

Case Study EU-TAPP

Use of a Standardized Approach and Tool in subnational Capacity Building

June 2016

In May 2013, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) and the Local Government Board (LGB) of South Sudan jointly issued a Public Financial Management (PFM) manual for local government (LG). The manual includes the policies, procedures and forms to ensure sound PFM on a local level and enable LGs to effectively deliver basic services. The EU-TAPP project is mandated to support local governments in meeting the requirements of the LG PFM manual. In order to do this, the EU-TAPP team has developed a standardized approach, using the same methodology in all states and counties covered, nonetheless adapting it to the local reality.

What was the situation?

After the introduction of the LG PFM Manual in 2013, the manual was rolled out to all the states and counties of South Sudan through the training of over 600 government staff. The purpose of the manual was to ensure that the local government finance function provides efficient, fast, accurate and complete financial information necessary for the delivery of local government services. However, implementation of the key requirements of this manual was yet to be effected in practice on the job. Thus, one identified objective of the EU-TAPP project is to 'Support Local Governments (LGs) in meeting the requirements of the LG PFM Manual: planning and budgeting; financial management and accounting; and preparing and submitting quarterly budget performance reports/financial reporting.' In order to reach this objective, the EU-TAPP team uses a Standardized Approach to deliver capacity building (CB) activities to county governments across South Sudan. The Standardized Approach encompasses both the use of a standardized tool, the LG PFM Manual, and a standardized implementation process.

EU-TAPP stands for the EU funded project: Technical Assistance for sub-national capacity building in payroll and PFM in South Sudan. The purpose of this project is to improve service delivery in South Sudan through strengthening Public Financial Management (PFM) and payroll management at state and county level. EU-TAPP implements the broader Local Services Support (LSS) agenda of the Government of South Sudan. Significant results were achieved, improving PFM and payroll management through workshops and On-the-Job training on county and state level. The work was performed by a core national team and state-based teams in 7 out of 10 states. Ecorys and VNG implemented this project between August 2014 and August 2016.

What were the challenges that justified the standardized approach?

Geographical challenge: The geographical scope of coverage is vast, with seven teams resident in the seven non-conflict states, covering a further 49 counties.

Challenges in the coordination of various implementation partners: There are other capacity building service providers providing similar training in our area of operation, creating the risk of duplicating training as well as confusing participants through using different tools and processes.

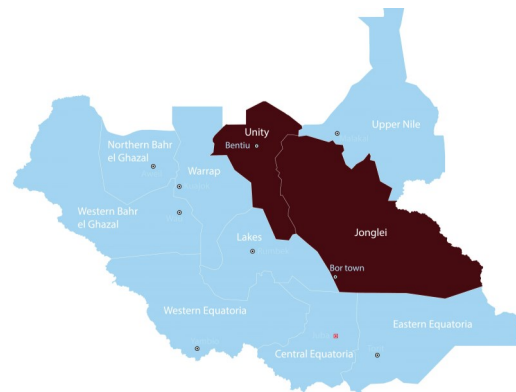
Challenges in the availability of government staff: Absence of key staff in key positions is an issue in South Sudan local governments, as some posts are not filled, office bearers are not at their station due to absenteeism, or not willing to participate in the process due to a lack of motivation and appreciation of the benefit. Additionally, staff transfers are very frequent. These issues created difficulties in ensuring that sufficient and equal capacity was developed among all relevant staff.

Challenges in the composition of the capacity building team: The training specialists had both a diversity in qualifications as well as diversity in experiences. The training specialists were drawn from different professional backgrounds, many of them with a finance basis, some with additional expertise in human resources or decentralisation. Furthermore, each State based team was composed of a regional expert with a local state trainer, leading to differences in experience, as well as the years of experience. These differences could potentially lead to differences in results and trainings.

What solution did we propose?

In order to ensure that all the relevant government staff are trained in the same way, no matter by whom the training was given or where the training took place, the standardized approach in building capacity for the LG PFM Manual has been developed. The approach involved the following key steps:

1. The organization of a 10 day Training-of-Trainers (TOT) workshop on the use of the LG PFM manual, in which all state-based training teams are oriented on the key LG PFM processes. All seven teams have acquired requisite knowledge on the manual and how to pass this over to the trainees.
2. The state-based training teams have received copies of the LG PFM Manual to distribute, as well as a LG PFM workbook that simplifies and operationalizes the manual to be used by the trainees.
3. Each state-based training team has organized a planning workshop on basis of which it has developed a Capacity Building Plan (CBP) specifying the activities to be undertaken and when, specified to the local context. The plan further responded to the PFM functions as spelt out in the manual and the critical capacity building gaps identified.
4. Targeted delivery and capacity building of LG staff in the respective States is performed, on the basis of the PFM Manual and the state specific CBP. This includes mixed methods of short capacity building workshops and On-the-Job training (OJT).
5. On the Capacity Building Platforms it has been agreed to use the LG PFM Manual as the principal training tool among all capacity building service providers to ensure that all trainees receive the same training and it was possible to build synergies among the different CB providers.
6. A standardized M&E-tool which had 74 questions related to the implementation of the LG PFM manual has been rolled out and used to assess progress periodically.



What was the result?

The following results have been achieved until now in the project with the standardized approach:

- Over 1000 additional copies of the LG PFM Manual have been printed and distributed country-wide;
- 44 workshops covering up to 480 county staff have been conducted on the LG PFM manual; up to 531 county staff have received On-the-Job training on application of procedures in the manual;
- 44 out of 46 counties in the states not affected by the 2013 conflict have prepared 2015/16 budgets in the format recommended in the LG PFM manual, and the quality of these budgets have progressively improved in terms of format, completeness and the narrative explanation of underlying data;
- Counties have made strides on implementing the single treasury account and control system, albeit with difficulties. Many county staff now understand the use of the various finance forms in financial management;
- Up to 90% of counties in states less affected by the 2013 conflict are capable of preparing their Quarterly Budget Performance Reports (QBPRs) and submitting them to the CTMCs on time. As the counties used a standard format for preparing these reports, the quality of the reporting has improved progressively; and
- The performance of counties can now be assessed using a standard assessment tool, enabling comparisons between counties. Counties have been assessed every quarter and a county “dashboard” indicating key PFM indicators for each of the 46 counties.

What are the lessons learned and the relevance of standardized approach in future reform?

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Lesson 1: The way in which the standardized approach has been implemented combines harmonization, through the TOT and using the standardized LG PFM Manual, with ownership, creating room for State CBPs. In the CBPs the EU-TAPP team combine efforts with other capacity building providers, which also avoids duplication and stimulates synergies. Additionally use of the standardized tools helps different capacity building providers to sustain the capacity building intervention even when a given capacity building provider has ended his/her project activities (See box).



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Lesson 2: All available PFM, management and human resource staff have been trained, even though some are in acting roles or switched functions, through frequent short duration capacity building support missions to the LG, using the same tools and same methods. Even when the staff are transferred the same methods and tools will be used, ensuring sustainability.

3

Lesson 3: With the use of the standardized M&E tool, capacity building plans can be based on an actual capacity building needs assessment, as well as create the opportunity to assess the level of progress of each respective LG as all LGs have gone through the same process using the same tools.

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Lesson 4: Using the standardized approach and tools enables lesson sharing and peer learning among LGs. This can be of particular relevance in the near future, if the LG PFM Manual needs to be rolled out to an increased number of states and counties.

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Lesson 5: Matching capacity building with delivery of outputs helps to ensure that the acquired knowledge is applied by staff through performance of their functions. In this way the trained staff are able to grasp what they have learnt leading to sustainability of the approach. It also helps capacity building providers to identify areas that required remedial actions through review of the outputs of the trainees and be able to plan for remedial capacity building activities.

Case Study Yei River County (Central Equatoria State)

In Yei River County the EU-TAPP team supported the County in compilation of Q1 BPR. The project was not able to support and follow up the County to compile and submit Q2 because the project duration had ended. Lucky enough the County was selected under the LOGOSEED project, thus LOGOSEED supported compilation of 2015/16 Q2 BPR. By the time EU-TAPP returned during the bridging phase Q2 report was already out and EU-TAPP thus supported the County to compile Q3 2015/16 report. This was only able to be achieved because the two Capacity Building providers were using the same tools thus each of them could build on what the other has done, building synergies.



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