Republic of South Sudan
Local Services Support - Joint Plan of Action
Dated July 18, 2013

Introduction

1. Enhancing the delivery of basic social and economic services is one of the key objectives in the South Sudan Development Plan (SSDP). The responsibility for delivering these services lies primarily with local governments, with state governments providing support and supervision and national government setting the policy environment and providing funding. Strengthening the capacity of local governments to deliver services is therefore critical to South Sudan’s long-term development. With time it also will be critical to strengthen the delivery of the secondary services under the responsibility of the State Governments. Thus while this Joint Plan of Action focuses on local governments and select number of sectors, the Government’s intention is to expand its policy reach over time to reflect these needs.

2. Taking the first steps in this long term agenda, the Government has developed Service Delivery Frameworks (SDFs) for primary education, rural water and sanitation, primary health care and small-scale infrastructure. The SDFs identified the common challenges to improving basic service delivery that cut across these sectors and that require cross-agency coordination to resolve. This Local Services Support (LSS) Joint Plan of Action (JPA) sets out the challenges identified in the SDFs, the Government’s policy commitment to tackling these challenges, and outlines the actions proposed to address them.

3. As part of the JPA, Government has: (i) developed a Financing Framework that lays out a simple, coherent and transparent system for financing local service delivery; (ii) developed and issued a Local Government Public Finance Management (LG PFM) Manual to guide the budgeting, financial management, reporting and accountability; (iii) developed a framework for provision of local infrastructure; and (iv) is in the process of developing a Human Resource Framework to guide human resources practices at the county and facility level.

Common “Blockages” to Local Service Delivery

4. The following key blockages have been identified, which prevent the effective delivery of services at the local level:

5. Weak policy and institutional coherence: The policies, laws, and guidelines for local service delivery are either not in place or are not widely disseminated and known. This has led to a lack of clarity about what functions should be carried out by the respective levels of government (local, state and national) and weak coordination within and between sectors.
6. Inadequate and inequitably distributed infrastructure at local level: states and counties have meager capital budgets and there is weak capacity and lack of systems at County level for planning, budgeting, procurement and contract management. This has led to a very slow and costly construction of local infrastructure (schools, clinics, water points etc.) and in some cases infrastructure is not being built in the areas of greatest need. In addition, the existing systems for information management, quality assurance and supply chains are inadequate, which is preventing effective primary education, basic health care and rural water and sanitation service delivery.

7. Weak human resource and payroll management: human resource management responsibilities, staffing and grading norms are unclear. As a result LG offices have little control over the placement and management of key staff who are seconded from the State level and have little scope for hiring and firing of locally-recruited staff. This has resulted in high staff turn-over, staff that are not well suited for their positions, and a lack of clarity about job responsibilities. Attracting and retaining the right staff is further constrained by the inadequate skilled staff on the market to fill some of the specialized posts needed at county-level.

8. Inadequate, unbalanced and unclear modalities for funding decentralised service delivery: States currently allocate little from the block transfer to service delivery, there is limited County and State involvement in national budget processes, and there are no clear and objective formulas for allocation of grants. This has led to insufficient funding at local government level for basic operating costs, such as transport, utilities and stationary; education, water and health departments at State and county level that rely almost exclusively on conditional transfers; and an inequitable distribution of funding, e.g. grants are not proportional to the population or need.

9. Weak top-down and bottom-up accountability: Accountability structures are not well developed, widely known or enforced. Community structures such as Boma Development Committees, Payam Development Committees, WASH Committees, Community Health Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations are not performing their duties. The performance reporting from County level to State level to National level is irregular, non-standardised or non-existent of the national and state level institutions and systems for oversight, supervision, inspection and top-down accountability are not in place.

Core Policy Principles

10. Government’s policy commitment to address the weaknesses and strengthen decentralized service delivery is summarized in the following core policy principles:
   a. Ensure a coherent set of policies and institutions for decentralized service delivery;
   b. Ensure adequate sector management of local service delivery;
   c. Ensure adequate and equitably distributed staffing at LG and facility level;
   d. Ensure adequate, timely and equitably distributed funding for LGs and facilities;
   e. Hold local government to fiduciary standards; and
   f. Ensure transparency and accountability for local service delivery.
11. These core policy principles will be presented in a LSS JPA Policy Matrix that will outline strategic policy actions to be taken by the Government, and a set of indicators and targets reflecting the performance of the systems that need to be strengthened. The Government and development partners will review the Policy Matrix annually to determine progress toward the local services support reforms.

Priority Actions to Improve Service Delivery

12. To enhance basic service delivery, priority actions will be implemented in five broad areas: (i) improving policy and institutional coherence; (ii) building capacity for effective sector service delivery; (iii) enhancing human resources at LG and facility level; (iv) increasing and improving the equity and coherence of funding for decentralized service delivery; and (v) strengthen transparency and top-down and bottom-up accountability. These actions are briefly summarized below and further elaborated in an Implementation Matrix that also assigns responsibilities and sets timelines for completion. The Implementation matrix will be rolling covering a 12-18 month period. It will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to track activity progress and take corrective action as needed.

13. To **improve policy and institutional coherence**, the following actions will be implemented:

   a. Complete and/or disseminate policies that are critical to carrying out basic service delivery functions. This includes existing crosscutting and sector priority policies and guidelines for local service delivery, and the roles and responsibilities of the different government levels as described in each SDF. To disseminate these strategies the Government will take advantage of other ongoing outreach and training initiatives to reach as many stakeholders as possible.

   b. Improve communication within and between levels of government. By: (i) maintaining an effective local service support coordination mechanism; (ii) ensuring communication and collaboration between the LSS coordination structures and respective Sector Working Groups (SWGs); and (iii) increasing State and LG participation in SWG activities.

14. To **building capacity for effective sector service delivery**, the following actions will be implemented:

   a. Building the capacity for effective education, health and WASH service delivery. This involves: (i) developing and enforcing sector specific systems for information management, quality assurance and supply chains; (ii) strengthening the capacity of ministries at the state level to support county authorities and departments; and (iii) providing capacity building support/training to the county officials to use these systems.

   b. Building the capacity for effective capital investment and management. This involves: (i) developing common procedures for planning, budgeting, procurement, contract management and engineering supervision of local infrastructure; (ii) developing standard technical designs for construction of basic infrastructure regardless of source of funding; and (iii) building the capacity of the counties for infrastructure contract management and engineering supervision.
15. To enhance human resource at LG and facility level, the following actions will be implemented:

a. Review and provide guidance on local government human resource management practices. This involves: (i) reviewing the current LG HR practices; and (ii) developing a Human Resource Management Framework for LGs offering guidance to LG officials on HR practices and clarifying the role of the State Ministry of Labour & Public Service in regulating LG human resource management.

b. Establish standard LG staffing structure and job descriptions: This involves: (i) reviewing the current functions of LGs (the activities they perform and relationships among the departments) and the current HR levels of LGs (staffing levels/numbers, job descriptions, personnel specifications, grading and reporting); and (ii) developing a standard LG structure specifying the departments, functions, relationships, as well as human resource structure specifying the staffing levels, job descriptions, personnel specifications, reporting arrangements and grades.

c. Strengthen pay and payroll management. This involves: (i) developing a single payroll for county staff; (ii) supporting the implementation of the local government payroll system; and (iii) developing a system for transitioning NGO health workers to government payroll.

16. To increase and improve the equity and coherence of funding for decentralized services, the following actions will be implemented.

a. Strengthen the budgeting process at State and County level to benefit service delivery. This involves: (i) issuing planning and budgeting guidelines to States and Local Governments to guide the budget processes; and (ii) ensuring that Budget Sector Plans at national and State levels make clear and policy-based vertical and horizontal allocations of transfers between States (secondary services) and Local Governments (primary services), across States and across Local Governments.

b. Design Sector County/facility grants supportive of local service delivery. This involves: (i) reforming the County Development Grant (LG development grants) and supporting the implementation of the Payam Development Grant (PDG); and (ii) designing local government block and sectoral grant(s) in line with the Framework for Financing County Service Delivery together with clear guidance on the planning, budgeting, use and reporting of these grants.

c. Develop and implement local government PFM systems. This involves: (i) issuing of the Local Government Public Financial Management Manual to States and Counties; (ii) supporting the use of the LG PFM Manual focussing on boosting the state-level PFM capacity to support county PFM reforms, and strengthening the LG PFM capacity for both administration and sector departments.

d. Design a local government oversight, supervision and monitoring system at State and national levels. This will be based on LG quarterly budget performance reports and State FMIS expenditure reports, that will be considered together with sector performance reports. The Government will (i) improve the functioning of
the State Transfer Monitoring Committee at national and ensuring participation and information flow to line ministries; (ii) design and establish County Transfer Monitoring Committees in all States; and (iii) design and institute audit mechanisms i.e. county financial and performance audits and an annual benchmark assessment.

17. To strengthen transparency and top-down and bottom-up accountability, the following actions will be implemented.

a. *Enable the Local Government legislative councils to oversee the LG executive and holding it to account for service delivery.* This involves: (i) reviewing and proposing guidance on roles and responsibilities of the LG legislative councils and (ii) prepare and implement an Action Plan aimed to implement the guidance.

b. *Review and propose social accountability structures and practices:* This involves: (i) reviewing the existing social accountability structures and practices in South Sudan; (ii) developing a Social Accountability Framework offering guidance among others on community management structures and their role in holding LGs to account and the implications for LGs; and (iii) supporting the implementation of the Social Accountability Framework.

Yours Sincerely;

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