EVALUATION OF THE UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN 2008–2013

UNDP

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

EVALUATION OF THE
UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN 2008–2013

May 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FOREWORD

For the United Nations Development Programme, the Strategic Plan lies at the heart of the management system. Most importantly, the Plan guides the organization and provides a framework for accountability to its partners. This evaluation provides an assessment of UNDP performance during the period covered by the Strategic Plan and an organizational assessment of UNDP's use of the Plan. It analyses lessons learned from the body of evaluations undertaken by the Evaluation Office in the last few years and draws on the insights of a variety of stakeholders. It thus represents the Evaluation Office's contribution to the design of the new Strategic Plan.

The evaluation concluded that UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the Strategic Plan was approved. The strategic planning system has been strengthened, but UNDP also faces a more challenging context and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. Most significantly, it has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas, although strengthening efficiency and ensuring sustainability of results remain challenging. Another challenge has been ensuring that the major efforts made at headquarters to promote certain approaches (for example, mainstreaming of gender equality) result in effective implementation at the country level.

A key thrust of the evaluation is the need for UNDP to build on its decentralized nature, which is a major strength of the organization and is consistent with its emphasis on national ownership. The evaluation recommends that UNDP strengthen its support to the country level and keep this level as the unit of analysis for performance monitoring. The evaluation notes the trade-offs faced by UNDP, including those between national ownership and organizational priorities and between long-term capacity development needs and short-term results. It also recognizes the challenges to effective programming and performance UNDP faces as a result of current funding arrangements, specifically the heavy reliance on non-core resources.

As UNDP prepares to develop a new Strategic Plan, I hope this evaluation will shed light on how the organization can further enhance its contribution to global development.

Indran A. Naidoo
Director, Evaluation Office

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADR   Assessment of Development Results
AOC   Agenda for Organizational Change
CIS   Commonwealth of Independent States
CPAP   Country Programme Action Plan
CPD   Country Programme Document
ERBM   Enhanced Results Based Management
MDG   Millennium Development Goal
MYFF   Multi-Year Funding Framework
OPG   Organizational Performance Group
ROAR   Results Oriented Annual Report
TCPR   Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
UNDAF   United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP   United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I.   INTRODUCTION

The independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2013 was originally included in the UNDP Evaluation Office work programme submitted at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009. The purposes of the evaluation are to: support UNDP accountability to the Executive Board by providing evidence-based analysis; and provide input into the development of the new UNDP Strategic Plan. This is not an evaluation of the content of the current Strategic Plan but instead of the organizational and development performance of UNDP during the first five years of implementing the Plan. To facilitate design and management of the evaluation, work was split between two related components with associated evaluation questions:

First, an assessment of UNDP development performance, answering the question: How has UNDP performed during the period of the Strategic Plan in relation to the strategic intent as expressed in the Strategic Plan goals? The evaluation makes this assessment based on the following criteria: (a) effectiveness, (b) efficiency and (c) sustainability. The evaluation does not assess the relevance of the Strategic Plan as it is assumed to be relevant at the corporate level.

Second, an organizational assessment of the use of the Strategic Plan by UNDP, answering the question: How effectively has UNDP used the Strategic Plan to strengthen the management of the UNDP contribution to development results? This includes assessment of UNDP work in enhancing its comprehensive strategic planning system and using the Strategic Plan to then direct the organization (priorities, focus areas and approaches) and strengthen organizational accountability.

UNDP support to the Resident Coordinator function was not included in the scope of the evaluation for reasons of feasibility and utility. In addition, the evaluation does not cover the work of the associated funds and programmes. Furthermore, it does not comprehensively evaluate UNDP performance over the period of the Strategic Plan, but instead analyses whether and how major commitments brought together under the Strategic Plan have delivered against the stated intent. It also traces the logic of how the Strategic Plan is supposed to influence what UNDP does and then examines the evidence of the UNDP contribution to results, and whether they have been delivered efficiently and are likely to be sustainable. The independent evaluation was conducted in parallel to the process of preparing a cumulative review of the Strategic Plan by UNDP management. The evaluation relies less on self-reported evidence and more on independent evaluations than the cumulative review and so can be seen as complementary.

Multiple sources of evidence and techniques – mainly qualitative but also drawing upon reliable quantitative data, where available – were used to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions and to reach judgements. The sources included:

- A meta-synthesis of evidence from independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office between 2010 and 2012

- Interviews with individuals from three cohorts of stakeholders: Executive Board members, UNDP senior management and UNDP country office management

- Document review and administrative data analysis. Extensive use was also made of

information from the enhanced results-based management system (ERBM), and findings were compared, where relevant, with evidence from donor reviews.

II.   BACKGROUND

The original draft UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2011 was submitted to the Executive Board at the annual session in 2007, but agreement was not reached on key issues contained in the draft. The current Plan was therefore approved by the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2008 after a lengthy negotiation process among member States. The strategic planning process was also heavily influenced by the triennial comprehensive policy review of United Nations development activities, specifically the triennial review approved by the General Assembly in 2007. The Plan approved in June 2008 included an addendum containing the development and institutional results frameworks. At the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009, a decision was made to extend the Plan to 2013, and the same decision led to the alignment of the regional and global programmes to the Strategic Plan time frame.

The Strategic Plan for 2008–2013 demanded strategic focus, even while emphasizing that national ownership of development interventions is essential. It therefore recognized that implementation requires that UNDP managers strike a balance between the requirements set out in the Plan and what is specifically demanded, and feasible, within a specific regional or national context. Two roles were clearly defined for UNDP in the Plan. The first was in supporting the promotion of coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system as a whole at the country level. The second was to provide policy and technical support to the governments of programme countries. Within the latter, the Strategic Plan document provided direction in four broad themes:

(a) **Four focus areas.** Based on assessment of demand from countries and on UNDP comparative strengths, its work should focus on the following four key areas: (i) poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals; (ii) democratic governance; (iii) environment and sustainable development; and (iv) crisis prevention and recovery;

(b) **Six key approaches.** In addition to the areas of focus described above, the Strategic Plan was explicit about the approaches that UNDP should utilize in delivering that support: (i) human development-based approach to programming; (ii) national ownership; (iii) capacity building and development; (iv) effective aid management; (v) mainstreaming South-South cooperation; and (vi) mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women;

(c) **Four-country typology and regional priorities.** The Strategic Plan was explicit in recognizing the special needs of (i) Africa, (ii) the least-developed countries, (iii) landlocked developing countries and (iv) small island developing States. It also recognized that their special needs must be taken into consideration, especially with regard to capacity development. It was not made clear how this was to be operationalized, or what special consideration would entail;

(d) **Four areas where UNDP should not engage.** The Strategic Plan clearly stated what UNDP should not normally engage in, specifically: (i) specialized sectoral activities; (ii) small-scale projects without countrywide impact; (iii) provision of infrastructure with no capacity-building; and (iv) stand-alone procurement of goods and services. One caveat mentioned is that UNDP, as part of the United Nations country team response to national demand, will stand ready to serve as the 'provider of last resort' in case of a national capacity deficit or crisis, when specifically asked to do so.

The Strategic Plan set out the basis of the accountability framework with accountability as an overarching theme among UNDP management priorities. In order to provide greater transparency on the use of all UNDP resources, the Strategic Plan set out the integrated financial resources framework so that the Executive Board and other stakeholders could see a clear link between the strategic priorities outlined and the resources required to achieve them. The Strategic Plan specifically set out requirements and guidance for monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board and at the national level. The total financial expenditure for the first five years of the Strategic Plan totalled USD 19.7 billion. Of this, only 11 percent (USD 2.2 billion) was from UNDP regular resources. The vast majority of other resources were from donor countries (65 percent of the total for the period 2008-2012), with local (programme country) resources accounting for approximately 23 percent.

III. FINDINGS ON PERFORMANCE

EFFECTIVENESS

Although assessing performance across the organization is challenging, it is nonetheless possible to identify some broad findings related to effectiveness and the factors affecting it. Evidence on performance largely comes from analysis and synthesis of evaluations that in turn base their assessments on contribution to national outcomes. Delivering the intended change in an outcome ultimately depends upon the actions of a wide range of stakeholders. Given the nature of what UNDP provides, successful delivery of UNDP results is likely to reveal constraints elsewhere as much as within the organization.

Finding 1. In terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas.

Country office self-reporting through the results-oriented annual report (ROAR) suggests that the majority of outcomes were achieved (15 percent) or on track (78 percent) at the time of reporting over the period 2008–2012. Very few were reported as being off-track across all regions. The evidence from the meta-synthesis of Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) is less positive. While it indicates that in most cases outputs of projects and programmes are delivered, in terms of the effectiveness of contributions, the overall rating suggests that in just over half of the country programmes, UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcome in most of its programme. Although the ADRs use the same framework of outcomes as the ROARs, they make an assessment at the end of the programming cycle rather than on an annual basis.

No significant variation of performance across the four UNDP focus areas was found in the ADR analysis. This finding is also consistent with evidence from self-reporting through the ROAR and suggests that the major factors affecting the UNDP contribution are not particularly related to the broad goal areas in which it works. However, in practice, the focus areas each encompass a wide range of areas of support, and the evidence suggests that there may be significant variations in performance across the corporate outcomes. Evidence from the ADRs also suggests that, given the nature of what UNDP does, the outcomes to which it is supposed to contribute take time to achieve and will be unpredictable. Hence, to the extent possible, UNDP support, both in terms of what it does and how, needs to be embedded in a keen appreciation of the overall context. The need to understand context in turn makes it challenging to judge whether performance, in the short to medium term, has been good or bad.

Finding 2. A major reason for non-delivery of planned outputs is the under-resourcing of projects due to the earmarked nature of funds.

UNDP financial data show that most country programmes are successful in mobilizing more resources than the expectations reflected in the country programme documents. What these aggregate figures mask, however, is the imbalance in resource mobilization across outcomes or outputs. Clearly for an organization relying on core resources for only 11 percent of its programme expenditure, programming becomes a major challenge. Inevitably at the point when the country programme starts, only a portion of the funds required to deliver against it is assured. The outcome statements and supporting outputs across the country programme results frameworks are therefore, to varying degrees, statements of intent. What evidence is available from evaluations suggests that a major reason for non-delivery of outputs is often the lack of resources that can be mobilized for them.

Finding 3. In order to increase effectiveness, learning needs to be strengthened at the country level and across the organization.

Support to national efforts to learn about what works, in what contexts and for whom is essential if UNDP is to increase its effectiveness. A number of thematic evaluations – on local governance and on national capacity development – have noted poor learning by the organization. The recent evaluation of the UNDP contribution to poverty reduction concluded that UNDP poverty reduction is seriously compromised by the absence of adequate support to learning about what works and why. In most regional programme evaluations, although the potential for the regional programmes to promote more effective knowledge management is noted, they have not fully lived up to that potential. The evaluation of the global programme concluded that knowledge production and sharing is not considered a strategic programming priority and is not internalized as part of programming.

EFFICIENCY

As part of its efforts to enhance organizational efficiency UNDP monitors the management efficiency ratio (total management expenditure divided by total management and programme expenditure). Since the start of the Strategic Plan the organization has been consistently above target. Yet, while it may be interesting to monitor this from a management perspective, from a development one, it can mask differences in the business models used by different units. The following analysis therefore takes a different approach and distinguishes between two types of efficiency: First, administrative efficiency, based on timeliness in executing programmes, use of human resources and use of management information systems. Second, programmatic efficiency, based on the extent to which UNDP has or has not prioritized and concentrated its programme on a set of core activities rather than a fragmented set of programmes/projects that strain its capacity to manage efficiently. However, the treatment of efficiency in the evaluations is inconsistent, both in terms of depth of analysis and sharing of a common understanding, so the evidence is only sufficient for flagging major areas of concern rather than making a definitive judgement of where the problems lie across a sample of country programmes.

Finding 4. Even though measuring UNDP efficiency is difficult, the existing evidence is that strengthening the efficiency of projects and programmes is a major challenge.

The meta-synthesis revealed that a large number of country programmes face challenges with getting projects started on time. Once implementation starts, timely disbursement of funds is often a problem. A further administrative problem identified in evaluations is that UNDP does not maintain adequate oversight of the projects/programmes. Overall, the ADRs suggest that there are three major causes of inefficiency of administration:

(a) UNDP administrative systems are too complex to operate efficiently, especially in fast-moving situations. However, whether it is actually the complexity of the systems or a lack of capacity to use them is open to question, as some country programmes can apparently operate them efficiently and not all projects/programmes encounter problems;

(b) In some cases, UNDP staff and partners at the project/programme level do not have the requisite skills to operate the systems. This is a particular problem in scenarios where project managers get drawn into resolving the administrative issues with the projects;

(c) Some UNDP offices have a portfolio with many small projects/programmes, and given that there is a fixed cost associated with each project/programme, irrespective of size, this negatively affects capacity within the office.

The causes outlined seem to suggest that inefficiency to some degree reflects a series of trade-offs being made by management. For example, country offices, on the one hand, are assessed against the degree to which funds are spent on time. On the other hand, in order to strengthen national ownership they have also increasingly moved to national implementation of projects and programmes. Hence, UNDP efficiency at the project/programme level increasingly becomes a function of the capacity of national partners. Context, therefore, becomes a key factor in determining efficiency. This is something that can only be assessed at the country level, and not through summary indicators that are aggregated at the corporate level.

Finding 5. In terms of programming efficiency, most of the country programme portfolios are not prioritized and not focused on a set of core activities.

Since the start of the Strategic Plan, there has been a decline in the number of outcomes reported on each year, from an average of 8.7 per country programme to 7.4. This indicates a move in the right direction and a small increase in focus in terms of the number of outcomes. More importantly, there has been a significant decline of nearly 50 percent in the number of project IDs (i.e., outputs) in country portfolios. By themselves, these findings indicate a more focused organization, but macro-level aggregated data hide some of the subtleties of analysis undertaken at the country level through the ADRs. This analysis finds that, although UNDP country programmes are aligned to the broad outcomes specified in the Strategic Plan, most of the country programme portfolios are not prioritized and focused on a set of central activities appropriate to the strengths and capacities of the office. Instead, the ADRs find a fragmented set of programmes/projects that the country office cannot manage efficiently. Three reasons explain the proliferation of unfocused programmes:

(a) In over half of the country programmes (14 out of the 26 programmes with information), it reflected the difficulty in implementing a more programmatic approach. To varying degrees this also reflected the challenge with managing the UNDP wish to be responsive to national demands (which is consistently identified as one of the organization's strengths) with the ability to decline a request for support based on a lack of capacity. Country offices interviewed noted that this is often easier said than done.

(b) In a third of the country programmes (8 out 26), setting of unrealistic programme objectives relative to the level of funding available was identified as the problem.

(c) Lastly, three ADRs reported that country programmes reflected a programming approach dominated by the search for funds rather than programmatic logic.

Operationalizing this strategic programmatic approach remains a challenge for many country programmes, as it involves trade-offs. For example, the ADRs consistently highlight UNDP responsiveness to government requests as a strength of the organization, yet the evidence suggests that if taken too far, it often seems to lead to portfolios dominated by small projects that appear unfocused and strain the already slim management and technical capacity of UNDP at the country level and hence adversely affect its longer-term effectiveness.

SUSTAINABILITY

Almost by definition when looking at the activities conducted since 2008, it will be too early to make a judgement on the sustainability of many of them. The assessment therefore focused on the likelihood of sustainability, and specifically, whether UNDP projects implemented strategies to manage possible threats to the sustainability of results. The findings below may well refer to the period before the start of the Strategic Plan, but even though the problem of sustainability has been reported for some time, there is no evidence of a concerted effort to address the fundamental issues that surround it in the ADRs. This is notwithstanding efforts undertaken in UNDP headquarters to address the issue of sustainability of results through monitoring sustainability and creating necessary incentives.

Finding 6. Programmes are seldom designed with sustainability in mind. The UNDP funding model also adds to the sustainability challenge.

UNDP invests significant resources in country programming and ensuring that its programmes are aligned with national priorities and government policy. In addition, UNDP has increasingly attempted to use the national implementation modality in its projects, on the assumption that this will enhance both national ownership and capacity, thus leading to enhanced sustainability.

The overall finding from examination of ADRs is that the likelihood of the sustainability of the outcomes to which UNDP is contributing is poor. The assessment reflects a number of issues common across the country programmes:

(a) The sustainability of results is rarely considered in detail as part of the selection and design process. Nor is there evidence of management for enhanced sustainability being a major focus of project/programme management. In no ADR was a country programme identified in which consideration of exit strategies had been explicitly mainstreamed across the portfolio of support as a matter of course.

(b) Since UNDP has no control over its resources in the long term, sustainability of the benefits is often related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and is therefore often at risk. In the case of many of the community-based interventions, support was often withdrawn before community-level capacity had been established.

(c) In the country programmes examined, the more strategic approach to capacity development found in UNDP internal guidance was not found in most cases.

IV. FINDINGS ON USE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan contains all the elements expected in a stand-alone strategic planning document, although it should be assumed that it would be implemented through the overall corporate-level planning and other systems. The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan therefore depends upon whether these other systems are in place, how the Strategic Plan interacts with them and the effectiveness of these systems.

Finding 7. UNDP has established, and is in the process of strengthening, a comprehensive strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core.

The midterm review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2010/2011 was used by UNDP to operationalize its commitment to the Executive Board to improve how it monitors and reports on results under the Strategic Plan and to be responsive to partner feedback and evidence from evaluations and other sources. As already noted, it resulted in the approval of new results frameworks, but it also set the basis for further reform of strategic planning in UNDP. In April 2011 the UNDP Administrator launched the Agenda for Organizational Change, and UNDP embarked on "a multifaceted agenda to lift performance – from good to great". As a core part of achieving the Agenda results, UNDP rolled out a substantially upgraded corporate strategic planning system in the last quarter of 2011. The system builds upon and integrates several existing tools and processes. It was proposed to develop the system progressively during 2011–2013 so that it is fully functioning in time for the next Strategic Plan, starting in 2014. The main ideas introduced include: (a) the Annual Business Plan – a flexible and adaptable tool that can identify year after year what it will take to deliver on the results in the Strategic Plan; and (b) an integrated budget that will bring together regular and other resources.

PROVIDING DIRECTION TO THE ORGANIZATION

Providing direction to the organization is seen as the core role of the Strategic Plan. This section examines how effective UNDP has been in this respect. Four specific elements of the Strategic Plan are examined: (a) focus areas; (b) core strategies; (c) mainstreaming efforts; and (d) areas where UNDP would not normally engage. Factors influencing those areas are also examined.

Finding 8. UNDP has been increasingly successful in aligning its work to the four broad focus areas.

All streams of evidence indicate that the description of areas of UNDP support in the Strategic Plan, paragraphs 71 to 121, is an accurate representation of the areas in which UNDP works. From the 30 country programmes examined through ADRs, there is little evidence of substantial UNDP support outside these areas. That is confirmed by evidence from the ERBM system, which shows a decrease in non-aligned outcomes from nearly 4 percent of the total in 2008 to 1 percent in 2012. Consistent with the above, a high degree of alignment is the dominant perception across all cohorts of interviewees. Many of those interviewed, however, commented that the mandate is so broad that virtually anything can be aligned to it within the focus areas.

Finding 9. UNDP has put in place systems to actively manage greater implementation of some, but not all, of the core strategies identified in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan included a number of approaches that the organization was expected to implement. As UNDP is currently managed, if implementation of an approach is a priority, one would expect to find: (a) a clear statement (definition) of what needs to be implemented; (b) guidance to managers on how it is expected to be implemented; and (c) a system in place that allows senior management to check whether it has been implemented and what adjustments need to be made to overcome challenges. The evidence suggests that this method has not been adopted by UNDP for several key strategies highlighted in the Strategic Plan.

UNDP has not put in place systems to actively encourage a human development-based

programming approach across the organization or to check that it is used. While human development may implicitly be considered in programming processes, there is no evidence of an explicit and systematic approach to programming based on its principles. Although it can be argued that the idea of human development is so strong that programming is automatically based on its principles and goals, the absence of systems that explicitly set out what is different when using a human development-based programming approach would suggest that gaining buy-in from partners would be challenging.

In contrast, UNDP does have a definition of what it understands capacity development to mean and has issued extensive guidance on how to approach this issue. In 2011 UNDP introduced the 'capacity development tracker' to monitor the implementation of capacity development activities. Along with the tracker, substantial work has been done to increase the support to practitioners on better measurement of results through the guidance note on measuring capacity development and the introduction of capacity development questions in the ROAR. Despite the fact that the UNDP approach to supporting capacity development clearly and consistently highlights that a strategic approach must be undertaken, there is little evidence from independent evaluations that this approach has been systematically implemented across most UNDP work. Evidence from the thematic and ADR evaluations is consistent in this regard. Capacity development is still, in most cases, perceived in terms of provision of training. Four of the thematic evaluations explicitly indicate, however, that UNDP can implement the approach intended and that it adds value.

Although the definition of national ownership as used in the international development community can be ambiguous, in the Strategic Plan it refers to ownership by governments of programme countries. UNDP provides guidance on engaging with government in the programming, project development and project implementation processes. This engagement is aimed at promoting national ownership, and such processes are monitored. The Strategic Plan also sees national implementation as vital for enhancing national ownership. And although national implementation is the default modality for UNDP, between 2008 and 2012 the proportion of total procurement using this modality was consistently half of the total (by value). The ADRs show that while national implementation may be necessary for true national ownership, by itself it does not appear to be sufficient to ensure it.

Aid effectiveness is included in the Strategic Plan among the other strategies and context of this analysis it is assumed that it is an approach aimed at promoting internationally agreed agreements on aid effectiveness, i.e., dealing with the broader engagement of programme countries with international development cooperation rather than focusing on national ownership in UNDP engagement.

Although UNDP support in this area is provided on demand and not systematically to all country offices, guidance has been prepared for the programmatic interventions in the spirit of the aid effectiveness approach. In addition, UNDP has started to monitor the implementation of the aid effectiveness approach, and after the midterm review in 2011, the ROAR was revised to include relevant questions.

Finding 10. UNDP success with mainstreaming gender equality and South-South cooperation has been mixed.

Mainstreaming means making an idea practical by integrating it into everything the organization does. But to do this, there is a need for specific tools and guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives and benchmarks for achievement.

UNDP has made great efforts to support gender mainstreaming. The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011 describes in detail how UNDP can achieve each of its goals so as to take account of men's and women's specific needs, interests and contributions. As such, it parallels and amplifies the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and was designed to be read and implemented in conjunction with it. The Strategy includes practical tools to help programme units undertake mainstreaming. Other major efforts to strengthen mainstreaming include: (a) establishing the Gender Steering and Implementation Committee; (b) introducing the Gender Marker across the organization in 2010; and (c) introducing the Gender Equality Seal in 2011.

Since 2008, external assessments of UNDP performance have commended UNDP work in support of gender equality. In 2011, UNDP completed a review of the gender strategy, which had generally positive findings. Although data from the Gender Marker imply a steady increase in the gender content of UNDP projects since 2008, analysis of evaluations is consistent with the gender equality strategy review finding that, despite notable improvements, gender mainstreaming in project and programme activities remains uneven and ad hoc. Half of the 30 country programmes examined were rated as having successfully mainstreamed gender into the UNDP programme, and the evidence suggests that country programmes have indeed been taking more care to deal with gender issues. In the other half of the country programmes examined, the most frequently cited factor limiting gender mainstreaming into the programme was the absence of a systematic approach to gender analysis during programme design. In general, findings/conclusions from the thematic evaluations broadly support those found in the ADRs.

The recent evaluation of South-South cooperation found that UNDP has a strong comparative advantage in supporting and facilitating such cooperation. UNDP could play an important and critical role in supporting programme countries to scale up successful South-South initiatives. Moreover, UNDP brokering of South-South knowledge exchanges and learning experiences has produced immediate and short-term benefits for participants, with the potential to evolve into more institutional and country benefits. It has also contributed to regional integration efforts, for example, within the African Peer Review Mechanism. Country ROARs indicate that South-South cooperation has now been integrated into UNDP country programmes worldwide: Reports show that in 2011 support to South-South cooperation was reflected in 645 of 995 country outcomes in 152 countries.

Notwithstanding the above, in terms of implementing the approach set out in the Strategic Plan to mainstream South-South cooperation within programmes, the evaluation found uneven progress. Since the start of the Strategic Plan, UNDP has made several efforts to formulate a South-South cooperation strategy that would help mainstream support to such cooperation, but these efforts have not yielded concrete results. Various monitoring mechanisms have been initiated during the Strategic Plan by UNDP management, but while these efforts are commendable, they need to be further strengthened. There is much good will among UNDP personnel towards increased integration of South-South cooperation into UNDP operations at the country and regional levels, but the lack of dedicated resources and budgets, specific tools and operational guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives, benchmarks and incentives for achievement was found to produce practical shortfalls.

Finding 11. UNDP country offices often do things the Strategic Plan states they should not normally do; specifically, undertaking downstream activities with no linkages to policy reform.

The Strategic Plan identifies a number of activities in which UNDP should not engage. In 25 of the 30 country programmes examined, such activities were a major or significant component. UNDP generally did not engage in specialized sectoral activities or provision of infrastructure with no capacity-building, suggesting that the organization has respected these two directions. The key issue is that the Strategic Plan specifically directs that the organization should not normally engage in small-scale projects without country-wide impact. UNDP leadership has repeatedly instructed country offices to address this issue since 2009, although it will take time before it will be possible to see whether and how country programmes have responded to these instructions.

Evidence from evaluations conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012, however, confirms that management is correct to focus on this issue, as they indicate that the degree of alignment to this Strategic Plan direction remains unsatisfactory. Overall, the evidence suggests that UNDP country offices do not usually select and design downstream projects to maximize the production of credible evidence that can then be used to influence policy dialogues. In addition, with some notable exceptions, many country programmes do not seem to invest enough in assessing whether the conditions are in place that would mean that a pilot would be well-received. Looking to the future, the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy is supporting a more integrated and strategic approach to scaling up local development and local governance interventions that may have wider lessons on how the organization can address this issue.

Finding 12. The trade-offs between corporate priorities and the demands of programme partners and competing programming frameworks have added challenges to UNDP use of the Strategic Plan in providing direction.

Informants from all cohorts recognize the challenge facing UNDP in the trade-off between, on the one hand, corporate priorities and focus, and on the other, responding to the demands of programme countries and opportunities for resource mobilization. Yet while recognizing the trade-off, many Executive Board members and some UNDP managers believe UNDP should be more focused, more disciplined and better at saying no. Similarly, many believe UNDP should be more strategic, looking for areas where it can really make a difference rather than focusing on resource mobilization. The role of the Strategic Plan is also complicated by the fact that it is not the only strategy that affects programming intentions at the country level. For example, country offices interviewed noted the importance of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process as the starting point for country programming, and this issue is taken further in the next finding.

COMMUNICATING UNDP FOCUS AND STRENGTHS

The Strategic Plan notes that it should play a role in communicating the focus areas and areas of UNDP comparative strength. Its ability to do so can also be included among the factors influencing UNDP senior management's ability to provide direction to the organization.

Finding 13. The Strategic Plan was important for communicating internally between UNDP management and the Executive Board but was less effective in communicating across all of UNDP's partners.

The Strategic Plan was successful, but to differing degrees, in communicating its role internally and externally. There was a common understanding of its role in setting out the mandate, vision and/or strategic focus of the organization.

It also provided direction in terms of the four focus areas. Views on how it should be used to communicate these are more varied. Executive Board members and UNDP senior management interviewed generally agree that UNDP has not been able to communicate enough about what it stands for. Given this situation, UNDP developed additional tools to help in this area, especially strengthening its web presence (including at the country level), using social media and disseminating its illustrated annual report. UNDP monitors whether the country office website is updated and reflects key UNDP priorities, but the data show that UNDP country offices are below the corporate targets in this respect. Country offices appear to see little use for the Strategic Plan for communicating with external partners even when programming. There is also a perception at the country level that the visibility and importance of the Strategic Plan have declined over time.

PROMOTING GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

The implementation of the Strategic Plan has also coincided with increased demand for accountability by taxpayers in countries providing resources to UNDP and in turn by the development agencies of these countries. This demand has been captured in the idea of value for money and the need for greater clarity on reporting results.

Finding 14. Accountability through monitoring and reporting of performance under the Strategic Plan has improved over time.

UNDP has made efforts to strengthen the performance monitoring system since the approval of the Strategic Plan. In 2007 the Evaluation Office undertook an evaluation of results-based management in UNDP, and implementation of the recommendations set the basis for developing a stronger system and culture of results in the organization. The new results framework introduced after the midterm review was generally well received by Executive Board

members. Of those interviewees who addressed the question, most believed that UNDP has become a more results-oriented organization. This is a good example of the importance of commitment by leadership in pushing forward an important reform agenda. Continuous efforts have been made to strengthen the reporting process during the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Accountability has been strengthened by the important progress UNDP has made during the present Strategic Plan period in terms of the transparency of its operations and performance. UNDP senior management is cognizant of the problems with reporting and clearly senses the frustration of many Executive Board members who have issues with the system.

Finding 15. The system of decentralized evaluation is not working well, and while steps have been taken to improve overall utilization of evaluation, it is not as high as it could be.

There were a total of nearly 1,300 UNDP decentralized evaluations (including UNDAF evaluations) uploaded onto the Evaluation Resources Centre between 2008 and 2012, which means an average of approximately 9 per country office over the five-year period. Coverage by decentralized evaluations between 2008 and 2012 across the four focus areas has been quite even. Decentralized evaluation by programme units remains weak, and of all decentralized evaluations that were assessed in 2012 only 30 percent rated in the satisfactory or highly satisfactory categories (a large increase from 20 percent the previous year). UNDP management has made important efforts since the start of the Strategic Plan to increase utilization of evaluation. For example, independent evaluations that are due to be presented to the Executive Board are discussed in regular senior management meetings together with their management responses. In addition, implementing actions set out in management responses can be used as a proxy for assessing evaluation utilization. According to the data on management responses to independent

evaluations available in the Evaluation Resources Centre, there has been insufficient effort to do so. Of the 52 ADRs conducted between 2008 and 2012, 15 percent of all actions are ongoing (with a due date) and overdue. For thematic evaluations, the figure is 31 percent.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. Overall, UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the Strategic Plan was approved. It also faces a very different context than five years ago, including stronger demands and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. In terms of development performance, UNDP has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas, but efficiency and sustainability remain challenging.

It was found that in terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas. Within the broad focus areas within which it works, some themes are clearly strengths. Examples of the areas where UNDP works well can be identified from recent thematic evaluations:

(a) UNDP has made an important contribution to national efforts aimed at pro-poor policy development in most of the programme countries where it works. In particular, it has helped strengthen the pro-poor enabling environment for policymaking, and this type of support remains a comparative strength for the organization in many countries.

(b) UNDP is one of very few international organizations able to operate 'at scale' across multiple programme areas, before, during and after the outbreak of conflict. This work directly links to the broader UNDP emphasis on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to UNDP cross-cutting priorities, such as women's empowerment.

(c) UNDP has made significant contributions to strengthening electoral systems and processes. The UNDP framework for electoral assistance is well conceived and enables an effective response, if applied appropriately.

(d) UNDP remains an important conduit for development funding. This is particularly clear in the case of partnership with global funds, where strategic, corporate level linkages are cultivated and maintained.

UNDP is not alone in facing the challenges of efficiency and sustainability. In supporting national ownership of the implementation process, inevitably UNDP will not be in control of the implementation process and to some extent the degree of management efficiency. Equally, sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributes is often beyond its control, and capacities and incentives need to be introduced to ensure that this issue is considered at the time of design. Moreover, both efficiency and sustainability are difficult to measure and context specific.

Conclusion 2. Through various initiatives centred on the Agenda for Organizational Change, UNDP has strengthened the overall strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core. There is still much to do, and while the Agenda for Organizational Change explicitly noted the need to start with headquarters and regional centres, the move to strengthen country offices and to clarify roles and responsibilities at all three levels is urgent.

It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the Agenda for Organizational Change as the umbrella for a series of reforms aimed at strengthening UNDP organization and management. Nonetheless, UNDP management has started

an effective process to take forward the Strategic Plan and strengthen the planning and management systems that surround it. This is especially important given the nature of the Strategic Plan as a political, and therefore negotiated, document that did not please all factions within the Executive Board and is, inevitably, the result of compromise. UNDP by design is a highly decentralized organization, and it is clearly at the country level where the greatest contribution is made. It is also here where capacities – as much institutional as individual – are often weakest. Limited learning at the country level, and therefore by default between countries and regions, is an important constraint affecting UNDP organizational and development performance. If UNDP is truly to become a learning organization, then extra efforts will need to be made and appropriate incentives and capacities introduced at the country level.

Conclusion 3. UNDP effectively used the Strategic Plan to direct the organization towards the four broad focus areas, but implementation of all the approaches at the programming level as intended in the Strategic Plan document (for example, the human development-based approach to programming and mainstreaming South-South cooperation) was not ensured. Even where major efforts were made (such as in gender mainstreaming and capacity development) incentives and capacities to ensure country-level implementation were not adequate.

Although capacity-building and development represent the overarching contribution of UNDP, the organization has not been successful in adapting these approaches to the wide range of contexts within which it works. Moreover, the UNDP strategy and its component parts have led to fragmentation in programming due to the lack of a unifying principle, even though the Strategic Plan explicitly stated that this should be human development. All the elements of a

useful strategic planning tool are there to enable the organization to take a strategic management approach. The Strategic Plan document set out the goals, approaches and priorities and a framework to facilitate accountability in achieving or implementing them. As far as capacity development and gender mainstreaming are concerned, the organization made great efforts to design tools and guidance for country offices. But in other cases – South-South cooperation, human development – neither of these essential elements of success was developed sufficiently to comply with the approach set out in the Strategic Plan. Yet while UNDP has made efforts to develop tools and guidance at headquarters, these efforts have not been sufficient to ensure that country offices and other programming units have implemented these approaches. This has implications for support, oversight and country-level incentive structures.

Conclusion 4. UNDP did not adequately support country offices in addressing the trade-offs between the approaches and/or priorities identified in the Strategic Plan, for example, the trade-offs between national ownership and organizational priorities or between long-term capacity development needs and short-term results.

While the Strategic Plan sets the direction, UNDP management needs to address the inherent trade-offs that it contains. Basing the scope of UNDP work on existing demand does not preclude different demands in the future. At the same time, while the focus areas are based on demand, the approaches contained in the Strategic Plan may not be. For example, the importance of responding to national demands may also have reduced the incentives to ensure implementation of corporate approaches. These may also be reasons for the continuation of downstream projects with little link to policy. National demand may also result in a programme that is too broad to be efficiently managed or for

which appropriate capacities are not available at the local level. Greater guidance needs to be developed to help country offices address tensions between national demand (however defined) and organizational goals. At the same time, UNDP's comparative strengths lie not just in its technical areas but also in its long-term commitment, flexibility and speed through country-level decision-making. As a result of the long-term approach, UNDP has the potential to engage in complex capacity development initiatives and to support national learning from different strategies. Both these areas have presented challenges to UNDP.

Conclusion 5. UNDP funding arrangements and reliance on non-core funding present challenges to effective programming and limit performance as assessed by the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability criteria.

While UNDP is committed to long-term engagement with programme countries, it has no control over its resources in the long term. In some circumstances, sustainability of benefits can be related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and can therefore be at risk. Effectiveness was seen to be affected by the difficulty in mobilizing adequate resources to undertake activities contributing to specific outcomes. Moreover, the reliance on largely unpredictable non-core resources results in challenges to maintaining programme focus. This is especially true when country offices struggle to maintain a critical mass of staff with limited core resources, making the imperative to mobilize resources very strong. This challenge presented by the funding model is so important that the logic of having a country programme in a situation where only a small percentage of resources can be programmed needs to be examined. Keeping within the framework of the UNDAF and focusing on projects (and by default results in terms of project outcomes) may be a more appropriate approach. This could be especially effective where UNDP country offices are focused on only a few core initiatives in which they are able to exploit their comparative strengths and develop appropriate partnerships.

Conclusion 6. The performance monitoring and reporting system has been strengthened over time. Yet it is not optimal for a highly decentralized organization working on complex development issues where context is extremely important. This is an issue at the heart of its performance monitoring and reporting challenges. To create a more appropriate performance monitoring and assessment system, the country programme should be the unit of analysis.

An adequate system to assess performance across the organization is an essential part of the management of any organization. The decentralized nature of the organization, very rare among development organizations, is a major strength; it allows UNDP the flexibility to adapt to different contexts and greater national ownership of programmes. Yet it also requires a different approach to monitoring, and one where context plays a role. Such an approach is logically consistent with the Executive Board-approved country programme document and with the country programme action plan as the nationally owned basis of implementing the programme. Accountability to government is already facilitated though annual country programme action plan meetings, a system run in parallel to the annual reporting process to UNDP senior management, and, through the annual report of the Administrator, to the Executive Board.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The new Strategic Plan needs to be clear about the direction it wants UNDP to take, and UNDP management needs to ensure that adequate tools are put in place to support and monitor implementation of the strategies and priorities contained in the plan.

A key conclusion was that efforts to implement priorities and approaches were mixed and not carefully monitored from the start of the Plan. Even though the role of the Plan is to provide direction, the role of UNDP management is to operationalize and implement this direction through ensuring clarity of concepts and approaches, developing tools such as guidance and monitoring its implementation. Yet, the examples of capacity development and gender mainstreaming suggest that guidance and monitoring are not enough to ensure implementation of the approaches identified in the Strategic Plan. Even combined with strong leadership the central actions are necessary but not sufficient to guarantee implementation.

Recommendation 2. The new Strategic Plan needs to explicitly address the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model.

The UNDP comparative strengths are not just in parts of its focus areas but, inter alia, in its long-term commitment and in general its position as a trusted partner. These are elements of an underlying 'theory' of how UNDP works that is operationalized through a business model. The trade-offs faced by UNDP are inherent in any business model and need to be made transparent with decisions made by the Executive Board as to the UNDP position. Specifically, agreement must be reached on the trade-offs in two areas: first, between national ownership and organizational priorities, with clear organizational approaches, strategies and focus combined with guidance for programme units when faced with a potential trade-off; and second, between addressing long-term capacity development needs and short-term results, which requires a review of the incentives faced by programme units when reporting on results and the investments in innovation, learning and adaptation that are required if long-term capacity development is to be effectively supported.

Recommendation 3. The new Strategic Plan should emphasize the priority of support at the country level and explicitly recognize that no matter how good the work is at the centre, it is at the country level where the difference is being made.

Effective support to strengthening country offices must be the priority of UNDP central and regional support. Taking into account context variability, the generation of coherent policy support needs to be anchored at the regional level. For its central research function, in the spirit of One United Nations and to prevent duplication of work, UNDP should work more closely with the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs and the United Nations University. Moreover, to overcome the tendency to work in silos, sustainable human development as a unifying principle should be explicitly at the centre of country-level programming. Practical support and guidance need to be provided to ensure that this becomes a reality.

Recommendation 4. When assessing performance, the new Strategic Plan needs to take the country programme as the unit of analysis. This will allow a more realistic and meaningful assessment, taking into account the country-level context.

In complex development situations and areas of intervention, the role of context is vital in determining performance. The contexts and areas in which UNDP works can only be fully internalized if performance assessment is made at the country level (i.e., the country programme). Taking the country level as the unit of analysis for performance in terms of contribution to outcomes would still require country office reporting on approaches and outputs for aggregation at the corporate level. Moreover, a focus on the country programme would allow the monitoring and evaluation systems to be vertically integrated so that selected independent evaluations could validate (or not) the performance assessment made through the monitoring system.

CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made its first corporate plan available to the Executive Board at its annual session in 1995.[1] Two years later it started developing a planning and results management system that led to the first Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) in 2000. The UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013[2] is the latest corporate planning tool in this series. The evaluation of the Plan was originally included in the UNDP Evaluation Office work programme presented to the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009.[3]

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purposes of the independent evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013 are to support UNDP's accountability to the Executive Board by providing evidence-based analysis and to provide input for the development of the new Strategic Plan. This is not an evaluation of the content of the current Strategic Plan but instead of UNDP's organizational and development performance during the first five years of implementing the Plan. To facilitate design and management of the evaluation, work was divided into two components, each with an associated evaluation question.

The first component was an assessment of UNDP performance, answering the question: How has UNDP performed during the period of the Strategic Plan relative to the strategic intent expressed in the Plan's goals? The evaluation makes this assessment based on the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation does not assess the relevance of the Strategic Plan, as it is assumed to be relevant at the corporate level.[4]

The second component was an organizational assessment of UNDP's use of the Strategic Plan, answering the question: How effectively has UNDP used the Strategic Plan to strengthen the management of its contribution to development results? This includes assessment of UNDP work in enhancing its comprehensive strategic planning system and then using the Strategic Plan to direct the organization (in terms of its priorities, focus areas and approaches) and strengthen organizational accountability.

UNDP support to the Resident Coordinator function was not included in the scope of the evaluation for reasons of feasibility and utility. Mandated by the General Assembly, the Resident Coordinator function extends beyond UNDP alone and has implications for the entire United Nations system. It has also been recently assessed through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and other system-wide mechanisms, the results of which will feed directly into the development of this function within a new strategic plan. In addition, the evaluation does not cover the work of the associated funds and

---

[1] As noted in UNDP, 'Initiatives for Change: Follow-up to Decision 95/22, Paragraph 4' (DP/1996/2).

[2] When approved the Strategic Plan was to cover the period 2008–2011, but it was then extended to 2013 by Executive Board decision 2009/9.

[3] Executive Board decision DP/2009/13.

[4] However, relevance was examined when identified as a factor determining the organization's contribution at country level.

programmes, namely the United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Volunteers and, until end-2010, the United Nations Fund for Women.

1.2 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Given its wide scope, the evaluation is inevitably a hybrid of the types of evaluations that the UNDP Evaluation Office normally undertakes, which include organizational, programmatic and thematic studies. Given the complexity of the subject being evaluated, an iterative approach has been taken to gathering multiple perspectives, allowing for measurement and understanding of past performance. However, this is not a comprehensive evaluation of UNDP performance over the period of the Strategic Plan, since, for reasons made clear in the report, such a task would be difficult. The evaluation instead analyses whether and how major commitments brought together under the Strategic Plan have delivered against their stated intent. It also traces the logic of how the Strategic Plan is supposed to influence what UNDP does and then examines the evidence of how this affects UNDP's contribution to results, and whether these have been delivered efficiently and are likely to be sustainable. The overall approach, therefore, has been to make evaluative judgements as to UNDP performance and contribution within both of the components of the evaluation, and, where possible, to identify the factors that can explain UNDP's performance and positioning, within the context of the Strategic Plan.

Overview of data collection, analysis and synthesis. Multiple sources of evidence and

techniques – mainly qualitative but also drawing upon reliable quantitative data, where available – were used to provide and validate evidence against the evaluation questions and to reach judgements. The sources included:

- A meta-synthesis of evidence from independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office between 2010 and 2012, including 30 country-level assessments of development results (ADRs), 10 thematic evaluations and evaluations of the 5 regional programmes and the global programme. The full list of evaluations covered by the meta-synthesis can be found in Annex 4.[5]

- Interviews with individuals from three cohorts of stakeholders: Executive Board members, UNDP senior management and UNDP country office management.[6] A full list of persons interviewed can be found in Annex 2.

- Document review and administrative data analysis. A full list of documents consulted as well as administrative data sources can be found in Annex 3. Extensive use was also made of information from the Enhanced Results Based Management (ERBM) system, and findings were compared, where relevant, with evidence from donor reviews.

- In some cases – for example, when looking at the strategic intent of the country programme – it was important to look at country programme documents (CPDs) that were approved during the period covered by the Strategic Plan. The analysis therefore

---

[5] The original design included a set of decentralized evaluations in the meta-synthesis, but there were too few evaluations assessed as satisfactory, especially at the country level. The regional and global programme evaluations were added to the meta-synthesis instead. While independent evaluations were also used in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan (DP/2011/22), this evaluation uses a body of more recent reports. As a result, only 5 of the 46 evaluations used were also used in the midterm review.

[6] The original approach had been to include other development partners including global and regional organizations, but limited time precluded this from taking place.

included a review of these CPDs, recognizing that they are no more than a statement of intent. In other cases it is assumed that the Strategic Plan approaches apply to ongoing programmes as well as new ones, and therefore analysis of the former is still valid when making assessments.

The independent evaluation was conducted during preparation of a cumulative review of the Strategic Plan by UNDP management. It relies less on self-reported evidence and more on independent evaluations than the cumulative review and so can be seen as complementary.

Methodological challenges. The approach first recognizes the difficulty of capturing the effects of very recent initiatives through analysis of evaluations that, in some cases, were completed before the reforms were implemented. This issue is managed by verifying the results of the meta-synthesis with the analysis of interviews and administrative/ERBM data. This approach helps reconcile discrepancies between the different sources of evidence.

A second possible challenge is that the evaluations used as building blocks for the present analysis did not specifically set out to identify the added value of the Strategic Plan. In many cases they examined performance over a period that may have started before the current Strategic Plan was agreed. This would have been a fundamental challenge if the intention had been to produce a comprehensive evaluation of UNDP performance over the period of the Strategic Plan. However, the directions and priorities expressed in the Strategic Plan should have been used by UNDP managers to reorient ongoing programmes during the periods evaluated in all of the evaluations included. As such, the evaluations do allow assessment of (a) how the Strategic Plan has influenced what UNDP intends to do; (b) whether and how this affects UNDP's contribution to results; and (c) whether these intentions have been delivered efficiently and are likely to be sustainable.

Given UNDP's presence in over 135 country offices serving 177 countries and territories, it is vital to ensure that the evaluation adequately covers the full range of UNDP work. The evaluation made use of evidence gathered through the conduct of independent evaluations covering more than half of UNDP's country, regional, global and other programmes.[7] This is considered more than adequate for an evaluation aiming to draw conclusions and make recommendations on the value of the Strategic Plan and factors affecting UNDP's performance.

Finally, attempts to assess whether performance was significantly affected by country typologies and/or regions proved difficult to implement, and the final results were inconclusive. The major reasons for the difficulty included the lack of suitable and consistent evidence across the evaluations that would allow such analysis and accessible international data sets that could be used instead.

Management arrangements and process. The evaluation was conducted by the independent Evaluation Office of UNDP. Given its nature and the importance of the evaluation, it was conducted under the direction of the Evaluation Office Director, and the results were reported directly to the UNDP Executive Board. Evaluation Office staff members were responsible for specific components, supported by consultants and researchers. Two high-level development experts served as an external advisory panel, reporting directly to the Evaluation Office Director. They provided a substantive review of the draft evaluation.

---

[7]   This includes country coverage through thematic evaluation case studies.

A concept note was prepared at the start of the process and discussed with UNDP senior management and in an informal meeting of the Executive Board (August 2012). Based on feedback from these consultations, the terms of reference (Annex 1) were prepared. Feedback was provided to UNDP senior management during the process and to the Executive Board during a second informal meeting in January 2013.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The remainder of the report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 2 sets the context by introducing the content of the Strategic Plan being examined. This is followed by findings for each of the two components, in chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 brings together the major strategic conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2.

UNDP AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This chapter sets the context within which the evaluation was undertaken. It briefly describes the development and approval of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013, and then examines the content of the Strategic Plan and its various elements, from focus areas to financial resources. Strategic planning presents challenges in a highly decentralized organization. It is also challenging in the context of an organization that relies so much on local resource mobilization for funds to undertake its work, which has important implications for strategic programming at the country level. The following chapters will examine some of these issues and the trade-offs between strategic intent and the realities on the ground.

2.1   THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The original draft UNDP Strategic Plan for 2008-2011[8] was presented to the Executive Board at the annual session in 2007, but agreement was not reached on key issues contained in the draft. The current Plan was approved by the UNDP Executive Board at its annual session in June 2008 after a lengthy negotiation among Member States. The core area of dispute was over human rights and the role of UNDP in

this area. According to the official report of the annual meeting of the Executive Board[9] some delegations pointed out that UNDP, as a United Nations organization, has a continuing obligation to uphold respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Others urged UNDP to remain focused on its core development mandate, while steering clear of political conditionality in supporting capacity-development efforts as programme countries pursue achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The strategic planning process was also heavily influenced by the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of United Nations development activities,[10] specifically the TCPR approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007.[11] The Strategic Plan approved in June 2008 included an addendum containing the development and institutional results frameworks.[12] At the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009, a decision was made to extend the Strategic Plan to 2013.[13] The same decision led to alignment of the regional and global programmes with the Strategic Plan time frame.

---

[8]   UNDP, 'Draft Strategic Plan, 2008-2011: Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development' (DP/2007/19).

[9]   'Report of the Executive Board on its Work during 2008' (E/2008/35). The 2008 annual session was held in Geneva, 16–27 June 2008.

[10]   After the 2007 TCPR, the United Nations moved to a system of four-year reviews in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

[11]   United Nations, 'Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System' (A/RES/62/208).

[12]   UNDP, 'Strategic Plan, 2008-2011 Addendum 1: Development and Institutional Results Frameworks' (DP/2007/43/Add.1).

[13]   Executive Board Decision 2009/9.

2.2 CONTENT OF THE PLAN

The Strategic Plan for 2008–2013 demanded strategic focus, even while emphasizing that national leadership and ownership of development interventions are essential and that UNDP's programming must be 'demand driven'. It therefore recognized that implementation requires UNDP managers to strike a balance between the requirements set out in the Plan and what is specifically demanded, and feasible, within a specific regional or national context.

The Strategic Plan clearly defined two roles for UNDP. The first role was to support the coordination, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations system as a whole at the country level. As stated before, this is not considered further in this report. The second role was to provide policy and technical support to programme country governments. Several global and national-level development challenges were identified: increasing inequalities and inadequate sharing of the benefits of globalization; conflicts, disasters and epidemics that have derailed national development efforts; and environmental challenges. To fulfil its objective of working towards meeting the MDGs in this context, the Plan emphasized that UNDP would focus on using the human development framework in its programming and on ensuring South-South cooperation to reach the Goals. This reflected the perception that a comparative strength of UNDP lies in its holistic, cross-sectoral approach to human development. More specifically, the Strategic Plan document provided direction in the following broad themes.

Four focus areas. Based on an assessment of demand from countries and on UNDP's comparative strengths, the Plan identified four key areas in which UNDP should focus its work:

- Poverty reduction and the MDGs

- Democratic governance

- Environment and sustainable development

- Crisis prevention and recovery.

These together form a very broad and extensive menu of potential areas of support, and the Strategic Plan makes it clear that actual support within this broad menu should reflect national demands, with emphasis on the most appropriate and relevant ones for each context. Within each focus area, the Strategic Plan identified further areas of intervention that were translated into outcomes in the development results framework. In practice, the four focus areas are not very different from those in the previous MYFF and earlier planning documents (as indicated in Annex 6), reflecting UNDP's unaltered mandate.[14] It should also be noted that, although the Strategic Plan included a section on crisis prevention and recovery, the Executive Board approved a separate paper on the vision of its work in crisis-affected countries.[15]

Six key approaches. In addition to the areas of focus described above, the Strategic Plan was explicit about the approaches that UNDP should use in delivering that support. Table 1 sets out the approaches and indicates whether they were also included in the TCPR.

Most of these approaches were already included in the MYFF 2004–2007 and are long-standing strategies of UNDP and priorities of the General Assembly, as stated in successive TCPRs. The importance of national ownership, capacity development and gender equality stand out. Human development was described as the overarching

---

[14] The 16 key results areas within the Strategic Plan focus areas marked a distinct shift from the 32 service lines contained in the MYFF. They reflected greater organizational focus and greater inter-sectoral work, both important Strategic Plan objectives.

[15] UNDP, 'UNDP Strategic Vision on Assistance to Crisis-affected Countries' (DP/2007/20/Rev.1).

Table 1. Key Approaches Set Out in the Strategic Plan		
UNDP approach	**TCPR guidance[16]**	**Description**
Human development-based approach to programming	No	The Strategic Plan puts human development at the centre of its work and emphasizes that UNDP should take a human development-based approach to programming
National ownership	Yes	The Strategic Plan places great emphasis on the importance of national ownership as a core approach for UNDP. It states, for example, that "UNDP activities are based on the premise that governments have the primary responsibility for the development of their countries and for establishing and leading the national development agenda".
Capacity building and development	Yes	The Strategic Plan noted that capacity building and development is "the overarching contribution of UNDP".
Effective aid management	No	The Strategic Plan suggests that UNDP support to programme countries is characterized by support to effective aid management.
Mainstreaming South-South cooperation	Yes	The Strategic Plan not only states that it is dedicated to advancing South-South cooperation as a significant dimension of its contribution to the global partnership for development, but that it will also step up efforts "to mainstream South-South approaches in all focus areas".
Mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women	Yes	The Strategic Plan emphasizes the importance of gender and states that "UNDP will integrate a gender perspective into its four focus areas to increase development effectiveness".

vision in the MYFF but not as an approach to programming (although depending on one's interpretation these could be the same). South-South cooperation was less prominent in the MYFF and there was no commitment to mainstreaming it, as there was in the Strategic Plan.[17] Effective aid management appeared linked to national ownership and therefore was interpreted as an approach, not as a programmatic intervention.

Four-country typology and regional priorities. The Strategic Plan was explicit in recognizing the special needs of Africa, least-developed countries, land-locked developing countries and small island developing states, and in noting that these must be taken into consideration, especially with

regard to capacity development. It was not made clear how this was to be operationalized or what special consideration would entail.

Four areas where UNDP should not engage. The Strategic Plan clearly stated what UNDP should not normally engage in, specifically:

- Specialized sectoral activities

- Small-scale projects without countrywide impact

- Provision of infrastructure with no capacity-building

---

[16] This column indicates whether the TCPR includes the approach as a key direction for the United Nations development system as a whole.

[17] Although it was a driver of development in the previous MYFF 2000-2003.

- Stand-alone procurement of goods and services.

One caveat is that UNDP, as part of the United Nations country team response to national demand, will stand ready to serve as the 'provider of last resort' when specifically asked to do so in case of a national capacity deficit or crisis. Specifically, the Strategic Plan states:

> *Within the context of overall United Nations support for internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs; and, when requested by national governments, UNDP, after consultation with United Nations organizations that have a mandate for operational activities in their respective areas of work, may exceptionally provide support in areas outside the agreed focus areas.* (para 55)

2.3 ACCOUNTABILITY: RISKS, RESOURCES AND MANAGING FOR RESULTS

Managing for results: accountability risks and resources. The Strategic Plan set out the basis of the accountability framework, with accountability as "an overarching theme among UNDP management priorities". The details were established in a separate accountability framework approved by the Executive Board in 2008.[18] The Plan also noted that UNDP "is exposed to a broad range of environmental, financial, operational, programmatic, organizational, political, regulatory and strategic risks". As a result it set out the basis

of a risk management approach as an essential element of good corporate governance.

Integrated financial resources framework. To provide greater transparency on the use of UNDP resources, the Strategic Plan set out the integrated financial resources framework so that the Executive Board and other stakeholders could see a clear link between the strategic priorities outlined and the resources required to achieve them. The framework represents the overall funding target for the Strategic Plan, encompassing the resources that are contributed directly to UNDP and managed by it (UNDP resources[19]), as well as the resources that are administered by UNDP on behalf of the United Nations system (United Nations resources[20]). The plan therefore included regular resources[21] and other resources,[22] with a four-year programme budget (referred to as the 'programming arrangements') and a two-year support budget (referred to as the 'biennial support budget').

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting for accountability. The Strategic Plan specifically set out requirements and guidance for monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board and at the national level. The development results framework, included as an addendum to the Plan, was designed to capture the goals and outcomes that UNDP would work towards and contribute to over the Strategic Plan period. It was also meant to facilitate monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board on the UNDP contribution to those development results. For each of the four

---

[18]   UNDP, 'The UNDP Accountability System: Accountability Framework and Oversight Policy' (DP/2008/16/Rev.1).

[19]   UNDP resources directly support established development objectives and management priorities, as well as the UNDP role in coordinating United Nations development activities.

[20]   United Nations resources are entrusted to UNDP in its role as administrative agent for the United Nations system and are passed through to other United Nations entities.

[21]   Contributions to the UNDP core budget, which follow the criteria and appropriations established by the Executive Board.

[22]   Comprised of contributions earmarked to themes, countries, regions and/or specific projects, and broken down into three distinct categories based on their source: bilateral donor contributions, multilateral contributions and resources provided by programme countries for local development activities.

development goals, the framework presented the expected outcomes supported by UNDP upon request by programme countries, the UNDP outputs and activities, and the output indicators to be used in reporting on UNDP contributions. Requirements and guidance for decentralized and independent evaluations were also included.

In the final decision approving the Strategic Plan 2008–2011, the Executive Board did not approve outcome indicators as originally presented. Instead it approved a framework that includes (a) 34 outcome statements over the 4 mandated focus areas; (b) UNDP outputs/activities that characterize how the organization contributes to development results; and (c) 3 output indicators to be used in reporting on the UNDP contribution to national outcomes. In 2010–2011, UNDP undertook a comprehensive midterm review of the Strategic Plan[23] to analyse performance from 2008 to 2010. In the review process, the development results framework and the institutional results framework were revised to capture and steer the development and institutional focus of the organization, and to facilitate more predictable measurement and reporting of UNDP programme and organizational results.

2.4 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The total financial expenditure for the first five years of the Strategic Plan totalled USD 19.7 billion. Of this only 11 percent (USD 2.2 billion) was from UNDP regular resources. The vast majority of other resources were from donor countries (65 percent of the total for the period 2008–2012) with local (programme country) resources accounting for approximately 23 percent. These rates have been steady over time apart from a decline in the proportion of local resources in 2009[24] and, importantly, a decline in the proportion of regular resources (as illustrated in Table 2). In money terms, the decline of regular resources has been more significant in the period covered.

Table 2. Programme Expenditures by Source (2008–2012)						
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2008–2012**
(a) As percentage of total expenditure(%)						
Donor	57	64	70	68	65	65
Local	30	23	19	22	24	23
Regular	13	13	11	10	11	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
(a) Actual expenditure (in US$)						
Donor	2,165,779,595	2,372,053,837	2,998,183,537	2,844,441,322	2,426,065,324	12,806,523,616
Local	1,155,969,705	848,238,145	802,993,659	907,905,621	894,714,712	4,609,821,841
Regular	487,784,264	497,730,635	466,173,013	409,444,061	390,604,106	2,251,736,079
Total	3,809,533,581	3,718,022,581	4,267,350,226	4,161,791,005	3,711,384,141	19,668,081,534

Note: 2012 data are provisional

Source: UNDP ERBM system (ROAR Tool v.2)

---

[23] UNDP, 'Midterm Review of the UNDP Strategic Plan and Annual Report for 2010' (DP/2011/22).

[24] This decline was very large in Latin America, largely reflecting the move by UNDP away from stand-alone procurement of goods and services.

Programme expenditure is heavily weighted in a relatively small number of countries, with the largest five programmes accounting for more than one third of total programme expenditure and the top 10 accounting for nearly half (as illustrated in Table 3).

Table 3. Programme Expenditures by Largest Programmes (2008–2012)		
Programme country	**Total expenditure 2008–2012 (US$)**	**Expenditure as percentage of total programme expenditure (%)**
Afghanistan	3,085,160,984	16
Republic of the Sudan	1,079,443,392	5
Argentina	1,044,767,352	5
Democratic Republic of the Congo	899,049,384	5
Brazil	575,222,027	3
Top 5 recipients by budget	**6,683,643,139**	**34**
Panama	473,818,577	2
Bangladesh	417,534,116	2
Zimbabwe	369,489,545	2
Egypt	366,234,474	2
Programme for Palestinian people	335,635,613	2
Top 10 recipients by budget	**8,646,355,464**	**44**
Total programme expenditure	**19,668,081,534**	**100**

Source: UNDP ERBM system (ROAR Tool v.2)

CHAPTER 3.

FINDINGS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF UNDP

This chapter provides findings in relation to the question: How has UNDP performed during the period of the Strategic Plan relative to the strategic intent as expressed in Strategic Plan goals? It makes the assessment using three evaluation criteria: effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (each of which is explained at the start of the relevant section). It draws on a meta-synthesis of independent evaluations but also incorporates analysis from the ERBM system and other related documentation including the reviews by donor partners.

3.1 EFFECTIVENESS

Although assessing performance across the organization is challenging it is nonetheless possible to identify some broad findings related to effectiveness and the factors affecting it. Evidence on performance largely comes from analysis and synthesis of evaluations that in turn base their assessments on contribution to national outcomes. Delivering the intended change in an outcome ultimately depends upon the actions of

a wide range of stakeholders. Given the nature of what UNDP provides, successful delivery of UNDP results is likely to reveal constraints elsewhere as much as within the organization. It should also be noted that implementation of the Strategic Plan coincided with a severe financial and economic crisis that had a significant development impact on the world and in many programme countries.

Finding 1. In terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas.

Country office self-reporting through the Results Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) suggests that the majority of outcomes were either achieved (15 percent) or on track (78 percent) at the time of reporting over the period 2008–2012. Very few were reported as being off track across all regions. Table 4 provides a summary by region.

Table 4. Outcome Status as Reported in the ROAR by Region (2008–2012)					
Region	**Achieved**	**On track**	**Off track**	**Not set**	**Total**
Africa	19%	74%	2%	4%	100%
Asia and Pacific	9%	85%	2%	4%	100%
Arab States	12%	79%	4%	5%	100%
Europe and CIS*	19%	76%	0%	4%	100%
Latin America and Caribbean	13%	81%	3%	3%	100%
Total	**15%**	**78%**	**2%**	**4%**	**100%**

* Commonwealth of Independent States

Source: UNDP ERBM system (ROAR Tool v.2)

The evidence from the meta-synthesis of ADRs is less positive. While it indicates that in most cases outputs of projects and programmes are delivered, in terms of effectiveness of contribution, the overall rating suggests that UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcome in just over half of its country programmes. Although the ADRs use the same framework of outcomes as the ROARs, they make an assessment at the end of the programming cycle rather than annually.

No significant variation of performance across the four focus areas was found in the ADR analysis. This finding is also consistent with evidence from self-reporting through the ROAR, as illustrated in Table 5. Lack of variation suggests that the major factors affecting whether or not UNDP makes a significant contribution are not particularly related to the broad goal areas in which it works. However, there are nuances to this broad conclusion. In practice, the focus areas each encompass a wide range of areas of support, and the evidence suggests that there may be significant variations in performance at the level of the 34 outcomes listed in the (original) Strategic Plan results framework.

Evidence from the ADRs also suggests that successful delivery of UNDP results in the short to medium term is as likely to reveal systemic constraints within the government as it is to contribute to a clear, plausible and rapid effect at the impact level. This is especially true given the nature of what UNDP provides and the context within which it works. UNDP's experience in working to mainstream the MDGs into national strategies illustrates this well. UNDP has supported governments to reflect achievement of the MDGs in their national strategies in all countries. If the outcome therefore is defined in terms of a national strategic document reflecting the MDGs, the outcome has almost always been achieved. However, the degree to which having a national strategy reflecting the MDGs drives decision-making across the government in terms of budget allocations and sector-level planning varies significantly. This raises a whole new set of challenges that affect the degree to which the initial outcome can plausibly be said to be likely to affect poverty and achievement of the MDGs.

This nuance illustrates that, by the nature of what UNDP does, the outcomes and the resulting impacts take time to achieve and will be unpredictable. Hence, to the extent possible, UNDP support (both in terms of what it does and how it does it) needs to be embedded in a keen appreciation of the overall context. The need to understand context in turn makes it challenging

Table 5. Outcome Status as Reported in the ROAR by Focus Area (2008–2012)					
Focus area	**Achieved**	**On track**	**Off track**	**Not set**	**Total**
Unlinked	4%	20%	3%	73%	100%
Poverty and MDGs	18%	79%	2%	1%	100%
Democratic governance	14%	83%	3%	1%	100%
Crisis prevention and recovery	14%	83%	2%	1%	100%
Environment and energy	16%	81%	2%	1%	100%
Total	**15%**	**78%**	**2%**	**4%**	**100%**

Source: UNDP ERBM system (ROAR Tool V2)

to judge whether performance, in the short to medium term, has been good or bad.

Finding 2. A major reason for non-delivery of planned outputs is under-resourcing of projects due to the earmarked nature of funds.

UNDP financial data show that most country programmes are successful in mobilizing more resources than reflected by the expectations in the country programme documents. What these aggregate figures hide, however, is the imbalance in resource mobilization across outcomes or outputs. Clearly, when an organization relies on core resources for only 11 percent of its programme expenditure, programming becomes a major challenge. Programme outcomes and outputs are defined in the CPD, but inevitably at the point that the country programme action plan (CPAP)[25] is finalized, only a portion of the funds required to deliver against it are assured. The outcome statements and supporting outputs across the country programme results frameworks are therefore, to varying degrees, statements of intent.

What evidence is available from ADRs suggests that a major reason for non-delivery of outputs is the lack of resources that can be mobilized for them. Examples of very significant divergence between what was intended and what resources could be mobilized were identified in the ADRs. Although UNDP sometimes must start projects without having secured the full funding, for instance in order to support innovative approaches, these initiatives often do not lead to policy influence or up-scaling. Starting projects before all of the envisaged resources have been secured can lead to scaling back the anticipated outputs if funds are not subsequently mobilized. Box 1 provides an example of the issue.

The impact of insufficient resources was also seen in recent regional programme evaluations, in which reduced funding limited the capacity to respond to emerging events (Arab States) or threatened successful implementation (Europe and the CIS; Latin America and the Caribbean). The evaluation of the regional programme in Asia and the Pacific noted that most donor agencies lack a regional funding window but also that regional resource mobilization lacks a well-defined mandate and organizational arrangements. In the global programme, there were cases of poor performance partly due to fragmentation of resource mobilization efforts.

Box 1. An Example of Over-Optimistic Resource Mobilization Assessment at Programme Level

The 2008–2012 programme for country A was very ambitious. During its formulation, sometime after the elections in 2008, donors were displaying a willingness to phase out short-term emergency interventions and switch to long-term development assistance. UNDP formulated a programme to fight poverty and promote the MDGs that totalled USD 311 million. However, these hopes never materialized. At the end of 2010, only USD 58.2 million had been spent, less than 20 percent of the budget, two years from the end of the cycle. The reasons for this gap were (a) overly optimistic planning, (b) relative lack of interest by UNDP's main donors in ambitious development actions in a context that was still seen as precarious, (c) a 25 percent reduction in UNDP's own resources halfway through the cycle, and (d) the effects of the global financial crisis on international aid.

---

[25] The CPAP, the operation plan of the country programme, is a legal agreement between the host government and UNDP to execute the country programme.

Finding 3. To increase effectiveness, learning needs to be strengthened at the country level and across the organization.

Support to national efforts to learn about what works, in what contexts and for whom is essential if UNDP is to increase its effectiveness. For example, there is generally poor coverage and quality of decentralized evaluations[26] and many country-level projects are not designed to develop evidence of what does and does not work. In addition, a number of thematic evaluations – on local governance[27] and on national capacity development,[28] for example – have noted poor learning by the organization. The evaluation of the UNDP contribution to poverty reduction[29] concluded that:

> *The contribution of UNDP interventions to national poverty outcomes is seriously compromised by the absence of adequate support to learning about what works and why. This in turn is caused in large part by the absence of a structure of incentives that would encourage systematic collection, monitoring and evaluation of evidence on the actual changes in people's lives as a result of interventions.*

The evaluations of regional programmes and the global programme examined their roles in promoting knowledge management. The evaluation of the global programme concluded that knowledge production and sharing is not considered a strategic programming priority and is not internalized as part of programming. Most regional programme evaluations find that, despite their potential, regional programmes have not effectively promoted knowledge management. In the Arab States it is partly because the regional

programme is not sufficiently 'anchored' in the region, is not connected to the UNDP 'knowledge architecture' and is perceived as distant by country offices. In Europe and the CIS, on the other hand, the focus on developing knowledge products relevant to regional development needs was reported as having increased programme relevance. Evaluations in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean note the importance of the alignment between evaluation, knowledge management, communication, capacity development and South-South solutions to effectively promote learning in an integrated manner in supporting UNDP's goal to be strategically positioned as a knowledge organization.

The evaluation of the Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific noted that regional programmes have been in a unique position to serve as regional knowledge hubs. This is because they have the opportunity to learn from country-level experiences, conduct comparative analysis and feed it back into policy advice and technical support. Knowledge networks showed promising signs of being an effective mechanism to generate and deliver knowledge. The Regional Programme's knowledge products were considered reliable and relevant in addressing pertinent issues, although questions remained regarding their outreach and the applicability of knowledge presented in case-study materials. The challenge is to make maximum value out of knowledge generated from different sources.

3.2 EFFICIENCY

As part of its efforts to enhance organizational efficiency UNDP monitors the management efficiency ratio (total management expenditure

---

[26] This issue is discussed further in finding 15.

[27] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Local Governance', New York, 2011.

[28] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities', New York, 2011.

[29] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Poverty Reduction', New York, 2013.

divided by total management and programme expenditure).[30] Since the start of the Strategic Plan the organization has been consistently above target, as illustrated in Table 6. While it may be interesting to monitor this from a management perspective, from a development one, it can mask differences in the business models used by different units.

The following analysis therefore takes a different approach and distinguishes between two types of efficiency: First is **administrative efficiency**, based on the following sub-criteria: (a) timeliness in executing programmes within deadlines and budgets and in the time required to perform certain operations and transactions; (b) use of human resources (e.g. time spent in administrative vs. substantive activities); and (c) use of management information systems. Second is **programmatic efficiency**, based on the extent to which UNDP has prioritized and concentrated its programme in a set of core activities rather than a fragmented set of programmes/projects that strain its capacity to manage efficiently. However, efficiency is treated inconsistently in evaluations, both in terms of depth of analysis and in use of a common understanding of efficiency. As a result, the evidence is only sufficient for flagging major areas of concern, not for making definitive judgements about where the problems lie across a sample of country programmes.

Finding 4. Even though measuring UNDP efficiency is difficult, the existing evidence is **that strengthening the efficiency of projects and programmes is a major challenge.**

The finding that efficiency poses a major problem for UNDP is supported by a similar finding in the 2012 Development Effectiveness Review of the United Nations Development Programme, commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency. It found that efficiency was the most negative area of performance assessed. The meta-synthesis revealed that many country programmes face challenges in getting projects started on time. Once implementation starts, timely disbursement of funds is often a problem. This was also a serious problem identified with the ongoing regional programme for Africa, in which much of the programme started two years after approval due to delays in approval of the draft programmes by partners (done to ensure broader consultation). A further administrative problem identified in evaluations is that UNDP does not maintain adequate oversight of the projects/programmes. However, the evidence suggests that when specific problems become very obvious, country offices move to resolve them. The adverse effect of inefficient use of human resources on effectiveness was another common issue, as was insufficient use of management information systems.

In terms of benchmarking UNDP's relative performance, several ADRs noted that national governments perceive UNDP systems to be more efficient and/or flexible relative to their own. On

Table 6. Management Efficiency Ratio (2008–2012)					
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Actual value	12.3	14.0	12.5	13.6	Not available
Target	11.3	8.9	10.7	Not available[31]	Not available

Source: UNDP Executive Balanced Scorecard

---

[30] All regular (core) and other (non-core) programme expenditures are included.

[31] Not available as at 22 February 2013.

the other hand, two of the ADRs noted that the perceived inefficiency of UNDP is leading donors to seriously question its role in management of basket funds. Overall, discussion in the ADRs would suggest that there are three major causes of inefficiency in administration:

- UNDP's administrative systems are too complex, especially in fast-moving situations. However, whether the problem is the complexity of the systems or the lack of capacity in using them is open to question. Some country programmes can apparently operate them efficiently, and in others not all projects/programmes have such problems.

- In some cases, UNDP staff and partners at project/programme level do not have the requisite skills to operate the systems. This is a particular problem in situations where project managers are drawn into resolving administrative issues. This issue comes up primarily in situations with 'hybrid' approaches to national implementation,[32] which the ADRs suggest is common.

- Some UNDP offices have a portfolio with many small projects/programmes, which hinders efficiency, given that each has fixed costs, regardless of size. This is associated with the issue (addressed below) of programming efficiency. The meta-synthesis found that numerous country programmes face efficiency challenges due to fragmentation.

The causes outlined suggest that inefficiency to some degree reflects trade-offs being made by management, although the ADRs do not provide the thorough analysis required to get deep into this topic. For example, country offices are assessed based on the degree to which funds are spent on time. However, to strengthen national

ownership and in response to the directions found in both the Strategic Plan and the TCPR, they have also increasingly moved to national execution of projects and programmes. Hence, UNDP efficiency at the project/programme level increasingly becomes a function of the capacity of national partners. The common experience is that partner capacity is insufficient to assume this role or partners prefer that UNDP retain the administrative role.

A number of responses to balancing these two trends are observed in the ADRs. A limited number of country programmes include training of national counterparts. However, the majority of country programmes appear to be moving towards a 'hybrid' version of national implementation, in which UNDP retains responsibility for varying levels of project administration. In some countries UNDP has taken measures to ensure sufficient internal administrative capacity under this hybrid model, often by establishing a suitably resourced unit dedicated to administration or continued use of project implementation units. In turn, the trade-off above affects the choice between using a country office's limited core funding to employ staff for substantive or administrative work.

It is difficult to hold UNDP accountable for efficiency when extraneous factors play an important role in determining the transformation of inputs into outputs. Context therefore becomes a key factor in determining efficiency. This is something that can only be assessed at the country level, not through summary indicators that are aggregated at the corporate level.

Finding 5. In terms of programming efficiency, most of the country programme portfolios are not prioritized and not focused on a set of core activities.

---

32 The national implementation modality is applied when there is adequate capacity within the government to carry out functions and activities of the project/programme. In direct implementation modality UNDP assumes overall management responsibility and accountability for project implementation. A hybrid contains elements of both.

Each year since the start of the Strategic Plan the number of outcomes reported on has declined, from an average of 8.7 per country programme to 7.4. This indicates a move in the right direction and a small increase in focus. However, this is just an average, and it hides variation. It is also unclear how the move to higher level outcomes in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2010 has influenced this trend. More importantly, there has been a significant decline, nearly 50 percent, in the number of project IDs[33] in country portfolios. The decline has been especially dramatic in the poverty/MDG cluster, where the number has fallen by half. How much of this is simply related to closing inactive projects is unclear.

By themselves, these findings indicate a more focused organization, but macro-level aggregated data hide some of the subtleties of analysis undertaken at the country level through the ADRs. This analysis finds that although UNDP country programmes are aligned to the broad outcomes specified in the Strategic Plan, most of the country programme portfolios (89 percent) do not prioritize and focus on a set of central activities appropriate to the strengths and capacities of the office. Instead, the ADRs find a fragmented set of programmes/projects that the country office cannot manage efficiently. Three reasons explain the proliferation of unfocused programmes:

- In over half of the country programmes (14 of the 26 programmes with information) this fragmentation reflected the difficulty in implementing a more programmatic approach. To varying degrees it also reflected the challenge of balancing UNDP's desire to respond to national demands (which is consistently identified as one of the organization's strengths) with its willingness to decline a request for support due to a lack of

capacity. Country offices interviewed noted that this is often easier said than done.

- In a third of the country programmes (8 of 26), the problem was unrealistic programme objectives relative to the level of funding available.

- In 12 percent of the programmes (3 of 26), the ADRs reported that the programming approach was dominated by the search for funds rather than programmatic logic.

Operationalizing this strategic programmatic approach remains a challenge for many country programmes, as it involves trade-offs. For example, the ADRs consistently highlight UNDP's responsiveness to government requests, which is usually much appreciated by the governments and is also flagged in the Strategic Plan as a necessity (see paragraph 52, for example). Indeed, responsiveness is generally seen as a strength of the organization. Yet the evidence suggests that when taken too far responsiveness can lead to portfolios dominated by small projects that appear unfocused, straining UNDP's already slim in-country management and technical capacity and impeding longer term effectiveness. It should be noted that the ADRs do not capture how the focus has increased over time and if the focus changed with a new CPD, since this finding is based on evaluations of CPDs approved during a prior cycle. Moreover, all CPDs approved since 2011 have undergone a more rigorous quality assurance to support a focused approach. This included providing strong links to UNDAFs and better-articulated results frameworks to capture the focus of UNDP's contribution.

The interesting point here is that if government takes a strategic approach to the type of support requested and it is embedded in a wider endogenous process, the unfocused appearance

---

[33] In UNDP's administrative system Atlas, a project ID is an output.

would not be a problem. Unfortunately, the ADRs suggest that this is not the case. Moreover, this problem also relates to a tendency for country programmes to be organized in 'silos' around UNDP focus areas, which results in missing opportunities to ensure synergies across the wider portfolio. The issue is also relevant for regional programmes. For example, in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the evaluation found the regional programme was spread too thin, trying to do too much without a clear, transparent and sustainable strategy of prioritization.

3.3 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability of the benefits derived from UNDP's contributions is extremely difficult to measure. When looking at the activities conducted since 2008, it is too early to make a judgement on the sustainability of many. The assessment therefore focused on the likelihood of sustainability, specifically, whether UNDP projects implemented strategies to manage possible threats to the sustainability of results. The findings below may well refer to the period before the start of the Strategic Plan, but even though the problem of sustainability has been reported for some time there is no evidence of a concerted effort to address the fundamental issues that surround it in the ADRs examined. This is notwithstanding efforts at UNDP headquarters to address the issue of sustainability of results through monitoring sustainability and creating necessary incentives.

Finding 6. Programmes are seldom designed with sustainability in mind. The UNDP funding model also adds to the sustainability challenge.

UNDP invests significant resources in country programming and ensuring that its programmes are aligned with national priorities and government policy. In addition, UNDP has increasingly attempted to use the national implementation modality in its projects, on the assumption that this will enhance both national ownership and national capacity, thus enhancing sustainability. The overall finding from examination of ADRs is that the likelihood of sustaining the outcomes to which UNDP is contributing is poor. The assessment reflects a number of issues common across the country programmes:

- The sustainability of results is rarely considered in detail as part of the selection and design process (97 percent of country programmes). Nor is there evidence that project/programme management focuses significantly on management for enhanced sustainability. No ADR identified a country programme in which consideration of exit strategies had been explicitly mainstreamed across the portfolio of support as a matter of course.

- Since UNDP has no control over its resources in the long term, sustainability of the benefits is often related to sustainability of the intervention itself, and is therefore often at risk. In the case of many community-based interventions, support was often withdrawn before community-level capacity had been established.

- The more strategic approach to capacity development found in UNDP's internal guidance (which represents a codification of international best practice according to

---

34 See discussion in: UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities', 2010.

35 This issue is further discussed in chapter 4, finding 9.

a thematic evaluation that examined this issue)[34] was not found in most cases. Instead, in most cases, capacity development was still understood to mean training of individuals, with little attention to how to address the underlying capacity constraints, or the provision of technical experts.[35]

Regional and global programme evaluations indicate that sustainability of benefits is at best mixed. There are good examples in which the right partnership and capacities have been developed, but more commonly the problems mirror those found in ADRs. The recent assessment of UNDP by the Canadian International Development Agency noted that sustainability of results and benefits represents a significant challenge for UNDP's development effectiveness. However, the report also noted that UNDP achieved positive results on the extent to which its programmes have made a positive contribution to the enabling environment for development.

CHAPTER 4.

FINDINGS ON USE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN AS A MANAGEMENT TOOL

This chapter examines the key roles the Strategic Plan plays in strengthening management for more effective contribution to development results. Although the Strategic Plan did not detail how it was to be used for this purpose, it did identify roles for the Strategic Plan in three areas:

- To provide direction to the organization

- To communicate the areas in which it has comparative strengths

- As the basis of the accountability framework.

In addition the role of the Strategic Plan as the keystone of UNDP's corporate planning system is examined.

4.1 DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGIC PLANNING SYSTEM

The Strategic Plan contains all the elements expected in a stand-alone strategic planning document, although it should be assumed that strategic planning would be implemented through overall corporate level planning systems. The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan therefore depends upon whether these systems are in place, how effective they are and how the Strategic Plan interacts with them.

Finding 7. UNDP has established, and is in the process of strengthening, a comprehensive strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core.

UNDP used the midterm review of the Strategic Plan conducted in 2010–2011 to operationalize its pledge to improve how it monitors and reports on results under the Strategic Plan and to be responsive to partner feedback and evidence from evaluations and other sources. As already noted, the midterm review resulted in approval of new results frameworks, but it also set the basis for further reform of strategic planning in UNDP. In April 2011 the UNDP Administrator launched the Agenda for Organizational Change (AOC)[36] and UNDP embarked on "a multifaceted agenda to lift performance – from good to great". The reforms initially focused on headquarters and the regional service centres in order to "sharpen UNDP's strategic focus, reduce the operational burden and ensure that country offices receive effective, integrated support and services to deliver visible results on the ground. It will build from UNDP's strengths and integrate key elements of the Action Plan". The AOC focused reform in three broad areas as illustrated in Figure 1.

As a core part of achieving AOC results, UNDP rolled out a substantially upgraded corporate strategic planning system in the last quarter of

---

[36] UNDP, 'Agenda for Organizational Change: Lifting UNDP Performance from Good to Great', April 2011. This is an internal document and not available on UNDP's public website (as at 1 February 2013).

Figure 1. Overview of the Agenda for Organizational Change			
Improved governance within UNDP	• Setting strategic priorities • Integrated budget framework • Clear and strategically focused decision-making • Clarity of functions and accountability	→	
Improved organizational effectiveness	• Strategic role for all bureaux • Integrated crisis prevention and recovery • Value-added corporate services • Strategic and high-quality policy services • Organizational strategies that properly align incentives	→	**Effective programme delivery**
Leadership, culture and behaviour	• Leadership values and behaviours are clear • Accountabilities captured in performance agreements • Improved communication and transparency • Strengthened performance management system	→	

2011. This system builds upon and integrates several existing tools and processes. It was proposed to develop the system progressively during 2011–2013 so that it is fully functioning in time for the start of the next Strategic Plan, in 2014. The AOC document described the purpose of the system as "straightforward but ambitious: aligning actions and resources so that we can deliver better results more efficiently to promote sustainable human development".

The framework of the planning system and its elements were set out in the 'Achievement by Design' document:[37] "The new system brings together within a single framework several elements that are currently dispersed across various parts of UNDP, suggesting critical improvements where needed, and adding new elements very selectively and only when essential." The overall structure of and logic behind the new planning system is set out in Annex 5. While the system builds on existing elements, the main ideas introduced include:

■ The Annual Business Plan – a flexible and adaptable tool that can identify year on year what it will take to deliver on the results in the Strategic Plan. The first Annual Business Plan, for 2012, was introduced in late 2011. It addressed one of the key lessons learned by UNDP over the past decade: that "a medium-term Strategic Plan can be too static, inflexible and, in a sense, remote a tool for an organization that has to respond quickly and nimbly within an increasingly volatile environment".

■ An integrated budget – which for the first time will bring together core and non-core resources, providing a basis for resource allocation in line with strategic priorities and results, enhancing flexibility and providing additional capacity to respond to new opportunities. The tool is currently being designed, and UNDP will submit an integrated budget at the same time as the new Strategic Plan

---

[37] UNDP, 'Achievement by Design: Strategic Planning for a Higher Performing UNDP', September 2011.

The original stated focus of the process was headquarters and regional levels but efforts have recently turned towards country offices. Examples include the country office support initiative (known by its acronym, COSI) to improve results-based management[38] and the country office business model project.[39] Nonetheless, an area not covered by the Strategic Plan and so far not addressed by the AOC is the relationship between country, regional and central levels. The importance of this issue is highlighted by the recommendation of the 2010 evaluation of UNDP's work at the regional level[40] that UNDP should "develop a strategic corporate business model that covers global, regional and country levels; provides a sustainable and transparent allocation of funds and human resources; ensures that functions and services are not duplicated; and facilitates the location of capacity in the most appropriate place". Recent global and regional programme evaluations point to the continued need for addressing this recommendation.

4.2 PROVIDING DIRECTION TO THE ORGANIZATION

Providing direction to the organization is seen as the core role of the Strategic Plan. This section will examine how effective UNDP has been in this respect. Four specific elements of the Strategic Plan are examined: (a) focus areas; (b) core strategies; (c) mainstreaming efforts; and (d) areas where UNDP would not normally engage. Factors influencing the above areas are also examined.

Finding 8. UNDP has been increasingly successful in aligning its work to the four broad focus areas.

All streams of evidence indicate that the description of areas of UNDP support in the Strategic Plan (paragraphs 71–121) is an accurate representation of the areas in which UNDP works. From the 30 country programmes examined through ADRs, there is little evidence of substantial UNDP support outside of these areas. This is confirmed by evidence from the ERBM system, which shows a decrease in non-aligned outcomes from nearly 4 percent of the total in 2008 to 1 percent in 2012 (Table 7).

A high degree of alignment is the dominant perception across all cohorts of interviewees, although many of them commented that the mandate is so broad that virtually anything can be aligned to it within the focus areas. However, the recent review of UNDP by the Government of Denmark[41] noted that "there are still examples of unfocused UNDP activities, typically when UNDP is acting as the 'provider of last resort' – i.e. outside of UNDP's main area of competence and without the appropriate competencies on the ground".

Finding 9. UNDP has put in place systems to actively manage greater implementation of some, but not all, of the core strategies identified in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan included a number of approaches that the organization was expected to implement. Given how UNDP is managed,

---

[38] This initiative seeks to embed at the country level the capacities, skills and practices needed for evidence-based analysis and programming. It aims to enhance data collection and analysis so that the evidence gathered can be used effectively to inform decision-making and managing for development results throughout a programme cycle.

[39] Working with selected units, the project aims to develop a range of options for all country offices by focusing on three areas – monitoring and evaluation, clustering of operational services and effective project costing.

[40] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution at the Regional Level to Development and Corporate Results', New York, 2010.

[41] Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Denmark's Engagement in Multilateral Development and Humanitarian Organizations 2012', Copenhagen, January 2012.

Table 7. Programme Expenditure by Aligned and Unaligned Outcomes (2008–2012) US$ thousands					
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Total expenditure	4,190,105	4,143,218	4,580,167	4,426,419	4,432,786
Unaligned expenditure	95,203	21,608	14,100	12	75
Aligned expenditure	4,094,902	4,121,610	4,566,067	4,426,407	4,432,711
Percent of total expenditure aligned	97.73%	99.48%	99.69%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: UNDP ERBM system

if implementation of an approach is a priority, one would expect to find (a) a clear statement (definition) of what needs to be implemented; (b) guidance to managers on how it is expected to be implemented; and (c) a system in place that allows senior management to check whether it has been implemented and what adjustments need to be made to overcome challenges. The evidence suggests that this method has not been adopted by UNDP for several key strategies highlighted in the Strategic Plan (as summarized in Table 8).

UNDP has not put in place systems to actively encourage a **human development–based programming approach** across the organization or to check that it is used. While human development may be considered implicitly in programming processes, there is no evidence of an explicit and systematic approach to programming based on its

principles. For example, of the 13 CPDs approved in 2012, only 4 (31 percent) made explicit reference to human development as an approach to programming.[42] Some UNDP interviewees noted that for long-term UNDP staff the idea of human development is so strong and clear that programming is automatically based on its principles and goals. While this may be the case, there are new staff members who are not so well versed in the human development paradigm and, more specifically in the context of the Strategic Plan, how it can be used as the basis for programming. Just as important, at country level programming takes place in partnership with key stakeholders. The absence of systems that explicitly set out what is different when using a human development-based programming approach would suggest that it would be more challenging to explain to partners and gain their buy-in.

Table 8. Implementation of the Core Strategies			
Approach/principle	**Clear definition**	**Guidance for operationalization**	**Monitoring/oversight**
Human development- based approach to programming	No	No	No
Strategic approach to capacity development	Yes	Yes	Yes: CD Tracker introduced in 2011
National ownership	Yes	Yes	Partial

---

[42] For CPDs presented to the Executive Board in 2008, the figure was 46 percent.

As an example of the lack of human development-based programming, the Evaluation of UNDP Partnership with Global Funds and Philanthropic Foundations found that UNDP had missed opportunities to maximize the benefits of partnership by consistently integrating a human development perspective and fostering a more holistic development approach. Likewise, the evaluation of the Fourth Global Programme found that UNDP did not do enough to promote the human development perspective more systematically in UNDP country programmes.

In contrast, UNDP does have a definition of what it understands **capacity development** to mean and has issued extensive guidance on how to approach this issue. The guidance is consistent with the understanding of capacity development found in the Strategic Plan and consistently highlights that a strategic approach must be undertaken. This means that capacity development should be supported at multiple levels (enabling environment, organizational and individual) and with a variety of responses that address multiple core issues (institutional arrangements, leadership, accountability and knowledge). It also means that capacity development must find an appropriate balance between short-term wins and long-term results; the former are necessary to gain momentum and the latter to ensure sustainability.

In 2011 UNDP introduced the Capacity Development Tracker[43] to monitor implementation of capacity development activities. It assesses the level of integration of capacity development in the project planning stage. Projects that have a significant capacity development component or objective are rated 1, 2 or 3, and those that do not

are marked 'NA'.[44] The rating will be assigned for each of the four dimensions: national partner-led process, sound diagnosis, comprehensive response and clear results. In addition, substantial work has been done to increase the support to practitioners on better measurement of results through the guidance note on measuring capacity development[45] and the introduction of capacity development questions in the ROAR.

Despite the fact that UNDP's approach to supporting capacity development clearly and consistently highlights the importance of a strategic approach, there is little evidence from independent evaluations that the approach outlined in the Strategic Plan and UNDP guidance has been systematically implemented across most of UNDP's work. Evidence from the thematic and ADR evaluations (93 percent of countries examined) is consistent on this. In most cases, capacity development is still perceived in terms of providing training and technical assistance. Examples of programmes designed after a capacity assessment has been carried out are rare, as is monitoring to track changes in capacity, even at the level of the individual being trained. This is found in nearly all ADRs and in 7 of the 10 thematic evaluations examined (2 do not address this issue). There is more limited evidence from the thematic evaluations confirming the ADR synthesis finding that capacity development is still perceived mostly in terms of training at the individual level; only four of the thematic evaluations explicitly made this conclusion.

However, the thematic evaluations indicate that UNDP can implement the approach intended and that it adds value. The strongest evidence is from the recent evaluation of UNDP's work

---

[43] It was introduced as a practical corporate instrument to systematically understand the mainstreaming of capacity development in project planning. Projects that have a significant capacity-development component are rated against four dimensions: national partner-led process, sound diagnosis, comprehensive response and clear results.

[44] UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Capacity Development Group, 'Guidance Note on the CD Tracker – 2011: Tracking the Integration of Capacity Development in UNDP Project Planning', 12 December 2011.

[45] UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, Capacity Development Group, 'Measuring Capacity Development', 2010.

in supporting elections.[46] It found that when UNDP assistance incorporates development and capacity-building considerations it increases national ownership and contributes to more sustainable results. UNDP projects that develop capacity (rather than replacing it with external expertise) showed a clear progression of national ownership by electoral management bodies and civil society of the activities and normative values supported by the programme. Such ownership has reduced the need for continuing technical assistance over time.

Regional and global programme evaluations point to a number of important issues. First, a long-term approach is needed, but regional programmes often only rely on short-term interventions (Africa, Asia and the Pacific). Second, there are problems with assessing the extent of success of capacity-development work, because results are not systematically measured (Europe and CIS) or often have broad, overly ambitious, financially unfeasible and unclear goals (Latin America and the Caribbean). Third, the evaluation of the global programme noted that UNDP has yet to move towards developing thematic and context-specific models to guide country offices in their support to capacity development. Fourth, in Asia and the Pacific it was recognized that capacity development is only achieved when it is internalized as a goal and grounded in the main activities of beneficiaries. To address this challenge, the regional and country programmes should share objectives. Moreover, in Africa it was noted that a major challenge is the differing understanding of the concept of capacity development among stakeholders.

Although the definition of **national ownership** as used in the international development community can be ambiguous, in the Strategic Plan it refers to ownership by programme country governments. Specifically the Plan states that "UNDP activities are based on the premise that governments have the primary responsibility for the development of their countries and for establishing and leading the national development agenda". UNDP provides guidance (in UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures) on engaging with governments in programming, project development and project implementation. This engagement is aimed at promoting national ownership, and such processes are monitored.

The Strategic Plan, like the TCPR, sees national implementation as vital for enhancing national ownership, though it is clearly not the only dimension of national ownership. Although national implementation is the default modality for UNDP, between 2008 and 2012 the proportion of total procurement using this modality has been consistently half of the total (by value).[47] The ADRs show that UNDP has moved to support national implementation across nearly all of the country programmes evaluated, the exceptions being in South America and emergency/post-conflict situations. What evidence there is in the ADRs on this issue suggests that, while national implementation may be necessary for true national ownership, by itself it does not appear to be enough to ensure good national ownership (63 percent of country programmes). Unfortunately, neither the ADRs nor the thematic evaluations provided sufficient evidence to allow identification of what else may be needed, and in what contexts, to ensure national ownership. Evaluations of regional programmes note that national ownership is extremely important even for regional interventions but that securing national ownership is also a major challenge.

Aid effectiveness is included in the Strategic Plan among the other strategies, but it could be

---

[46] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Electoral Systems and Processes', 2012.

[47] UNDP internal procurement dashboard.

considered as both a programmatic intervention (such as through strengthening national tools for effective aid management) and an approach (such as promoting internationally agreed agreements on aid effectiveness, including the Monterrey Consensus[48] and the Paris Declaration[49]). In the context of this analysis it is assumed that aid effectiveness as an approach is more important. It is therefore closely linked to the discussion on national ownership above, dealing with the broader engagement of programme countries with international development cooperation rather than focusing on national ownership in UNDP's own engagement. Although UNDP support in this area is provided on demand, not systematically to all country offices, guidance has been prepared[50] for programmatic interventions in the spirit of the aid effectiveness approach. In addition, UNDP has started to monitor implementation of the aid effectiveness approach, and after the 2011 midterm review the ROAR was revised to include relevant questions.

Finding 10. UNDP success with mainstreaming gender equality and South-South cooperation has been mixed.

Mainstreaming means making an idea practical by integrating it into everything the organization does.[51] But to do this, there is a need for tools, guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives and benchmarks for achievement. Table 9 summarizes implementation of the mainstreaming strategy of the Strategic Plan.

UNDP has made great efforts to support **gender mainstreaming**. The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011 describes in detail how UNDP can achieve each of its goals in a manner that takes account of men's and women's specific needs, interests and contributions. As such, it parallels and amplifies the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2011 and was designed to be read and implemented in conjunction with it. The Strategy

Table 9. Implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy			
Mainstreaming	**Clear definition**	**Guidance for operationalization**	**Monitoring/oversight**
Gender equality and empowerment of women	Yes	Yes: clear guidance including that contained in the Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011	Yes: captured in the ROAR plus the Gender Marker rolled out in December 2009
South-South cooperation	No	No	Partial: the ROAR provides examples and analysis but not the extent of mainstreaming[52]

---

48 United Nations, 'Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development', Monterrey, Mexico, 2002.

49 OECD, 'The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness', Paris, 2005.

50 For example, the April 2011 Guidance Note on UNDP Support to Country Level Aid Coordination Mechanisms.

51 The Strategic Plan also refers to mainstreaming into national development plans, specifically with respect to HIV/AIDS and the environment. It also refers to United Nations commitment to mainstreaming human rights, although it is unclear how this relates to UNDP.

52 For example, the ROAR provides data on which outcome areas and output profiles are most closely correlated with South-South cooperation, and categories for different types of cooperation have been introduced so that it can be tracked. The quality of the ROAR data is analysed in Annex 4 of the recent 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to South-South and Triangular Cooperation'.

includes practical tools to help programme units undertake mainstreaming. For example, it sets out a range of gender-responsive outcome indicators that can be integrated into UNDP programmes and projects when implementing the Strategic Plan. These provide guidance to ensure appropriate attention to women's rights, women's empowerment and gender equality.

The Gender Steering and Implementation Committee (chaired by the Administrator/ Associate Administrator) was introduced as an important accountability mechanism. Through the Committee, bureau directors and practice leaders report annually to the Administrator, both in writing and verbally, on progress, including results achieved, institutional steps taken and progress on achieving gender balance in staffing. These meetings also provide an opportunity for dialogue and capacity building of senior managers to ensure they systematically integrate gender equality into each area of work and can demonstrate leadership on gender equality. Since 2008, the Committee has made numerous recommendations to improve gender equality results throughout UNDP. For example, it has recommended inclusion of gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data and gender-explicit outcomes, outputs, indicators and budget allocations in strategic plans and processes, including country programme documents.

UNDP's ERBM also integrates gender achievements at the outcome level. ROAR data reveal a consistent increase in the number of outcomes reporting gender equality results from 2008 to 2012 across each thematic area and region. In addition, in 2010 UNDP introduced the Gender Marker, which presents data by region, focus area and outcome in the ERBM. Integrated into systems as a planning, monitoring, reporting and accountability tool, the Gender Marker is a systematic corporate approach to changing behaviour and procedures in programme and project planning, monitoring and reporting. It provides a new means for holding offices accountable for mainstreaming gender in UNDP's work. Introduction of the Gender Marker has been accompanied at global, regional and country levels by capacity-building efforts and assessments to review the accuracy of its data and improve the methodology for using it.

Since 2008, external assessments of UNDP's performance have commended UNDP's work in support of gender equality. A recent example is the MOPAN[53] report:

> In the survey, UNDP received an overall rating of strong for the extent to which it mainstreams gender equality in its work. A little more than half of respondents (51 percent) rated UNDP as strong or very strong, 34 percent as adequate, and 8 percent as inadequate or weak. Direct partners were more positive in their responses, while MOPAN donors in-country were less so. These differences are statistically significant. In line with the survey, the document review rated UNDP as strong for its gender mainstreaming efforts.

In 2011, UNDP completed a review of the gender strategy;[54] the key findings are presented in Box 2.

---

[53] Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, 'Assessment of Organizational Effectiveness and Reporting on Development Results', vol. 1, UNDP, December 2012.

[54] UNDP, '2008–2013 Gender Equality Strategy: Mid-Term Review Report'. The review was conducted between May 2010 and January 2011.

Although data from the Gender Marker imply a steady increase in the gender content of UNDP projects since 2008, analysis of evaluations is consistent with the gender equality strategy review finding (finding 8 in Box 2) that:

> *Despite notable improvements, gender mainstreaming in project and programme activities remains uneven and ad hoc: in other words, the 'islands of success' identified in the [2006] Evaluation[55] remain. While frameworks have been developed at the corporate level, capacity for implementation is inconsistent and particularly weak at the field level.[56]*

Half of the 30 country programmes examined were rated as having successfully mainstreamed gender into the UNDP programme, and the evidence suggests that country programmes have indeed been taking more care to deal with gender issues. In the other half of the country programmes examined, the most frequently cited factor limiting gender mainstreaming was the absence of a systematic approach to gender analysis during programme design. Other factors that limited effectiveness in gender mainstreaming included:

■ Poor conceptualization at the local level of a gender equality model that could be implemented in the context without weakening the commitment or results achieved

■ The lack of human resource capacity for gender programming in some UNDP offices. This is consistent with the DFID Multilateral Aid Review[57] finding that there is strong

---

55 UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP', New York, 2006.

56 UNDP, '2008–2013 Gender Equality Strategy Review: Mid-Term Review Report', p. 5.

57 United Kingdom Department for International Development, 'Multilateral Aid Review', London, March 2011.

leadership and good incentive mechanisms on gender, but strengthened delivery depends on continued effort and skills-building across the organization.

In general, findings and conclusions from the thematic evaluations[58] broadly support those found in the ADRs. But they suggest only partial success in gender mainstreaming in areas such as strengthening local governance, where there was a lack of a strategic and systematic effort to mainstream gender concerns and support development of national capacities. The 2011 evaluation of UNDP contributions to crisis prevention and recovery found that, although UNDP has adopted significant policy measures to further gender equality in crisis-related programming, they have not been systematically implemented (Box 3).[59] Moreover, the recent evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries[60] found that UNDP has not been successful in its efforts to improve the gender balance of its own staff working in countries affected by conflict.

The findings from the regional and global programmes were also mixed. For example, the regional programme for Europe and CIS was successful in building capacity for gender mainstreaming among gender practitioners in the region but only partially successful in mainstreaming gender in the regional results framework. In Latin America and the Caribbean, although attempts to mainstream gender have translated into a distinctive added value in the achievement of development results, gender mainstreaming is not sufficiently visible, explicit or promoted. Nor is the impact of the regional programme on women and men systematically considered at every stage of the programme cycle. Both in Latin America and in the Arab States, regional evaluations found that

---

Box 3. Gender Mainstreaming in Crisis Prevention and Recovery[61]

The [UNDP] Eight-Point Agenda,[62] which includes a mandatory requirement to allocate 15 percent of the budget for crisis-related programming to interventions that promote gender equality, is an important and unique step taken by UNDP to address issues related to gender and women. While there are indications that these measures are gaining acceptability, only modest efforts have so far been made to integrate gender issues into the design and implementation of disaster prevention and recovery programmes. UNDP has ensured the participation of women, particularly those from indigenous and vulnerable groups, in community projects and programmes. However, success has been limited when it comes to contributing to a more coherent approach to integrating gender-related concerns in policy and government programming. UNDP programmes often narrowly construe the presence of women in community-level interventions as addressing gender concerns. This fails to take into account the extent to which women have the opportunity to participate in leadership positions and the extent to which their perspectives and aspirations have been considered.

---

58   The two thematic evaluations where it is assessed are 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Local Governance' and 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities'.

59   The evaluation's key recommendation in this area was: A stronger commitment is needed to implement UNDP's corporate gender policies and advance gender equality in crisis-related programming. According to the Evaluation Resources Centre, all three actions included in the management response to address the recommendation are overdue (as at 22 March 2013).

60   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Support to Conflict-Affected Countries in the Context of Peace Operations', New York, 2012.

61   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Prevention and Recovery', New York, 2011.

62   UNDP, 'The Eight Point Agenda: Practical, Positive Outcomes for Girls and Women in Crisis', New York, 2008.

gender mainstreaming efforts largely depend on committed individuals rather than institutionalized effort. In Africa, regional efforts to mainstream gender face capacity constraints in regional gender teams and country offices. The evaluation of the global programme noted that gender mainstreaming in UNDP continues to follow a generalized approach; it is not yet developing specific strategies for the different areas of UNDP work.

UNDP has undertaken further actions to build on the successes identified in the 2006 evaluation of gender mainstreaming and again in the 2012 gender strategy review. This has most notably included the Gender Equality Seal, a corporate certification process introduced in 2011[63] that recognizes UNDP offices and units for delivering transformational gender equality results. It aims to help committed managers to better link gender equality at the workplace with development results; increase internal efficiency to make gender equality results visible; and enable country offices to learn from each other. It is as yet too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative in achieving its aims.

In terms of **South-South cooperation**,[64] the recent evaluation of this issue[65] found that UNDP has a strong comparative advantage in supporting and facilitating it. UNDP could play an important and critical role in supporting programme countries to scale up successful initiatives. Moreover, UNDP brokering of South-South knowledge exchanges and learning experiences, which constitutes one of the most common ways UNDP supports such cooperation, has produced immediate and short-term benefits for

participants, and there is potential to evolve into more institutional and country benefits. It has also contributed to regional integration efforts, for example, to strengthen partnership arrangements and help build regional cooperation around key thematic areas under the African Peer Review Mechanism. Country ROARs indicate that South-South cooperation has now been integrated into UNDP country programmes worldwide: In 2011, reports show that 645 out of 995 country outcomes have supported it in 152 countries.[66]

Yet in terms of implementing the approach set out in the Strategic Plan to mainstream South-South cooperation within its programmes, the evaluation found uneven progress. Since the start of the Strategic Plan, UNDP has made several efforts to formulate a South-South cooperation strategy that would help mainstream support to it, but these efforts have not yielded concrete results. Various monitoring mechanisms have been initiated by UNDP management during implementation of the Strategic Plan. While these efforts are commendable, they need further strengthening. There is a lot of support among UNDP personnel to increase integration of South-South cooperation into UNDP operations at country and regional levels, but the lack of dedicated resources and budgets, specific tools and operational guidance, continuous monitoring and an overarching strategy with clear objectives,[67] benchmarks and incentives for achievement leaves practical shortfalls. The mainstreaming of South-South cooperation within UNDAFs and UNDP country programme plans followed no consistent institutional guidance or model.

---

[63]   Initially piloted in three countries and now being systematically introduced to country offices.

[64]   The Strategic Plan generally refers to South-South cooperation alone and only once to triangular cooperation.

[65]   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to South-South and Triangular Cooperation', New York, 2013.

[66]   Management response to the 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to South-South and Triangular Cooperation'. The evaluation contains a comprehensive critique of this data in Annex 4.

[67]   UNDP is preparing a strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation but at the time of the evaluation it was still in draft form.

The result is a gap between promotion of South-South cooperation at higher levels of the organization and its practical and functional integration into programming. Knowledge-sharing platforms and corporate reporting systems are not generating corporate learning on such cooperation or systematically providing performance information. At present, most information reported by UNDP as support to South-South cooperation focuses on the exchange of experiences and knowledge, mainly through study tours, knowledge fairs and participation in regional meetings. Support from UNDP is also taking place mainly at subregional level. Hence, while both the number of country offices and the quantity of information reported have improved since 2008, the evaluation found that, with very few exceptions, UNDP does not distil lessons learned from current practices and approaches to South-South cooperation within country and regional programmes. This is a missed opportunity, as the evaluation finds that important lessons can be drawn from both successful and unsuccessful experiences, which need to be systematically disseminated throughout the organization.

Finding 11. UNDP country offices often do things the Strategic Plan states they should not normally do; specifically, undertaking downstream activities with no linkages to policy reform.

The Strategic Plan identifies four activities in which UNDP should not engage: specialized sectoral activities; small-scale projects without countrywide impact; provision of infrastructure with no capacity-building; and stand-alone procurement of goods and services. In 83 percent of the 30 country programmes examined, such activities were a major or significant component.[68]

UNDP generally did not engage in specialized sectoral activities or provision of infrastructure with no capacity-building, suggesting that the organization has respected the directive in these two areas. In terms of the UNDP role as a stand-alone procurement agent, this comprised UNDP's main role in only one country programme. It could also be concluded that UNDP had fulfilled this role in Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in post-conflict situations, where it has administered multi-donor funds with little engagement on the substantive issues. Whether this represents a case of UNDP acting contrary to the guidance of the Strategic Plan is debatable. In post-conflict situations such cases might instead be examples of UNDP acting as the 'provider of last resort' in the context of national capacity deficits or crises (see paragraph 55 in the Strategic Plan).

The Strategic Plan also specifies that the organization should not normally engage in small-scale projects lacking countrywide impact. Since 2009, UNDP leadership has repeatedly instructed country offices to address this issue, although it will take time before it will be clear whether and how country programmes have responded to these instructions. Evidence from evaluations conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2012[69] confirms that management is correct to focus on this issue, as the evaluations indicate that the degree of alignment with this Strategic Plan directive remains unsatisfactory. They found that this was mostly due to the significant number of small projects, often subnational, without likely countrywide impact in the portfolios.

To some extent, this situation may reflect inertia in country project portfolios as, in many cases, these projects/programmes were initiated before paragraph 54 of the Strategic Plan made it explicit

---

[68] 'Major' is used where this was a real issue in the country portfolio and the evaluators could find no real indication that the programme was trying to deal with it, while 'significant' were cases where it was a real issue but there were indications that the programme was starting to move in the right direction.

[69] In 24 out of the 29 country programmes examined where there was sufficient evidence.

that UNDP should not undertake such initiatives. Some country offices interviewed also noted the government demand for action on the ground, not just upstream policy work. This indicates that governments' understanding of this issue is also an important contextual factor. On the other hand, from the evidence presented in the ADRs it is difficult to discern country programme strategies designed to move away from developing such projects. Indeed, a third of the ADRs include conclusions and recommendations on the need for country offices to manage this issue.

Overall, the evidence from the ADRs suggests that UNDP country offices do not usually select and design downstream projects to maximize the production of credible evidence that can then be used to influence policy dialogues. From the ADRs, there are few examples of 'pilot' projects being designed with strong monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that evidence will be available to assess their national-level implications. Nor is there evidence of appropriate research approaches influencing the design of pilot projects, which would be expected if the major purpose of such projects is to contribute to evidence-based policymaking.

In addition, with some notable exceptions, many country programmes do not seem to invest enough in assessing whether the conditions are in place that would lead to a good reception of a pilot project. This may be a reflection of the finding on efficiency, that many country offices lack substantive capacity or devote it mainly to meeting administrative demands rather than substantive demands. However, it also reflects the fact that for evidence to be valuable, it usually has to be available when needed, and predicting such timing is extremely difficult.

Looking to the future, the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy is supporting a more integrated and strategic approach to scaling up local development and local governance interventions[70] that may have wider lessons for how the organization can address this issue. The aim of the initiative, being undertaken in partnership with the Special Unit on South-South Cooperation and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, is to build a strong knowledge base on the key enablers and conditions for scaling up and support scaling-up programming at the country level. Initial outputs include a series of case studies on scaling up for transformational change and a draft guidance note on scaling up.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the basis of scaling up or linking projects to policy is effective learning about what works, for whom and, most importantly, in what contexts. To do this well requires capacities that may not be available in a country office; even commissioning work by outside experts requires certain skills and guidance that may not always be available. Although it is clear that evaluation is not the only way to learn, the fact that only 30 percent of decentralized evaluations completed in 2012 were assessed as satisfactory illustrates the challenges faced by country offices in addressing the learning issue.

Finding 12. The trade-off between corporate priorities and the demands of programme partners and competing programming frameworks have added challenges to UNDP's use of the Strategic Plan in providing direction.

Informants from all cohorts recognize the challenge facing UNDP in the trade-off between corporate priorities and focus on one hand, and on the other, the demands of programme countries and resource mobilization opportunities. Yet while recognizing the trade-off, many Executive Board members as well as some UNDP managers believe UNDP should be more

---

[70]   Within the project 'Scaling up local development innovations', funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

focused, more disciplined and better at saying no. Similarly, many believe UNDP should be more strategic, looking for areas where it can really make a difference rather than concentrating on resource mobilization. The limited oversight by some regional bureaux and its failure to stop programme units from doing things outside their areas of strength was also raised by interviewees.

The role of the Strategic Plan is also complicated by the fact that it is not the only strategy that affects programming intentions at the country level. For example, country offices interviewed noted the importance of the UNDAF process as the starting point for country programming.

4.3 COMMUNICATING UNDP'S FOCUS AND STRENGTHS

The Strategic Plan notes that it should play a role in communicating the focus areas and areas of UNDP's comparative strength. Its ability to do so can also be included among the factors influencing senior management's ability to provide direction to the organization.

Finding 13. The Strategic Plan was important for communicating internally between UNDP management and the Executive Board but was less effective in communicating across all of UNDP's partners.

The Strategic Plan was successful, though to differing degrees, in communicating its role internally and externally. Discussions of the role of the Strategic Plan across different cohorts of stakeholders tend to show a common understanding that it sets out the mandate, vision, strategic focus and/or role of the organization. It also provides direction in terms of the four focus areas. Views on how it should be used to communicate these, by whom and to whom, are more varied.

Some Executive Board members interviewed noted that UNDP has not been able to adequately communicate what it stands for, and by implication the Strategic Plan document alone is insufficient for this purpose. UNDP senior management generally agrees that the organization has not been effective in communicating with partners, and some note that the Strategic Plan document was never intended to be a major communication tool in the first place. Given this situation, UNDP developed additional tools to help in this area, particularly strengthening its web presence (including at country level), using social media and disseminating its illustrated annual report. UNDP monitors whether country office websites are updated and reflect key UNDP priorities,[71] but the data show that country offices are below the corporate targets in this respect (Table 10).

Table 10. **Website is Updated and Reflects Key UNDP Priorities (2008–2012)**					
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Actual value	71.9%	70.9%	75.4%	72.5%	Not available[72]
Target	70.0%	80.0%	85.0%	90.0%	90.0%

Source: UNDP Executive Balanced Scorecard

---

[71] Based on an index (0-10 scale) resulting from the assessment of the office website by the UNDP Office of Communications according to a set of criteria validating the alignment of the website content with key UNDP priorities.

[72] Not available as at 22 February 2013.

Country offices appear to see little use for the Strategic Plan as a tool for communicating with external partners. There are, however, examples of its use when national partners request evidence concerning whether or not a certain issue is within UNDP's mandate. There is also a perception at the country level that the visibility and importance of the Strategic Plan has declined over time and it has not served an ongoing communication role. To some extent, declining visibility of the Strategic Plan and reference to it can be expected; during its implementation the focus should be much more on the other components of the strategic planning system, and they are being reformed under the AOC initiative. The strategic planning system set out in Annex 5 makes a clear distinction between the medium-term tools approved by the Executive Board (the Strategic Plan and the integrated budget) and the annual business plans at corporate, regional and country levels, which are internally approved. In terms of the content of the Strategic Plan and the activities that UNDP undertakes, this distinction is less clear.

4.4 PROMOTING GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY

Implementation of the Strategic Plan has also coincided with increased demand for accountability by taxpayers in countries providing resources to UNDP and then in turn by the development agencies of these countries. This demand has been captured in the idea of value for money[73] and the need for greater clarity on reporting results.

Finding 14. Accountability through monitoring and reporting of performance under the Strategic Plan has improved over time.

UNDP has made efforts to strengthen the performance monitoring system since approval of the Strategic Plan. In 2007 the Evaluation Office undertook an evaluation of results-based management in UNDP,[74] and implementation of the recommendations set the basis for developing a stronger system and culture of results in the organization.[75] The new results framework introduced after the midterm review was generally well received by Executive Board members. Of those interviewees who addressed the question, most believed that UNDP has become a more results-oriented organization. This is a good example of the importance of leaders' commitment in pushing forward an important reform agenda.

On reporting, continuous efforts have been made to strengthen the process during implementation of the Strategic Plan. Accountability has been strengthened by the important progress UNDP has made during the present Strategic Plan period in raising the transparency of its operations and performance. The adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards was envisaged in the Strategic Plan and, although implemented later than planned, became operational from 2012. In addition, UNDP has made progress under the aid transparency initiative and performed well in the 2012 'Publish What you Fund'[76] index of aid transparency, ranking 10th out of 72 bilateral and multilateral development organizations. Finally, in late 2012 full audit reports became publicly available online. As at 31 December 2012,[77] the overall implementation rate of audit recommendations was 90.7 percent, a slight reduction from a year earlier.

---

[73] The UK Department for International Development, a driver of the value-for-money agenda, described it as "about maximizing the impact of each pound spent to improve poor people's lives". DfID, 'DFID's Approach to Value for Money', 2011, p. 2.

[74] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of Results Based Management in UNDP', New York, 2007.

[75] As of 21 March 2013, all actions in the management response had been completed or were ongoing with no due date.

[76] www.publishwhatyoufund.org/.

[77] This covers all reports from 1 January 2010 to 30 November 2012. Source: 'UNDP Annual Report on Internal Audit and Investigations' (DP/2013/35).

The general sentiment of those interviewed can be summed up by a statement from one Executive Board member: "It's definitely moving in the right direction. We have seen some clear improvements on this, but we are not there yet." UNDP senior management is cognizant of the problems with reporting and clearly senses the frustration of many Executive Board members who have issues with the system. These include:

- Lack of comparability over time and criteria that change annually[78]

- Poor use of examples, seen by some as too anecdotal

- Lack of analysis.

Some Executive Board members also noted that many programme country governments do not have the capacity to digest the large reports. Moreover, there is a disconnect between the system of corporate performance monitoring through the ROARs and ERBM and the system for reporting at the country level through the CPAP annual reviews.

The corporate reporting system faces two specific issues that still need to be addressed: aggregation and contextualization. The challenge is how a highly decentralized organization aggregates results across 130-plus programmes while at the same time taking into account their diverse contexts. Progress made since the midterm review to aggregate output-level data (through the UNDP output profile) has given greater depth and scope to understanding of UNDP's aggregate output-level performance. Nonetheless, these are challenges recognized by UNDP senior management and Executive Board members alike, and they have yet to be fully addressed at the outcome level.

Finding 15. The system of decentralized evaluation[79] is not working well, and while steps have been taken to improve overall utilization of evaluation, it is not as high as it could be.

Nearly 1,300 UNDP decentralized evaluations (including UNDAF evaluations) were uploaded onto the Evaluation Resources Centre between 2008 and 2012, meaning an average of approximately 9 per country office over the five-year period (Table 11).[80] Coverage by decentralized evaluations between 2008 and 2012 across the four focus areas was quite even, although with some over-representation of projects/outcomes under the poverty focus area (29 percent of all decentralized evaluations) and under-representation of the crisis prevention and recovery focus area (19 percent).

It is widely recognized within UNDP that decentralized evaluation by programme units remains weak, and some interviewees noted insufficient country office capacity for both monitoring and evaluation. This view is supported by the evidence on the quality of decentralized evaluations assessed by the Evaluation Office and reported on in the annual report on evaluation to the Executive Board.

Between 2008 and 2010, only outcome evaluations were assessed by the Evaluation Office. In this three-year period, 25 percent of assessed evaluations were considered satisfactory or highly satisfactory. In 2011, at the request of the Executive Board, all decentralized evaluations were assessed, and only 20 percent rated in the satisfactory or highly satisfactory categories. By 2012, this figure had increased to over 30 percent. All independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office are subject

---

78 One Executive Board member noted, "You feel you are starting from zero every year."

79 Evaluations commissioned by programme units and conducted by independent external experts.

80 According to the UNDP evaluation policy, decentralized evaluations are those commissioned by UN programme units, including country offices.

Table 11. Decentralized Evaluations by Type (2008–2012)[81]							
	2008	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**Total (2008-2012)**	**As a percentage of total decentralized evaluations**
Project evaluations	145	168	187	200	197	897	71%
Outcome evaluations	26	48	43	73	27	217	17%
UNDAF evaluations	4	8	17	8	6	43	3%
Other evaluations[82]	21	32	19	14	21	107	8%
Total decentralized evaluations	**196**	**256**	**266**	**295**	**251**	**1,264**	**100%**

Source: Evaluation Resources Centre

to a quality assurance process. For independent thematic evaluations this means an external advisory panel of senior thematic and evaluation specialists. For ADRs, quality is assured through the use of internal and external reviewers as well as stakeholder workshops in the country. In 2013 the Evaluation Office will introduce an advisory board to provide strong advice or quality assurance over the complete cycle of each evaluation.

UNDP management has made important efforts since the start of the Strategic Plan to increase use of evaluation. Independent evaluations that

are to be presented to the Executive Board[83] are discussed in regular senior management meetings – the Organizational Performance Group (OPG)[84] and sometimes the Executive Group[85] – together with their management responses. The Director of the Evaluation Office participates in OPG meetings as an observer to provide an evaluation perspective on issues on the agenda. In addition, evaluations are being used as part of background documentation for preparation of country office scans[86] and discussions between the Associate Administrator and the regional bureaux. UNDP has improved its efforts to

---

[81] Does not include evaluations commissioned by United Nations Volunteers, United Nations Capital Development Fund or the United Nations Millennium Campaign.

[82] Includes decentralized evaluations categorized as 'thematic'.

[83] All independent evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office with the exception of ADRs.

[84] The OPG is chaired by the Associate Administrator and comprises all Bureau Deputy Directors. It advises on key priorities for operational policy to support organizational performance and takes decisions on changes to operational policy and procedures where appropriate.

[85] The Executive Group comprises the Administrator, Associate Administrator and Bureau Directors. It is responsible for: (a) setting the vision and strategy of the organization; (b) setting high-level priorities to focus the organization on the achievement of that strategic direction; (c) allocating and aligning resources to priority areas; and (d) making the highest level decisions, such as those involving significant risks, opportunities, sensitivity or reputational impact.

[86] These are part of the Associate Administrator's regular performance review discussions with Regional Bureaux.

ensure that evaluative knowledge is internalized in programming, as per the Evaluation Policy. For instance, since 2011, ROAR captures country office reports on their usage of evaluations as evidence of contributions made to development. This is also an element of the ROAR quality measure that is now part of the Balanced Scorecard.[87]

The long-standing practice of twice-yearly updates by the Evaluation Office to senior management on recurring issues and emerging findings from independent evaluations continued during the Strategic Plan. These updates prompt discussions at the most senior management levels on evaluation and related issues. They also allow OPG to monitor organizational performance in terms of following up on evaluations and making decisions to correct course as needed. With regard to management responses, OPG receives regular updates on progress and challenges in implementation of management responses to independent evaluations (except ADRs), a practice introduced in 2011. This is an opportunity to review and 'fine tune' the UNDP response to substantive issues raised in evaluations and to ensure that the management response is not a one-off exercise but is used as a management tool and a source of continuous learning.

The Annual Report on Evaluations mentioned above is another important tool for accountability of the evaluation function. Since 2012, UNDP has prepared a management response to the Report. This corporate exercise led by Operations Support Group is another opportunity to take stock of the performance of the evaluation function across the organization in all its aspects, including compliance, follow-up, learning and use.

In addition, implementing actions set out in management responses can be used as a proxy for assessing evaluation use. According to the data on management responses to independent evaluations available in the Evaluation Resources Centre, efforts to do so have been insufficient (Table 12). Of the 52 ADRs conducted in this period, 15 percent of all actions are ongoing (with a due date) and overdue. For thematic evaluations the figure is 31 percent.

Table 12. Implementation of Management Responses for Independent Evaluations Conducted 2008–2012[88]						
		Status of management response (percent of total)				**Ongoing actions (with a due date) that are overdue (% of total)**
Type of evaluation	**Number of evaluations**	**Completed actions**	**Ongoing actions (without a due date)**	**Ongoing actions (with a due date)**	**Total**	
ADR	52	46%	12%	41%	100%	15%
Thematic	12	25%	23%	53%	100%	31%

Source: Evaluation Resources Centre

---

[87] The UNDP Balanced Scorecard consists of selected results and indicators to be planned, monitored and acted upon corporately to achieve the goals articulated in the Strategic Plan.

[88] Data downloaded from Evaluation Resources Centre, 22 March 2013.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions below are drawn from the findings described in sections 3 and 4 and are interpretations of the facts set out in these findings. Although based on the assessment of UNDP performance during the period 2008–2012, the focus of the conclusions is on the Strategic Plan itself and how it was used by UNDP. They should be seen as mutually reinforcing, conveying an overall sense of UNDP strengths and challenges in contributing to human development. The recommendations are drawn from the key conclusions and are intended to help the organization in preparing the new Strategic Plan. More specifically, they aim to contribute to an increase in UNDP's development effectiveness, and this perspective permeates all recommendations.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1. Overall, UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the Strategic Plan was approved. It also faces a very different context than five years ago, including stronger demands and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. In terms of development performance, UNDP has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas, but efficiency and sustainability remain challenging.

It was found that in terms of effectiveness of contributions at the country level, UNDP is likely to have made, or to make, a significant contribution to the intended outcomes in most of its country programmes and across all four focus areas. Within the broad focus areas within which it works some themes are clearly strengths. Examples of the areas where UNDP works well can be identified from recent thematic evaluations:

- UNDP has made an important contribution to national efforts aimed at pro-poor policy development in most of the programme countries where it works. In particular, it has helped strengthen the pro-poor enabling environment for policymaking, and this type of support remains a comparative strength for the organization in many countries.[89]

- UNDP is one of very few international organizations able to operate 'at scale' across multiple programme areas, before, during and after the outbreak of conflict. This work directly links to the broader UNDP emphasis on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to UNDP cross-cutting priorities such as women's empowerment.[90]

---

[89] UNDP Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Poverty Reduction* (New York, 2012).

[90] UNDP Evaluation Office, *Evaluation of UNDP Support to Conflict-Affected Countries in the Context of Peace Operations* (New York, 2012).

- UNDP has made significant contributions to strengthening electoral systems and processes. The UNDP framework for electoral assistance is well conceived and enables an effective response, if applied appropriately.[91]

- UNDP remains an important conduit for development funding. This is particularly clear in the case of partnership with global funds, where strategic, corporate-level linkages are cultivated and maintained.[92]

UNDP is not alone in facing the challenges of efficiency and sustainability. In supporting national ownership of the implementation process, inevitably UNDP will not be in control of the implementation process and to some extent the degree of management efficiency. Equally, sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributes is often beyond its control, so capacities and incentives need to be introduced to ensure that this issue is considered at the time of design. Moreover, both efficiency and sustainability are difficult to measure and context specific.

Conclusion 2. Through various initiatives centred on the AOC, UNDP has strengthened the overall strategic planning system with the Strategic Plan at its core. There is still much to do, and while the AOC explicitly noted the need to start with headquarters and regional centres, the move to strengthen country offices and to clarify roles and responsibilities at all three levels is urgent.

It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the AOC as the umbrella for reforms aimed at strengthening UNDP organization and management. Nonetheless, UNDP management has started an effective process to take forward the Strategic Plan and strengthen the planning and

management systems that surround it. This is especially important given the nature of the Strategic Plan as a political, and therefore negotiated, document that did not please all factions within the Executive Board and is, inevitably, the result of compromise.

By design UNDP is a highly decentralized organization, and it is clearly at the country level that it makes its greatest contribution. It is also at the country level where capacities – as much institutional as individual – are often weakest. Limited learning at the country level, and therefore by default between countries and regions, is an important constraint affecting UNDP organizational and development performance. If UNDP is truly to become a learning organization, extra efforts will be needed as well as appropriate incentives and capacities at the country level.

Conclusion 3. UNDP effectively used the Strategic Plan to direct the organization towards the four broad focus areas, but implementation of all the approaches at the programming level as intended in the Strategic Plan document (for example, the human development-based approach to programming and mainstreaming South-South cooperation) was not ensured. Even where major efforts were made (such as in gender mainstreaming and capacity development) incentives and capacities to ensure country-level implementation were not adequate.

Although capacity-building and development represent the overarching contribution of UNDP, the organization has not been successful in adapting this approach to the wide range of contexts within which it works. Moreover, UNDP's strategy and its component parts have

---

[91] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Electoral Systems and Processes', New York, 2012.

[92] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Partnership with Global Funds and Philanthropic Foundations', New York, 2012.

led to fragmentation in programming due to the lack of a unifying principle, even though the Strategic Plan explicitly stated that this should be human development.

All the elements of a useful strategic planning tool are there for the organization to take a strategic management approach. The Strategic Plan document set out the goals, approaches and priorities for the organization and a framework to facilitate accountability in achieving or implementing them. In the cases of capacity development and gender mainstreaming, the organization made great efforts to design tools and guidance for country offices. But in other cases – South-South cooperation, human development – neither of these essential elements of success was developed sufficiently to comply with the approach set out in the Strategic Plan. Yet while UNDP has made efforts to develop tools and guidance at headquarters, these efforts have not been sufficient to ensure that country offices and other programming units have implemented these approaches. This has implications for support, oversight and country-level incentive structures.

Conclusion 4. UNDP did not adequately support country offices in addressing the trade-offs between the approaches and/or priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. For example, the trade-off between national ownership and organizational priorities or between long-term capacity development needs and short-term results.

While the Strategic Plan sets the direction, UNDP management needs to address the inherent trade-offs that it contains. Basing the scope of UNDP's work on existing demand does not preclude different demand in the future. At the same time, while the focus areas are based on demand, the approaches contained in the Strategic Plan may not be. For example, the importance of responding to national demands

may also have reduced the incentives to ensure implementation of corporate approaches. These may also be reasons for the continuation of downstream projects with little link to policy. National demand may also result in a programme that is too broad to be efficiently managed or for which appropriate capacities are not available at the local level. Greater guidance needs to be developed to help country offices address tensions between national demand (however defined) and organizational goals.

At the same time UNDP's comparative strengths lie not just in its technical areas but also in its long-term commitment, flexibility and speed through country-level decision-making. As a result of the long-term approach UNDP has the potential to engage in complex capacity development initiatives and in support to national learning from different strategies. Both these areas have presented challenges to UNDP.

Conclusion 5. UNDP's funding arrangements and reliance on non-core funding present challenges to effective programming and limit performance as assessed by the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability criteria.

While UNDP is committed to long-term engagement with programme countries, it has no control over its resources in the long term. In some circumstances sustainability of the benefits can be related to the sustainability of the intervention itself and can therefore be at risk. Effectiveness was seen to be affected by the difficulty in mobilizing adequate resources to undertake activities contributing to specific outcomes. Moreover, the reliance on largely unpredictable non-core resources results in challenges to maintaining programme focus. This is especially true when country offices struggle to maintain a critical mass of staff with limited core resources, making the imperative to mobilize resources very strong.

The challenges presented by the funding model are so important that the logic of having a country programme in a situation where only a small percentage of resources can be programmed needs to be examined. Keeping within the framework of the UNDAF and focusing on projects (and by default results in terms of project outcomes) may be a more appropriate approach. This could be especially effective where UNDP country offices are focused on only a few core initiatives in which they are able to exploit their comparative strengths and develop appropriate partnerships.

Conclusion 6. The performance monitoring and reporting system has been strengthened over time. Yet it is not optimal for a highly decentralized organization working on complex development issues where context is extremely important. This is an issue at the heart of its performance monitoring and reporting challenges. To create a more appropriate performance monitoring and assessment system, the country programme should be the unit of analysis.

An adequate system to assess performance across the organization is an essential part of the management of any organization. The decentralized nature of the organization, very rare among development organizations, is a major strength; it allows UNDP the flexibility to adapt to different contexts and greater national ownership of programmes. Yet it also requires a different approach to monitoring and one where context plays a role.

Such an approach is logically consistent with the Executive Board-approved CPD and with the CPAP as the nationally owned basis of implementing the programme. Accountability to government is already facilitated though annual CPAP meetings, a system run in parallel to the annual reporting process to UNDP senior management, and, through the Annual Report of the Administrator, to the Executive Board.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The new Strategic Plan needs to be clear about the direction it wants UNDP to take, and UNDP management needs to ensure that adequate tools are put in place to support and monitor implementation of the strategies and priorities contained in the plan.

A key conclusion was that efforts to implement priorities and approaches were mixed and not carefully monitored from the start of the Plan. Even though the role of the Plan is to provide direction, the role of UNDP management is to operationalize and implement this direction through ensuring clarity of concepts and approaches, developing tools such as guidance, and monitoring its implementation. Yet, the examples of capacity development and gender mainstreaming suggest that guidance and monitoring are not enough to ensure implementation of the approaches identified in the Strategic Plan. Even combined with strong leadership the central actions are necessary but not sufficient to guarantee implementation.

Recommendation 2. The new Strategic Plan needs to explicitly address the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model.

UNDP's comparative strengths are not just in parts of its focus areas but, inter alia, in its long-term commitment and in general its position as a trusted partner. These are elements of an underlying 'theory' of how UNDP works that is operationalized through a business model. The trade-offs faced by UNDP are inherent in any business model and need to be made transparent, with decisions made by the Executive Board as to UNDP's position. Specifically, agreement must be reached on the trade-offs in two areas: first, between national ownership and organizational priorities with clear organization, approaches, strategies and focus combined with guidance for programme units when faced

with a potential trade-off; and second, between addressing long-term capacity development needs and short-term results, which requires a review of the incentives faced by programme units when reporting on results and the investments in processes of innovation, learning and adaptation that are required if long-term capacity development is to be effectively supported.

Recommendation 3. The new Strategic Plan should emphasize the priority of supporting the country level and explicitly recognize that no matter how good the work is at the centre, it is at the country level where the difference is being made.

Effective support to strengthening country offices must be the priority of UNDP central and regional support. Taking into account context variability, the generation of coherent policy support needs to be anchored at the regional level. For its central research function, in the spirit of One UN and in order to prevent duplication of work, UNDP should work more closely with the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs and the United Nations University. Moreover, to overcome the tendency to work in silos, sustainable human development as a unifying principle should be explicitly at the centre of country-level programming. Practical support and guidance need to be provided to ensure that this becomes a reality.

Recommendation 4. When assessing performance, the new Strategic Plan needs to take the country programme as the unit of analysis. This will allow a more realistic and meaningful assessment, taking into account the country-level context.

In complex development situations and areas of intervention, the role of context is vital in determining performance. The contexts and areas in which UNDP works can only be fully internalized if performance assessment is made at the country level (i.e. the country programme). Taking the country level as the unit of analysis for performance in terms of contribution to outcomes would still require country office reporting on approaches and outputs for aggregation at the corporate level. Moreover, a focus on the country programme would allow the monitoring and evaluation systems to be vertically integrated so that selected independent evaluations could validate (or not) the performance assessment made through the monitoring system.

ANNEX 1.
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

UNDP made its first corporate plan available to the Executive Board at its annual session in 1995[93] and in 1997 started developing an overall planning and results management system that led to the first Multi-Year Funding Framework in 2000. The 'UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2011 – accelerating global progress on human development' (DP/2007/43/Rev.1) – was the latest corporate planning tool in this series.

The plan was finally approved by the UNDP Executive Board at its annual session in June 2008 after a long negotiation process among Member States. The original Strategic Plan (DP/2007/43) had been presented to the Executive Board at the annual session in 2007, but agreement was not reached on key issues contained in the draft. The revised version of the report also included an addendum of the development and institutional results frameworks (DP/2007/43/Add.1). At the annual session of the Board in 2009 a decision was made to extend the plan to 2013 (Decision 2009/9), and the same decision led to alignment of the regional and global programmes to the strategic plan timeframe.

UNDP's main tool for reporting back to the Executive Board is the Annual Report of the Administrator, and in 2011 UNDP combined the report with a midterm review of the strategic plan (DP/2011/22). A cumulative review of the Strategic Plan is also planned for presentation to the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2013. The design of the independent evaluation by the Evaluation Office takes this review process into account.

2. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The evaluation of the Strategic Plan was originally included in the Evaluation Office work programme presented to the annual session of the Executive Board in 2009 (DP/2009/13). The purposes of the evaluation are:

■ To support UNDP's accountability to the Executive Board

■ To provide input into the development of the new Strategic Plan.[94]

The primary objectives of the evaluation are to:

■ Assess the performance of UNDP during the period covered by the Strategic Plan

■ Assess the use of the Strategic Plan as a tool for guiding UNDP and for managing its activities

■ Facilitate learning from UNDP experience during the Strategic Plan period

■ Provide actionable recommendations with respect to UNDP overall strategy and strategic planning process.

The evaluation will cover the UNDP strategic plan 2008-2013. The breadth of the Plan and its multiple purposes means that the scope of the evaluation will be equally broad. To facilitate design

---

[93] UNDP, *Initiatives for Change: Follow-up to Decision 95/22 Paragraph 4*. Note by the Administrator.

[94] More information on the preparation of the new Strategic Plan can be found in the *Road Map for the Implementation of Executive Board Decision 2011/14* (DP/2011/CRP.5).

and management of the evaluation the scope will be aligned to the structure of the Strategic Plan and divided into two related components:

- **An assessment of UNDP development performance:** This component will assess UNDP's development contribution against the goals established in the Strategic Plan results framework.[95] It will also asses the approaches set out in the Strategic Plan (national ownership, capacity development, South-South cooperation, effective aid management, etc.) to see if they were followed and how they affected performance. In addition and where possible, the evaluation will assess UNDP's performance in different development contexts (for example, in small island developing states, landlocked countries or middle-income countries).

- **An organizational assessment of the Strategic Plan:** The component will assess how UNDP has used the Strategic Plan as a management tool in support of greater development contribution. It would cover (a) whether it led to an adherence to the set priorities and (b) the role of the Strategic Plan in supporting better management for development results in the organization – that is, whether UNDP became a more results-oriented organization and built a robust planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation system around the Strategic Plan.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Given the wide scope the evaluation is inevitably a hybrid of the types of evaluations that the Evaluation Office normally undertakes, specifically a mix of organizational, programmatic and thematic. Recognizing the complexity of this evaluation, an iterative approach will be taken, gathering multiple perspectives to measure and understand past performance. The evaluation will include broad engagement in the process including among (a) Executive Board members; (b) UNDP at the headquarters, regional and country levels; and (c) development partners, including global and regional organizations.

The methodology is to make evaluative judgements as to UNDP performance and contribution within each of the two components of the evaluation, the assessment of UNDP development performance and the assessment of the Strategic Plan as a tool for managing for development results. These judgements will be made according to component-specific evaluation criteria. In addition, efforts will be made to identify the factors that can explain UNDP's performance and positioning.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions. The following criteria will be used:

Component 1: The overall evaluation question for the first component is: How has UNDP performed during the period of the Strategic Plan in relation to the strategic intent as expressed in strategic plan goals? The component is a programmatic evaluation based on the strategic plan results framework and would therefore use the standard criteria used in undertaking such evaluations:

- **Effectiveness:** How effective has UNDP been in contributing to the goals specified in the development results framework?

- **Efficiency:** How efficiently has UNDP used its resources in contributing to these results?

- **Sustainability:** How sustainable are the development results to which UNDP contributed during implementation of the Strategic Plan?

---

[95] DP/2007/43/Add.1. The results framework was revised in 2011.

The relevance of the strategic plan is taken as a given because the plan was approved by the Executive Board following extensive analysis and consultations. The relevance of the different approaches used will, however, be examined in the context of the factors that explain performance.

Component 2: The second component will focus on a single criterion covering a number of areas set out in the strategic plan:

■ **Effectiveness:** How effectively has UNDP used the Strategic Plan to strengthen management for contributing to development results?

Identifying factors that can explain performance: A number of factors that can explain UNDP performance will be identified before the start of the data collection. First, factors that relate to the cross-cutting approaches identified in the Strategic Plan (national ownership, emphasis on upstream work, capacity development, etc.) including approaches that can be goals within themselves (gender equality, human rights, etc.). An assessment will be made as to how relevant these approaches are to improving UNDP's performance. During the data collection process other factors will be identified.

4. DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

The detailed design, including an evaluation matrix to link the evaluation criteria and questions with data collection methods and sources of data, will be developed during the inception phase.

Development performance component: Data will be collected primarily through a meta-analysis of the evaluations conducted since the start of the Strategic Plan in 2008 as well as the management

responses to these evaluations. Through this process, efforts will be made to quantify the findings so as to assess UNDP's performance across different regions and contexts. The evaluations to be covered by the meta-analysis include the independent evaluations conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office, specifically the assessments of development results conducted at country level and thematic evaluations that cover a specific issue of importance to the organization. Decentralized evaluations commissioned by UNDP units at headquarters, regional and country levels and other credible evaluative evidence will also be covered.

Organizational component: Data collection will largely be undertaken through desk review, analysis of administrative data and interviews among a large range of stakeholders:

■ Headquarters, regional service centres and country offices

■ EB member interviews, ensuring representation from different regions

■ Key global and regional partners.

Documents to be reviewed include Executive Board decisions and reports of meetings as well as UNDP annual reports and corporate surveys. Additional primary data will be collected from the UNDP ERBM system (including the results-oriented annual reports) and Atlas.[96] A comparison between the two MYFFs covering the periods 2000–2003 and 2004–2007 and the ongoing Strategic Plan will also be needed.

The process of synthesizing the evaluation evidence produced from desk reviews, interviews, evaluation meta-analysis and quantitative data analysis will be undertaken though a synthesis workshop

---

[96] Atlas is the enterprise resource planning system used by UNDP and other United Nations agencies. UNDP uses Atlas to manage projects, finances, human resources, inventory and procurement. Atlas also forms the basis for UNDP's internal control and accountability framework.

led by the evaluation manager. The process will be framed by the criteria and questions.

5. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

With presence in over 135 country offices serving more than 160 countries, aggregating UNDP's contribution to provide accountability to stakeholders is a methodological challenge. The evaluation will make use of evidence gathered through the conduct of independent and quality-assessed decentralized evaluations that cover more than half of UNDP's wide range of initiatives, including its country, regional, global and other programmes. Moreover, the period covered by these independent and decentralized evaluations may not coincide with the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Even though the evaluations used in the meta-analysis are recent (completed between 2010 and 2012) they will inevitably cover a period before the start of the Strategic Plan. Nonetheless, these evaluations make conclusions and recommendations that relate to the end of the period being examined and it is therefore valid to use them in meta-analysis process.

UNDP support to the Resident Coordinator function will not be included in the scope of the evaluation for reasons of feasibility and utility. On the feasibility side, it would require engagement with a far greater range of stakeholders in the coordination process than would be required for the rest of the evaluation. This would not be possible in the time given. On the utility side, since the system is mandated by the General Assembly, lessons learned from evaluation of this function would not necessarily feed directly into the development of a new Strategic Plan.

6. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Evaluation Team and the Role of the Evaluation Office: The evaluation will be conducted by the independent UNDP Evaluation Office. Given the nature and importance of the evaluation, the Office recognizes that high-level leadership and management is required. The evaluation will therefore be conducted under the overall direction of the Evaluation Office Director, who will report directly to the UNDP Executive Board. The team will be led by a senior staff member who will act as evaluation manager for the conduct of the evaluation. Additional Evaluation Office staff members will be responsible for specific components. The team will be supported by a research consultant, and additional researchers will be recruited as necessary.

Stakeholder Engagement and Quality Assurance. Regular briefings will be made to the UNDP Organizational Performance Group (OPG)[97] to ensure engagement with UNDP stakeholders at an appropriately high level. The evaluation will also be discussed at three informal meetings of the Executive Board, specifically, at the design stage, when emerging findings become clear and for presentation of the final draft shortly before the Executive Board session in June 2013. An external advisory panel will be established early in the evaluation process and will report directly to the Evaluation Office Director. The panel (four people) will provide guidance on the design of the evaluation as set out in the terms of reference and inception report and will undertake a substantive review of the draft evaluation report. Members of the panel will be high-level development specialists, practitioners and evaluators. Efforts will be made to ensure gender and regional balance and to include a range of types of expertise and experience. In addition a senior

---

[97] The Organizational Performance Group (OPG) is chaired by the Associate Administrator and meets on average twice a month. The group includes the Central and Regional Bureaux Deputy Directors, Director of the Office of Human Resources, Director of the Office of Communications and Executive Heads of the United Nations Capital Development Fund and United Nations Volunteers. The OPG facilitates senior management review of and decision-making on programme and operational issues.

member of the Evaluation Office staff will be designated internal reviewer.

7. PROCESS AND TENTATIVE TIME FRAME

Phases of the Evaluation. The evaluation will be conducted in five phases:

■ **Preparation phase:** A concept note was prepared by the Evaluation Office core team and reviewed by UNDP senior management and members of the Executive Board. The note set out the basic approach and scope of the evaluation and forms the basis of this terms of reference.

■ **Inception phase:** The core evaluation team will meet in New York to finalize the detailed design of the evaluation. Detailed tools to facilitate the evaluation will be noted in a concise inception report/evaluation implementation plan.

■ **Data collection, analysis and synthesis phase:** This will be conducted according to the information set out in section 4 of this terms of reference and according to the division of labour described above. At the end of the synthesis process, the evaluation team will provide feedback to UNDP management on the main findings, conclusions and emerging

recommendations of the evaluations. This will be timed so as to feed into the process of developing the new Strategic Plan.

■ **Reporting phase:** Following the synthesis workshop the first draft of the report will be prepared and distributed for internal review by Evaluation Office staff and members of the Advisory Panel. Upon clearance by the Evaluation Office Director it will be submitted to UNDP management for addressing factual corrections as well as errors of interpretation and omissions. The revised report will be considered final and will be submitted to UNDP management so that a management response can be prepared.

■ **Follow-up phase:** The report will be uploaded onto the Executive Board web page and will be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2013.

Time frame: The Strategic Plan evaluation will be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2013. This means that the evaluation should be complete, including all reviews, and shared with UNDP senior management by the end of January 2013, to comply with Executive Board secretariat deadlines and allow more than a month for preparation of a management response. Based on these parameters, the time frame for the evaluation process is tentatively as follows:

Activity	Deadline
Evaluation team members recruited	August 2012
Design finalized in an inception report	September 2012
Data collection	September/October 2012
Analysis and synthesis	Mid-October 2012
Feedback workshop for UNDP management and Executive Board	Late-October 2012
First draft report for Evaluation Office review	Mid-November 2012
Revision of first draft report and submission to stakeholders	End-November 2012
Final unedited report submitted to UNDP management	End-December 2013
Executive summary submitted to Executive Board Secretariat	Mid-February 2013
Presentation to UNDP Executive Board	June 2013

ANNEX 2.
PERSONS INTERVIEWED

EXECUTIVE BOARD

It was planned to interview 15 members of the Executive Board across all 5 regions. As a first step, the president and four vice presidents of the Executive Board were requested to nominate other members from their region to participate in the interviews. The aim was to interview members in the same ratio of donor countries to programme countries as on the Executive Board itself. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview as many members from programme countries as hoped. Members from the following countries were interviewed:

Antigua and Barbuda

Czech Republic

El Salvador

Indonesia

Finland

France

Germany

Russian Federation

Sweden

Switzerland

UNDP SENIOR MANAGEMENT

The goal, which was achieved, was to interview senior management from all regional and other headquarters bureaux. The following individuals were interviewed:

Chhibber, Ajay, Director, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific

Cissé, Babacar, Deputy Director, Regional Bureau for Africa

Clark, Helen, Administrator

Elizondo, Ligia, former Director, Operations Support Group

Faieta, Jessica, Deputy Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

Grynspan, Rebeca, Associate Administrator

Kaag, Sigrid, Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy

Karl, Judith, Director, Operations Support Group

Martinez-Soliman, Magdy, Deputy Director, Bureau for Development Policy

Ruedas, Marta, Deputy Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery

Saigal, Sunil, Deputy Director, Regional Bureau for Arab States

Shah, Dharshak, Deputy Director, Bureau of Management

Sultanoglu, Cihan, Director, Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICES

It was planned to interview senior managers from 12 UNDP country offices; 10 participated. The country offices were selected randomly. Senior staff members from the following country offices were interviewed:

Chile

Ghana

Guatemala

Indonesia

Kyrgyzstan

Lebanon

Mauritius

Mongolia

Timor-Leste

Uganda

DOCUMENTS CONSULTED AND DATA SOURCES

UNDP Strategic Planning Documents

Strategic Plan 2008–2011 – Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development (updated pursuant to decision 2007/32) (DP/2007/43Rev.1).

Strategic Plan 2008–2011 – Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development (DP/2007/43).

Addendum of the development and institutional results frameworks (DP/2007/43/Add.1).

Second Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF), 2004–2007.

Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) 2000–2003.

Narrowing the Focus (DP/1998/5).

Initiatives for Change: Follow-up to Decision 95/22 (DP/1996/2).

Future of the UNDP: Initiatives for Change (DP/1994/39).

Annual Reports on Implementation of the Strategic Plan

Report on the Operationalization of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008–2011 (DP/2009/11).

Annual Report of the Administrator on the Strategic Plan: Performance and Results for 2009 (DP/2010/17).

Midterm Review of the UNDP Strategic Plan and Annual Report for 2010 (DP/2011/22).

Annual Report of the Administrator on the Strategic Plan: Performance and Results for 2011 (DP/2012/7).

Other Strategic Planning Documents

An Agenda for Organizational Change: Lifting UNDP from Good to Great, April 2011.

Aiming Higher: Strategic Priorities for a Stronger UNDP. Summary, 9 June 2011.

Achievement by Design: Strategic Planning for a Higher Performing UNDP, 19 September 2011.

Achievement by Design: Strategic Planning for a Higher Performing UNDP, (update on implementation, 23 September 2011).

UNDP Annual Business Plan: Priorities, Actions , Responsibilities and Indicators, 23 November 2011.

Recent Donor Assessments of UNDP

Australian Agency for International Development, 'Australian Multilateral Assessment', Canberra, March 2012.

Canadian International Development Agency, 'Development Effectiveness Review of the United Nations Development Programme 2005-2011, Synthesis Report', Québec, February 2012.

Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Denmark's Engagement in Multilateral Development and Humanitarian Organizations', Copenhagen, January 2012.

Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, 'Assessment of Organizational Effectiveness and Reporting on Development Results: United Nations Development Programme', vol. I, December 2012.

United Kingdom Department for International Development, 'Multilateral Aid Review', London, March 2011.

ANNEX 4.

EVALUATIONS USED IN META-SYNTHESIS

Thematic Evaluations Included in the Meta-analysis	
Year	**Title**
2012	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to South-South and Triangular Cooperation
2012	Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-affected Countries
2012	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Poverty Reduction
2011	Evaluation of UNDP Partnership with Global Funds and Philanthropic Foundations
2011	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Electoral Systems and Processes
2010	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Environmental Management for Poverty Reduction
2010	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities
2010	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Strengthening Local Governance
2010	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Disaster Prevention and Recovery
2010	Evaluation of UNDP Contribution at the Regional Level to Development and Corporate Results

ADRs Included in the Meta-analysis[98]				
Africa	**Asia and the Pacific**	**Arab States**	**Europe and the CIS**	**Latin America and Caribbean**
2012				
Niger	Timor-Leste			
Angola				
Cote D'Ivoire				
2011				
Liberia	India	Djibouti	Moldova	Costa Rica
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Nepal	Egypt		
	Pacific Island Countries (Fiji and Samoa)	United Arab Emirates		
	Sri Lanka			
	Papua New Guinea			
2010				
Ghana	Thailand	Somalia		El Salvador
Malawi	Lao PDR	Tunisia		Brazil
Senegal	Bangladesh			Jamaica
	Mongolia			Paraguay
8	11[99]	5	1	5

---

[98] The date represents the year when the majority of the data collection was undertaken.

[99] The Pacific Island Countries ADR covers two multi-country programmes, Samoa and Fiji.

Other Programmatic Evaluations Included in the Meta-analysis	
Year	**Title**
2012	Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Africa
2012	Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific
2012	Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean
2012	Evaluation of the Regional Programme for the Arab States
2012	Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
2012	Evaluation of the Fourth Global Programme

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Maps the process of sustained external and internal stakeholder engagement in strategic planning

Medium-term | Board-approved

Strategic Plan (SP)
Determines development & management priorities and results and defines milestones for monitoring

Integrated Budget
Aligns core resources with programme & management priorities in the SP

Board-approved programme documents
Reflect strategic priorities based on stakeholder dialogue

Annual Report on the SP

Reports on progress

Integrated Resource Management Framework

UNDP Annual Business Plans (ABP)
Defines 12 month dev. & mgmt. priorities, key actions and required resources

Accountability Framework

Defines accountabilities for SP and ABP

Strategic Fund

CBx Annual Plan
Defines follow-through on annual business plans with detail

RBx Annual Plan
Defines follow-through on annual business plans with detail

CO IWPs
Defines follow-through on annual business plans with detail

Annual | internally approved

Enterprise Risk Management

ANNEX 6.

THE EVOLUTION OF UNDP CORPORATE GOALS AND FOCUS AREAS

'Narrowing the Focus' (1998)[100]	MYFF 1 (2000–2003)	MYFF 2 (2004–2007)	Strategic Plan (2008–2013)
Poverty eradication	Poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods	Achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty	Poverty reduction and the MDGs
Employment and sustainable livelihoods			
Environmental management	Environment and natural resources	Energy and environment for sustainable development	Environment and sustainable development
Establishment of an enabling environment for sustainable human development	Enabling environment for sustainable human development	Fostering democratic governance	Democratic governance
	Special development situations	Crisis prevention and recovery	Crisis prevention and recovery
		Responding to HIV/AIDS	
Gender equality and the advancement of women	Gender equality and the advancement of women		

---

[100] UNDP, 'Narrowing the Focus' (DP/1998/5).

ANNEX 7.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

TO THE EVALUATION OF THE UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN, 2008-2013

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

This report summarizes the response of UNDP management to the evaluation of the organization's Strategic Plan, 2008–2013. The purposes of the evaluation were to support UNDP accountability to the Executive Board by providing evidence-based analysis and inputs into the development of the new UNDP strategic plan, 2014–2017. This management response to the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2008–2013, should be read in conjunction with related management responses to the evaluations of the global, regional and South-South programmes, and the cumulative review of the Strategic Plan.

As noted in the evaluation, UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the Strategic Plan was developed, and the organization has continued to make an important development contribution across all its focus areas. Since 2008, UNDP has contributed to bringing the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agenda from 'vision' to implementation; built the capacity of national counterparts in high-prevalence countries to address HIV/AIDS comprehensively as a development rather than simply a health issue; contributed to strengthening governance through better linkages between national and subnational development agendas and through strengthening democratic institutions; and helped embed climate change mitigation and disaster reduction strategies in national development plans across the globe. UNDP is an important link between humanitarian and development actors in post-crisis settings, and has been an important contributor to preventing violence in fragile settings as well as assisting countries and communities to rebuild livelihoods and re-establish stable institutions and development pathways after conflict.

UNDP is also recognized as having made an important contribution to national efforts aimed at pro-poor policy development, particularly with regard to strengthening the pro-poor enabling environment for policymaking. As 2015 approaches, accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals remains a key focus of UNDP work in this area. Since 2009, the organization has been more active in meeting demand from countries for strategic support on the Millennium Development Goals and the MDG acceleration framework (MAF), which was designed as a United Nations system process to address off-track goals and has become the main vehicle of UNDP improved support in this area, having been applied thus far in 45 countries since 2010.

Making UNDP and its work more evidence-based has also been a key part of the agenda for organizational change, launched by the Administrator in 2011. The MAF is proving highly successful largely because it exemplifies a more evidenced-based approach, drawing on existing evidence, policies and strategies in order to devise concrete, prioritized country action plans jointly and coherently with the United Nations system. The MAF not only exemplifies the stronger results focus, which has been evident in recent years, but is also an example of how UNDP is moving upstream to target transformational change.

UNDP is confident that although progress has been faster in some areas than in others, there has been a perceptible and meaningful improvement in the extent and quality of gender mainstreaming in UNDP during the Strategic Plan period. Through that period, UNDP contributions to gender equality have grown from 30 percent of country outcomes in 2008 to 71 percent in 2012. Gender marker data show a similar pattern. From 2010 to 2012, 36 percent of UNDP Gender Marker-rated programming expenditures either made "a significant contribution to gender equality" or "had gender equality as a principal objective", the highest categories of contribution.

More broadly, UNDP success with mainstreaming approaches, including gender equality, capacity development, the human development-based approach and South-South cooperation, has indeed been mixed, and there continue to be variations in performance across the organization with regard to mainstreaming and managing all of these approaches and issues. Although progress has been made, UNDP aspires for excellence; lessons learned from UNDP work in gender and other cross-cutting approaches during the current Strategic Plan period will continue to inform learning in all UNDP programmes in the future. Strengthening quality assurance processes in the full programme and project cycle will allow UNDP to be increasingly rigorous in ensuring that approaches outlined in the Strategic Plan are substantively reflected in its work.

Since the midterm review of the Strategic Plan (DP/2011/22), the organization has prioritized being more focused and at the same time ever more responsive to country demands for more synergistic and issue-based interventions. UNDP has been stressing the interdependencies of social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world and advocating for approaches and strategies that are reflective of this, such as 'triple wins for development', the connection between inclusive governance and social resilience and the poverty/environment nexus. Based on the unique added value and experience of UNDP in working toward the MDGs these past 13 years, the organization is now poised to play a pivotal role in helping to shape the post-2015 agenda. The next strategic plan, 2014-2017, will be designed on an issues-based rather than practice-based architecture, and measures are already being taken to align organizational approaches accordingly.

As noted in the evaluation, UNDP faces a very different substantive and operational context than five years ago, including stronger demands and higher expectations from the full spectrum of its partners, old and new. Owing to changes in the UNDP strategic planning system and its stronger culture of results, significant progress has been made in meeting the challenge of explaining the organization's particular contribution to important development results. This will continue to be challenging, especially because the organization is unswerving in its commitment to work with countries in tackling the deep-rooted and often most intractable impediments to development progress, and to ensuring that gains are truly inclusive and sustainable. More and more often, achieving this entails greater focus and resolve in standing for the kinds of programmes that are likely to drive lasting, equitable change with strong strategic potential. Much of UNDP work is dedicated to tackling these kinds of long-term challenges and trade-offs, where progress is often harder to quantify and communicate, and where the UNDP core/non-core funding model presents particular challenges with regard to predictability for long-term commitment.

UNDP recognizes that efficiency and sustainability are key dimensions of performance, and continually seeks to improve the way they are tracked and measured. As an organization that places a premium on national ownership and prioritizes national implementation at the project level, the identification of appropriate

measures and useful benchmarking standards has been challenging. UNDP is committed to managing the trade-offs associated with pursuing efficiency while prioritizing the strengthening of national institutions, arrangements and processes – especially as a means of fostering sustainability.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND UNDP

As highlighted in the evaluation report, a key element of the organization's efforts to improve results management is the overall progress, particularly over the past two years, in the UNDP strategic planning system. The introduction of an annual business plan and its integration into the unit-level integrated work plan of country offices and headquarters bureaux has allowed the organization to mobilize its efforts more strategically, and to have a coordinated operational approach to achieving results across the strategic plan focus areas. The organization continues to learn and explore new approaches around balancing country-level demand and organizational priorities, and then translating them into a coherent results picture that allows partners to see and understand the aggregate UNDP contribution to development results at the country, regional and global levels.

Stepping up efforts at headquarters is recognized as just one part of the puzzle. UNDP remains committed to ensuring that the national results that it pursues with its country partners are strategic and transformational. Country offices stand at the interface between UNDP, with its corporate standards and accountabilities, and national partners, with their own policies and procedures. UNDP is working hard to be an organization that increasingly harnesses innovative and collaborative approaches (for example, multifunctional platforms) to deliver programmes that prioritize interventions which can be scaled up and used to

provide the upstream policy options that partner countries value most highly and are demanding from UNDP.

The agenda for organizational change focused initially on headquarters and regional levels; attention is now fixed on country offices as the front line of creating real development value and meeting expectations of efficiency and sustainability. Over the last three years, UNDP has worked to strengthen results-based performance management, programme cycle management and learning from evaluation. Now oversight and reporting are being consolidated through the Country Office Support Initiative (COSI). COSI is helping country offices to manage the interface between country and corporate levels, and to ensure that UNDP commitments to national ownership are well balanced with organizational commitments to focus on programmatic quality and organizational accountability for results. UNDP has also renewed its focus on improving planning, monitoring and evaluation systems as part of the business models review under the agenda for organizational change.

Since 2008, UNDP has been purposeful and innovative in its efforts to effectively manage an imperfect Strategic Plan results framework. The organization has learned lessons in the areas of performance management, results reporting, the value of the Gender Marker and capacity development tracker, and the use of country and corporate outcomes, outcome indicators and output dimensions since the mid-term review. The organization's move to become a more evidence-based development actor, with a mastery of measurement and data in its areas of focus, has been challenging but is evolving in a robust and positive direction. Progress, including the shift in organizational culture, is both perceptible and broad. The challenges in coming years will be to generalize this progress in all offices, to achieve

more even performance across offices; and to refine performance and knowledge management structures and processes within UNDP in order to take full advantage of the improved data at the organization's disposal, to deepen the UNDP learning culture and put it in service to stronger results on the ground. Subject to Executive Board approval of a strong results framework with SMART indicators for every level of results, UNDP is poised to reap the benefits of learning for deepened development dialogue with all its partners and stakeholders, as it implements the new strategic plan, 2014-2017.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The new strategic plan needs to be clear about the direction it wants UNDP to take, and UNDP management needs to ensure that adequate tools are put in place to support and monitor implementation of the strategies and priorities contained in the plan.				
Management response UNDP agrees with this recommendation. The new strategic plan, 2014-2017, will be clearer about the future direction of UNDP. The organization recognizes the need to be more systematic in ensuring that adequate incentives and capacities are in place so that its priorities and approaches are more effectively reflected and implemented in all its programmes. As noted in the evaluation, UNDP made great efforts in gender and capacity development and, having learned from those efforts, is in a stronger position to support the use of its other approaches and priorities systematically over the coming years. UNDP is intent on ensuring a smoother, more managed transition to the new strategic plan, which includes developing stronger incentives to support the deployment of its approaches.				
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Tracking**	
			Comments	**Status**
1.1 The new strategic plan provides greater clarity and focus for the future work of UNDP.	September 2013	Executive Office		
1.2 UNDP develops adequate tools which enable the approaches outlined in the plan to be used fully in its programmes, and which support and monitor implementation of the strategic plan.	January 2014	Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), Executive Office		
1.3 UNDP provides targeted support to country offices in order to support their capacity to transition to the new strategic plan, including through COSI.	Ongoing	Regional bureaux, BDP, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), Executive Office		

Recommendation 2. The new strategic plan needs to explicitly address the trade-offs that occur as a result of UNDP's business model.				
Management response UNDP agrees with this recommendation. UNDP organizational results are defined at an organizational level and determined at the national level based on national demand for UNDP engagement in specific areas. Improved business analytics and pipeline management will further improve the ability of UNDP to ensure that there is a convergence between its priorities and demand for its support in key areas. Learning lessons from implementation of the current Strategic Plan, UNDP is intent on ensuring a smoother, more managed transition to the new strategic plan, including more clear guidance to its programmes on managing trade-offs that emerge from the approaches and priorities laid out in the strategic plan. Issues related to the UNDP funding model and associated trade-offs will continue to feature in performance monitoring and reporting to the Executive Board. UNDP will also use the new integrated results and resources framework to underpin a more robust reflection of the relationship between results and resources.				
2.1 Reporting under the new strategic plan provides more robust analysis of the trade-offs that occur as a result of the UNDP business model, including the relationship between national demand and organizational priorities; between transformational and short-term results; and between funding sources and the pursuit of durability in the long term.	September 2013	Executive Office		
2.2 Stronger UNDP performance management and business analytics enable more accurate forecasting of business model implications for achieving results under the new strategic plan.	December 2014	Executive Office		

Recommendation 3. The new strategic plan should emphasize the priority of supporting the country level, and explicitly recognize that no matter how good the work is at headquarters, it is at the country level that the difference is being made.

Management response
UNDP acts at the global, regional and country levels, and prioritizes support at the country level where development progress affects people's lives. UNDP recognizes the importance of the global and regional policy functions inter alia to support country offices and to benefit all partners through shared knowledge and learning. UNDP accepts that the Agenda for Organizational Change now needs to focus on country offices. The 2013 annual business plan includes important measures to capitalize on more than three years of intensive effort to improve the organization's results-based management culture, and to strengthen country office performance and learning through greater focus, strategic priority-setting, ongoing efforts such as COSI and refining UNDP business models.

3.1 The new strategic plan clearly emphasizes that support for the country level is the priority of UNDP, and that it is at the country level that UNDP makes the greatest difference.	September 2013	Executive Office		
3.2 See key action 1.3 above.	Ongoing	Regional bureaux, BDP, BCPR, Executive Office		
3.3 UNDP's future global programme leverages the global policy function to optimize the policy mix in order to service countries and to promote knowledge sharing and South-South exchange.	January 2014	BDP, BCPR, Executive Office, regional bureaux		

Recommendation 4. When assessing performance, the new strategic plan needs to take the country programme as the unit of analysis. This will allow a more realistic and meaningful assessment, taking into account the country-level context.				
Management response UNDP understands the recommendation, and agrees that there is the need to establish clearer performance criteria as part of a stronger performance monitoring system. UNDP recognizes the central role of the country programme as the main 'unit of analysis' in managing the organization's performance; UNDP currently monitors performance against country programme outcome indicators and country management indicators as an integral part of its performance monitoring and reporting architecture. The challenge of aggregating data to analyse organizational performance, while understanding the unique country context within which results are generated, is one that is faced by all large development actors. UNDP has made notable progress in its use of performance data since 2011, and continues to build its own capacity to produce high-quality, contextualized and nuanced performance metrics that go beyond compliance-oriented reporting to provide a meaningful picture of what is working and what is not.				
4.1 The new strategic plan has a results framework with SMART indicators at every result level that can be incorporated into country-level programming, including new country programme documents and results and resources frameworks.	September 2013	Executive Office, BDP, regional bureaux		
4.2 UNDP annual reports ensure that analysis of UNDP performance is founded on data and analysis of country-level performance, and is reflective of country context.	Ongoing	Executive Office, regional bureaux		
4.3 UNDP develops a stronger and more integrated performance monitoring system that provides a stronger evidence base for better evaluations.	October 2014	Executive Office, Bureau of Management		

Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.