STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DELIVER QUALITY SERVICES EQUITABLY THROUGH THE TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
Public Administration Capacity Branch

Final Report – ROA 206

1. KEY PROJECT FEATURES

I. Project title	Strengthening capacities of the public sector in least developed countries to deliver quality services equitably through the transfer and adaptation of innovative practices
II. DA project code	1213B, ROA 206
III. Implementing Entity	Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)
IV. Start date	12/12
VI. End date	a. Original: 12/15 (as per Project Document) b. Actual date: 06/16 (upon granted extension)

VII. Beneficiary countries		
	Afghanistan	Mauritania
	Bangladesh	Mozambique
	Benin	Myanmar
	Bhutan	Nepal
	Burkina Faso	Niger
	Burundi	Rwanda
	Cambodia	Senegal
	Central African Republic	Sierra Leone
	Chad	Somalia
	Comoros	South Sudan
	Djibouti	Sudan
	Equatorial Guinea	Tanzania
	Ethiopia	Timor Leste
	Guinea-Bissau	Togo
	Haiti	Uganda
	Kiribati	Vanuatu
	Laos	Zambia
	Lesotho	
	Liberia	
	Madagascar	
	Malawi	
	Mali	

VIII. Implementing partners	UN system	Other partners
	DPADM, UNODC, UN-Women, UNDP and UN-Habitat	The e-Government Authority of Bahrain The Chinese Academy of Governance Government of Ethiopia (for the Workshop in Addis Ababa)

2. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The Project "Strengthening capacities of least developed countries (LDCs) to deliver quality services through the transfer and adaptation of innovative practices" was launched in 2012 for a period of four years. However, the implementing entity, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) sought approval to extend the project for another six months – this was to allow the last study tour to take place in January 2016 following a decision in the last quarter of 2015 to shift the last study tour activity to Beijing, China. As such, the project officially ended in June 2016.

The project is based on DPADM's work with the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme (UNPSA) in collecting, rewarding, disseminating and sharing knowledge on innovative practices in public administration, with the aim of providing Least Developing Countries (LDCs) with options and solutions for improved public service delivery through knowledge transfer. The project was delivered through six events; an Expert Group Meeting, two capacity building workshops and three study tours, in addition to two online training courses and a publication.

Following the conclusion of the project in 2016, it was deemed successful by the implementing entity as well as by the findings of the evaluation of the project, as both Expected Accomplishments (EAs) were achieved. The EAs were to "increase awareness and knowledge of public sector officials of participating LDCs interest in innovative practices to deliver quality services equitably", and to "strengthen capacities of the public sector in selected target countries to promote innovation and implement good practices".

3. DETAILED REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Table 1 - Review of Performance Indicators

Expected Accomplishment	Indicator of achievement (IA1)	Indicator of achievement (IA2)	Comments
EA1 - Increased awareness and knowledge of public sector officials of participating LDCs interested in innovative practices to deliver quality services equitably.	Number of local authorities in the participating LDCs who expressed that the presented innovative practices are relevant for the development of their service delivery and are interested in introducing the lessons from these practices.	Many participants indicated that the substantive focus of the study tour and workshops were highly relevant, with a rate of almost 70 per cent indicating that innovative practices were relevant to local authorities in their home countries.	Besides confirming the relevance of the substantive focus, participants also indicated that they would be interested in introducing lessons learned from workshops. Therefore the EA was deemed achieved.
EA2 - Strengthened capacities of the public sector in selected target countries to promote innovation and implement good practices.	Number of countries adapting innovative good practices in public governance that promote sustainable development.	13 countries out of 24 responded through an online survey during the evaluation that they had either fully or partially implemented an innovative practice. Many participating LDCs have embraced e-government as a result of learning from the Bahrain experience. Somalia, for instance, was interested in developing a payroll system, Chad noted intentions to work on a smart card and Togo wanted to focus on a national strategy framework, following their Bahrain visit.	The EA was deemed achieved in terms of adapting innovative good practices in public governance that promote sustainable development.

	Number of participants in the online training courses		The online courses, albeit completed, are yet to be uploaded for the public to access due to technical obstacles. Therefore no data on participation is yet recorded.

Table 2 - Review of Activities

Activities implemented	Comments
EA1 - Increased awareness and knowledge of public sector officials of participating LDCs interested in innovative practices to deliver quality services equitably	
A1.1 Organizing and conducting Expert Group Meeting on selecting and transferring best practices	Expert Group Meeting – UNHQ New York February 2013 The EGM held in February 2013 developed the principles that underpinned the implementation of the project, including linkage to the MDGs, local LDC conditions, the innovations best suited to transfer to LDCs, the role of the UN in the implementation of the project, and what the UN should do in implementing the project.
A1.2 Organizing and conducting two workshops on innovations in public service delivery	Workshop 1 – Manama, Bahrain June 2013 The workshop brought together senior government officials from LDCs and a pool of innovators who already had been successful in the implementation of good practices that resulted in considerable improvement in public service delivery in their respective countries. Representatives of 11 LDCs at the Workshop expressed interest in participating in the next phase of the project by learning more about the possible adaption of Bahrain's e-Government experience in their own context.
	Workshop 2 – Addis Ababa, Ethiopia March 2014 The second Workshop applied the same content as the first Workshop, but for francophone countries.

EA2 - Strengthened capacities of the public sector in selected target countries to promote innovation and implement good practices	
A2.1 Organizing and conducting three Practitioner-to-practitioner knowledge transfer workshops, including study tours	Study Tour 1 – Manama, Bahrain January 2014 The first Study Tour took place in Manama, Bahrain in 2014 as part of the project which brings together innovators and senior officials from participating LDCs to study an innovation of particular relevance. The Study Tour consisted of five days of intensive delivery of information regarding the use of needs analysis, evaluation for services, consumer satisfaction surveys, user feedback, capacity building, as well at the power of marketing. The study tour took place at the premises of Bahrain's eGovernment Authority with site visits where participants understudied key government agencies applying ICT to deliver services in innovative ways with technical support from the E-Government Authority.
	Study Tour 2 – Manama, Bahrain January 2015 The second Study Tour was also conducted in Manama, Bahrain yet for a group of LDC who expressed interest in the e-Government strategy which drives the work of the e-Government Authority in Bahrain in the improvement of the countries performance in the delivery of services. The programme covered the same innovations but was updated to reflect more recent developments by going more in-depth on the Smart Card model, i-Seha, financial support systems, and also arranging additional site visits to service centers.
	Study Tour 3 – Beijing and Shanghai, China January 2016 The third Study Tour took place in Beijing and Shanghai China in January 2016. A decision was made to move the last study tour activity to China and to shift the focus to Public Administration for Sustainable Development in view of the recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. The study tour was extended to 10 consecutive days and programme activities took place both in Beijing and

	Shanghai. Participants from previous study tours and workshops were invited, in order to continue the peer-to-peer learning experience of host government exposing participants to local solutions and innovations for possible adaptation in their home countries.
A2.2 Online courses	Two online training courses were developed: 1. Adapting and Transferring Innovations in Governance 2. Achieving Development Goals with Public Sector Innovations The development of the courses was completed by a consultant but unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, are not yet available online. This has yet to be completed.
A2.3 Production of a publication on lessons learned on the adaptation process and innovative service delivery as emerged during the workshops and expert group meetings.	Report completed

4. CHALLENGES/PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Table 3 - Challenges and Actions

Description of challenges	Action(s) taken to solve the issue, if any
Not all participants had the most relevant background, and it was also evident in select activities that there were some participants with less implementing authority than others. It is crucial for the success of the project that those with implementation authority do attend. Nevertheless, given that it was determined early on in the project that the Governments were to nominate representatives, it was difficult for DPADM to fully control who participated.	DPADM did collaborate with focal points for subsequent activities to solicit participation from those with the most relevant background.
Facilitating a Memorandum of Understanding was intended as a way for LDCs to formally liaise and establish a relationship between a country having introduced an innovation and a country interested to learn from it. Unfortunately this did not prove	Transfer of innovation did still happen, but in a more informal setting where LDCs, on their own merit and by discussing with host governments, learned from experiences and site visits. DPADM was supportive of this informal dialogue and

easy as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have to get involved in the signing of a MOU. The protocol and diplomatic communications involved in government to government cooperation had not been factored in the project design which added additional layers of bureaucracy.	facilitated discussions accordingly.
For some of the activities under the project, the content was not fully aligned with the intentions of the project. Particularly during study tour 3, some of the lecture material had more of an informative perspective rather than being content which could easily be transferred. This was still useful in setting the context, but perhaps more focus should have been on the site-visits etc.	DPADM should be involved in all aspects and programme development by working with local hosts and partners in select countries. The project showed that co-development makes it easier to ensure consistency in content across various activities.
Initially it was intended to have UNODC, UN Women, UNDP and UN Habitat involved throughout the process. Unfortunately, UNODC, UN Women and UN Habitat were not able to participate as much as intended, especially towards the end of the project implementation.	DPADM did however engage UNDP throughout the process, and UNDP colleagues were helpful and willing to support various activities. For instance, in Beijing a UNDP representative came to open the study tour and also to undertake a lecture on UNDP's work in China and their approach to South-south cooperation in the region.
Even though the online training courses were completed by the author, due to technical constraints with the online platform (UDUTU) for where the course was due to be launched, DPADM did not succeed in publishing the training courses to the public by the time the project closed.	Several colleagues assisted with the technical implementation in-house, and it is expected that with additional support from DPADM's dedicated IT team the courses will be launched shortly.

5. GOOD PRACTICES AND KEY LESSONS LEARNED

In the concluding session of Study Tour 1 delegates referred to a number of topics as particularly valuable lessons learned from the experience of Bahrain in implementing an e-government strategy.

The first group of topics concerned the human factors associated with introducing innovation such as:

- the importance of leadership and political will to successful implementation of e-government strategies;
- the engagement of stakeholders and users in developing the strategy;
- using consumer satisfaction evaluations;
- the power of marketing (internal and external) and market analysis; and
- examples of capacity building.

For the planning phase of an innovation transfer, delegates were impressed by the eGA practice of researching international experience and applicable operating standards, and the importance of business process re-engineering (BPR).

Several countries sent IT specialists as delegates to Study Tour 1 but others were represented by officials from central government, public service commissions or foreign affairs. While these officials may be in a position to facilitate the transfer processes of innovations they may not be the best placed to evaluate or benefit from the Study Tour.

In Study Tour 2, the delegates represented countries at extremely diverse stages of digital development and preparedness for implementation of e-government solutions and fell into one of four groups:

1. had plans to develop e-government strategies (Kiribati, Burkina Faso, Vanuatu, Mauritania)
2. currently developing e-government strategies (e.g. Bhutan, Togo, Senegal, Cambodia)
3. had no real plans (e.g. Comoros)
4. interested in specific applications rather than a whole of government strategy (e.g. Chad, Somalia).

Most country delegates expressed interest in learning more about topics related to the planning stage of e-government services such as developing the strategy and enterprise architecture.

Some delegates had specific projects in mind that they wished to develop in conjunction with the eGA. In this category, Cambodia was interested in benchmarking their services against the Kingdom of Bahrain, Somalia was interested in human resources and payroll systems, whilst Chad was interested in introducing a SmartCard solution. Two delegates expressed an interest in sending a small delegation to Bahrain to establish a relationship.

In Study Tour 3, the focus was of less of a technical nature given the overarching theme of 'Public Administration for Sustainable Development'. Nevertheless, participants reflected upon

being exposed to for instance the Free Trade Zone in Shanghai and seeing how the Chinese government has created an environment for commercial activity to flourish. Participants noted that enabling such Free Trade Zones "…will help to invite [Foreign Direct Investment] for the economic development". Delegates also made reference to seeing how China has focused on strategy and policies to realise economic growth, and enabling policy for bettering public service is one area the study tour exposed participants to through extensive presentations and discussions with academic staff at the Chinese Academy of Governance.

The visit to the rural village outside of Shanghai was recognized by delegates as another useful area of exposure, by learning how the Chinese government has moved rural farmers to a communal area and this way been able to not only improve the living standards of the farmers, but also optimize the land usage for agricultural purposes. During this visit, delegates had an opportunity to engage with a member of the community whom presented on the concept as well as progress made since its inception.

Full responses from delegates of all study tours and workshops are captured in evaluation reports for each event as well as in the interim project reports.

Process and activities

MoU model

The experience of host and delegates of using the MoU model of transfer (in both Study Tours) suggests that this model has limitations. The process appears to be complicated by the need for the involvement of central government in any arrangement reached by a government agency with an agency of a foreign country. This is an obstacle that UNDESA may not be able to resolve, nevertheless, it may have been avoided in this instance by expecting less of the participants. Both parties could have been prepared better for an ongoing relationship, perhaps using a less formal model such as allocation of a dedicated contact person for follow up queries or the commitment to a mentoring relationship or visit of experts.

Funding ICT solutions

A number of delegates described the main challenges they face in implementing innovations as a lack of resources (mostly financial but also human) and political commitment. Presenters touched on the factors used in Bahrain and in other UNSPA case studies to overcome these challenges such as partnerships, sponsorships, leveraging donor assistance and outsourcing to the private sector and public-private partnerships. Incorporating a discussion of concrete opportunities for raising funds into the program would be highly practical.

Role of the UN

One of the principles agreed for the project was 'The need to maintain a demand-driven focus' which refers to the need for the project to be directed by the needs and interests of the LDCs rather than an externally imposed blueprint or product. In this context the role for the UN as facilitator of the project was envisaged to include:

- intensify capacity building and workshop settings for LDCs in order help identify innovators, innovations and LDCs to participate in collaborations;
- facilitate collaborations between innovators and adaptors;
- encourage synergies to stimulate new ideas and projects to encourage sustainability of innovations at local levels; and
- follow up and evaluate the effectiveness and celebrate successes.

In evaluation feedback, delegates made suggestions about the role of UNDESDA to consider as lessons learned including:

- More pre-meeting preparation by delegates is needed. For example delegates could be asked to come with a project concept to be adapted to local conditions that includes an accurate assessment of available and missing resources (Study Tour 1)
- Follow up of the progress of innovation adaptations with represented countries in a year's time (Study Tour 1).
- Allow more time for delegates engagement with the staff of host agencies in field visits (Study Tour 1).
- Allow for wider exposure of LDCs to new and innovative practices (Study Tour 1).
- Workshops on innovations to be conducted in LDCs (Workshop 2).
- Facilitation of a professional network among the LDC delegates perhaps starting with a Facebook page as a way to stay in touch (Study Tour 2).
- More information about substantive content could have been shared prior to the study tour as this would have enabled delegates to better prepare as well as identifying the most suitable representative from their respective government to attend (Study Tour 3).
- Allow the substantive material of the study tour be somewhat more targeted, to better serve the purpose of knowledge transfer for LDCs (Study Tour 3).Consider reducing the duration of the programme to one week (Study Tour 3).

In addition to these suggestions, there are facilitating activities that could have been undertaken without jeopardising the 'demand-driven' focus, such as:

- incorporating into the study tour programme content that builds capacity to deal with the main challenges faced by LCDs in innovating, such as options for financing innovations, governance models and internal marketing and management;
- facilitating connections with networks that may be useful to LDCs in building partnerships, for example with universities, NGOs, societies, colleagues, international organisations or countries, networks and informal benchmarking groups;
- maximising available UN resources within and between UN agencies such as with UNDP who provided speakers for Study Tour 2 and Workshop 2 who were popular with the delegates;
- exploiting the invaluable instructive information contained in the database of UNSPA cases by improving accessibility in format and language such as edited publications, training materials, VODcasts.
- actively maintain connections with the UNPSA innovators in a network to facilitate engagement between LDCs and innovating government agencies.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

At the end of the project, 13 countries reported having adopted fully or partially an innovative practice whilst another 3 reported having initiated a planning process. This outcome indicates that the impact of the project is likely to sustain moving forward. Also, it is more challenging to assess the impact for those countries which did not provide much input on their progress. Nevertheless, in receiving positive feedback and interest in future activities it is likely that the innovations and best practices which the public service officials were exposed to during the project activities did have an impact. Through surveys, delegates indicated that they were interested in capacity building, innovations in public service delivery, economic development, health, anti-corruption as well as better use of natural resources. More on this can be found in the evaluation report.

Given this positive assessment of the project, there is a chance that future activities, even if outside of the Development Account domain, will draw upon recommendation and lessons learned from the project. The lessons from the project, in addition to the findings and feedback from participants, is likely to sustain a similar model with the approach of transferring best practices to LDCs by continuing to engage public service officials from select countries.

7. MULTIPLIER EFFECTS

The project preliminarily was designed to target LDCs, and out of the 48 countries recognized by the United Nations as LDCs, 39 countries did attend at some point throughout the project. Although project activities did take place in countries such as China and Bahrain, processes were not triggered outside of the LDC target group beyond facilitating workshops and/or study tours. Nevertheless, the replication of activities is possible and likely, given the high number of participating countries. In some instances delegations contained more than one professional, which also increased the chances of project material being disseminated to a broader audience upon return to their respective home countries.

From DPADM's side, there are possibilities of similar projects to arise in the future. Particularly promising is the peer-to-peer approach which proved to be a success. Although the focus and substance may differ, lessons learned from this project are likely to play an important role in developing future project documents. Elements of its approach were used in preparing project documents for the Development Account.

8. SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING

Table 4 – Financial Leveraging

Contributing Entity/Donor	Purpose	Amount raised	
		Cash (USD)	In-Kind
The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain	Hosted one workshop and two study tours		Logistics involved in hosting including facilitating VISAs for participants, transport for participants from and to the airport, from hotels to venue and back, transport to site visits, etc.
The Government of Ethiopia in collaboration with UN-ECA	Hosted workshop		Logistics involved in hosting including facilitating VISAs for participants, transport for participants from and to the airport, from hotels to venue and back, transport to site visits, etc.
The Government of China	Hosted study tour		Logistics involved in hosting including facilitating VISAs for participants, transport for participants from and to the airport, from hotels to venue and back, transport to site visits, etc.

9. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kindly refer to Evaluation Report for further details on the results, impact, and lessons learned from the project.

10. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Table 5

Object Class	Description	A. Budget/Allotment (as per project document) (USD)	B. Revisions to allotments (if any) (USD)	C. Explanations of revisions to allotments (USD)	D. Total Expenditure (USD)
602	General Temporary Assistance				
604	Consultants and Expert Groups				
608	Travel of staff				
612	Contractual services				
616	Operating expenses				
618	Supplies, Materials etc.				
621	Fellowships, grants and contributions				
	Total				