and that the flexibility of the Portfolio's framework will support this.

UNDP Resident Representative concluded by stating that the Portfolio is a critical part of UNDP's broader Country Programme 2018-2022 and will be a key framework for UNDP's work in governance in the coming years. UNDP will start implementation next month with the funds that have been already secured, and this will be upscaled as partners join in to support the Portfolio.

Key Note address from the co-chair - Mr. Sivagnanasothy, Secretary, Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation, Northern Province development, Vocational Training & Skills Development and Youth Affairs

The Secretary welcomed UNDP Resident Representatives and all participants. He stressed that SDG Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is a fundamental and enabling goal to achieve the other SDG goals.

The Secretary placed on record the Ministry's appreciation for UNDP's active engagement with the Government in planning and implementation, which will also help to secure national ownership of interventions. He noted that the Portfolio is well aligned to the national development framework as outlined in Vision 2025 and the draft 2030 Vision. He added that moving from a project approach to a programmatic approach will help to ensure a more harmonised process and will help create mutual accountability between the Government, implementing partners and donors. He noted that the workplan had been prepared with months of deliberations and contained a well outlined theory of change, clear key performance indicators and monitoring plans. Additionally, the flexibility of the Portfolio in moving funds according to the traction received by certain outputs will help to support successful implementation.

The Secretary also encouraged participants to consider having an ongoing evaluation and using learnings to revisit work plans in order to ensure the future relevance of the Portfolio according to the ground reality.

Presentation on objectives of the project board - Ms. Nimmi Ariyaratne, Programme Quality & Design Analyst, UNDP

The Programme Quality and Design Analyst agreed with the Secretary's emphasis on the importance of monitoring and evaluation and stated that the Project Board's key focus will be on quality assurance and ensuring that progress is on track to achieve final results.

The functions of the Project Board will be: to provide guidance and direction on budgetary adjustments within tolerance levels by consensus; assess achievements against the UNDAF and national results/outcomes; assess programming quality against UNDAF and UNDP criteria; assess and address risks and identify and address operational issues related to implementation that could lead to revisions and reprogramming.

The composition of the Project Board is as follows: project directors (co-chairs - UNDP Resident Representative and Mr. Sivagnanasothy representing the Government); development partners (implementing partners, UNDP and donors) and beneficiary representatives (individuals or groups/ civil society representatives who will ultimately benefit from the project). The Programme Quality and Design Analyst stated that suggestions on ways to incorporate beneficiary representatives to the Project Board would be welcome. Please refer to Annex C.

Clarifications:

In response to a query on whether participants of today's meeting were part of the project board, the Policy & Design Specialist clarified that the different functions of the project board will be carried out by different participants. She elaborated on the composition of the project board and explained that participants could also function as observers or advisors providing technical inputs to improving strategy and implementation.

SDG 16 Portfolio: Changes incorporated following feedback from the local project appraisal committee meeting - Ms. Sonali Dayaratne, Policy and Design Specialist, UNDP

The Policy and Design Specialist provided an overview of the changes made to the Portfolio document following the LPAC meeting. The Portfolio draft was circulated for the feedback of all Government implementing agencies, NGO, academia and advisors. The four main areas of feedback are outlined below:

1. Portfolio outputs and indicative outputs are too broad and do not contain specific activities.

This is part of the new Portfolio approach introduced by UNDP Headquarters in 2018 in order to respond quickly and flexibly to global developments. The Portfolio contains a combination of projects that contribute to an overall result. The advantages of this approach include: flexibility to move funds between projects; changes can be made to outputs within the outcomes of the Portfolio to respond to changes in sociopolitical context and reductions to transaction costs as all project functions (design, implementation, monitoring and reporting) take place at the portfolio rather than project level.

2. The theory of change for the Portfolio is lacking.

The theory of change was not initially included in the original Portfolio document as the Portfolio contributes completely to UNDP Sri Lanka's broader Country Programme 2018-2022 and so the overarching theory of change remains the same. However, this has now been incorporated into the final version of the Portfolio.

3. Weak gender analysis

The gender analysis of the Portfolio has been strengthened with the help of UNDP's dedicated Gender Specialist to incorporate more gender related analysis into the sub outputs and more gender focused indicators have been added to the results framework.

4. Questions around the monitoring and evaluation Framework, tools and processes
 These queries will be addressed by the Programme Manager and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Specialist.

Work Plan and management arrangements - Mr. Mohamed Muzain, Programme Manager, UNDP

The Programme Manager provided an overview of the Portfolio, with a focus on detailed workplans and management arrangements for the service lines of the Portfolio. He elaborated on the planned activities under the expected outputs with the respective funding allocation and status of funding.

Table 1: Overview of Key Projects

Name of the Project	Duration	Donor	Amount	Status
UNDP Sri Lanka’s Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	December 2018 - December 2020	Government of Norway	USD 1,500,000	Secured
Gender and Peace Initiative	January 2019 - December 2020	Peace Building Fund	USD 400,000	Secured
Capacity Development for Local Government	July 2019 - December 2023	European Union	EUR 10,000,000	Pipeline
Support for Sustainable Resettlement	June 2019 - June 2022	Government of UK	USD 2,300,000	Pipeline

The Programme Manager explained that UNDP plans to mobilise USD 26 million for the Portfolio, out of which USD 1.9 million has been secured (1.5 million from the Government of Norway and USD 400,000 from the Peacebuilding Fund). There is a hard pipeline of EUR 10 million from the European Union and USD 2.3 million from the Government of UK. Altogether, a total of USD 17.2 million will be mobilised within this year.

The Programme Manager provided an overview of the detailed workplans for the 3 service lines. His presentation also covered the organogram detailing the management arrangements for the Portfolio. Following the Portfolio approach, there will be a pooling of resources and technical expertise to improve efficiency. UNDP’s Integrated Management Team consisting of the UNDP Resident Representative, Integrated Knowledge Team Leader, Policy Design Specialist and Integrated Support Leader will provide overall strategic guidance and management to support implementation of the projects. Programme Quality and Design Analysts will play a quality assurance function and technical specialists for all three service lines will support implementation with support staff. The integrated support team will oversee procurement and operational support. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting resources will be pooled to ensure continuous reporting of results across the Portfolio as a whole. The field implementation team will be pooled on a regional basis. Please refer to Annex D.

Discussion

[Commissioner, Human Rights Commission](#) stated that the Portfolio refers to 'strengthening' of independent commissions, however in reality these institutions do not always have the capacity to perform basic functions. For example, there is a severe lack of human resources in the HRC and this negatively impacts the inquiry investigation process which in turn undermines public trust in the institution. Recruitment of personnel for the Commission's inquiry and investigation department has been delayed for 3.5 years as the scheme of recruitment has not been approved. As a result of this gap, the HRC has not been able to respond to complaints – such as the several complaints of torture in prisons which were received following UNDP's Prison study. There needs to be an accurate assessment of the state of institutions in order to identify the actual requirements – these may not always fall under the category of UNDP's criteria for support but are still necessary for the institution to function.

Secondly, internal processes and approval protocols which may cause delays to project implementation should be considered.

Finally, there may be resistance to reform within institutions which results in further delays to implementation. However, it is important to persevere as such reforms should be treated as non-negotiable in securing good governance.

Flexibility in funding to account for such challenges in the work plan and ground realities would be appreciated to help ensure the success of the intervention.

[Senior Research Officer, Right to Information \(RTI\) Commission](#) expressed appreciation for UNDP's support and echoed concerns shared by the HRC on the need for an assessment of the institution to identify the support required for ensuring basic services and activities of the Commission.

[Director General, Department of Project Management and Monitoring](#), sought clarification on the assurance of mobilising the balance funds in the pipeline, as a lack of funds would threaten the achievement of the Portfolio's objectives. Secondly, it would be appreciated if quarterly monitoring reviews could be arranged as part of the Portfolio's monitoring time plan to track project progress.

The [UNDP Resident Representative](#) assured participants that the Independent Commissions are a key priority of the Portfolio. In order to ensure the sustainability of the intervention, the Government will have to commit to carrying forward the institutional changes as UNDP provides a more value addition support to strengthening institutions for a limited period of time. However, there is room for support to key activities on an adhoc basis or to increase allocation of funding over time as required.

With regards to quarterly monitoring review meetings, the Project Board may deliberate and decide on the frequency of the review meetings.

He clarified that the Portfolio's funding envelope is very ambitious, however UNDP remains confident in securing the remaining funds required as there is keen interest from development partners. A significant

amount of funds has already been mobilised and UNDP is continuously working with partners to mobilise funding.

[UNDP's Policy and Design Specialist](#) explained that with regards to supporting basic requirement of institutions, this is a challenging area as UNDP and development partners are cautious not to substitute for core budgetary requirements that should be supported by the Government as part of its commitment to ensuring core functions of these institutions. Additionally, withdrawal of support will leave gaps in institutions which will undermine the sustainability of the intervention. However, such support can be explored in the context of temporary assistance from UNDP with a Government undertaking to continue the support thereafter. For instance, UNDP supported the Parliament Sectoral Oversight Committees with translators during the constitutional reform process, and the Secretary General committed to recruiting a permanent cadre within 6 months to a year. Therefore, UNDP will engage with the Independent Commissions and development partners to identify similar arrangements to support basic functions of the Commissions.

With regards to resource mobilisation, according to the Portfolio's framework, commitment to results will depend on the resources mobilised. UNDP will only be accountable for the outputs for which resources have been mobilised.

[Commissioner, Human Rights Commission](#) responded to the Policy and Design Specialist's suggestion by clarifying that it would be challenging for Independent Commissions to give similar undertakings as they are reliant on Government support.

[UNDP's Policy and Design Specialist](#) appreciated the point made and suggested organising a focused discussion with the three commissions and development partners to identify how to overcome such challenges.

[UNDP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Specialist](#) clarified that according to the results based management approach it is mandatory to have quarterly review meetings for the Portfolio. A comprehensive monitoring framework for the Portfolio has been established and work has commenced on identifying baselines and targets.

[Assistant Director, External Resources Department](#) requested clarification on the implementing mechanism for the interventions.

[UNDP's Programme Manager](#) outlined that a direct implementation modality would be used whereby UNDP would take the lead in implementation in consultation with relevant organisations. All procurement would be governed by UNDP's rules and regulations according to the respective funding ceilings. Letter of Agreements would be signed with Government institutions to implement technical and

service requirements. Responsible Party Agreements will be signed to engage with NGOs for implementation.

Upon request for further clarification, the Programme Manager stated that where LOAs are signed with government institutions, the fund will go to the institution and the respective Ministry will inform the Treasury Division on the particulars of the fund received.

[UNDP's Policy and Design Specialist](#) added that following discussions between UNDP and ERD the information required would be provided according to the templates provided by ERD and workplans will be shared in the interim to inform budgetary processes.

[UNDP's Programme Manager](#) expanded that for the access to justice service line, UNDP will work with Ministry of Justice to reimburse consultants hired.

[UNDP's Gender Specialist](#) added that UNDP will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to take forward the Gender for Peace Initiative.

[Additional Director, Presidential Task Force on the Northern and Eastern Province Development](#) recommended carrying out joint collaborative evaluations with the Government when undertaking evaluations as this will enhance national ownership of findings and recommendations.

[UNDP's Policy and Design Specialist](#) stated that UNDP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Knowledge Management Specialist will liaise with the relevant Government officials to organise a meeting with Government parties to explore the possibility of joint collaborative evaluations.

[Director General, Department of Project Management and Monitoring](#) clarified that following the launch of the Government's information policy, joint evaluations can be undertaken from next year.

[Director, National Authority for The Protection of Victims of Crimes and Witnesses](#) mentioned that UNDP's funds have been utilised to raise awareness among relevant stakeholders which resulted in an increase in the number of complaints received. He also expressed appreciation for UNDP's support and hopes to continue working with UNDP to upscale the public awareness campaign.

[Media Officer, National Police Commission](#) stated that public consultations on the police and service delivery have been carried out across the island with UNDP's support and this has helped to improve police activities.

The [UNDP Resident Representative](#) concluded the meeting by thanking the Secretary, all presenters and participants. He also acknowledged the support from the Government of Norway and the Peacebuilding Fund in mobilising seed funding. The next steps would be to organise separate meetings with the

Independent Commissions to explore how to bridge the gap of Government support as well as monitoring and evaluation meetings to finalise joint evaluation plans. Project Board Meetings will be arranged on a biannual basis to review project progress.

The Secretary, Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation, Northern Province development, Vocational Training & Skills Development and Youth Affairs highlighted that going forward with the Portfolio approach, reporting on results will also really need to focus on outcomes and impact. Additionally, the Government should ideally finance routine operational costs of independent commissions to ensure sustainability of the intervention. He concluded by wishing all partners success in initiating implementation of project activities.

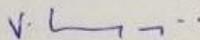
Approved:



Jorn Sorensen

Resident Representative

(Chair of the Meeting)



V Sivagnasothy,

Secretary, Ministry of National Policies,
Economic Affairs, Resettlement & Rehabilitation,
Northern province development, Vocational
Training & Skills Development and Youth Affairs
(Co-Chair of the Meeting)

Date: