

# **Evaluation of the UNDP/DPKO-DFS/DPA Project on UN Transitions in Mission Settings**

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## Glossary of Terms

CDI - Côte d'Ivoire
CO – Country Office
DPA – Department of Political Affairs
DPET – Policy, Evaluation and Training Division
DPKO – Department for Peacekeeping Operations
DPO - Department of Peace Operations (to be created)
DPPA - Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (to be created)
DRC - Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSRSG – Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General
HC- Humanitarian Coordinator
HQ – Headquarters
MS – Member States
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
PBC – Peace Building Commission
PBF – Peace Building Fund
PBSO – Peace Building Support Office
PDA – Peace and Development Advisors
PMT – Project Management Team
PSC – Project Steering Committee
RC – Resident Coordinator
RCO – Resident Coordinator's Office
SIDA – Swedish International Cooperation Agency
SG – Secretary General
SRSG – Special Representative of the Secretary General
TS – Transition Specialist
SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UNCT – United Nations Country Office
UN-DOCO - the UN Development Operations Coordination Office
UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UN-EOSG - Executive Office of the Secretary General
UN-WGT - UN Working Group on Transitions
USD – United States Dollars

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In response to increased requests from UN field presences for transition-related support, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) initiated a joint project in 2014 that seeks to ensure that UN transition processes are planned and managed in a proactive, gradual and integrated manner, thereby supporting the sustainability of peacebuilding achievements.
2. The project identified an overall project outcome: UN transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient with reduced transaction costs, and more effective through better support to host countries. It subsequently identified four outputs:
  - The transition process in Liberia, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire and DRC well managed including through the use of integrated coordination mechanisms, and the UN team positioned to implement medium and long-term peace consolidation activities;
  - Transition planning and management capacities of UN leadership and staff strengthened;
  - Integration of transition-related lessons and best practices into guidance; and
  - Briefings to Member States consistently include references to UN transition guidelines, principles, lessons learned, and good practices.
3. The evaluation examined the work undertaken between 2014 – 2017 and assessed:
  - i) Whether key project deliverables were met;
  - ii) The demand for integrated support to UN transition processes,
  - iii) The project infrastructure and how it supported project implementation; and
  - iv) The impact of the project on UN transition processes in priority countries, as well as at Headquarters.

### Findings

4. The project is not a standard 'development' project and one of very few joint projects between UNDP, DPA, and DPKO. In its spirit and function it is thus in line with the thinking of the new Secretary-General (SG), as well as the recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO, 2015) and the Report of The Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (AGE, 2015), which call for more integrated responses across the political, security and development pillars. The project has worked on the assumption that if the three entities involved were to work together both at Headquarters and in the field, transition processes would improve and in particular to enhance the joint analytical and planning capacity in country.
5. There is empirical evidence that technical and operational support to UN transitions in the field is relevant and effective. Learning from such support has been beneficial to those involved, particularly at country level.
6. The project was timely and has helped raise awareness that support to transitions increase the likelihood that they run smoother, experience less resistance and increase sustained support to peacebuilding in country - laying the ground for future sustainable development.

7. In particular its support through Transition Specialists (TS), surge capacity and expert field visits has led to concrete results such as the elaboration of transition plans and other documents that support transitions. Such support has been catalytic in drawing attention to, and enabling the conversation on, transitions both from a planning and a programmatic perspective. Transition plans bring to the fore the critical peacebuilding gaps that result from mission drawdown or closure.
8. At times it has been challenging to find the right capacity to support countries and deploy TS in a timely manner, but the project team managed to find alternatives to ensure that support to the transition planning would not slow down. The actual placement of the TS in a country can pose a dilemma: Is the person best placed in UNDP, which given its mandate has the largest peacebuilding portfolio in country, or should this person be part of the Resident Coordinators Office who leads the UN Country Team?
9. Through its different activities the project has contributed to raising awareness and facilitating discussions on the need to start planning for transitions at an early stage and respond to or anticipate Security Council resolutions. Transition planning needs to be better aligned to, and positioned in, integrated planning processes both in terms of substance and in sequencing activities of the transition plan. This means that the TS needs to receive strategic support and buy-in from the UN leadership in country in order to succeed.
10. The organization-wide UN policy on transitions (2013) and the UNDP guidance on transitions (2014) are relevant, but need to be updated to reflect results from this project.
11. The project suffered from insufficient visibility within the three entities at Headquarters, including their leadership and the UN at large, including the Member States. The effectiveness of its information sharing with Member States needs to be improved.
12. Lessons learned documents are useful, contribute to Knowledge Management but the evaluation found limited evidence that they are effectively used or that they provide relevant information to its readers. This is partly due to an ineffective dissemination mechanism.
13. Training courses and capacity building efforts have been relevant and useful to increase transition-related expertise in the organization. They created a first level of critical mass within the UN where staff and management acquire knowledge and skills, which they can apply to improving transition planning and tackle the challenges inherent in transition planning.
14. Project implementation has been flexible and the project steering committee, in consultation with the project management team, has adapted the project to adjust to challenges and opportunities. The project management team has adequately fulfilled its tasks and has been flexible in responding to the demands from countries and Headquarters. Transition processes are, however, not limited to the three entities and the project's strategic relevance will increase if the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBSO, PBC, PBF) and the EOSG are more directly involved.
15. The advisory role of project staff and TSs have raised awareness of the complexity of UN transitions as a process (political, operational and technical) and reduced the perception that UN transitions equal a 'handover' between mission and the UNCT.

16. Gender as a concept, including a methodology to apply it to transitions, has been absent from the work. There are, however, gender sensitive elements in transition plans. There is little guidance or understanding how gender can be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

17. SIDA has agreed to extend the project beyond the end of 2017 for another two years with the same focus and in order to ensure that integrated transition planning and management is firmly anchored in the organization in the longer term. Achieving this requires the creation of operational support to countries preparing a UN transition and ensuring that UN transition planning is integrating in policy, planning and reform processes as recently elaborated by the SG. The latter creates an important window of opportunity to enhance the strategic relevance of the work and ensure that UN transition planning will be reflected in regular UN structures and budgets.

18. On the operational side the second stage of the project needs to:

- a. Continue support to countries if and where required. In Haiti, a new two-year mission has started and support for the duration of the new mission would allow the project to collect evidence on how operational support to a transition for the entire duration of a mission can consolidate planning processes and contribute to a smoother transition.
- b. Create a talent pool of staff/consultants that can support transitions, including through rapid short-term deployment. This would reduce the time of deployment, increase the expertise levels of those deployed, and ensure more types of skills are readily available. The project should consider TS to serve several countries at a time.
- c. Expand the tool box in support of UN leadership in transition countries and reserve time to conduct research, or contribute to research, on transitions including in response to new themes that emerge from the SG's initiated reforms.
- d. Consider tailor-made trainings to a broader audience that contribute to UN transitions, including other entities that are working in country.
- e. Develop a proactive, coherent, and flexible advocacy and outreach strategy to disseminate results of the project and broaden the audience to target strategic offices in the UN, the UNCT, development partners and other interested parties. This could include UN transition notes for different audiences at different levels in the UN to increase the visibility of the project and contribute to strategic discussions. A communications strategy could help effective targeting.
- f. Given the above, UNDP needs to create a window of support to transition planning in the Strategic Policy Team in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support by increasing staff time and agree with other project partners on the human and financial resources needed and develop a cost sharing model.

19. On the strategic side the second phase of the project needs to:

- a. Review the UN Transition Policy and consider incorporating all aspects of UN transitions, including start-ups and scaling up. Consider how the EOSG office can reflect this policy in Planning Directives and strategic decision making. Review the UNDP guidance document and consider how it can be made relevant for the wider UNCT.

- b. Lobby for the anchoring of dedicated transition capacity at the strategic, as well as the operational levels, and financed through regular budget mechanisms.
- c. Undertake research and seek support to introduce gender in the project outputs and in the substance of the work on UN Transitions.
- d. Initiate discussions with UN training institutes to enable a handover of the training in order to make the training sustainable and part of the institute's curriculum. Consider how learning and support can be organized interactively among different staff and management.
- e. Explore the capturing, sharing, and use of knowledge on transitions through the development of a knowledge management strategy on transitions.
- f. Develop a communication strategy to provide UN transition information upstream to the UN EOSG, other UN strategic bodies, including those that are part of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.

## 1. Description of the project

1. UN transitions are high on the agenda, as a number of peacekeeping and special political missions are currently planning for (or undergoing) drawdown, reconfiguration and/or withdrawal processes that greatly affect the presence and work of the UN system. In response to increased requests from UN field presences for transition related support, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), and the Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) initiated a joint project in 2014 that seeks to ensure that UN transition processes are planned and managed in a proactive, gradual and integrated manner - thereby supporting the sustainability of peacebuilding achievements.

2. DPKO and DPA had collaborated on UN transitions prior to the project though lessons learned exercises undertaken in Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone, as well as support to the UN mission in Burundi. The drafting of the UN transition policy and the UNDP guidelines on UN transitions started before this project, however the project itself was an institutional response to support the work that would be required under the policy. Moreover, UNDP also partnered with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' on the publication 'Beyond Transitions'.<sup>1</sup> All of this work was funded by the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through its regular support to the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

3. The project seeks to ensure that UN transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient, with reduced transaction costs, as well as more effective through better support to the UN and national actors in host countries. This will in turn support the sustainability of peacebuilding achievements and longer term development. The Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown and Withdrawal, endorsed by the Secretary-General in February 2013, formed the basis for the project proposal.<sup>2</sup>

4. The project was designed to continue and better structure the work among the three entities, in particular to enhance the joint analytical and planning capacity in country, based on the Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning.<sup>3</sup> The policy clearly states that there should be: 'A joint analytical and planning capacity to share assessments and analyses and develop, update, and monitor integrated planning frameworks. All entities that are part of the integrated presence should either be represented in, or seek to otherwise contribute to, the joint analytical and planning capacity'.<sup>4</sup> The project's primary support to this capacity is the deployment of Transition Specialists (TS), surge support and expert visits.<sup>5</sup>

5. The priority countries identified in the project were Burundi, Liberia, Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These priority countries were chosen based on the likelihood that a UN transition process was either underway or would take place in these countries

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond Transitions: UNDP's role before, during and after UN mission withdrawal. Megan Price and Lina Titulaer. Conflict Research Unit, The Clingendael Institute. The Hague. September 2013

<sup>2</sup> Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal. This Policy was endorsed by the Secretary-General on 4 February 2013 following its endorsement by the Integration Steering Group.

<sup>3</sup> At field level, integrated UN presences are required to put in place mechanisms for joint information-sharing, analysis, planning, decision-making, coordination and monitoring. Existing mechanisms should be used where appropriate and specific and enhanced mechanisms during transitions should be considered.

<sup>4</sup> Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning, Approved by: The Secretary-General on 09 April 2013 Following endorsement by the Integration Steering Group<sup>4</sup> on 15 March 2013 and by the United Nations Development Group on 13 March section I. Requirement 3: Integrated mechanisms, paragraph 58. No pages.

<sup>5</sup> Transition Specialists are temporary staff hired under the project while surge support and expert field visits were provided through the three entities or the project team members.

during the duration of the project. Sierra Leone was included in the first year of the project to conduct a lessons learned exercise and report on the transition completed in 2014. No actual support was provided to this country.

6. The project was developed to include an overall project outcome and four outputs that contributing to the outcome, as elaborated below:

**Table 1 Table 1: Outcome and outputs of the project**

<b>Outcome: UN Transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient with reduced transaction costs and more effective through better support to host countries.</b>	
Output 1	The transition process in Liberia, Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire and DRC well managed including through the use of integrated coordination mechanisms, and the UN team positioned to implement medium and long-term peace consolidation activities.
Output 2	Transition planning and management capacities of UN leadership and staff strengthened.
Output 3	Integration of transition-related lessons and best practices into guidance.
Output 4	Briefings to Member States consistently include references to UN transition guidelines, principles, lessons, and good practices.

7. The project’s initial budget was USD 2,897,120 in total over three years that increased with approximately USD 200,000 in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Other donors took an interest in the project, which served as a vehicle to undertake additional work. The project was extended – at no cost – by six months and will close at the end of 2017. It is anticipated that the next project extension will be for two years immediately following the closure of phase one.

**1.1 The situation evolved during the project lifetime**

8. The situations in the countries receiving support from the project evolved, and thus the activities and milestones had to be adapted. This also meant that the project team had to respond to new and emerging needs. In some instances this took time, and the project team provided surge capacity and expert field visits to ensure that support to the UN in these countries did not slow down. The project was flexible from the start, as changes in the countries could not be anticipated in advance during the design of the project.

9. The deployment of Transition Specialists (TS) proved to be challenging in some instances. Specialists were deployed timely to Haiti and DRC, while for Burundi the decision was taken to support the desk in DPA Headquarters focussing more on implementation than on planning. The deployment of the TS to Liberia was delayed because of the outbreak of Ebola, and in Côte d’Ivoire the preferred

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<sup>6</sup> This funded the Independent review of Agencies, Funds and Programmes to support Sustaining Peace called for in the reports of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts (2015 review of the UN Peacebuilding) ) from 2015, and endorsed by the Secretary-General. The Government of Norway contributed to the same review with USD 70,083 and additional USD 123,265 for the mapping of UN Prevention Capacities also produced by the Overseas Development Institute for the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Switzerland contributed USD 133,509 and USD 45,000 respectively to the production of the joint United Nations – World Bank report “Pathways for Peace – inclusive approaches to preventing violent conflict”. Global consultations contributing to the report was facilitated through the project with this support.

candidate was no longer available. In most cases the project team managed to respond adequately, including through surge support and expert field visits. In some instances, a TS was also temporarily deployed to another country.

10. Some project milestones were changed during the implementation to better respond to evolving demands from project priority countries. The changes were determined annually and based on an assessment of organizational needs and opportunities.

11. Since the inception of the project, transitions have gained even more visibility and importance across the UN organization. The reason for this is twofold: they are one of the key priorities on the agenda of the new Secretary-General (SG), and further transitions are anticipated in several countries in the near future. In its spirit and function, the project is in line with the recommendations of the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO,2015) and the Report of The Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (AGE,2015).<sup>7</sup> Both reports call for more integrated responses across the UN political, security and development pillars.

12. Lastly, the proposed reforms by the SG will affect the way in which transitions are prepared and supported, including through the creation of new entities in the organization. As such the transition landscape will further evolve.

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. 16 June 2015. Report of The Advisory Group Of Experts for The 2015 Review of The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture. The Challenge of Sustaining Peace, 29 June 2015

## **2. Evaluation: Purpose and Scope, Methodology and Limitations**

### **2.1 Evaluation Purpose**

The project team has commissioned an external evaluation of the UNDP/DPKO-DFS/DPA Project on UN Transitions in Mission Settings. For the Terms of Reference, please see Annex 1.

13. This evaluation has a dual purpose:

1) **Accountability:** the evaluation aims to provide evidence to the donor about the extent to which the project achieved its objectives and illustrate that the project provides a good return on investment.

2) **Learning:** the evaluation aims to improve how the project partners provide integrated support on transitions. To this end, the evaluation should be forward-looking and, based on the findings, contribute to the project extension.

14. The evaluation findings and the way forward are expected to be used by both the donor, the project team and other interested parties such as Member States (MS).

### **2.2 Evaluation Scope**

15. The evaluation examined the work undertaken between 2014 – 2017 through the project's four-pronged approach:

(1) Direct support to field presences engaged in a transition processes;

(2) Capacity building to increase planning skills and other capacities related to transitions;

(3) Identifying, capturing and sharing lessons learned and good practices and developing/improving guidance; and

(4) Engaging in dialogue with Member States on the challenges and experiences encountered in UN transitions.

16. The present evaluation aims to assist decision-making and suggest corrective action by providing evidence-based findings and contribute to the formulation and implementation of the next phase of the project.

### **2.3 Methodology**

17. The assignment consisted of three phases, including an inception phase, data collection phase and a synthesis and analytical phase. A kick off meeting was organized at the beginning of the work in order to discuss the content of the project. A stakeholder analysis was undertaken to support the elaboration of the data collection tools (see annex 2 for the analysis).

18. The data collection methodology included:

- Document review

- Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in New York using an interview questionnaire responding to the evaluation criteria. An interview with the responsible staff in SIDA, Stockholm. For a list of people met in New York, see Annex 3. <sup>8</sup>
- Interviews with Transition Specialists (current and former) and a selection of stakeholders in each of the countries.
- Interviews in Liberia, which served as a case study, since the transition is on-going, a TS is deployed and key interlocutors were still available. For a list of people met in Liberia see Annex 4.
- A survey prepared for staff and management from the three different entities DPKO-DFS, DPA, UNDP and others – such as from the regional offices and the EOSG who have participated in the different trainings that the project organised.

Table 2: Stakeholders in the project and survey response

Suggested Category of stakeholders based on the stakeholder analysis.	Estimated number of interviews	Interviews held and survey response
Stakeholders based in New York, including management, Member States, The Integrated Operational Teams in DPKO, the Regional Bureaus in UNDP and the country desks in DPA, other relevant Peace and Transition related entities and their staff as well as those who received briefings.	20	25
Skype Interviews.		6
Transition specialists and key stakeholders in country, including UN mission/UNCT, other beneficiaries.	4 in 4 countries	4 Transition Specialists and their current or former superior
Liberia, transition expert, UN mission/UNCT, other beneficiaries.	15 – 20	35+ (some group discussions)
Survey sent to staff and management who participated in the training.	93	40 (43 % of people responded)

## 2.4 Limitations

19. Various limitations affected the data collection and thus the basis for the evidence in support of the findings:

- Limitations in assessing impact.

The ToR requests impact assessment of the project. Since the project is about to close in a few months, it is challenging to come to an overall impact assessment of the work undertaken – particularly because intended and unintended effects may occur beyond the project’s ending. Impact could also be coincidental and not systematic as a result of context specific circumstances in the focus countries. The

<sup>8</sup> Interviews in New York and in Liberia were with UN staff and management

project evaluation will discuss impact as “intended and unintended results of the project” in chapter eight.

- Limitations in data collection.

The survey response was 43 percent and its results can only be used to support findings from the document review, interviews and to illustrate to what extent the outputs have been achieved and discuss suggestions from respondents looking forward. The survey results are integrated in discussing the outputs below.

### 3. Results of the four Outputs

20. The reporting on the activities and milestones of the four outputs for this report is per fiscal year, and for each output an overview of achievements has been prepared based on the identified milestones in the results framework. Milestones were added in the course of the work and also for the extension of the project. New milestones are reflected in the annexes, and in some instances lead to an additional activity and thus workload. This flexibility has contributed to sustaining the relevance and effectiveness of each output.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.1 Output 1

**Output 1: The transition process in Liberia, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire and DRC well managed including through the use of integrated coordination mechanisms, and the UN team positioned to implement medium and long-term peace consolidation activities.**

21. This output constitutes about two-thirds of the overall project costs. The key activities in this output include strengthening planning capacity of UNDP in particular, and UN teams in general, and integrated coordination mechanisms for transition planning in-country and at Headquarters through i) Transition Specialists and ii) joint expert visits and surge capacity.<sup>10</sup>

##### Findings:

22. Transition Specialists fill an important gap in integrated planning capacity for Resident Coordinators Offices (RCO) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) where planning capacity is often limited<sup>11</sup> and their bridge function between the UN mission and the UNCT is critical. One of their key assets is that they can bring different actors from management and technical staff of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes together around one theme: UN transition in a country. Their coordination function - building relationships with the relevant stakeholders - is considerable both in terms of substance (elaborating the Plan and other documents that support it) and in demanding time from technical staff and management. This process is time consuming and necessary in order to increase the relevance of the transition plan to its contributors, and to ensure that it remains relevant while circumstances and context change.

23. The deployment of dedicated capacity to help the UNCT with transition planning has been a significant contribution to transition planning in country at a time when there was little attention to transitions and their challenges. The outputs include detailed transition plans, and/or other related documents, to help plan and prepare implementation of transitions.

24. The output has achieved to improve transition processes in all the countries mentioned above, although in different forms and with different kinds of support modalities. The latter were dependent on what the needs were, the availability and timely deployment of capacity and the changes that occurred over time.

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<sup>9</sup> The results framework for the project starts with a baseline in July 2014 and moves forward with milestones per July 2016 since the donor preferred annual milestones. Therefore, the reporting reflects different periods. The project, however, had a no cost extension of six months until the end of 2017 and an additional set of milestones was developed.

<sup>10</sup> short term visits can include lessons learned activities, facilitating workshops and providing analytical and subject matter feedback while the latter is short to medium term deployment to contribute to the development of key transition-related products

<sup>11</sup> The standard allocation for RCOs in mission context is funding for a P5 and a P3.

25. The support to the countries has been completed in Burundi and Sierra Leone and is ongoing in Liberia, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire. In some instances, the project team had to identify alternative types of support since the key support modality - the deployment of Transition Specialists – was challenging in terms of recruitment. This was due to the combination of very specialist expertise and skills required, as well as the difficulty of ensuring timely deployment. See Annex 5 for an overview.

26. Transition plans and related documents added value to the planning process, including for the provision of guidance, processes for building consensus, elaborating joint programming, provoking discussions on funding, and defining sequencing of the transition plan activities. The development of the transition plan in general brings forward thinking in terms of identifying challenges and how to tackle them in the transition planning and implementation.

### **Transition Specialists**

27. In Haiti and DRC, the Transition Specialists were deployed as planned, while in Liberia the deployment was delayed and in Côte d'Ivoire an alternative solution for support was found. Interviewees, in all cases, suggested that deployment should ideally be as early as a Security Council's decision on transition in a country is taken. In other words, support to transition planning cannot start early enough through specialised and expert support.

28. When the project started, in some of the countries the transition process was already underway. As a result, in some cases the Transition Specialists came in later than the actual start of the preparation for the transition. This meant that the start-up of their work, mobilizing support and getting commitment to jointly produce a transition plan and related documents was challenging. Interviewees consider the timing of deployment, along with other types of support, to be critical as the key role of TS is to provide guidance and support to UNDP, the wider UNCT and for the joint analytical and planning capacity of the UN in country.

29. The seniority of the post and where it is anchored impact the acceptance of such staff in the field. The Specialists themselves point out that it takes time to mobilize support to kick off the planning process. In most cases the level of the post, P4, was considered too low to generate the required support from other UN staff members. While the post should preferably be at P5 level<sup>12</sup> and located in the RC/DSRSG office - since this serves the entire UNCT – it was also felt that the SRSRSG would need to provide strategic direction to the transition plan. This would enhance the cooperation between the mission and the UNCT, which is critical if the TS is to succeed.

30. Where Transition Specialists were posted in UNDP (DRC and in Haiti 50% in UNDP and 50% in the RCO) they filled a critical planning gap, since no UNCT member has planning capacity for transitions.<sup>13</sup> Being the agency in the UNCT that is expected to continue the bulk of peacebuilding support in the post-mission phase, this lack of capacity critically affects UNDP. Unlike the RCO and missions, UNDP does not have dedicated planning capacity beyond country programme planning. However, posting a TS in UNDP can undermine broader buy-in from the UN mission, as well as other UNCT members. It is perceived as beneficial to UNDP, which is justified given UNDP's mandate, but non UNDP respondents felt that they should benefit too. This led to a great majority of interviewees suggesting that the TS should be posted in the RCO. Therefore the posting can lead to a potential dilemma, can the TS best fulfil her/his role in UNDP or the RCO? The posting location affects the extent

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<sup>12</sup> P5 level is considered high in an RCO office in comparison to other posts and could create some inequality among staff

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of the deployment of Transition Specialists, please see Output 1, annex 5 in the separate annex document

to which the TS can contribute effectively to transition planning, preparing the transition plan and achieving effective and efficient cooperation with mission and non-mission colleagues.

31. Transition Specialists consider the UN policy on UN transitions and UNDP transition guidance relevant and helpful. They are in agreement that both need to be reviewed and updated, while the question was also raised about whether and how guidance might be written to focus on the entire UNCT.

32. Surge support and expert field visits from Headquarters and the project team have been relevant. Such support can reinvigorate transition processes and also support the TS in country. In some cases, countries would have preferred to have that support earlier. A few times interviewees suggested that the support was somewhat 'Headquarters oriented', and that the cooperation among the three entities in Headquarters is very different from what occurs in a field situation. At the same time, such support has given a boost to the in-country process of working on the transition plan. In particular, when the process had slowed down or when a specific part of the plan needed additional support.

### **Transition Plans**

33. As mentioned before, in some instances the TS arrived at a moment when the transition was already underway, and thus the transition plan was developed based on an ongoing planning process. While the value added of the plan is recognised by all interviewees, they also felt that the development of a transition plan needs to be included in the Security Council's mandate on reconfiguration, drawdown or closure – and start even before the SC decision is final. In other words, any change in the UN mission and presence needs to include reference to a transition plan. This implies that the preparation for the transition process should be recognized at an earlier moment in time – something that is not always the case. References in SC Resolutions to joint integrated and transition planning could provoke early planning, something that the interviewees consider critical. In the case of the UNOCI transition, the Security Council asked the Mission to help strengthen UNCT capacities to ensure that peacebuilding gains would be consolidated in the post-mission phase. This is considered best practice and should be replicated in future transitions.

34. It has proven challenging to build ownership in country for the transition plan. The mission and the UNCT have different perspectives and interests on transition planning. It was frequently mentioned that mission's interest in the transition beyond their presence is limited, given that they will drawdown and/or leave and do not share the concerns regarding challenges that the UNCT will face after drawdown and closure. In addition, most Security Council resolutions do not include 'transition language', meaning that the transition ends up being framed as a 'hand-over of tasks or responsibilities'. This has also affected finding the 'right balance' in the transition plan between what the mission does during scale down and before closure, and the forwarding looking prioritisation that takes the mandates, capacities and approach (business model) of the UNCT into consideration. It is a given that the UNCT has limited capacity and resources when compared to the mission, and therefore cannot perform the same tasks and duties. This creates a gap where the gains of the mission may be undermined or undone, in particular when a UN mission closes and leaves the UNCT without any logistical support to continue peacebuilding. In Liberia, for example, the transition plan is subject to a kind of 'negotiation' based on what the UN mission considers necessary, while the UNCT would like to respond to the UN mission's departure based on what they consider realistic and the resources that

are available to them. Given that the UNCT has less resources than the UN mission this puts them in an impossible position: they cannot continue the same level of support to the country that the UN mission was able to provide. This results in a subsequent gap between these two visions.

35. The planning process for the transition is very country-specific and as earlier mentioned the timing of the deployment of the TS is critical. It is not always clear how the transition planning process links with other planning processes in-country or at Headquarters. Interviewees felt that both at the policy and planning levels, this needs to be further clarified so that the various planning processes are coherent. This would include linking the UN Policy on Transitions to the Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) process, as well as the peacebuilding architecture. Coherence and integration across these planning processes would avoid duplication and underline that the transition plan is a country-based tool to ensure a smooth transition process.

36. The transition plan in itself, however, is perceived as an additional product that creates value added by drawing attention to the transition and pulling all the different perspectives together in one plan. While those who have been immediately involved and contributed to transition plans feel a great deal of ownership, this may not be the case for the entire mission, the UNCT and Headquarters. In addition, it was mentioned frequently that the PBSO is not sufficiently involved to support transition processes, and in particular to align plans or build upon ongoing or planned activities in regions and countries.<sup>14</sup>

37. In Liberia, the transition plan includes a matrix which assigns a lead on the plan's priorities before and after mission closure, and elaborates joint programmatic work among UNCT members in response to country priorities expressed in the plan.

38. 'Finding the right balance' has also led to a change in language. The project team, the TS and others in-country prefer to avoid the phrase 'hand-over of tasks' that has been commonly used, while the Security Council resolutions often use the word 'transfer'. Both indicate the same. The Plan, including the Transition Policy, demonstrates that it is not just a hand-over of tasks but rather a response to a different UN configuration and presence. This will require realigning the UNCT and Headquarters' readiness, including DPA Regional Offices, to respond to immediate peacebuilding needs, and good offices, based on available capacity and funding.<sup>15</sup>

39. Given that most plans address the gaps that are identified as a result of the mission changing or leaving, the challenges increase when funding for UNCT programmes and government buy-in is not yet ensured. In addition, mission closure gives the impression that the UN's remaining presence is devoid of explicit UN political leadership and engagement as expressed in SC's resolutions. The SG, however, through DPA continues to maintain political engagement and leadership through its regional offices, special envoys, etc.

40. The absence of political accompaniment in the transition planning process after mission closure has been a key concern, since such support ensures that the most pressing needs are recognized both by government and the UNCT. Political accompaniment can contribute to ensuring progress in peacebuilding and avoiding the erosion of previous gains. In Liberia, the so called 'extended

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<sup>14</sup> PBSO has no presence in country but the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has presence in countries it supports. Given the PBF's focus on peacebuilding through different kind of support modalities working closely with the PBF in terms of its programmes would be mutually beneficial and could also avoid duplication.

<sup>15</sup> Other terminology includes: reconfiguration of the UN presence; transformation of the UN presence; UNCT resuming responsibility jointly with government to implement priority needs; the evolution of UN political engagement through DPA Regional Offices, etc. Such terminology expresses the *process* of the Transition not just 'lowering the flag'.

Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)<sup>16</sup> provides the opportunity for political engagement after mission closure, including more staffing for specific relevant posts in the post-UN mission presence. This has been welcomed and provides opportunities to ensure that the transition plan remains relevant and can indeed be implemented.

41. In the context of the absence of political accompaniment, concerns were expressed that the transition plan is too mechanical, focussing on UN needs that are not sufficiently embedded in the political reality of the country and how that could change (rapidly) over time, including once a mission has left. Although political analysis is often undertaken at the beginning of the transition plan, it may lack the continued relevance once political changes occur and priorities change. This is why most interviewees consider the posting of the TS in the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG)/RCO as the best option to ensure adaptations as they occur. In addition, the transition plan serving as an intermediary between mission drawdown/closure and the existing (or to be developed) country strategy - the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) – means that the plan needs to be flexible and open. Interviewees felt that plans need to have a well-articulated purpose stipulating who the owner and client is. In addition, they felt that given that the plan is exposed to a level of unpredictability, continued discussion in-country is needed about when the plan becomes obsolete – both in terms of planning and implementation by mutual agreement amongst the parties involved.

42. Interviewees assert that transition plans should follow SC resolutions, and as such need to be seen as supporting their implementation. In the case of Liberia, for example, the United Nations Integrated Transition Plan is following the Peacebuilding Plan that was endorsed by the SC and it follows the same timeline to optimise planning.<sup>17</sup> Transition plans identify critical peacebuilding needs beyond the date of withdrawal or closure of the UN mission, and in some cases (like Liberia) include an overview of the programmatic transition peacebuilding priorities, their costs, deadlines, responsible parties and milestones. In addition, capacity assessments of the UNCT - such as in Liberia as mandated by SCR 2333 - have provided a 'reality check' of the extent to which the UNCT can assume the responsibilities for key peacebuilding work after the mission closes. The capacity assessment has been relevant, timely and of strategic value.<sup>18</sup> It puts capacity and funding for programmes at the heart of the transition discussion.

43. Developing a transition plan in the context of elections (Liberia and Haiti) is challenging since governments change and thus their buy-in will potentially fluctuate with unpredictability. Respondents recommended that it is not advisable to develop transition plans in the context of elections since the timing of the latter and their outcome could undermine the effectiveness of transition planning. This process is currently ongoing, at the time of writing, in Liberia where a run off of the elections is to be expected shortly and the new administration will need to take notice of the plan and commit to it. In this context, it was suggested that the implementation of the plan is also dependent on the capacity of the new administration that will become responsible for the implementation of the peacebuilding plan upon which the transition plan itself is built. Some interviewees suggest that a capacity assessment of the administration is equally important in adopting and implementing the plan. This line

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<sup>16</sup> This terminology stems from the recent UNSG reform agenda where reinforced RCOs could fill the political accompaniment gap, including reformulating the RC's mandate.

<sup>17</sup> Final Draft. Sustaining Peace and Securing Development Liberia Peacebuilding Plan, March 20, 2017. This plan was endorsed by the Security Council.

<sup>18</sup> A project team member was part of the assessment team.

of thought takes the perspective that it is government that assumes responsibility for peacebuilding and the UNCT supports government in doing so.

44. Transition plans are often perceived as UN centric by the respondents. The project focussed on the UN *internal* business model and presence in a country that changes: when a UN mission is reconfigured, draws down or is closed. Respondents felt that while the Plan is the key instrument that supports the transition processes in a country, others should be included in the elaboration of such plans. While it is clear that the UN needs to agree internally on what the plan should entail and how it could be implemented, many interviewees suggested that the Plan should be shared at an earlier stage, including with government, regional entities<sup>19</sup>, development partners, international and national NGOs. Respondents pointed to the risk that sharing the Plan at a later stage of the transition preparation could be seen as a resource mobilization strategy for the UNCT. UNCT's will usually have considerable fewer resources than a UN mission after closure or reconfiguration. This has led some to suggest that the transition itself should receive resources, including assessed funding from the mission.<sup>20</sup> Some interviewees point out that this is difficult to achieve since Member States are reluctant to provide funds after mission closure. They claim that this is somewhat 'short-sighted' since the peacebuilding does not stop with mission closure or reconfiguration – an often heard opinion - and transition funding could help in preventing relapse into conflict. Currently, the implementation of the plan and its related costs are entirely the responsibility of the UNCT, and many fear that voluntary contributions will not cover the most pressing peacebuilding needs.<sup>21</sup>

45. Gender and Human Rights are included in plans and related documents. While both gender and human rights are addressed in terms of substantive parts of plans in these areas, as well as addressing gender and human rights in different priorities, there is limited evidence that Plans are fully gender sensitive or human rights based. The key challenge is to apply some methodology that applies gender and human rights across the transition plan and peacebuilding priorities. In the case of Liberia, the human rights based approach has been fully applied and included in the narrative of the Plan.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, a representation of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights will be established (OHCHR) in Liberia which ensures that there is strategic attention to human rights after the mission leaves.

## 3.2 Output 2

### **Output 2: Transition planning and management capacities of UN leadership and staff strengthened.**

#### **Findings:**

46. This output includes training to strengthen planning and management capacity of UN staff and also includes briefings of additional Headquarters and field staff on transition-related guidance.

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<sup>19</sup> For example, regional entities such as UNOWAS and ECOWAS

<sup>20</sup> Assessed contributions are obligatory payments made by member states to finance the U.N. regular budget and peacekeeping operations. Assessed contributions to the regular budget from member states are largely based on per capita income, with a floor of 0.001 percent to ensure that even the poorest countries contribute something.

<sup>21</sup> Voluntary contributions are entirely left to the discretion of individual Member States

<sup>22</sup> A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. See: <http://hrbportal.org/faq/what-is-a-human-rights-based-approach>

47. The activities in the output have been achieved to a large extent. Some deviations occurred in terms of changes to respond to priorities. The project team has completed a final training in November in Brindisi.

48. About 150 people thus far have received training and the project team provided briefings to multiple audiences and in some cases exceeded the planned number of briefings. See Annex 6 for an overview.

49. In the course of this evaluation interviewees expressed appreciation for the training, it has a well-designed outline and modules and they considered it informative and useful. Transition Specialists and project team members have participated as resource persons bringing different aspects and field experiences to the training. Lessons learned documents, for example, (which are part of output 3) have been shared and discussed.

### **The survey**

50. The survey was designed to get a better understanding of how the training has been used by staff and management to better manage and plan transitions. While the survey response was 43% it is still useful to highlight those responses that had high scores, since this can reinforce some of the other findings in this report. Moreover, 80% of the respondents indicate that they are working in a UN transition setting. Of the respondents 48% are in Headquarters while 40% are in a country office. The majority are at a P5 level followed by P4.

51. Those who answered the question to what extent they used elements of the training (13 in total) indicated that the three elements used regularly include: i) UN Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal; ii) Developing and planning a Transition Strategy/Plan, and iii) UN transition background material and concepts. Used irregularly, the highest three elements include: i) monitoring plans, ii) UN transition background material and concepts; and iii) examples of transitions plans and strategies. Not used were: i) the technical and political aspects of benchmarking; ii) communications plans and both iii) Comparative Advantage Assessments and country case studies. Respondents refer to useful documents on transitions and notably those related to Liberia, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste.

52. Respondents suggested that the knowledge they acquired has contributed in first instance to influencing colleagues. Both making concrete contributions to UN transition planning, and improved contributions to meetings and deliberations on UN transitions, share a second place and improved planning for UN transitions in the field is the third highest score.

53. When asked what they would need in the future, participants responded the following: i) consolidated lessons learned document from various missions; ii) a summary/chart on UN transition policy/rules and mapping of existing UNCT capacity once a mission leaves; iii) write-ups, samples and overviews of recent UN transitions; iv) presentations with a succinct overview of best practices; and v) practical information on inter-agency programmatic collaboration and costing of mission transitions.

## **3.3 Output 3**

### **Output 3: Integration of transition-related lessons and best practices into guidance.**

#### **Findings:**

54. This output includes the drafting of lessons learned documents (e.g. Lessons Learned Reports, Transition Case Studies, After Action Reviews, and research papers); the organization of lessons learned workshops, and the updating or development of various guidance notes.

55. The activities in this output have been largely achieved. Various other activities related to updating and reviewing documents is ongoing and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

56. Lessons learned documents have been completed for Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Liberia and DRC. A concept note on Security Council benchmarks in the context of UN mission transitions was developed and piloted. Two studies are underway, the Review of strategies to resource transitions and the Review of Agency, Funds and Programmes (funded by Sweden and Norway). Also in-country workshops were organized for the lessons learned country studies. In addition, the project team is working on a document that captures lessons learned and best practices related to all key areas of the UN Policy on transitions. See Annex 7 for an overview.

57. Interviewees refer to the lessons learned document from Timor-Leste as a kind of benchmark of how transitions can be planned and successfully implemented. In general, lessons learned are considered useful and provide inspiration, but there is little evidence on how lessons learned are systematically consulted. As indicated below, the dissemination of the information is inadequate and possibly the targeted audience is too limited.

58. Only half of the respondents answered the question on whether any of the lessons learned documents were found useful in the past two years of their work. Most reference is made to the document on United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, followed by lessons learned documents on Liberia (security transition), Timor-Leste and Haiti. Just over 50% of the respondents to the survey indicate that they have actually applied lessons learned and in most cases to early planning efforts. Interviewees find some of the documents somewhat academic, and also respondents of the survey ask for templates for transition planning and how to include contextual factors.

59. In the ways that the respondents received lessons learned documents the highest score was: i) through the training (73%); ii) through a colleague, and; iii) through the Policy and Practice Database.<sup>23</sup>

60. Just over half of the respondents answered the question related to how useful the UN Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal was, given the respondents' role and responsibility. Just over 60% found the policy relevant compared to just fewer than 13% that considered it not so relevant. The principle of 'early planning' is considered most relevant followed by 'communications'. 'UN Integration' is considered quite relevant and the 'national capacity' principle receives the highest score on irrelevance. This confirms the findings of the interviews and in particular the early planning process. Some interviewees have also suggested that the principles need to include partnerships in order to broaden the scope beyond the UN.

61. Questions in relation to UNDP's guidance on UN Mission transitions were answered by 24 respondents and only 16 are familiar with the guidance. Most relevant in the guidance are the 'key principles and messages' section followed by 'understanding the transition'. Somewhat relevant are 'developing a post transition portfolio' and 'fundraising', 'communication' and 'partnerships' while

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<sup>23</sup> [www.ppdb.un.org](http://www.ppdb.un.org)

'organizational adjustments' are considered irrelevant. Respondents suggested that the existing guidance could be improved in the area of liquidation; joint programming for transition; integrating the UNCT in the transition process; clarification on how the UNCT can continue mission programmes and how good offices capacity and leadership engagement can be considered.

62. Interviewees consider the guidance useful, including the Transition Specialists. It was questioned, however, whether such guidance should not be developed for the entire UNCT. Although it was acknowledged that UNDP plays a key role in post mission presence and carries the responsibilities for the peacebuilding elements of the transition plan, joint programming implies that all members of the UNCT would be served by such approach.

### **3.4 Output 4**

#### **Output 4: engaging in dialogue with Member States on the challenges and experiences encountered in UN transitions.**

##### **Findings:**

63. This output includes regular joint briefings to Member States and key partners on transition-related lessons and best practices, and engagement with other interested entities. See Annex 8 for an overview.

64. The briefings to Member States have been completed and various additional briefings were given, including to PBC, for example. Although the activities in the output have been completed, this output has suffered from a lack of strategic direction, as well as identifying who constitutes the key audience to be informed about the project's contributions to UN transitions.

65. The focus in this output on Member States is relevant and in particular those who are represented in the Security Council. This output has had too much of a 'sharing of information activity' focus, while the results of the project could have been used to support discussions within the UN, including the participating entities in this project; policy makers, strategic planning units, and Member States.

66. Activities could have been used as an advocacy tool bringing forward how UN transitions can be better prepared and implemented. The project could have attracted more attention and 'followers' who would like to pursue UN reforms and to take a position on the effectiveness and efficiency of UN transitions. Moreover, Member States are the critical partners to ensure that UN transitions remain high on the political agenda.

#### **4. Conclusion: the contribution of the four outputs to the outcome**

##### **Outcome: UN Transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient with reduced transaction costs and more effective through better support to host countries.**

67. The transition project has four outputs that reinforce each other: (1) supporting transition processes in country; (2) providing training on transitions to UN staff; (3) capturing lessons learned and translating this into guidance; and (4) engaging with Member States. Jointly these outputs have contributed to putting transitions on the agenda of the different entities and raised awareness of the challenges of transitions and how these can be tackled. They have contributed to the overall project outcome. As such the project is not a standard 'development' project, but concretely contributes to learning from supporting countries in transition and translating this experience into guidance and raising awareness of the challenges that are inherent in transitions.

68. The project – while continuing earlier cooperation among UNDP, DPKO-DFS and DPA – has therefore been a significant learning process on how transitions can be improved. It has been relevant and its results are increasingly relevant in the context of the SG's planned reforms and putting transitions more firmly on the UN agenda.

69. The project was timely and has helped to raise awareness that support to transitions increase the likelihood that they run smoother, experience less resistance and increase sustained support to peacebuilding in country, laying the ground for future development. This is an important contribution to the part of the outcome that reflects that UN transitions are more effective through better support to host countries. This support, however, can be further improved as explained below.

70. There is no evidence that the project has reduced transaction costs. It is impossible at this stage to assess this in the absence of having a comparison of a country that did not receive support. Based on the above findings it appears that transaction costs initially rise since time and resources spent on the transition are considerable. At the same time, it can be concluded that the 'return on investment' is substantial given the above findings and the opportunities that present themselves with the SG's planned reforms.

71. The project has also enjoyed additional support from some donors, which indicates that it can function as a critical vehicle for other transition related work that was not part of the original project outputs. This provides an opportunity to broaden the discussion, in particular with Member States, who have a geo-political interest in supporting stability in fragile countries emerging from UN missions.

72. While it was not the explicit focus of the project, except for output 4 (engagement with Member States), it has suffered from insufficient visibility within the three entities, including their leadership and the UN at large, including the Member States. This is a missed opportunity and needs to be corrected in the next phase.

73. The practical support in output 1 has been the main component to support transitions in the targeted countries, while the other three outputs had a broader focus on raising awareness on UN transitions and providing guidance in improving transition planning. Support to the targeted countries has been significantly greater in terms of improving transition planning and implementation than at Headquarters.

74. The deployment of Transition Specialists and other support provided to elaborate a transition plan is catalytic in countries, drawing attention to and enabling the conversation on transitions both from a planning and a programmatic perspective. In Headquarters, it has contributed to raising awareness and facilitating discussions on: i) the need to start planning for transitions at an early stage and aligning strategically to such decisions; ii) the need to position transition planning in integrated planning processes both in terms of substance and in sequencing, and thus the need to engage those who play a role in these (political) processes.

75. The countries targeted in the project have all benefitted: Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi, Liberia and the DRC. In Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti more support is needed to ensure continuation of the work, or to provide support right at the moment when a new mission is starting (Haiti).

76. Transition plans bring to the fore the critical peacebuilding gaps that result from mission drawdown or closure. Although the plan is often 'mission heavy', meaning that the mission presence and resources are always greater than the UNCT, the plan can be mutually reinforcing in agreeing on transition priorities for the host country. This is an important step forward and can be attributed to the project.

77. It must be noted, however, that transition plans: i) can be further aligned with integrated planning processes; ii) need to be sufficiently inclusive; and that the TS need to receive strategic support and buy-in in order to succeed. The operational planning capacity is the most relevant and effective asset of the project and planning support. Matching experience and skills of a TS with the country needs can be further improved.

78. The contribution of all the work under output 1 to the outcome is substantial and provides a relevant departure point for the next phase of the project if the proposed changes below are considered (see chapter 9).

79. Lessons learned documents are useful, but there is limited evidence that these provide relevant information to its readers and their effective use is also limited. They have, however, intrinsic value as official record of what happened, what was learned, etc. for the UN. In this context they contribute to Knowledge Management and provide a source for additional research. The dissemination is not optimal. They do, however, provide inspiration and support discussions.. The contribution to the outcome is limited.

80. Training has been relevant and parts of the training are used by participants. Using different resource persons who can speak to different topics and provide country context analysis is relevant and effective. The contribution to the outcome is substantial.

81. The briefings to Member States and other parties has focused on information exchange. There is no evidence that the sharing of information has led the recipient of the information to use it. The contribution to the outcome is poor.

## 5. Project infrastructure

### Findings:

82. The project has a day-to-day project management team consisting of four persons: a focal point in each of the three organizations (DPKO/DFS, UNDP and DPA) plus one full time colleague paid for by the project and one part-time administrative staff. In addition, there is a full-time consultant paid for by the project who, while not technically part of the team, provides support to the team. The focal points spent 60, 20 and 20% respectively on the project and are UN staff that are not funded by the project. In addition, there is a project steering committee representing the three entities. The project steering committee provides strategic guidance, oversight and ensures the effective management and implementation of the project. The committee approves annual work plans with indicative budget and timelines, terms of reference for Transition Specialists and reviews progress reports.

83. Both the Project management team and the project steering committee represent the three entities based on the idea that if these three organizations can work together at Headquarters and in the field, silos among the three would break down in support of smoother and better planned transitions.

84. Interviewees point out that there are significant differences among the three entities in Headquarters and the field, they have very different weights in terms of planning capacities, roles and responsibilities in mandates, and positioning in transitions. DPKO carries the responsibility for peacekeeping, UNDP is usually the largest UNCT member with the portfolio for peacebuilding in a country and DPA's focus is on Special Political Missions and non-mission settings (i.e. following the closure of a UN mission). They each have different perspectives on transitions given their respective mandates, capacities and interests. While the assumption of bringing the three entities together in this project seems logical when looking at it from a silo perspective, interviewees suggest that this is not broad enough and that other peacebuilding, planning and coordination entities need to be consulted such as Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Development Policy & Analysis Division (DPAD), DPKO's IAP Unit, the UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO)<sup>24</sup>, the UN Secretary-General's Executive Office and regional entities depending on the country of support. There is a danger that too many members in a project may slow down project objectives and implementation, the suggestions point to the *strategic relevance* of the project and how UN transitions need to be addressed within the UN family.

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<sup>24</sup> UN DOCO has a silo fighter's blog. <https://undg.org/about/undg-global/development-operations-and-coordination-office/>

## 6. Project implementation

### Findings:

85. Project implementation has been flexible and the project steering committee in consultation with the project management team has adapted as necessary. Key challenges as mentioned above include timely deployment of support to countries. In addition, interviewees in-country point out that it is challenging to keep the transition process and discussions going if there are intermittent moments of support. In Liberia, for example, the kick-off process through a workshop was relevant and effective – but in the absence of deployment of the TS the opportunities that occur to elaborate a plan and bring management and staff of the mission and UNCT together are missed.<sup>25</sup>

86. Transition specialists appreciate the backstopping and support role from the project management team. This arrangement works well also since the team can bridge what happens in Headquarters and in the field.

87. Some interviewees suggest that the project is somewhat Headquarters driven, and not assessing demand sufficiently in-country – both in terms of what is needed and how this demand needs to ensure buy-in from those who need to be part of the transition. They suggest that given the considerable differences among the three entities in Headquarters, the country perspective should lead given that the projects' main support is to countries in transition. It must be noted, however, that in some cases countries did not show interest in particular elements of the preparation of a plan or other documents.

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<sup>25</sup> The Transition Specialist was deployed at a later stage due to the outbreak of the Ebola virus

## 7. Project impact

### Findings:

88. Project impact is defined as both intended and unintended effects.<sup>26</sup> Since there was no previous project on UN transitions (or something comparable) there is no benchmark, neither was this evaluation designed to compare results of the project, for example, against those countries that did not receive project support while also qualifying as a UN transition country.

89. The underlying assumption of breaking down silos among DPKO, UNDP and DPA may have been ambitious and in this context the project has *symbolic value*, the different partners are coming together around a shared agenda – UN transitions. The partners, as well as the project members both in Headquarters and in-country, acknowledge the relevance of the project and commend SIDA's initiative.

90. The project provides empirical evidence that technical and operational support to UN transitions in-country is relevant. The strategic effect of the project in the UN at Headquarters is less visible at this moment in time. While transition processes in the priority countries have considerably improved and integrating transition aspects are ongoing, for example, in the Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy and the Liquidation Manual – the results are not yet visible. The impact of these measures cannot be measured at this stage. Given that the project is based on cooperation among the three entities, not all strategic levels of the UN structures benefit, and where change needs to be discussed and implemented. This could reduce the ownership of the project at the higher levels of the UN.

91. The project's position and visibility within the UN entities and structures is also limited. Although its results can contribute to, for example, the previous UN Working Group on Transitions (UN-WGT)<sup>27</sup> and newly created Sustainable Development-Sustaining Peace Results Group, it has not outlined who its most critical audience is at various levels of the UN.

92. The advisory role of project staff and Transition Specialists have raised awareness of the *complexity of UN Transitions as a process* (political, operational and technical) and reduced the perception that UN transitions equal a 'handover' between mission and UNCT.

93. The project has followed the UN Policy on Transitions and there is limited attention to start-up, which would be at least as relevant. As soon as a resolution has passed, early planning of the transition or planning of an exit needs to follow.

94. Gender as a concept, including a methodology to apply it to transitions has been absent from the work. While gender has been addressed in transition plans, it is not clear how gender needs to be addressed in projects such as these. There is little guidance or understanding how gender can be addressed.

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<sup>26</sup> Used by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), also used by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). OECD (2002). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI). DFID's Approach to Delivering Impact.

<sup>27</sup> Membership of the working group is comprised of the members of UNDG and ECHA, and will include UN Secretariat entities DPKO, DPA and PBSO, as well as World Bank and IOM as invitees. The WGT may decide to invite colleagues from other UNDG working groups, Regional UNDG Teams or UNCTs to selected meetings. The Chair and Secretariat is co-chaired by two agencies, rotating every second year: UN DOCO and OCHA serve as a joint secretariat.



## 8. The way forward: recommendations

95. SIDA has agreed to extend the project beyond the end of 2017, and the ToR requests that “the evaluation should identify how support to UN transition processes can be improved going forward. This includes focusing on the sustainability of the project and identifying suggestions to further mainstream UN transitions into integrated assessment and planning processes, as well as highlighting areas where further support or initiatives are needed”.

96. The suggestions moving forward assumes that the project will be extended for another two years, which should also provide sufficient time to use the extension as an exit strategy and fully address how the project can be mainstreamed in UN transition related processes and become sustainable. At this point in time, the evaluation was informed that the outputs and outcome remain more or less the same. This would also imply that the costs of activities would follow the same kind of division as before, with the operational support to countries (output 1) demanding most of the investment.

97. Before discussing improvements per output, outcome and other sustainability issues it is relevant to determine how mainstreaming could be understood in the context of this project. A simple definition of mainstreaming is that a ‘theme shall be considered in all aspects of the organization’s work, and the way it is to be done’.<sup>28</sup> It is commonly known that mainstreaming is a challenging process and task, and given the project’s objectives mainstreaming could be understood as: i) ensuring that the UN system provides operational support to countries preparing a UN transition (operational relevance and effectiveness), and; ii) integrating UN transitions in policy, planning and reform processes (strategic relevance and effectiveness) so that these become part of the UN structures.

98. Keeping the above in mind the focus of the next phase of the project is on the operational aspects of the four outputs as well as addressing the strategic aspects on UN transitions in light of the proposed SG’s reforms. The latter are evolving and thus the project will need to remain flexible in anticipating and reacting to reform decisions and changes.

### Output 1

**Current phase: The transition process in Liberia, Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire and DRC well managed including through the use of integrated coordination mechanisms, and the UN team positioned to implement medium and long-term peace consolidation activities.**

**Future phase:**

**Operational:**

- In some of the countries the support has been completed, while Liberia is still in a transition process. In Côte d’Ivoire, the mission has closed and the transition plan needs to be implemented. In Haiti, a new two-year mission has started. For Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, support needs to be provided to assist with the implementation of the plan and if the project provides support to these countries an exit strategy will need to be developed. In Haiti, a new reconfigured mission has just started that coincides with the extension of this project. Providing (intermittent) support to Haiti for the duration of the mission would respond to the observation that an exit strategy should be determined at the moment a new mission starts.

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<sup>28</sup> Mainstreaming at Sida A Synthesis Report. Fredrik Uggla. Sida Studies in Evaluation 2007:05.

It would also allow the project to collect evidence on how operational support to a transition for the entire duration of a mission can consolidate planning processes and contribute to a smoother transition. In order to anticipate that other UN missions may start up, reconfigure or close, it is suggested that this output responds to demand from countries facing a transition, including countries with a special political mission. The countries should not be preselected.

- Creating a talent pool or roster of staff/consultants that can support transitions would reduce the time taken for recruitment and deployment, increase the expertise levels of those deployed, and ensure more types of skills are readily available. This implies that more people need to be recruited to the pool with a variety of skills, seniority and experience. Options include exchanging or bringing together current staff working in transition countries for short periods to new transition countries. This could include deployment of one person to a region thereby increasing staff mobility and responding effectively and efficiently to needs in the region.
- Assessing demand in more detail and include top UN officials in decision making, for example, on the ToRs for staff, positioning and time lines. Deployment of staff could be made dependent on the in-country planning processes to increase coherence and sequencing of the activities of a transition plan.
- Consider how transition planning and deployment of staff can support continued political engagement of the in-country leadership as well as the ‘good offices’.<sup>29</sup>
- Develop a tool box based on the current instruments that exist, including capacity assessments, to support UNCT and the UN leadership in transition countries. Include various instruments that have been developed already to monitor progress of the transition.<sup>30</sup>
- Reserve time and resources to conduct research or contribute to research on transitions, including to respond to new themes that emerge from the UNSG initiated reforms. Such research would increase the visibility of the project.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Strategic:**

- Review the UN Transition Policy and consider including all aspects of UN transitions, including start-ups and scaling up. Define how this policy is situated in the existing UN planning and policy documents, and subsequent processes, and what needs to be done to disseminate the policy and increase compliance. Consider how the EOSG office can reflect this policy in Planning Directives and strategic decision making. Review the principles and include partnerships.

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<sup>29</sup> Secretary-General’s diplomatic “good offices” are employed to help bring warring parties toward peace or to prevent political and armed conflicts from escalating. DPA is typically working behind the scenes to define and plan the mission and to provide guidance and backing to mediators. <http://www.un.org/undpa/en/overview>

<sup>30</sup> UNMIL and UNDP developed a Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index. This pilot quantified Liberia’s socio-political fragility during the transition period and provides predictive assessments of strategic peacebuilding interventions that hold the greatest potential for delivering impact. Based on this first iteration, the Government of Liberia and the UN Resident Coordinator agreed to adopt the SCORE as the principal instrument to provide a coherent evidence-base for strategic decision-making and programme design to advance the sustaining peace agenda in Liberia.

<sup>31</sup> For example the recent report on Pathways for Peace. Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict; Main Messages and Emerging Policy Directions. World Bank Group and the United Nations, 2017. This report will contribute to the discussion on prevention and the SG’s putting prevention as one of his priorities (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/priorities/prevention.shtml>).

- Review the UNDP guidance document and consider how it can be made more relevant for the UNCT. Undertake some additional analysis if needed to increase ownership of the guidance, both at Headquarters and in the field.<sup>32</sup>
- Undertake research and seek support to introduce gender in the project outputs and in the substance of the work on UN transitions.<sup>33</sup>
- At this stage it may be a step too far to position the project in the SG’s priorities. The discussion on ‘integrated approaches to prevention’, however, provides an opportunity to situate the project’s work in terms of how an integrated approach to planned transitions contributes to reducing relapse into violent conflict. At the same time, the project management team could identify the key players and provide insight into what the project aims to achieve. This will point to its strategic relevance in terms of learning and contributing to improved transition processes.

## **Output 2**

**Current phase: Transition planning and management capacities of UN leadership and staff strengthened.**

**Future phase:**

**Operational:**

- Consider tailor made training to a broader audience contributing to UN transitions, including other entities that are working in country (PBF, other UN policy, planning and coordination entities).
- Consider training to a combination of UN organizations – Headquarters, regions, and field – once new requests for support come in.

**Strategic:**

- Initiate discussions with UN training institutes to enable a handover of the training in order to make the training sustainable and part of the institute’s curriculum. Provide resource persons from the project in support of the training.
- Consider how learning and support can be organized interactively among different staff and management.

## **Output 3.**

**Current phase: Integration of transition-related lessons and best practices into guidance.**

**Future phase:**

**Operational:**

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<sup>32</sup> Systematic feedback has been provided in the case of the use of the guidance in Haiti.

<sup>33</sup> The resolution recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 7 June 2017. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system could be a good starting point.

- Conclude the overall practice notes summarising lessons learned and disseminate widely.
- Conduct lessons learned for Liberia and Haiti and consider how dissemination of captured knowledge can be improved.
- Develop UN transition notes for different audiences, including the SG’s Secretariat - based on lessons learned, the UN transition policy, guidance and other material – that can be used for dissemination and use to a variety of users, including Member States. Frequent information sharing increases the likelihood that the project and its contributions are recognised and that this advances learning and contributes to various debates and improved practice.
- Consider developing typologies of transitions to better respond to needs in countries and enable learning and application of support processes elsewhere.

**Strategic:**

- The above activities will need to be part of the work plan of the operational capacity support that needs to be established (see section 8.2 below).
- Explore the capturing, sharing, and use of knowledge on transitions through the development of a knowledge management strategy on transitions.

**Output 4.**

**Current phase: Briefings to Member States consistently include references to UN transition guidelines, principles, lessons, and good practices.**

**Future phase:**

**Operational:**

- Develop a proactive, coherent, and flexible advocacy and outreach strategy to disseminate results of the project and broaden the audience to target strategic offices in the UN, the UNCT, development partners and other interested parties. This could include a website and use of social media.
- Share the operations entry point where countries can ask for support (see section 8.2 below).

**Strategic:**

- Develop a simple communication strategy to provide UN transition information upstream to the UN EOSG, other UN strategic bodies, including those that are part of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture.
- Consider how results of the project can serve as briefings to the Executive Committee’s biennial review that discusses the status of UN transitions (see below section 8.2). This could also include reporting on UN transitions in reports and other materials.
- Supply information and become a resource base for Member States. Briefing Member States on the countries receiving project support and influence them, for example, on the need to adapt the language in SC resolutions and include transition language in UN missions.
- The above activities will need to be part of the work plan of the operational, integrated capacity that needs to be established (see below section 8.2).

**The outcome. Phase1: UN Transition processes at Headquarters and in the field are more efficient with reduced transaction costs and more effective through better support to host countries.**

99. While the outcome is still relevant, it is questionable whether transaction costs are reduced. In the first instance the transaction costs are likely to increase given the time that is needed to prepare for and plan a transition. This will remain the case. At the same time the increase in transaction costs could pay off in the long run: better managed and successful transitions.

100. While efficiency and effectiveness remain an issue in UN transitions – and in particular the unpredictable financial situation of the UNCT – the project could have as its key objective ‘to improve planning for and management of UN transitions’. This would include field and Headquarters, but does not exclude regional or other relevant entities such as the PBSO and regional entities. Moreover, the word management invites other UN entities to participate if required and respond to reform decisions as they evolve.

101. Given the findings of the evaluation, it could be considered to include ‘in close cooperation with development and other partners’ since this would open up the possibility to work more closely with other non-UN partners.

102. ‘Support to host countries’ remains relevant since the support assumes that there is demand from a country facing a UN transition.

**8.1 The context in which the project is situated is changing**

103. The new Secretary-General initiated a so called Internal Review Process in early 2017 and appointed an Executive Committee whose purpose is “to assist the Secretary-General in taking decisions in issues of strategic consequence requiring principle-level attention across all pillars of the UN work, informed by relevant deliberations in United Nations intergovernmental bodies.”<sup>34</sup> Its membership includes USGs for Political Affairs and Peacekeeping.

104. In 2017, the Secretary-General made prevention his top priority. In this context, he reiterated the importance of more upstream transition planning to enhance the nimbleness of the organization. He asked the Executive Committee to monitor transition processes closely.<sup>35</sup>

105. The SG’s reforms include a proposed structure of the Peace and Security Pillar that would create two new departments reporting to a Standing Principles Group. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO). One of the consequences would be that DPA and DPKO would merge. A stand-alone Gender cluster is placed in the middle, while the regions are responsible for ‘integrated planning, backstopping and support to engagements in the area of peace and security’. If this indeed is to happen (not before 2019), the project will need to ensure its relevance and contribution.

106. The above reforms address the current silos and the project – based on SIDA’s original objective ‘to break down the silos’ – could in its second phase contribute to these reforms.

Strategically this would imply that the project needs to link to:

- a. The reforms and the sustaining peace agenda;

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<sup>34</sup> The decision dates from January,3, 2017”.

<sup>35</sup> EC Decision 2017/15.

- b. Contribute to synergies between the peace agenda, and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, including the SDGs; and
- c. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

## **8.2 Operational way forward in addressing the sustainability of the project**

107. The extension requires an exit strategy and in addition to the above strategic considerations, the project needs to have a clear operational anchor where countries in transition can ask for support. For interviewees, the most logical point would be UNDP (although some suggested the PBSO). This would mean that UNDP needs to have a window of support to transition planning in the Strategic Policy Team in the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and increase staff time and agree with other project partners on the human and financial resources needed. Depending on how the reforms unfold it would be a safe choice if the merging of DPA and DPKO become a fact with all the necessary changes.

108. One model that could be considered is to look closer at UNDP's Crisis Response Unit and how it operates, including having staff ready to be deployed and setting limits to what it can and cannot do. It would also be relevant to study costing tools, if there is demand for support services than in kind contributions or costs sharing should be explored. Some interviewees indicated that cost sharing is an option.

### **Next project steps**

109. The project needs to develop a robust Theory of Change that will help to develop a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. This leads to better planning, in that activities are linked to a detailed understanding of how change actually happens. It also improves the evaluability of the project during its lifecycle, as it is possible to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that goes beyond the identification of program outputs.

110. The likelihood that changes occur in the countries that request support is high, so flexibility remains a key priority.

111. The reporting on progress and achievements should include new or changed milestones. In addition, in order to measure progress towards integrating the project in the UN structure and thus implementing an exit strategy, a separate two-year traffic light system should be developed based on clear milestones.

112. The project management team composition could be expanded based on where planning functions are situated across the UN, and possibly some link to coordination functions at a higher level. The project steering committee's membership could be expanded with representation of the Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Executive Office of the SG and the PBSO, for example. This would need to be reviewed if DPA and PBSO were to merge. This could ensure that the strategic relevance is further expanded.