

# *Uganda Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) Project*

**Mid Term Evaluation of the Uganda Monitoring & Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) Project managed by the Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG): SOL-617-11-000007**

Final Report  
November 30,  
2011



**pwc**

This document was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID/Uganda). It was prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited.

---

## ***Acknowledgements***

*We would like to thank all USAID staff, particularly Jeremiah Carew and May Mwaka from the PPD Office, The Mission Director Dave Eckerson, TMG Managers, particularly Pat Rainey, Jenkins Cooper, and the personnel of the Implementing Partners (IPs) for their valuable contribution that enabled us to understand the procedures, processes and key issues relating to this assignment on which the evaluation has been based.*

*The midterm evaluation of UMEMS was undertaken by Guy Maughfling as the Engagement Director, Charles Wright as the Lead Evaluator, Anthony Kintu Mwanje as the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Margaret Nalwanga as the ID/OD Specialist, Mansoor Bunnya as the IT/Database Management Specialist and Michael Sendiwala as the Research Assistant.*

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	8
<b>1. Introduction</b>	13
1.1 Background and Context	13
1.2 Context	13
1.3 Purpose of the Evaluation	14
1.4 Structure of the Final Report	14
<b>2. Approach and Methodology</b>	15
2.1 Approach	15
2.2 Evaluation Methodology	15
<b>2.2.1 Document reviews</b>	15
<b>2.2.2 Data collection</b>	15
<b>2.2.3 Data analysis</b>	16
<b>2.2.4 Quality Control</b>	16
<b>2.2.5 Sampling</b>	16
<b>2.2.6 Development of Data Collection tools</b>	17
2.3 Limitations	18
<b>3. UMEMS Contribution to Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Performance within USAID Uganda</b>	19
3.1 Development of Performance Management Plans (PMP) for the Mission and IPs	19
<b>3.1.1 Support to IPs to develop their Performance Management Plans</b>	19
<b>3.1.2 Support to Mission Strategic Objective Teams to develop their PMPs</b>	20
<b>3.1.3 Conclusion</b>	20
3.2 Conducting Data Quality Assessments (DQAs)	20
<b>3.2.1 Contribution of DQA to effective M&amp;E performance in USAID</b>	21
<b>3.2.2 Conclusion</b>	22
3.3 Training and Capacity building of Mission and IP staff	22
<b>3.3.1 IP Staff Training and Capacity building</b>	22
<b>3.3.2 Mission Staff Training and Capacity Building</b>	23
<b>3.3.3 Access to and usefulness of “how-to reports”</b>	23
<b>3.3.4 Gender Considerations</b>	24
<b>3.3.5 Conclusion</b>	24
3.4 Operation and Maintenance of the PRS Database	24
<b>3.4.1 Technical strength and weaknesses of the PRS database</b>	24

<b>3.4.2</b>	<b>Access to and Usage of the PRS database</b>	25
<b>3.4.3</b>	<b>Usefulness of the PRS database</b>	26
<b>3.4.4</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	26
<b>3.4.5</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	27
<hr/>		
3.5	Conducting Evaluations and Special Studies	27
<b>3.5.2</b>	<b>Effectiveness of UMEMS Evaluation Assistance</b>	28
<b>3.5.3</b>	<b>Key areas for improvement</b>	28
<b>3.5.4</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	28
<hr/>		
3.6	Other consequences	29
3.7	Conclusion	29
<hr/>		
<b>4.</b>	<b>Adequacy of UMEMS Design in Ensuring the Achievement of Intended Objectives</b>	30
<hr/>		
4.1	Strengths and Weaknesses of the Organisational Design and Structure of UMEMS contract	30
<b>4.1.1</b>	<b>UMEMS intended objectives</b>	30
<b>4.1.2</b>	<b>The Key issues in the design of UMEMS</b>	30
<b>4.1.3</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	31
<hr/>		
4.2	UMEMS liaison with PPD and the SO teams in designing and implementing specific activities	31
4.3	UMEMS support to the Implementing Partners	32
4.4	Quality and Timeliness of Technical Guidance from the Mission	32
4.5	Ability of the Current UMEMS Contract to Support the Implementation of the CDCS, CLA agenda and Performance Reforms	33
<b>4.5.1</b>	<b>The Current UMEMS Contract</b>	34
<b>4.5.3</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	35
<hr/>		
<b>5.</b>	<b>Capacity of UMEMS to Render Effective M&amp;E services to the Mission</b>	36
<hr/>		
5.1	Quality and Effectiveness of UMEMS staff	36
5.2	Usefulness of the Geographical Information System (GIS) module and UMEMS' capacity to support GIS in the mission	36
<b>5.2.1</b>	<b>Quality and usefulness of the GIS module in the database</b>	36
<b>5.2.2</b>	<b>Capacity of UMEMS in supporting GIS use in the Mission</b>	36
<hr/>		
5.3	Strategic Partnerships	37
5.4	Conclusion	37
<hr/>		
<b>6.</b>	<b>What Next after UMEMS</b>	38
<hr/>		
6.1	Transitional arrangements	38
<b>6.1.1</b>	<b>Handover of UMEMS to Mission staff</b>	38
<b>6.1.2</b>	<b>Four month extension of UMEMS and its funding</b>	38
<hr/>		
6.2	UMEMS successor or Not	39

<b>6.2.1</b>	<b>Reintegration of M&amp;E into the Mission</b>	39
<b>6.2.2</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	39
<hr/>		
6.3	UMEMS successor – Its scope and possible structure	39
<b>6.3.1</b>	<b>The scope and services of UMEMS successor</b>	39
<b>6.3.2</b>	<b>Proposed organisation structure</b>	40
<b>6.3.3</b>	<b>Total size of structure</b>	42
<hr/>		
6.4	Vision for UMEMS successor	42
<hr/>		
<b>7.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	43
<hr/>		
7.1	Short term actions	43
7.2	PRS database	44
7.3	Evaluations and Special Studies	44
7.4	Preparation for what’s next	45
7.5	Design considerations for UMEMS successor	45

## List of Tables

Table 1: The Sample Selection - Implementing Partners consulted .....	17
Table 2: Evaluation studies’ component weighting .....	18
Table 3: DOA outcomes for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 .....	21
Table 4: Evaluation studies’ component scores .....	27

## List of Figures

Figure 1: PRS database usage by COTR, IP, PPD and TMG staff .....	25
Figure 2: Proposed top level organogram.....	40
Figure 3: Proposed front office organogram .....	41
Figure 4: Proposed back office organogram .....	41

---

## **Appendices**

Appendix I :	SoW for the Mid-Term evaluation of UMEMS
Appendix II:	Evaluation methodology matrix
Appendix III:	IPs evaluation questionnaire
Appendix IV:	USAID (PPD) questionnaire
Appendix V:	Assessment tool for TMG evaluation and special studies
Appendix VI:	Checklist for the PRS database assessment
Appendix VII:	Focused group discussion checklist/issues
Appendix VIII:	List of organizations and people consulted
Appendix IX:	List of documents reviewed
Appendix X:	TMG self evaluation questionnaire
Appendix XI	List of sampled Implementing Partners

## List of Acronyms:

<b>Acronym</b>	
<b>ADS</b>	Automated Directive System
<b>CDCS</b>	Country Development and Cooperation Strategy
<b>CLA</b>	Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation
<b>COP</b>	Chief of Party
<b>COTR</b>	Contracting Officer Technical Representative
<b>DO</b>	Development Objective
<b>DQA</b>	Data Quality Assessments
<b>FAQ</b>	Frequently Asked Questions
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>FY</b>	Fiscal Year
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information System
<b>GOU</b>	Government of Uganda
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partners
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non- governmental Organisation(s)
<b>NUDEIL</b>	Northern Uganda Development of Enhanced Local Governance Infrastructure and Livelihoods
<b>NUMAT</b>	Northern Uganda Malaria, AIDS and Tuberculosis Program
<b>PILPG</b>	Public International Law and Policy Group
<b>PMP</b>	Performance Management Plans
<b>PPD</b>	Program and Policy Development
<b>PPR</b>	Plan and Performance Report
<b>PRS</b>	Performance Reporting System
<b>PwC</b>	PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited
<b>RIG</b>	Regional Inspector General
<b>SiCOP</b>	Strategic Information Community of Practice
<b>SO</b>	Strategic Objective
<b>SoW</b>	Statement(s) of Work
<b>TMG</b>	The Mitchell Group Inc.
<b>UMEMS</b>	Uganda Monitoring & Evaluation Management Services project
<b>UNITY</b>	Uganda Initiative for Teacher Development Management Systems and the Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy Communication to the Youth
<b>URL</b>	Uniform Resource Locator
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development

---

## Executive Summary

### Background and Purpose of the evaluation

USAID's Uganda Mission is required under Agency ADS regulations to have a comprehensive system to measure the performance of its activities. In operationalizing this performance management function, USAID/Uganda engaged The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG) to provide performance measurement, evaluation and reporting services to the Mission and its Implementing Partners (IPs) under the Uganda Monitoring & Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) project. UMEMS is a four years (2008-2012) project ending May 2012 with an estimated cost for performance of the work of 7.5 million United States Dollars.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the performance of the UMEMS contract so far and guide a USAID management decision on how future implementation can be improved to enable achievement of the CDCS objectives and specifically the implementation of the CLA agenda. Secondly, the evaluation will inform the decision of whether to design a follow-on activity to UMEMS and, if so, how that contract should be designed. The Mission is interested in establishing the extent to which UMEMS is contributing to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within the Mission.

This report therefore answers the key evaluation questions that include:

1. How has UMEMS contributed to effective M&E performance within USAID Uganda?
2. Is the design of UMEMS adequate to ensure achievement of the intended objectives?
3. Does UMEMS have sufficient capacity to render effective M&E services to the mission? and
4. What next after UMEMS?

### Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology involved a review of documents, designing data collection tools, choosing a sample of 15 Implementing Partners operating in the three Strategic Objectives 7, 8 and 9, collecting data from IPs and mission staff through interviews and focus group discussions, analysing data and assessing the evaluation and special studies, preparing, and presenting the inception and draft reports; all quality controlled by the Engagements Leader and the USAID Uganda contract Managers.

### Findings and Conclusions

#### Question 1 - How has UMEMS contributed to effective M&E performance?

Our findings on UMEMS performance covered four main areas as follows;

1. **Support to Preparation of Performance Management Plans** – Twelve (80%) of the sampled IPs acknowledged receiving guidance from UMEMS on how to develop their PMPs in line with USAID policies. Of those that received the guidance, 75% rated UMEMS support as '**exceeding expectations**' while 3 (25%) rated it as '**in line with expectations**', and hence collectively, 100% of the IPs that received guidance on preparation of PMPs from UMEMS rated the support as in line with expectations and above. SO Teams were generally satisfied with the support they had received, despite a few minor concerns. Considering the fact that at the time of this evaluation 85% of the IPs had their PMPs approved by USAID; the high positive IP response rate, **combined with the fact that no IP rated UMEMS as 'below expectations'** all evidenced by the mission compliance with ADS requirements for performance management; presence of nearly full data sets and targets for SO team and IP PMP indicators; indicates that UMEMS has to a large extent contributed to effective Monitoring and Evaluation performance within USAID.

2. **Data Quality Assessments** - UMEMS on average completes 52 DQAs per annum and during the past 3 years, the percentage of DQAs with a positive rating has increased from 49% in 2008 to 75% in 2010, while those with a negative rating have reduced from 43% in 2008 to 21% in 2010. **Likewise, DQA outcomes with “No data” have reduced from 8% in 2008 to 4% in 2010. Of the IPs sampled, 80% had had DQA’s completed.** Respondents generally considered **DQA’s to be instructive and helpful**, in the sense that they have helped IPs to have a better understanding of their project indicators, and thereby review and improve their data collection tools and mechanisms. The mission now has more confidence in the quality and accuracy of performance information being received from IPs, which is used in portfolio reviews and other decision making platforms. However, concerns have been raised by IPs that sometimes DQA findings and reports either take too long, or are not communicated to the responsible persons, making it difficult to correct any issues. Likewise better involvement of the USAID COTRs in DQAs would strengthen the response by partners in addressing issues raised. It was also noted that **DQA’s substantially comprise a review of data quality processes** through interviews with head quarters staff, with relatively little work being done on data verification through inspection.
3. **Training and building the capacity of IP and Mission Staff** – A total of 80% of the IPs sampled acknowledged receipt of training and capacity building services from UMEMS, and they all rated the usefulness of the training and capacity building workshops as inline with expectations and above. **The “how to guidelines” exist and are being accessed and used by the majority of IPs.** As a result of the training and capacity building interventions, the IP staff capacity to measure progress on Indicators, use the PRS database and understand better their indicators has improved. On the other hand, mission staff participation and appreciation of the trainings organised by UMEMS has not been as good.

#### 4. **Operation of the Performance Reporting System (PRS) Database**

UMEMS assists the Mission to manage its large volume of data through a web based database and reporting system, the Performance Reporting System (PRS) database. Our technical assessment reveals that the PRS database is generally sound with a few hitches. All the sampled Implementing Partners access and use the PRS database and they all rated its usefulness as in line with expectations and above. From the database, the Mission is able to compile comprehensive indicator data for the annual Plan and Performance Report (PPR) and bi-annual Portfolio Reviews and special initiative reports like the Presidential Malaria Initiative. As such, the PRS supports the Mission in pooling together information to meet the basic overall planning and reporting requirements well. However, regular usage of the PRS is generally low especially among the PPD and COTRs. Against this background, the PRS **appears to be a ‘diamond in the rough’, but certainly not a ‘white elephant’**. The PRS has a lot of potential to become central to effective and efficient Monitoring and Evaluation, and can be an indispensable aid to COTRs, IPs, and PPD.

5. **UMEMS Studies and Evaluations** - UMEMS is supposed to assist the mission with evaluations that meet the needs of USAID and comply with ADS guidance. In exercising this role, UMEMS has seen the development and utilisation of an Evaluation Calendar that is regarded as very useful, and has led to a higher number of Evaluations being planned and completed. The evaluation calendar has been useful in enabling better planning, budgeting and timing of the evaluations. It signals on upcoming evaluations to begin the process of preparation of SoWs and procurements. In addition, UMEMS has undertaken about 18 Evaluations and Special Studies, of which we assessed 6 of the products for quality, timeliness and usefulness. The overall weighted score for the sampled studies was 67%. Major factors affecting the scores were inadequate quality assurance, supervision and management of the assignments. SO Teams were however fairly critical of some (not all) of UMEMS performance in this area, citing three unsatisfactory assignments. Some COTRs have consequently gone directly to the market for such work, bypassing the UMEMS mechanism. The quality of some of the evaluations and studies has also been affected by poor quality statements of work, inadequate time and sometimes budgetary constraints. It’s worthwhile to note that the evaluation findings have been used as much as possible in the design of new programs, re-alignment and focusing within USAID and with Government of Uganda partners in some cases.

6. **Conclusion.** UMEMS have contributed to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within USAID Uganda by assisting the mission to: have complete and quality PMPs in use; meet the PPR requirements (complete information and accurate); set targets; have complete information for the portfolio review and other performance information needs; have better quality and confidence in information from IPs, and thereby a clearer picture of mission performance. There are however areas that have so far received minimal or no attention, where UMEMS and the Mission have to get together and agree the best way forward for their implementation. The areas that received minimal or no attention include offering targeted training and building the capacity of Mission staff in monitoring and evaluation; and training IP and USAID staff on use and expectations of the PRS database and the GIS system.

## **Question 2 - Is the Design of UMEMS Adequate to ensure Achievement of the Intended Objectives?**

1. **The organizational design and structure of the contract** – While the design of the contract is adequate in most respects, there are two key issues:
  - The SoW does not contain a Statement of Objectives nor does it contain a Performance Management Framework, and Plan. Thus it is not possible to monitor the performance of UMEMS, and hold UMEMS to account, using the standard tools and methods of ‘Managing for Results’; and
  - Most of the Scope of Work comprises routine tasks, namely facilitating Performance Management Plans, training in M&E and in the operation of the PRS database, ensuring the PRS data are updated, conducting Data Quality Assessments. These routine tasks do **not require highly developed M&E skills, or ‘Sector Specialism’.** Thus the Kampala based M&E staff, under **the very capable COP, are ‘generalists’.** The consequences have been significant and inhibited UMEMS from **becoming ‘part of the fabric’ of USAID’s M&E function, and being valued as an integral ‘partner’ in M&E** in the mission teams.
2. **UMEMS liaison with PPD and the SO teams** - Liaison between UMEMS and PPD is good, as regular communications and meetings take place on an ‘as needed’ basis, but in particular the ‘weekly tracker meeting’. Collaboration with SO Teams varies and is high whenever a special study or evaluation is underway, but is otherwise low at other times. It appears that M&E is not a high priority for most COTRs, and when faced with difficult choices, M&E including the work done by UMEMS, is relegated to second position.
3. **UMEMS interaction with Implementing Partners** - UMEMS’s relationship with IP’s is more of supportive, guidance and facilitation. It has no authority, and therefore does not take final responsibility for quality of PMPs, updating the PRS Data base, implementation of recommendations from DQA’s, or reviewing IP’s quarterly performance reports. These are areas where UMEMS could add value. In addition, **feedback from IP’s shows that several, are not fully clear on UMEMS’ mandate, its roles and functions, and the responsibilities of each of the three parties.**
4. **The Mission’s quality & timeliness of technical guidance, participation in UMEMS initiatives, turnaround time, and coordination between SO teams and PPD** – This area has drawn generally unfavourable comment. **The Mission’s own assessment is that ‘little time is set aside for UMEMS activities, and (lack of) interest is a factor’.** Our overall observation is that SO Teams and COTRs have not generally given sufficient priority to M&E issues and activities, and that their inputs are sometimes found wanting.
5. **The ability of the current UMEMS Contract to support the CDCS, CLA Agenda and Performance Reforms** The current budgets, and the capacity of full time staff, is not at the levels required to meet the recurring needs of the CLA agenda on an on-going basis. However it is possible that UMEMS could, if directed by USAID, carry out specific analytical and research assignments, within limited budgets, by bringing in the required expertise. However the current contract is clearly not designed to handle the wider remit now emerging.

---

### Question 3 - Does UMEMS have Sufficient Capacity to Render Effective M&E services to the Mission?

The question of full time staff capacity, and the ability of UMEMS to guide the Mission in implementing the CLA agenda, has been dealt with under Question 2 above. Other topics under this question include;

1. **Capacity of headquarters staff and virtual advisors** – This capacity was found to be adequate and in most cases in line with expectations of the current contract.
2. **Strategic Partnerships** – There are no formal strategic partnerships as such, and UMEMS effort to forge a strategic partnership with Makerere University have not been fruitful. **Likewise, little effort has been made by the mission to facilitate UMEMS’ strategic partnerships** even where it would be in their control e.g. the possibility of finding a way to harmonise and eliminate the duplication of data in the MEEPS database was noted.

### Question 4 – What next after UMEMS

This section considers the two options for transitional arrangements, namely a hand over of **UMEMS’ functions** to mission staff in time before the contract ends, or the extension of UMEMS until UMEMS successor is in place. It then assesses the longer term options of either bringing M&E functions back into the Mission, or continuing to outsource the bulk of M&E services to a contractor under UMEMS successor.

1. **Transitional Arrangements** - It will be difficult to bring the UMEMS services and functions back into the Mission, and there is little appetite to do so. It therefore seems likely that UMEMS successor is the most feasible option. However, we understand that a typical procurement of this type may take up to 12 months to procure and UMEMS II only has 8 months remaining. However there are surplus funds of approximately \$ 570 000 which could **either be used for a ‘no cost extension’ or alternatively get the CLA agenda finalised and any additional research and special studies underway.** If the latter is chosen, then additional funding will have to be sourced for the additional four months, or UMEMS functions will have to be handed over to the Mission on a transitional basis, until UMEMS successor is ready. The nature of the handover is set out in the main report
2. **UMEMS successor – Its Scope and Structure**- To meet fully the CLA agenda, the **additional** services required are;
  - *Sector Impact Evaluations, Evidence Gathering, Results Attribution*
  - *Research - emerging issues, solutions, alternative approaches*
  - *Design of programs, involving alternative approaches and solutions*
  - *Baseline Surveys – Design & Data Gathering*
  - *Tracking of Game Changers, and manifestation of Hypotheses and Assumptions*
  - *Knowledge Management & Dissemination*
  - *Learning Forums, Interactive Learning*
  - *CLA Coordination across the Mission*

We have set out an organization and staffing structure which provides for all these services. This addresses the shortcomings in the current structure, namely it provides for Senior Sector M&E specialists for each SO. The final proposed staffing requirement is 18 of whom 12 are to provide ‘front office’ technical services, and 6 are in ‘back office’ support functions.

---

## Recommendations – The way forward

The mission needs to undertake a series of activities to ensure the successful execution of the M&E function under the current UMEMS contract, and that of UMEMS successor. In summary, we recommend that the mission undertakes the following:

- The Mission should complete work on setting out its complete understanding of the CLA agenda in relation to M&E and the CDCS. UMEMS participation in this role should be enhanced as they have the potential to play a critical role;
- The mission should **hold a ‘CLA Launch’ event for all** key stakeholders, to explain the M&E enhancements and the new rigour, as well as reinforcing the role and services of UMEMS and its successor. The Mission should use this opportunity to inculcate a stronger appreciation amongst COTRs and SO Teams, of the importance of M&E in improving aid effectiveness and reducing poverty;
- Conduct a PRS user requirements gathering exercise with all stakeholders, to capture their views on the constraints of the PRS database, and how it should be enhanced to be embraced by all stakeholders. Following the enhancement/upgrade of the PRS, UMEMS should introduce user **‘Driver License’ training and certification for all users**;
- Design a widened mandate and SoW for UMEMS successor, reflecting the broadened requirements of M&E, which is underpinned by a well-constructed performance management and results framework. The SoW will need to clearly define the relationship with the Mission SO M&E staff. and
- UMEMS successor should have a fully staffed structure incorporating highly experienced sector M&E specialists, a DCOP, and Knowledge Management specialist, with the capacity to execute the SoW, meet the expectations of SO **Teams, IP’s and PPD.**

In the last section of the report, we summarise all our recommendations in a chronological and actionable manner. We have defined four categories of recommendations as follows: Short Term Actions; the PRS Database; Preparation for UMEMS successor; and Design Issues for UMEMS successor. These recommendations address all the issues arising from the evaluation, and the preparation needed to bring UMEMS successor into being.

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

USAID's Uganda Mission is required under Agency ADS regulations to have a comprehensive system to measure the performance of its activities. USAID/Uganda Mission Order No. 200-02 documents the Mission's specific M&E policies and requirements that supplement USAID requirements. It defines the roles and responsibilities of USAID/Uganda Mission Staff and the **Mission's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) contractors**. In operationalizing this performance management function, USAID/Uganda engaged The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG) to provide performance measurement, evaluation and reporting services to the Mission and its Implementing Partners (IPs) under the Uganda Monitoring & Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) project. UMEMS is a four years (2008-2012) project ending May 2012 with an estimated cost for performance of the work of 7.5 million United States Dollars. UMEMS supports the Mission in the following areas:

**Performance Monitoring:** compliance with ADS guidance on performance monitoring, develop its performance management plans, assess data quality, collate, store, and aggregate data and report on program performance. UMEMS assists the Mission to manage large amounts of data by developing and managing a web-based database currently known as the Performance Reporting System (PRS);

**Evaluation assistance:** preparing and/or conducting evaluations and other special studies, documentation and dissemination of results and mobilisation of qualified evaluation specialists through the roster of qualified consultants.

**Information and Capacity building** in M&E for Mission staff and implementing partners through training, preparation of information products and strengthening of the information flow. Prior to UMEMS, there was a four year Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services (MEMS) programme but we were not able to determine the extent to which lessons learnt were built in the current UMEMS.

### 1.2 Context

USAID's program in Uganda is among the largest USAID programs in sub-Saharan Africa. The portfolio includes projects to support each of the US Mission's foreign policy objectives in peace and security, governing justly and democratically (strategic Objective nine), health and education (strategic objective eight), economic growth and humanitarian assistance (strategic objective seven), and currently exceeds \$ 300 million per annum, the heaviest allocation is to the Health Sector.

In 2010 several developments occurred that have a bearing on the implementation of UMEMS. USAID's Country Development Strategy (CDCS) for Uganda was finalised which establishes new development objectives and a revised results framework for the years 2011 – 2015. The CDCS will involve a complete overhaul of the performance management plans and other M&E procedures. In addition the Mission will be going beyond traditional M&E, towards a more dynamic approach of Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) to implement of the CDCS. CLA will involve a continuous assessment and adjustment of the development objective causal pathways to strengthen evidence based decision making. It will also integrate impact evaluations and quasi-experimental designs in order to help inform its on-going implementation. Further, in January 2011 USAID published a new USAID evaluation policy 2011 which sets out an ambitious recommitment to learn as we do, updating USAID's standards and practices to address contemporary needs.

The above developments emphasize evidence based decision making and learning, and have thus raised the bar on the quality and robustness of the mission's M&E systems hence going forward, evaluations will use methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked, taking into consideration the time and budget and other considerations.

*Final Report of the mid-term evaluation of the Uganda Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) Project managed by The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG): SOL-617-11-000007*

---

### 1.3 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the performance of the UMEMS contract so far and guide a USAID management decision on how future implementation can be improved to enable achievement of the CDCS objectives and specifically the implementation of the CLA agenda.

Secondly, the evaluation will inform the decision of whether to design a follow-on activity to UMEMS and, if so, how that contract should be designed. The Mission is interested in establishing the extent to which UMEMS is contributing to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within the Mission.

This report therefore answers the key evaluation questions that include:

1. How has UMEMS contributed to effective M&E performance within USAID Uganda
2. Is the design of UMEMS adequate to ensure achievement of the intended objectives?
3. Does UMEMS have sufficient capacity to render effective M&E services to the mission? and
4. What next after UMEMS?

The report is supported by a series of appendices, which include the evaluation framework, the three main questionnaires and the two evaluation and special studies assessment tools that we developed.

### 1.4 Structure of the Final Report

This report is designed to directly respond to the requirements of the Statement of Works, specifically the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, and the evaluation questions. Thus the report is structured as follows:

	Executive Summary
Chapter 1:	Introduction
Chapter 2:	Approach and Methodology
Chapter 3:	UMEMS contribution to effective M&E performance within the mission
Chapter 4:	Adequacy of UMEMS design in ensuring the achievement of intended objectives
Chapter 5:	Capacity of UMEMS to render effective M&E services to the Mission
Chapter 6:	What next after UMEMS
Chapter 7:	Recommendations
	Appendices

---

## 2. Approach and Methodology

### 2.1 Approach

To ensure relevance, quality and effectiveness of this evaluation, we identified and employed six basic principles, i.e. deploying a multi-disciplinary team; using a participatory approach; adopted a continuous communication system; used a no-surprises approach; and maintained cost and quality controls. The overriding requirement was to provide feedback and answers to the four overarching questions, and the 29 sub questions that USAID proposed, which underpin the overarching questions.

### 2.2 Evaluation Methodology

Generally, we adopted the following methodology in order to fully address the Scope of Work and achieve the purpose of the evaluation:

#### 2.2.1 Document reviews

**In order to enhance our understanding of UMEMS' operating environment**, background, context, performance and progress of the UMEMS contract, we obtained and reviewed among others the UMEMS contract, annual plans and performance reports, evaluations and special studies reports; USAID Uganda activity list, Country Development Strategy 2011-2014, Mission Order on Monitoring and Evaluation, CLA presentation and Draft implementation Plan, and portfolio review documents; and USAID World Policy Documents (ADS 203, Assessing Learning, USAID Evaluation Policy 2011); Meta Evaluation Report and Selected Evaluation Reports and Studies; etc.

We also reviewed the Uganda Country Development Strategy, noting its goals and objectives and results framework to track its performance. Further, we reviewed selected Implementing **Partners'** (IP) Performance Management Plans and Data Quality Assessment reports to get a better understanding of their content, quality and accuracy.

The information gathered in this way gave us a framework and context for the design of data collection tools, analysis of primary data, and to validate further, some of the issues that were identified. It was also useful for the formulation of practical and relevant recommendations. A list of the documents reviewed in this process is attached as Appendix IX.

#### 2.2.2 Data collection

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected by way of the above document review exercise (secondary data), Interviews with officials of the sampled IP, USAID Mission PPD staff, Key Informant interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (primary data) as detailed below.

**Questionnaires/interviews:** Questionnaires were dispatched to PPD, TMG and all the 16 IPs in advance, and followed up with meetings and discussions with respondents to clarify, probe further and jointly review the completed questionnaires. Although we sent the IP questionnaires to all the 16 IPs, we managed to get responses from only 15 IPs, representing a 94% response rate which, we considered a good response. We attempted to get an appointment with the 16<sup>th</sup> IP but we were unsuccessful.

**Focus Group Discussions:** Four focus group discussions were held, one for each of the Strategic Objective (SO) teams 7, 8 and 9; and one for the USAID Mission Gulu Field Office. Each of the focus group discussions was attended by at least 5 of the targeted 10 members, and the participants were selected in such a way as to represent views of the various sub teams within each SO team.

The focus group discussions were designed for the members to clarify and complement issues that emerged from the document reviews, questionnaires and interviews with the IPs, PDP and TMG staff; and to share their own experiences with UMEMS and the extent to which their expectations are being met. They were carried out to ensure that the consultants obtained a more comprehensive grasp of the issues that required clarification. The proceedings were recorded, and analysed to contribute to the evaluation findings.

---

**Key informant interviews:** These were held with opinion leaders and knowledge champions within USAID, the key participants being the Mission Director and SO8 M&E Specialist. During the interviews, various issues relating to the current and future UMEMS, M&E, CLA, CDCS etc were discussed.

**Walk through and assessment of the PRS Data Base and GIS:** The work consisted of receiving a demonstration of the data base by TMG; our own ‘technical’ and ‘user’ walk through of the system, following our checklist; a ‘triangular’ meeting with a key client user TMG and PwC to probe user issues; and the interrogation of the data base to establish frequency of access by category of user, and a (failed) attempt to see if we could obtain trends in performance gaps. The system could not produce this information in the time available.

### 2.2.3 Data analysis

The completed questionnaires and checklists were received, checked, validated, and synchronized by the team members to ensure good quality and where need be, further consultations were made. The qualitative issues were analyzed by content, classified, and the major findings coded by theme/issues that emerged from the IPs, TMG and USAID questionnaires.

The coded responses were then entered in the computer and analysed for each of the questions in the questionnaires. This analysis therefore informed the findings, conclusions and substantiated the findings from the document reviews (inspection of evidence), evaluation and special studies assessments, PRS data base assessments, etc.

### 2.2.4 Quality Control

Quality control was built in at a number of stages including, review, discussion and agreement with USAID Mission staff on the inception report i.e. review of the methodology, work plan, data collection tools, sample size and organisations for completeness.

The first draft findings, conclusions and recommendations were first peer reviewed and subsequently reviewed by the Engagement Leader at PwC before submission and presentation to USAID mission for a further review and comments. Equally the draft report was first peer reviewed and subsequently reviewed by the Engagement Leader at PwC before submission to USAID mission for a further review and comments, which comments have been incorporated to produce this final draft report.

### 2.2.5 Sampling

USAID has funded over 79 activities over the period, which fall under the jurisdiction of UMEMS, and which relate to Strategic Objectives, 7, 8 and 9 and are implemented by about 63 Implementing Partners. In discussion with USAID, we decided that a judgmental sample of 16 (approximately 25%) Implementing Partners be selected and visited, in order to get their opinion, experience and justification in respect of the support they have received, and the effectiveness of the UMEMS Contract.

The sixteen Implementing Partners in the sample proportionately covered the three strategic objectives 7, 8 and 9 and also considered a proportionate mix of local and international Implementing Partners, program area and sector/sub sector. The distribution of the 16 IP's surveyed is presented in the table below, while the detailed listing of IP's consulted is provided in Appendix XI.

**Table 1: The Sample Selection - Implementing Partners consulted**

SN	By Programme Area	Strategic Objective			Total
		SO7	SO8	SO9	
1	Health		7		7
2	Education		1		1
3	Conflict Mitigation			1	1
4	Political Competition			1	1
5	Agriculture	3			3
6	Environment	2			2
7	Infrastructure	1			1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>By ownership</b>				
	Local	2	4	1	7
	International	4	4	1	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>

### 2.2.6 Development of Data Collection tools

Informed by the document review exercise, we developed questionnaires and checklists to aid and guide data collection from USAID Program and Policy Development staff, Implementing Partner staff, Strategic Objective Teams and the Mitchell Group staff, etc. The tools were designed in such a way that aids the capture of all salient issues relevant to evaluating the performance of the UMEMS contract. The following tools were developed, presented and discussed with mission officials (PPD) to agree the final versions, and are attached as appendices to this report:

1. TMG Self Evaluation questionnaire;
2. USAID PPD questionnaire;
3. Implementing Partners (IP) questionnaire;
4. Focus Group Discussions Checklist;
5. Evaluations/Special Studies assessment tool; and
6. PRS database assessment tool.

**The TMG Self Evaluation Questionnaire:** This contained the 29 questions in this evaluation’s SoW, tailored in an appropriate way. These questions provided an opportunity for TMG to rate the performance of UMEMS, and provide their opinion on all the issues on which USAID sought PwC conclusions and recommendations. We requested for evidence to substantiate opinions given and statements made. A further 16 questions, to provide us with the additional information we believed was required to obtain a fuller understanding of the operations and performance of UMEMS.

**The USAID PPD Questionnaire:** This followed parallel lines to that of TMG, except tailored differently where appropriate. USAID was however able to ‘opt out’ of answering any question.

**The Implementing Partner (IP) questionnaire:** The IP Questionnaire was mainly designed to capture the nature of interaction with UMEMS and satisfaction with the support provided.

**The Focus Group Discussion checklist:** The precise construction and wording of the FGD questions was done after the evaluation team was some way through the interviews. The checklist had 7 main questions and a number of probing questions.

**The Evaluations/Special Studies assessment tool:** This had three main components, each with a set of sub criteria, and each with a different weighting, per the following table.

**Table 2: Evaluation studies' component weighting**

MAIN COMPONENT	NO OF CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
Quality / Completeness of SoW	8	15%
On Time Completion and Delivery	3	25%
'Fit for Purpose' Outputs	10	60%

The reasoning behind the weightings is as follows:

- The 15% for the SoW is the lowest because several parties have input into the SoW. It is therefore not an entirely UMEMS effort, and not fully under their control. In addition the level of effort required is proportionally the lowest of the assignment cycle;
- The 25% for completion and delivery is based on UMEMS subcontracting this element out, so they are not solely responsible for the execution. In addition other senior stakeholders (particularly USAID) may be responsible for part of any time delay, so the weighting is fairly light;
- **The 60% for “Fit for purpose” is because the overriding objective of the assignment is to produce a deliverable that matches the SOW, and is ‘Fit for Purpose’. Fit for purpose basically deals with compliance of the report with the SoW; Management and Quality Assurance Procedures applied; acceptance and sign off of the output (with or without reservation); and the issue of usefulness and usage of the report. All the fit for purpose sub criteria are under the control of UMEMS, except for ‘Usage of the Report’. However in the detailed evaluation there was no occasion where UMEMS was marked down on this sub criterion, hence no prejudice in the score. The 21 sub criteria are set out in Appendix V.**

A four point scoring system was then used for each of the sub criteria, where; fully compliant=3; substantially compliant=2; partially compliant=1 and zero compliance=0. The average scores attained were then turned into percentages, i.e. 3 = 100%.

## 2.3 Limitations

There was limited baseline data on which to compare the current performance and contribution of the UMEMS project, considering that there was no final evaluation of the predecessor (MEMS) project. **We therefore had to rely on respondents' memory to recall the situation then. Again the lack of baseline data was affected by the fact that most of the IP and USAID mission staff then have since left the country and/or found other jobs.**

Considering the need to have adequate representation of the different Implementing Partners classifications in the sample, i.e. ownership, SO affiliation, sector, program area, duration, etc., the resultant sample of Implementing Partners was to some extent, chosen using non probability sampling techniques (judgmental sampling), which conditions may have given rise to exclusion bias.

Further, there were limitations on the project related to the tight time budget. This limited our sample of Implementing Partners to 16 out of 63 IPs, and there were also limitations in respect of the level of detail to which the evaluations and special studies and PRS database assessments would be executed.

The fact that this mid term evaluation of the 4 year UMEMS contract comes barely 8 months to project end also limited some of our recommendations to those that can be implemented within the remaining time. However, we are confident that we were able to obtain sufficient information to form reasonable and valid conclusions and recommendations.

---

### 3. UMEMS Contribution to Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Performance within USAID Uganda

The purpose of this midterm evaluation was to assess the performance of the UMEMS contract so far; and one of the key questions to be answered was “How has UMEMS contributed to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within USAID Uganda?”

In order to answer this question adequately; we reviewed the UMEMS contract, specifically the Statement of Work to note and understand the project goals and objectives, key contractual obligations, roles and responsibilities of UMEMS and the other parties to the contract. As part of our methodology we interviewed and held discussions with a sample of Implementing Partners, USAID and UMEMS staff to get their perspective in respect to UMEMS contribution to effective Monitoring and evaluation within USAID Uganda.

In the following sections, we present UMEMS contribution to effective Monitoring and Evaluation Performance in the Mission and Implementing Partner organizations through its participation in facilitating the development of Performance Management Plans (PMPs) for the Strategic Objective (SO) teams and Implementing Partner organizations; conducting Data Quality Assessments; training and building the capacity of IP/Mission staff; maintaining and Operating the PRS Database; undertaking evaluations and special studies; etc. We also highlight the effectiveness of the above UMEMS interventions and the corresponding intended and unintended consequences.

#### 3.1 Development of Performance Management Plans (PMP) for the Mission and IPs

As earlier mentioned, UMEMS has supported both IPs and Mission Strategic Objective teams to develop their Performance Management Plans. In the following subsection we present the kind of support rendered, the IP and Mission staff rating of this support, including justification for the rating, and we finally give our conclusion and assessment of the support in respect to the development of Performance Management Plans for IPs and the Mission Strategic Objective teams.

##### 3.1.1 Support to IPs to develop their Performance Management Plans

Twelve out of the fifteen (80%) sampled Implementing Partners acknowledged receiving guidance from UMEMS on how to prepare, develop and review their PMPs in line with USAID policies, practices and guidelines. The guidance covered how to design the Results framework, Performance Indicator Reference Sheets and the Performance Management Plan Matrix. It also covered the modification of performance indicators and selection of appropriate Intermediate Results, and ensuring that project goals and intermediate results are logically linked to USAID Strategic Objective goal and results. At the time of this evaluation, 50 out of 59 (85%) IPs had their PMPs approved by the respective USAID COTRs.

The majority of sampled Implementing Partners **that received UMEMS’ services** (75%) rated UMEMS support to the development of their Performance Management Plans as above expectations, while 25% rated it as in line with expectations, the main reasons being:

- UMEMS staff are always readily available for consultation and provide timely feedback, and they are professional and always keen to help find a solution;
- Developing a PMP that meets USAID requirements required a lot of technical support which UMEMS adequately provided;
- Ability of the supported staff to translate the support received into the actual practice by **completing the organisation’s** PMP with the guidance received;
- The fact that IPs PMPs were approved by USAID following UMEMS guidance and support in their preparation; and

- 
- UMEMS ensured that the relevant USAID policies, practices & guidelines were adhered to during the development of the PMPs.

A few exceptions were noted from 3 (20%) out of the 15 IPs sampled. These included limited follow up sessions by UMEMS to review the implementation of PMP by the IPs, say on six months or annual basis; and the limited IP staff interaction and engagement with UMEMS.

### **3.1.2 Support to Mission Strategic Objective Teams to develop their PMPs**

At Mission level, UMEMS supported the Strategic Objective teams to develop and review their Performance Management Plans and the support included but not limited to:

- Coordinating and facilitating the SO7 and SO8 teams to develop and review their results framework and performance indicators which underpin their Performance Management Plan.
- UMEMS is currently supporting the SO7 team to go through the process of developing and aligning its PMP to the new Country Development and Cooperation Strategy.
- Supporting the SO9 team to align its program indicators to the relevant national and international indicators.
- Examining indicators and helping the Mission to adjust the indicators in order to fit into the Mission objectives.

However, we noted that the quality of PMPs is still wanting as there is more focus on quantity/output oriented indicators than meaningful outcome indicators that can enable the Mission to have meaningful discussions on performance and understanding of the US government contribution to addressing development problems in Uganda. Though this is also partly a USAID program problem that pushes down standard indicators that are output driven, UMEMS should engage the teams and bring in ideas on other kinds of performance indicators that could be used.

As a result of UMEMS support, the mission is compliant with the ADS requirements for performance management at the mission level; nearly complete data set for both the team and IP PMP indicators; targets are now being set for all Team PMP indicators and certified by COTRS; evaluations are usually being undertaken according to the agreed schedule and to some extent recommendations implemented; and the mission undertakes portfolio reviews using performance data.

### **3.1.3 Conclusion**

Considering the fact that at the time of this evaluation 85% of the IPs had their PMPs approved; 100% of the sampled IPs that received UMEMS support rated the support as in line with expectations and above; all evidenced by the presence of PMPs that meet agency standards and **that are able to guide the mission's performance management** function; presence of nearly full data sets and targets for SO team and IP PMP indicators; UMEMS has to a large extent contributed to effective Monitoring and Evaluation performance within USAID.

## **3.2 Conducting Data Quality Assessments (DQAs)**

One of UMEMS' main tasks under this contract is to assist USAID/Uganda to ensure that indicators meet or surpass USAID data quality and reliability standards through data quality assessments. We therefore sought to establish the extent to which UMEMS has exercised this function, and the corresponding contribution to data quality and reliability standards, and subsequently to effective M&E within the Mission We present our findings in the following sections.

### 3.2.1 Contribution of DQA to effective M&E performance in USAID

Twelve out of the fifteen (80%) sampled Implementing Partners had a data quality assessment exercise undertaken by UMEMS. The three IPs that did not have a data quality assessment cited reasons such as limited interactions with UMEMS; not knowing what UMEMS' role is in supporting their M&E function; and having received no communication from UMEMS on a schedule for the data quality assessments.

Overall, over 155 Data Quality Assessments (51, 80 and 24 for 2008, 2009 and 2010 (provisional) data respectively) have been undertaken by UMEMS. Over the years, the percentage of data quality assessments that come out okay has increased from (49% in 2008 to 75% in 2010, while cases of no data have decreased from 8% in 2008 to 4% in 2010. Likewise the percentage of data quality assessments that come out with a “not okay” outcome have reduced from 43% in 2008 to 21% in 2010 as illustrated in the following table.

**Table 3: DQA outcomes for the years 2008, 2009 and 2010**

Outcome	2008		2009		2010	
	No of DQAs	%	No of DQAs	%	No of DQAs	%
Okay	25	49%	61	<b>76%</b>	18	<b>75%</b>
Not Okay	22	43%	13	<b>16%</b>	5	<b>21%</b>
No data	4	8%	6	<b>8%</b>	1	<b>4%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Summarised from the DQA assessment plans for FY 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The DQAs have helped IPs to:

- Have a better understanding of their project indicators and hence streamline their reporting;
- Develop, review and improve data collection tools and mechanisms to ensure improved data quality, consistency, integrity and compliance with USAID policies and procedures;
- Revise their training of data collectors to address the issues identified during the data quality assessments;
- Undertake similar data quality assessments with their sub grantees and field staff, by particularly guiding them on how to collect valid and credible data; and
- Identify data-capture and other measuring difficulties, and provide an opportunity for UMEMS and IPs to discuss and agree solutions.

Further, the Mission team attributed the following contributions to effective M&E performance to the data quality assessments undertaken by UMEMS:

- Identifying early where data is missing, getting, cleaning and adding the data to the PRS database for subsequent consolidation and reporting;
- DQAs ensure the mission gets better quality and accurate performance information from the implementing partners to meet mission reporting and decision making requirements. As earlier mentioned the DQAs highlight the weaknesses in the data definition, collection and analysis process that need to be addressed; and
- DQAs are done on schedule and follow up action to check improvements is undertaken to address the challenges. Unlike before, reports are now sent to the COTRs to follow up with the IPs on necessary changes.

---

However, mission staff participation in DQA is minimal, casting doubt on their ability to independently undertake this important task. We believe that better participation by the mission staff would not only enrich the discussions and understanding of the data issues between both the IP and USAID but also add momentum to actions taken by the IPs in addressing the emerging issues. Despite the above achievements, some of the sampled IPs noted exceptions such as:

- The DQA findings and reports either taking long, or not being communicated at all to the responsible Implementing Partners, making it difficult to learn from past mistakes and achievements so as to inform the design of subsequent actions.
- It was also noted that **DQA's substantially comprise a review of data quality processes through** interviews with head quarters staff, with relatively little work being done on data verification through inspection of data from the source and source records.

### **3.2.2 Conclusion**

From the foregoing findings, it is evident that the IPs, SO teams and subsequently mission data quality has improved as result of the data quality assessments undertaken by UMEMS.

## **3.3 Training and Capacity building of Mission and IP staff**

The UMEMS contract requires UMEMS to educate and train IPs and USAID staff in a number of areas that include but not limited to common definitions and methods of data collection, use and expectations of the performance indicators database. The contract further obligates UMEMS to produce and make available a **series of “how-to reports” and** other M&E resources that address effective M&E, conduct capacity building workshops for USAID and IP staff to cover activity design, implementation, evaluation and the USAID Uganda GIS system. We therefore undertook to establish the extent to which the training and capacity building happened, and the corresponding contribution to effective M&E in the Mission. Our findings are as follows.

### **3.3.1 IP Staff Training and Capacity building**

UMEMS has trained over 178 IPs and Mission staff on managing for results (147), data use (42), and preparing an evaluation scope of work in compliance with USAID policies & guidelines (13). A number of one to one mentoring sessions have also been held with different IP staff for support, advice and capacity building. Out of the fifteen Implementing Partners sampled, 12 (80%) had some of their staff trained by UMEMS in at least one of the above trainings and in addition, 11 (73%) of the Implementing Partners had attended the capacity building workshops facilitated by UMEMS.

The IPs whose staff had not been trained by UMEMS and who did not attend the UMEMS provided capacity building workshops had various reasons for missing the training and these included having already been trained in the areas UMEMS was training; not having been invited and lack of awareness of the training; and IP staff schedules clashing with the UMEMS training dates (scheduling conflicts). However, we also learnt that some IPs are not able or willing to fund their staff especially field level staff to participate in the trainings.

All the IPs whose staff were trained by UMEMS rated the usefulness of the training and capacity building workshops as inline with expectations and above, the justification being:

- The training sessions were hands on, gave an opportunity for practical learning and easy conceptualisation of the topic at hand, relevant to IP M&E needs at that time, and the trainees were supported with reading materials and references;
- The trainings in the specified areas was done in a more participative manner and UMEMS did a follow up to ensure that there was adoption of these trainings; The training met **trainees'** expectations and the facilitators were knowledgeable on subject matter;
- For the majority of the trainees, what they learnt was totally new to them and highly educative, responsive to the existing M&E challenges and helping in coming out with the way forward;

- The trainings gave an understanding of the M&E system for all USAID supported activities, and participants learnt how to prepare in particular, a Results Framework and Indicator Performance Reference Sheets and the relevance of Data Quality Assessment exercises; and
- The training workshops provided information on USAID policies, procedures and expectations in performance monitoring, basics of monitoring and evaluation and developing complete PMPs.

The above training and capacity building workshops have contributed to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within USAID mission as evidenced by the:

- Enhanced ability of some IPs' staff to measure progress on the non-PEPFAR indicators which was not possible before the training;
- IP staff ability to use the PRS database on their own and with minimum difficulty after the training was conducted;
- Enhanced IP staff capacity to carry out effective performance monitoring in line with USAID M&E policies and procedures, and subsequently enhanced timeliness and quality of reporting on project results, and compliance with USAID policies and procedures;
- Better understanding of project indicators and the relevance of target setting; and the presence of refined data collection and other M&E tools that meet USAID approval requirements.

### 3.3.2 Mission Staff Training and Capacity Building

Although thirteen Mission staff attended the Managing for Results training provided by UMEMS, training and building the capacity of Mission staff in M&E has received minimal coverage under the current UMEMS contract. This was evidenced by the fact that during our interviews and discussions with Mission staff, we hardly identified any persons who attended the different training and capacity building workshops conducted by UMEMS. Low attendance of the trainings by Mission staff has been attributed to the generic nature of the trainings (no training assessments were conducted) and scheduling conflicts.

### 3.3.3 Access to and usefulness of "how-to reports"

As part of its information dissemination and capacity building for M&E responsibility under this contract, UMEMS is expected to produce a series of "how-to reports" that address effective M&E and make such reports available on the public portion of the UMEMS website. We therefore sought to establish the presence, usefulness and contribution of "how to reports" to effective M&E in the Mission and here below, we present our findings.

UMEMS has developed "How to guides" such as (i) How to develop project PMP (April 2010); (ii) How to exercise your M&E function; and (iii) Planning and conducting an evaluation (June, 2008). The how-to reports and M&E guidelines are available at UMEMS Website, especially on Templates and Protocols screen.

Twelve (80%) of the fifteen sampled Implementing Partners acknowledged having accessed the how to reports. The IPs who had not accessed the how to reports cited lack of awareness of their presence, and the availability of a wide range of USAID resources that address a wide variety of issues. The how-to reports and M&E guidelines were rated very useful because they are clear, easy to read and follow, and are accessible online.

Generally, most of the "how to" reports and guidelines are specific USAID materials that have now been made more available and accessible to staff, IPs and the world at large through the UMEMS website. As most of them are in line with USAID guidance and basic good practise in M&E, they are useful to guide all in meeting agency requirements. Though resources / experiences of other development agencies are also posted and accessible on this website, this could be improved to include more state of the art general and thematic materials and relevant government policies and strategies on M&E. The level of use within the Mission is also based on the internal demand for effective performance management and specifically the COTR's ability to interpret and adapt the guidance being provided.

---

### 3.3.4 Gender Considerations

This evaluation sought to establish the extent to which gender issues are integrated in the M&E support by UMEMS. It was established that during the different training and capacity building workshops, data quality assessments and support to the development of PMPs, UMEMS emphasised disaggregating of indicator data according to gender at planning and reporting. As a result, data collection tools were revised to capture gender disaggregated data; and several of the reported indicators are now disaggregated by gender. Furthermore all applicable data in the PRS database is gender disaggregated.

### 3.3.5 Conclusion

UMEMS training, how-to guides and capacity building initiatives have to a great extent benefited the Implementing Partners as evidenced by their current staff capacity to measure progress on Indicators, use the PRS database and understand better their indicators. However, relatively lesser benefits have been realised by mission staff, hence downgrading UMEMS overall contribution to effective monitoring and evaluation performance with USAID.

## 3.4 Operation and Maintenance of the PRS Database

UMEMS assists the Mission to manage its large volume of data through a web based database and reporting system, the Performance Reporting System (PRS). The objective of the Performance Reporting System (PRS) is to collect and report Implementing Partner (IP) data, standardise IP quarterly reporting, increase transparency, increase the focus on reporting results and to help the Mission overcome any issues of data mismatch. Through the PRS database, Implementing Partners are expected to enter data into the database and are expected to generate reports. We therefore sought to establish the PRS **data base's contribution to effective M&E within the Mission**; the extent to which the PRS database is a best practice; and propose changes that need to be done to enhance the effectiveness, management, and functionality of the PRS and bring it to its full potential. Our assessment of the PRS was conducted in two categories:

- Technical assessment – to assess the technical features and functionality of the PRS; and
- User assessment – to assess the extent to which users are satisfied with the effectiveness and functionality of the PRS database.

### 3.4.1 Technical strength and weaknesses of the PRS database

Technically, the following PRS database features were found useful and going well.

- The PRS database has strong security controls, with access to the system being controlled through usernames and passwords with strong complexity settings. User privileges are granted with respect to the particular grouping of a user e.g. IP Administrator, CoTR etc. In addition, the PRS has an inbuilt session expiry feature that locks out a user after a period of inactivity after logging in;
- **The PRS's response times during logon and navigation of the website were comfortably fast;**
- A user manual can be downloaded from the system to provide guidance on the PRS on a module to module basis and can be used as a quick reference for more experienced users;
- The PRS contains Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that provide the system with the ability to quickly introduce content to an unfamiliar user;
- The PRS is able to log activities of users through a user log that records selected details of user activity; and
- The PRS is a large repository of data and performance information, meeting ADS Compliance requirements, enabling efficient support to Portfolio Review and PPR.

From a technical angle, the following areas were identified for improvement:

- The PRS is a web-based system that is accessed by entering an Internet Protocol (IP) address (<http://209.190.241.211/iprs>). Although this address can be saved in the 'favourites' folder in an internet browser for ease of use, it may prove to be difficult to remember for a user that attempts to log onto the PRS with a PC that has never accessed the PRS in the past and therefore would not have saved the IP address in its browser's favourite folder;
- There is a lot of manual user intervention in formatting PRS report (excel) data for reporting purposes. For example, a report measuring the status of achievement of performance indicators (target vs. actual) was extracted. However, the system has no functionality to filter the data by percentage of achievement of target indicators. This can only be performed through manual intervention by formatting the excel output and scrolling through the output to identify indicators that match the percentage criteria;
- The system does not display terms or conditions of use. A terms of use notification is essential for management to specify what you do and why and what users have to agree on if they want to use your system; and
- There has never been any user refresher training since the implementation of the PRS more than a year ago.

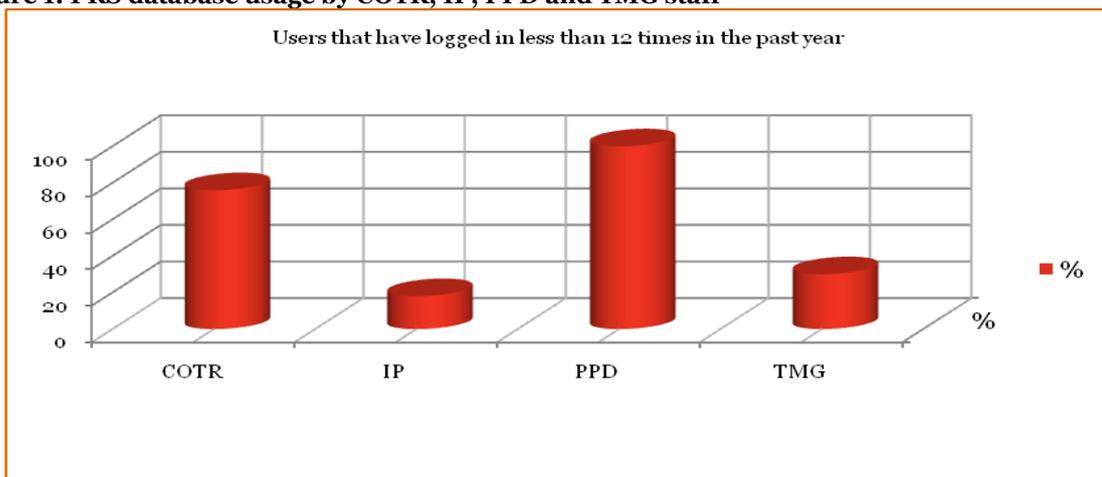
Although no formal refresher training has been given, we came to know from UMEMS that IPs are assisted virtually, and face to face, and new COTRs are given an orientation. We also noted that other developments such as dashboards suggested by UMEMS have not been taken up by the Mission and the reason provided was that such changes were hinging on a detailed investigation and understanding of overall database issues to be able to make well informed modifications.

### 3.4.2 Access to and Usage of the PRS database

All the sampled Implementing Partners access and use the PRS database at least once a week (7%), once a month (7%), once a quarter (64%) and once a year (21%); accessing especially the administration i.e. data entry, targets, indicators, baseline and data reports interfaces.

In respect to its usage by the different stakeholders, we established that PPD and COTRs staff had the least number of loggings in the PRS database in the past year as illustrated in the figure below.

**Figure 1: PRS database usage by COTR, IP, PPD and TMG staff**



### 3.4.3 Usefulness of the PRS database

The sampled IPs consider the usefulness of the PRS database as above expectations (50%) and other others find it inline with expectations for various reasons, of which the most prominent are described below:

- The PRS is simple, easy to use and straight forward, and provides the opportunity to report on non-PEPFAR indicators that were previously not reported on;
- The PRS helps keep track of the project's performance. One can easily view the project performance and how the achievement of Indicators progresses as outputs get entered on quarterly basis;
- The database supports in tracking performance of indicators, several project actors can access information on performance of our program.

From the mission perspective, the PRS database is able to generate relevant reports per indicator, Implementing Partner, theme and SO and can also run simple trends analysis. They are able to track extent of setting and certification of targets and actuals. Through the PRS, the mission is able to generate indicator data for the Mission for the annual Plan and Performance Report (PPR) and bi-annual Portfolio Reviews. As multiple partners contribute data to an indicator in most cases, PRS database aggregates the data for an overall total necessary for overall strategic objective performance discussion and review and for reporting to Washington. The PRS database generates a report for the PPR with the selected indicators for transcription over to the Agency database. Likewise from the database, the Mission is able to extract data for specific reporting purposes like reporting against Presidential Malaria Initiative. The database generates summary products in the formats requested by the Program Office for use in the Portfolio Reviews. UMEMS recently started holding pre-Portfolio Reviews with Mission Teams to familiarize them with the data in the products and help interpret them).

Through the database system, UMEMS has supported the Mission in streamlining the target setting and performance reporting system via the organised certification process to avoid data mismatch. Nevertheless, the database does not address other M&E related issues of weak target setting as evidenced by the reports on exceeding of targets in portfolio reviews. Therefore a database also needs to function within an effective M&E system with established procedures and incentives for performance management.

### 3.4.4 Areas for Improvement

The areas for improvement in respect of the PRS database as identified by users include:

- The PRS database mainly holds quantitative data and is weak on qualitative data. Indicator comment fields are limited to 500 characters which is inadequate, and comments are not displayed when viewing previously submitted quarterly or annual reports;
- Based on the chart in section 3.4.2 and through discussions with mission and IP staff, we have discovered that the reputation of the PRS amongst its intended users is below par thereby affecting optimal usage. In some cases, there is resistance to the use of the PRS. This can be partly attributed to its inability to produce certain analysis and reports as required by the users.
- The PRS does not generate a useful array of management reports, highlighting areas / indicators needing attention; exception reports; league tables; trends of achievement/non-achievement of performance indicators over time; and Incomplete updates and thereby generate informed discussions on performance issues and other internal and external factors affecting achievement of USAID objectives;
- The printed reports are not as user friendly and sometimes, it is difficult to disaggregate data. There have also been reports of inconsistencies and miscalculations but these arise from the process of entry, misinformed certification of figures but also errors in the calculation and analysis within the database and with UMEMS.

### 3.4.5 Conclusion

The PRS database has contributed to effective M&E within the mission by enabling the management and analysis of large sets of data used in performance reviews and reporting within the Mission and with other external agencies. This data informs planning and programming decisions. However, the low usage of the PRS especially among the PPD and COTRs staff inhibits the Mission from fully harnessing the full benefits. Against this background, the PRS appears to be a **‘diamond in the rough’, but certainly not a ‘white elephant’**. It has a lot of potential to become central to effective and efficient Monitoring and Evaluation, and can be an indispensable aid to IPs and the mission as a whole.

### 3.5 Conducting Evaluations and Special Studies

As part of its responsibilities under the current contract, UMEMS is expected to assist with evaluations and special studies that meet the needs of USAID/Uganda and comply with the current ADS guidance. UMEMS is further expected to be available to provide guidance and assistance to ensure quality, timeliness and adequate dissemination of results.

From a total of 18 assignments, we selected a random sample of six, including 2 evaluation, 1 design and 3 special studies. The assignments selected for assessment were as follows;

1. Uganda SO8 Strategy Report Jan 2009;
2. Advocacy in the Health & Education Sectors -Feb 2011;
3. Strengthening DG and Conflict Monitoring and Evaluation: Key Findings and Recommendations – May 2010;
4. NUMAT Mid Term Review 2009;
5. QoC Evaluation – Aug 2010; and
6. Feed the Future Design.

This Section sets out the results of the assessment we carried out to evaluate the quality and usefulness of a sample of six evaluations and special studies conducted by UMEMS for the Mission. It then sets out a range of additional feedback received from the Mission, before reaching conclusions and recommendations. The following overall results were recorded.

**Table 4: Evaluation studies’ component scores**

	COMPONENT	EVALUATION SCORE
<b>SN</b>		
1	Quality / Completeness of SoW	77.3 %
2	On Time Completion and Delivery	77.8%
3	‘Fit for Purpose’ Outputs	59.7 %
	<b>Total Weighted Score</b>	<b>66.83 %</b>

The mid/upper 70s scores attained for component 1 (SoW) and 2 (On Time Completion), reflect a reasonably good score on those components. The score of 59.7 % re **‘Fit for Purpose’ is modest and** contains areas of weakness described below. The overall score of 66.83 places the overall result into the second tier category of **‘substantial’ compliance**, the exact dividing line being 66.67%.

One limitation on the evaluation and special studies assessments was that the evaluation of Feed the Future could not be completed because it became very difficult to judge in a rational way, and trying to attribute responsibility for the difficulties could have become contentious. The SoW was vague, but was signed off by USAID, the seven outputs papers, while appearing adequate, could not be tied back to the SoW.

The 66.83% score is therefore possibly on the slightly generous side as none of the five remaining assignments, randomly selected, included any assignment which USAID considered problematic, which would have lowered the overall score.

### 3.5.2 Effectiveness of UMEMS Evaluation Assistance

Generally the evaluation findings and study reports have been used in improving program management, re-alignment/re-design and programming for new activities. The advocacy assessment report was very critical in designing advocacy intervention towards improving **citizen's** voice and accountability in both the health and democratic governance teams. From the SO8 strategy designs, the team adopted the local government systems strengthening approach to improve delivery of health services in Uganda.

UMEMS evaluation assistance has seen the development and utilisation of an Evaluation Calendar that is regarded as very useful, and has led to a higher number of Evaluations being planned and completed. The evaluation calendar has been useful in enabling better planning, budgeting and timing of the evaluations. It signals on upcoming evaluations to begin the process of preparation of SoWs, procurements and others. In addition, it is acknowledged that UMEMS can provide quick response and quick turnaround, especially when assignments go well.

### 3.5.3 Key areas for improvement

The main area that scored poorly was that we were unable to see evidence that the assignments had been well managed, monitored and supervised by UMEMS. It seems that UMEMS do not keep systematic records of emails, minutes, instructions to consultants, and the like, evidencing strong management of assignments. We also did not see evidence of robust Quality Assurance, i.e. versions of drafts showing the review and improvement efforts to initial drafts of reports. While none of these best practices are explicit requirements in USAID policy or procedures, it is our opinion that the retention of evidence is generally accepted as **'good management practice'** that should be applied in the execution of all assignments, irrespective of whether or not there is a specific policy.

Other feedback received from PPD and from the Focus Group Discussions with the SO teams included mixed opinions with some degree of criticism. Three studies in particular were described unfavourably, namely Strengthening Multiparty Democracy; Northern Uganda Water Services (NUWATER) evaluation and Feed the Future design.

The nature of the issues raised included the fact that there are too many layers between the user and consultant (PPD and UMEMS), leading to ineffective direction, supervision and delays in the execution of an assignment; studies requiring too much time input to get right; and sometimes the SoW's being below par.

### 3.5.4 Conclusions

The assessment showed that UMEMS performance on the selected assignments was "Good" (66.83%) – but with distinct gaps in management and quality assurance. The feedback from SO Teams has been less favourable, and clearly there is a set of issues regarding quality and timeliness that need to be resolved. The lesson to be learnt is that one adverse assignment can negate the good work done on four or more assignments, and hence poorly conducted assignments must be stringently avoided.

The source of the problem seems to lie substantially **in the 'gap' in the staffing structure of** UMEMS, where provision was never made for having full time sector specialised evaluation staff. Essentially UMEMS has not had the calibre of specialist staff to supervise and provide better quality control of the products of the sub contractor, ensure best methods are being used, and handle the different demands and complexity of special studies and evaluations.

Nevertheless UMEMS has contributed to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within USAID Uganda by way of developing and operationalizing the evaluations calendar which has been useful in enabling better planning, budgeting and timing of evaluations; and the provision of quick, flexible, good quality and useful evaluation services to the mission. Some of the evaluations are regarded helpful in guiding, refocusing and alignment of some projects, design of new programmes, and other improvements in M&E processes within the team.

### 3.6 Other consequences

This evaluation also sought to establish the other consequences arising out of UMEMS performance of the contract. We therefore designed our methodology in such a way that facilitated the identification and understanding of these consequences, which we present here below.

- UMEMS facilitation of Implementing Partners and Strategic Objective teams to develop performance Management Plans and undertake data quality Assessments has undoubtedly lessened M&E burden on USAID staff; as these require a lot of time and commitment which Mission staff may not have provided, bearing in mind the other and key responsibilities and roles they play;
- As a result of the continued training of new and existing IP staff, there is improved M&E capacity within local organizations and individuals in Uganda;
- There is improved understanding and rigor within the IPs on the importance and use of M&E data to manage, design and implement their programs;
- The evaluations and special studies contracting mechanism via UMEMS saves the Mission time in contracting evaluations, designs and special studies; and
- Through the roster of consultants designed by UMEMS, Ugandan consultants get an opportunity to be screened for suitability and to participate in the evaluations and special studies, hence building their revenues and experiences in Monitoring and Evaluation.

### 3.7 Conclusion

Through facilitating SO teams and IPs to develop their Performance Management Plans; undertaking Data Quality Assessments; training and capacity building activities for IP and Mission staff; Managing SO and IP indicator data (baseline, target and actual) by operating the PRS database; and facilitating the planning and execution of evaluations and special studies; all guided by the ADS and other policies and guidelines relevant to USAID monitoring and evaluation, UMEMS has to great extent fulfilled its contractual obligations and its performance is satisfactory.

The above interventions by UMEMS have contributed to effective monitoring and evaluation performance within USAID Uganda as evidenced by the mission and IPs having complete and quality PMPs in use; **the mission's current** ability to meet PPR and portfolio review requirements; and the better quality and confidence in information from IPs.

There are however areas that have so far received minimal or no attention, where UMEMS and the Mission have to get together and agree the best way forward for their implementation or deferment in a way that maximises their contribution. The areas that received minimal or no attention include offering targeted training and building the capacity of Mission staff in monitoring and evaluation; and training IP and USAID staff on use and expectations of the PRS database and GIS system, in order to maintain a high quality, streamlined system for data collection and reporting.

**We believe that UMEMS' performance and contribution to effective monitoring and evaluation** within the Mission has the potential to grow, and can be enhanced/improved to address the current gaps, and also embrace the new developments within the Mission such as the Country Development and Cooperation strategy (CDCS), and the Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) agenda.

---

## 4. Adequacy of UMEMS Design in Ensuring the Achievement of Intended Objectives

This section has been organised under five subsections, which cover all the sub questions in this **evaluation's Statement of Work**, but not strictly on a one for one basis, and not in an identical sequence. This is because the findings that emerged sometimes became interrelated and needed to be merged. The five subsections each set out our findings and conclusions as and where they are called for (i.e. some findings and conclusions do not need recommendations). Note however that the final section of the report sets out all the key recommendations in logical, actionable order, under four appropriate categories.

### 4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Organisational Design and Structure of UMEMS contract

#### 4.1.1 UMEMS intended objectives

The SoW in UMEMS contract clearly sets out the deliverables for UMEMS during the contract, and the requirement for performance review is documented in the contract. However, the Statement of Work does not explicitly specify the intended objectives of UMEMS. These are implied within the SoW activities. This represents a limitation in the design, something which should be corrected in the design of UMEMS successor – if the decision is taken to go that route. The absence of objectives leads, in turn, to the absence of a Performance Management Framework, and Plan. Thus it is not possible to monitor the performance of UMEMS, and hold UMEMS to account, using the **standard tools and methods of 'Managing for Results', which is current development best practice**. This issue is examined further in section 4.2 below dealing with liaison between PPD and UMEMS.

#### 4.1.2 The Key issues in the design of UMEMS

We noted that nevertheless, UMEMS contract was designed to help the Mission meeting the **agency's performance management requirements as set out in ADS 203**. These include having PMPs in place, quality of data and DQAs, undertaking Evaluations, and portfolio reviews.

The design of UMEMS is reflected in the RFP which sets out the Scope of Work, as well as the Staffing Requirements – their skills and experience. What emerges is that the weight of activities in the Scope of Work comprise **fairly routine 'monitoring' related tasks, namely:**

- Facilitating the preparation of Performance Management Plans;
- Training in M&E, and in the operation of the PRS Data Base;
- Ensuring the Performance Indicators in PRS are updated;
- Conducting Data Quality Reviews; and
- Evaluation Assistance.

These tasks, which comprise the bulk of the work that UMEMS staff perform, do not require highly developed M&E skills, nor do they **demand a high degree of 'Sector Specialism'**. **This situation is reinforced by the fact that it was designed that any Programme Evaluations, or Special Studies to be carried out, are to be subcontracted out, at which time high levels of expertise and sector specialists are brought in for these particular activities. In addition the 'virtual advisors' advisors concept**, which enables experienced M&E staff to support SO Teams remotely, is reputed to have worked well and is cheaper than short term technical assistance. **The result of these 'design' considerations is that UMEMS is headed by a very capable, and highly regarded Chief of Party, supported by full time technical M&E staff who are 'generalists'**. This staffing is appropriate in that it matches the SoW requirements, and gives rise to a lower cost base. However the consequences have been significant.

- The M&E Staff have not had the Sector experience, or the (perceived) seniority to build credibility and respect amongst the Missions SO Teams, and amongst many IPs. As a result UMEMS M&E staff are rarely invited to SO meetings, and have not been able to cultivate the interactive relationships that would have benefited all parties.

- The ability to handle Evaluations and Special Studies to the high level expected by the Mission has been compromised. There are insufficient staff that have the skills and experience to guide skilfully all these complex pieces of work to a successful conclusion, and so lapses have occurred. This also has had a slightly negative effect on UMEMS credibility within the Mission.
- **The consequences of this have been that UMEMS has not succeeded in becoming ‘part of the fabric’ of USAID’s M&E function. UMEMS is treated as an ‘outsider’ service provider, rather than as a valued and integral ‘partner’ in M&E.**
- This has led to a situation where the Mission has ended up not using UMEMS as optimally as possible and hence not expanded out M&E to meaningfully help the mission understand better its portfolio performance and the operating environment, and to learn and appropriately adjust its interventions. **These two issues, particularly their ‘efficiency’ considerations, are discussed in more detail in the section dealing with UMEMS Capacity and Transitional Arrangements.**

#### 4.1.3 Conclusion

A significant shortcoming in the design of UMEMS has been that the need **for experienced ‘Sector Specialised’ Evaluation Staff** was not identified and provided for. Consequently the interaction with SO Teams and IP M&E staff, and provision of advisory services has not happened, and evaluation assignments and special studies have not been as well managed as expected. This is an issue that needs to be addressed.

All the above issues need to be addressed in the design of UMEMS successor, if that is the option selected. However there is an opportunity to address them earlier, depending on decisions taken. All of the related recommendations, short term and long term, are set out chronologically in the final section of the report.

#### 4.2 UMEMS liaison with PPD and the SO teams in designing and implementing specific activities

Liaison between UMEMS and PPD is good, as regular communications and meetings take place on an ‘as needed’ basis, but in particular there is also a **weekly meeting , which reviews the ‘weekly tracker schedule’** that monitors the status of all UMEMS activities across the Mission. In addition before any SoW can be finalised and issued, PPD has to review and approve it. At first pass, liaison **therefore appears healthy. However the weekly ‘tracker review’ is managerially time intensive** for both parties and it is questionable if this activity is an efficient and effective use of time. Unless there are common occurrences of activities **‘falling into the cracks’**, then a monthly tracker meetings may be sufficient.

Collaboration with SO Teams varies based on team interest, presence of M&E specialists within a particular team, and particular M&E demands at hand. Whenever a special study or evaluation is underway, the level of liaison is high with regard to the finalisation of the SoW, the Inception report, and the final reports. However at other times the degree of liaison is low, and initiatives to secure a UMEMS M&E presence in regular SO team meetings have not been fruitful, for reasons discussed above. **In addition the intention was that SO’s and or COTRs avail a team member to work with the consultants on studies/evaluations, has generally not happened, due to time and resource constraints.**

From feedback received in Focus Group discussions, and from reviewing the usage of the PRS database, it seems apparent that M&E is not a high priority for most COTRs, and when faced with difficult choices, M&E including the work done by UMEMS, is relegated to second position. The relationship between some key constituencies within USAID and UMEMS, is not all it should and could be, and the same applies to the time devoted to M&E within the Mission (outside of the PPD). A consequence of this is that UMEMS operates somewhat on the periphery of the Mission, and has not succeeded in becoming an integral part of M&E within the Mission.

The absence of Performance Management Framework, as mentioned above, has led to UMEMS **being ‘micro managed,’ via weekly tracker meetings, which may not be optimal use of time.** Recommendations relating to improving communications and liaison between UMEMS, SO Teams and COTRs, and managing the contract’s performance, are included in the report’s final section.

### 4.3 UMEMS support to the Implementing Partners

We established the following issues in respect of UMEMS support and communication with Implementing Partners.

- **UMEMS never had an ‘official launch’ at the commencement of the contract, an omission** regretted by TMG. In addition there was at least one instance where an IP (STRIDES) was not even made aware of UMEMS and its role and services. They completed their PMP without **UMEMS support, and then had to substantially redo it. Our feedback from IP’s has shown that many are not fully clear on UMEMS’s mandate,** its roles and functions, and the responsibilities of each of the three parties.
- **UMEMS’ role with IP’s is one of support, guidance and facilitation only,** i.e. it has no authority. UMEMS thus does not have final responsibility for the **quality or completeness of IP’s PMPs;** **IP’s updating their portion** the PRS Data base; implementation of recommendations arising from DQA’s; and receiving or **reviewing IP’s** quarterly performance reports.

All the above are areas where UMEMS could potentially add value, and make their involvement more structured, robust and meaningful. We therefore recommend as follows:

- Once the CLA Agenda has been fully defined and its execution planned, a dissemination and launch workshop should be held, inviting all IPs, COTRs and SO Teams. The workshop should also be used to clarify the role of UMEMS;
- At an appropriate point, introduce the concept and practice of Service Level Agreements. The first would be the SLA between UMEMS and IPs which set out the roles, responsibilities, and services (including frequency) to be provided by UMEMS and any authority UMEMS may be given. The SLA will also set out the responsibilities of the IP, and will be signed by the IP COP, the COTR and UMEMS COP. The second SLA will be a similar document between the SO Teams and UMEMS, and here the third signatory will be the PPD; and
- At the CLA launch workshop (above) introduce, and possibly start the commencement of the Service Level Agreement concept.

### 4.4 Quality and Timeliness of Technical Guidance from the Mission

In order to establish the quality and timeliness of technical guidance from the Mission to UMEMS, we held interviews and focus group discussions with the Mission and TMG staff, in addition to review of relevant literature. In the following section, we present our findings.

Generally, the Mission staff rated the quality and timeliness of their technical guidance as in line with expectations, **while some rated it below expectation, reason being that ‘little time is set aside for UMEMS activities, and (lack of) interest is a factor.’** This is clearly an area recognised as needing improvement.

Likewise, UMEMS, the intended recipients of the feed back and technical guidance rated the support as in line with expectations. They articulate a series of concerns to justify their rating, some of which mirror the Missions brief comment above. These are presented here below:

**Quality and timeliness of feedback:** Although it comes from a few individuals and takes a long time to get, the feedback from SO teams is good and sometimes excellent. Meanwhile attendance at debriefing meetings varies from poor to good as evidenced by the good attendance at debriefing on the M&E systems assessment for SO8, while it was poor at the MISR baseline survey.

Overall [with some notable exceptions], it appears that SO Teams and COTRs do not give sufficient priority to M&E issues and activities, and that their inputs are sometimes found wanting. These issues are addressed in the final section on recommendations.

## 4.5 Ability of the Current UMEMS Contract to Support the Implementation of the CDCS, CLA agenda and Performance Reforms<sup>1</sup>

USAID launched an ambitious effort to improve its programming, with its new Evaluation Policy published 8 months ago, which is the basis for organizational learning as USAID implements its programs. The Policy demands strong practice and use of monitoring and evaluation as the critical tool to inform USAID efforts and make hard choices in strategies, program design, and resource allocation. In addition, USAID/Uganda has developed a new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) which proposes the redesign of some programs, and the Mission is a pilot program for the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) model that proposes to use evidence-based M&E data about game-changing issues, **among other things, to develop a “living strategy”** that is a continuous search for improvement, building on what works and eliminating what does not.

Given the above, it is clear that USAID is moving beyond the mechanical management of projects, wherein **USAID focuses on its’ implementing partners meeting their targets, towards a more operations research-oriented, “think tank” approach where evidenced-based evaluation methods** like impact evaluations and other types of analyses will be used to direct USAID investments. As the vision of USAID outlined in the CLA and Evaluation Policy is implemented, so then the UMEMS program and /or its successor needs to change its SoW, to become involved in carrying out more in-depth analyses to assist the Mission implement the CLA Agenda. Areas in which USAID is going to need a lot more support, from which ever source (i.e. not necessarily all from UMEMS), is in Impact Evaluation, Research on Issues and Solutions, Programme Designs embodying the new CLA principles, Baseline Surveys, Data Gathering, Monitoring and Measuring Change / Assumptions / Impacts , and in facilitating interactive learning processes within the Mission, with partners and other relevant stakeholders. The consequence is that the Mission is going to need a major increase in capacity capable of handling complex, sector specific, M&E activities.

In addition, the Mission has not as yet fully conceptualised precisely how it is going to address all elements of the CDCS and CLA Agenda. As of now, a voluntary community of practice, the Strategic Information Community of Practice (SiCOP), comes together to share experiences and developments within the areas of information collection and use. One of its tasks is to build the mission understanding on CLA and provide guidance on development of team and thereby mission wide CLA agenda. This is still a work in progress, but what is clear is that the SO teams are going to **have to reconstruct their PMP’s to fit the new CDCS, and then build in all the CLA requirements;** all in all a significant task.

UMEMS is already helping SO teams to develop PMPs aligned to the new CDCS and is helping the mission with CLA and on this aspect they have been able to redirect and respond to the CLA albeit in ad hoc way – they are part of the SiCOP; they have helped in the design and implementation of the pilot CLA exercise on bulking centres; they are producing a game changer bulletin and plan to conduct some training on impact evaluation. Of course they could have been more pro-active in helping the mission untangle CLA but their progress is also influenced by the extent to which the mission is clear on what can be done under CLA.

---

<sup>1</sup> In dealing with this topic we have combined the following three sub questions from the SoW, because the **topics’ findings and recommendations are interrelated to a significant degree. The questions are as follows:**

- a) As the Mission begins implementation of the CDCS, CLA and other performance reforms, the evaluation should help establish to what extent the current organizational structure allows UMEMS to support these processes and if not, recommend specific approaches to address these strategic changes.
- b) Is there a need to reformulate project design or modify the activities given changes in the country, sector, and operational context:
- c) Finally, going beyond only issues of organizational design and looking at the contract as a whole: how can UMEMS support the Mission most effectively to implement a new strategy and a new approach to performance management through CLA?

---

#### 4.5.1 The Current UMEMS Contract

The current contract and SoW was formulated when the demands of M&E were in ‘the traditional,’ less complex mode. The current budget, and the capacity of full time staff, is not at the levels required to meet the recurring needs of the CLA agenda on an on-going basis. However it is a moot point as to whether the current UMEMS contract is wide enough to accommodate some aspects of the wider remit now emerging. Even though the concept of analyses does not appear in the UMEMS SoW, it is possible that UMEMS could, if directed by USAID, carry out specific analytical and research assignments, within limited budgets, by bringing in the required expertise. However the current contract is clearly not designed to handle the wider remit now emerging.

It is worth noting that UMEMS is restricted in the type of analysis it might perform because some of the information it might need may be seen as proprietary or procurement sensitive. For example, UMEMS does not see or participate in program design and access quarterly reports of IPs because it is thought to be propriety, but that position severely limits the type of additional support and analysis that UMEMS could provide. That issue could be solved by requesting TMG to sign a binding agreement that it will not use, divulge or bid on any activity for a reasonable period after its related involvement.

A further key point however is that UMEMS is presently seen as a contractor with a limited role, whereas ideally UMEMS (and particularly its successor) needs to graduate to a point where it is seen by USAID as a partner in the development of the CLA, and in the execution of the more demanding M&E function. Otherwise the overall value that the Contractor can offer the Mission is impaired. Thus, if the Mission wishes to leverage the full potential of UMEMS, then PPD and the SO teams should consider sharing information about their current evaluation and research needs. For example, the Mission is currently trying to develop evidenced-based hypotheses and program approaches to implement its new set of programs, but UMEMS has not been privy to this and is not assisting the Mission.

Considering the fact that very often difficult evaluations are mainly a result of poor programme design, it would be productive and useful to all parties if:

- UMEMS was invited to make appropriate contributions to the definition of the CLA Agenda, assisting the Mission in determining its research needs, and identifying the additional data and M&E requirements; and
- **UMEMS’ potential role, both now and under UMEMS successor**, would become clearer in this process, and UMEMS may then be requested to assist in the search for evidence, or to assist with any of the identified tasks.

#### 4.5.2 Resource Requirements and Availability

With regard to funding UMEMS apparently has 25% of its budget remaining, with 17% of time to run, suggesting an 8% resource envelope to fund any additional support requested. In round figures this translates into \$ 570 000. Adopting a narrow short term focus, funds are available for using virtual advisors or commissioning short term studies / technical assistance to carry out some of the additional work or research identified, on an ad hoc basis. This can be done with relative ease.

However there is a wider focus to consider. As elaborated in section 5 – What Next, there is a strong case for employing three Sector Specialist Evaluation staff, as well as a Knowledge Manager<sup>2</sup>. These professionals are needed to overcome existing shortcomings and to meet the increased M&E demands of the CLA agenda. If that recommendation is accepted, the question facing the Mission is when to act, especially as the remaining life of the original contract is limited to 8 months.

---

<sup>2</sup> The full proposed organisation structure, and justification therefore, is set out under Question 4 – What Next. It is useful to understand the details of this proposal, while considering the recommendation above.

---

### **4.5.3 Conclusions**

The UMEMS project design is adequate for the traditional M&E services envisaged at that time of drafting and signing the current UMEMS contract, and for enabling the mission meet agency requirements. However, considering the current developments within and outside of the mission, the project design falls short of the capacity to effectively and efficiently supervise and control the quality of evaluations and impact studies relevant to the implementation of the Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), Collaboration Learning and Adaptation (CLA) agenda.

---

## 5. Capacity of UMEMS to Render Effective M&E services to the Mission

### 5.1 Quality and Effectiveness of UMEMS staff

In overall terms the total number of full time staff employed on the UMEMS contract is nine, of which five are technical M&E staff, including the COP, and four are administrative support. The Chief of Party is, without exception, well regarded by all persons interviewed. In addition, feedback and opinion regarding the Washington based staff, especially the Programme Director who fulfils the QA role, has also been favourable. Similar generally favourable feedback has been received regarding the capability and support received from the 'Virtual Advisors and the Mentoring programme. Therefore the only reservations regarding staff capacity relate to full time M&E staff in Uganda. These reservations have been dealt with under section 4, and are mainly a result of a design issue, not an issue of underperforming against the tasks they were employed to execute.

The experience with the Study Teams and Evaluation Teams has been variable from project to project, with some being competent, others less so. This has all been dealt with under section 3 (evaluation question 1). The question of the quality of consultants on the Consultants Data Base has raised some concern, with observations being passed that:

- Some of Uganda's best known and capable consultants do not appear on the data base; and
- There does not seem to be a mechanism for 'tagging' underperforming consultants.

These two issues should be included on the agenda of the proposed mini workshop to strengthen the execution of evaluations and special studies.

### 5.2 Usefulness of the Geographical Information System (GIS) module and UMEMS' capacity to support GIS in the mission

The PRS database is supposed to be the gateway to the Mission's Geographical Information System (GIS) data and maps. We therefore sought to establish the quality, usefulness and potential of the Geographical Information System (GIS) module and the capacity of UMEMS in supporting GIS use in the Mission.

#### 5.2.1 Quality and usefulness of the GIS module in the database

The PRS database has the ability to upload/store excel files (IPs) and maps (USAID); however, GIS specialist in the mission must manually link GPS coordinates to IP's activities, manipulate data, and process/upload final map products. This system is somewhat inefficient and leaves greater room for errors to occur. It seems to mainly serve as a storage unit. IPs generally communicate directly via phone/email when they want maps instead of using the database request system.

Further, IPs have not been trained on how to utilize this function and they have accordingly expressed a need for training in GIS from data collection through mapping software and particularly the use of GIS data in analysis. We understand that UMEMS is proposing a GIS training in their 4th year work plan.

The database has the potential to be a useful M&E tool for the mission. As mentioned above, the GIS module is currently more of a storage facility and it is definitely underutilized. The design could be modified to include GPS coordinates with the PMP data uploads; this would help streamline the map production process and also create a greater potential for querying/analyzing larger datasets. Also it would help to reduce errors if coordinate data was consolidated in this upload.

#### 5.2.2 Capacity of UMEMS in supporting GIS use in the Mission

Since UMEMS currently has no GIS expert on staff, UMEMS has limited internal capacity to support the GIS function for the mission. However, UMEMS may choose to hire a short term consultant either fulltime or on retainer basis.

### 5.3 Strategic Partnerships

According to UMEMS, there are no strategic partnerships per se. UMEMS proposed working with local universities to build capacity in aspects of M&E to have a consultant base to draw upon. However, few showed any interest as they appear well endowed with financial resources from other institutions. It also proved difficult to get university staff to register on the Roster of Consultants as consultants despite an outreach campaign UMEMS undertook. Proposals to work with the **Office of the Prime Minister's M&E Unit** were also not fruitful.

**UMEMS' work with the MEEPP project is only to extract USAID-attributable data for the Mission's PMP and PPR twice a year; there is no strategic partnership per se.**

**However some Health Sector IP's noted the duplication of effort of having to provide data twice into the two different data bases, commenting that the MEEP database was 'always on' and more user friendly.** There appears to be a need to harmonise the two data bases in some way so that the same data only needs to be entered once. This requirement is carried forward into the upgrade of the PRS.

In our view therefore, UMEMS should have considered exploring better relationships with institutions like MEEP, Makerere University Institute of Social Research (MISR) and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), who are known gurus in research and information. Likewise, the Mission should also have strived better to ensure that such partnerships happen, as they bring in expert resources, databanks and local knowledge that can be made available to Mission and IPs.

### 5.4 Conclusion

Considering the running UMEMS contract and Statement of Work, the current local and international staff at UMEMS are adequate to offer Monitoring and Evaluation services to the mission. However, the current staff capacity and numbers need to be upgraded to address the new developments at the mission i.e. CDCS, CLA, GIS and corresponding M&E services.

---

## 6. What Next after UMEMS

In this section we look at the two options for transitional arrangements, namely a hand over of **UMEMS' functions to Mission Staff well in time before the contract ends**, or the extension of UMEMS until UMEMS successor is in place.

Thereafter we assess the longer term options of either bringing M&E functions back into the Mission, or continuing to outsource the bulk of M&E services to a contractor under UMEMS successor.

### 6.1 Transitional arrangements

#### 6.1.1 Handover of UMEMS to Mission staff

UMEMS ends in eight months, in May 2012. Given that the SoW has not yet been finalised, reviewed and approved, it is unlikely that UMEMS successor (if there is to be one) will be contracted before then, and we understand that a typical procurement of this type may take up to 12 months to procure. Therefore the Mission would need to be prepared to take over the functions of UMEMS for several months, particularly regarding the maintenance and operations of the PRS data base. UMEMS is in the process of preparing a handover plan, which incorporates:

- Preparing procedures for setting & certifying targets especially for three years out in the case of PPR indicators.
- Setting up a calendar for PPR development, data call & certification, and managing data aggregation for the PPR.
- Developing protocols for Portfolio Review product development.
- Entering a contract with the current Washington based firm (or some other Service Provider) for maintenance of the PRS database.
- Handing over management of the database – training system administrator staff at the Mission on how to use it, as well as the obligations of IP users, and their follow up.
- **Handing over the responsibility for doing DQA's, including the mechanism for contracting consultants**

Clearly there is some complexity to all this, which carries a degree of risk, and if this is the route that is to be taken the decision needs to be made as early as possible to allow sufficient time to finalise, agree and execute the hand over protocol. Obviously, all this is particularly important if the concept of UMEMS successor is dismissed and a decision is taken to bring the M&E function back into the Mission.

#### 6.1.2 Four month extension of UMEMS and its funding

The simpler, and possibly preferable alternative, but one which is likely to have budget consequences, is to extend UMEMS for approximately four months to cover the transitional period necessary to allow UMEMS successor to be contracted.

Under section 4 (evaluation question 2) we noted that there appears to be a surplus funding of approximately \$ 570 000 to be applied as decided. This money could be used to fund an enhanced SoW for the remainder of UMEMS incorporating:

- the additional staffing being proposed (three Evaluation Specialists, and a Knowledge Manager);
- a broadened set of activities and research under the CLA agenda; and
- The upgrade and enhancements to the PRS database.

Alternatively the funds could be used for a no cost extension for four months for the existing staffing levels, but this would mean no funds for the above three bullet points. That would mean **UMEMS goes into 'treading water' mode. Assuming this is not the preferred option, an additional budget of approximately \$600 000 seems required to either fund the extension, or to fund the wider SoW.**

## 6.2 UMEMS successor or Not

### 6.2.1 Reintegration of M&E into the Mission

The possible reintegration of M&E into the Mission raises a series of issues and challenges as follows;

- The demands being placed on the M&E function, by virtue of the CLA Agenda, the new Evaluation Policy and the CDCS, have escalated considerably and it is now a complex arena.
- Of late there has been a rapidly growing demand for competent M&E professionals, as all Development Partners are focussing more on M&E as aid effectiveness comes increasingly under the spotlight. Finding and retaining the right M&E professionals, be they National or International, will be a challenge that may be best left to a service provider, who then has to manage the cost and retention issues. The cost and mobility of experienced M&E professionals is reputed to be rising at a rapid pace, due to the gap in supply and demand.
- Outsourcing the function to a service provider should provide a very clear cut performance and accountability framework, and compliance with the accountability framework should be visible and rigorous. This contractual dynamic, if properly applied, should lead to more effective and efficient M&E and more effective aid in due course. Bringing the function in house seldom achieves the same high level of visibility and performance scrutiny.
- Bringing the function in house entails new staff becoming entwined in the unavoidable **'overhead' of following Mission administrative (and cultural) procedures and processes**, and the additional time demands that ensue can be significant. In a service provider environment **the level of 'administrative time' for front office professionals is usually comparatively low.**
- Bringing the function in house is not feasible logistically. There simply is not the space available to house a fully-fledged M&E function in the Mission / Embassy premises.
- The higher cost of outsourced services is an issue that needs to be considered, but in fairly broad terms as we have not had time to carry out any detailed cost analysis. At first pass the costs of outsourcing obviously appear higher, because of the management and administrative overhead that is built in, and the profit margin that is added. However if the function was conducted in house, then a fair cost comparison would be to add in a (headcount related) share **of all Mission's 'back office' costs, which could be considerable.** Any excess that remains (including the 'profit element'), **is justified by the notion that the outsourced function will:**
  - Be more efficient and effective (for reasons given above),
  - Be more easily managed within the Mission, and with greater accountability,
  - Lead to overall better results and outcomes.

If all this manifests then the benefits far outweigh the extra cost. The issue is for PPD to prepare a SoW that reflects the escalated M&E requirements and contains a performance and results framework, and they then manage contract execution to a successful conclusion.

### 6.2.2 Conclusion

The case for outsourcing the M&E function to a Service Provider seems to outweigh disadvantages and the higher cost.

## 6.3 UMEMS successor – Its scope and possible structure

### 6.3.1 The scope and services of UMEMS successor

ADS guidelines state that M&E should be allocated a minimum of 3% of total Mission budget. The Uganda Mission order on M&E raises this allocation to between 3-10% of program resources. This would imply that approximately \$ 9-30 million should be spent annually. The amount allocated to the current UMEMS contract is less than 20% of that, suggesting that there is scope and budget to widen and deepen the mandate and services to be provided under UMEMS successor. The study looked at the new demands being made on M&E, arising from the CLA, CDCS and Evaluation Policy agendas, and what new services and activities will be required. The list emerging for each Development Objective is as follows. New requirements are ***shown in italics.***

*Final Report of the mid-term evaluation of the Uganda Monitoring and Evaluation Management Services (UMEMS) Project managed by The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG): SOL-617-11-000007*

- *Sector Impact Evaluations, Evidence Gathering, Results Attribution*
- *Research - emerging issues, solutions, alternative approaches*
- *Design of programs, involving alternative approaches and solutions*
- *Baseline Surveys – Design & Data Gathering*
- *Tracking of Game Changers, and manifestation of Hypotheses and Assumptions.*
- Conventional Program Evaluations
- Special studies
- Portfolio Review & PPR Preparation,
- PMPs, DQA
- IP/USAID Training Needs Assessment and training, possibly in M&E + MfDR + *PRP ‘Driving Licenses , Impact Assessments, CLA*
- *IP Quarterly Report Reviews,*
- *Harness Lessons Learnt, Best Practices*

The entire list does not necessarily have to be provided under one SoW with one Service Provider, although the case for splitting the requirement between two or more providers may be difficult to justify.

In addition to the above services there is a new cross cutting requirement of Knowledge Management and strengthened Information Technology. This requirement is as follows:

- Knowledge Management & Dissemination;
- CLA Coordination across the Mission;
- Learning Forums, Interactive Learning;
- Data Base Maintenance;
- Data Base Development;
- Web Maintenance;
- GIS Development; and
- Data Security.

### 6.3.2 Proposed organisation structure

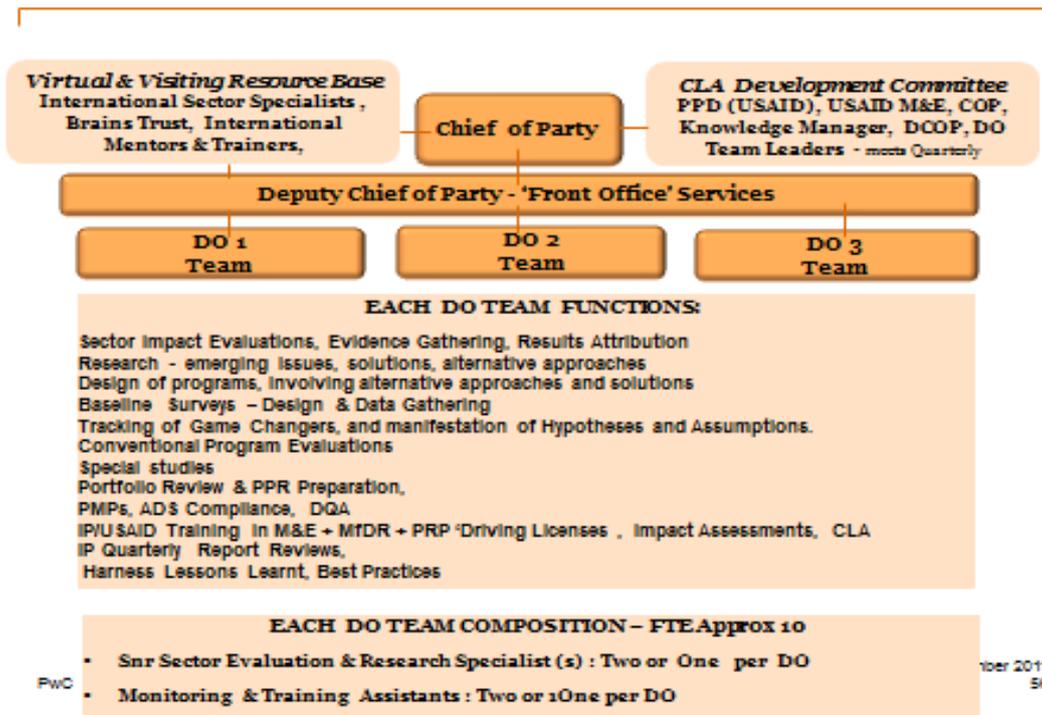
The proposed organisation structure and staffing levels that emerges from the above requirements is as follows. This is the top level view; lower level views are set out on the following organograms.

**Figure 2: Proposed top level organogram**



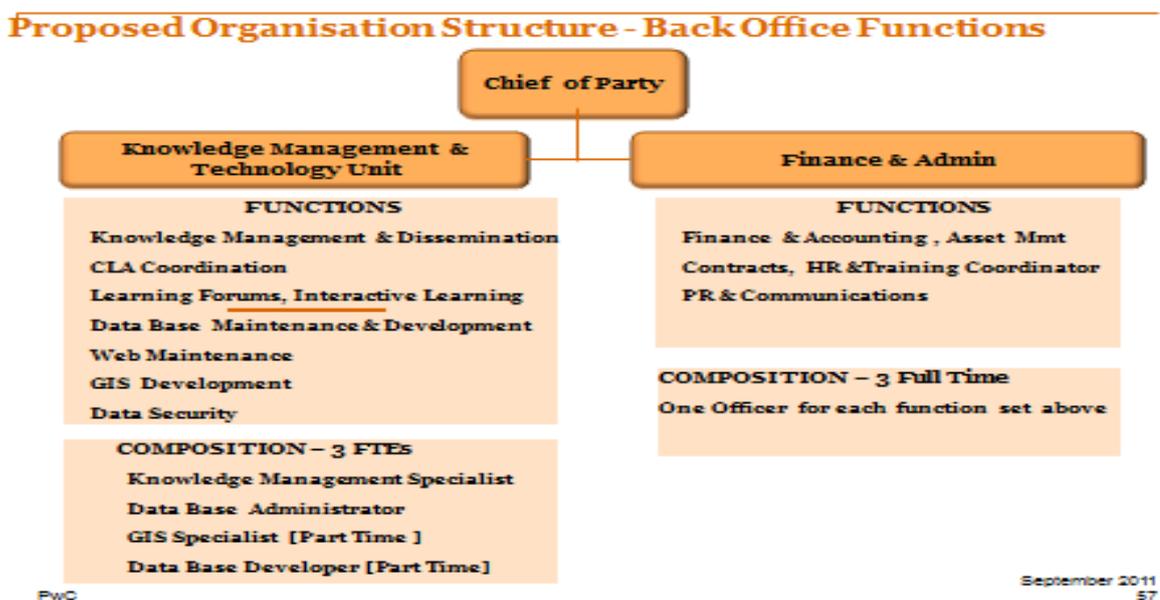
Subsequent organograms set out the details of the underlying structures. The proposed structure of the Front Office services is as follows;

**Figure 3: Proposed front office organogram**



The structure therefore proposes a 'front office' of approximately 10 professionals split between the three SO teams, plus a Deputy Chief of Party to manage the Front Office activities. The other new requirement that emerges is that of the CLA Development Committee, chaired by PPD, but with due representation from the Service Provider. The proposed structure of the Back Office support services is set out below;

**Figure 4: Proposed back office organogram**



---

### 6.3.3 Total size of structure

The proposed staff complement of the back office is six, bringing the total staff complement (full time) to 18, including the COP and DCOP. This compares to the current complement of nine. In a nutshell, the additional nine are justified on the basis of

- A much broader mandate of services and activities
- The fact that under the design of the current contract there was a gap in that the need for senior sector evaluation specialists was not identified or provided for. That should be corrected under UMEMS successor.

Comments made earlier suggest that the Mission could spend approximately \$ 10 million per annum on M&E, in accordance with ADS guidelines. In ball park terms the structure outlined above may account for approximately half of that, leaving the balance to fund all other M&E requirements.

## 6.4 Vision for UMEMS successor

To be fully successful UMEMS successor needs to embody a series of characteristics as follows;

- A well designed widened mandate and SoW reflecting the broadened requirements of M&E , which is underpinned by a well-constructed performance management and results framework. This facilitates **Mission’s contract monitoring and supervision, moving away from reliance on weekly ‘work tracker’ management. The SoW will need to clearly define the relationship with the Mission SO M&E staff<sup>3</sup>.**
- A fully staffed structure incorporating Sector M&E specialists, a DCOP, and Knowledge Management specialist, with the capacity to execute the SoW, meet the expectations of SO **Teams, IP’s and PPD.**
- By so doing, UMEMS successor will earn the respect of the Mission at the SO and COTR level, which in turn builds relationships, and allows UMEMS successor **to become a ‘full intrinsic partner’ in executing the M&E and CLA agenda. This will mean** UMEMS successor becoming valuable members of the SO teams, interacting closely with and supporting the internal SO M&E staff.
- An upgraded PRS, which graduates from a database and data collection repository, into a fully fledged system for managing and reporting on the performance and direction of all the **Missions activities, in a way that highlights ‘actionable issues’ and presents** a picture on the **‘health’ of all activities, using techniques such as league tables, and exception reports.**
- The intention is for the PRS to become, and be seen by COTRs and SO teams as, an indispensable aid to management of their programmes, which is frequently used, and has become as the sole authentic source of performance tracking and performance data. The PRS should also include a summary report which reflects on a single page the performance information required by the office of the Mission Director, **with ‘drill down’ capabilities to view** the subordinate composite data. With this report available, the Mission Director could then **lead a quarterly ‘management’ meeting to review SO and IP performance. If this can be** achieved, the spin off should be a cadre of professionals with a heightened interest in Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.

Once all of the above is achieved the result should be a CLA agenda which is active and vibrant, and is having a major impact on uplifting aid effectiveness.

---

<sup>3</sup> The current relationship of SO M&E specialists with UMEMS is negligible as these staff are more involved with managing other M&E contracts and activities. This in itself is a somewhat unhealthy indicator of the UMEMS / Mission relationship at the SO level, something to be corrected under UMEMS successor.

## 7. Recommendations

In this section we summarise all our recommendations in a chronological manner. We have defined five categories of recommendations as Short Term Actions; PRS Database; Evaluations and Special Studies; Preparation for UMEMS successor and Design Issues for UMEMS successor:

### 7.1 Short term actions

1. The Mission needs to complete its work on setting out its complete understanding of the CLA agenda, and how it will be applied to the CDCS. UMEMS should be invited into the process to make appropriate contributions, and assist the Mission in determining its research needs, and identifying the additional data and new M&E requirements and UMEMS role.
2. **UMEMS' potential role, both now and under UMEMS successor**, would become clearer in this process, and UMEMS may then be requested to assist in the search for evidence, or to assist with any of the identified tasks, in the short term, depending on the decision taken in 4. Below.
3. Take the big decision on whether to bring the M&E function back into the Mission or proceed to UMEMS successor. Flowing from this, is a decision on whether UMEMS needs to prepare to hand over all its operations back to Mission staff, for either the long term, or possibly just for a transitional period of some four months – depending on funding considerations set out in 5 below.
4. The Mission, with strong input from the Director, should take this opportunity of the CLA Agenda, and the CDCS, to inculcate a stronger appreciation amongst COTRs and SO Teams, of the importance of M&E in improving aid effectiveness and reducing poverty. The message should be that M&E reporting is the Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account of the Development Industry, and it should be of fundamental interest to all managers. The proposed upgrade to the PRS will underpin this message and will (in due course) provide the Mission Director with the management and performance information needed to hold an quarterly senior management meeting, which reviews progress and performance across the entire portfolio.
5. Clarify precisely how much uncommitted funding is available in UMEMS (currently estimated at \$ 570 000), and determine how these funds will be spent. There are basically three options
  - a. Adopt a narrow focus, and utilize the funds for virtual advisors, or commission short term studies / technical assistance to carry out some of the additional work or research identified in 2 above, on an ad hoc basis.
  - b. Move now on upgrading the capacity of the UMEMS team (an option that addresses a multiplicity of constraints) and recruit the three Sector Specialist Evaluation staff, as well as a Knowledge Manager<sup>4</sup>. The main issue is that the end of UMEMS is less than a year away. A possible solution is to permit the new staff to make their services available to all bidders on UMEMS successor, so follow on employment is made more certain. This course of action will correct the deficiencies in the design of UMEMS II, and start addressing the CLA and CDCS requirements forthwith.
  - c. **The funds could be used to pay for a 'no cost extension' for approximately four months, to cover the transitional period needed until UMEMS successor is ready**
6. **Hold a 'CLA Launch' event for all IPs, to explain the M&E enhancements and the new rigour**, as well as reinforcing the role and services of UMEMS. Introduce the concept of UMEMS successor **(if that's the decision)**, as well as the added requirement for Service Level Agreements (more detail below).
7. Hold the DQA clarification workshop with UMEMS, to agree the scope, boundaries, and depth **of a DQA, the extent of 'inspections' and data verification, and norms of expected time input to complete an 'average' DQA. DQA activities will assume increasing importance once the enhanced version of the PRS database is operational, and a new spotlight is brought to bear on performance discrepancies – see next section.**
8. Hold the **'lessons learnt' / problem identification workshop on** issues that impede the quality and timeliness of Evaluations and Special Studies. Map out the way forward. We recommend

---

<sup>4</sup> The full proposed organisation structure, and justification therefore, is set out in Section 6.3.2. It is useful to understand the details of this proposal, while considering the recommendation above.

---

that the workshop should look at the possibility that each study / evaluation is led by a **'reference group', chaired by the Primary User, so that the user has full authority over the assignment.**

## 7.2 PRS database

In order to respond to and address user issues and requirements, the PRS needs to be enhanced or upgraded. This can be achieved by:

9. Conducting a PRS user requirements gathering exercise with all stakeholders, possibly in workshop mode. This will ensure ownership of the system as all their views will be taken into consideration for the upgrade; and brainstorming ways in which the PRS can be embraced by all stakeholders;
10. Management needs to discuss and agree on the standard management reports for performance reporting. Examples of such reports include a report that shows the overall status of achievement of performance indicators by IPs, printed in ascending and descending order; top 10 ranked variances (% of completion) compared with 12 and 24 months ago; ranking tables of IPs – reporting the average % of the top 20 variances; dashboard presentations showing a snapshot of the status of achievement of indicators; IPs missing and Incomplete data;
11. **Following the enhancement/upgrade of the PRS, UMEMS should introduce user 'Driver License' training and certification for all users;**
12. Investigate the possibility of the PRS to provide automatic email prompts that can notify users of forthcoming activity such as reporting deadlines;
13. **Investigate the possibility of UMEMS 'instructing' the system to produce all the agreed IP / Mission management reports which are then uploaded and filed on the PRS, and a notification is automatically sent to respective users, that the reports are now available;**
14. **In the process of completing all the above, devise and implement a 'change management' plan which is designed to ensure all users embrace the system and then regularly use its features and benefits.**

The overall intention is to create a PRS which is seen as an indispensable aid to efficient and effective management of performance. Once the upgrade and training is completed the system will need to go through the conventional processes of user acceptance testing, approval and sign off, and then commissioning and launching. The technical recommendations include:

15. Create a short and more user friendly Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for accessing the PRS e.g. <http://umems.org/prs>;
16. Develop and publish terms and conditions for use of the PRS. This will be a helpful disclaimer for protecting the organisation from complaints or actions of users you cannot control directly, such as any links to 3rd party websites;
17. Consider development of a search facility for the system to provide users with a means of finding what they want on the system quickly and efficiently. This is especially important given the substantial amount of data that is fed into the system for measuring the performance of several entities;
18. **Fully implement and launch the 'NARRATIVES' feature;**
19. Fully implement and launch the GIS module; and
20. Develop, implement and monitor a periodical refresher training program for all users.

## 7.3 Evaluations and Special Studies

21. UMEMS successor needs three more sector specialised evaluation staff, one at least for each SO. This additional capacity (required for a spectrum of additional activities) will have a major impact on the quality of Evaluations and Studies, through high quality SoWs, close monitoring supervision and quality assurance of assignments;
22. **USAID gives thought to the time inputs budgeted, as UMEMS's experience is that often the budgets provided are too frugal to provide for the depth of work requested and the quality of output expected; and**

- 
23. A ‘lessons learnt’ / problem identification workshop is held to get all the issues and concerns tabled, and a way forward mapped out, as it is decidedly inefficient use of scarce management time to go to the market directly and manage assignments directly. The workshop should look **at the possibility that each study/evaluation is led by a ‘reference group’, chaired by the Primary User**, so that the user has full authority over the assignment.

#### 7.4 Preparation for what’s next

24. If UMEMS successor is the option selected, finalise the Statement of Work. Key inputs into this process are this report as well as the deliberations in finalising the CLA agenda per recommendations 1 and 2 above.
25. In finalising the SoW, take into account the design considerations set out in the next section.

#### 7.5 Design considerations for UMEMS successor

26. Assuming UMEMS successor is the option selected finalise and agree the mandate, services and activities to be built into UMEMS successor. A key consideration is whether the Mission should contract one firm, or two, to provide all the outsourced services. This issue has not been fully considered, but a key issue will be whether the extra (scarce) management time needed to procure, supervise and manage two contractors is worth whatever extra benefit may accrue.
27. Determine the Communication and Reporting relationships between the contractor and PPD; Contractor and SO Teams; **Contractor and IP’s, including the key issue of the ‘ level of authority’ that UMEMS may have relating to IPs compliance with M&E requirements;** contractor and the M&E Officers on the SO Teams. The respective roles, boundaries and interaction between both parties will require particular attention
28. Build into the design the concept of two Service Level Agreements. The first is the SLA between UMEMS and IPs which set out the roles, responsibilities, and services (including frequency) to be provided by UMEMS and any authority UMEMS may be given. The SLA will also set out the responsibilities of the IP, and will be signed by the IP COP, the COTR and UMEMS COP. The second IP will be a similar document between the SO Teams and UMEMS, and here the third signatory will be the PPD. On the management side, the SLA should have a provision for periodic review, change process, and provide a mechanism for modification and a means of tracking and reporting on the progress.
29. Note that the intention should be, as far as is practical and desirable, to integrate UMEMS successor **into the ‘M&E fabric’ of the Mission, building sound relationships and making full use of the range of expertise (and value) that will be available from the successful Service Provider.**
30. A key design issue is the specification of objectives, and expected results for UMEMS successor. This will enable the development and agreement of a Performance and Results Framework, by which the contract will be managed, and performance assessed.

