



UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT GROUP
LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN

Implementation Progress of the Standard Operating Procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean

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¹ This report is compiled by the UNDG LAC Secretariat based on data provided by the RCOs through the UNDG IMS and a survey-checklist.

Executive Summary

This report has the objective of raising awareness to the areas that UNCTs in LAC need to pay thorough attention to in order to reach the full implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One. In the following, analyses are drawn on where LAC countries stand with the implementation of the SOPs, what the main obstacles are, and suggestions on how to overcome them.

Data & Methodology

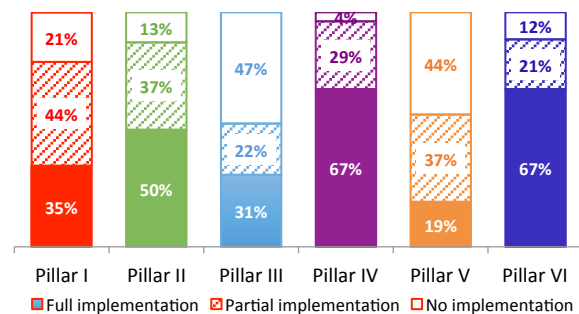
The present report gathers data from different sources about the implementation of the SOPs in the LAC region. Data was obtained from the UNDG Information Management System (2015, 2016 and 2017) and through a survey (Checklist) that the UNDG LAC Secretariat conducted in September 2015 and September 2016. Whereas the UNDG IMS data is mostly quantitative, the data from the Checklists² complement the former with qualitative insights that allow to look behind the mere numbers.

Status of implementation

The chart below shows the implementation rate of the SOP pillars by full, partial and no implementation. The implementation of Pillar IV 'One Leader' has advanced the most in the region, closely followed by pillar VI 'Communicating as One'. The pillars with critically low implementation status are pillar III 'Common Budgetary Framework' and even more pillar V 'Operating as One'. Within these pillars, elements 7 (Annual Common Budgetary Frameworks), 8 (Joint Resource Mobilization strategy), 11 (Business Operations Strategy) and 13 (Operations costs and budgets) are the ones

² The Checklist is a survey that was conducted by the UNDG LAC Secretariat in September 2016 asking RCOs to indicate the UNCTs' level of advancement on the SOPs and next steps for ensuring fulfillment of the SOPs.

that are hardly implemented in the majority of LAC countries.



Six countries (Guyana, Colombia, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and Argentina) have an overall implementation rate of 2.5 or higher, indicating a high level of achievement of the SOPs on average. Furthermore, it is positive to see that no country in the region has an overall implementation rate of less than 1.5, indicating a critical low implementation of the SOPs.

Between the first measurement in 2015 and the last one in 2017, there is a steady upward trend. Whereas the overall regional average of SOP implementation was 1.7 in 2015, it reached 2.2 in 2017. 85% of the LAC countries improved their overall implementation rate during this time.

Challenges and Bottlenecks

The three major challenges/ bottlenecks for faster SOP implementation in the LAC region reported by the UNCTs are:

- 1 Lack of clear instructions & emphasis from the Headquarters of Agencies
- 2 Non-harmonized rules & procedures of the Agencies
- 3 Lack of government buy-in (especially problematic for pillar I)

Conclusions and Recommendations

SOP implementation in the LAC region is progressing but the job is far from being done. More effort from all stakeholders involved is necessary to ensure that full implementation,

and consequently the objective of a more integrated and coherent UN Development System, is achieved. Some of the challenges identified directly refer to action points in the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters 2.0. These points should be emphasized and given priority over other points if necessary. However, further adjustments in agency procedures/rules and regulations beyond the



HQ Plan for Action are required. Also, the UNDG LAC should further prioritize ongoing assistance. The Checklist tool proved to be useful to plan tailored support. Regional analyses like the present one should support the work of the Programme Support Group. To increase government buy-in, the SOPs should be prominently positioned in all UNCT advocacy activities for the 2030 Agenda.

Introduction





The present document was prepared based on data obtained from the UNDG Information Management System (data from 2015, 2016 and 2017) and through a survey (Checklist) that the UNDG LAC Secretariat conducted in September 2015 and September 2016. The objective of the Checklist survey was to complement the quantitative data from the Information Management System by collecting qualitative information allowing to better understand the narrative and individual regional- and country-specific challenges related to the SOP implementation in the LAC region. The IMS data from 2015-2017 and the Checklist data from 2015 cover all 26 countries in the LAC region. However, for the Checklist 2016 only 23 country responses were received.⁴ In order to improve objectivity of the data reported, the UNDG LAC Secretariat, with inputs from UN DOCO, published detailed criteria for measurement. The present report covers all elements and pillars of the Standard Operating Procedures as displayed in figure 1 below.

In chapter 1, the report will first focus on the latest status of SOP implementation (cross-cutting analysis) and the development of implementation over time (longitudinal analysis). Chapter 2 summarizes region-wide challenges to SOP implementation in the LAC region based on the qualitative data of the most recent Checklist from 2016. In Chapter 3, element-specific problems and bottlenecks are presented in more detail, whereas chapter 4 compares the findings in the LAC region with findings from the ECA region. Finally, detailed conclusions and recommendations addressing different stakeholders are given in Chapter 5.

Figure 1: Overview Standard Operating Procedures

PILLAR	#	SOPs CORE ELEMENTS
OVERARCHING / GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP 	1	Joint oversight and ownership agreed between Government and the UN and outlined in agreed terms of reference for a Joint National/ UN Steering Committee
	2	Annual reporting on joint UN results in the UN Country Results Report
ONE PROGRAMME 	3	Signed UNDAF at the outcome level with legal text as appropriate
	4	Joint Work Plans (of Results Groups) aligned with the UNDAF and signed by involved UN entities
	5	Results Groups (chaired by Heads of Agencies) focused on strategic policy and programme content established and aligned with national coordination mechanisms

⁴ Missing countries: Costa Rica, Cuba and Nicaragua.

COMMON BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK (AND ONE FUND) 	6	A medium-term Common Budgetary Framework aligned to the UNDAF/One Programme as a results oriented resourcing framework for UN resources
	7	Annual Common Budgetary Frameworks (as a part of the Joint Work Plans) updated annually with transparent data on financial resources required, available, expected, and to be mobilized
	8	A Joint Resource Mobilization strategy as appropriate to the country context (with the option of a One Fund duly considered) approved by the UNCT and monitored and reported against in the UN Country Results Report
ONE LEADER 	9	Strong commitment and incentives of the UNCT to work towards common results and accountability through full implementation of the Management and Accountability System and the UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements
	10	Empowered UNCT to make joint decisions relating to programming activities and financial matters
OPERATING AS ONE 	11	Business Operations Strategy endorsed by UNCT is highly recommended, adapted to local needs and capacities, to enhance operational oneness processes through eliminating duplication of common processes to leverage efficiencies and maximize economies of scale
	12	Empowered Operations Management Team (chaired by a Head of Agency)
	13	Operations costs and budgets integrated in the overall medium-term Common Budgetary Framework
COMMUNICATING AS ONE 	14	A joint communication strategy appropriate to the country context approved by the UNCT and monitored and reported against in the UN Country Results Report
	15	Country Communications Group (chaired by a Head of Agency) and supported by regional and HQ levels, as necessary

Methodology

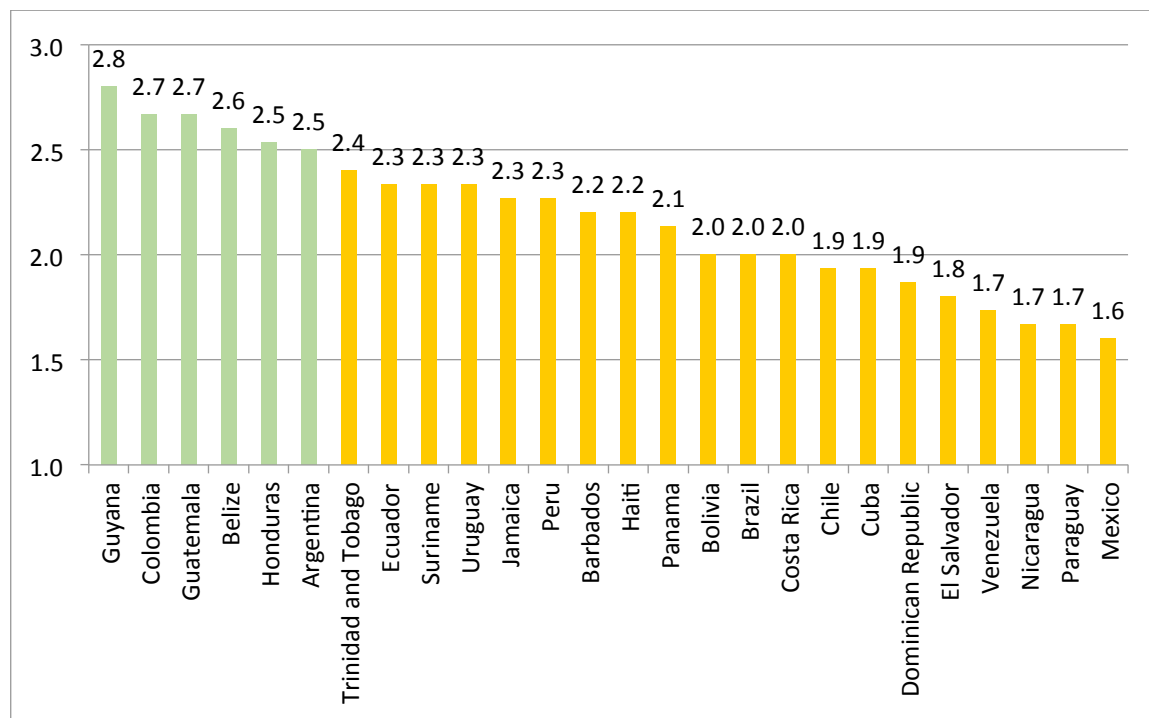
When analyzing the UNDG IMS data on the SOPs, a numerical value is attributed to each implementation status (1 = No Implementation; 2 = Partial Implementation; 3 = Full Implementation). Thus, an average score across all SOPs of 3 equals full implementation, while the average score of 1 equals no implementation. Therefore, the scales of the graphs run between 1 indicating no implementation and 3 demonstrating full implementation. All numbers are rounded and only show one decimal point, therefore, bars can have slightly different lengths while depicting the same value.

1. General Overview: SOP Implementation in the LAC region

1.1. Cross-cutting Analysis: Latest Update on the SOP Implementation in the LAC Region

The UNDG Information Management System offers the most recent data source for the SOP implementation in the LAC region. The overall average of SOP implementation in the LAC region in July 2017 is 2.2, which corresponds with “partial achievement” according to the evaluation scale established by UNDOCO. Figure 2 shows that six countries (Guyana, Colombia, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and Argentina) have a score of 2.5 or higher, indicating a high level of SOP implementation on average. Furthermore, it is positive to see that no country in the region has an overall score of lower than 1.5, which would indicate a very low average of implementation of the SOPs.

Figure 2: SOP implementation in the LAC region as of February 2017



Implementation by pillar:

Figure 3 and 4 show that Pillar IV “One Leader” and VI “Communicating as One” have the highest status of implementation. Both pillars present an overall average implementation rate of 2.6 with 67% full implementation throughout the region. Pillar I and II also display satisfying implementation rates. Pillar II “One Programme” has an average of 2.4 with 50% full implementation throughout the LAC region. Pillar I “Overarching Pillar” has an overall implementation rate of 2.1 and 35% full implementation. The problematic pillars are number III and V. Both have on average a lower implementation rate than 2 (partial implementation). Especially the status of pillar III “Common Budgetary Framework” is concerning as it is not implemented at all in 47% of the region.

Figure 3: Average rate of Implementation by SOP pillars (Data: IMS 2017)

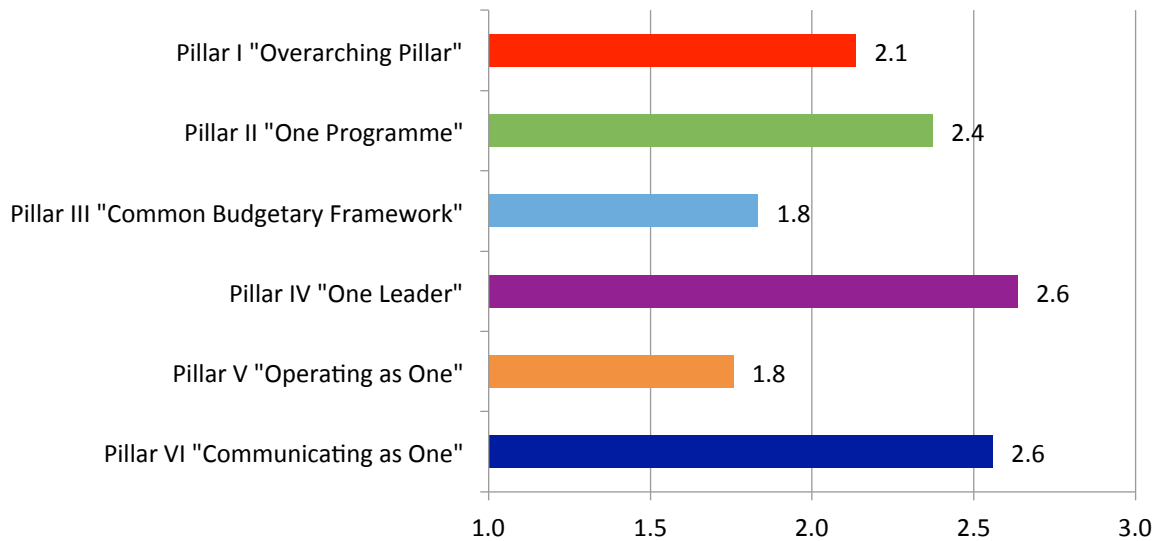
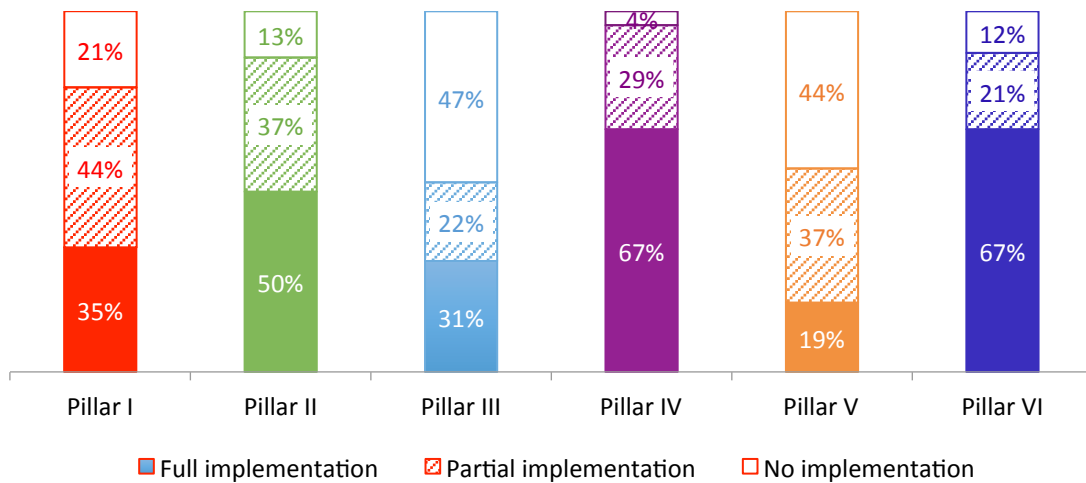


Figure 4: Status by Full, Partial and No Implementation (Data: IMS 2017)



Impact of DaO-Status

It is reasonable to assume that countries with DaO-status are ahead with the implementation of the SOPs compared to the countries without, considering that the interconnection between the two frameworks is likely to set an incentive to direct resources to the SOPs. This assumption is backed by the example of the LAC region. Currently there are 7 countries in the region with DaO-status (El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela). The overall average of implementation for these countries is 2.5, as figure 5 indicates. Figure 6 reveals that the overall average for Non-DaO countries is lower with 2.2.

Figure 5: SOP implementation of DaO countries in the LAC region as of February 2017

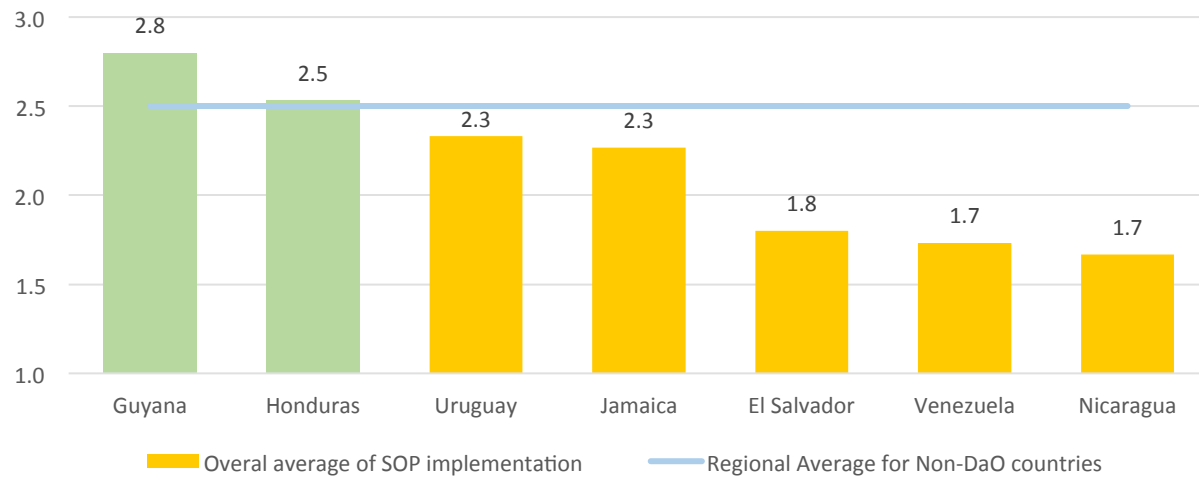
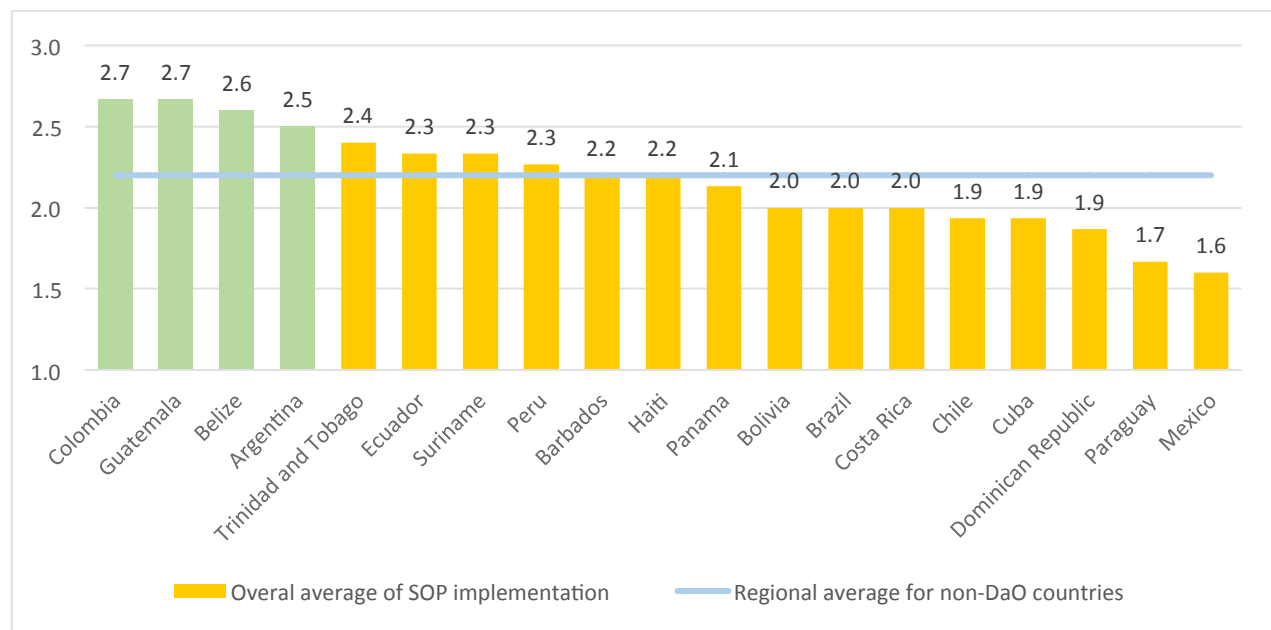


Figure 6: Figure 2: SOP implementation of Non-DaO countries in the LAC region as of February 2017



1.2. UNMSDF Countries versus other LAC countries

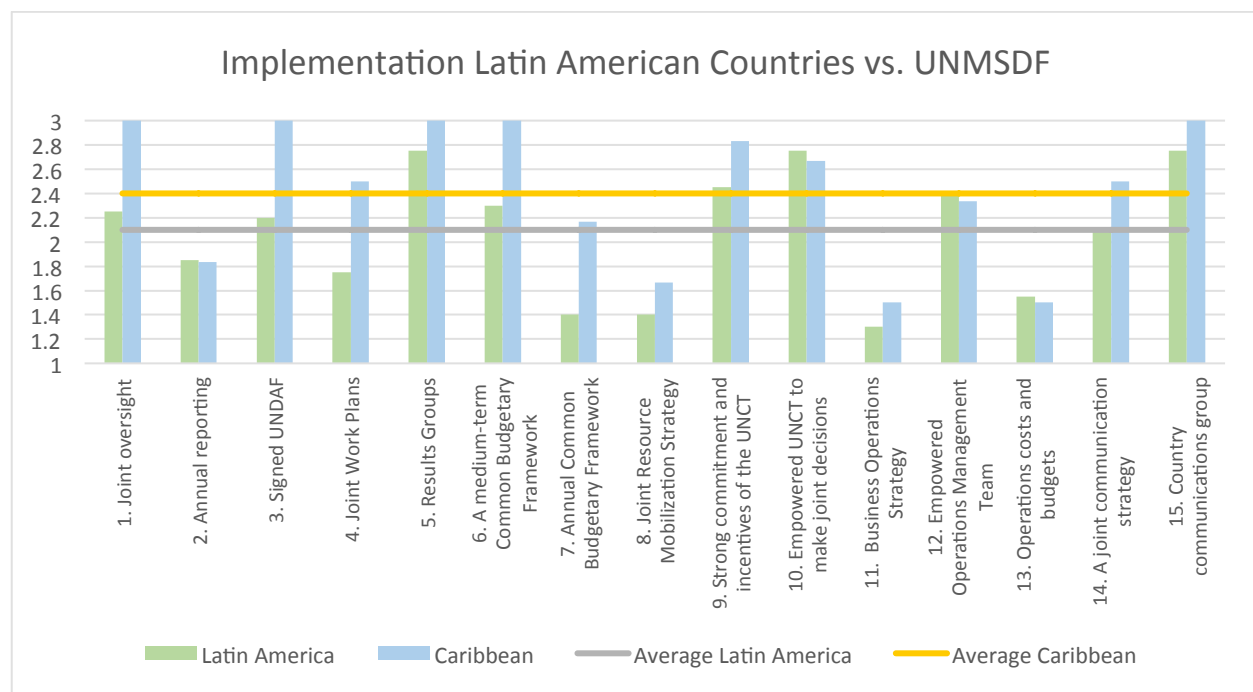
Figure 7 shows that there is a visible difference in the implementation status of the countries participating in the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (MSDF)⁶ and those that are not. The average of implementation of MSDF countries is 2.4 versus 2.1 of those countries that are not

⁶ The United Nations Multi country Sustainable Development Framework (UN MSDF) is the successor to the United Nations Development Frameworks for the UN agencies, funds and programmes in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean (Barbados & the OECS, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) for the period January 2017 to December 2021.

participating in the framework. MSDF countries are advancing on 11 out of the 15 core elements. This can be attributed to the common approach of the MSDF, which regulates some of the SOPs at the regional level. The MSDF is the overarching one programme, strategy, and solution at the outcome level for all participating countries and territories. It facilitates regional engagement and technical integration among UN Agencies, Departments and Funds to promote synergies and enhance programme impact. Thus, it has helped the region to tick several boxes on the SOPs.

The SOPs 1 "Joint oversight", 3 "Signed UNDAF", 5 "Results Groups" and 6 "Medium-term budgetary framework" are all incorporated in the MSDF framework, which explains the full achievement rate in these areas. In fact, the SOPs implementation of the MSDF participating countries is expected to become even higher since also the SOPs 2 "Annual reporting", 4 "Joint Workplans" and 7 "Annual Common Budgetary Framework" are resolved at regional level within the MSDF. The partial achievement rate on these elements can be attributed to the time of reporting (December 2016 to February 2017) by when the UNCTS were either still in the process of setting up the mechanisms to comply with the MSDF (SOP 4 and 7), or did not have the opportunity yet to fulfill the requirements since the required action can only be taken at the end of the annual calendar (SOP 2).

Figure 7: Implementation of the SOPs: UNMSDF countries vs. other LAC countries (Data: IMS 2017)



1.3. Longitudinal Analysis: Trends in the LAC Region between 2015 and 2017

First and foremost, it is positive to see that the regional average between the first data collection in 2015 and the most recent data collection in 2017 improved from 1.7 to 2.2. Except for a drop between the Checklist 2015 data and the UNDG IMS 2016 data, the data shows that there is a steady upward trend, implying that the UNCTs in the region are constantly and continuously working to implement the SOPs. Consequently, most countries significantly improved their overall average of implementation between 2015 and 2017. However, a few countries' score did not improve or even deteriorate during

the time of measurement (Nicaragua, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela). Some possible reason for this negative performance are summarized in chapter 2.

The drop of the overall average of implementation between the Checklist data from 2015 and the UNDG IMS data from 2016 can be interpreted as an indicator that the self-reporting by RCOs still remains subjective and only partially reliable. In order to clarify the evaluation scale of the SOP elements and thus improve the reliability of the SOP measurement, the UNDG LAC Secretariat, with feedback from UNDOCO, published 'Criteria for Measuring Advances in the Implementation' together with the regional Checklist in 2016.⁷ It is positive to see that the criteria did not lead to a significant drop in the reported implementation status (but even a slight improvement), considering that a certain over-reporting was suspected before. Pillar III on the 'Common Budgetary Framework' had the biggest difference in reported implementation among the LAC countries before and after the criteria were published, indicating that UNCTs had particular need for clarification in this pillar.

Table 1: Time series analysis of SOP implementation in the LAC region

Country	IMS 2015	Checklist 2015	IMS 2016	Checklist 2016	IMS 2017
Argentina	1.6	2.2	2.2	1.7	2.5
Barbados	1.5	1.9	1.7	2.1	2.2
Belize	1.4	1.9	1.7	2.5	2.6
Bolivia	1.6	1.9	1.5	1.5	2.0
Brazil	1.6	2.4	1.9	1.9	2.0
Chile	1.3	1.6	1.5	1.9	1.9
Colombia	1.9	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.7
Costa Rica	1.9	2.2	1.9	1.9	2.0
Cuba	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.2	1.9
Dominican Republic	1.7	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.9
Ecuador	1.8	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.3
El Salvador	1.7	2.4	1.8	2.0	1.8
Guatemala	1.6	2.3	2.1	2.4	2.7
Guyana	1.8	2.3	2.4	2.7	2.8
Haiti	1.9	1.7	1.8	2.5	2.2
Honduras	1.4	2.1	1.3	2.4	2.5
Jamaica	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.3

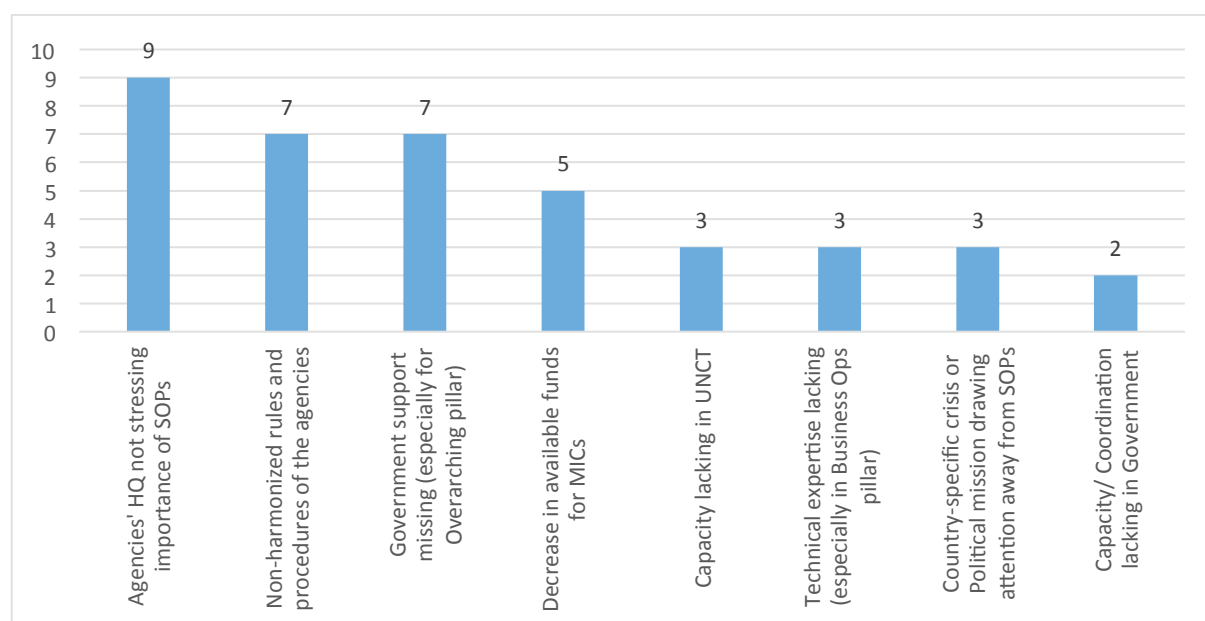
⁷ The Criteria for Measuring Advances in the Implementation of the SOPs can be found on the [UNDG Website](#).

Mexico	1.2	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.6
Nicaragua	2.0	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.7
Panama	1.1	1.6	1.9	2.1	2.1
Paraguay	1.4	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.7
Peru	1.6	1.8	1.7	2.2	2.3
Suriname	2.0	2.3	1.9	2.4	2.3
Trinidad and Tobago	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.4
Uruguay	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3
Venezuela	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.7
Overall Average	1.7	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.2

2. Region-wide Challenges of SOP Implementation

Whereas the first chapter focused on the quantitative data of the SOP implementation in the LAC region, the second and third chapter look behind the mere numbers. By drawing on qualitative data collected through the Checklist survey from September 2016, challenges and bottlenecks that hinder faster SOP implementation in the LAC region were identified. Eight specific challenges were mentioned repeatedly by UNCTs in the LAC region. Their distribution is displayed in figure 8.

Figure 8: Region-wide challenges to SOP implementation



Nine countries in the region stated that a **lack of clear instructions and emphasis from the headquarters of the Agencies, Funds and Programmes** slows down SOP implementation. Whereas strong messages, orientation and instructions were sent by UNDP HQ to the Resident Coordinators, this is not the case for the leadership of many other Agencies which impacts implementation in the countries as the level of ownership and priority given to SOPs is determined by directives from the Agency HQs. Several UNCTs stressed the importance of advancements on the undg SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters with appropriate consequences to allow agencies to be more nimble to make field harmonization advances.

Countries mentioning this challenge:	Chile, Belize, Argentina, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela
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The second most frequently mentioned challenge were **non-harmonized rules and procedures of the agencies** which impede integration, especially in the field of procurement, finance and administrative processes. The incompatibility of Agencies' operational and management systems, procedures and policies also impact reporting on results of agreed common services. UNCTs thus urge for enabling mechanisms that allow a greater interaction among agencies, funds and programs at various operational

levels. Again, the importance of advancements on the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters was stressed.

Countries mentioning this challenge:

Chile, El Salvador, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Trinidad & Tobago, Bolivia

Another crucial bottleneck mentioned by UNCTs was **lacking government support** which especially impedes progress in pillar one. This challenge occurred in countries where governments did not opt for requesting a Delivering as One mission neither. In Paraguay and Colombia the governments do not show any political commitment to join a functioning oversight mechanism. The lacking implementation of the first element of pillar I directly impacts the second element of pillar I likewise (the UN Country Results Report cannot be endorsed by a Joint National/ UN Steering Committee if no such committee exists). Moreover, high turnover of government officials plays a negative role in some countries such as Guatemala and Bolivia. In Panama, there is a Steering Committee but the government has not picked up any discussion related to the SOPs. Regardless, information has been shared with some authorities.

Countries mentioning this challenge:

Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala, Panama, Paraguay, Bolivia

Due to the economic status of Latin America and the Caribbean, several countries in the region struggle with **decreasing international funds available to Middle-Income Countries**. Five countries mentioned this point as a direct challenge to SOP implementation. El Salvador especially stressed the decrease in funds for joint programmes. Mexico reports that the lack of available international funds and the resulting importance of the Mexican government as donor led to many Agencies, Funds and Programmes re-focusing on individual fund-raising efforts, thus hindering further integration in that field. In Peru, some UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes are facing political and legal barriers to mobilize resources from the local government.

Countries mentioning this challenge:

Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay

Furthermore, **a lack of capacity within the UNCT** was listed several times. Belize is facing limited human capacity (number of staff) among resident agencies to effectively engage in inter-agency structures, address common services arrangements (OMT) and support effective and strategic UNCT communication (CCG). Barbados and the OECS reports issues related to the implementation of the Operating as one Pillar, due to limited capacity among the Operations Management Team and the disparate operational footprints of the agencies. There is also limited capacity in the UNST in Barbados and the OECS due to the demands of a multi-country context, which requires frequent travelling. Uruguay points out the lacking commitment to the Cost Sharing Agreement leading to a systematic decrease of HR capacity in the RC office while responsibilities remain constant or even increase.

Countries mentioning this challenge:

Belize, Barbados, Uruguay

Another challenge related to lacking capacity is **insufficient technical expertise**, especially in the Business Operations Pillar. Chile mentions the existing gap of technical expertise as the primary challenge for the development of a Common Budgetary Framework. El Salvador is actively trying to handle missing knowledge by seeking exchange with other UNCTs and other country offices of the different agencies, funds and programs to determine the most appropriate and feasible options for the implementation of SOPs. In co-operation with the UNDG LAC Secretariat, Mexico organized a workshop on Business Operations in October 2016. The UNDG Regional Hub sent two experts from the BOS roster and managed the workshop.

Countries mentioning this challenge:	Chile, El Salvador, Mexico
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Beyond common challenges for countries in the region, some UNCTs pointed out **country-specific crises or political missions drawing attention away from the SOPs**. In this vein, Columbia stressed that the high demands on the UN to support the peace implementation process during 2016 and 2017 requires significant attention by the UNCT and the RC/ RCO, also affecting the capacity to follow-up on the full implementation of the SOPs. In Ecuador, the earthquake from April 2016 left the country with reconstruction needs estimated at 3.5% of GDP. This situation shifted the UN efforts and resources to disaster relief, leaving behind some of the planned SOPs activities. El Salvador is facing a series of crisis that put at risk the governance and operating capacity of the government, demanding attention and action of Government officials as well as the UN system in the country.

Countries mentioning this challenge:	Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador
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Lastly, two countries reported problems related to **lacking capacity or coordination within the national government**. Peru stressed that the coordinated approach triggered by the SOPs can only be fully leveraged if the national counterparts also adopt an integrated approach to match the UNCT's efforts. However, the UNCT in Peru faces Government entities that prefer to work with specific agencies and have not developed mechanisms for inter-sectoral coordination. To tackle such challenges, El Salvador incorporated a new pillar named One Government, which is meant to contribute to the adoption of a similar approach by the government, aiming to reduce the transactional cost and advancing to a more coordinated and strategic relationship with the UN system.

Countries mentioning this challenge:	Belize, Peru
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3. Element-specific Challenges of SOP Implementation

The analysis under 1.1 showed that the pillars with the weakest implementation rate are pillar III “Common Budgetary Framework” and pillar V “Operating as One”. A closer look into these pillars reveals that especially four elements impede higher SOP implementation rates in the region⁸:

Table 2: Implementation rates in pillar III and V

Country	6. A medium-term Common Budgetary Framework aligned to the UNDAF	7. Annual Common Budgetary Frameworks (as a part of JWP)	8. A Joint Resource Mobilization strategy	11. Business Operations Strategy endorsed by UNCT	12. Empowered Operations Management Team	13. Operations costs and budgets integrated in CBF
Argentina	3	2	2	1	3	3
Barbados	3	1	1	1	2	2
Belize	3	2	3	2	3	2
Bolivia	2	1	2	2	2	1
Brazil	2	1	1	3	2	1
Chile	1	1	1	1	2	2
Colombia	3	2	3	2	3	2
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	3	1
Cuba	2	2	1	1	2	1
Dominican Republic	2	1	1	1	2	1
Ecuador	3	3	1	1	3	1
El Salvador	1	1	1	1	3	1
Guatemala	3	2	2	2	3	3
Guyana	3	3	3	2	3	2
Haiti	1	1	1	1	3	2
Honduras	3	2	2	1	2	3
Jamaica	3	2	1	2	2	1
Mexico	1	1	1	2	2	1
Nicaragua	3	1	1	1	2	1
Panama	3	2	1	1	2	1
Paraguay	3	1	1	1	2	1
Peru	3	1	1	1	3	3
Suriname	3	3	1	1	2	1
Trinidad and Tobago	3	2	1	1	2	1
Uruguay	3	1	3	1	2	1
Venezuela	1	1	1	1	2	1
Average	2.5	1.6	1.5	1.3	2.5	1.5

⁸ The analysis in this chapter is based on the undg ims 2017 data, being the most recent data available.

The first critical element is the Annual Common Budgetary Frameworks as part of the Joint Work Plans (JWPs). Full achievement of these elements means that the JWPs are costed at the outcome level and output level, per agency, with financial data broken down by: 1) JWP total estimated budget, 2) Funded budget, and 3) Unfunded budget. However, only 12% (3 countries) of the countries in the LAC region fully achieved this element while 61% (14 countries) have not implemented the element at all. Among these 14 countries, Joint Work Plans do exist but are not costed in 10 countries. In 4 countries, there are not even Joint Work Plans. In 35% of the 26 LAC countries (9 countries), minor points impede full achievement, for instance Joint Work Plans have been costed but not consolidated into an overview chart. The qualitative data from the Checklists conducted in the LAC region provide little information about reasons for this low implementation rate though.

The second critical element under the “Common Budgetary Framework & One Fund” pillar is element 8 “A Joint Resource Mobilization strategy as appropriate to the country context (with the option of a One Fund duly considered)”. The element is fully achieved when a Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy is approved by the UNCT and is being used to mobilize resources for the implementation of the UNDAF/One UN Programme. Only 15% of the countries in the region (4 countries) fully implemented this element while 69% (18 countries) did not implement the element at all (no Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy). In 4 countries (15%), the Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy is under development or will be part of the new UNDAF. Ecuador and El Salvador both point out a decrease in available funds for Middle Income Countries as an obstacle for a Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy, even though a lower level of available funds should increase the urgency of pooling efforts to secure as much of the scarce funding as possible. However, Ecuador states that there is no joint strategy for non-traditional donors (i.e. private sector) and a lack of joint fund-raising capacities and/or resources allocated to this purpose. Mexico stresses the strong sectorial division of the national government

Best Practice:

Belize is one of the few countries that already developed a Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy. The “Joint Resource Mobilization and Partnership Strategy” was completed in June 2016 by leveraging technical expertise from UNICEF Headquarter. Chile is following Belize’s example and promotes agreements on common principles for resource mobilization drawing on expertise from UNICEF. Jamaica developed a proposal at the regional level to access funds from the UNDAF Innovation Facility to design a resource mobilization strategy for the MSDF. Colombia leveraged the post-conflict situation to launch the [Fondo Multidonante de las Naciones Unidas para el Posconflicto](#) gathering 15 participating UN agencies. All joint resource mobilization for post-conflict priorities are transacted through the Fund.

leading to silo work and difficulties to raise funds jointly.

Apart from pillar III, it is the “Operating As One” pillar that presents the lowest implementation rate, and within this pillar first and foremost element 11 and 13. Element 11 refers to the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) and requires that a Business Operations Strategy is endorsed by the UNCT, adapted to local needs and capacities, to enhance operational oneness processes through eliminating duplication of common processes to leverage efficiencies and maximize economies of scale. 18 countries (69%) in the

region did not develop a BOS and thus do not comply with this SOP element at all. The same number of countries partially complies, mostly as they are in the process of developing a BOS. So far, only Brazil fully complies this SOP element (see best practice box). 7 countries in the LAC region received specific BOS training. From the UNCTs' comments it becomes evident that lacking expertise is the main obstacle to BOS achievement. Several countries stressed the urge of BOS training (Argentina, Ecuador, and Venezuela). Some countries reported that they continue to pursue common service agreements to improve operational efficiency and maximize economies of scale despite not developing a full BOS (Trinidad & Tobago, Colombia). Different rules and procedures of the Agencies, Funds and Programmes remain an obstacle to operational integration. This also affects the collection of data necessary for joint

Best Practice:

Brazil was among the global pioneers in terms of Business Operation Strategy (BOS) development. The UNCT in Brazil went a step further in the harmonization of business operations, choosing to supplement the BOS initiative in the country with an integrated service delivery platform – the [Joint Operations Facility \(JOF\)](#). The JOF business model, which was launched on 18 January 2016, is based on three core elements: a) the simplification of business processes; b) the integration of operational services across agencies, and c) flexibility and adaptation of practice according to country context. This integrated UN service center is a step toward a common UN back office, for all UN entities operating in Brazil and will provide 14 services which will be rolled out sequentially

operations. Furthermore, in Colombia and Jamaica BOS efforts were put at halt due to pressing national priorities.

The last critical element is the integration of operations costs and budgets in the overall medium-term Common Budgetary Framework (CBF) (Element 13). 62% of the countries in the region (16 countries), do not include or distinguish operational costs in the medium-term CBF. Only 15% (4 countries) fully comply with this element whereas 23% (6 countries) comply to a certain extent. Obviously, element 13 directly depends on the status of the CBF (element 6) as can be seen in Mexico where different rules and procedures in procurement and finance between AFPs impeded the development of a common budget and in turn completion of element 13. Likewise, the status of element 11 directly impacts the status of element 13. When there is no BOS developed, there are often no joint operations defined that could be costed in the CBF. The challenges revealed under Element 11 on the BOS thus are relevant here as well.

4. Comparison with other Regions

4.1. Cross-regional comparison – Quantitative Analysis

In this section UNDG IMS 2017 data is used to compare how far advanced the LAC region is compared to other regions regarding the implementation of the SOPs. The data reveals that the LAC region is advancing on the implementation of the SOPs above the global average. Figure 9 shows that LAC lies ahead of the global average in 7 elements: Joint Oversight (Pillar I), Results Groups (Pillar II), Medium-term Common Budgetary Framework (Pillar III), Strong commitment and incentives of the UNCT (Pillar IV), Empowered UNCT to make joint decisions (Pillar IV), Operations costs and budgets (Pillar V), and Country Communications Groups (Pillar VI). Thus, LAC is above average in at least one element within each pillar. In Pillar IV “One Leader” LAC is above average in both elements. In the first element “Joint Oversight” LAC is taking the lead across all regions as figure 10 shows.

Figure 9: Average rate of implementation of the 15 SOP elements of LAC versus the global average (Data: IMS 2017)

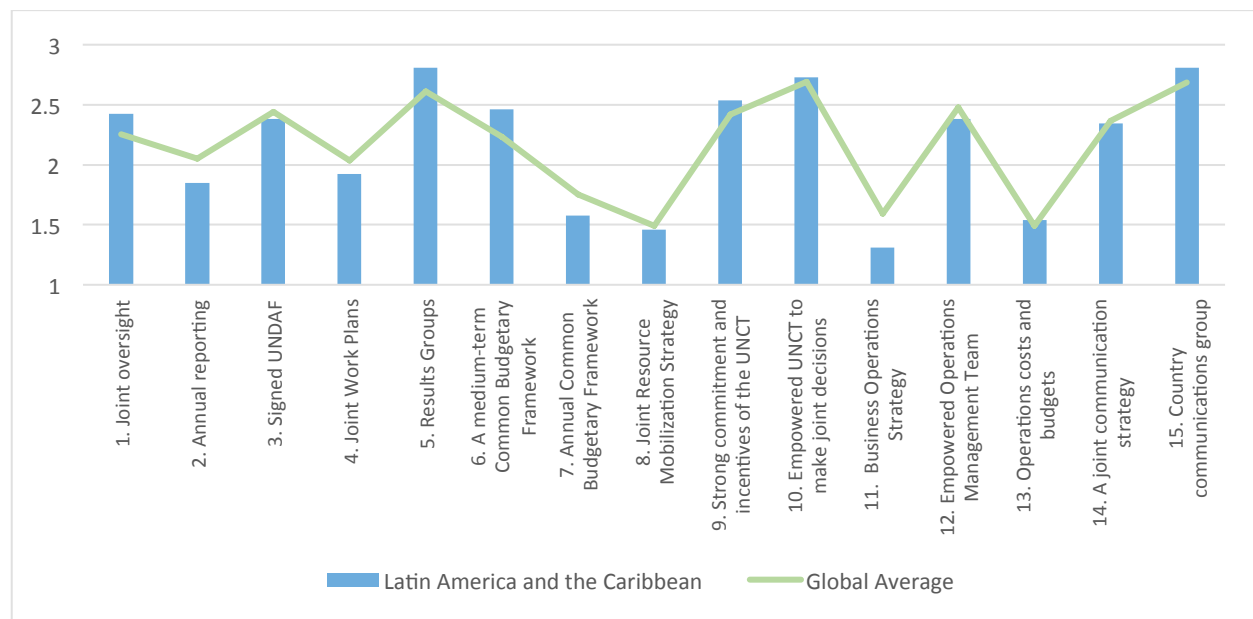
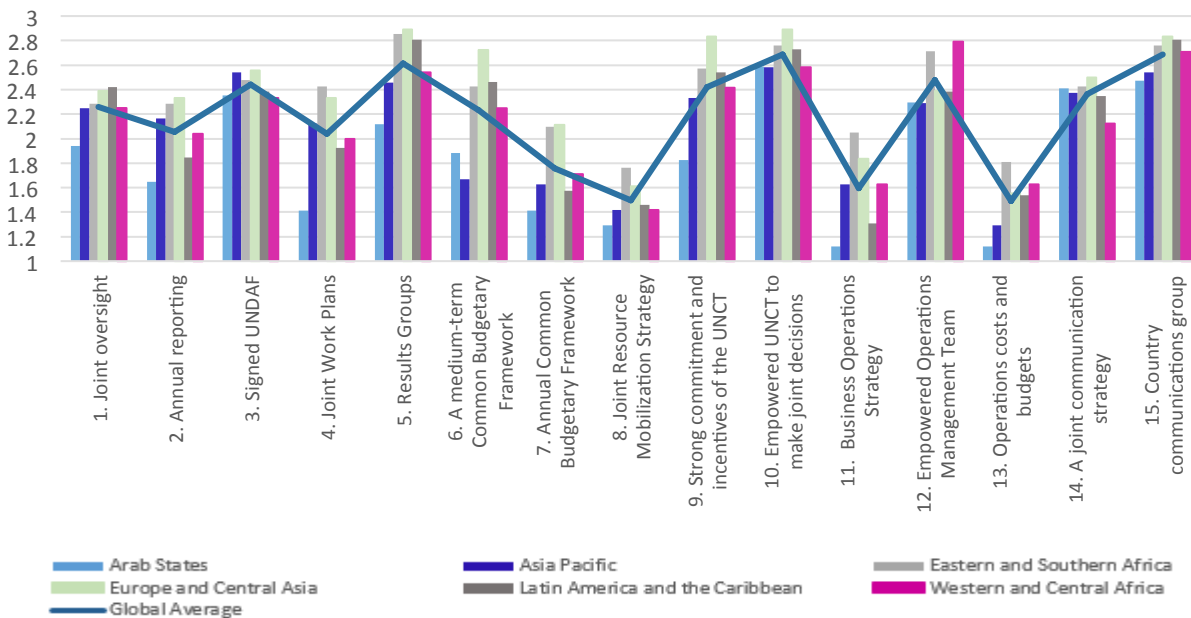


Figure 11 focuses on the pillars to give an overview of how far advanced the LAC region is compared to the global average. The data reveals that LAC is slightly higher than the global average in two pillars (Pillar I and V) and is only lagging behind marginally in Pillar VI “Communicating as One”.

The increasing advancing in the implementation of the SOPs in the LAC region can be attributed to the continuous support net provided by the UNDG LAC. The UNDG LAC Chair has sent a communication to the Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams summarizing the country status and encouraging the acceleration on the implementation, and requesting a roadmap. Also, the UNDG LAC provided the tools for the UNCTs to advance with the implementation. For example, the UNDG LAC updated the SOPs implementation checklist and provided relevant materials to support country teams (such as the Code of Conduct), while also identifying and sharing good practices.

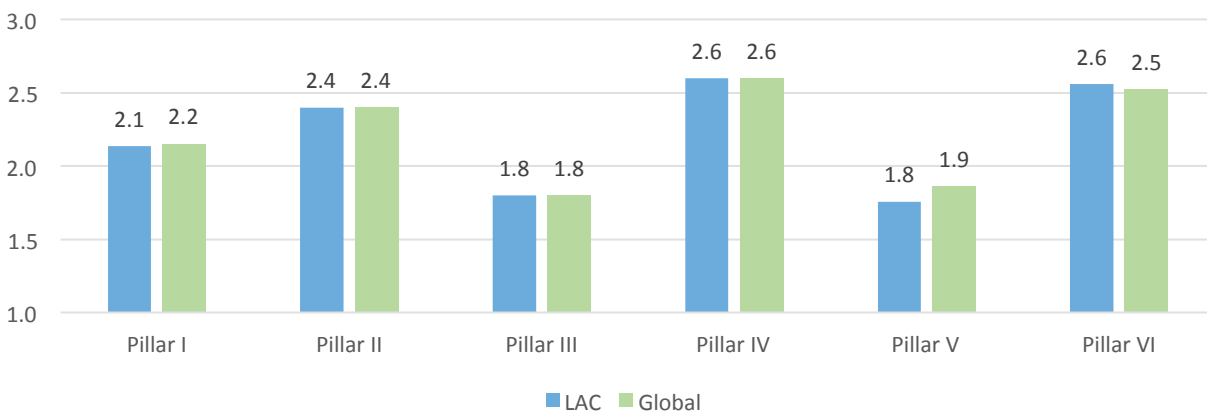
Figure 10: Average rate of implementation of the 15 SOP elements by region versus the global average (Data: IMS 2017)



Additionally, the UNDG LAC adopted a Country Liaison Mechanism to strengthen the support by the UNDG LAC to the RCs and UNCTs and increase impact at the country level, and upgraded its Programme Support Group (PSG) to broaden its expertise with the integration of the former Monitoring and Evaluation team, aiming to provide a coordinated support to UNCTs related to M&E and RBM, and to ultimately ensure that the UNDAFs in the region are adequately developed and implemented. In 2016, this includes providing quality assurance and technical support to the 2015 roll-out countries (Barbados and OECS, Belize, Brazil, Guyana, Jamaica, Honduras, Peru, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) and 2016 countries (Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Dominican Republic).

Likewise, to the end of harmonizing operations at the country level, the UNDG LAC established a Regional OMT in August 2016, which supported the UNCTs and their OMTs in formulating and implementing their BOS. The team is currently supporting closely the preparation of a BOS for Panama that also contains a regional component.

Figure 11: Average rate of implementation by SOP pillars: LAC versus global (Data: IMS 2017)



4.2. Cross-regional comparison – Qualitative Analysis

Europe and Central Asia was the only region so far that had conducted a detailed regional analysis of the SOP implementation which includes quantitative and qualitative data through the ECA Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Implementation Survey in 2015. Hence, the findings of the ECA exercise will be compared with the findings from this analysis in the LAC region in the following. This comparison will first focus on implementation status and then turn to identified trends and challenges.

Implementation status in the ECA vs. LAC region

As the analysis in the ECA region was conducted in 2015, it will be compared to LAC data from the checklist 2015 and the most recent data from the IMS for 2017. For the latter, it has to be taken into account that ECA countries probably also advanced in the implementation of the SOPs and that patterns might have changed.

When comparing the order of the SOP pillars in terms of implementation status in 2015, we can see a very similar pattern in the ECA and the LAC region. The only difference is that the ‘One Leader’ pillar was the best implemented pillar in the LAC region, whereas it was the third lowest one in the ECA region. Comparing this pattern to 2017, significant changes become visible in the LAC region. As of February 2017, ‘Communicating as one’ is the pillar that is implemented the best throughout the LAC region, with an even higher implementation rate than the ‘One Leader’ pillar now. Likewise, the ‘Overarching Pillar’ and ‘One Programme’, as well as ‘Operating as One’ and ‘Common Budgetary Framework’ have swapped places. A constant factor remains though, that ‘Operating as One’ and ‘Common Budgetary Framework’ are the most problematic SOP pillars.

Figure 12: Implementation of the SOPs Pillars in **ECA** region (2015) from the lowest to the highest level of implementation



Figure 13: Implementation of the SOPs Pillars in **LAC** region (2015) from the lowest to the highest level of implementation



Figure 14: Implementation of the SOPs Pillars in **LAC** region (2017) from the lowest to the highest level of implementation



Challenges/ bottlenecks in comparison

In this second part, challenges and bottlenecks identified in the ECA region will be compared to the ones found in the LAC region. Not all of the findings from the ECA analysis can be taken into account here, as due to differences in methodology (question items applied etc.), not all findings from the ECA analysis could be tested with the LAC SOP Checklist.

Finding ECA analysis: Countries that formally adopted the DaO approach are more advanced with the SOP implementation than countries with no formal DaO application

This finding can be clearly rejected for the LAC region. As presented under 1.1, overall there is no significant difference in terms of SOP implementation status of Dao vs Non-Dao countries. Whereas the six DaO-countries (El Salvador, Guyana, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela) show an overall average implementation rate of 2.1, Non-DaO countries even have a slightly higher average implementation rate of 2.2.

Finding ECA analysis: There is a lack of buy-in and commitment on a number of individual Heads of Agencies in different countries and their primary concentration on agency(ies)'s specific mandates, which leads to bringing the overall status of implementation of the SOP pillar(s) to a lower level.

This finding can be clearly backed by the data from the LAC region. As presented in chapter 2, this challenge was mentioned by 9 countries in the region and can thus be considered as the primary bottleneck for faster SOP implementation in the region. Whereas strong messages, orientation and instructions were sent by UNDP HQ to the Resident Coordinators, this is not the case for the leadership of many other Agencies which impacts implementation in the countries as the level of ownership and priority given to SOPs is determined by directives from the Agency HQs. Several UNCTs stressed the importance of advancements on the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Finding ECA analysis: There is a perception of a bureaucratic character of a number of SOP requirements.

Like for the first finding, there is no evidence in the LAC region that UNCTs consider the SOP as particularly bureaucratic. Having said that, UNCTs do stress the capacity required to implement the SOPs and three countries in the region explicitly stated that they are lacking sufficient capacity to drive SOP implementation forward. The lacking commitment to the Cost Sharing Agreement is clearly pointed out as a factor leading to a systematic decrease of HR capacity in the RC offices while responsibilities remain constant or even increase.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

SOP implementation in the LAC region is progressing but the job is far from being done. As UNDOCO's 2015 Progress Report 'Building Blocks Towards 2030' evidenced, this conclusion is valid for other global regions, too. More effort from all stakeholders involved is necessary to ensure that full implementation, and consequently the objective of a more integrated and coherent UN Development System, will be achieved. In the following, conclusions and recommendations based on the presented findings are given, divided into the three major stakeholders groups with capacities to support RCOs/ UNCTs to implement the SOPs: UNDG Agencies, UNDG Secretariats and national governments.

1. UNDG Agencies at HQ level: the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters

To ensure that the SOPs have demonstrable impact on efficiency, coherence and development effectiveness at the country level, the UNDG in close collaboration with HLCM agreed to implement important supporting measures at the headquarters level, outlined in the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters. Each Executive Head committed to actively promote implementation through individual agency follow-up and collective monitoring. In 2016, the UNDG adopted a follow-up "Headquarters Plan of Action 2.0" to help meet the demands of the 2030 Agenda. From the several challenges/ bottlenecks identified in the two previous chapters, some directly refer to the Headquarters of Agencies, Funds and Programmes and thus to the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters 2.0. The table below summarizes these challenges/ bottlenecks and their reference to action points in the UNDG SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters 2.0:

Challenge/ Bottleneck identified	Action points in UNDG 2016/17 SOPs Plan of Action for Headquarters 2.0
Lack of clear instructions and emphasis from the headquarters of the Agencies, Funds and Programmes	Action Point 5: Ensure reporting obligations of agency representatives (as UNCT members) to the RC on resource mobilization and programme implementation of UNDAF/One Programme elements led by the agency.
	Action Point 6: The Resident Coordinator provides an assessment of performance for UNCT members' contributions to joint UNCT results as formal input to each agencies' performance appraisal process.
	Action Point 7: Include the UNCT results in agency performance-appraisal systems (already agreed by the UNDG and needs re-emphasis via the Standard Operating Procedures).
Non-harmonized rules and procedures of the agencies which hinder integration, especially in the field of procurement, finance and administrative processes.	Action Point 9: Develop and agree standardized common services solutions based on field practice to support the scale up of common service design and implementation at the country level at low transaction cost and transport arrangements, for UN Country Teams.
	Action Point 10: Agree on common insurance options, where it is cost-effective, for light vehicle fleets at the country level.
	Action Point 11: Guided by a risk-assessment of the joint undertaking to be audited, and taking into account the integration level of activities, the internal audit services of the UN organizations participating in the joint undertaking may conduct a joint internal audit, carried out on behalf of all participating organizations, or

	coordinate their respective internal audits. This will be carried out according to a joint audit framework and protocols agreed among internal audit services. The joint undertaking selected for an audit shall cover the costs of the joint internal audit from its budget, and include a budgetary provision from the onset to cover these costs.
	Action Point 15: Standardize lease and rental agreements, including the establishment of lease agreements exceeding a duration of five years on a case-by- case basis (especially in the case of construction).
	Action Point 16: Operationalize Private Public Partnerships strategy as a funding mechanism to facilitate new common premises/UN House Projects.
	Action Point 18: Finalize a standardized approach to cost-recovery for services provided between UN Missions and UN Country Teams, taking due account of the delivery of mandate-related activities by UN Country Team members.
	Action Point 20: Staff members that are leading Operations Management teams/ Business Operations Strategies/Results Groups have appropriate support and recognition within their agencies and incorporate that element of their mandate into both their job descriptions and their regular performance reviews.
Decreasing international funds available to Middle-Income Countries	Action Point 22: Strengthen the UNDS inter-agency work around financing instruments with a focus on partnership, innovation and knowledge-management, to enhance the system's capacity to develop smart and strategic financing instruments and strategies in the context of the 2030 agenda.
	Action Point 25: Enhance UN inter-agency pooled financing instruments to support national implementation of the SDGs, targeting a broad base of contributors and partners.

Beyond that, several findings and recommendations identified in UNDOCO's 2015 Progress Report on the SOPs 'Building Blocks Towards 2030' are worth to be stressed again:

- Imperative of *“enhanced vertical and horizontal accountability across all levels, including HQ and regional levels. One example is through recognizing the role of the Regional UNDG in positioning a coherent UNDAF/One Programme in each country.”*⁹
- *“In the area of joint funding, a knowledge-sharing platform on innovative financing across the UNDS is required to enhance the system's capacity to develop smart financing strategies in the context of the 2030 Agenda.”*¹⁰
- *“Accelerated implementation of SOPs-related reform actions requires changes at HQ level. These changes go beyond agency alignment to UNDG policies and guidance (some of which are part of the HQ Plan of Action 2.0) and require adjustments in agency procedures/rules and regulations.*

⁹ See UNDOCO Building Blocks Towards 2030, p. 20.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

Harmonization together with ‘mutual recognition’ of best policies and practices helps in this regard.”¹¹

- *“Agency learning initiatives for staff development should include training on the SOPs and their relevance in the context of the 2030 Agenda. More learning and training can be done together as it will ensure common understanding of working together and promote UN staff cohesion.”¹²*

2. UNDG LAC and UNDOCO

The UNDG LAC accelerated the implementation of the SOPs in 2015 with the roll out of a comprehensive strategy consisting of communications, mapping and analysis, training, and policy advice for UNCTs. The presented data proves that this strategy paid out. 81% of the countries in the region improved their overall SOP implementation rate between 2015 and 2017. Among all countries, the overall regional average of implementation rose from 1.7 at the first data collection through the IMS in 2015 to 2.2 in February 2017. Going forward, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Mapping and Analysis:** The Checklist tool used in the LAC region in 2015 and 2016 proved to be useful to complement IMS data and better understand the narrative of implementation. The more detailed, qualitative information allow to tailor support of the UNDG LAC accordingly. In the future, it should be considered to align the Checklist tool with other global regions to facilitate cross-regional analyses of challenges and bottlenecks.
- **Training:** Training efforts in the region are ongoing and should be intensified in certain areas. First and foremost, this is the case for the ‘Operating as One’ pillar and the Business Operations Strategy. A schedule with trainings for most countries in the region is set up and will be executed assertively.
- **Policy advice:** The findings from this report should be fed into the work plan of the Programme Support Group as the operational arm of the UNDG LAC. The Quality Support and Assurance (QSA) function through the Programme Support Group is critical to consistently ensure high quality UNDAFs. The contribution of agency staff at the regional level in strengthening QSA actions should be formally recognized in agency performance evaluations.

Furthermore, a suggestion made by UNDOCO itself might be effective to strengthen the incentive scheme for collaboration: *“Pooled funding mechanisms that underpin the UNDAFs and joint work plans are helpful in facilitating joint planning, implementation and reporting. Preferential access to global pooled funding (e.g. through DRT-F, SDG Funds, etc.) could be granted to formal ‘Delivering as One’ countries, as an incentive to organizing and behaving in more collaborative ways.”¹³*

3. National Governments

The findings of the report show that increased government ownership for Delivering as One and Standard Operating Procedures is crucial. 7 countries in the region mentioned missing government support as a key challenge to faster SOP implementation. The initiation of the 2030 Agenda offers a formidable window of opportunity. It has to be made clear to national governments, that the UN system is in a unique position to support the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda. However, to provide coherent and unified support to the implementation of the cross-sectional and integrated 2030 Agenda,

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 23.

¹² Ibidem.

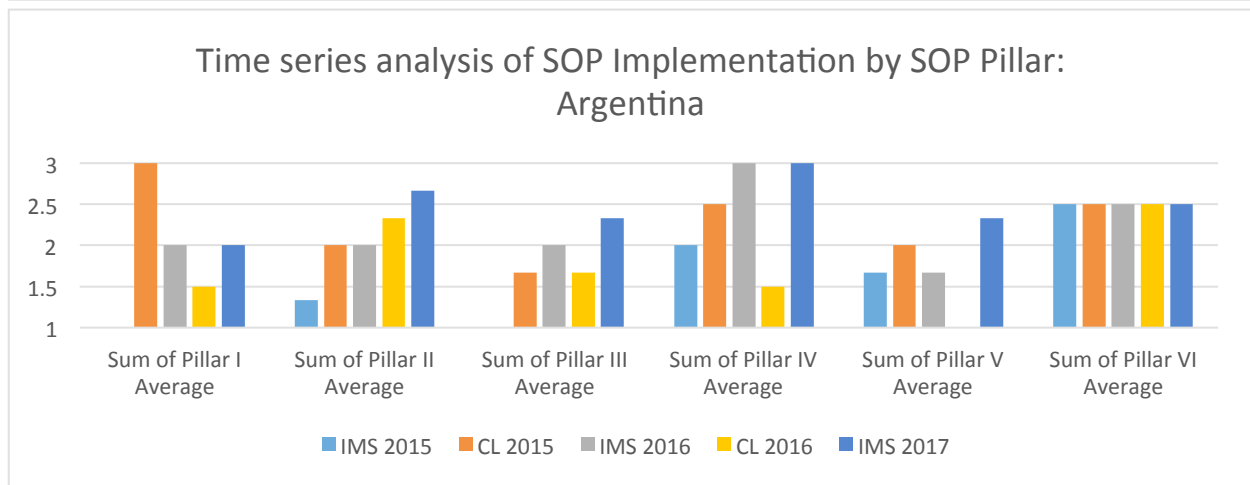
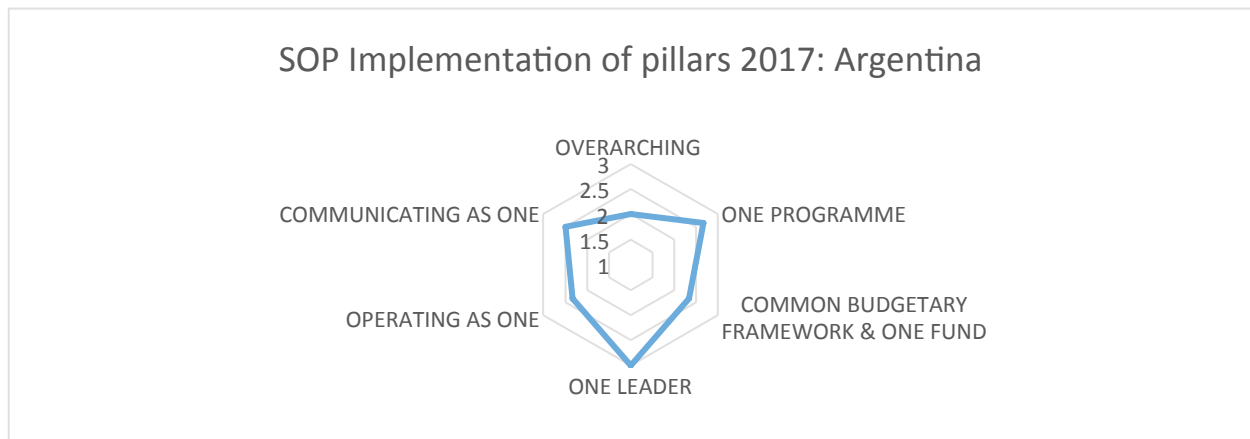
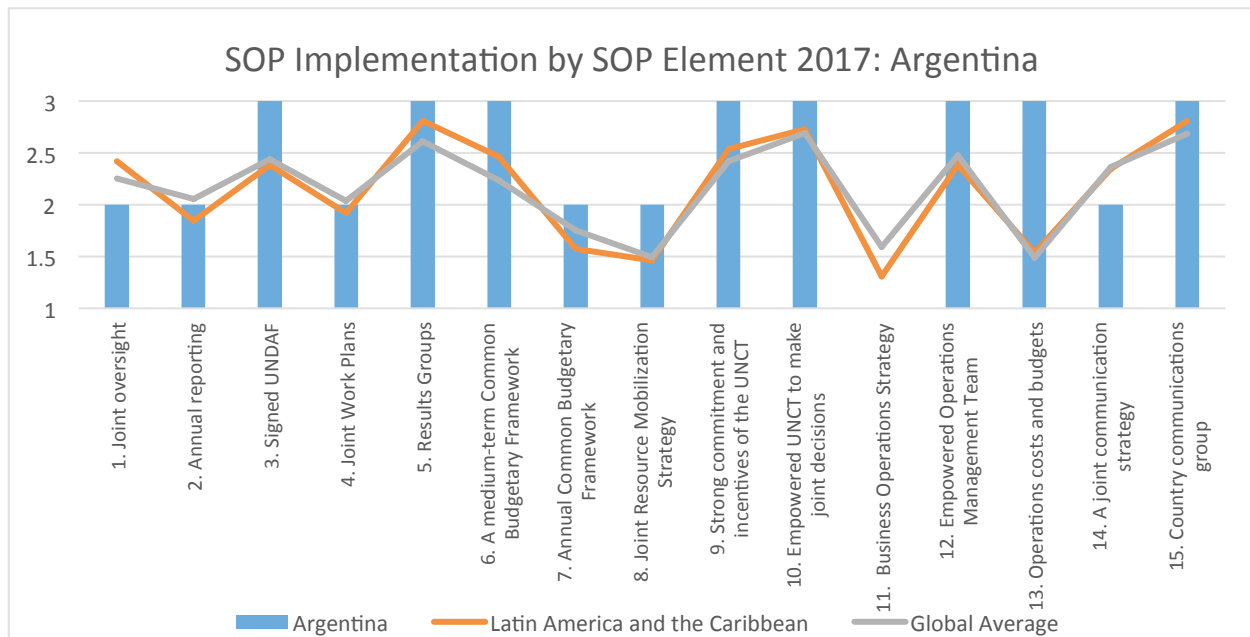
¹³ Ibidem, p. 25.

coherent and integrated internal operations are key. Therefore, the Standard Operating Procedures should have a prominent place in the SDG advocacy activities of UNCTs towards national governments.

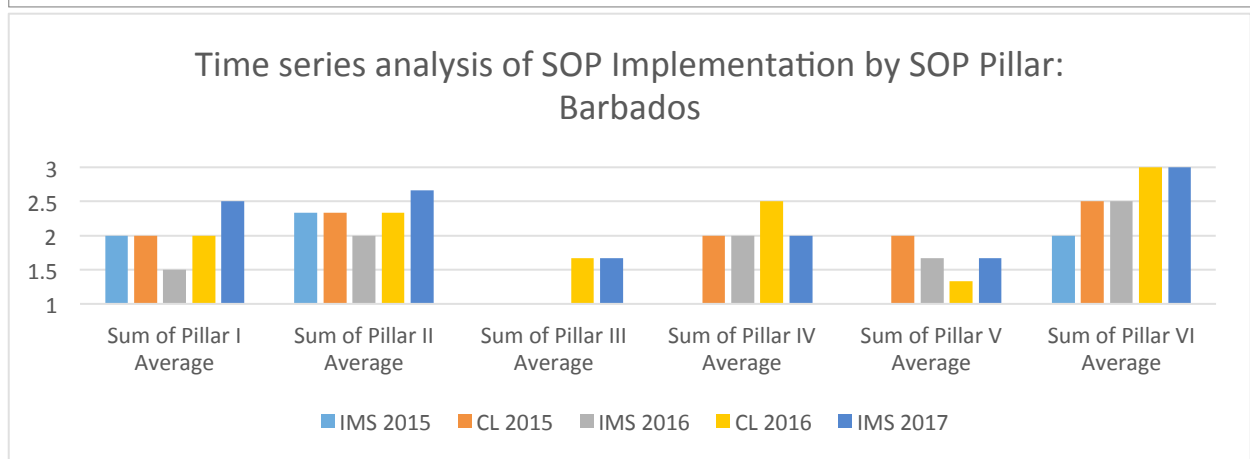
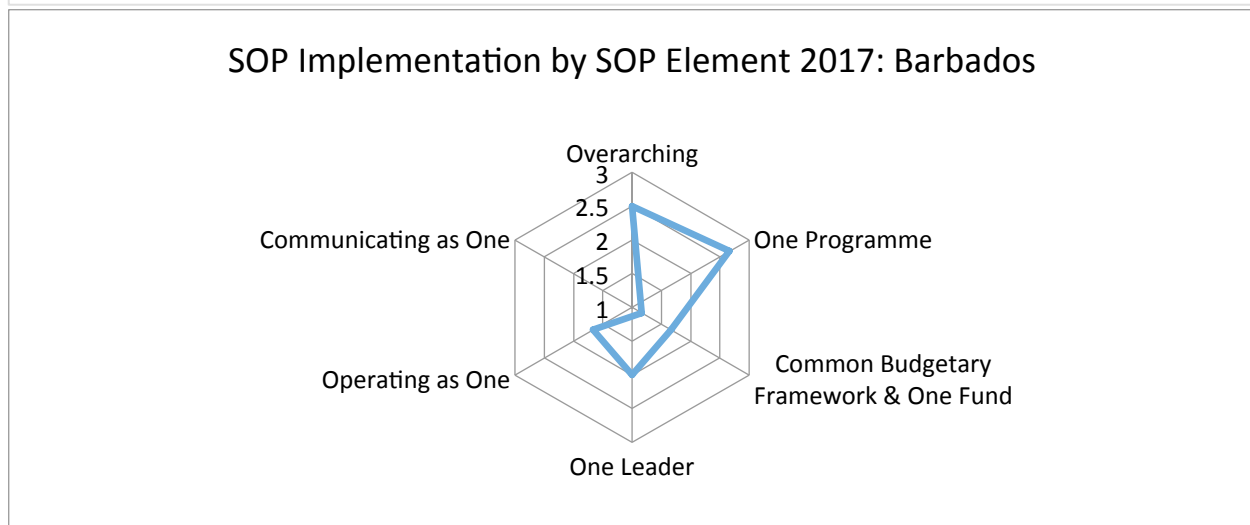
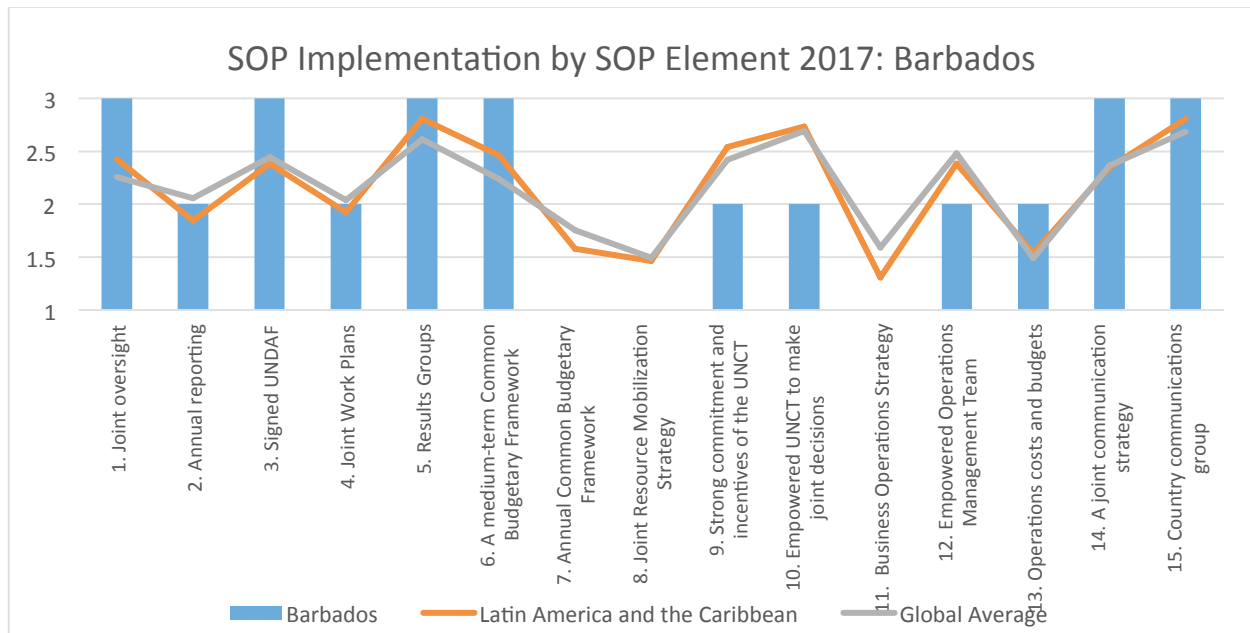
Another starting point at the Member States level are the reporting duties that UN Agencies are subject to. Member States could promote and support simplification of planning and reporting requirements at UN agency and system wide levels to minimize and avoid duplication of procedures, and ensure that duplication of planning and reporting requirements are avoided.

Annex

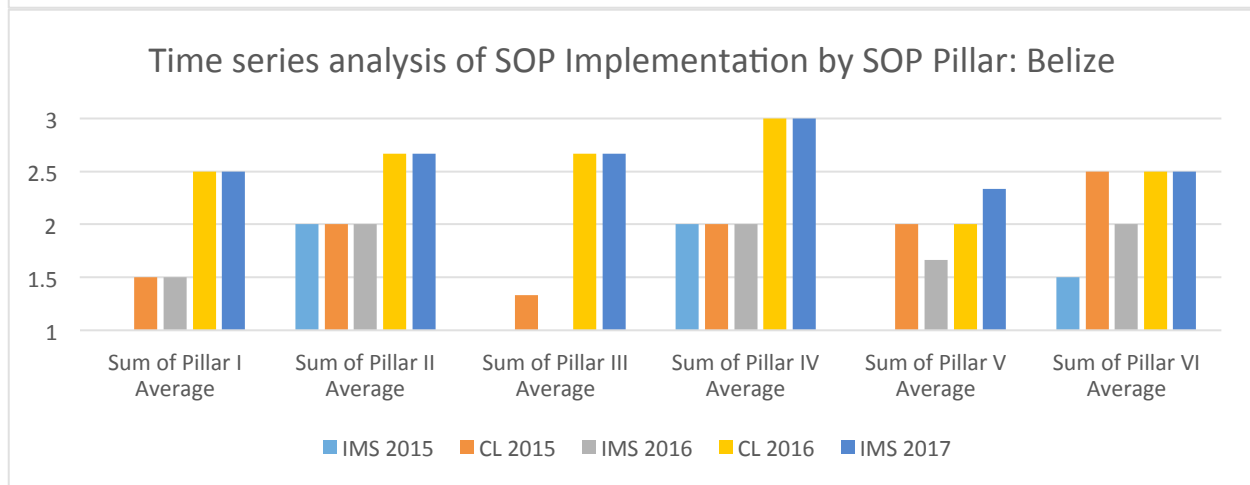
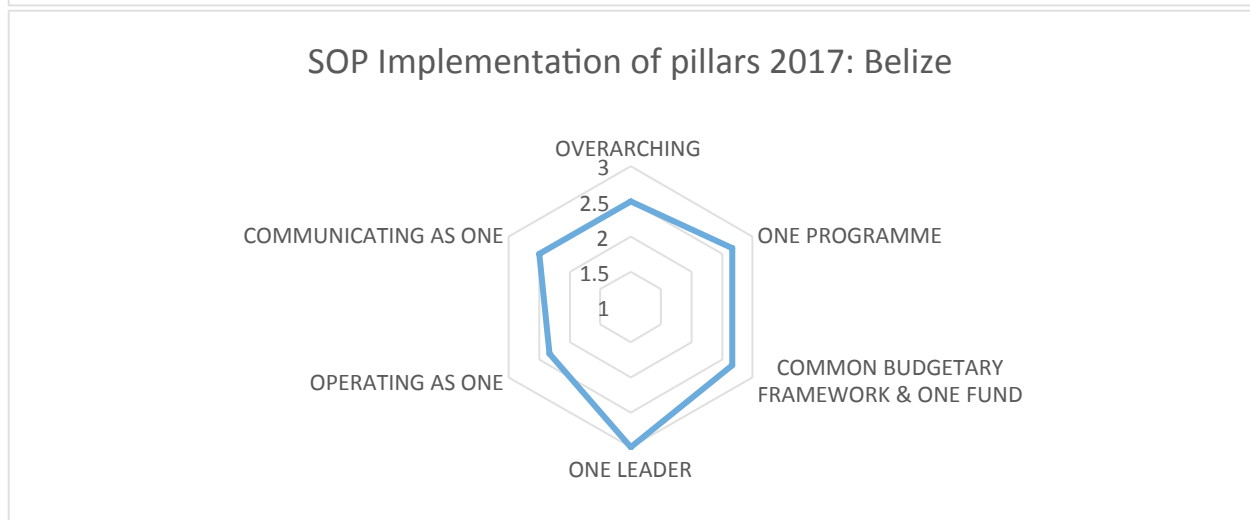
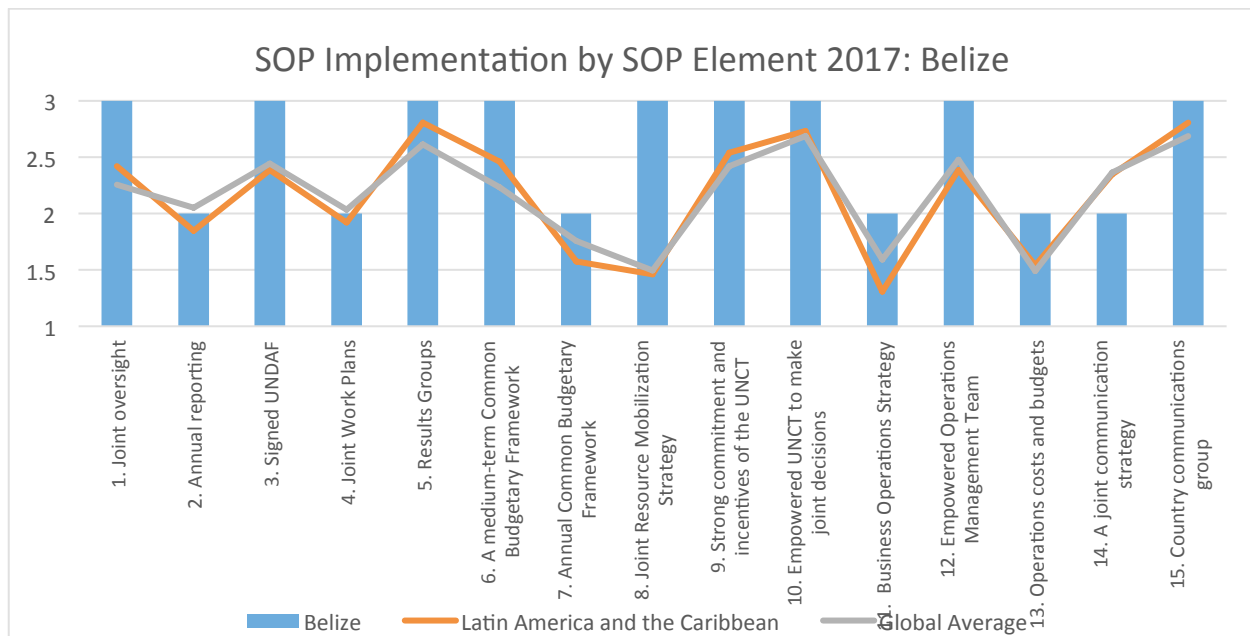
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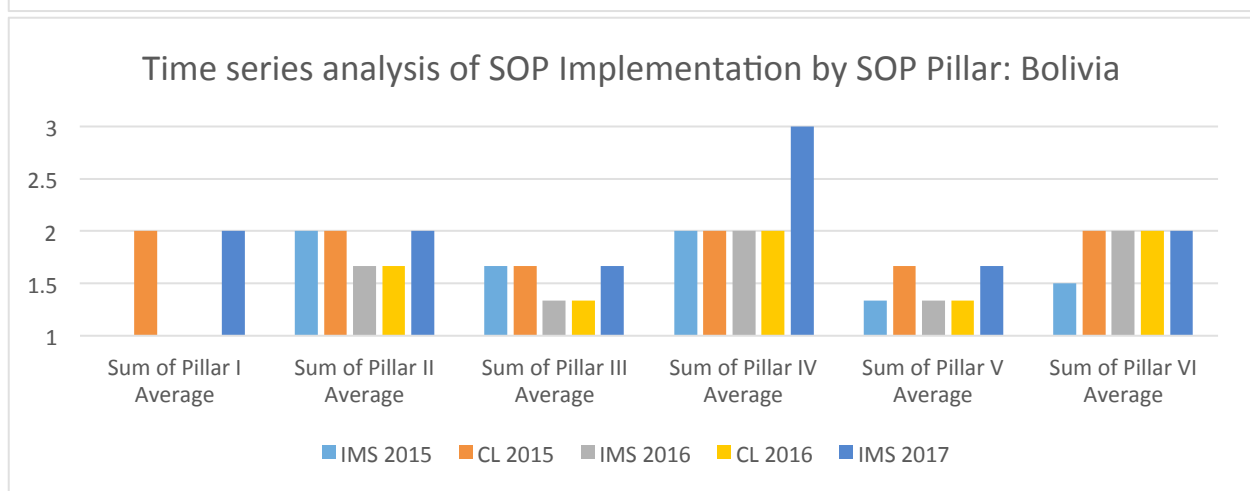
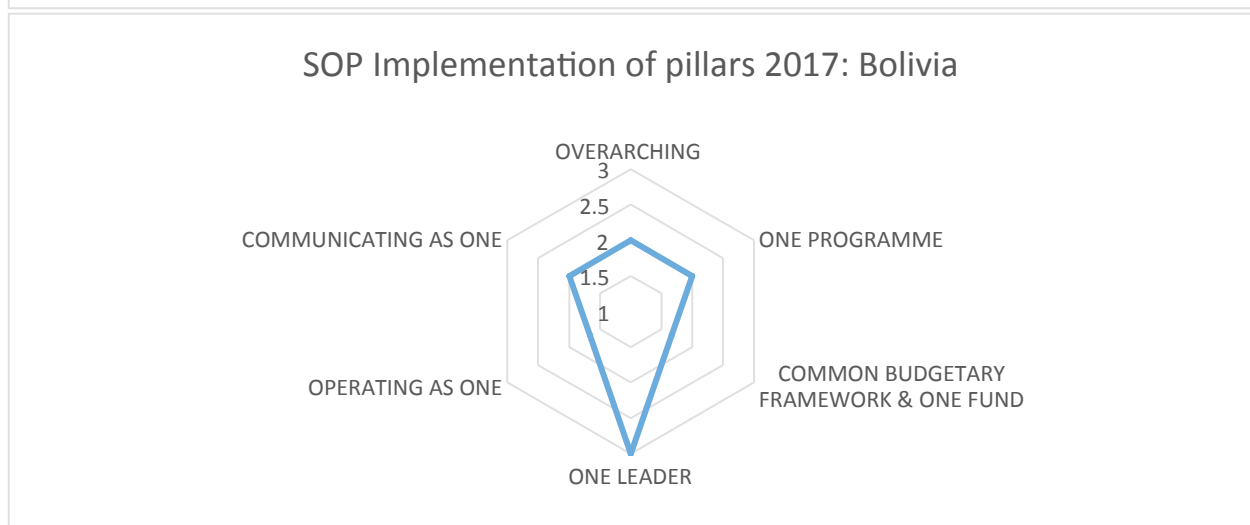
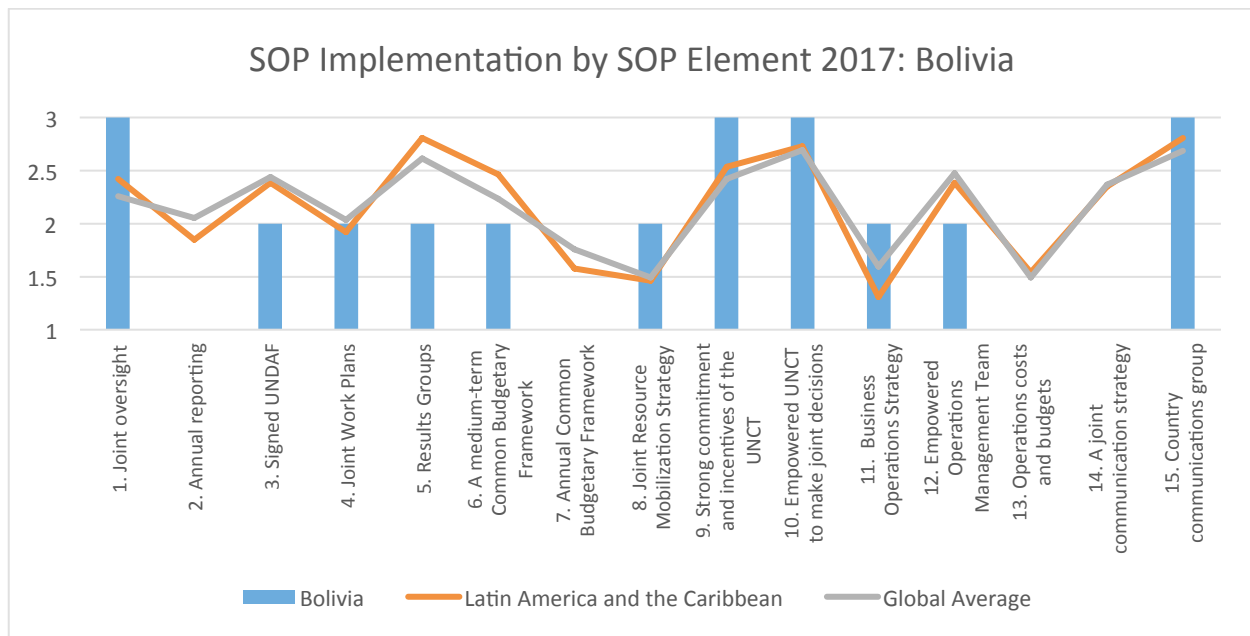
Barbados and the OECS



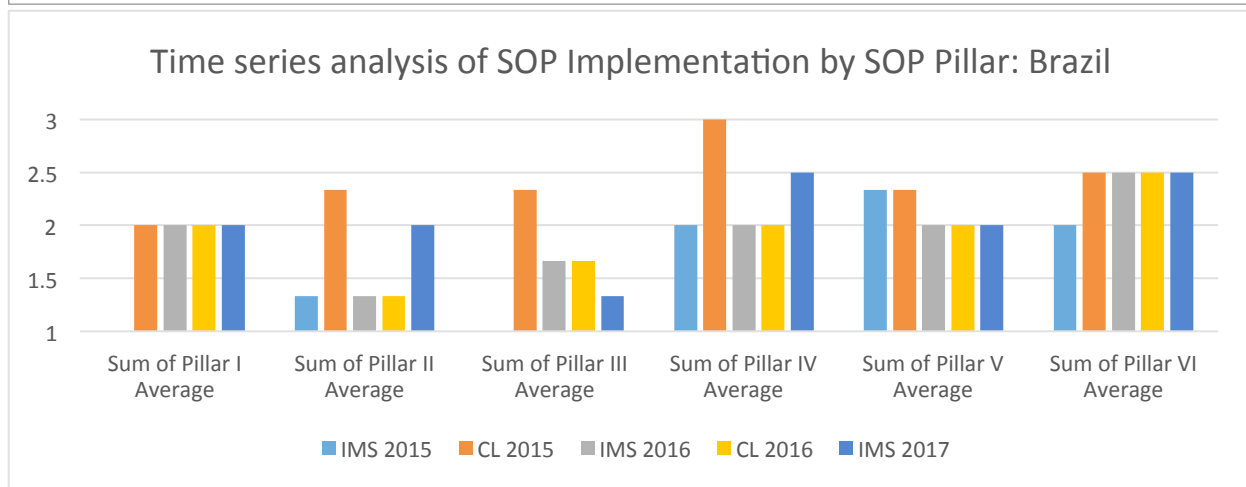
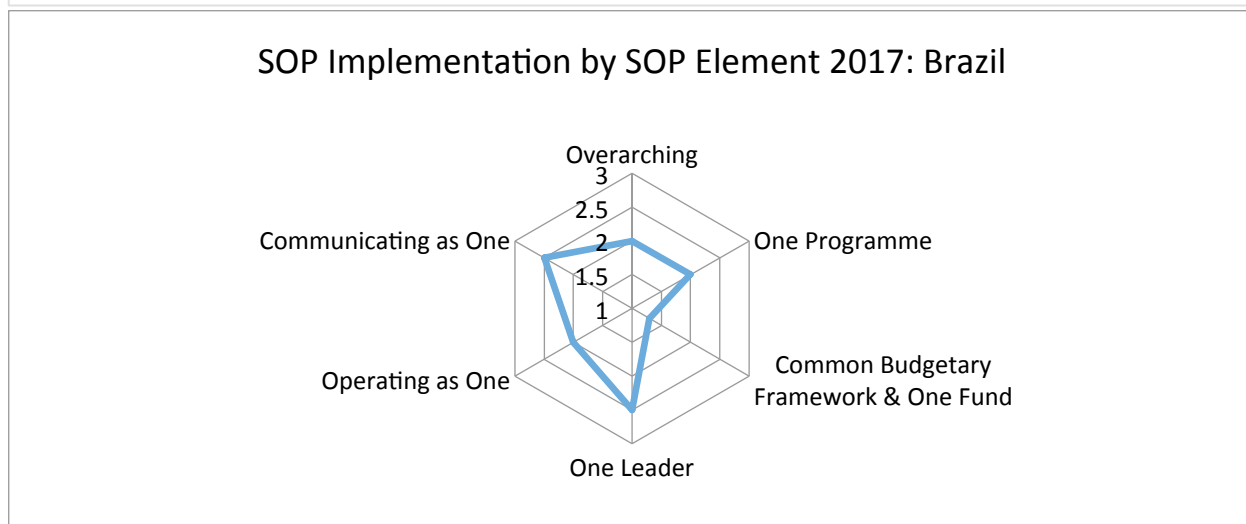
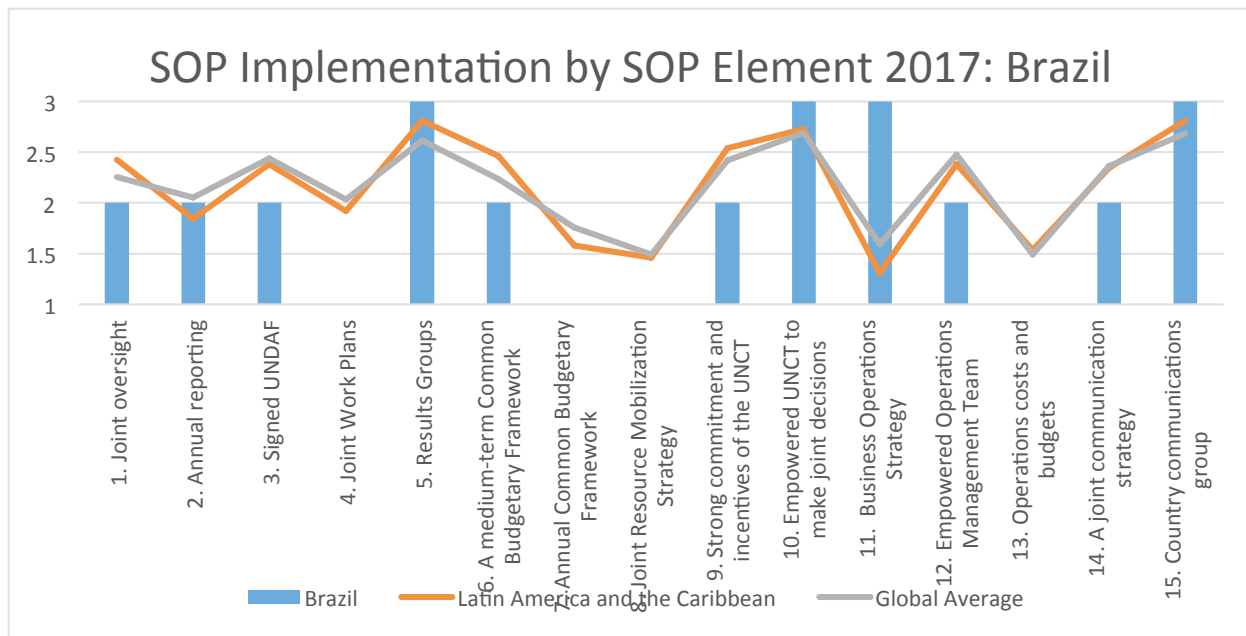
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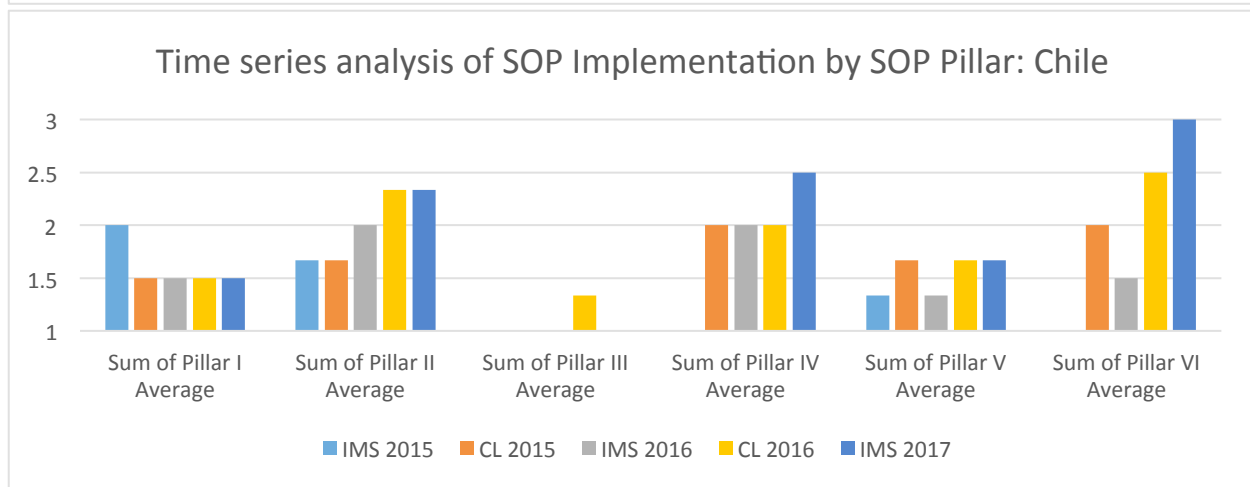
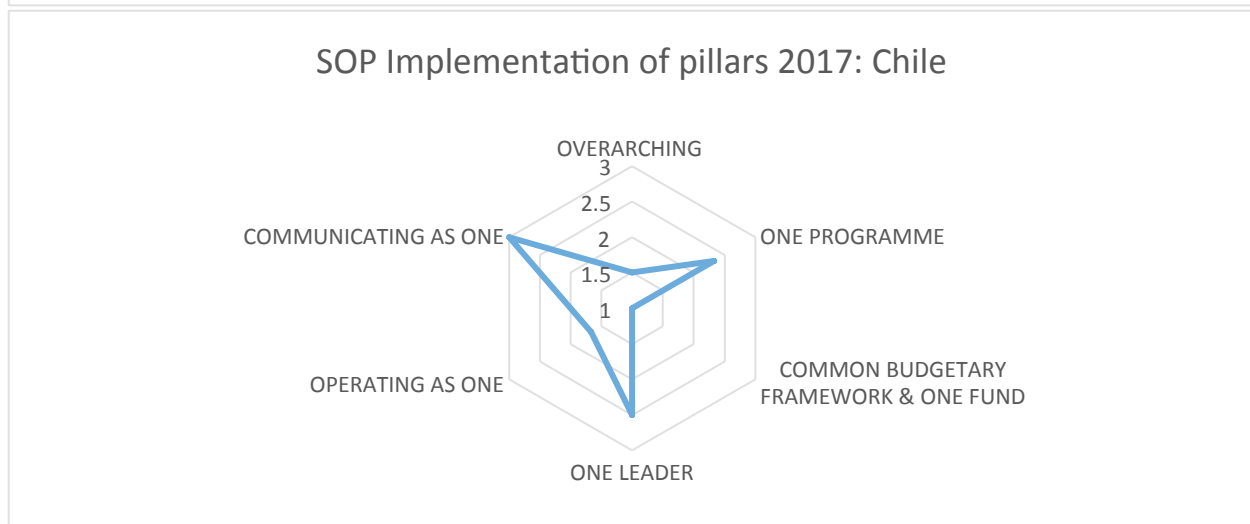
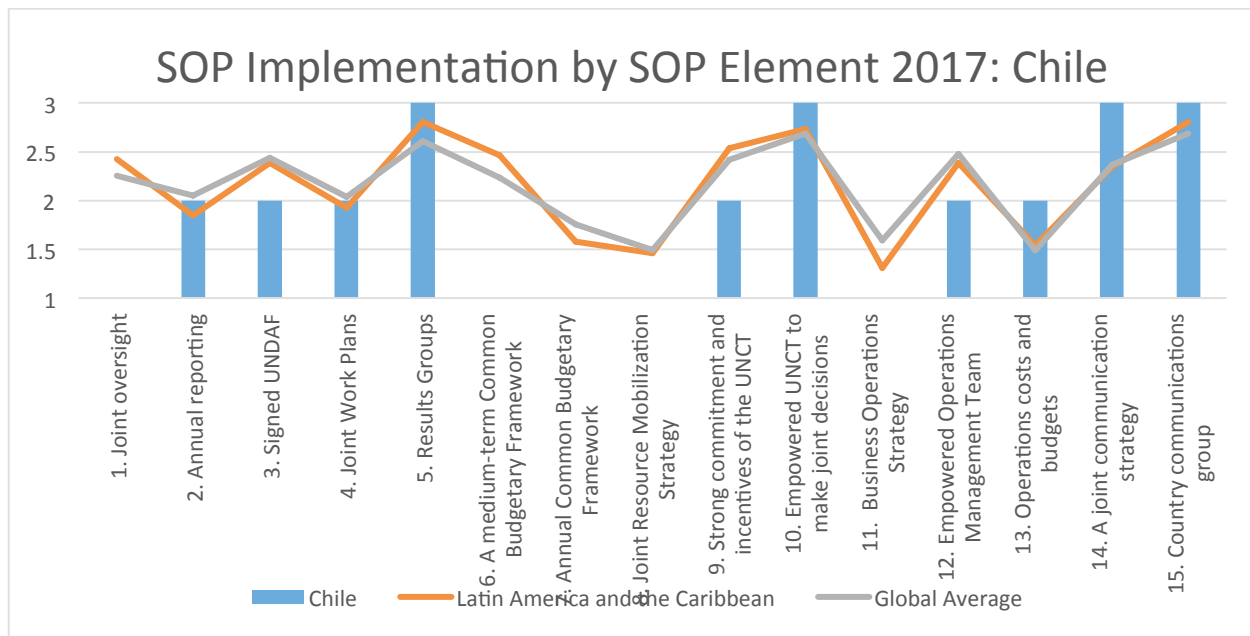
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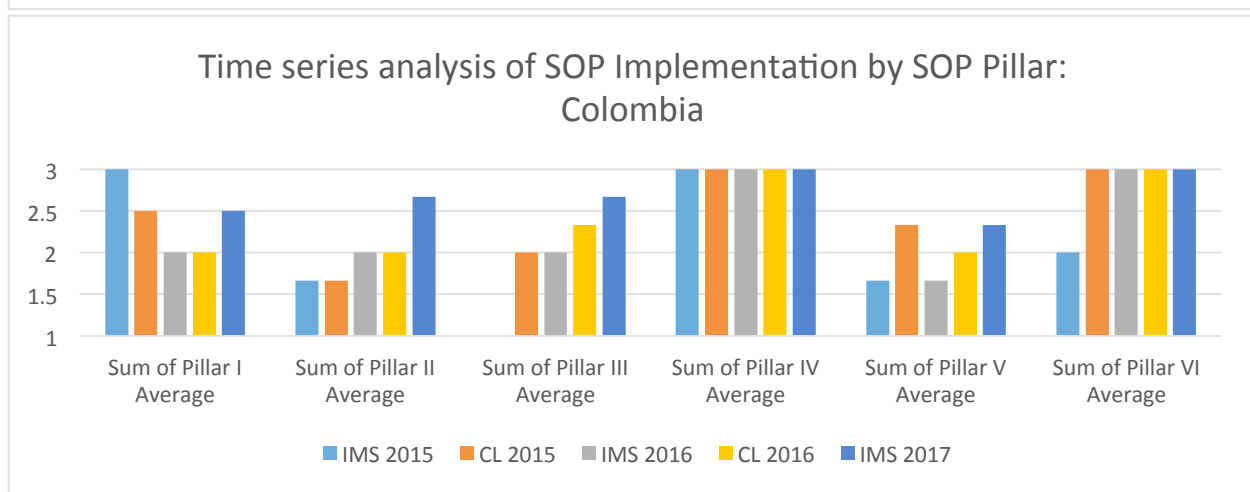
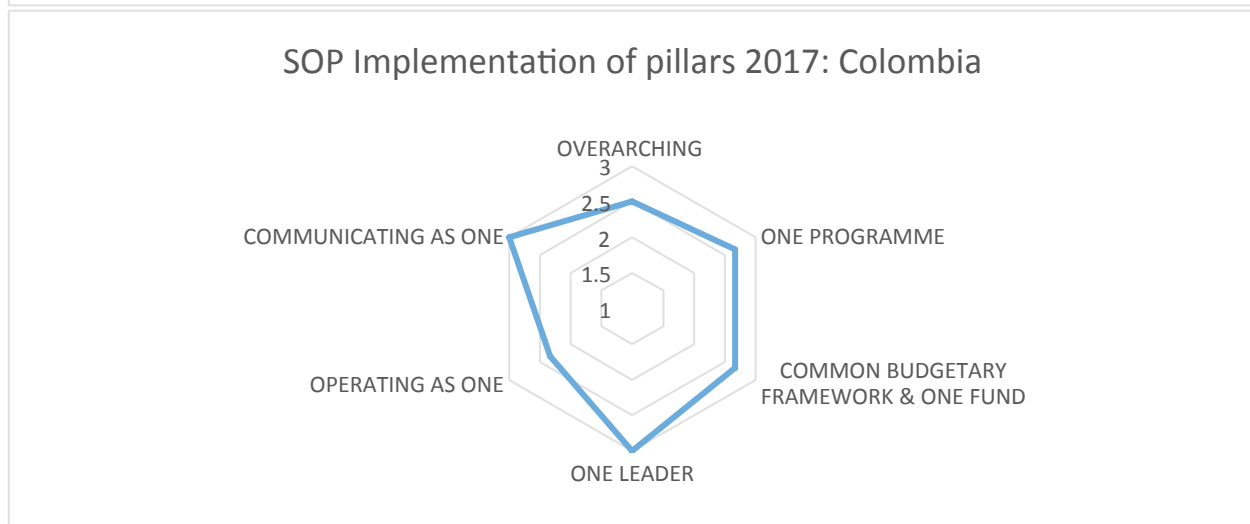
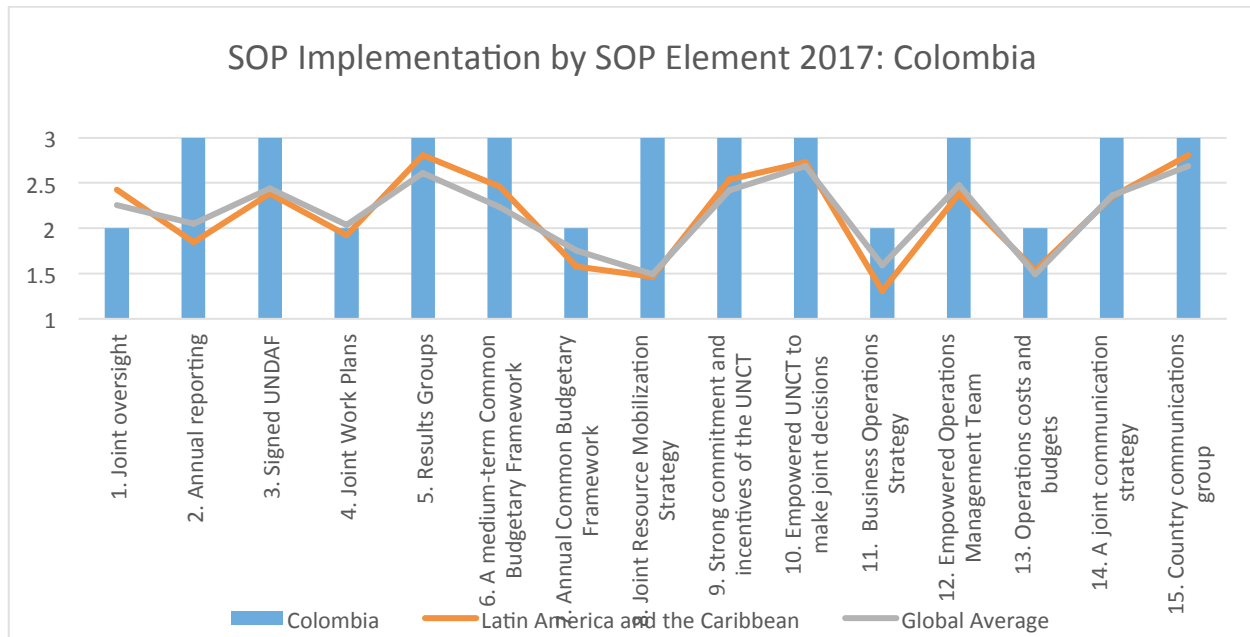
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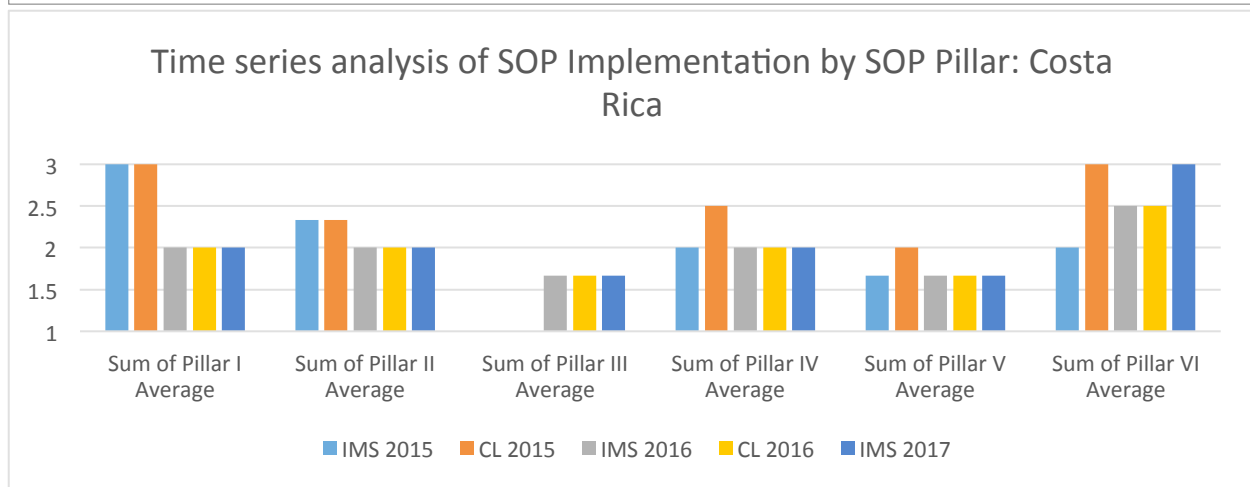
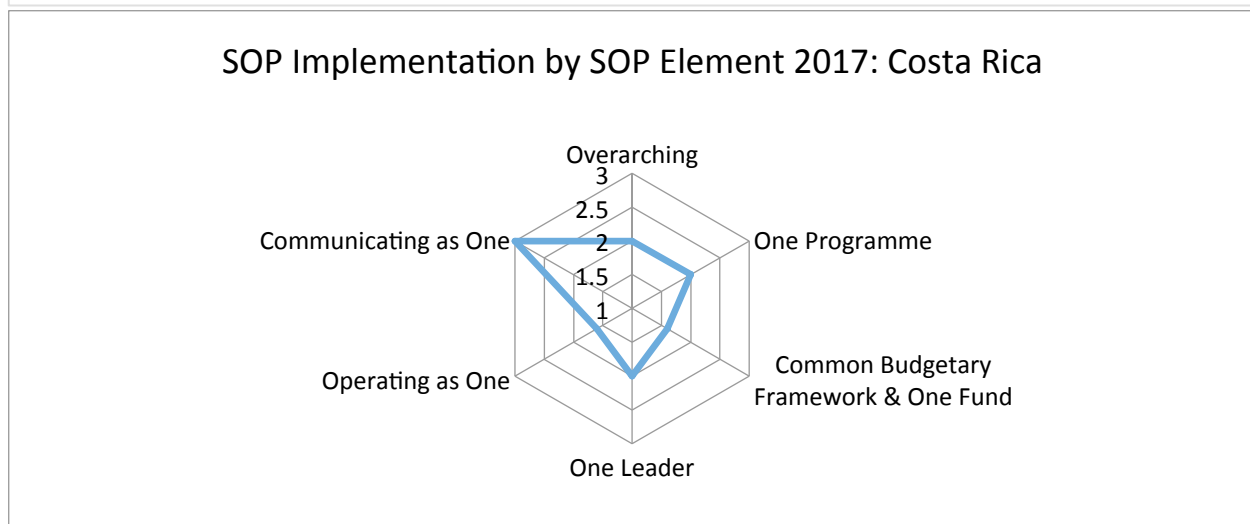
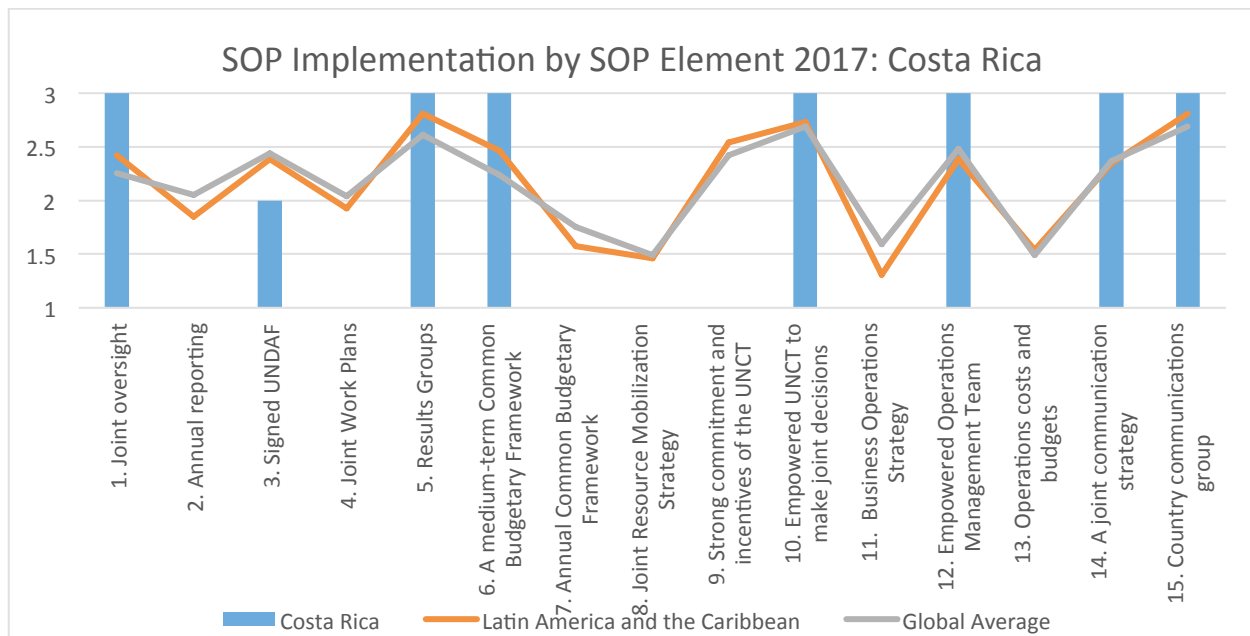
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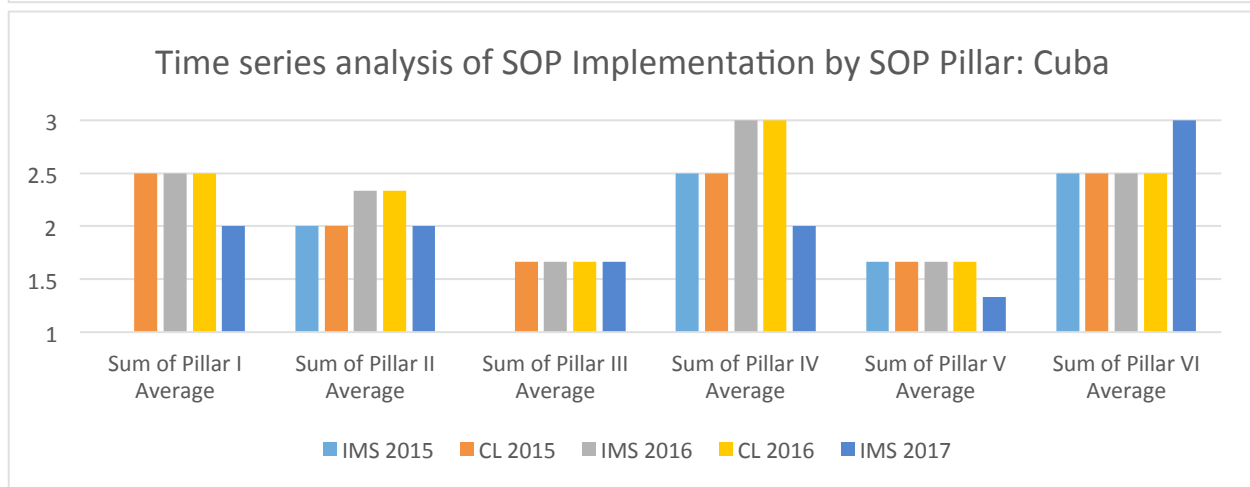
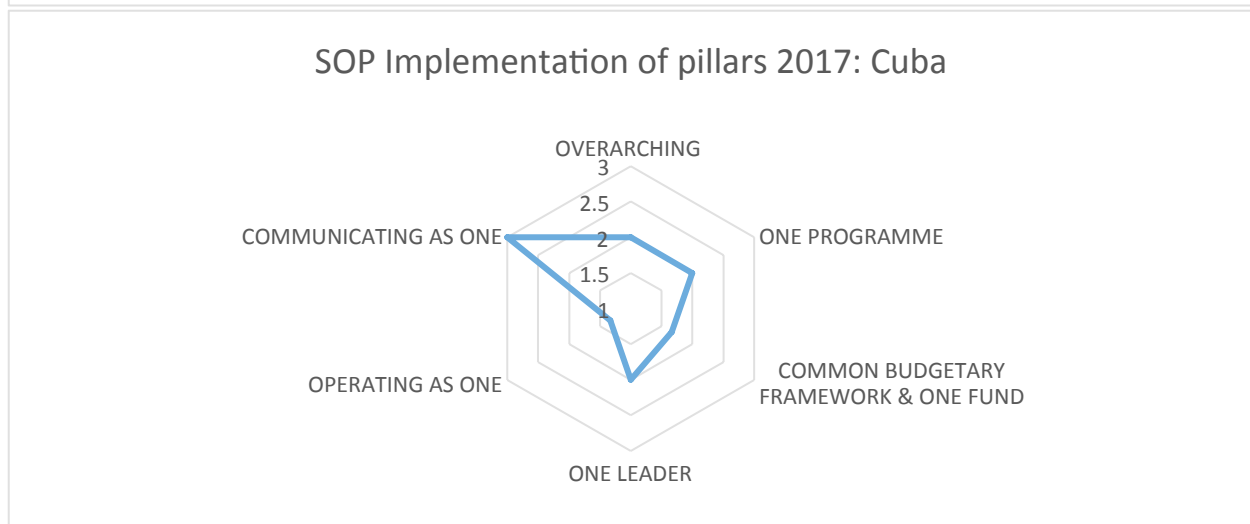
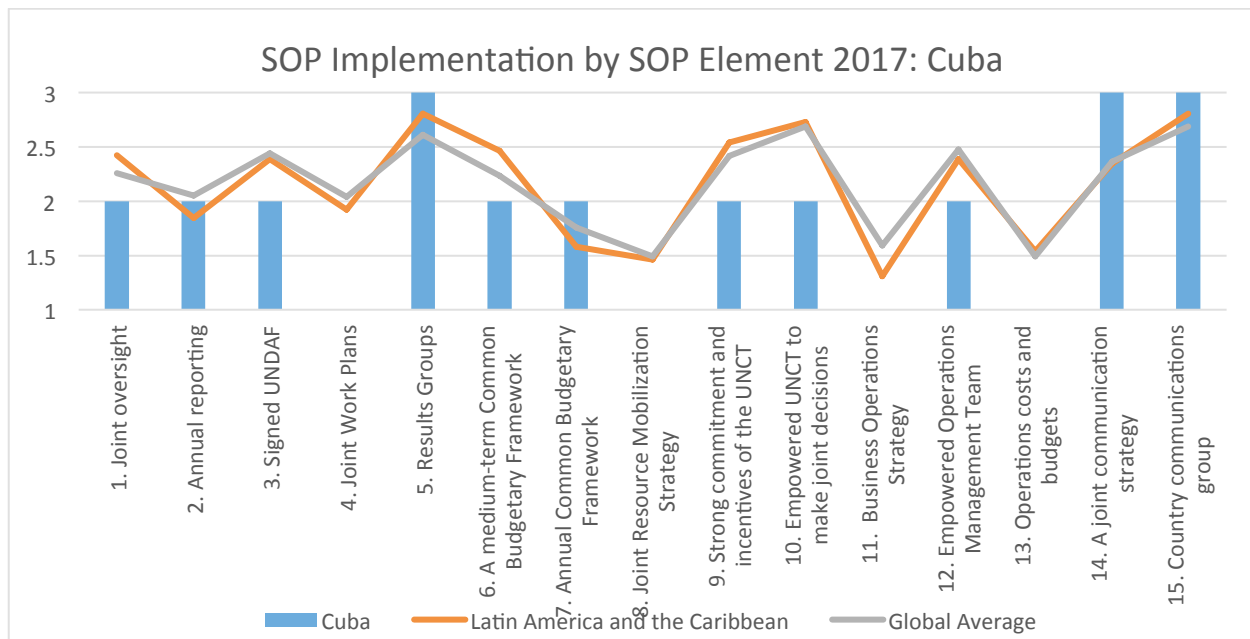
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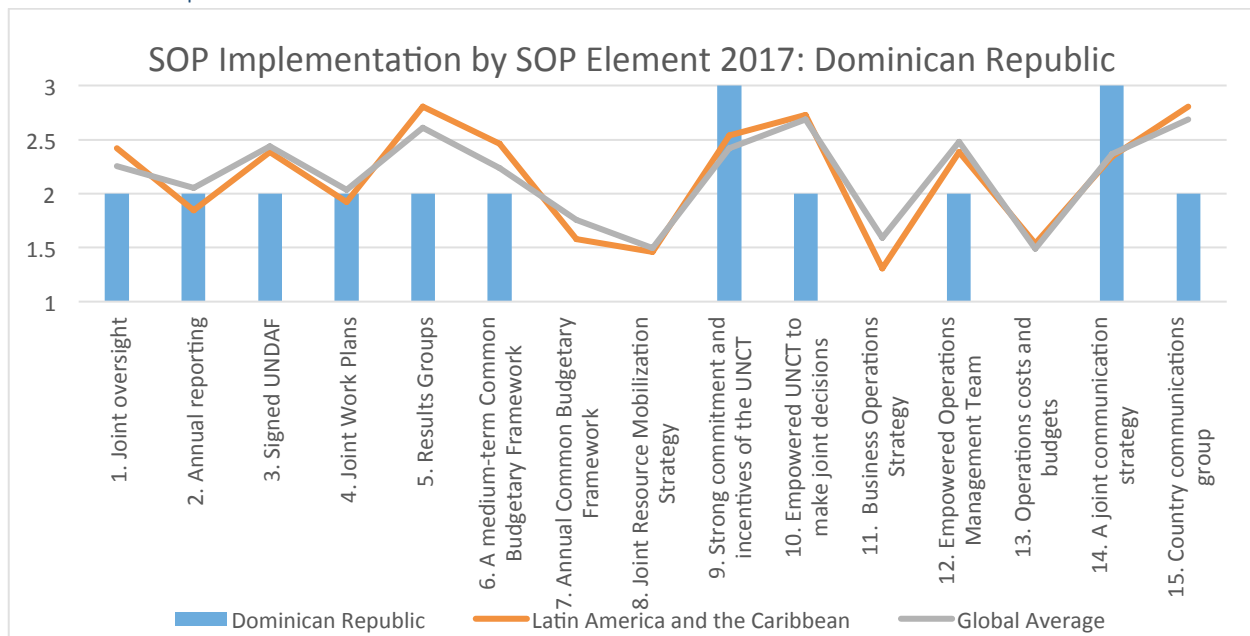
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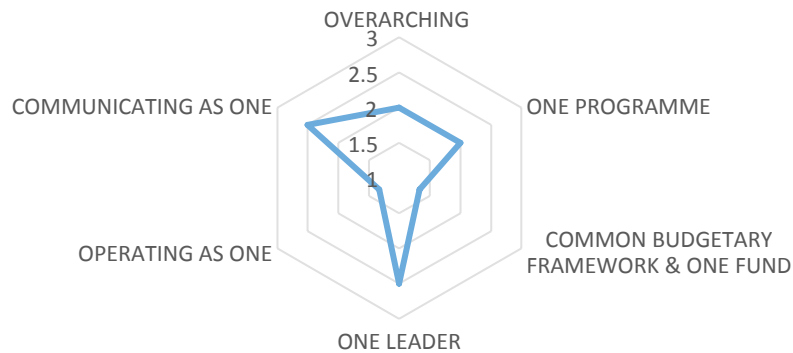
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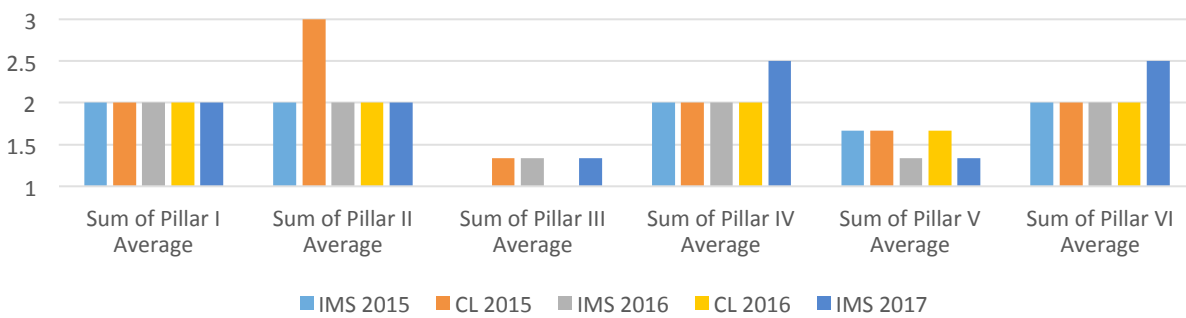
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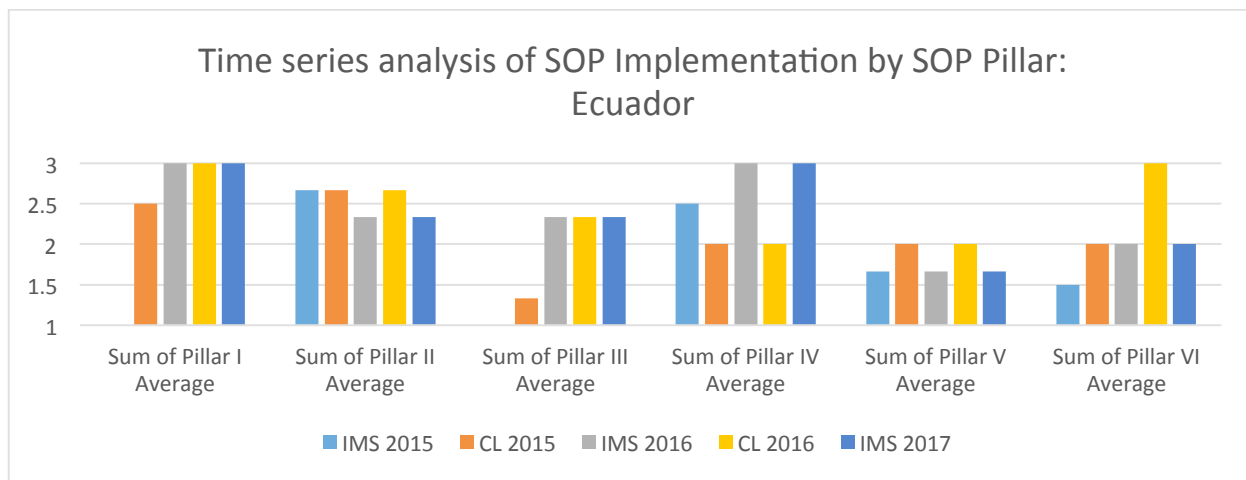
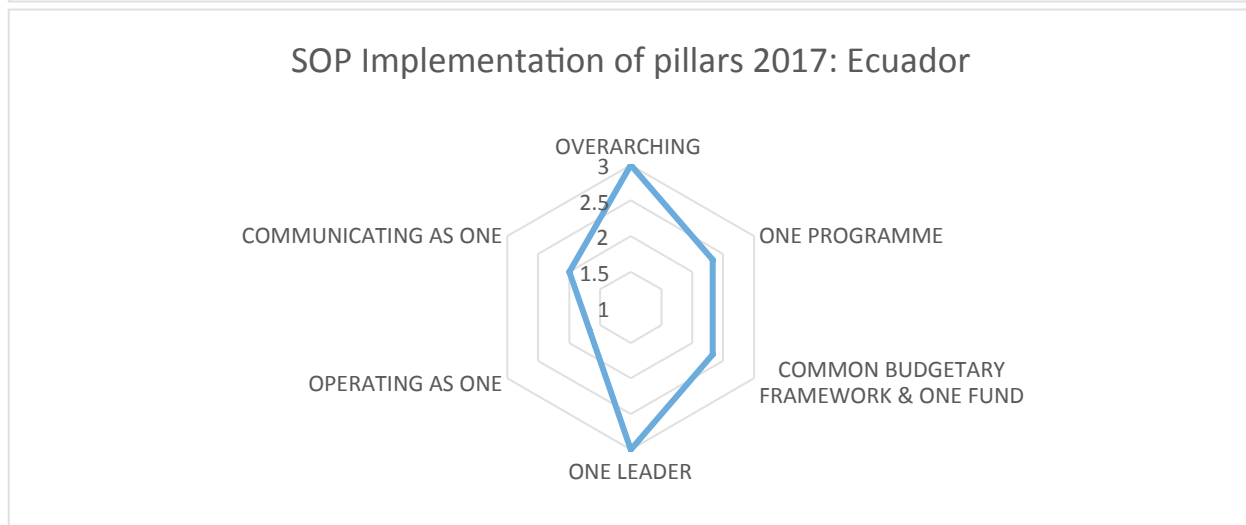
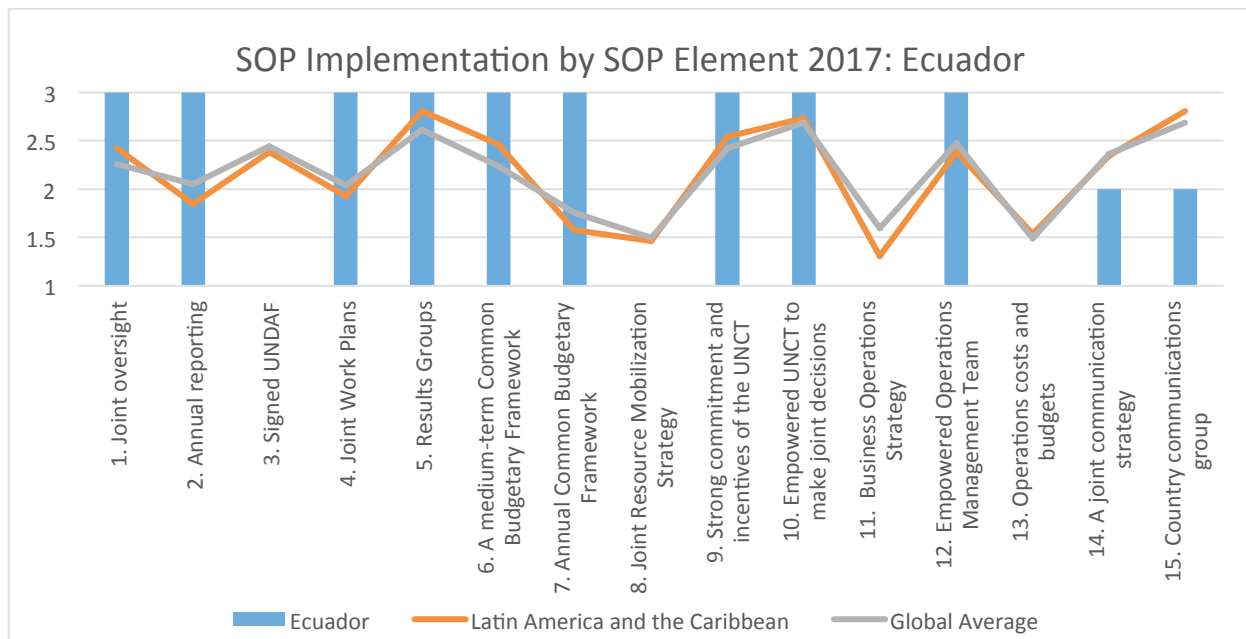
SOP Implementation of pillars 2017: Dominican Republic



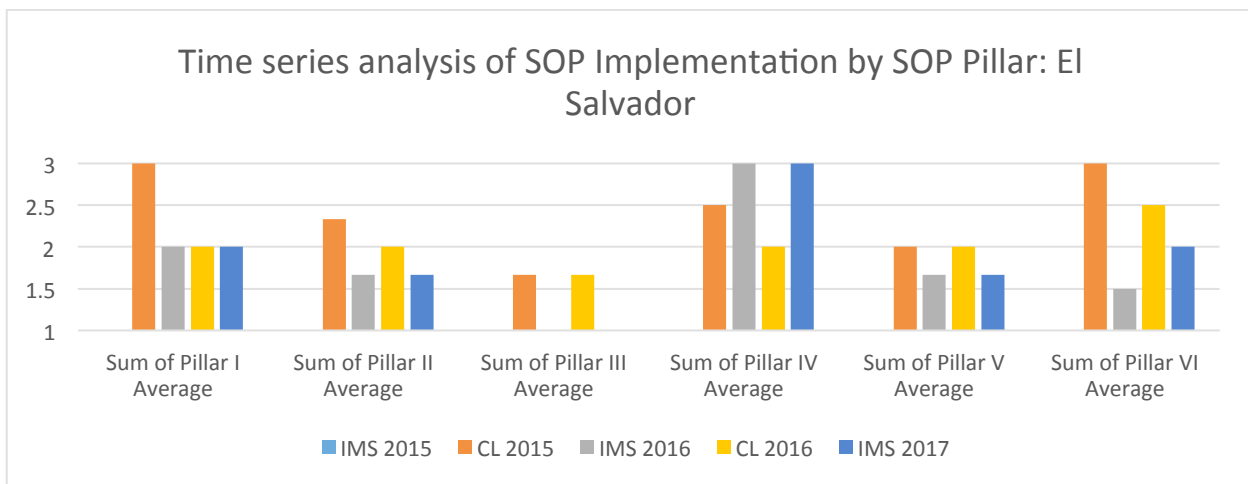
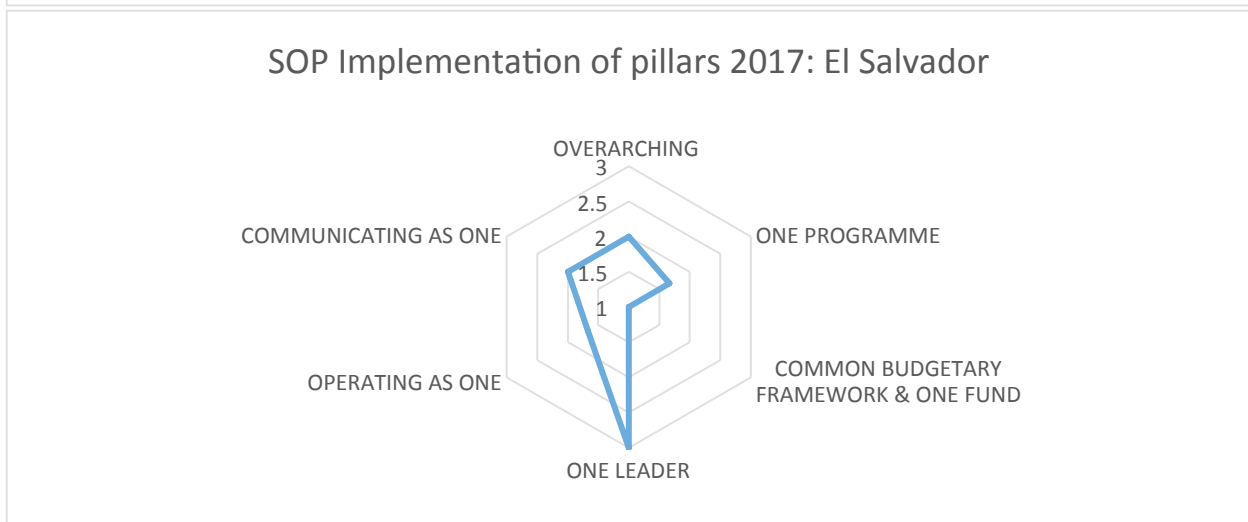
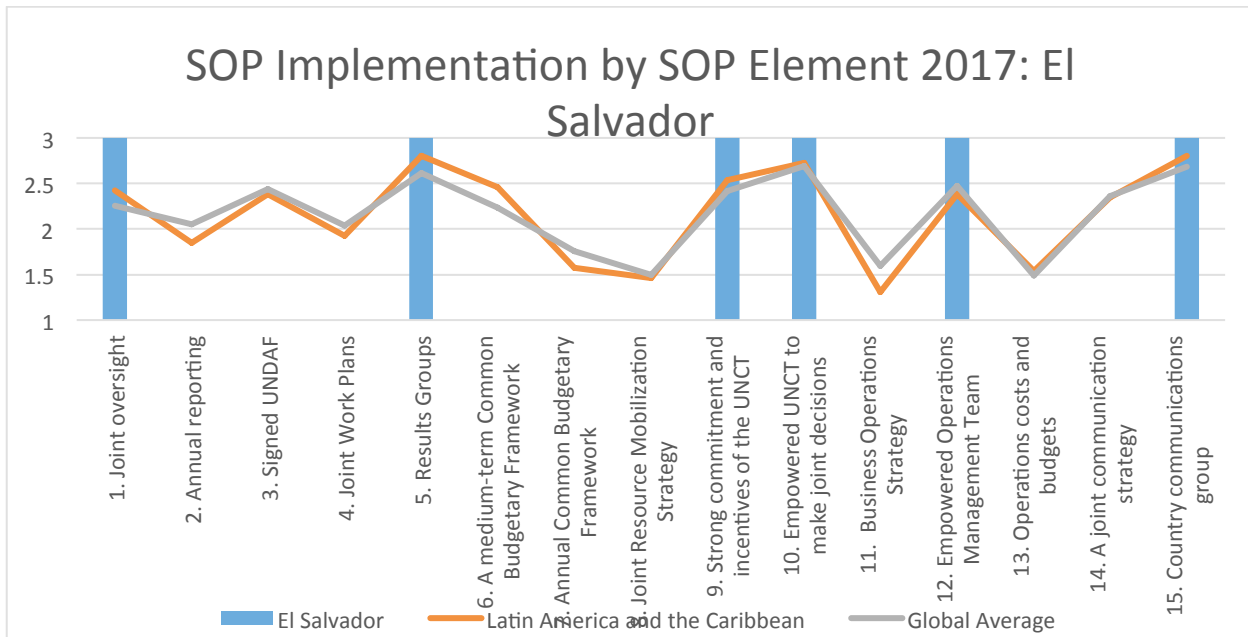
Time series analysis of SOP Implementation by SOP Pillar: Dominican Republic



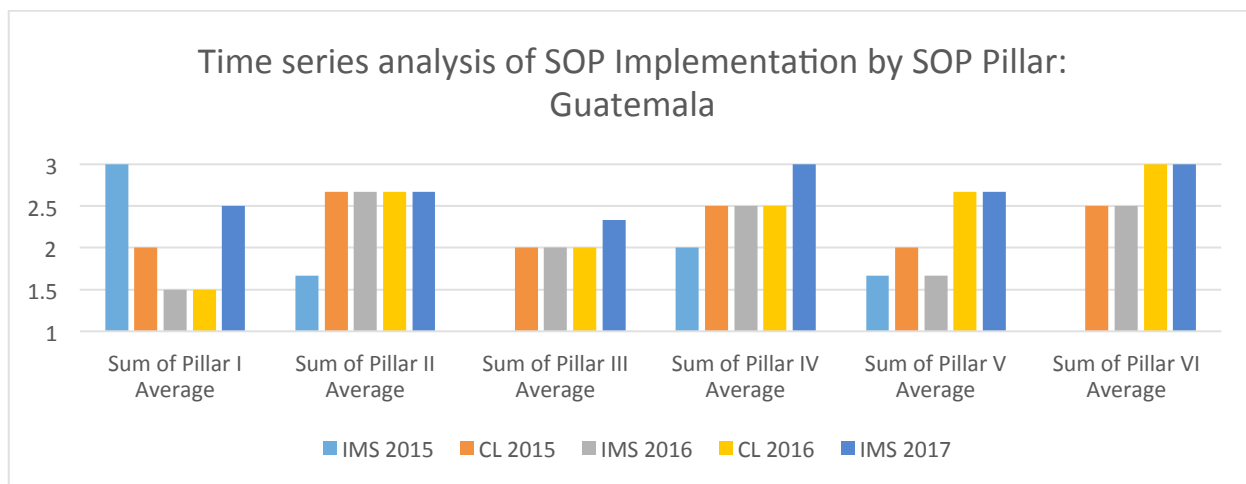
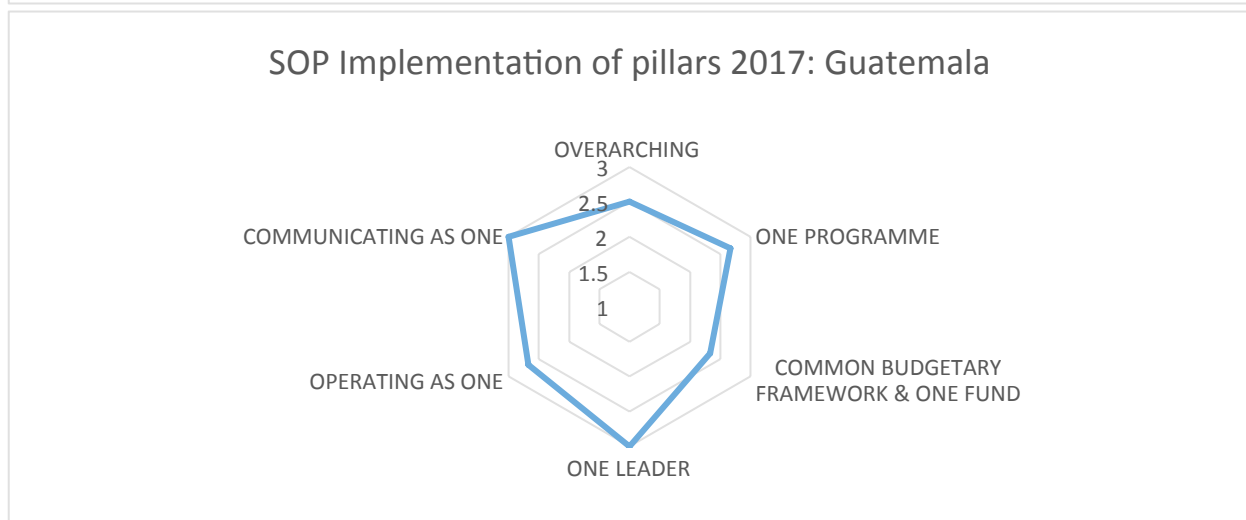
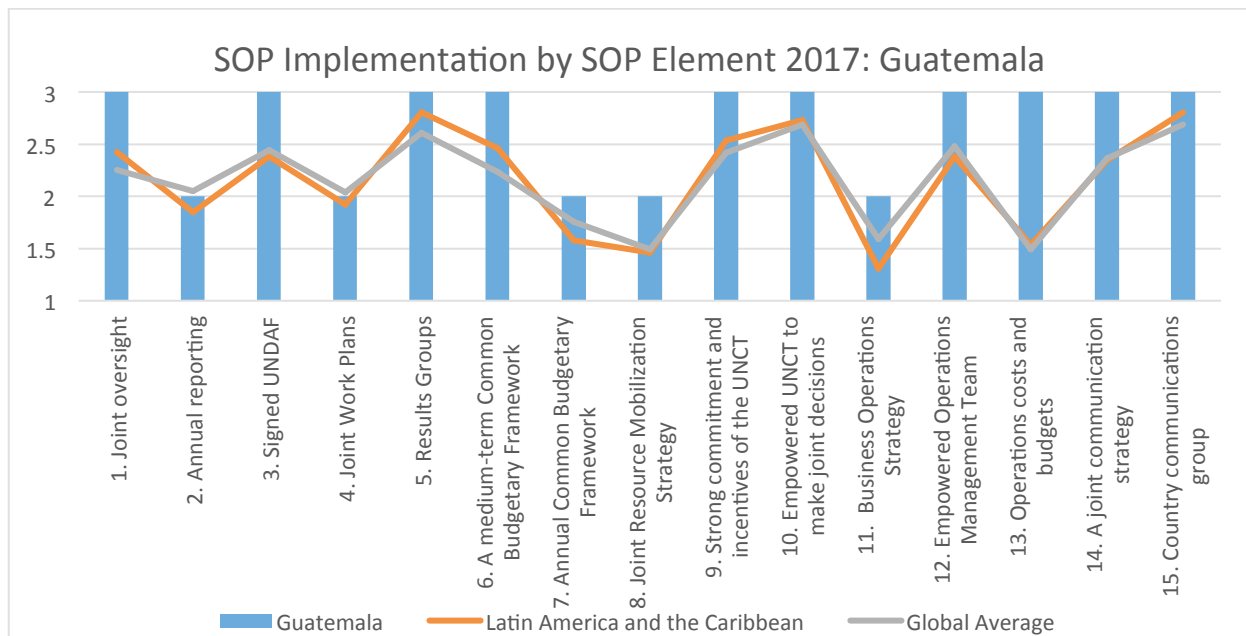
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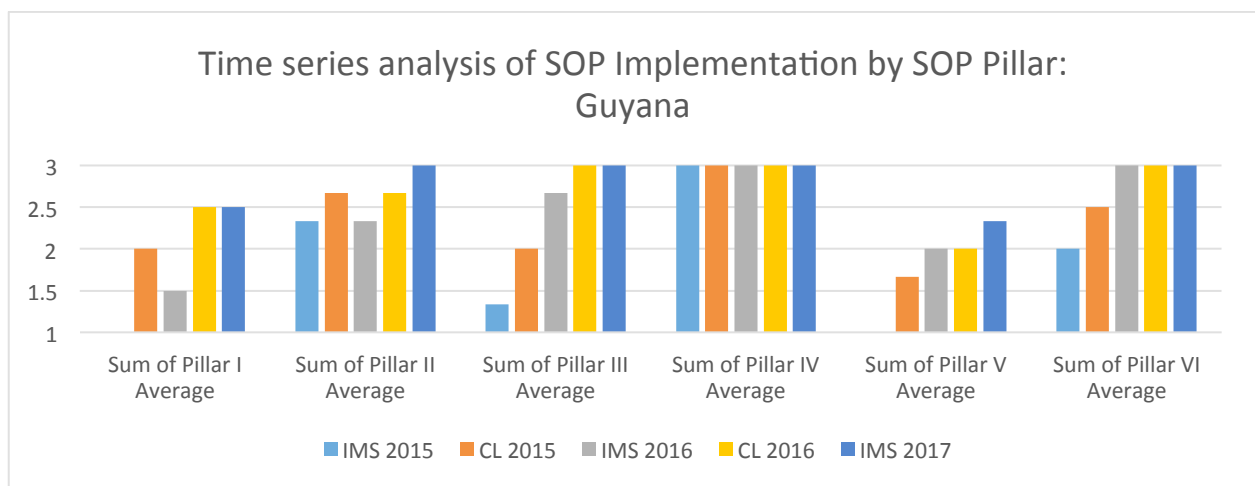
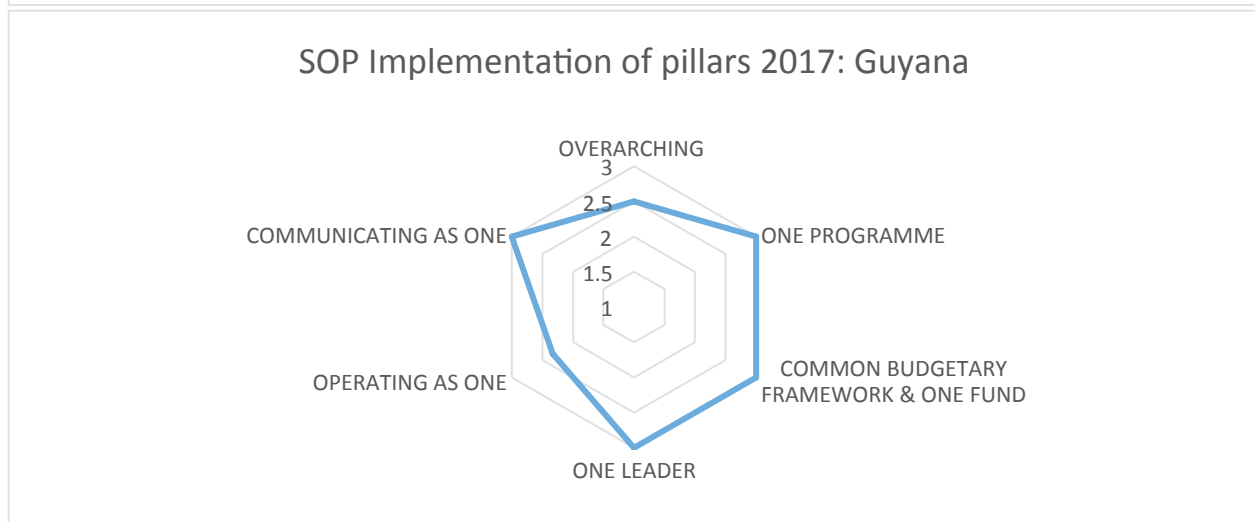
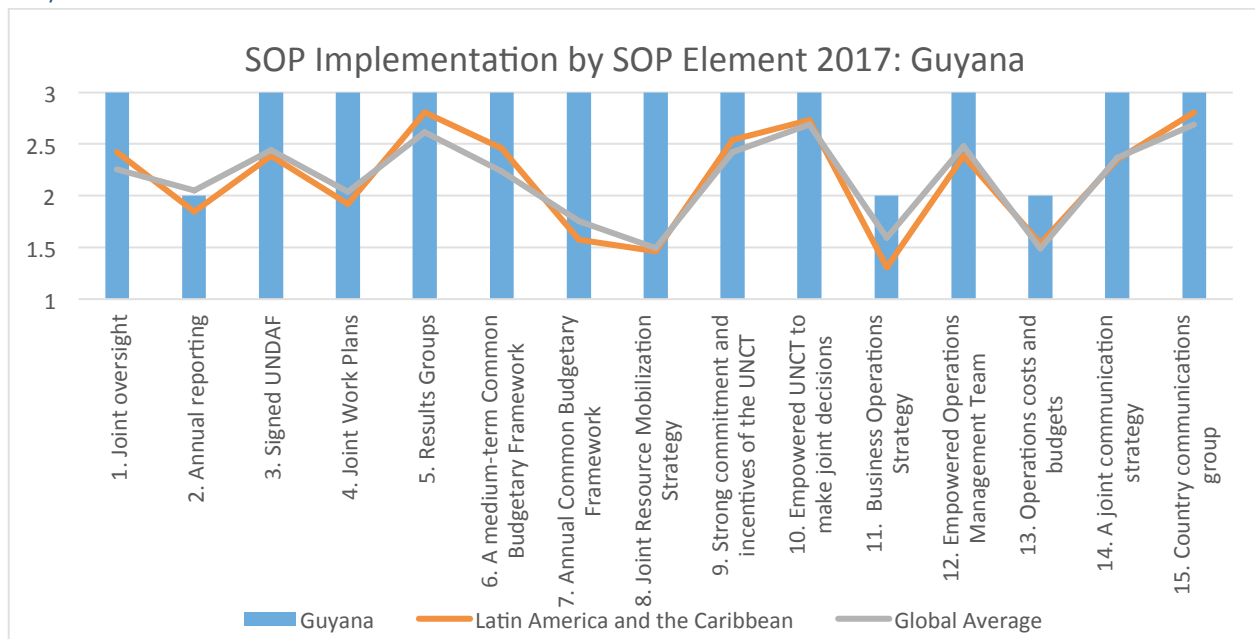
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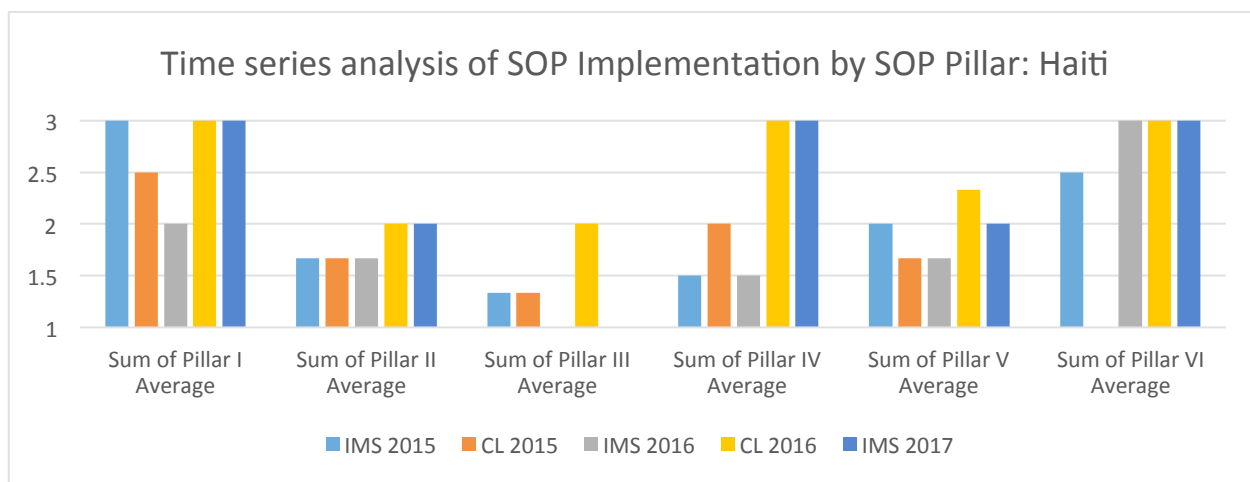
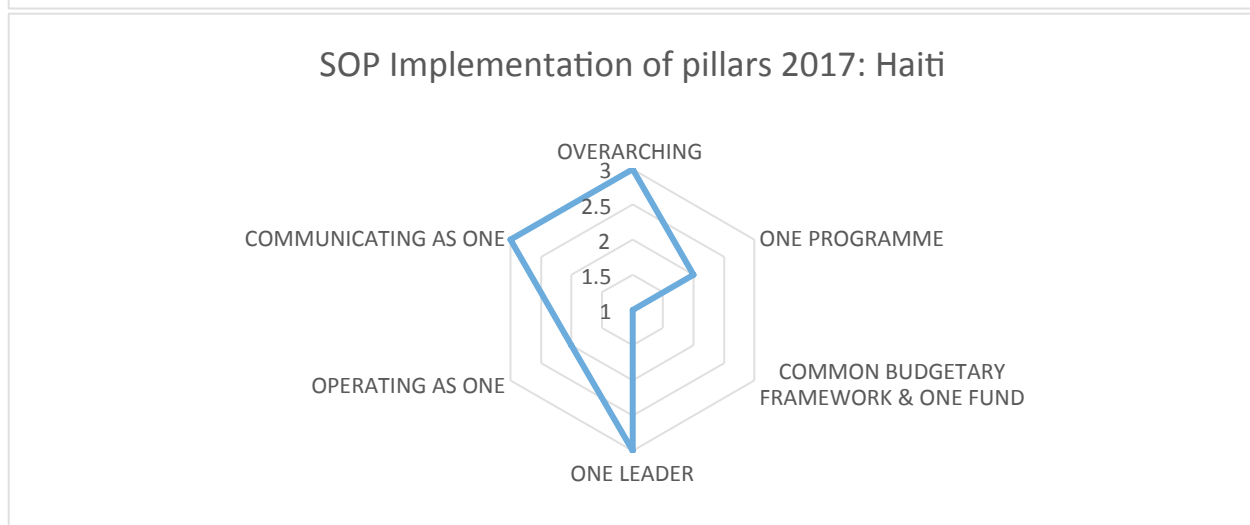
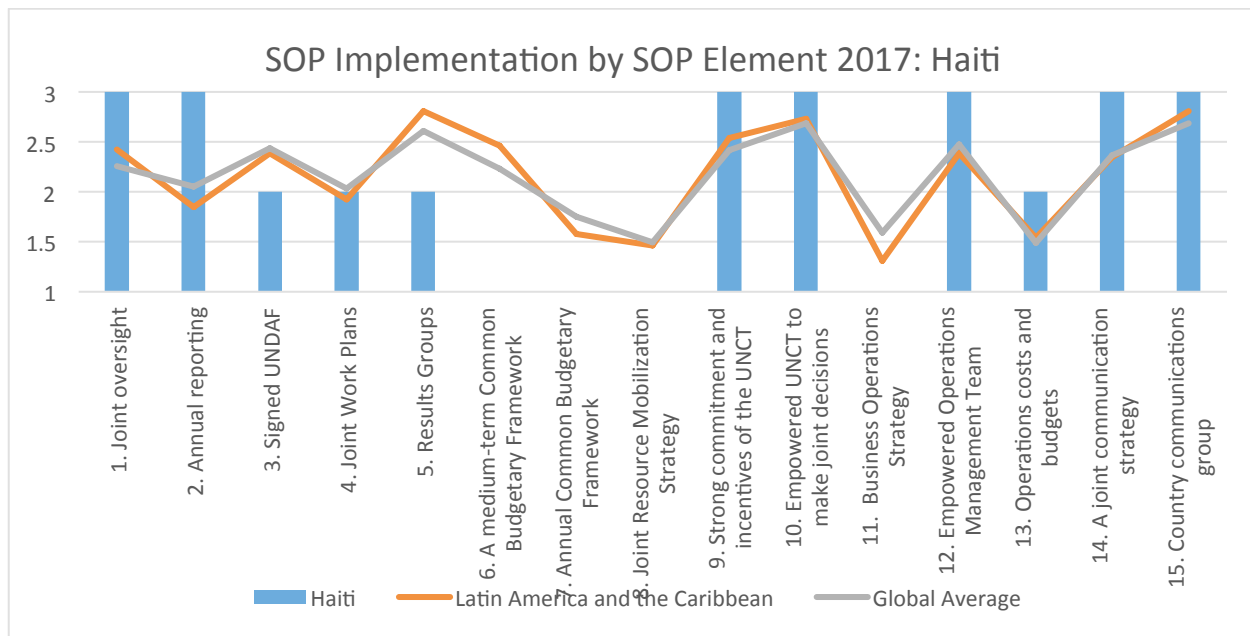
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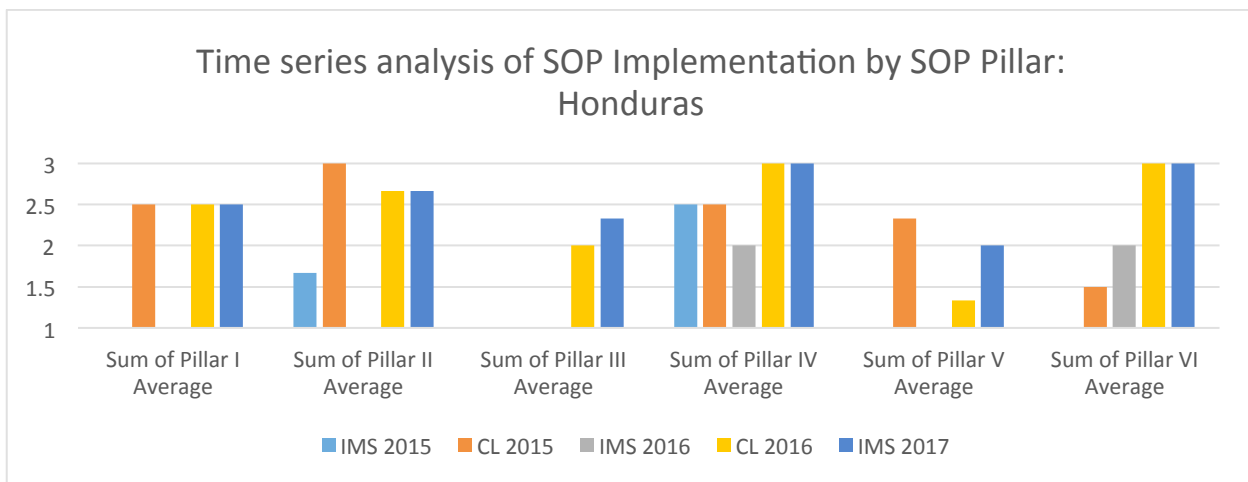
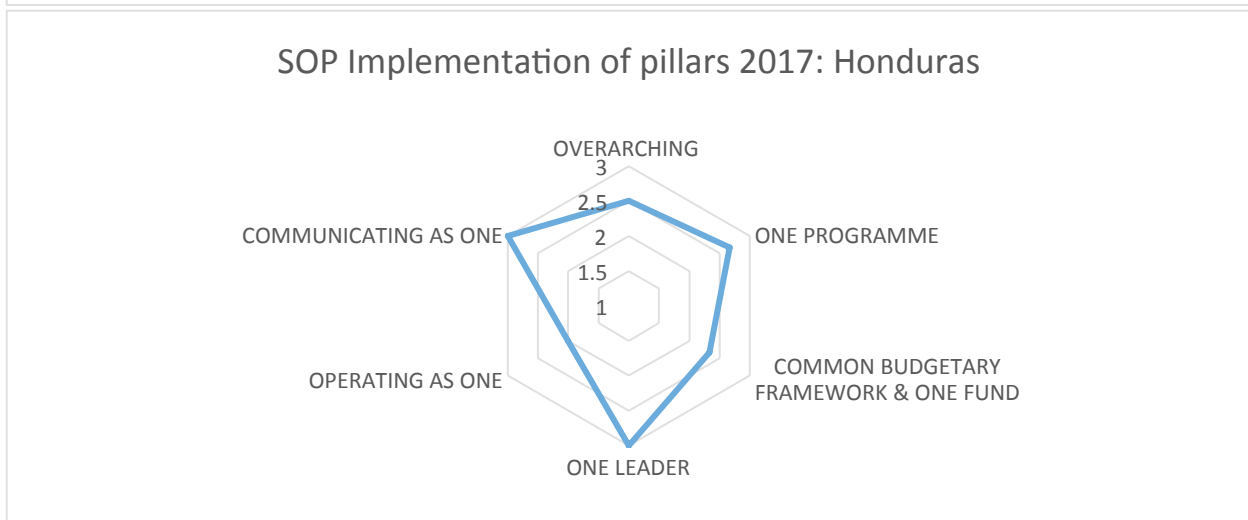
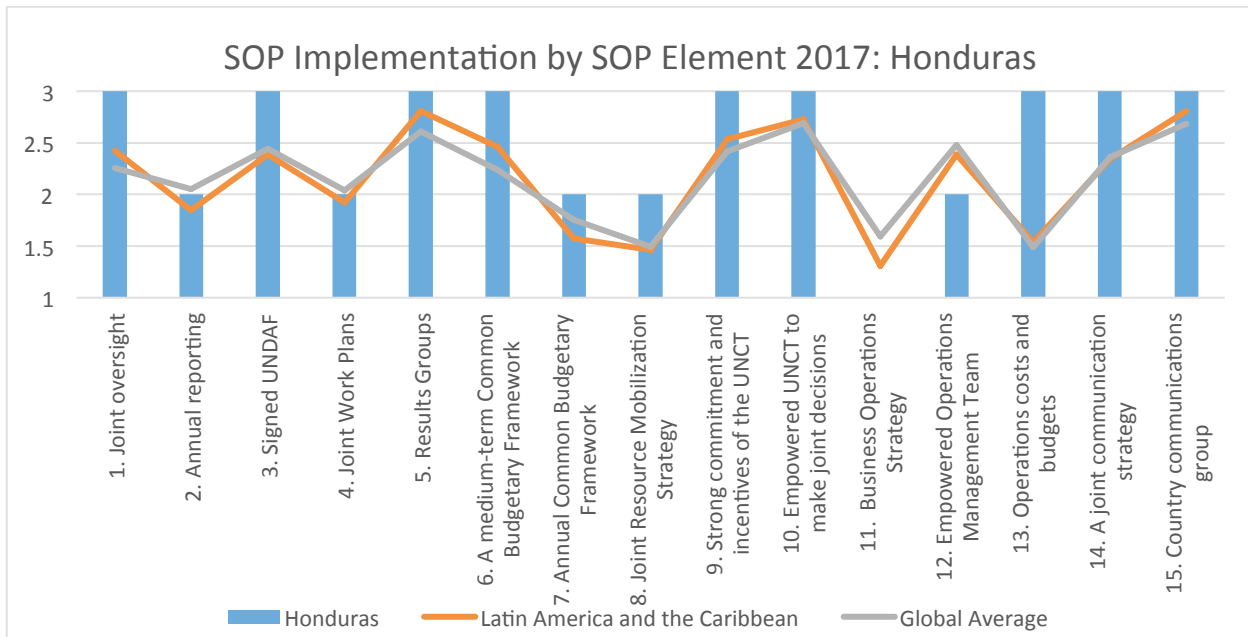
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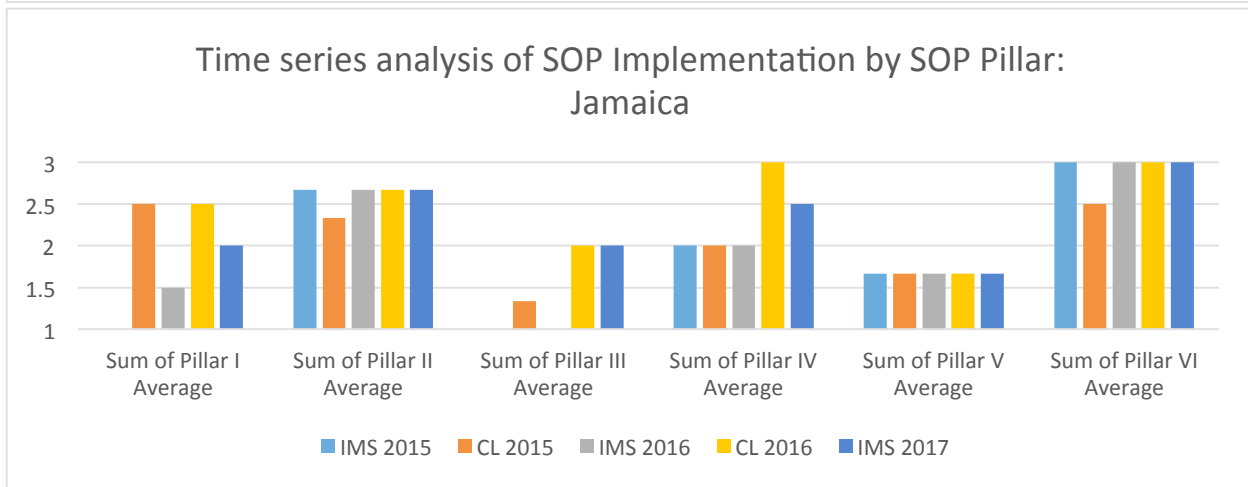
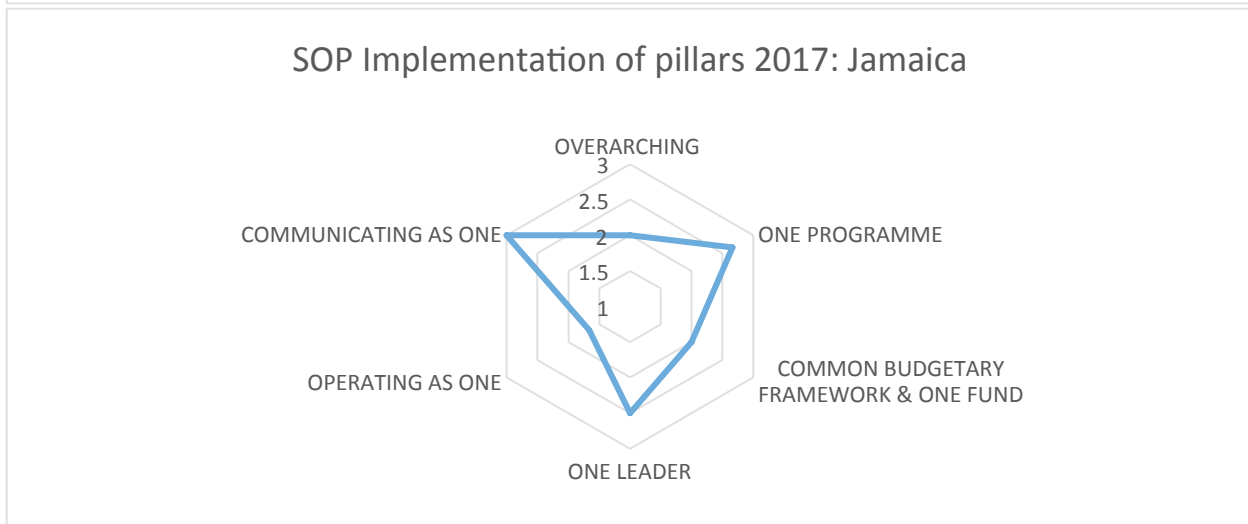
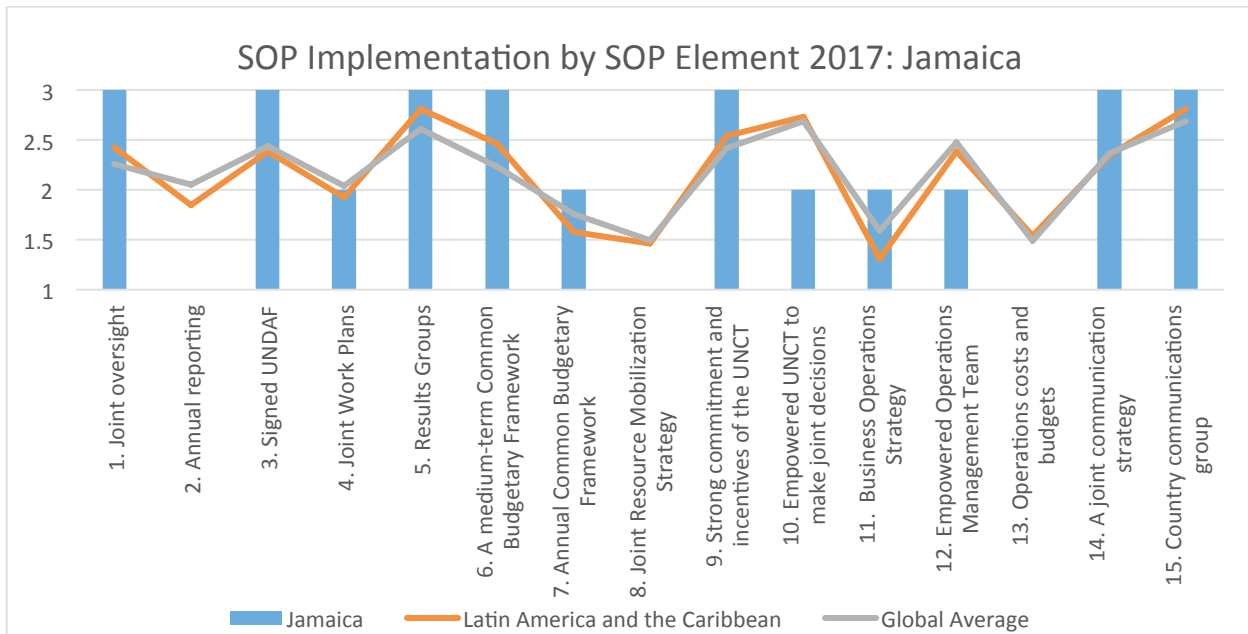
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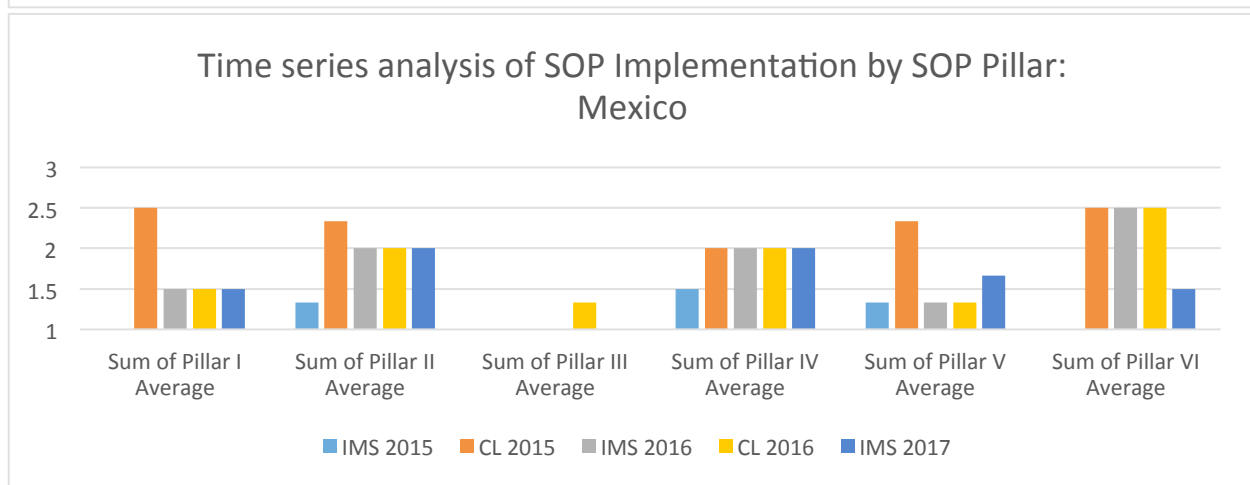
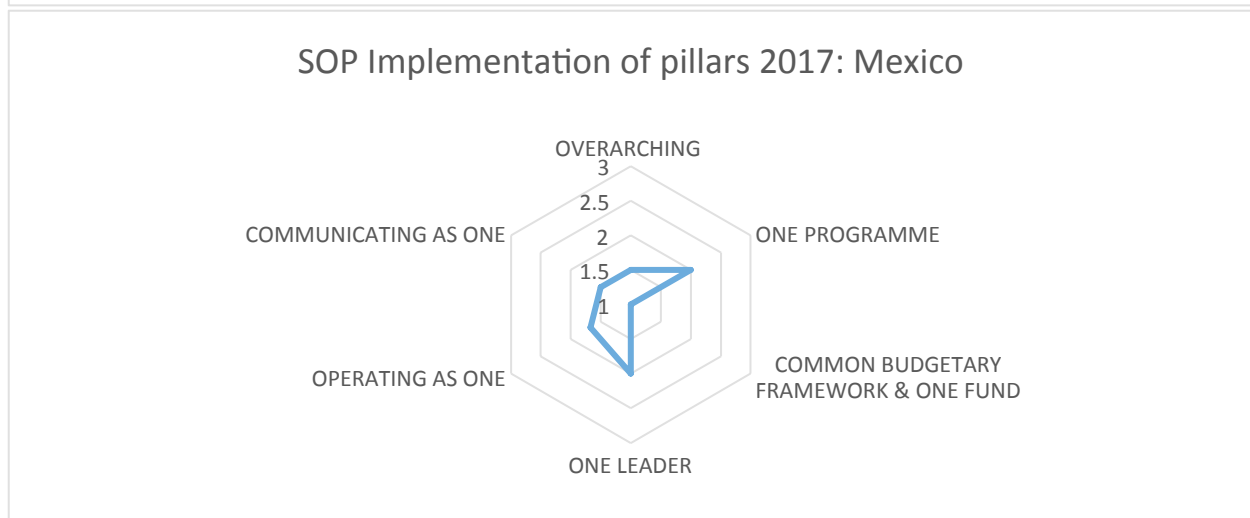
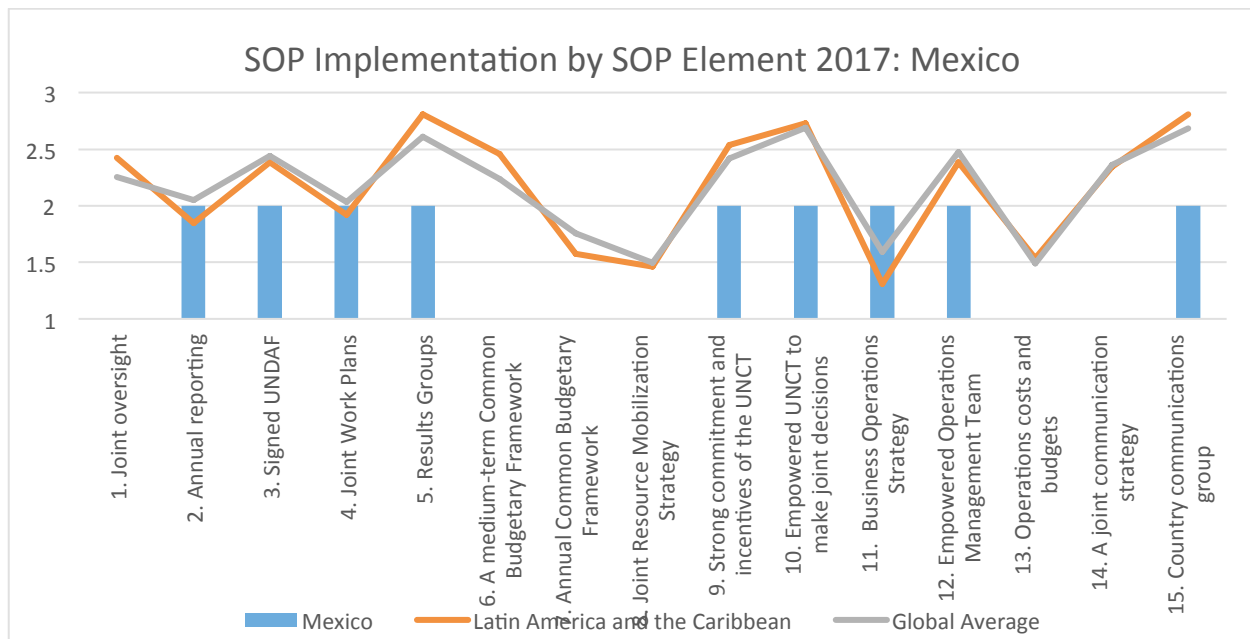
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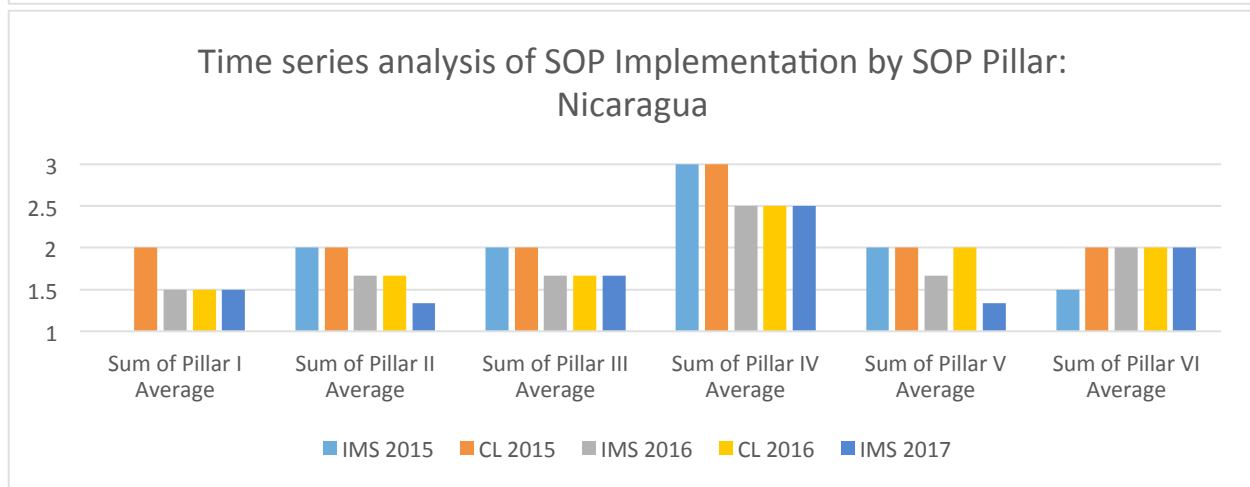
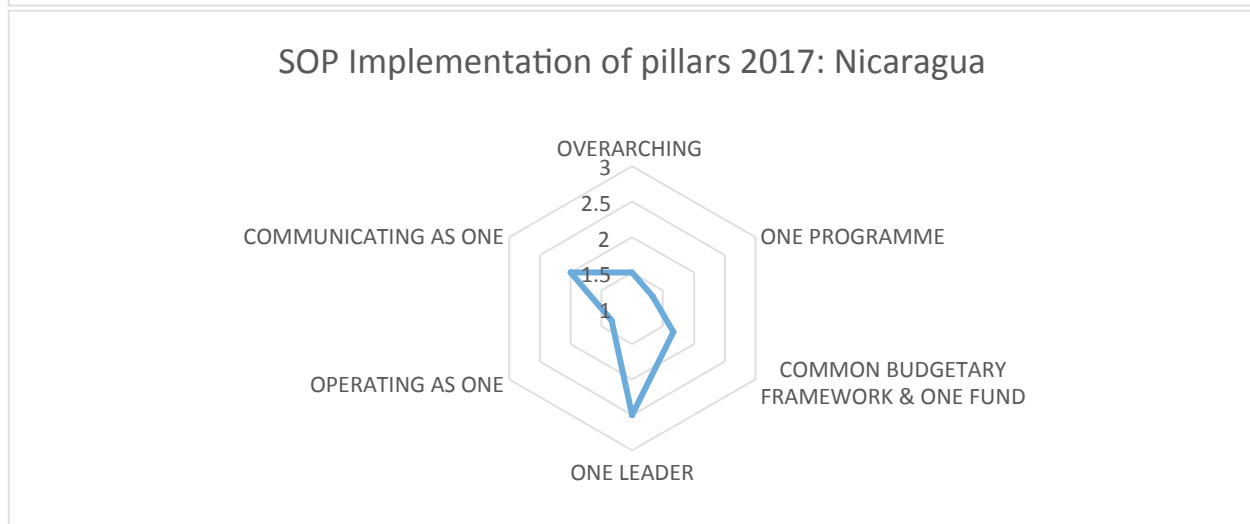
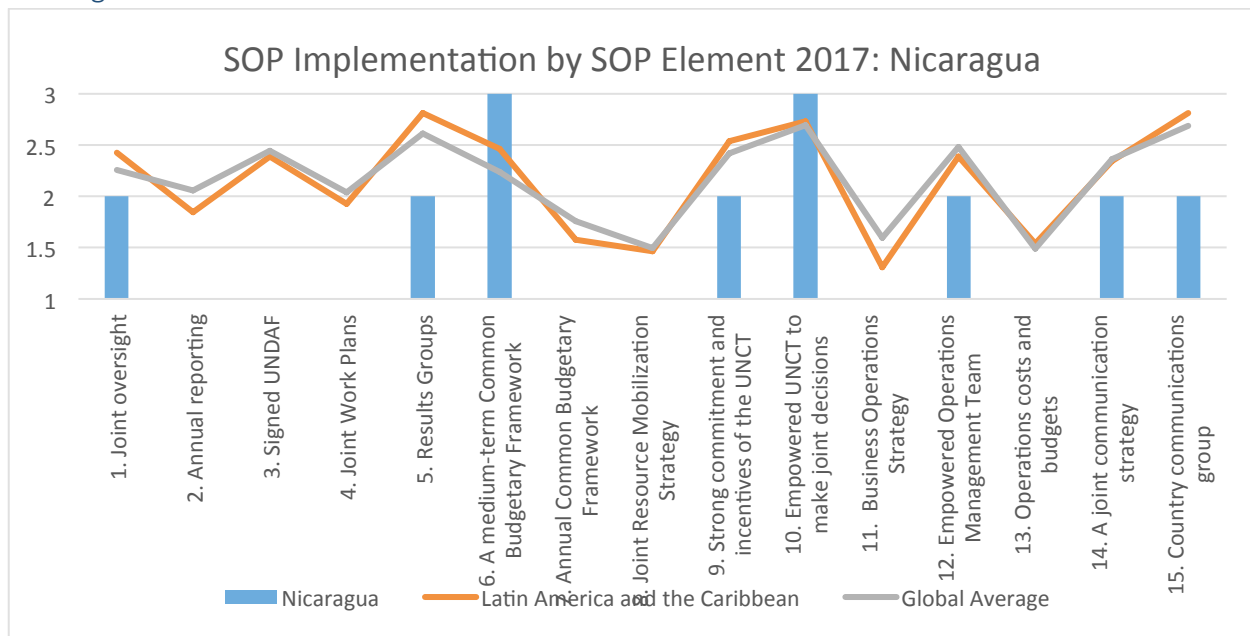
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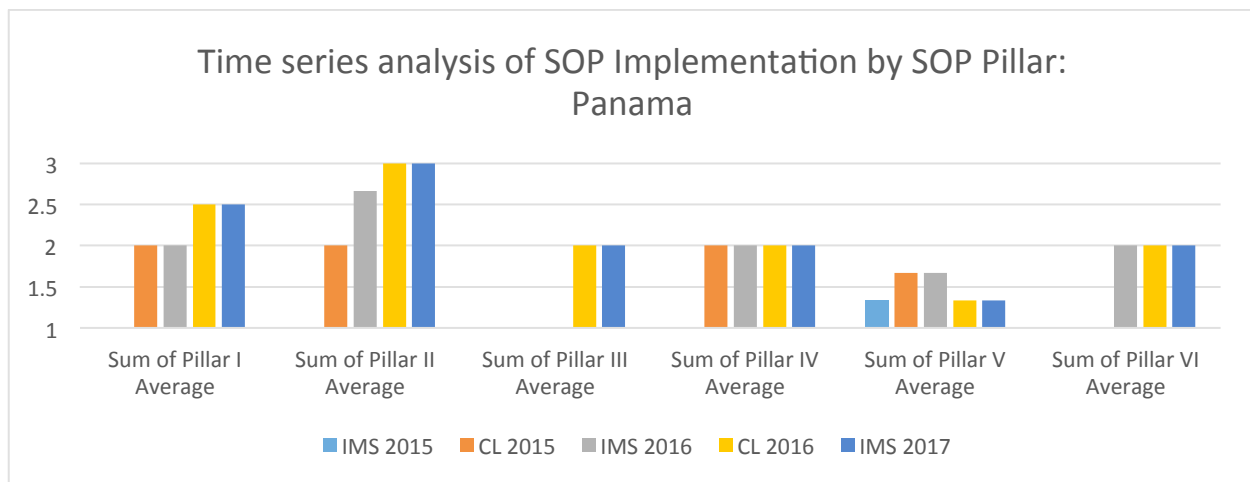
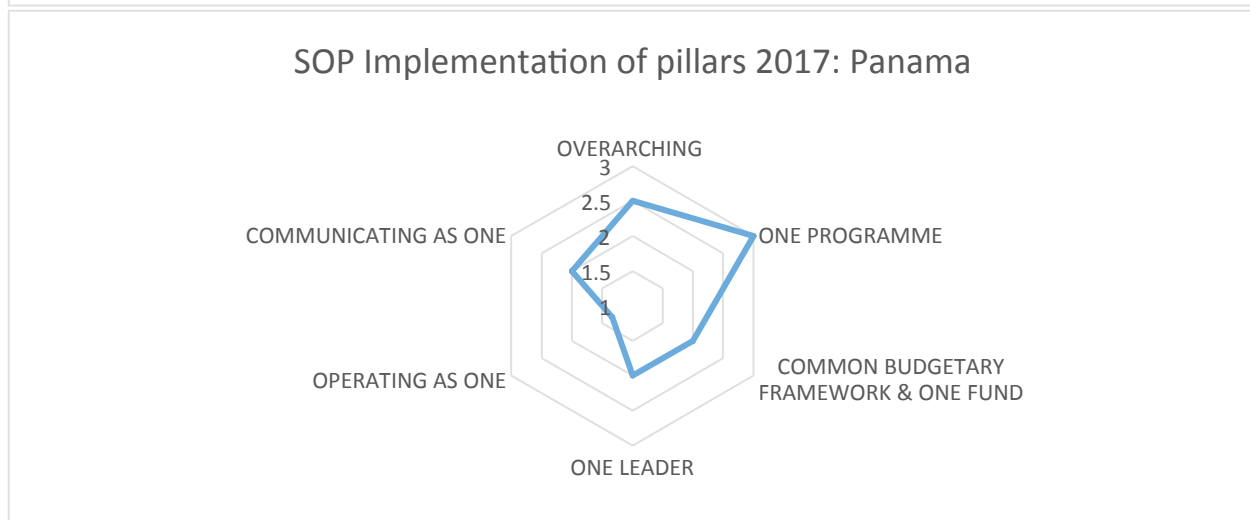
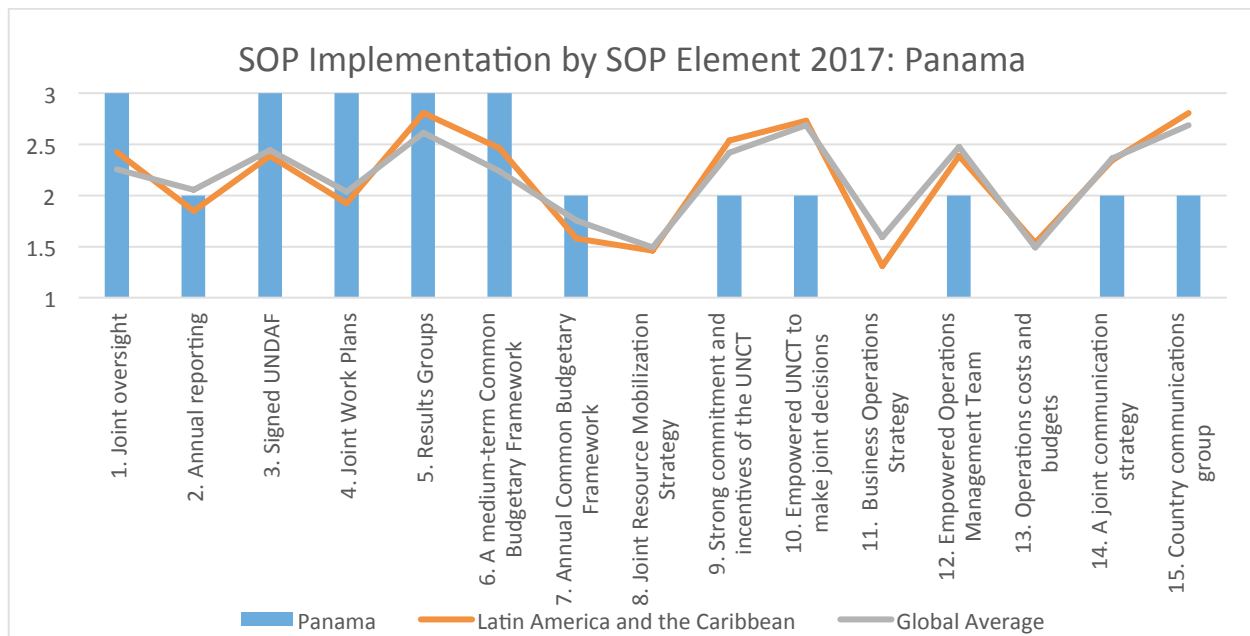
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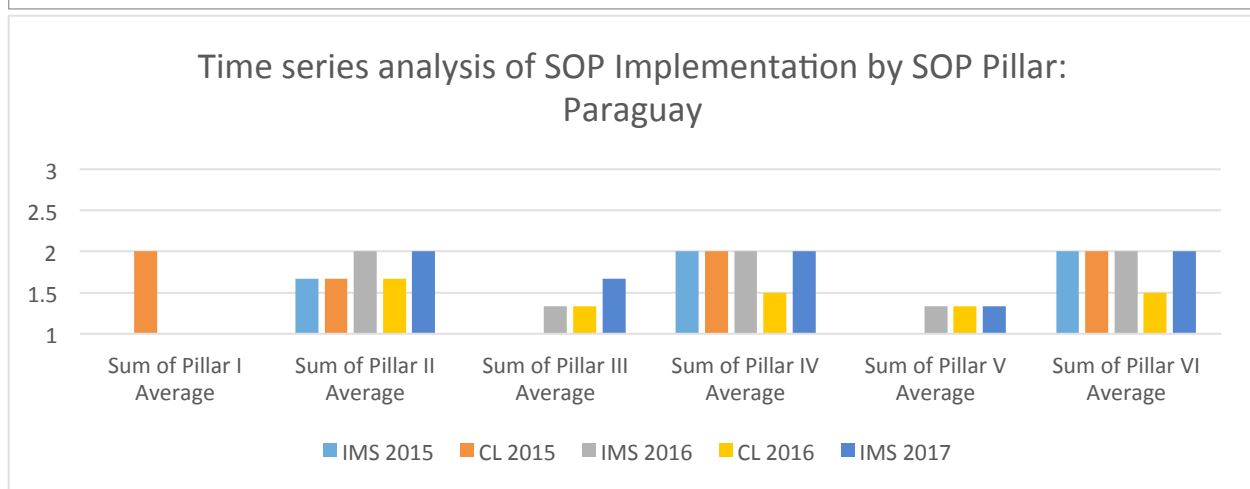
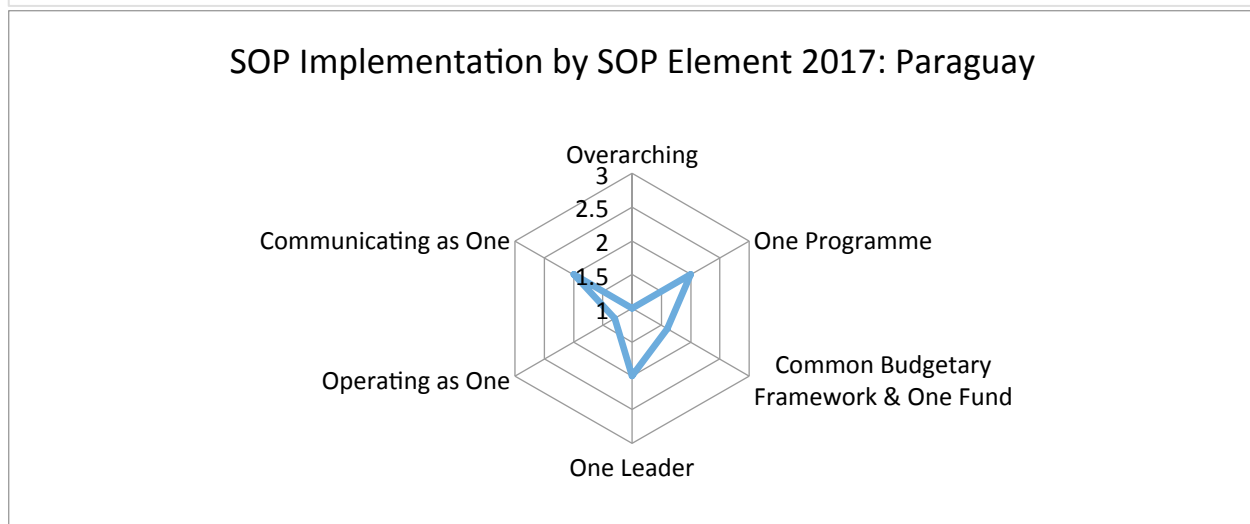
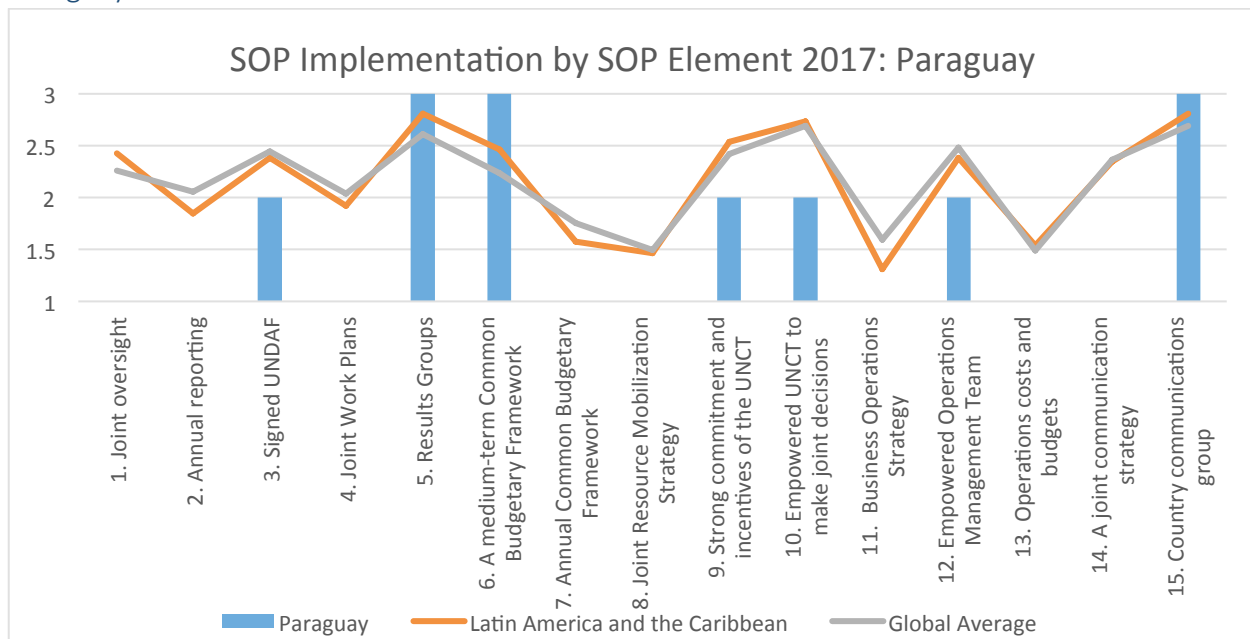
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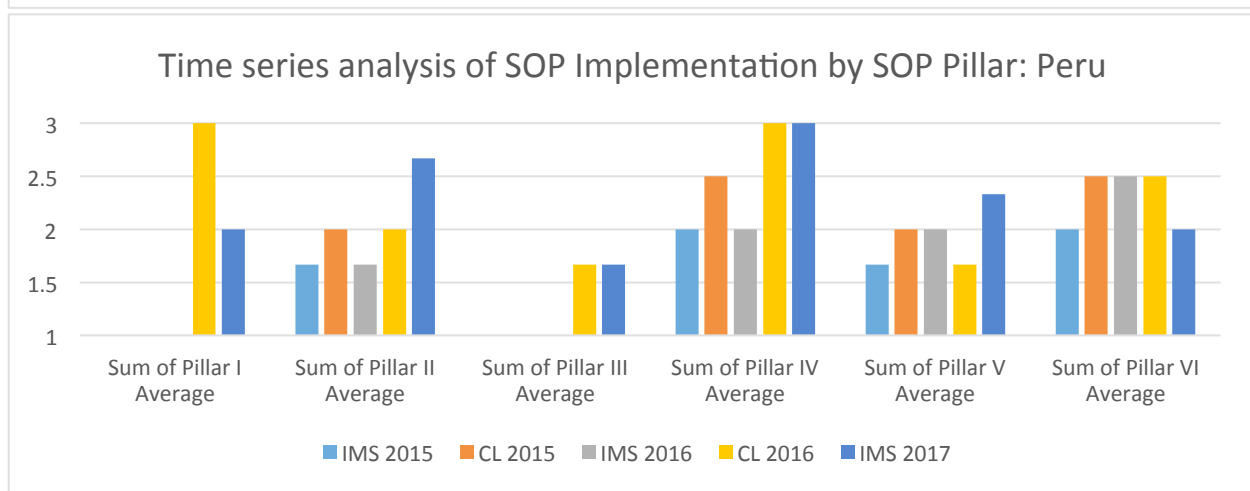
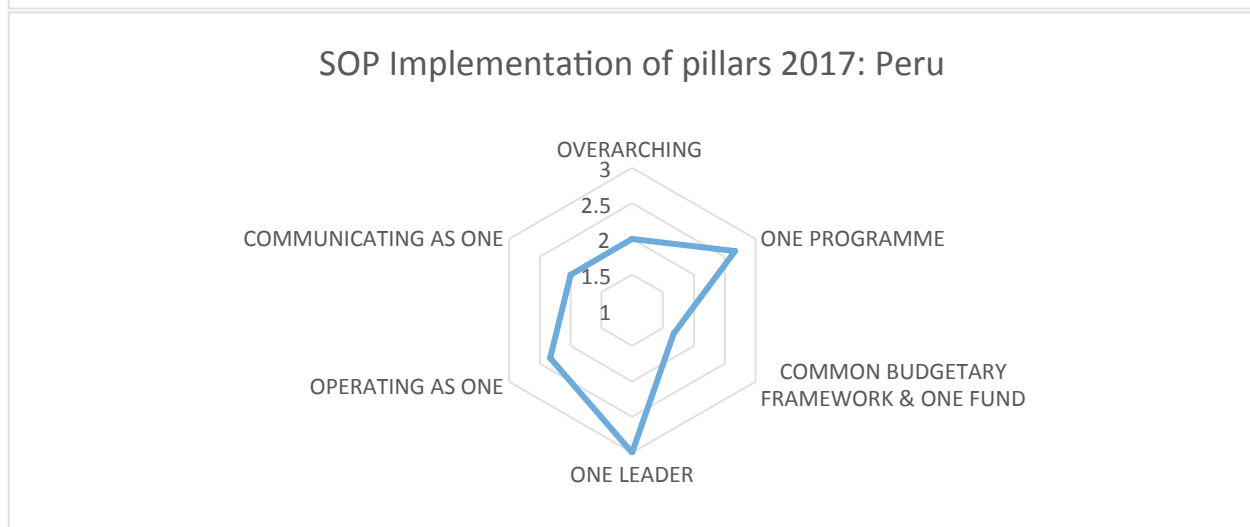
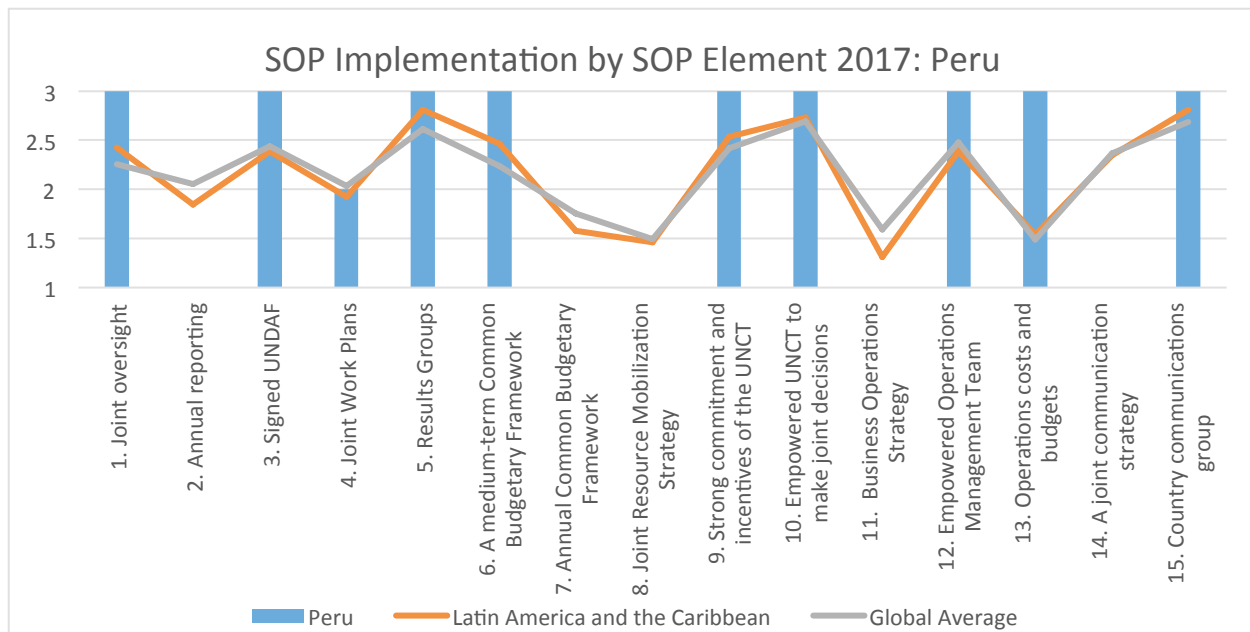
Panama



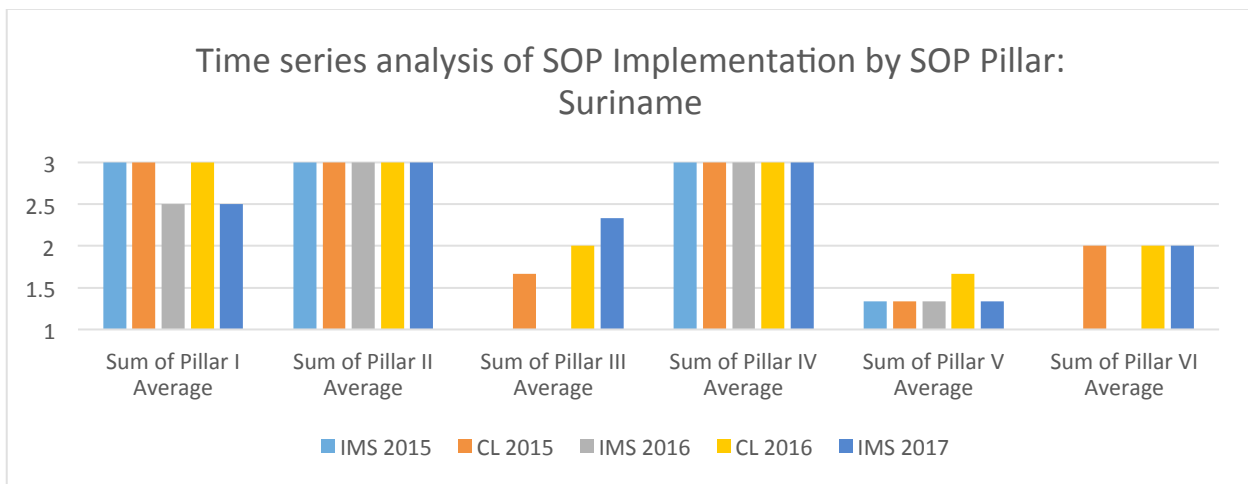
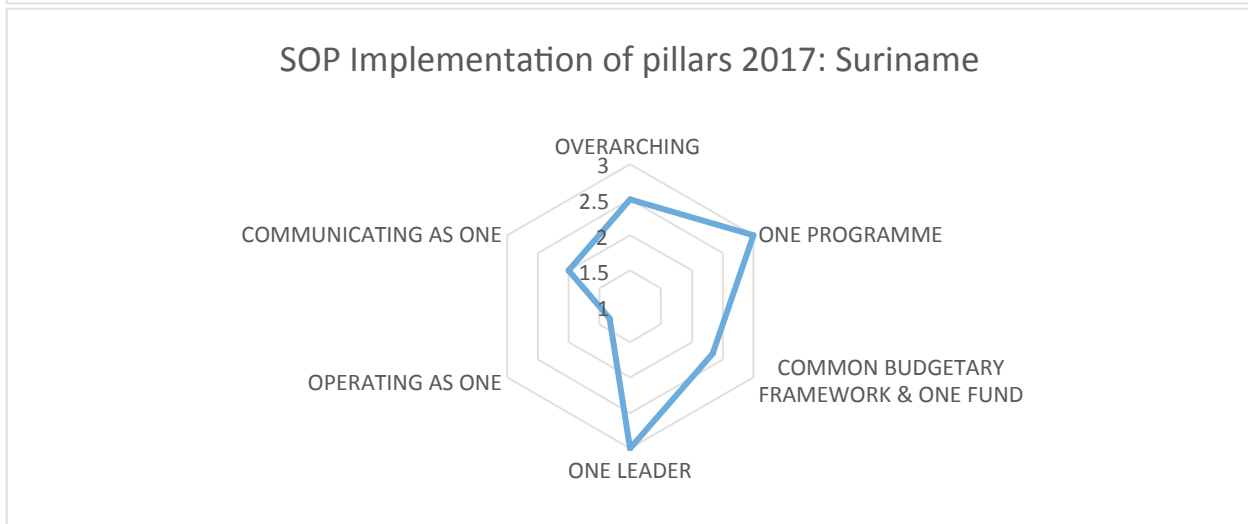
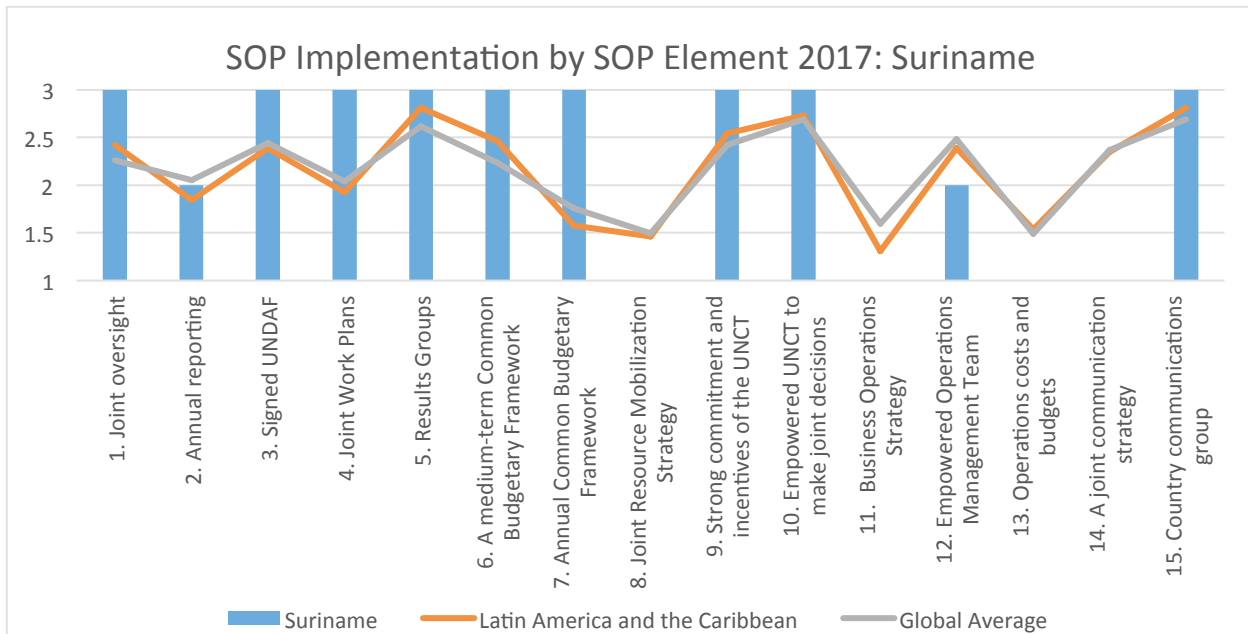
Paraguay



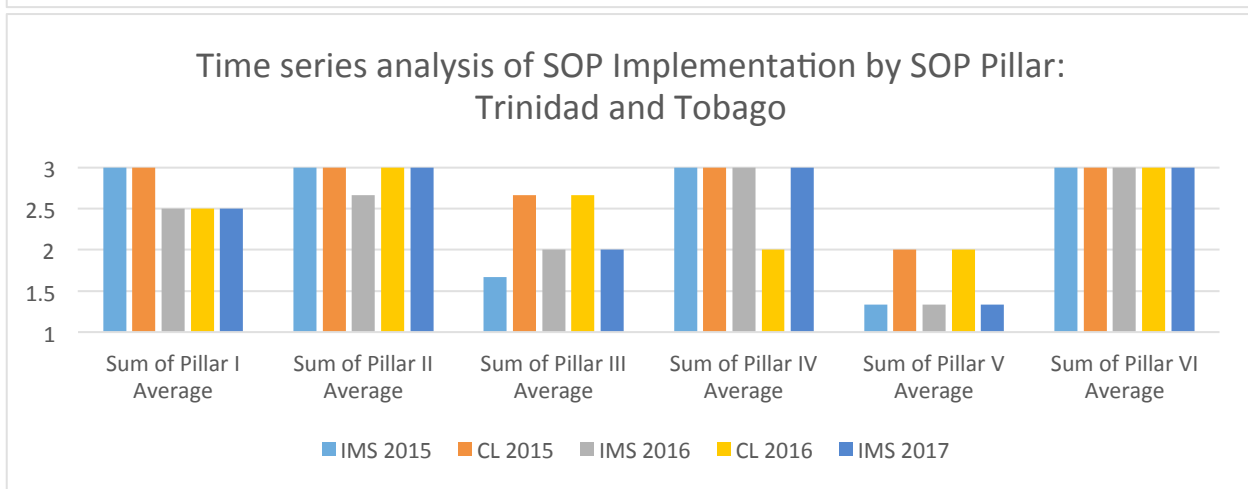
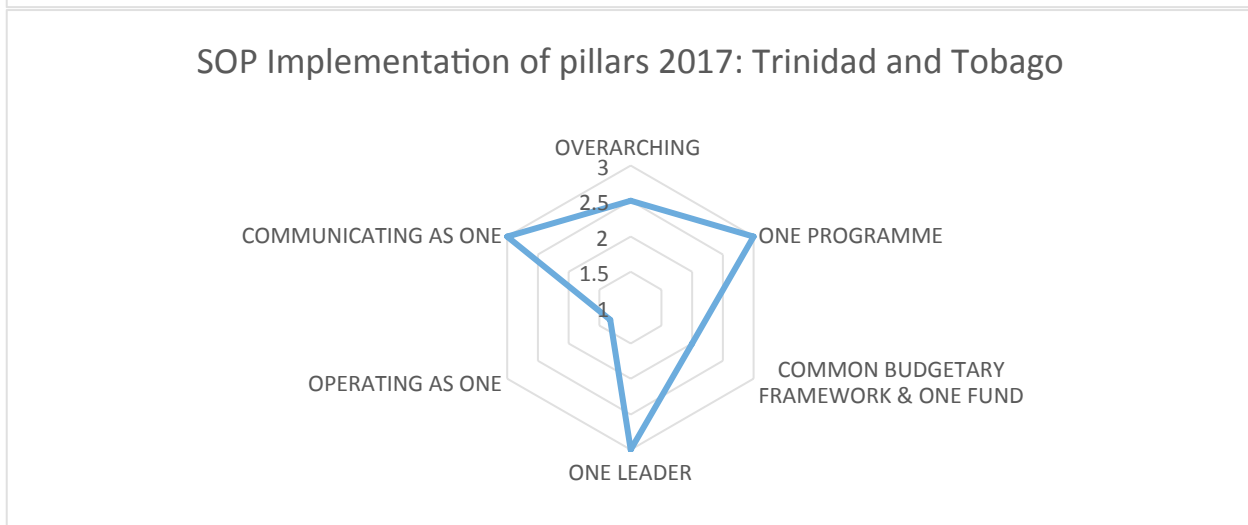
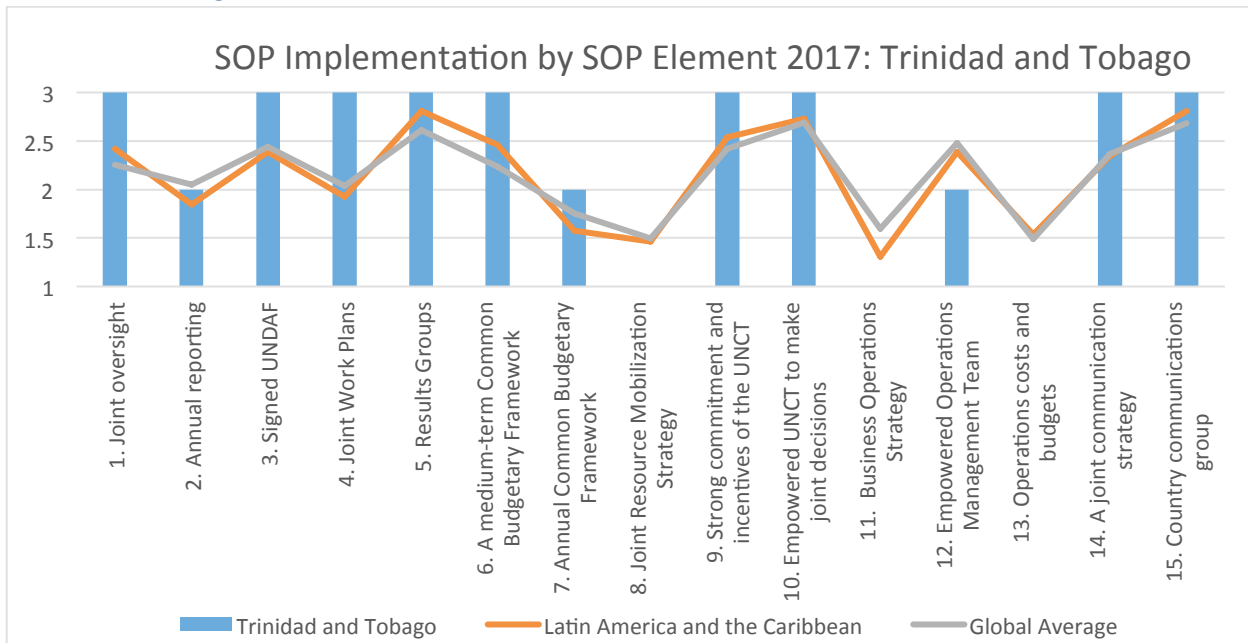
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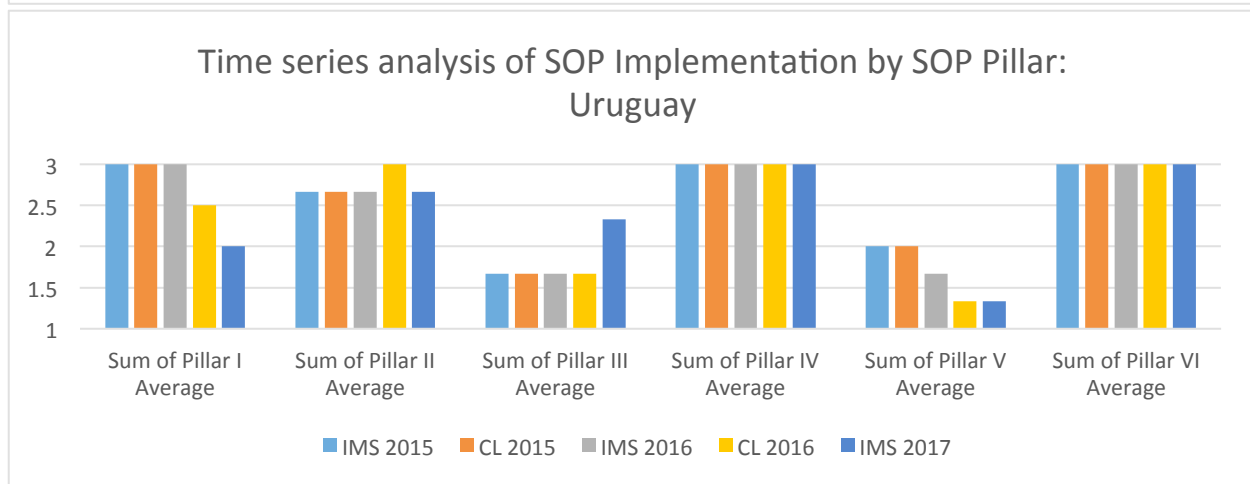
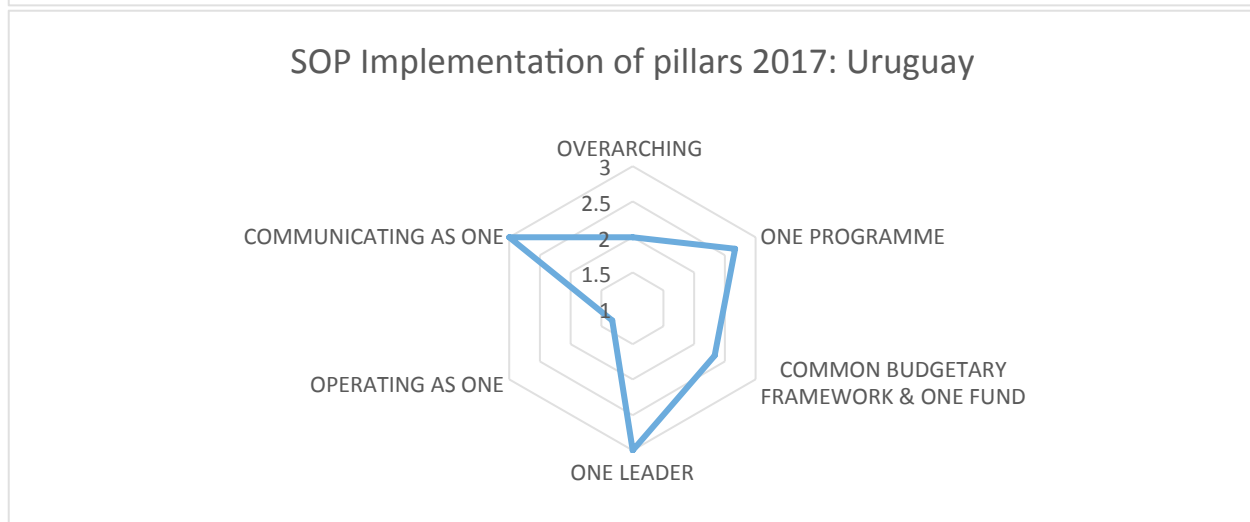
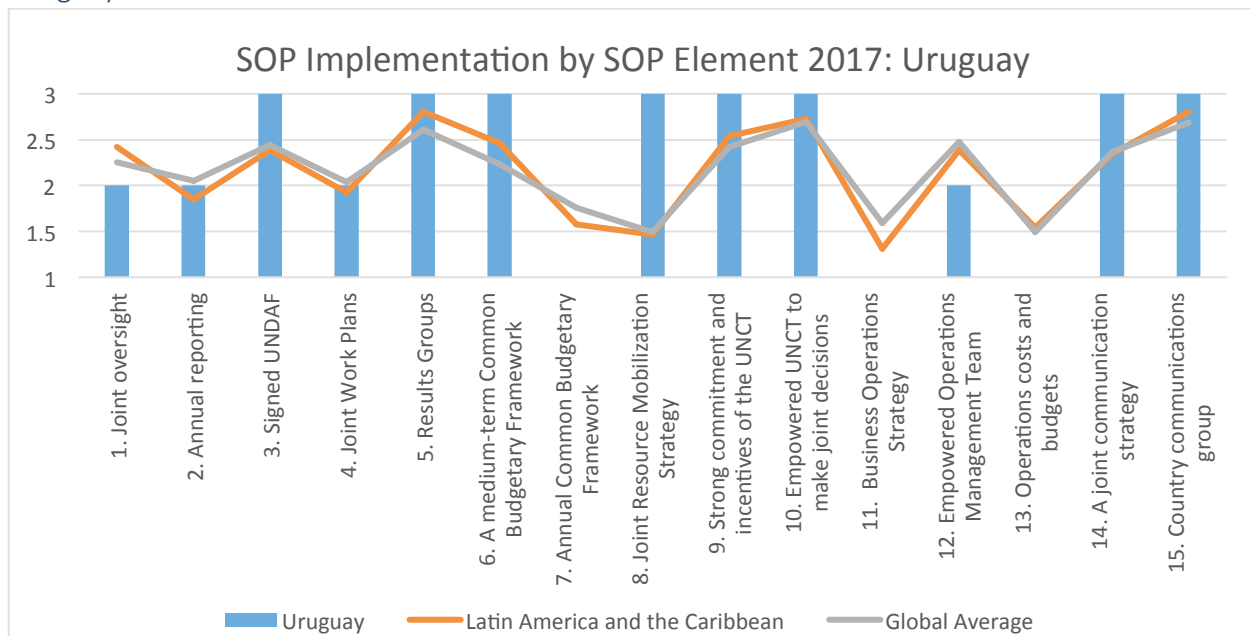
Suriname



Trinidad & Tobago



Uruguay



Venezuela

