

How to set up a PMU

The staffing of a PMU is closely related to the nature of the proposed assistance. For example, if the project calls for strong political coordination and democracy building, then the project manager should have the profile and experience that fits with those requirements. Where there is a primary focus on technical assistance to the EMB then it may be advisable for the manager's skills to reflect this priority or for there to be a Chief Technical Advisor post supported by a project manager. Additional guidance on office structures may be found in the Toolkit for Managing Change¹, which also contains some additional examples of mergers and functions in Azerbaijan, China and Vietnam in which the financial and PMU units were consolidated.

If electoral assistance is to be nationally executed, the EMB should manage the project and, after identifying requirements, UNDP should recruit technical experts who will report to the national programme manager or head of the EMB.

UNDP levies a 7 percent management fee for managing donor funds in order to recover costs. However, this only covers general management services. Support costs for the office/secretariat and the PMU per se should come from the project budget. It is often difficult to explain to donors that, in addition to general management support (GMS), UNDP also intends to charge implementation support services (ISS) for procurement and financial disbursement. Yet ISS costs can in most cases be built into the project budget through the inclusion of procurement and finance staff positions.

Considerations for Setting up a PMU

- Identify staffing requirements in consultation and agreement with the project's beneficiary (usually the EMB).
- Determine the skills and experience required for staff, including the project manager and specialist staff; prepare ToR; seek assistance from DPA/EAD, UNDP regional centers and Headquarters, the EC–UNDP Joint Task Force on Electoral Assistance, and the UNDP (senior) electoral advisor, if there is one, to identify appropriate personnel. Consider the possibility of obtaining assistance or skills from established EMBs.
- Set up bank accounts and financial authorizations.
- Allocate office space and procure necessary office equipment.
- After recruitment of the project manager, advertise and appoint local staff. Brief senior PMU staff on communication protocols with the government and other key stakeholders;

¹ See <http://managingchange.undp.org/>.

Brief senior PMU staff on UNDP guidelines and procedures especially in relation to recruitment, procurement, tendering, ATLAS and so on.

- Clarify reporting relationships and communication protocols within UNDP, including media spokesperson responsibilities.
- Delineate relationships (communications and correspondence) among regular UNDP Country Office authorities and PMU staff (including the Chief Technical Advisor) with government and other key actors so as to avoid confusion on roles and authority.
- Include the PMU in any inter-agency communication strategy to avoid duplications or conflicting policy decisions.
- An effective participatory partnership between the PMU and the RC/RR and UNDP CO team is essential for the smooth operation of a project. Weekly meetings should be held between the PMU and the programme and operations sections of the UNDP Country Office to facilitate programming needs. UNDP senior management team should meet with the PMU at least fortnightly.
- It is fundamental as well to identify within the CO a dedicated programme officer (ARR for instance), senior enough, who will act as the UNDP CO election Focal Point, help the PMU liaise with UNDP CO departments, follow project issues with UNDP senior management, and help bridge the gap that may exist between the PMU and the CO. This role is particularly important when the PMU is not located within the UNDP premises.
- An 'exit strategy' for the PMU should be established at the outset, and the hand-over of information, documentation and ongoing processes needs to be well in place.

Challenges in Setting up a PMU

- Ensuring a harmonious working relationship between the PMU and UNDP Country Office staff is vital. CO staff must be well informed about PMU activities and potential demands on their time, especially with contracting, tenders, evaluation committees and so on. It is also necessary to ensure that delineations of tasks and responsibilities between regular CO staff and PMU staff are made ahead and monitored by senior CO management.
- Any election-related project will be high profile, while routine electoral assistance may be less so. Therefore it is important to ensure that the UNDP Country Office is well informed about overall electoral activities, is as engaged as possible with the project, and is able to learn from it. The PMU should attend UNDP (governance cluster and, if possible, general) staff meetings and make presentations from time to time.
- The demands of an elections project on the time of the senior management (SRSG, DSRSG, RR, Country Director, DRR) will be high.

- Having a clear media policy is crucial. Such a policy should differentiate between provision of facts about election activities and opinion on political or electoral environment and events.
- Maintaining a focus on development goals is necessary.
- There should be clear supervisory lines in an 'integrated mission' context.