



UNITED NATIONS BOARD OF AUDITORS

Compilation of lessons learned from the Global Field Support Strategy

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Contents

| | <i>Page</i> |
|--|-------------|
| I. About the Global Field Support Strategy | 3 |
| II. Lessons learned from the Global Field Support Strategy | 4 |
| 1. Governance and project management | 4 |
| 2. Client needs and performance management | 5 |
| 3. Resources: budget and staffing | 6 |
| 4. Change management | 6 |
| III. | |

BOARD OF AUDITORS

**Compilation of lessons learned from the
Global Field Support Strategy (GFSS)**

1. In its resolution 70/286, the General Assembly requested the Advisory Committee for Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) to ask the Board of Auditors to issue a compilation of lessons learned from the Global Field Support Strategy (GFSS) for publication. To provide an answer to this specific request the Board has considered which lessons the Department of Field Support (DFS) has learned from GFSS and which conclusions DFS has drawn and actions taken to better support field missions.
2. The DFS implemented GFSS from 2010 to 2015. During GFSS implementation the Secretary-General, the ACABQ, and internal and external auditors addressed the GFSS approach in several documents. DFS reported annually to the General Assembly. The United Nations Board of Auditors (the Board) considered GFSS implementation in its annual report on peacekeeping operations A/70/5 Vol. II. The Board has based its compilation on these documents.

I. About the Global Field Support Strategy

3. In 2010 the Secretary-General launched the GFSS to modernize and adapt field support to bridge the gap between complex demands in the field and the United Nations capabilities to respond to them effectively and efficiently. The aim was to create a new way of doing business that allowed the United Nations to respond more rapidly and flexibly to both new and existing requirements. In addition to that, this new way of doing business should serve their personnel in the field in a responsive, consistent and client-oriented manner, all while taking advantage of economies of scale and bolstering transparency and accountability in the management of scarce resources.
4. The GFSS provided a five-year strategic agenda to reshape and strengthen support to United Nations field missions. The Strategy served as a framework for delivering sustained and significant change during a period of intensive growth in the number, scale and complexity of United Nations field missions. Against this operational backdrop, the GFSS set out to strengthen field support and address contemporary challenges. The Strategy was translated into sets of specific actions that were based on four pillars. An end state vision with targets and key performance indicators was established for each pillar:
 - a) A **human resources pillar** to ensure that the right personnel with the appropriate skillsets are staffed when and where they are needed and to improve conditions of service in the field.
 - b) A **strategic resourcing and financing pillar** to standardize the financing of missions to better anticipate and plan for resource requirements in new missions.
 - c) A **supply chain and modularization pillar** to implement an integrated approach so that goods and services can flow effectively and efficiently from source to clients.
 - d) A **shared services pillar** to provide standardized and streamlined administrative and operational support to field missions from global and regional service centres.

To a limited extent, the GFSS also aimed to improve the safety and quality of life of staff, better utilize regional and local resources and to reduce adverse environmental impacts of field missions.

5. While the final Board Report (A/70/5 Vol. II) acknowledges the 'substantial progress' achieved under the GFSS, the full aspirations of the end-state targets were not entirely fulfilled. Two pillars: 'Strategic Resourcing and Financing' and 'Shared Services', made strong progress. The 'Human Resources' work stream also advanced well. During the implementation period, the 'Supply Chain Management' pillar did not progress as expected; neither did the efforts in the environmental area.

II. Lessons learned from the Global Field Support Strategy

6. DFS encountered a number of challenges while implementing the GFSS, which helped to determine course corrections throughout the implementation period, but also lessons learned for future endeavors of change both in the field and at the Secretariat as a whole. The listing below shows the key lessons learned that emerged while the GFSS was being implemented.

1. Governance and project management

7. When the GFSS was designed, a key intention was to articulate a vision, strategic agenda and change process for improving the performance of field services. During its implementation, however, stakeholders and staff often associated the GFSS with specific projects only, such as modularization or shared service centres. To ensure the GFSS remains relevant for all, future approaches should

Strong management commitment is needed at Headquarters and in all locations to continuously support efforts and

From the outset, it is critical to gather reliable baseline data to measure progress over time. Validation of data collected, its

Reliance on resources contributed from within mission funding also affected the visibility and oversight of resourcing.

Sustained high operational speed has an impact on strategy implementation.

Lacking continuity of key personnel affects the quality of overall implementation.

III. Conclusions and actions taken by the Administration

23. After June 2015, DFS has made a systematic effort to mainstream a strategic approach to continuous performance improvement, including a clear mission, vision, set of priorities, and portfolio of key performance indicators. The DFS has also put in place strategies to advance priorities such as supply chain or environmental management that were not sufficiently addressed during the GFSS period. In addition, the Secretariat also introduced a new financing model for the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe to support increased transparency, scalability, resource management and performance oversight.

Governance and project management

24. The Board has recommended that mainstreaming activities be monitored through documented regular meetings of the Strategic Project Oversight Committee and other institutional mechanisms to ensure timely and effective risk mitigation and mid-course corrections. The GFSS approaches and tools identified for mainstreaming be embedded in the relevant standard operating procedures and manuals to ensure that their benefits may be realized.

25. As a result, DFS has taken a more structured approach to the use of its management forums. Weekly Directors meetings now include systematic performance reviews, based on a widely-communicated annual schedule. These reviews focus on critical business processes. Decision notes and tracking of the implementation of decisions taken in the meeting are a regular occurrence. Moreover, the Strategic Project Oversight Committee meets to review, discuss and provide direction to departmental priority initiatives such as supply chain management, and environmental management. Additionally, DFS institutionalized a Client Board comprised of members of client Departments at Headquarters as well as representative Force Commanders, Police Commissioners and civilian Chiefs of Staff from the field.

26. In terms of mainstreaming the GFSS approaches, DFS has made further progress, for example, by introducing a harmonized performance framework for mission support components in the results-based budget for the 2017/18 financial period, institutionalizing the Global Client Satisfaction Survey, delivering a proposal on expanding shared-service coverage in the context of the Global Service Delivery Model, continuing the civilian staffing reviews, expanding options for enabling capacity via the United Nations Office for Project Services and others.

27. In terms of mainstreaming GFSS tools and guidance, existing guidance is being updated to incorporate GFSS aspects. Other guidance materials under development are based on GFSS outcomes; for example, the new interim guidance on centralized warehousing, the centralized warehousing operations manual, the environmental strategy, and the cost-benefit analysis guideline.

Cost-Benefit analysis and benefits tracking

28. The Board recognizes that the benefits of a business transformation strategy such as the GFSS may be both tangible and intangible. The intangible benefits would include the changing of set procedures and methodologies as well as approaches and work habits that would eventually lead to greater efficiencies and cost-effectiveness in the way that the peacekeeping operations are managed and executed. Such benefits take time to accrue in a manner that would be demonstrable and concrete. The Board does not dispute that the implementation of the GFSS has strengthened and improved support services to field missions in many respects. However, there should have been a benefits realization plan that captures the actual costs and realized benefits on the basis of a consistent and objective methodology that can be empirically verified.

39. Initiatives to strengthen the United Nations field support needs to be sustained and coordinated across all United Nations Secretariat entities, including Departments at headquarters, service centres, field missions as well as through engagement of key internal and external stakeholders and clients. In this way, the approach shall be mainstreamed into the future work of each of these entities. The Secretariat should remain committed to maintaining the strategic dialogue developed with Member States to ensure that a balanced set of priorities is guiding further improvements in United Nations field support. It should ensure that:

Lessons learned by DFS inform the management of Secretariat-wide change initiatives, such as the Global Service Delivery Model;

Approaches introduced during and after the GFSS, including revised management forums, systematic performance reviews, client satisfaction survey, the core performance framework and stronger communication products are institutionalized in the long term;

Governance, management and oversight of shared service centres at headquarters are further strengthened, given its importance for operational success, client services and satisfaction;

The implementation of the supply chain management strategy and the environment strategy for field missions is prioritized within the United Nations Secretariat; and

Recommendations for further strengthening of United Nations field support are prioritized by the United Nations Secretariat and its stakeholders.

40. Drawing on the lessons of GFSS, DFS should be committed to work with all partners on delivering further improvement in United Nations field support. The DFS has set internal foundations for the post-GFSS period. Senior management has agreed on new mission and vision statements, established mid-term priorities, and strengthened management processes for the regular review of support performance and priorities.