

Minutes of Meeting

Project Appraisal Committee Meeting: UNDP's Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16

Date: 19 March 2019

Venue: UNDP Conference Room

Time: 10.00 AM – 12.00 PM

Background

This meeting was primarily aimed at presenting the new proposed portfolio of projects supporting Governance and Peacebuilding from 2018-2022, for the feedback of government, non-government, development and academic partners, development practitioners and UN agencies, who provided input during the formulation stages of this portfolio, and now to finalize the strategic direction forward in implementing these projects. The agenda for the meeting is enclosed as Annex A.

The meeting was chaired by the UNDP Resident Representative. As per the agenda, presentations were made by the Policy & Design Specialist, Programme Manager, Programme Quality & Design Analyst and Technical Specialists. The relevant presentations are annexed. A complete list of participants is attached as Annex B.

Key highlights from the welcome address

Resident Representative, UNDP welcomed and thanked the Secretary General of the Parliament and all participants.

In his welcome address, the UNDP Resident Representative emphasised the objective of the meeting which is to obtain endorsement of the portfolio document in accordance with UNDP's quality standards; agree on the management arrangements for the portfolio's service lines and components and obtain approval for planning and execution of preliminary activities, pending the convening of project boards.

The design of the portfolio is informed by the results and lessons learnt during UNDP's previous phase of programming on Governance and Peace-building from 2013-2018. He emphasized that the SDG 16 Flagship Portfolio on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, aims to strengthen the inclusiveness, responsiveness and accountability of key institutions to deliver people-centered services. It also aims to build the space, capacity and trust for excluded and vulnerable groups to be a part of policy-making and decision-making processes.

The portfolio's strategy is intended to contribute to Sri Lanka achieving SDG 16, which is universally regarded as the enabler for realising the rest of the country-focused SDGs 1-15. He explained that without peace, justice and strong institutions, countries will not be able to, for example, alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities and become more climate resilient. He went on to explain that despite Sri Lanka having positioned itself to reach upper middle-income country status 10 years after the armed conflict, there are many challenges ahead as it strives to achieve the transformational change required by the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The UNDP Resident Representative presented the following examples:

- Sri Lanka has a human development ranking of 77, and although poverty rates are declining, regional and group disparities remain significant.
- The 2019 Long-Term Climate Change Risk Index ranked Sri Lanka 2nd on exposure to extreme weather events due to recurrent floods, landslides and drought.
- This coupled with the country's Gender Inequality ranking, which places Sri Lanka at 80/160 countries in 2018, further highlights the vulnerabilities faced by the country.

The UNDP Resident Representative noted that with an estimated resource envelope of USD 27 million, UNDP's Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16 seeks to support key institutions to be able to better respond to these challenges. He placed on record UNDP's appreciation to the Government of Norway for providing seed funding of 1.5 million USD for the portfolio's resource envelope. UNDP has succeeded in mobilizing a further 500,000 USD from the UN Peace Building Fund and the European Union's Business and Human Rights Programme framework and hoping to realise the USD 11 million pipeline funding from the European Union by mid-year. UNDP anticipates that other development partners will also consider contributing to meeting resource gaps for achieving the portfolio's results framework.

The UNDP Resident Representative stressed that the flagship portfolio can only succeed if everyone works in collaboration and in partnership, whilst injecting innovation into design and implementation.

Presentation on the UNDP's Flagship Portfolio on SDG 16

The Policy & Design Specialist, UNDP, presented the design of the new SDG 16 portfolio and expanded on the national priorities addressed through the portfolio as well as its rationale, strategy, outcomes, outputs and cross-cutting principles. She also presented key results of past governance projects (which fell under the previous Country Programme) on Parliament, Right to Information (RTI), National Police Commission, Human Rights Commission, Access to Justice, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Provincial and local Governance and Socio-economic and social cohesion over the last four years. The portfolio will build on these key results and achievements. The portfolio was informed by the UNDP Global Strategic Plan and key policy documents of the government of Sri Lanka. The next phase will focus on supporting institutions and non-government organisations to implement a considerable proportion of the strategies and actions.

There is globally unparalleled change, and this requires UNDP to revisit how to strategise and approach its programming and to embrace new ways to address stubborn developments. UNDP is moving away from the traditional project implementation model of working in a linear manner, and towards bringing about change in 'parallel'. She highlighted the importance of the need for more integration of cross cutting thematic areas including an intersect between governance, environment and climate resilience. UNDP will continue to consult all key political parties to secure ownership for long-term reforms. The importance of engaging other actors in civil society and the private sector was also acknowledged as governments are no longer the sole agents of policy making and implementation. In terms of other lessons learned from the previous phase of programming, the Policy & Design Specialist highlighted that more consistent use of gender analysis will inform the design of the projects and activities.

The Policy & Design Specialist highlighted that the “portfolio” concept was introduced recently as part of UNDP’s Programme and Project Management reforms in mid-2018, in order to encourage a more integrated approach to results management by combining a group of projects that contribute to the same outcome or SDG goal or thematic area. This will also reduce the transactional cost of managing multiple projects (i.e. in the previous approach, design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation had to be done separately for each project, whereas these steps can now be carried out for the portfolio at large).

A portfolio is a combination of projects. This portfolio has an overall impact and three outcomes and a combination of outputs which collectively contribute to those 3 outcomes and impact. Given the political fluidity of the country, it was decided to maintain a more flexible framework within which UNDP could capitalize on emerging opportunities and be able to better respond to bottlenecks and challenges. Resources can be moved between projects or between outputs within the portfolio but is subject to formal approval of the project board through the revision of annual work plans. Presentation is annexed herewith.

Resource Plan, Risk Log, Human Resources structure and Budget

The Programme Manager explained the funds allocation of the total estimated budget of USD 27 million with project implementation of four years. Furthermore, he confirmed that almost half the resource requirement of the portfolio has either been mobilized or is within the pipeline. Table 1 highlights that resources will be allocated within the 3 outcome areas over the lifespan of the portfolio.

Outcome 1	Select policymaking and oversight structures strengthened to perform core functions for improved accountability and inclusivity.	\$3.6 million
Outcome 2	Marginalized and vulnerable communities have increased and equitable access to justice, including demand-driven legal protection and gender sensitive services.	\$3.95 million
Outcome 3	National and sub-national level institutions have the capacity to deliver equitable, accountable and effective services.	\$19.5 million

Table 1: Budget allocation for targeted outcomes

The Programme Manager also presented the risk matrix and risk analysis with the respective mitigation strategies included. The risk log is mainly focused on political and economic risks. The parliament and provincial elections which will take place this year will impact the portfolio.

The governance mechanism of the portfolio consists of country project boards which is at the highest level that UNDP and government coordinating agency representatives operate. The project assurance will be carried out by the UNDP. A project implementation unit will be established to ensure UNDP’s accountability for activities, results and the use of resources, while at the same time fostering national ownership and alignment to national processes. The unit, at a minimum, comprises the heads (or their designated representatives) of the government parties, local and international NGOs and the private sector. Please refer to Annex C.

The technical specialists presented the planned activities under the 3 main outcome areas. Please refer to Annex D.

Gender Analysis, Quality Assurance and Social and Environmental screening, Results and Resource Framework and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

This interactive session was conducted by the Programme Quality & Design Analyst to introduce UNDP's Quality Assurance system to the participants and to get their feedback, based on the portfolio design document which was shared previously. Please refer to Annex E.

Discussion

Observations/Remarks

[The Secretary General, Parliament](#) acknowledged UNDP's role and contribution to improve the effectiveness of the Parliament in discharging its duties, as well as the coordination role that UNDP has played. He requested for assistance on formulating a new Action Plan because the last 3-year action plan has come to an end.

The Secretary General expressed concern that, given the broad mandate of the portfolio, whether the focus and resources received by any single institution might now be diluted. Also, there are UNDP specialists who work in Parliament and their attention should not be diluted. He further stated that it is distressing to learn that only \$800,000 out of \$27 million has been allocated to Parliament for three years. He requested to reconsider the allocation of resources for Parliament in order to carry out work without interruption or resource constraints when the portfolio is implemented. On the public access stream, Parliament will have many changes this year as a new directorate will be recruited for public access and media which requires a lot of expertise, equipment, exposure and other related requirements.

[First Secretary \(Development Cooperation\)](#), Australian High Commission stated that within this ambitious portfolio, prioritisation of interventions is necessary. Current array of activities is enormous; therefore, sufficient resources and staff are critical to deliver the expected outcomes. He pointed out the following gaps:

- The Political Economy analysis was lacking in the lessons learned section in terms of how did change occur/not occur in these projects; key learnings of UNDP's strengths and weaknesses and consequentially how this influenced the design of the portfolio. There is a theory of change gap which is not coming through as a result.
- Rationale for the portfolio approach is not strong.
- Importance of having flexibility within the portfolio to account for emerging needs and conditions on the ground as well as donor arrangements. If certain areas receive increased momentum over others, UNDP should have the ability to divert resources to those areas.
- Absence of a steering committee mechanism or a methodology behind decision making regarding shifting of resources within the portfolio.
- The Results Framework is clear and supported by comprehensive logical reasoning; however, the monitoring and evaluation plan is not adequately covered in the portfolio document. A tight feedback loop is required to track progress and resources.

[Additional Secretary, Public Service Commission](#), stated that support to the Public Services Commission is not included in the first phase of the project. As one of the first commissions responsible for the Human Resource management at the policy level while handling all issues related to Executive Officers, she requested UNDP to extend support in the future. Also, she requested technical support from UNDP particularly to develop the Public Disclosure System (among others) and capacity building of officers.

[Counsellor/ Deputy Head of Mission, Royal Norwegian Embassy](#), stated that Norway is pleased to be a partner of this ambitious flagship programme on SDG 16. It is important to design the programme with financial and programmatic flexibility to quickly respond to opportunities and evolving needs on the ground. For Norway, gender equality, good governance, access to justice, strong institutions and youth engagement are key priorities. In terms of the project boards, Norway recommended UNDP set up just one project board in keeping with the integrated programme approach.

[Additional Director, Department of National Planning](#) mentioned that all outcome areas are broad and highly recognized by the Government, as reflected in several strategic policy documents. It is imperative that the resource envelope of \$27 million is reflected in the government budget as the government is also planning some projects in similar areas where the portfolio can complement government resources. Given the 50% funds are in the pipeline, she questioned how UNDP will allocate the remaining resources gap. Activity areas are also quite broad. She pointed out that given the sensitivity of the activities and reform areas, it would be advisable to identify priorities based on resources through a consultative process to avoid duplication or overlap with government projects as there are similar initiatives executed by the government (e.g. on social protection strategy, women empowerment etc.).

[Director, Department of External Resources](#) thanked UNDP for the continuous support to the government and required clarity on how the portfolio resources will be reflected in the government budget. The Department needs to reflect UNDP figures in government accounts.

[Chief Investigation Officer, National Police Commission \(NPC\)](#) is pleased with UNDP's support which has enabled them to conduct various programmes over the last four years. NPC has been operating with a limited staff and budget and overseeing a police force of 84,000 people. UNDP has facilitated staff training, system development, public consultation as well as implementation. NPC looks forward to UNDP's continued support and resource allocation.

[Chairman, National Authority for the Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses](#) placed on record their deep appreciation for UNDP's assistance to carry forward their mandate. In 2015, the Victim and Witness Protection Law could not be implemented in full, due to logistical problems, lack of staff etc. The Authority is functioning well with UNDP's support despite initial hurdles with logistical issues related to the implementation of the Victim and Witness Protection Law. The results achieved by the National Authority are not necessarily tangible, however UNDP facilitated workshops with the police force, lawyers, judges etc. have helped to generate greater awareness on key issues.

[Assistant Director, Eastern Provincial Council](#), stated that people need to be made aware of RTI and the process of making requests for information. The Provincial Council has received only one RTI application thus far. The Language Policy should be implemented in local context, e.g. forms and documents need to be available in local languages, so that people do not feel discriminated.

[Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Mass Media](#) highlighted that the Ministry's focus in relation to the Right to Information has been on the supply side but since recently, they hope to place greater focus on the demand side (empowerment of citizens) as well. The Ministry has planned awareness campaigns for citizens, by introducing RTI to school curricula, launching media campaigns and introducing guidelines on how to obtain information from public authorities.

[Executive Director, Centre for Equality and Justice](#) stressed that it might be useful to have a mapping of what other actors are doing in these thematic areas, given the large number of stakeholders involved.

Clarifications and Responses

The UNDP Resident Representative assured the government partners that all proposed activities under the outcome areas described in the portfolio will be discussed with the government partners, prior to implementation. In terms of fund management, UNDP will liaise with the Department of External Resources to ensure that all contributions from UNDP are adequately reflected in government records. The UNDP Resident Representative assured that the portfolio has been designed with substantive and financial flexibility, with consultation of donors during this process and close coordination with the government. As per the rules and guidelines, the project boards do have the authority to redirect projects on moving forward.

UNDP's Policy & Design Specialist highlighted that the theory of change of the portfolio has moved from institution-based support in the previous approach to increasing the connection between people and institutions. The new system will consider the needs and capabilities of the people on the ground, particularly focusing on groups who are largely excluded from the mainstream development processes in the country. These excluded groups, identified by examining human development indices on vulnerability, gender and disability- based indices, etc., will be connected with the institutions that are mandated to provide basic essential services.

In response to comments from the Australian High Commission regarding the value of a portfolio-based approach, UNDP's Policy & Design Specialist explained that in previous phases, UNDP had 18 separate projects in its Governance and Peacebuilding cluster, which required planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting processes to be carried out separately for each individual project, as well as formulation of annual work plans and budget revisions, which had to be done at least twice a year for every individual project. Given that the portfolio will have only three projects, these processes can now be carried out in a much more manageable way. Due to the fluid political landscape and frequent changes to ministerial structures and institutions, it was challenging to keep pace with developments on the ground which was further compounded by the high volume of projects. The portfolio helps by making this process more streamlined, and enables a more integrated approach, with a cohesive framework, where all the projects are closely interlinked.

The outputs under the portfolio have been made deliberately broad so that, over time, UNDP can work with the relevant sectoral institutions to break down these outputs into specific activities. UNDP has deliberately not included specific details about its approach and interventions, because finding solutions to stubborn development challenges requires an iterative process, where solutions themselves change over time. UNDP needs to avoid the previous 'once-size-fits-all' approach and instead, will work with development partners, communities and end-users to prototype and test new development solutions and apply them, based on contextual developments.

The M&E framework of the portfolio also has in-built flexibility; UNDP is currently in the process of setting baselines and targets. This will be done in consultation with the partners. Project board meetings will be held to further refine the targets.

In response to comments from the Eastern Provincial Council, the Policy & Design Specialist clarified that on RTI, UNDP's focus has been on the supply side of information disclosure, in terms of

improving an institution's ability to supply information and the Commissions' ability to address appeals. UNDP's arrangements with CSOs that work more on the demand side have reduced the need for direct engagement on this. UNDP has however, supported the development of overall guidelines and manuals and conducted Training of Trainers programmes to assist with the demand side. UNDP has recognised the language policy in cross cutting areas and will ensure the work of UNDP will be available in all three official languages.

In response to the Centre for Equality and Justice, the Policy & Design Specialist confirmed that a basic mapping of governance institutions already exists, and that UNDP will build on this as work on the portfolio gets underway. UNDP is working with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office to develop a strategy for engaging with CSOs, which will also contribute to UNDP's work through the portfolio.

Key decisions/Next steps

Portfolio management arrangements are complex given the nature of the following three outcome areas.

<i>Outcome 1</i>	<i>Outcome 2</i>	<i>Outcome 3</i>
Parliament & Commissions	Ministries, Departments, NGOs	Public Sector and Local Governance

The outcomes are too broad to handle in a large forum. In addition, UNDP has brought in the partners they are currently working with. Membership and participation partnerships should be examined for each outcome area.

The Parliament has an advisory board, which has been an effective mechanism of governance, especially in terms of getting the political actors involved. UNDP will continue with that board for the parliament and have a separate board for the commissions, given the independent status of the commissions. For the other outcome areas, UNDP is considering having 2 separate project boards, with the technical organisations involved.

UNDP requested the members to provide further comments within the week in order to finalise the portfolio document. UNDP will later work with the key stakeholders in drilling down on each output area to identify indicative activities. UNDP will have follow-up meetings internally to incorporate the comments in the portfolio document as it is being finalised.

Approved:



Jorn Sorensen,
Resident Representative

Date: 8 April 2019