

The District Operational Plan: A tangible tool for improved coordination of aid among implementing partners and recipient district local governments in Uganda

Katarina M. Grande, MPH; Latifah Kiribedda, BS; Doreen Alaro, MPA; Ella Hoxha, MPP

Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability Programme (SDS); implemented by Cardno Emerging Markets, USA, Ltd.; funded by USAID and DANIDA

What is a "DOP"?

- DOP is "District Operational Plan," a **Memorandum of Understanding** signed by local government leaders and USAID-funded implementing partners in that district
- DOP utilizes the platform of district meetings to mandate the formation of the **District Management Committee (DMC)**
- DMC comprises of district leaders, USAID-funded implementing partners, and USAID-Uganda representatives and **meets quarterly to jointly plan and coordinate** development activities within the district
- DOP gives local government leaders more **power** in donor coordination and helps USAID ensure that its programs are aligned with district development plans.



Project Purpose

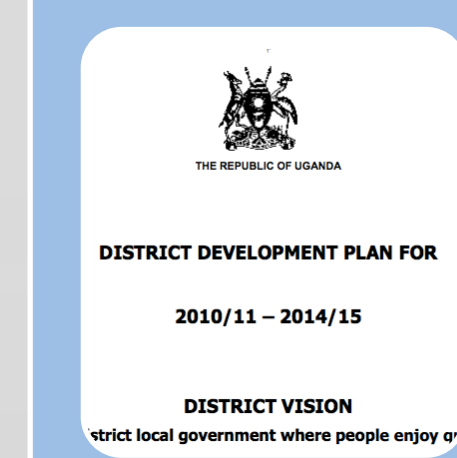
- Resolve lack of coordination between recipient governments and donors, as well as between implementing partners working with the same donor
- Offer tangible methods of coordination between parties; (the need for coordination or cooperation is often identified by aid summits, but specific plans rarely result)
- Manage the USAID-developed coordination mechanism, DOP, in 35 districts across Uganda through the Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability (SDS) Programme — an example that aims to respond to The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

Developing countries and donors, together, must focus on:

- Ownership
- Alignment
- Harmonization
- Results
- Mutual accountability

Design Objectives



- Ensure that USAID programs are aligned with District Development Plans



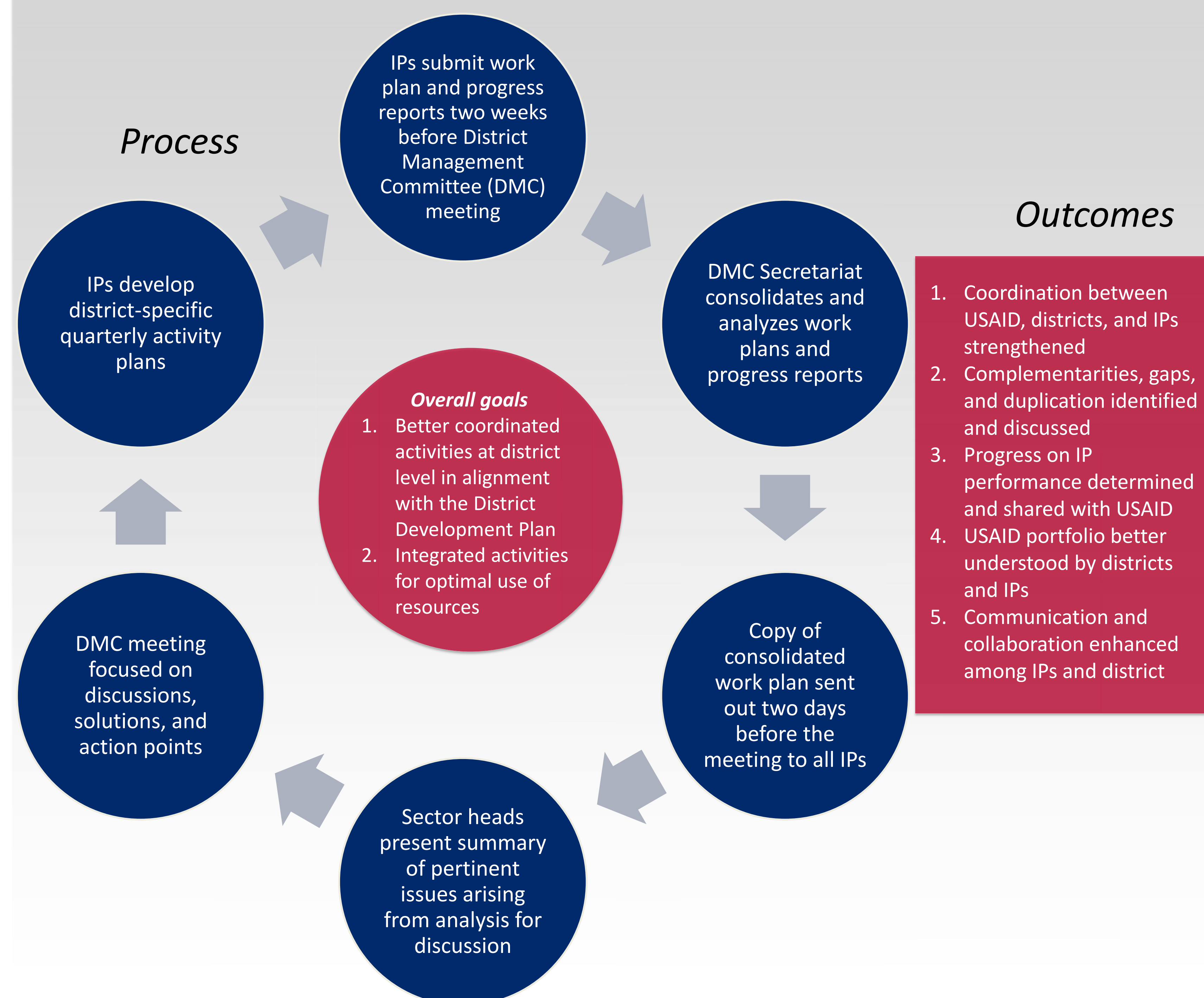
- Strengthen the district and USAID's joint coordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of activities within the district



- Eliminate duplication and improve complementarities among USAID implementing partners and improve collaboration and communication with local governments and other stakeholders working at the district level



- Make it easier for district governments to understand USAID's portfolio and provide feedback to USAID on project performance



Collaborative Partners

- DOP is a collaboration between district local government, USAID-Uganda, and USAID-funded IPs.
- SDS acts as a secretariat to USAID-Uganda and thus plays a key role in working with local governments to ensure the DOP is enacted.
- Non-USAID IPs also participate in this collaborative effort via DMC meetings if invited by the district leadership.

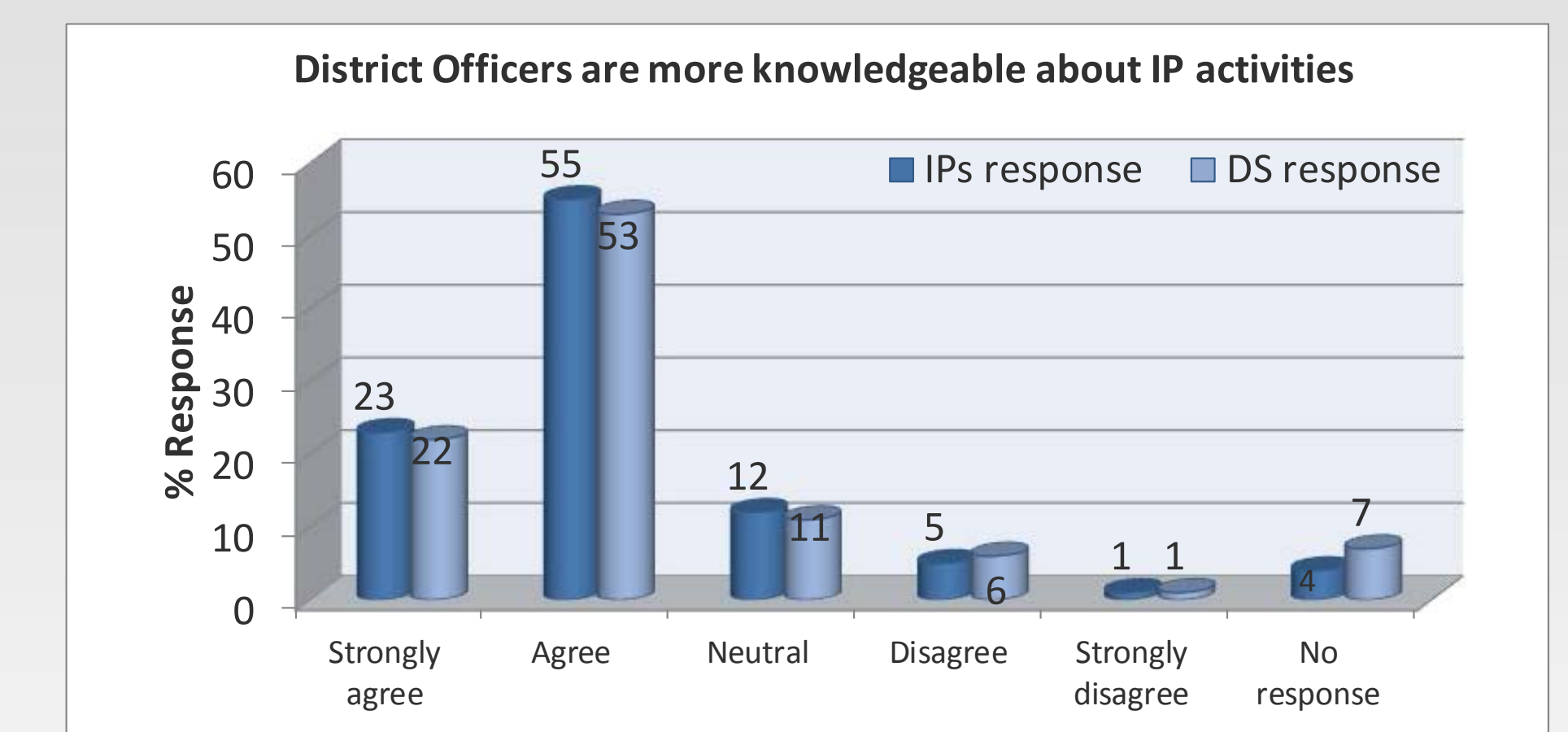


DOP signing ceremony

Summary of Successes/Challenges

- February 2012-present, over 90 DMC meetings have been held across 35 districts
- Jan.-Oct. 2013, an average of 69% of USAID IPs present at each meeting; 13 districts have incorporated or invited non-USAID development partners into the coordination meetings.

Emerging Best Practices [source: Uganda SDS Program: DOP Analytical Progress Report, October 2013]	
Good practice	Example
Dialogue between the district and IPs prompts district ownership and cooperation	Kamwenge district leadership task STRIDES to explain why they are distributing shoes--an intervention the district found to be unsustainable--a few months before the project's close. A district asked SPEAR, STRIDES, RECO PIN to meet, discuss and streamline their activities to avoid duplication.
Presence of many IPs at DMC meetings leads to discussion of opportunities for collaboration between IPs	AIDSTAR-ONE learns that SDS had planned and Executive Leadership Training. AIDSTAR-ONE needed a venue to introduce their work to additional districts they were supporting, so SDS allotted AIDSTAR-ONE time in the training agenda to introduce their work.
Thorough analysis of submitted work plans and reports leads to identify gaps and duplication in intervention areas	In Kasese district, two IPs working in a prison were identified to have similar activities, but neither was addressing an emerging issue (an outbreak of diarrhea)
Communication of next DMC meeting date during the DMC meeting to ease planning for all IPs and USAID.	≥ 80% of the districts pledged to set DMC meeting dates ahead of time and communicate this date during the DMC meeting discussion.
Invitation of other non USAID development partners to DMC meetings	≥ 47% of SDS supported non-mission districts have extended invitations to other development partners (Mityana had 14 non-USAID partners at their first meeting).



Regular DMC meetings are held and have led to improved understanding of USAID contribution in a district alongside district interventions
[source: Survey of districts and IPs, June 2013]

Areas for improvement

- Late submission of quarterly reports and work plans from the IPs to the district for consolidation and analysis—districts need at least two weeks
- Meeting minutes often general, rather than concise and precise documentation of action points, responsible person, and timeline for implementation
- Reading through the previous minutes at the DMC meeting rather than focusing on action points and areas requiring further discussion
- IP submission of reports and work plans to district not in provided standard format
- Poor time-keeping and unnecessarily lengthy meetings
- Collaboration of IPs and districts only during DMC meetings
- Some sector heads consolidate work plans for IP interventions only, leaving out district work plans

Moving forward

Learning event conducted in December 2013 to host discussions with IPs and district leaders to improve DOP

SDS Programme

Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability

Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability (SDS) is a six-year, \$56M (\$55 USAID and \$1M DANIDA) innovative program that supports local governments in Uganda to improve public service delivery, with an emphasis on health and social sector services. Cardno brings to the program a combined approach of coordination, technical assistance, capacity building, financing of strategic interventions through district cash grants,

and facilitation of public and social sector service programs, such as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and human resources for health. Through these interventions, SDS serves as USAID's vehicle for empowering local governments in Uganda to drive the decentralization process. The program supports 64 districts across eastern, western and central Uganda.

Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd. is part of Cardno's Emerging Markets Division with registered development assistance companies in Brisbane, Brussels, Jakarta, Manila, Melbourne, Nairobi, Oxford, Port Moresby, and Washington, DC. Cardno Emerging Markets USA, Ltd. has a nearly 40-year history of serving the U.S. Government's foreign assistance objectives.

Cardno's Emerging Markets Division provides specialized professional services associated with the planning, design, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of development programs across a range of physical, economic, and social infrastructure sectors. Our business has a global presence and strong commitment to use and build local capacity. Cardno engages over 8,500 professionals in more than 100 countries.



Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank SDS staff, USAID officials, and district leaders for jointly working to improve coordination, leadership, and sustainability of development projects in Uganda.

