

Project of the Year Awards – Nomination

2011

UNOPS South Sudan – Lakes State Stabilization Project (LSSP)
Award: 00061068



Dear Jose,

I am pleased to submit SSOC's entry for the 2011 UNOPS 'Project of the Year' Awards titled Lakes State Stabilization Program (LSSP). Two projects have been identified by the Senior Management of SSOC through our own internal competition as the most outstanding of our projects that ran during 2011. The 'Lakes State Stabilization Program' has played a key role in building peace in Lakes State which is one of the worst affected areas in South Sudan in relation to inter and intra communal violence. Within Lakes State, it has bridged the gap between humanitarian and recovery assistance through the successful delivery of a number of key services aimed at preventing conflict over water sources and livestock.

Specific outputs of the project included the successful construction of a number of *Hafirs* (underground reservoirs for storage of rain water) and bore holes in strategic locations throughout the state to help prevent conflict during the dry season. A number of Police Stations and Court Houses have also been successfully completed in order to increase police capacity and access to judicial process in those areas of the State particularly prone to violence.

The project has further built strong ties for UNOPS with both the donor Sudan Recovery Fund - South Sudan and the Lead Agency, UNDP, illustrated by the attached letter from the UNDP Programme Coordinator, Kanak Dhar. This initiative has further forged a strong relationship with all levels of government within Lakes State, with them now recognising UNOPS as a key partner in providing vital services related to the security within the State. Lastly, it has been delivered ahead of schedule, within budget, and in line with the policies and goals of UNOPS.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or the Project Manager, Peter Ooko if you have any follow-up questions regarding this project. All supporting documents have been uploaded to the Project Document Center.

Kind regards,

Bruce McKerrow
Head of Programme a.i.

Project of the Year Awards 2011 nomination Form

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Project Title: Lakes State Stabilization Project (LSSP)

Question 1

Q. Tell us about the success of your project during 2011 (using the "Situation Tactics Actions Results" (STAR) approach) (max 600 words collectively)

- What was the most critical factor in your success?
- Describe how you approached communications and stakeholder management?
- What was your approach to managing risks?

Undertaking a project in the newest country in the world, South Sudan is an extremely challenging task given the operational environment. In addition, implementing a project in Lakes State, one of the poorest areas in South Sudan, faces even greater difficulties. As with the rest of the country, the inhabitants of Lakes State have suffered a twenty two year period of civil war, resulting in the collapse of the socio-economic infrastructure as well as the internal displacements of its residents. Violence continues to ravage the state, due to the ongoing inter and intra communal conflicts centered on water sources and livestock.

From the outset, the project faced numerous risks in its delivery which included the ability to deliver the required outputs given the unstable security conditions; the implementation period being limited to only a few months of the year due to the rainy season; the complex stakeholder environment - from UNDP in its administrative capacity of the Sudan Recovery Fund (SRF), to the State and Local Government authorities' skepticism of the UN; and logistical challenges including associated lack of contract capacity.

The project team realised from the start that given the numerous risks that were faced, an inclusive approach was needed to encourage stakeholder involvement at all levels. This was done in order to not only mitigate risks but to also set realistic expectations, goals and objectives. Based on this process, a detailed plan was developed that was distributed to all stakeholders for discussion with feedback being encouraged (please see the PDC for details). SSOC Management also provided key advice on how to best structure the project given its tight deadlines within the short implementation period regarding Procurement and HR. The setting with the stakeholders of realistic goals, along with subsequent planning and the tracking of risks, has allowed the project team to deliver the outputs in a timely manner; within budget; and to the acceptable quality standards of the stakeholders.



At the beginning of the project the government authorities in Lakes State were skeptical of the UN and the ability of UNOPS to deliver, but due to their constant involvement throughout the life cycle of the project they have been able to accept UNOPS as a critical partner in assisting them to deal with inter and intra

communal conflict. Part of the problem at the beginning, was that the Government in Lakes saw UNOPS only as a contractor. However, through the facilitation of discussions and presenting the concerns of the Lakes Government to the donor, UNOPS was able to make clear the benefits it brings as an implementing partner. For example: on several occasions after meeting with key beneficiaries, UNOPS was able to negotiate with the funding source for the relocation of the sites of several boreholes, court houses and police stations to better serve the security needs of the community. These steps were greatly appreciated by the Lakes Government, and demonstrated the practicality and added value of working with UNOPS. Thanks to these decisions, in a number of locations where police stations and courthouses have been built, the town has started to centre around these buildings, as the community seeks to build houses and businesses where there will be protection, if needed.

The PRINCE2 training provided to the project team has allowed them to identify, assess, plan, and action possible risks at all stages of the project. The training provided within the PM Foundation Course in UNOPS HQ to the Project Manager, Peter Ooko has greatly benefited the implementation process, particularly in regards to dealing with planning and risks through the tools and guidance that have been developed by the Project Management Practice.

Question 2

Q. Lessons learned (max 600 words):

- 1) What advice would you give to another project manager starting the same project or if you could do it all over gain what would you do differently?

The best advice that the project can give is to ensure that you are satisfied with the business case and project plan before you commence the works as we can not stress enough the importance of having a solid platform to work from. It makes any challenges that face the project (and there are always challenges) so much easier to deal with. We would even recommend being conservative with all stated estimates. It is imperative to industriously work with stakeholders to understand any predicted constraints faced by the project. It is best to be honest from the start, rather than having to disappoint those involved later in the project.

Two key issues that the project faced at the end of 2011 were the maintenance and sustainability of the sites. Although these components had not been included in the project by the donor, it is the opinion of the project team that this will affect how the achievements are viewed by some stakeholders as they will most likely hold UNOPS responsible, even though technically it was not our responsibility. It had become apparent by the end of the rainy season of 2011 that ongoing maintenance at a number of sites would be needed to keep these places operational throughout the year: e.g. repairing damages, maintenance of the water bores and cleaning the grounds. The team would recommend that UNOPS places more emphasis at the planning stage and initiation of the project on securing such funding for the ongoing operational needs of these sites in to the future. Donor education is a critical part of this, to demonstrate that the initial investment could be sustained for much longer with only a minor amount of extra funds being committed to maintenance. It is the name and thus image of UNOPS that is associated with the buildings, therefore it only damages our standing as a partner if they are not properly maintained.



The issue of sustainability has also been highlighted throughout the implementation process, and this again is an important component that was not taken into consideration at the start of the project. All police stations and court houses are powered using a generator and in order for this to work it needs fuel and thus the funds for its purchase. In some cases, the local government simply cannot afford to purchase this essential resource or in others there is has difficulty sourcing the fuel, especially in remote locations. I would advice other PMs from the start of the project to take the time to think through the fundamental aims and constraints of the process, and what the beneficiaries want out of it. Put yourself in the shoes of those who will be using the benefits of the project outcomes. In hindsight, it is obvious for example that providing an expensive generator would have significant running costs associated with it, but it just wasn't considered during the planning stages. We are now putting together a proposal to use the saved funds from the project to provide solar power to all the buildings that have been constructed in order to lower the ongoing operational costs. If the project was to be repeated, greater emphasis would now be placed on the operational costs having now recognised the constraints placed on the beneficiaries.

Lessons Learnt Summary			
	What worked well	What did not work well	What the team would do differently
Project Execution and Delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The project kept to its original goals. 2) Project baselines in terms of scope, time, cost and quality have been well managed. 3) PRINCE2 project management processes have been followed. 4) Project reporting was done in a timely manner. 5) Stakeholders were satisfied with the information they received. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There were certain gaps in the overall project planning that UNOPS could have advised on. 2) Delay in getting project resources such as staff and vehicles and this slowed down progress. 3) Due to the delay in getting resources, monitoring in some of the locations was not adequate. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) We should ensure that resources are available for Project Start-Ups for new projects. Perhaps a contingency fund from the Central Support Services (CSS) budget can be used to start new projects. 3) If there is a way to have a pool of experts who can be quickly mobilized and recruited then this would alleviate the staffing crisis.
Human Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Project received support from the top OC management. 2) Project Team was well organized, talented, hardworking, and supportive. 3) Project Manager received excellent experience from the 'Pilot Project Management Course' and this was applied to the implementation process. 4) Outstanding communication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Project Manager spent a great deal of time on technical issues and was left with not enough time to perform some management functions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4) There should be a clear division of labour in that the manager should not 'wear two hats' but should instead concentrate on project management functions rather than spending a lot of time dealing with technical issues. This may improve the quality of project management.

	within the team.		
Overall	1) Initial cost and schedule estimates were accurate. 2) Outputs being delivered within budget and schedule. 3) External dependencies well understood and managed. 4) The overall 'Change Control' mechanism was effective. 5) Beneficiary needs and requirements are being met. 6) Project objectives are being met.	5) Initial estimates did not capture everything required and omitted valuable items e.g. furniture, power-source and police radio. Communication equipment which was later added.	6) A detailed analysis of the project is required and focus should not be based on getting work started on site, but on proper documentation. and project requirements.

Questions 3

Q. Tell us about a personal experience or an experience shared with the team that has left a lasting impression on you while working on this project (max 600 words).

For our team, successfully implementing the project in one of the most challenging work environments imaginable has provided the greatest sense of satisfaction. The positive feedback from the beneficiaries has been what has driven the project team towards success. It has been astonishing to see the difference in how the Government in Lakes State has changed their regard for UNOPS. At the start of implementation they were skeptical of our organisation, now they see us as a true partner in building their State.



Some of the quotes which left a lasting impression were:

"We used to travel several kilometres to fetch water for our use here at the Police Station: leaving few officers to man the station during this dry season, but now that we have water in our station we can now focus on providing security to our people in Maper".

County Police Commissioner Rumbek North County, Lakes State

"We are nearing the end of the project, but now we need to look to what is to be next with UNOPS. There is so much needed, we need hospitals."

County Commission H.E David Riak Mayom

"...UNOPS has proven its ability to find innovative solutions for delivering results in some of the most remote, inaccessible, and insecure target sites in South Sudan, in an expedient and cost effective manner. In my opinion, this experience is also further testament of how Joint UN Programming serves as a model for delivering results in a complex and difficult, post-conflict environment. Overall, I am very happy and pleased to be working with the UNOPS Senior Management Team and Project Managers on the abovementioned Stabilization Programmes, due to their high-level of technical and management experience and expertise, as well as client orientation for delivering results."

Programme Coordinator (UNDP- led SRF Programme), Kanal Dhar. Email sent to USAID on his experience with UNOPS (please see the Partner Center for full correspondence).

"This is the first stone building that has been constructed in the whole of Awerial County ever since the time of the British, and we are very proud to be the first people to occupy the first building of this kind in Awerial County."

County Police Commissioner, Awerial County, Lakes State

"The market has now moved to be next to the Police Station, the people feel safer here, so the market has followed the people."

Peter, fish store owner, Minkaman, Awerial County

The excellent teamwork and team spirit exhibited by the Project team has always impressed me. Members of the team at times travelled for over 300km on cattle tracks to access and assess the sites. Field staff faced daily difficulties in sourcing food and accommodation and dealing with changing security conditions. A large part of the success of this initiative has been due to the sacrifices team members have made in working in these remote areas.



As a Project Manager, it is an amazing thing to witness when you go to a project site and experience a village being created around the police station or around the *Hafirs*. In many of these locations there was nothing at all before the work began, but as the project progressed you started to see a community forming around the sites, you started to see the strategy developed with the SRF take effect. In talking with locals, you come to understand how huge the need is for people to live in safe environments across Lakes State. You get to see why a secure water source is so vital to a community in South Sudan – things we often take for granted in the West. It's an amazing insight to the benefits of the work of UNOPS being carried out in South Sudan.

Questions 4

Describe how your project meets the six UNOPS success criteria (max 600 words).

(i) Stakeholder satisfaction: Indicate any positive feedback from both partners and beneficiaries and support this by documenting it in the PDC.

The stakeholders have on several occasions made positive comments about the project. One example of this is attached to this submission: a letter from the UNDP Programme Coordinator, Kanak Dhar. Another example is noted in one of the Project Board Meetings where the Lakes State Minister of Finance, Trade and Industry asked specifically for his praise for UNOPS to be captured in the Project Board Meeting as highlighted below:

7) Update on Progress and Challenges on Implementation of the LSSP			
Issues	Discussion/Decision/Action point	Responsibility	Time Frame
8) Progress and challenges on LSSP implementation.	9) Kanak Dhar distributed a document titled: 'LSSP: Update on Progress and Planned Activities' to meeting participants and presented progress and challenges on implementation of the LSSP over the past three months (Q1 2011). 10) The meeting agreed on the following modifications to the document: 11) Point 1.7 on page 1 should note that the baseline study will be completed shortly and disseminated to all parties. 12) Point 1.8 on page 2 should note a closing date of 17 April 2011. 13) The Chair commented that he was happy with the implementation progress that was presented at the meeting.	14)	

*Extract from: *LSSP Project Board Meeting Minutes – 14th April 2011*

Most importantly, on a number of occasions beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction with the work of UNOPS. Quotes related to this have been provided above.

(ii) Delivery and Performance: How has your project performed in terms of budget, schedule, business case and quality indicators?

The project has performed well in terms of the four parameters listed above in the following ways:

- a) **Budget:** There has been no cost overrun in the SRF Lakes State Stabilization project. We have instead made savings on the budget allocation. Through value engineering, extra value has been added to the outputs through the utilization of saved funds by providing items that were not included

in the original Scope of Works (SoW) but which later became necessary and important for the proper functioning of the facilities as identified by the beneficiaries and UNOPS. These additional items included furniture and equipment (power source) which were not part of the original scope.

- b) **Schedule:** The project is on schedule and, in fact, some items of work in the Work Packages are ahead of schedule. The project was originally expected to be operationally closed by 31st December 2012 but with the approved amendment is expected to close by 30th June 2013 (please note that the amendment has been approved by SRF but the legal documents are still being finalised (this could change in the coming week)). Therefore, an amendment has yet to be entered into the leads system). Based on the Programme of Works, the civil works are expected to be completed by 30th April 2012 or at the latest 15th May 2012 and with a six months defects liability period allowed for, all the works are expected to be completed and handed over by the 30th November 2012 with almost 7 months remaining to close the Project.
- c) **Business Case:** The project business case is still valid and has to some extent already been achieved, if the comments of some of the stakeholders are taken in to account. The SRF Lakes State Stabilization Project focuses specifically on improving stability and security in priority areas affected by conflict. To this end, the project has constructed and completed county courts and police stations which have given the communities a sense of security by ensuring that there is police presence in the remote areas. HE Chairman of the SRF Lakes State Steering Committee had this to say on 29th February 2012: *"The Payam Police Station at Malek has now prevented cattle raiders from Cuiebet County moving freely into Rumbek Central County"*. In addition to this, the County Commissioner of Rumbek, North County stated that the construction of the Hafir in Ngok Jak will prevent large movements of cattle towards River Gel in Warrap and hence avert the conflicts with the Nuer tribe.
- d) **Quality Indicators:** Quality indicators are the agreed upon processes or outcomes which are used to determine the level of quality. For SRF Lakes State the project team has at all times considered that those who are the project's ultimate beneficiaries are themselves best placed to judge and assess whether the initiatives meet the quality criteria in the first instance. This evaluation is then compared with the feedback from other stakeholders involved in the project. Several positive comments have come from the beneficiaries themselves: for example, The County Police chief of Awerial had this to say: *"This is the first stone building that has been constructed in the whole of Awerial County ever since the time of the British and we are very proud to be the first people to occupy the first building of this kind in Awerial County"*. Project processes and quality standards have also been carefully followed and this is evidenced in the Quarterly Assessment Reports for the project.



(iii) Internal Procedures Performance: Tell us how your project performed based on audit of processes, documents and data quality criteria.

Based on the results of the Quarterly Quality Assurance, the project has adhered to UNOPS procedures and performance guidelines. Project documents have been regularly uploaded in the UNOPS Management Workspace. Both the award and project documents have been uploaded and available for viewing. The 'Pilot Project Management Foundation Training' that the Project Manager attended at the Headquarters in Copenhagen provided extremely useful insights and education on how to better use the Management Workspace to track the project on a daily basis. This has been a critical tool of the project team in the daily management of procedures.

(iv) Knowledge Performance: Tell us how lessons learned are documented and shared within the team, OC, about team contribution to the COP, and how new processes were coordinated with the Practice lead.

The 'Project Management Foundation Course' for new UNOPS project managers held at Headquarters, proved very useful to me in managing the SRF Lakes State Project following my attendance in May, 2011. Above all, I was provided with many examples of where information-sharing is an essential step for improving project management processes, since if those involved do not learn from history, then they are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. I found one of the most useful aspects of the course to be the sharing of knowledge of UNOPS Project Managers from all over the world where I was able to share my own experiences. One example of this can be found on the intranet site video for the Foundation Course. I was able to meet with many of the Practice Leads and talk about the challenges of implementing a project in Lakes State and give inputs to how the tools and policy could be improved to allow the project to run more effectively.

At the SSOC level, weekly and monthly Project Managers and Programme meetings allow Managers to share lessons learnt across different projects and programmes. At the team level, lessons learnt are shared at weekly and monthly project meetings.

During the execution of the project, progress was recorded and documented in the monthly highlight reports which are provided to the Programme Manager. At the end of the project life cycle, the 'Lessons Learned' report will be included as part of the project closure. We hope that the documentation of the success of our endeavour will add to the portfolio of successful projects available to those seeking support and advice to prevent 'reinventing the wheel'.

(v) Team Satisfaction: Tell us about the pride within the team, about the project outcomes, and any positive shared experiences

The SRF Lakes State Stabilization project team is a fantastic group of people. Each member of the team has the freedom to participate in all aspects of the process and to present their views and opinions in a democratic way, especially during project meetings. The team also puts in great effort, including weekends and public holidays, to ensure that delivery targets are met without submitting any request for compensation. In addition, there has been the creation of a sense of belonging where each member feels that they are part and parcel of the team. Positive leadership from several directions has assisted with the creation of a cohesive team who are able to freely interact with each other in an open and supportive environment where many interpersonal support outcomes have positively impacted on the project so far.

(vi) **Core Values:** Explain how the project was the right project for UNOPS, in terms of respect for national ownership and capacity, harmonization within the UN and beyond, accountability for results and the efficient use of resources as well as service to others.

The SRF Lakes State Stabilization project met the UN core values in the following ways:

- a) **Respect for national ownership and capacity:** The SRF Lakes is a state-led initiative which seeks to bolster the capacity of the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) and partners, and actively encourages the participation and empowerment of communities affected by conflict and poverty. UNOPS empowers both these communities and the State to make the choice of what is best for them.



- b) **Harmonization within the UN Family:** Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, humanitarian support constitutes the bulk of international assistance to the people of South Sudan. Recently the trend was complemented by the introduction of a longer term developmental support through the 'Multi Donor Trust Fund' (MDTF). There was however a gap that was noted through this funding mechanism as it did not address the medium term recovery assistance. For this reason, the UN and donor agencies established the SRF fund to fill this gap. This is a funding mechanism and joint partnership of the GoSS, the UN, and donor partners and hence provides a harmonized approach for developmental assistance by the incorporation of the UN agencies, with UNOPS being the main implementing partner.
- c) **Accountability for Results:** UNOPS as an organization is accountable for producing results by having a clearly defined and achievable set of deliverables, and we also aim to achieve positive results rather than just 'do the job'. Therefore, with this UNOPS underpinning firmly in mind at all times, we have focused on achieving our results by inspiring the team members to pursue successful outcomes beyond the boundaries of their job or tasks by creating an environment which motivates each person to ask: "*What else can I do to make my work contribution better, or add value to the project outcomes and outputs?*" We have demonstrated this extra commitment throughout each step of the 'SRF Lakes Project' by providing added items and contributions that were not provided for in the original 'Scope of Works' and therefore have added value to the project outcomes and output.
- d) **Efficient Use of Resources:** Unlike the majority of contractors in South Sudan who appear to be motivated mainly by profit, UNOPS seeks to maximize the benefits by concentrating on the planned outcomes that the project beneficiaries will receive, and not just the money value of the initiative. In addition, unlike contractors, UNOPS staff aim for sustainable solutions to problems and seeks to add value to projects being undertaken by them. In our case, one example of this proposal has been in the development area with the inclusion of solar water pumping for *Hafirs* as opposed to the approved use of diesel powered centrifugal pumps. We have also strived hard to add value through prudent use of the allocated budget and hence the savings that were accrued have been used in the supply of items which were not in the original scope of works, but which have been found to be necessary for the proper functioning of the facilities. All these initiatives have been achieved in line with the outlined procedures as highlighted in the 'Joint Donor Document'.

- e) **Service to others:** 'The SRF' Lakes Stabilization Project team holds a belief that regardless of what each team member contributes, the overarching purpose of the project is to create and deliver value for others, i.e. *the people* of Lakes State, and this has been our strongest motivating factor. An element of philosophy that has assisted us in our purpose is that Mahatma Gandhi once said, "*Be the Change you wish to see in the world*". The 'SRF Lakes Project' team has tried to be agents of that personal, and hence positive, impactful change in a lasting manner for our Project. We have tried our best to drill bore holes which have alleviated the sufferings of the communities in Lakes State especially for women.



We have provided infrastructure facilities now being used by the law-enforcement agencies to bring peace and security to otherwise volatile and insecure areas. Our team has also sought to achieve even more by always being willing to teach others, especially our counterparts in the 'Lakes State Ministry of Physical Infrastructure' through the sharing of knowledge and experiences where they have currently not had the same training opportunities as us. Finally, we have put in place mechanisms to ensure that the facilities constructed are owned and managed by the local communities, not by external agencies. We have set up Water Management Committees to manage the bore holes and *Hafirs* and have provided tools and equipment along with training in efficient usage for this purpose. It is for this reason that the SRF is a state and community led initiative, and we have always left their people to be at the forefront of decision making.