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EVALUATION OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR ARAB STATES (2010-2013)

Evaluation Office

United Nations Development Programme

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FOREWORD

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in addition to supporting the development of 177 countries and territories through its country and multi-country programmes, runs global and regional programmes to address issues of global and regional nature, provide coherence to its technical support and facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience across the countries it serves.

During 2012, the Evaluation Office conducted a series of evaluations of these global and regional programmes. The present evaluation covered the Regional Programme for Arab States 2010-2013, implemented by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States through its Regional Programme Division in New York.

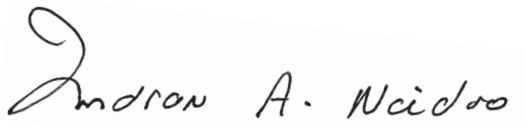
The evaluation found that in spite of wide disparities in social and economic standards, the Arab States' common development challenges and cultural heritage created a 'space' conducive to regional programming. The Regional Programme for Arab States has used this regional space to promote debate around key development issues that may be sensitive and controversial to address at country level, for instance, through the Arab Human Development Reports, which prompted much debate but reached an exceptionally wide audience and are now credited with foretelling the Arab uprisings of 2011. Support to the fight against corruption and efforts to address HIV/AIDS also exploited the same niche and proceeded from the same logic, the regional programme attempting in both cases to contextualize international norms in order to promote their implementation in the region.

The Arab uprisings created a peculiar context for the evaluation, preventing some travel and meetings but also, and more fundamentally, creating a 'moving target' in terms of relevance: interventions that were deemed irrelevant or unpalatable by regional governments before the uprisings came to be perceived as very relevant after 2011. This pertains in particular to democratic governance projects and the Arab Human Development Reports.

The evaluation concluded that the division of labour between the regional programme (managed from New York) and the advisory services to country offices (provided by the Regional Centre in Cairo) is currently too strict. While these lines of work probably need to retain a degree of autonomy, the lack of coordination and collaboration between the two regional entities generates confusion and neglects potential synergies.

To meet the challenges of the emerging era – particularly the rising expectations of the women, men and youth of the Arab world for employment, representation, freedom, dignity and security – UNDP will need to pull its strengths together, reach out to the Arab civil society, and translate the progressive language it uses in its reports and conferences into actual changes in people's lives.

As UNDP develops its new Strategic Plan, I hope this series of evaluations will shed light on how UNDP can further enhance the value of its services by utilizing these global and regional programme instruments more effectively and efficiently.



Indran A. Naidoo
Director, Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
AGORA	Portal for Parliamentary Development
AHDRs	Arab Human Development Reports
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ACIAC	Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries
ACINET	Arab Countries - Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network
ACRI	Arab Climate Resilience Initiative
AKR	Arab Knowledge Reports
ANND	Arab NGO Network for Development
ARPAC	Arab Region Parliamentarians Against Corruption
ATL	*Association Tunisienne de Lutte contre les Maladies Sexuellement Transmissible et le Sida* (Tunisia)
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy (UNDP)
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP)
CAWTAR	Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research
CCE	Community Capacity Enhancement
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CO	Country Office
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDC	Dryland Development Centre (UNDP unit)
DGTTF	Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund
DPA	Division of Political Affairs (UN)
EO	Evaluation Office (UNDP)
FSW	Female Sex Workers
GfD	Good Governance for Development Initiative
GIZ	*Deutsche Gesellschaftfür Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (German cooperation agency)
GPPS	Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening
HARPAS	HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOA	Horn of Africa
HDRO	Human Development Report Office
IDUs	Injecting Drug Users
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union

IRMS	Integrated Resource Mobilization Strategy
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LAS	League of Arab States
LDP	Leadership Development Programme
MARPs	Most At-Risk Populations
MBRF	Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NAP	National AIDS Programme
NCC	Net Contributor Country
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFID	OPEC Fund for International Development
OPALS	*Organisation Panafricaine de Lutte contre le Sida*
oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territories
PDIAR	Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region
PLWH	Person Living with HIV and AIDS
POGAR	Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
RANAA	Regional Arab Network Against AIDS
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP)
RCC	Regional Centre in Cairo
RCF	Regional Cooperation Framework
RLs	Religious Leaders
ROAR	UNDP Results Oriented Annual Report
RPD	Regional Programme Division
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIDC	*Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire* (Tunisian NGO)
TORs	Terms of Reference
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCAC	United Nations Convention Against Corruption
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNF	United Nations Foundation
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (now UN Women)
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drug Control
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGP-AS	Water Governance Programme for the Arab States
WHIA	Women's Health Improvement Association (Egypt)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of the Regional Programme for Arab States was meant to inform the next regional programme document for the Arab States, covering the period 2014-2018, and contribute to the programme's accountability to the Executive Board, donors, regional stakeholders and the UNDP Administrator.

A regional programme evaluation is an independent programmatic evaluation, the objectives of which are to: (a) provide substantive support to the Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board; (b) facilitate learning to inform current and future programming at the regional and corporate levels, particularly in formulating and implementing the new regional programme to be approved in 2014; and (c) provide stakeholders in programme countries, and development partners, with an objective assessment of the development contributions achieved through UNDP support, in partnerships with key players, through the regional programme.

This evaluation is the third of the Regional Programme for Arab States. It used a combination of techniques – including a desk review of the available documentation, an evaluation mission to five countries in the region, telephone interviews, a UNDP-wide survey of country office perceptions and an analysis of the websites, blogs and media quoting key knowledge products – in order to review the programme's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The evaluation also addressed partnerships and coordination issues, reviewed the strategic position of UNDP within the region at a time when the region is undergoing significant change, and examined the regional programme through the lenses of human rights, gender equality and empowerment. The contribution of the programme to development outcomes was assessed according to a standard set of four evaluation criteria used in all regional programme evaluations: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

A team of independent external consultants carried out the evaluation. The evaluation manager joined the evaluation mission to cover the environmental portfolio. The evaluation report was prepared by the team leader and the evaluation manager, and finalized by the Evaluation Office based on the team's draft and comments from the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS).

II. BACKGROUND

The region covered by RBAS comprises 17 countries and the occupied Palestinian territories, corresponding almost exactly to the countries in the League of Arab States. While political systems vary, the region has long been dominated by authoritarian regimes. It has also been marked by a number of conflicts, with important consequences on the UNDP presence in concerned countries, such as large donor funding and an important role played by the UNDP Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery.

The Arab uprisings characterized the past couple of years. What began as a popular revolt in Tunisia in January 2011 quickly spread to Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Even countries not affected by popular protests have felt pressure to reform, and topics such as freedom of expression, representation or corruption are now being discussed more openly throughout the region. As a consequence, the RBAS regional programme, initially formulated and implemented in a somewhat inert political environment, has had to adapt to a rapidly evolving situation.

These changes are occurring against the backdrop of slow economic growth, especially in non-oil producing countries. Growth has been stymied for decades by lack of transparency and political accountability, instability and conflicts, as well as global developments and crises. In some countries, growth has slowed even further since 2011 as a result of the uncertainty and instability created by the uprisings. Unemployment rates are considered to be the highest in the world, particularly among women and youth.

Other development challenges relevant for this evaluation and shared by virtually all RBAS countries include: (a) growing water scarcity (the Arab region is the most water-scarce region in the world); (b) rapid population growth, which threatens to offset development gains; (c) challenges to gender equality stemming from culture and religion; (d) high illiteracy rates in certain sectors of the population, and more generally a 'knowledge gap' as compared with other regions at similar levels of economic development; and (e) historically low but rising HIV/AIDS prevalence rates.

These similar development challenges, in addition to the region's common cultural and linguistic heritage, create a conducive space for regional programmes, in as much as common solutions can be found to common problems, while the Arabic language facilitates exchange of information, expertise and knowledge across the region.

The main objectives of the Regional Programme for Arab States, as listed in the regional programme document (2010-2013), are to: (a) develop capacity to generate, acquire and apply knowledge for human development; (b) build capacity for policy debate and dialogue among stakeholders; (c) contribute to development results with strategic and catalytic projects in key focus areas; (d) analyse and advocate for regional challenges; and (e) cultivate partnerships within and beyond the region.

Assuming that country offices and their programmes are better placed to respond directly to articulated national priorities, the RBAS regional programme has opted to address issues that are difficult to address by country offices because of their sensitivity, including HIV/AIDS, democratic governance or gender equality. The programme is active in four focus areas: (a) poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) achievement; (b) democratic governance; (c) environment and sustainable development; and (d) knowledge for human development. Each focus area is operationalized through a number of projects, many of which are long-standing.

The regional programme document estimated that financial resource requirements for the regional programme would come to USD 47.5 million for the four-year implementation period, 2010-2013. A fairly even spread of resources was envisaged across the focus areas. Resources to be mobilized from donors were estimated at USD 30 million. The actual amount of target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC) allocated to the regional programme was comparable to the planned amount (USD 15.8 million allocated against USD 17.5 million planned), but resources mobilized from donors were below target (USD 14.8 million mobilized against USD 30 million planned). Programme expenditures during the current cycle amounted to USD 20 million so far.

The Regional Programme for Arab States is supervised and, to a significant degree, managed from New York by the Regional Programme Division of RBAS. Like other UNDP regional bureaux, RBAS manages a regional service centre – the Regional Centre in Cairo – largely funded by the global programme. But unlike other UNDP regions, the Regional Centre in Cairo is not entrusted with any role in the regional programme's management. Its role is solely to provide technical support to country offices and programmes.

All projects are implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) through a series of project management units

based in the region. Two project management units are located in Cairo: the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States and the Water Governance Programme for Arab States. A third should be joining them soon: the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative. Ultimately, it is RBAS policy to host most regional projects in Cairo.

III. KEY FINDINGS

POVERTY REDUCTION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGS

The sole project implemented in this focus area has been the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS), supported by the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). No project was devoted to youth employment, regional cooperation and trade or inclusive growth, in spite of these areas being appropriately mentioned in the regional programme document and their relevance highlighted by the Arab uprisings.

HARPAS intends to contribute to a reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS through policy advice, capacity building, promotion of a multi-sectoral response to HIV and reduction of stigma associated with AIDS. Early activities centred on 'breaking the silence' surrounding HIV/AIDS. HARPAS undertook extensive training and sensitization campaigns for thousands of religious leaders across the Arab world. These campaigns resulted in the creation of Chahama, the network of religious leaders formed during the first HARPAS programme cycle (2002-2005).

During the present programme cycle, 2010-2013, the project has worked increasingly with civil society organizations representing persons living with HIV or persons at risk, at times intervening directly at the country level instead of working through country offices. Another achievement during the evaluation period was the development of a strategy addressing the vulnerabilities of migrants and mobile populations in the Horn of Africa (where HIV prevalence is higher than in other parts of the region). The ensuing 2010 Djibouti Declaration of Commitment and Call for Action on mobility, migration and HIV vulnerability of populations along the ports of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden received wide support in the subregion.

The project was found relevant inasmuch as the disease is still spreading and could burst into a real development challenge if left unattended. The regional format has the comparative strength to raise sensitive issues that otherwise may not be tackled at country level, such as homosexuality. Arab states tend to assign a rather low priority to combating HIV/AIDS, and to minimize the threat posed by HIV/AIDS. However, general government inattention to HIV/AIDS has been counter-balanced in several countries by heightened civil society mobilization, activism and advocacy.

Successive cycles of HARPAS programming have clearly raised the profile of HIV/AIDS in most countries of the region, reduced taboos surrounding HIV and made it easier for country offices to approach national counterparts on common strategies to address these issues.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The following are the main projects implemented in this focus area: (a) Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices; (b) Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR); (c) Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC), and (d) Support to Arab Countries Efforts in Transitional Governance Processes, launched in response to the Arab uprisings. Most of these initiatives stem from the now closed Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR).

The project entitled "Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices" trained prosecutors on human rights and increased the exposure of public prosecutors to matters related to intellectual property crimes, modern forensic techniques and environmental crimes.

The main activity of PDIAR during the current programme cycle was to strengthen the capacity of Arab parliaments to vote on legislation that would contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. The project identified promising pieces of legislation promoting the MDGs, and showcased these pieces of legislation in the "Guide for Arab Parliamentarians on the MDGs". It is unclear whether these efforts will lead to MDG-sensitive legislation.

ACIAC supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) through capacity building of anti-corruption bodies, technical support to UNCAC self-assessments, and facilitation of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET). Emulation between countries and the participation of civil society organizations play important roles in the dynamism of ACINET, but much remains to be done to promote the implementation of UNCAC and thereby reduce the incidence of corruption in the Arab region.

The project "Support to Arab Countries Efforts in Transitional Governance Processes" translated into Arabic a manual on constitution-making and co-funded the international forum Pathways of Democratic Transitions, held in Cairo on 5 and 6 June 2011. The forum facilitated debate around transitional justice in a non-prescriptive manner, making good use of UNDP's perceived neutrality and South-South cooperation.

Generally speaking, the strong relevance of the themes and issues promoted by the regional programme in democratic governance only came in full view after the Arab uprisings. Prior to this, the programme was advocating for international standards in democracy and rule of law, which countries of the region were generally reluctant to adopt. The situation changed markedly after the Arab uprisings, which highlighted the importance of good governance as a necessity for stability, prosperity and sovereignty. The themes and issues advocated by the UNDP regional governance programme proved in retrospect extremely pertinent. However, by that time, the governance portfolio had contracted significantly and become focused almost entirely on the fight against corruption, constraining its capacity to cater for more diverse and specific needs of Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, e.g. in asset recovery, constitution-building, or support to electoral processes.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environment and sustainable development is a new thematic area for the Regional Programme. It includes two projects: the Water Governance Programme for Arab States (WGP-AS) to promote effective governance of scarce water resources in Arab countries, and the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative (ACRI), which aims to strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to mainstream climate change adaptation policies into national development plans.

Initiatives in the environment and sustainable development focus area were found generally relevant. Unlike in other focus areas, projects in this area advocate for issues with a strong technical content and somewhat lower political sensitivity. Fresh water supply has become an issue of life-and-death importance for the region. The micro projects funded by WGP-AS in Jordan, the occupied Palestinian territories, Tunisia and Yemen were planned locally and addressed water conservation at the household and community levels in practical ways, and therefore were perceived as very relevant by stakeholders met by the mission. The idea of issuing a report on water (a key deliverable of the WGP-AS) received less support from the same stakeholders.

The design of the ACRI project went through an extensive consultative process involving country offices and Arab institutions. As a result, the project document appears well prepared and topical. However, it includes support in scientific domains that seem beyond the UNDP mandate,

and the technical complexity of the subject calls for more robust technical backstopping from the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy than envisaged in the project document. The project has not started yet.

While the general issues of water governance and climate change are of relevance to the region and congruent with the UNDP mandate, the comparative advantage of UNDP in this sector and region gives rise to concerns. The water sector in the Arab region is already quite 'crowded' by other organizations with a longer track record and more resources than UNDP can mobilize. Various stakeholders questioned why, as a relative newcomer to these regional environmental issues, UNDP would want to implement its own separate activities rather than join forces with like-minded, established partners.

PROMOTION OF KNOWLEDGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The regional programme has invested heavily into knowledge products. This emphasis on knowledge products was highly relevant in view of the Arab region's 'knowledge gap', fundamentally linked to a lack of freedom of expression, which, as the Arab Human Development Report series has shown, constrains the capacity of society to reflect upon issues, take on new challenges and promote purposeful change.

The most visible and well-known regional programme knowledge product is the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) series. While the first AHDR (2002) was launched at the League of Arab States (LAS), reflecting the League's genuine interest in promoting a healthy debate on development priorities among its members, subsequent reports were not well received by some regional governments. As with the democratic governance focus area, the degree of governmental support for the AHDR changed significantly after the Arab uprisings, the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions highlighting the importance of the topics covered in the reports.

Building upon the methodological foundations of the global Human Development Report series, UNDP actively defended the regional reports' neutrality against attempts at silencing or misusing their message. UNDP gave the authors a protected platform from which where they could freely express themselves and contribute to the regional debate, all the while maintaining a high level of quality and reliability throughout the years.

AHDR contributors tend to be western-educated Arab academics with strong pro-democratic, pro-poor and secularist values. Some countries are better represented than others in the pool of contributors, with Egypt and Lebanon accounting for 38 percent of all contributors. There have been calls for more diverse demographics – from a broader geographic origin, representing other intellectual traditions or including less academic profiles – in order to better represent the region and strengthen the relevance of the reports.

There is no doubt that the AHDR series helped shape the debate about governance and development in the Arab world. Ten years after the launch of the series, the reports are widely quoted as an authoritative source of facts and analysis. Among the websites citing or linking to the AHDR in Arabic, individual blogs were the most frequent, followed by the media and non-governmental organizations. The English editions are cited first and foremost by the media, followed by academia, and finally by non-governmental organizations and bloggers. There was nearly universal agreement with the content of the reports in the sampled websites.

The first report was described as an 'eye-opener' by LAS officials and it message about the need for reform in the Arab world was relayed during a subsequent Arab Submit (Tunis, May 2004), as well as in various other initiatives. However, the influence of the reports on national development plans, programmes and policies appears quite limited.

There is now a proliferation of UNDP Arab knowledge products and an evolution towards a more academic style, two trends that dilute impact.

GENDER EQUALITY, EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

Unequal gender relations were identified in the AHDRs as forming one of the three main deficits hindering development in the Arab region. The Arab uprisings, which many women actively supported, have only heightened those concerns, following the subsequent rise of Islamist parties to power in Tunisia and Egypt.

Most regional projects paid significant attention to gender mainstreaming. PDIAR researched the gender-sensitiveness of parliaments in Jordan and Tunisia, promoted women's representation as party members and candidates, and supported the Arabic platform of iKnow Politics. The WGP-AS forthcoming report on the state of Arab water resources devotes a chapter to gender differences in access, use and control of water resources, and the pilot water projects launched in Jordan include one project managed by a women's organization. HARPAS has trained male and female religious leaders of different faiths, provided microcredit for women living with AIDS, organized women's leadership programmes and devoted much attention to vulnerable groups, such as female sex workers, men having sex with men, intravenous drug users (more commonly men, including youth), or migrant workers. In knowledge for development, the first AHDR (2002) warned that "development not engendered is endangered". A whole subsequent AHDR (Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World - 2005) was devoted to the roots, manifestations and implications of gender inequality, and the 2009 AHDR emphasized the devastating consequences of ongoing wars and conflict on vulnerable populations, including women.

However, these successes were achieved through individual efforts and projects rather than through a coherent, programme-wide approach. Component projects in each focus area approach gender mainstreaming independently from one another, without an overarching coordinated gender strategy. As a result, the interesting but isolated approaches and activities implemented by the RBAS RP in pursuit of gender equality are not sufficiently communicated and visible.

The regional programme document highlighted the issue of youth, which, like gender, was to be managed as a cross-cutting issue. Specific interventions benefiting youth were also envisaged, but never implemented. The absence in the current portfolio of any regional project on inclusive growth and employment is problematic, as it leaves unattended the crucial development issue of youth unemployment in the Arab world.

EFFICIENCY

Efficiency of programme operations – i.e. how well UNDP organized itself to deliver quality outputs in the most timely and economical fashion – emerged as an issue of concern. It appears to have weakened during the current programme period. Many external factors intervened, including delays in obtaining the necessary country signatories or disruptions caused by the Arab uprisings. However, efficiency was also constrained by internal factors. Many interviewed staff working for regional projects spoke of a disruptive and demotivating degree of micromanagement from headquarters. The weak decision-making power of some project managers is compounded by insufficient human resources at their disposal to deliver planned outputs in a timely manner. Finally, programme implementation by UNOPS adds a layer of complexity to financial and staff management.

SUSTAINABILITY

In the poverty focus area, evidence of sustainability of HARPAS interventions abound, the enduring involvement of religious leaders in raising awareness and removing the stigma of HIV being the most powerful. HARPAS

interventions have also provided an impetus for country offices like Egypt and Somalia to integrate HIV into their own programmes.

Prospects for sustainability are hard to assess in the environment focus area. Most activities are just starting, and it is too early to tell whether they will be implemented through the type of strong regional partnerships that would ensure a degree of continuity and sustainability.

In the governance focus area, sustainability prospects are good for ACIAC and for the work on environmental infractions in Morocco. However, the closure of a number of projects early in this programme cycle (POGAR, PDIAR, Public Prosecutors) and the departure of their management team resulted in a significant loss of momentum and institutional memory. None of these projects had a clear exit strategy. The fact that the extensive POGAR website has not been maintained regularly since 2009 is a case in point.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

Given the lack of clear corporate guidance about the roles and functions expected of a UNDP regional programme, the evaluation team identified five roles that a UNDP regional programme can usefully and justifiably perform: (a) address significant regional issues where the country offices are less able to advocate or interact (for example, sensitive issues); (b) act as a knowledge hub; (c) test at country level the applicability of approaches promoted at the regional level, including through seed-funding; (d) coordinate 'multi-country' projects for cost-saving when implementing parallel activities in several countries; (e) support regional organizations.

Roles (a) and (b) above are fulfilled by the RBAS regional programme to a significant extent. Role (c) is also being fulfilled by some projects (ACIAC and HARAS) but may require a stronger connection between the regional programme and country offices than currently exists. As for role (d), responsibility for 'multi-country programmes' falls under the Country Office Division of RBAS, and not under the regional programme. Role (e) concerning support to regional organizations is to a small degree fulfilled by the Regional Centre in Cairo (RCC), with almost no involvement of the regional programme.

The regional programme, being largely managed from New York, lacks strong links with other UNDP units in the region, such as the country offices and the Regional Centre in Cairo. This in turn hampers its capacity to act as a knowledge hub, promote country-level pilot projects or support regional organizations. The overall perception among RBAS country offices is that the regional programme is isolated and unapproachable. It is worth noting that the regional programme has long had a light 'footprint' in the region. Its activities in Algeria, Djibouti, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan are very limited. This is linked to deep-rooted causes, such as the focus on sensitive issues, which means that some countries do not welcome regional programme activities, GCC states' status as net contributing countries, lack of a clear niche for the regional programme in crisis countries that are primarily supported by the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery, and resource mobilization difficulties. The limited presence of the regional programme in the region certainly affects its perception by country offices. However, even in countries where the regional programme has been active in recent years, the degree of interaction is often perceived by country office staff as insufficient.

In the present division of roles, the RBAS regional programme delivers projects, while the Regional Centre in Cairo is tasked with the delivery of advisory services to country offices. The two roles are completely separated. This disconnect creates confusion for country office staff having to deal with two distinct regional units, each supposedly performing distinct functions, but in practice competing for the same regional space. RBAS has in effect tried to divide its regional services in three independent streams: programmatic funding, knowledge products, and advisory services. Such a strategy assumes that

there is little synergy to be found in a more integrated offer of services, while the potential for synergy is in fact quite significant, as demonstrated in other UNDP regions.

PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The regional programme has been able to work with key governmental stakeholders, as well as with non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations as implementing partners. At a more strategic level, however, there have been missed opportunities in liaising with important regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). HARPAS relations with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) are also reportedly inadequate. In the area of gender, the regional programme could have benefited from a stronger partnership with the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), and did not act on the commitment made in the regional programme document to collaborate with UN Women (then the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM). This lack of collaboration with regional actors is also visible in the environment and sustainable development focus area.

The absence of a strong partnership strategy likely affected the capacity of the regional programme to raise funds, in combination with other factors, including the global financial crisis, the lack of aggressive resource mobilization efforts, and a policy adopted by UNDP management to promote the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Thematic Trust Fund as the main channel for resource mobilization in response to the Arab uprisings.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The RBAS regional programme 2010-2013 has been implemented at a challenging time in the region's history. It was designed and launched before the Arab uprisings of 2011. At the time, UNDP was among the very few aid organizations trying to promote good governance in the region. Its efforts were often met with little success, as governments from the region and beyond were content with the status quo and appeared more interested in debating reform than in actually reforming their governance systems.

Conclusion 1. The Arab uprisings presented an opportunity to build upon years of advocacy for governance reform and support real change. However, the regional programme's once large and visible governance portfolio has shrunk significantly with the closure of POGAR in 2009, leaving the regional programme with limited capacity to respond to the seminal events of 2011.

The most recent regional project to support political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt has been well received, but has provided only limited assistance so far. In contrast, the Bureau for Development Policy and the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery have responded to events in the region more actively than the RBAS regional programme.

Conclusion 2. The regional programme is not sufficiently 'anchored' in the region, not well connected to UNDP 'knowledge architecture', and still perceived as distant by country offices in spite of recent and much welcomed examples of collaboration at country level by HARPAS, ACIAC or WGP-AS. It is important to further strengthen the regional programme's relationship with other UNDP units. By nature, the regional programme cannot work alone. It depends on country offices to translate the regional programme's advocacy on sensitive issues into concrete action, and cannot perform well as a 'knowledge hub' if disconnected from other UNDP knowledge centres.

The regional programme's positioning in the region would be enhanced by linking it more closely with the regional centre's technical capacity and advisory services. In spite of being severely understaffed and under-resourced,

the Regional Centre in Cairo has shown great agility in its responses to the Arab uprisings. Its established relationships with the League of Arab States, ESCWA and Arab civil society are important assets in this regard.

Conclusion 3. The regional programme built on established strengths and successes of a regional focus: the ability to draw attention to issues that may be too sensitive and controversial to address at the country level, and to provide opportunities for dialogue, policy debate and sharing of knowledge and best practices.

In this respect, the regional programme has continued to position itself strategically in key focus areas where it enjoys the clearest comparative advantage: democratic governance and poverty reduction. For the first time, the regional programme has also entered the somewhat 'crowded' area of environment and sustainable development, with initiatives on water governance and climate change. In this focus area, the regional programme has yet to carve a niche for itself and demonstrate its comparative advantage.

Conclusion 4. Compared to previous regional programmes, the current programme has devoted more attention to working at the country level so as to help introduce regional programme themes into UNDP country programmes and national development plans. While this is in principle appropriate, some regional projects have tended to implement pilot activities at country level without sufficient involvement from the concerned country offices.

The results have been mixed: some country offices have perceived these pilot activities as impositions and infringements on their lead role at country level, while others (often those with a clear substantive role in the definition and implementation of the pilot activities) were more appreciative.

Conclusion 5. Some projects have fared better than others in realizing the strategic aims of the regional programme. HARPAS and ACIAC are noteworthy in this regard.

- HARPAS has partnered extensively with civil society, organizations of persons living with HIV, the media, youth, and religious leaders of all faiths, in a concerted effort to reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. The avenues explored by HARPAS over the years – specific attention to vulnerable groups, awareness raising through religious leaders and media outreach activities, to name a few – constitute good practice that other programme areas could usefully replicate. Recently, the project has implemented pilot projects, such as microcredit to support persons living with HIV, at the local level, with more mixed results.
- ACIAC works with anti-corruption bodies and civil society to build the capacity of Arab states to implement the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). ACIAC is noteworthy for its reliance on regional expertise, its use of emulation between participating countries as a driver for change, and the formal, structured participation of civil society organizations to promote the right to access information and challenge official pronouncements when needed.

Evaluating the effectiveness of other projects was sometimes a challenge, as a number of them were either cut short (PDIAR), much delayed (WGP-AS), or not yet launched at the time of the evaluation (ACRI).

Conclusion 6. In the 'knowledge for development' focus area, the regional programme has attracted the attention of a wide audience both within and outside the region since the launch of the first AHDR in 2002. The AHDR series has prompted much debate, and encouraged Arabs to work towards their own developmental solutions.

These publications were found unsavoury by some and were misused by others, but in hindsight, there is now widespread agreement in the region that their analysis was correct and their diagnosis confirmed by events. Indeed, the reports were ahead of their time. The AHDR series has contributed to the Arab uprisings in a modest way, by making a candid, daring and highly credible assessment of the development state in the region widely available. However, there now is a proliferation of UNDP Arab knowledge products (Arab Knowledge Report, Arab Water Report, Arab Development Challenges Report) and an evolution towards a more academic style, two trends which dilute impact.

Conclusion 7. Meeting the challenges of the emerging era, particularly the rising expectations of the people of the Arab world for employment, freedom, dignity and security, will require more coherence in the ways the organization works. UNDP has the right track record, the right skills, intelligence and values, significant regional assets, and a good image in the region. However, it needs to pull these strengths together and bring them to bear in a coordinated fashion.

The Arab uprisings have opened up new possibilities and created new needs. They form a regional phenomenon. Over the past decade, the regional programme has been calling for change. It has now a special responsibility to support real political reform, protect human rights and gender equality, fight corruption more aggressively, and promote inclusive growth in Arab countries. This is an opportune time to formulate a new regional programme, one that may be closer to the Arab people, allow citizens themselves to express their concerns, and be grounded more firmly in the regional reality.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. In order to enhance its visibility in the region and increase its chances of success and sustainability, the regional programme for Arab states should be more firmly anchored in, and managed from, the Arab region, and should strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations.

Engaging in closer partnership with organizations such as the League of Arab States, ESCWA and CAWTAR, and with the regional office of UN Women would give the regional programme access to their outreach and influence throughout the region, may help UNDP promote genuine reform, and could strengthen sustainability since some UNDP regional initiatives could ultimately be handed over to strong regional institutions.

Recommendation 2. Project managers located in the region should be empowered to manage their project's personnel and financial resources; encouraged to cultivate a rapport with donors and to participate in resource mobilization efforts; and allowed to strengthen links with other UNDP units and external partners.

As per UNDP standard procedures, project managers are responsible for managing project resources and to ensure that their project produces the results or outputs specified in the project document. Some programme management teams – especially that of WGP-AS – also need urgent strengthening to deliver against the commitments made to country offices, governments and donors.

Recommendation 3. The regional programme should be better connected to the UNDP knowledge architecture. The most effective way to achieve this would be to place regional projects and project managers under the responsibility of the regional centre, as is standard practice in other regions, with RBAS at headquarters retaining only an oversight role.

This would reduce the isolation of the regional programme from other UNDP units; allow it to disseminate its knowledge further within UNDP and benefit from in-house technical expertise (particularly important in highly technical areas such as climate change); and reduce duplication

and confusion. Over time, it could also generate economies of scale in operations, and result in a more coherent, useful 'package' of programmes, advisory services and knowledge products.

Recommendation 4. The regional programme should strengthen its internal coherence; connect projects outputs and activities with expected outcomes more systematically in the regional programme document; strengthen collaborations between regional programme components; and document and communicate regularly about the funding, activities and results of the regional programme as a whole.

At the moment, programme information tends to be scattered at the project level, difficult to access, and at times inconsistent. The programme deserves more consolidated documentation and communication of its goals, resources, achievements, progress and challenges at the overall programme level. It would also benefit from greater congruence between the actual programme components as implemented and the regional programme document as approved by the Executive Board, for instance by translating into practice the commitment made in the current regional programme document to work on inclusive growth and youth employment.

Recommendation 5. The regional programme should build upon the current positioning as a source of carefully contextualized regional knowledge and expertise in Arabic, English and French, and build on the comparative advantages of regional projects and programmes in advocacy on sensitive issues, socio-economic and political context analysis, knowledge sharing, regional debates and dialogue and use of South-South cooperation.

Interventions at the country level should always be implemented through country offices, respecting the country office's leadership at country level and avoiding the tendency to implement country-level activities directly. This may at times result in some pilot activities not being implemented in countries where the country office displays insufficient interest, but the goal of such country-level pilot activities is to demonstrate applicability, build the capacity of country offices and facilitate the mainstreaming of regional programme themes into country programmes and national development plans. This goal can only be achieved with the active participation and interest of country offices.

Recommendation 6. The regional programme should take into account the changes transforming the region, articulate a more explicit support to regional efforts to protect human rights, and attempt to translate information and knowledge into action so as to contribute to concrete outcomes that can improve people's lives.

The domains where UNDP regional support could prove the most useful to Arab states during the next cycle include:

- In the democratic governance focus area, transitional justice and reconciliation; anti-corruption and asset recovery; support to parliamentary representation; advocacy for human rights and gender equality; legal protection of the poor.
- In the poverty and MDGs focus area, a new dedicated project specific to youth is recommended, avoiding short-term fixes to focus on inclusive growth and structural barriers to employment. In the area of HIV/AIDS, awareness raising efforts may need to pay greater attention to ordinary citizens, women and men, and youth at risk.
- In environment and sustainable development, WGP-AS should assess the usefulness of its outputs and its own comparative advantage in a somewhat 'crowded' sector, to determine whether the next phase should emphasize knowledge production or practical ways to improve water governance through pilot projects. Over the long term, closer collaboration with established actors such as ESCWA would help reduce duplication of efforts and improve the regional programme's effectiveness and prospect for sustainability in the environment sector.

- In knowledge for human development, there is a need to democratize knowledge products from formulation to dissemination, by defining their purpose and audience; including more diverse, less academic voices; exploring other media such as television; reducing report length; and disseminating more widely.
- In gender, the regional programme should strengthen efforts to mainstream gender in all projects, and complement them by a specific project or dedicated activities designed to advance and protect women's equality and empowerment, addressing specific issues associated with violence against women, marginalization, education, and economic and political empowerment.

Recommendation 7. UNDP in the Arab states should expand its partnerships with civil society and engage with community organizations, religious leaders, the media and academia in debates, awareness raising activities, and assessment of public policy, in order to promote openness in the public sphere, enhance accountability and credible governance reforms, better reflect the range of opinions and views in a given context and apply more pressure for change on important social issues.

Recommendation 8. RBAS should conduct more frequent outcome evaluations and audits of its regional programme. This should include an audit of programme management costs geared to determining the cost-effectiveness of UNOPS implementation.

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the Regional Programme for Arab States was part of the Evaluation Office (EO) programme of work for 2012, approved by the Executive Board during its 2011 annual session (6-17 June), which indicated that the Evaluation Office should conduct independent evaluations of the UNDP global programme and of its five regional programmes.

This is the third evaluation of the RBAS regional programme. The evaluation, like other regional programme evaluations conducted in parallel, is meant to contribute to the formulation of the next regional programme document, covering the period 2014-2018, and to contribute to accountability towards the UNDP Administrator, its Executive Board, donors and regional stakeholders. These goals were described in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1) as follows:

- Provide substantive support to the Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board;
- Facilitate learning to inform current and future programming at the regional and corporate levels, particularly in the formulation and implementation of the new regional programme to be approved in 2013 and to start in 2014; and,
- Provide stakeholders in regional programme countries and among development partners with an objective assessment of the development contributions that have been achieved through UNDP support and partnerships with other key players through the regional programme during a given multi-year period.

1.2 SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

For the purpose of this evaluation, the regional programme was defined as a set of activities designed to implement the regional programme document approved by UNDP's Executive Board, and funded through resources mobilized by the RBAS Regional Programme Division (RPD). The evaluation analysed the contributions made by UNDP in the four focus areas of the RBAS Regional Programme 2010-2013: 1) poverty reduction and MDG achievement; 2) democratic governance; 3) environment and sustainable development; and 4) knowledge for human development. A focus on gender equality and empowerment is mainstreamed throughout the four areas. The evaluation also examined UNDP's strategic position within the region at a time when it is undergoing significant change.

The evaluation excluded programmes of a regional scope funded under the global programme, multi-country initiatives not officially part of the regional programme[1], and other regional cooperation frameworks initiated by the Bureau of Development Policy (BDP) or the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR).

The work of the Regional Centre in Cairo (RCC) was not systematically evaluated because it is largely funded by the global programme. However, the evaluation touched upon certain activities and aspects of the RCC that need to be reported here as they relate to the performance of the regional programme.

[1] Such as the new multi-country Youth Employment Generation Programme in Arab Transition Countries, financed by the Japanese Government.

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation assessed the regional programme's performance from two aspects: UNDP's contribution to regional development results through its thematic programmes, and its strategic position in the region. It used a combination of evaluation techniques, including a desk review, an evaluation mission to five countries in the region, telephone interviews, a UNDP-wide survey of country offices' perceptions, and an analysis of the websites, blogs and mass media quoting or linking up to the main RBAS regional programme knowledge products online.

As often is the case, assessing the development results of the regional programme proved challenging. It was found that the results framework outlined in the regional programme document does not always provide a relevant point of comparison, because the real programme, as actually funded and implemented, is different in important ways from the one envisaged in the regional programme document. Projects were primarily evaluated in comparison with their own goals as stated in project documents and the extent to which they contributed to regional programme document outcomes, whenever possible.

UNDP regional interventions focused principally on advocacy, awareness raising and the promotion of dialogue, interventions where the measure of success – influence – is not always easy to assess precisely. Attribution is also weakened by the position of the regional programme, one step removed from the country level where most development results ultimately take place. The outcomes described in the present report – like all outcomes by definition – are the result of interactions between a wide range of actors, including national stakeholders and UNDP country offices in the region. Describing precisely and faithfully the contribution of all these stakeholders would have been an impossible task. The evaluation focused mainly on assessing the contribution of the regional programme. It also reviewed interactions with partners, and at times analysed their role in greater depth to shed further light on a particular outcome.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation was designed to address the following main evaluation criteria:

- *Relevance:* How relevant are the regional programme document intended outcomes and activities to (a) the priority development challenges and emerging needs of the region; (b) the promotion of UN values and UNDP's mandate; and (c) its comparative strengths?
- *Effectiveness:* To what extent has the regional programme contributed to the realization of the intended outcomes as outlined in the regional programme document and key project documents?
- *Efficiency:* Has the regional programme made good use of its financial and human resources?
- *Sustainability:* To what extent are the results that UNDP contributed to through the regional programme sustainable?

In addition, some standard factors and cross-cutting issues were assumed to affect performance and included in regional programme evaluations:

- *Partnerships:* How well did the regional programme use its partnerships (e.g. with civil society, private sector, local government, donors, regional organizations and international development partners) to improve its performance, while at the same time protecting UNDP's neutrality? To what degree are there coordination, collaboration and synergies between the different interventions, entities and practices that make up the programme, and what is the extent of information sharing between the different programme 'hubs' (New York, Cairo, Beirut)?
- *Gender and human rights:* Did the regional programme incorporate gender equality and human rights into its programme?
- *Capacity development:* Did the regional programme adequately invest in, and focus on, national capacity development to ensure sustainability and promote efficiency?

- *Project/programme design:* Did the projects and programmes have a well-established design and strategy to ensure their performance (e.g. an appropriate mix of modalities such as regional public goods, subregional activities, technical support to country offices[2], and country-level activities) to maximize performance in view of regional needs?
- *Knowledge management:* Are knowledge products (reports, studies, etc.) delivered by the regional programme relevant to country needs? Are they of high quality and credibility? Did they succeed in reaching, influencing and motivating their audience? How much 'filtering up' of knowledge happens (from country offices to the regional programme or to the global programme) as compared to the 'trickling down' of knowledge produced centrally or regionally?

TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of independent external consultants carried out the evaluation, composed of: i) a team leader, with overall responsibility for providing guidance and leadership to team members, coordinating the drafting of the report, and also covering the HIV/AIDS portfolio; ii) a governance expert to cover the large governance portfolio; iii) a gender expert to analyse the degree to which gender has been taken into consideration and promoted throughout the programme; and iv) a knowledge product analyst to review web statistics and perform a citation analysis for key knowledge products (through a desk review). The EO evaluation manager joined the evaluation mission to cover the environmental portfolio.

All team members (except the EO evaluation manager) were able to converse, read and write in English and Arabic. Three team members were also able to work in French, which was seen as an asset in covering the Maghreb region.

DATA COLLECTION

This evaluation was conducted with a combination of evaluation techniques, comprising an extensive review of programme documents and evaluations, interviews with UNDP staff at headquarters, an evaluation mission to five countries in the region with extensive discussions in visited countries with country offices, national institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), donors and other partners, and telephone interviews with country office staff in countries not visited by the evaluation mission. This primary material is complemented by the results of a UNDP-wide country survey, and by a 'cybermetric' analysis of the main RBAS regional programme knowledge products. A more detailed description of methods used for data collection follows:

- *Desk reviews:* The evaluation team collected and reviewed all relevant documentation, including: i) the regional programme document; ii) project documents and activity reports; iii) past evaluation and self-assessment reports; iv) knowledge products from the regional programme, e.g. published reports, websites and training materials; v) country office reports; vi) UNDP's corporate strategies and reports; and viii) strategy reports, concept papers and other relevant data collected from various stakeholders in the field, particularly as regards challenges and trends emerging with the Arab uprisings. A list of the most important documents consulted during the evaluation process is presented in Annex 3.
- *Field visits in sampled countries:* The evaluation team travelled to capitals of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia and Morocco – representing countries hosting or implementing the main regional projects. Within those countries with a regional programme presence, consideration was given to balancing subregions (countries of North Africa versus those of the Eastern Mediterranean) and political systems (autocratic and in transition) in the sample.

[2] Technical support to country offices is the responsibility of the Regional Service Centre in Cairo, and does not form part of the regional programme's purpose. However, technical expertise and support have been provided upon request in specific areas where the regional programme had available expertise.

- *Stakeholder interviews:* The evaluation team conducted face-to-face and/or telephone interviews with relevant stakeholders, including: i) UN/UNDP staff posted at headquarters in RBAS, BDP, BCPR, the Human Development Report Office (HDRO) and the Evaluation Office, as well as in the United Nations Division of Political Affairs (UNDPA); ii) current and past regional project managers; iii) UNDP staff at the Regional Centre in Cairo and in country offices; iv) representatives of national government institutions; v) regional institutions such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the League of Arab States; vi) beneficiaries and civil society organizations; and iv) a few programme donors. In addition, a focus group interview was organized in Cairo with politically active Egyptian youth in order to gauge their expectations from, and perceptions of the United Nations. A total of 219 persons were interviewed for this evaluation. For a complete list, see Annex 2.
- *Country office survey:* A general survey, common to all regional programme evaluations, collected feedback from UNDP country offices. Out of a total of 18 countries in RBAS, 16 completed the questionnaire (an 89 percent response rate). The results helped inform and validate the evaluation team's findings (see Annex 4).
- *Analysis of download statistics and citations:* The extent of dissemination and influence of key knowledge products – the five Arab Human Development Reports (AHDRs) and the two Arab Knowledge Reports (AKRs) – was assessed through an analysis of available download statistics and a review of how much the Internet and other media have quoted and/or relayed key messages from UNDP publications. This analysis extended over a longer timeline than the rest of the evaluation, looking at the AHDR since its inception in 2002 and the AKR since 2009, primarily because it was deemed methodologically difficult to isolate the effect and audience of selected reports.

DATA ANALYSIS

The whole team travelled together[3], and shared the results of their interviews as the mission progressed through regular team debriefings. At the end of each country visit, country-level findings were documented through a series of country *aide mémoire* and notes. A summary of preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations were produced at the end of the evaluation mission. These preliminary findings were shared with RBAS for validation and comments.

The results from the country office survey and the cybermetric analysis became available after the evaluation mission. They were compared with preliminary findings emanating from the mission, and incorporated in the body of evidence going into the evaluation report.

The evaluation report was prepared by the team leader and the EO evaluation manager, based on inputs from the rest of the team. It was finalized by Evaluation Office based on the team's draft and comments from RBAS.

METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Establishing a frame of reference for assessing the performance of the regional programme proved challenging. It was found that the regional programme results framework outlined in the regional programme document does not always provide a strong framework on which to build an evaluation of the programme. The main reason is that the regional programme document was based on funding scenarios that did not materialize. The actual programme portfolio, as funded by UNDP and donors, is noticeably different from the Executive Board-approved programme. More importantly for the purposes of this

[3] The gender expert could not join the team in Morocco and the knowledge product analyst conducted a desk review and did not accompany the travelling team.

evaluation, there are in some projects unclear linkages between the stated outputs, outcome indicators and desired outcomes of individual programme components and those listed in the regional programme document. A similar lack of linkages is found in corporate results framework reports (Results Oriented Annual Report - ROAR) in which the criteria for measuring results are not always clearly connected to respective regional projects. The team opted to evaluate projects primarily by comparing them to their own stated goals as described in project documents (themselves not always up-to-date, e.g. for HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States). The extent to which these projects came together at the programme level to contribute to varied outcomes listed in the regional programme document was also assessed, whenever possible.

The RBAS regional programme, initially formulated and implemented in a somewhat inert political environment, had to adapt to a rapidly evolving political situation from 2011 onward. The way in which national authorities assessed the relevance of regional projects in the democratic governance focus area varied across countries, as should be expected, but also evolved markedly after the Arab uprisings. The team opted to contrast the two periods – pre- and post-uprising – in its analysis of development results in the democratic governance focus area.

UNDP regional interventions focused principally on advocacy, awareness raising, networking and the promotion of dialogue, 'soft' interventions where the measure of success – influence – may not always be easy to assess precisely. Attribution is also weakened by the position of the regional programme, one step removed from the country level where most development results ultimately take place. As is often the case, individual projects progress reports provided substantial information on outputs and activities but little relating to outcomes or impact. Evaluations typically analyse development results in greater detail than project progress reports, but only one project-level evaluation was commissioned during the evaluated period.

UNDP lacks standard corporate guidelines on the roles of its regional programmes.[4] Based on what seemed to have worked in the Arab region, the team identified a number of 'useful regional programme roles', detailed in Chapter 4 of this report. These questions are especially relevant in view of new challenges emerging in the wake of the Arab uprisings, which calls for a well-coordinated UNDP response.

Several programmes had already wound down or ended by the time the evaluation mission visited the region, for example the Support to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region. Another project, the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative had not yet been launched at evaluation time. In addition, staff turnover and unfilled vacancies in project management units meant that the evaluation team had limited opportunities to discuss programme and project achievements with all those directly concerned. Similarly, in several country offices programme staff was relatively new or had just inherited a portfolio and had little institutional memory to share.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report consists of five chapters. Following the present introduction, Chapter 2 presents a summary of the development context and the challenges common to most countries in the region, followed by an overview of UNDP's Regional Programme for Arab States. Chapter 3 details the assessment of UNDP's regional programme contribution to development results in each thematic area and against the key evaluation criteria. Chapter 4 analyses the regional programme's and UNDP's strategic position in the region. Finally, drawing on findings from Chapters 3 and 4, a set of conclusions and recommendations are proposed in Chapter 5.

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

CHAPTER 2.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT AND UNDP RESPONSE

This chapter is meant to provide the reader with a brief, factual description of the regional context and of the RBAS regional programme, limited to those facts and issues that are necessary to understand the following, more analytical sections.

2.1 THE REGIONAL CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The region covered by RBAS comprises 17 countries and the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). With the exception of a few countries, the RBAS region corresponds to the countries represented in the League of Arab States. Extending from the Atlantic Ocean across North Africa to the borders of Iran and Turkey and to the Indian Ocean, these countries share a common cultural heritage. All except Somalia use Arabic as their official language. Ethnic Arabs represent about 85 percent of the total population of the region; excluding Somalia and Djibouti. Several countries have significant ethnic minorities, such as the Berbers (North Africa) and the Kurds (mainly in Iraq and Syria). Sunni Islam is the largest religious denomination in the region, with Shia Muslims forming important communities in Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Kuwait and Lebanon. Other prominent sects historically stemming from Shia Islam include the Druze (e.g. in Lebanon) and the Alawite (Syria). Christians of various denominations are most numerous in Lebanon and Egypt, with smaller established communities spread across the region. Only a small number of indigenous Jews continue to inhabit Arab countries (mainly Morocco and Tunisia) after the establishment of the State of Israel.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

While some Arab countries have made progress towards more representative and democratic governance, the region as a whole has long been dominated by authoritarian regimes, with severe restraints placed on civil liberties and political dissent in some countries.

Since World War II, the Arab region has also been marked by a number of conflicts, which have had a profound influence on the region and on the UNDP presence. Regional conflicts relevant to the present evaluation include:

- the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967;
- the Lebanese civil war (1975 to 1990);
- long-standing, low intensity conflicts in Darfur and South Sudan (South Sudan seceded from Sudan in July 2011 with assistance from the UN);
- the Somali civil war which began in 1991 and resulted in recurring humanitarian crises, particularly in the south of the country;
- the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003 which ushered in a decade of confessional strife, instability and a massive refugee influx into Syria and Jordan; and
- more recently, the Libyan civil war and the ongoing conflict between the government and rebel groups in Syria, which sent a wave of refugees into Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

The seminal events of the past couple of years were the Arab uprisings. What began as a popular revolt in Tunisia in January 2011 quickly spread to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. Old regimes faltered and began to be swept away as countries strove to forge new paths in governance, culture, civil society, economic structures and international relations. As a consequence, the RBAS regional programme, initially formulated and implemented in a somewhat inert political environment, had to adapt to a rapidly evolving situation.

Not all transitions progressed smoothly. While Tunisia strives towards inclusiveness and consensus in its new constitution-building process, democratic reforms are stalled in Bahrain, the transition has proved more conflictual in Egypt and remains incomplete in Yemen, and Syria has been plunged into a devastating civil war. As of September 2012, an estimated 200,000 Syrian refugees had sought refuge in Jordan, adding to the country's burden of hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Iraq wars and addressing the needs of the long-standing Palestinian refugee communities there. In Libya, the civil war (February-October 2011) came to an end following NATO military intervention under UN Security Council Resolution 1973. Parliamentary elections were held successfully on 7 July 2012. The new government appointed by parliament is now attempting to restore public order and undertake sweeping reform, in close collaboration with the UN Support Mission in Libya.

Even as the parliamentary and presidential elections in countries such as Egypt carry the hope of more representative and accountable governments, concerns have emerged over the need to protect the gains achieved by women in public life over the past decades. In tandem with gender equality and women's empowerment, the empowerment and inclusion of youth is also fast becoming a major challenge, particularly in light of the Arab uprisings where youth were at the forefront of the revolts.

Even countries not affected by popular protests related to the Arab uprisings have nevertheless felt its impact. The Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, too significant to ignore, have been the subject of intense debates involving officials, parliamentarians, journalists, academia, NGO representatives and ordinary citizens, and as a result, what used to represent risky political topics – such as freedom of expression, representation or corruption – are now being discussed more openly throughout the region. Another effect of the Arab uprisings is that all states in the region feel a pressure to reform. For instance, Morocco adopted a new constitution in July 2011, substantially widening the Parliament's prerogatives. In Jordan, long a beacon of regional stability, pressures to reform and pre-empt unrest are leading the government to seek political reforms and employment opportunities for the youth.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

These changes are occurring against a backdrop of slow economic growth, especially in non-oil-producing countries. Growth has been stymied for decades by a lack of transparency and political accountability, instability and conflicts, as well as global events and crises. It was slowed even further since 2011 by the uncertainty and instability created by the uprisings. Unemployment rates are considered to be the highest in the world, particularly among women and youth. Over 50 percent of the population is under 25 years of age. A significant portion of the youth is jobless and seeking work: in 2010, before the Arab uprisings, the official unemployment rate for youth in the whole region had already reached 23 percent.[5]

[5] 2010 data from ILO, <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_154078/lang--en/index.htm> – these unemployment rate data are widely seen as underestimated.

The Arab region has been lagging behind other world regions in terms of setting up preferential trade agreements and common tariff systems. The Pan-Arab Free Trade Area (PAFTA, 1997) has reduced formal trade barriers but more informal barriers remain. Regional trade accounts for less than 10 percent of total international trade from and to the region.[6] However, if the focus is limited to non-oil-related trade, the intra-regional trade ratio rises substantially, especially for Mashreq and Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Maghreb countries export predominantly to EU countries.

Water scarcity is another regional issue that in theory should call for strengthened regional collaboration but in practice often leads to competition. With more than half of the fresh water supply coming from outside the region, the subject of management of transboundary waters is diplomatically charged. The Nile flows from Africa, the Euphrates and the Tigris from Turkey, the Jordan River is shared with Israel, and the Jubba and Shebelle rivers in Somalia flow from Ethiopia. Even between Arab states, the issue is divisive. Wars have been fought over water in the Middle East, and access to water is a root cause of numerous local conflicts across the region.[7] The Arab Human Development Report 2009 presented compelling evidence that the growing water scarcity problem presents a serious threat to human security in the Arab region. As in the area of trade, regional cooperation in transboundary waters is in fact almost non-existent.[8]

Other development challenges relevant for this evaluation and shared by virtually all RBAS countries include:

- The total population of the region increased from an estimated 282 million in 2000 to 360 million in 2011. Rapid population growth threatens to offset any improvements in the Human Development Index (HDI) over recent years (see Table 1, page 11).
- Challenges to gender equality stemming from traditional patriarchal cultures and religion: statistics show that only 25 percent of Arab women participate in the labour force, half the average for developing nations. Maternal mortality rates are also high when compared to other regions with similar incomes.
- High illiteracy rates in certain sectors of the population, particularly in rural areas and among women and girls; and more generally a 'knowledge gap' as compared with other regions at similar levels of economic development;
- The Arab region is by far the most water-scarce region in the world. The imbalance between sustainable water supply and demand is growing, driven by demographic and economic growth. Seven Arab countries have less than 200 m^3 of freshwater resources per capita per year.[9] To meet escalating water demands, countries of the Arabian Peninsula have increasingly relied on non-renewable groundwater resources, desalinated water and treated wastewater. Over-pumping of groundwater resources has led to depletion, salinization and pollution of aquifers.

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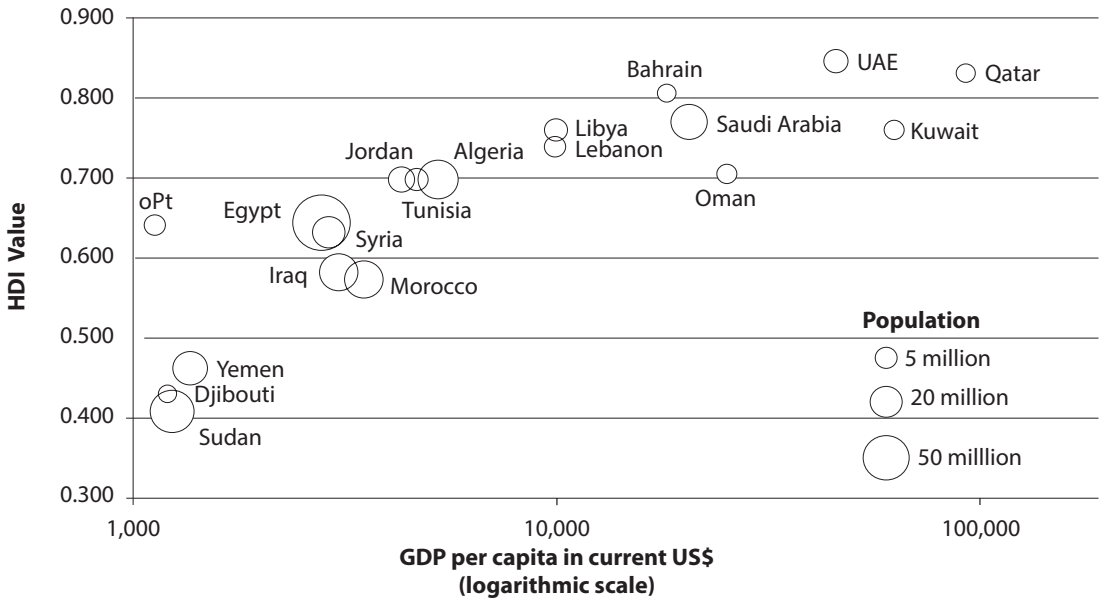
6 The average for all PAFTA member imports was 9.5 percent in 2007; and just 6.3 percent for exports; see, 'Changes in Cross-Border Trade Costs in the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area, 2001–2008', by B. Hoekman and J. Zarrouk, World Bank, August 2009 (based on UN COMTRADE data).

7 See, Strategic Foresight Group, 'The Blue Peace - Rethinking Middle East Water', published with support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Political Affairs Div IV of the Swiss Federal Dept of Foreign Affairs; Mumbai, 2011, available online at <http://www.strategicforesight.com/TheBluePeace-Summary%20of%20Rec.pdf>.

8 An exception is the Nile Basin Initiative, a partnership among the Nile riparian states that seeks to develop the river in a cooperative manner, share substantial socio-economic benefits, and promote regional peace and security. Even in NBI, collaboration and progress have been extremely slow.

9 Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, UAE, Yemen. The regional average was 981 m^3 in 2000, below the water scarcity threshold considered to be 1,000 m^3 per person per year; see World Bank, 'Water Scarcity in the Middle East and North Africa', Washington D.C., 2005.

Figure 1. Selected Development Indicators



- Climate change is likely to aggravate water scarcity[10] in the region. Morocco and Syria are already experiencing an increase of drought frequency. A recent study estimates that the regional agricultural output will decrease by 21 percent by 2080.[11]
- Historically low HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, threatened to rise by high-risk behaviours and government complacency. The number of people living with HIV in the Middle East and North Africa reached an estimated 460,000 at the end of 2009, up from 180,000 in 2001. Almost 70 percent of these cases are from the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan) and Yemen. New HIV cases rose from 36,000 in 2001 to 75,000 in 2009, with higher incidence reported among injecting drug users (IDUs), men having sex with men (MSM), and sex workers and their clients. Coverage of HIV treatment remains low across the region, at 15 percent.[12]

These similarities in development challenges, as well as the common cultural and linguistic heritage of the region create a space conducive to regional programmes, in as much as common solutions can be found to common problems and because the Arabic language facilitates exchange of information, expertise and knowledge across the region.

[10] UNDP, 'Mapping of Climate Change Threats and Human Development Impacts in the Arab Region', Arab Human Development Report Research Paper Series, Balgis Osman Elasha, 2010.

[11] World Bank, 2007. 'Regional Business Strategy to Address Climate Change Preliminary - Middle East and North Africa Region & Sustainable Development Sector Department – cited in the ACRI project document.

[12] UNAIDS: <http://www.unaids.org/documents/20101123_FS_mena_em_en.pdf>.

Table 1. Selected Development Indicators

Country	Population in thousands	HDI value (rank)	GDP per capita in current US$
Algeria	35,980	0.698 (96)	5,244
Bahrain	1,324	0.806 (42)	18,184 (2010)
Djibouti	906	0.430 (165)	1,203 (2009)
Egypt	82,537	0.644 (113)	2,781
Iraq	32,665	0.573 (132)	3,501
Jordan	6,330	0.698 (95)	4,666
Kuwait	2,818	0.760 (63)	62,664
Lebanon	4,259	0.739 (71)	9,904
Libya	6,423	0.760 (64)	9,957 (2009)
Morocco	32,273	0.582 (130)	3,054
oPt	4,152	0.641 (114)	1,123 (2005)
Oman	2,846	0.705 (89)	25,221
Qatar	1,870	0.831 (37)	92,501
Saudi Arabia	28,083	0.770 (56)	20,540
Somalia	9,557	n.a.	n.a.
Sudan*	44,632	0.408 (169)	1,234
Syria	20,766	0.632 (119)	2,893 (2010)
Tunisia	10,594	0.698 (94)	4,297
UAE	7,891	0.846 (30)	45,653
Yemen	24,800	0.462 (154)	1,361

* Sudan data from before partition

Sources: Population in thousands: UNDESA (2011); Human Development Index (HDI) value: HDRO calculations based on data from UNDESA (2011), Barro and Lee (2010), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011), World Bank (2011a) and IMF (2011); GDP per capita in current USD: World Bank (2011 unless otherwise specified)

Apparent similarities also hide significant complexity and diversity, such as the wide disparities between social and economic standards enjoyed by residents of oil- and gas-rich countries and those endured by residents of the poorer countries like Sudan or Somalia. Some countries, particularly the Arab Gulf States, appear to be on course to meet all or most of the MDG targets. The middle-income countries in the region paint a mixed picture, and the outlook is starker in LDCs and countries in conflict, unlikely to meet the MDGs by 2015.

Such sharp development differences between countries create a more complex environment for the regional programme than may be assumed. For instance, the interest in political reform may vary significantly depending on the type of regime in place (republics versus monarchies); the attitude of Arab states regarding climate change may depend on whether they are net exporters of fossil fuels or net importers; the use of Arabic as a working language is more limited than sometimes assumed, particularly in the Maghreb (Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) where

experts and professionals tend to use French instead; and so on.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Arab world is equipped with a series of regional organizations that generally replicate the UN specialized agency architecture (e.g. the Arab Monetary Fund, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Industrial Development Centre for Arab States, the Arab Council for Civil Aviation, the Arab Postal Union, the Arab Telecommunication Union, the Arab Labour Council), all under the aegis of the League of Arab States (LAS). Founded in 1945 to strengthen ties among member states and coordinate their policies, the League has 22 members including Palestine. Its headquarters are in Cairo. The Arab League's effectiveness has been hampered by divisions among member states, notably in the fields of foreign, defence or economic policies. Since the Arab uprisings however, LAS has shown a greater sense of unity and purpose and has played important roles in the Libyan and Syrian crises. The new Secretary-General, Nabil Al Arabi, has appointed a committee for the development of a reform agenda, to be presented to the next Arab Summit.

Another key regional institution is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), headquartered in Beirut. One of the UN Economic and Social Council's five regional commissions, ESCWA plays a respected normative role in the region and also manages some key development assistance activities and projects. Long confined to 'Western Asia', ESCWA has expanded to North Africa and now has 17 member states covering most of the RBAS region.[13]

Among subregional organizations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) stands out as the most active politically. The GCC is composed of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Jordan and Morocco have been invited to join.

2.2 UNDP IN THE REGION

The Regional Bureau for Arab States based in New York serves as the headquarters for the regional programme, 17 country offices, and the office of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP). RBAS at headquarters is structured as: i) the Regional Programme Division, managing the regional programme; ii) the Country Operations Division working closely with UNDP country offices to ensure quality programming; and iii) the RBAS Directorate whose role is to provide overall management and coordination, while also promoting the relevance of RBAS internally and in the region.

Like other UNDP regional bureaux, RBAS manages a regional service centre, called the Regional Centre in Cairo (RCC). It is largely funded by the global programme, although the regional programme also contributes with some modest funding.[14] Unlike in other UNDP regions however, the RCC is not entrusted with any role in the regional programme's management. Its role is only to provide technical support to country offices and programmes.

Five RBAS countries are classified as 'net contributor countries' (NCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Such countries cannot receive core UNDP funds. Each of their respective governments must finance all UNDP

[13] Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen. Libya, Morocco and Tunisia joined in September 2012. As a result of this expansion, its membership now overlaps with that of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

[14] USD 228,000 annually.

programmes and activities in the country, including those of the regional programme. As a result, the size of the UNDP programmes and offices in these countries is often quite limited.

The Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery plays an important role within UNDP in countries affected by conflicts, such as Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and more recently Libya. Resources that UNDP is able to mobilize in countries affected by crises and conflict often dwarf the size of programme resources available to UNDP elsewhere. Some of these countries also pose serious security constraints, leading UNDP to rely on 'remote management' of the Iraq country programme from an office in Amman, Jordan, and of the Somalia programme from Nairobi, Kenya.

2.3 THE UNDP REGIONAL PROGRAMME

The RBAS Regional Programme Document for 2010-2013[15] was approved by the Executive Board in January 2010. Guided by the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011[16] and by the recommendations presented in the independent evaluation of the last regional programme[17], it identifies four focus areas (Table 2). The main objectives of the regional programme, as listed in the regional programme document, are to:

- Develop capacity to generate, acquire and apply knowledge for human development;
- Build capacity for policy debate and dialogue among stakeholders;
- Contribute to development results with strategic and catalytic projects in key focus areas;
- Analysis of and advocacy on regional challenges; and
- Cultivate partnerships within and beyond the region.

Assuming that country offices and their programmes are better placed to respond directly to articulated national priorities, the RBAS regional programme has opted to address issues to "draw attention to needs that are difficult to address because of their sensitivity"[18], including HIV/AIDS, democratic governance or gender equality. This important feature of the regional programme is mentioned in the regional programme document, but does not constitute an explicit objective or strategy of the programme.

[15] UNDP, 'Regional Programme Document for the Arab States, 2010-2013', 1 November 2009.

[16] UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2011, 'Accelerating global progress on human development', DP/2007/43/Rev.1, 22 May 2008.

[17] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006–2009)', New York, May 2009. Pursuant to its recommendations, crisis prevention and recovery was not included as a focus area in the RBAS Regional Programme 2010-2013.

[18] UNDP RBAS, 'Regional Programme Document for the Arab States, 2010-2013', 1 November 2009, section II. Past cooperation and lessons learned.

Table 2. Overview of the Focus Areas in the Regional Programme Document[19]

Focus area	1. Poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs	2. Democratic governance	3. Environment and sustainable development	4. Knowledge for human development[20]
Objective	Support processes and policies towards inclusive growth and seizing the benefits of globalization	Promote further progress towards accountable and responsive democratic governance, by promoting the rule of law, strengthening responsive governing institutions and combating corruption	Help Arab countries face threats to human development from water scarcity, desertification and climate change	Foster development dialogue and debate on emerging issues
Main focus	a) Providing knowledge and disseminate best practices on poverty reduction; b) Monitoring progress and analysing policy options for inclusive growth, including women's economic empowerment, social protection, and employment (especially youth); c) Advocating and building capacities for regional cooperation on poverty reduction, trade, responding to HIV/AIDS, and achievement of the MDGs; d) Providing support for policy analysis to address emerging poverty-related issues.	Develop governments' capacity to: a) increase citizen participation; empowering civil society on access to information on governance processes, and for building and disseminating knowledge on the rights and duties of citizens and state; b) become more accountable and responsive through knowledge-building, technical assistance, and diffusion of best practices in public administration, parliamentary strengthening, modernization of independent judicial systems, and anti-corruption, the latter in line with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)[21]; c) fully implement commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including the political empowerment of women, through knowledge-building, capacity-development and advocacy, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women; d) hold informed debates on options for governance reform, grounded in human development	a) Develop capacity and enhancing regional dialogue to mitigate and adapt to climate change; b) Develop government capacity, as well as that of national and regional partners to develop strategies for integrated water resources management.	a) Develop the capacity for human development in the Arab States region by building knowledge for development and developing the capacity of stakeholders to generate, acquire and apply knowledge in policy processes; b) Produce and disseminate a wide range of knowledge products, including reports, manuals, toolkits, web resources and other essential services and technical know-how.

[19] This information is adapted, summarized and paraphrased from the regional programme document.

[20] This focus area was not identified separately in the main text of the regional programme document, but listed as a focus area in its annex.

[21] General Assembly Resolution 58/4 designates UNODC as the secretariat for the Conference of States Parties monitoring the implementation of UNCAC.

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Table 2. Overview of the Focus Areas in the Regional Programme Document

Focus area	1. Poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs	2. Democratic governance	3. Environment and sustainable development	4. Knowledge for human development
Examples of activities foreseen	Policy analysis for inclusive growth, capacity-building for HIV/AIDS mainstreaming in national development plans, setup of an 'Arab trust fund for poverty reduction', support to regional cooperation and trade.	Support UNCAC implementation and reporting; judiciary reforms and legal aid schemes to improve compliance with international norms; strengthen access to justice for vulnerable groups; public administration reforms aiming at more responsive public services for the poor and vulnerable.	Preparation of Integrated Water Resource Management plans; capacity development and seed funding for effective water governance; capacity building for national and subregional climate change adaptation plans.	Produce and disseminate a wide range of knowledge products, including reports, manuals, toolkits, web resources and other essential services and technical know-how.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL PROJECTS

The strategic orientations described in the regional programme document are operationalized through a number of projects. Many of those active during the current programme cycle are offshoots or extensions of earlier projects. For example, the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR, started in 2008) and Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC, started in 2010) are offshoots of the former Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) that closed in 2009. The HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States (HARPAS) extended long-standing achievements from previous programme cycles. Other programmes only recently began implementing activities, for example, Water Governance Programme for the Arab States (WGP-AS) and Transitional Governance, while others still had not yet implemented any activities, for example, the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative (ACRI).

In 2008-2009, the RBAS regional programme document embarked on a process to streamline the regional programme and reduce the until-then large number of projects by consolidating and/or closing down old projects. Between 2008 and end of 2010, 19 out of 26 projects were closed down. Some of these were long defunct projects, while others were projects that were found misaligned with the UNDP Strategic Plan or the new regional programme document 2010-2013. As a result, a number of projects active under the previous programme cycle have since been closed without a successor project, such as Information and Communications Technology for Development in the Arab Region (ICTDAR), Centre for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

POVERTY REDUCTION AND MDGS

The sole project identified under the poverty reduction and MDGs focus area is the long-standing HARPAS. HARPAS is meant to contribute to achievement of MDG #6 to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, and does this by improving Arab states' policy context, building institutional and community capacities for comprehensive multisectoral HIV

responses at both regional and country levels, and by raising awareness on HIV/AIDS so as to reduce vulnerability, HIV infections and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. Since 2008, HARPAS has been largely supported through funding from the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). Under the present programme cycle, HARPAS continued implementation of activities planned in its 2007-2009 programme document.[22] During the period under evaluation, expected initial results of the HARPAS programme included[23]: i) strengthened partnership with UNAIDS on the regional initiative, Mobility, Migration, and HIV in vulnerable populations along the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden; ii) strengthened capacity of UNDP's country offices to respond to HIV/AIDS; iii) countries supported for strengthening their national capacities for the implementation of community capacity enhancement and leadership development initiatives; and iv) strengthened rights and increased social protection and integration of Person Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWH) and Most at Risk Populations (MARPS).

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Governance has long been the mainstay of the Regional Programme for Arab States. Since 2001, significant work was undertaken under the **Programme on Governance for the Arab Region**. POGAR was structured in three pillars: a) rule-of-law; b) parliaments; and c) knowledge management. POGAR was closed in 2009.[24] The POGAR rule-of-law pillar 'branched-out' into three specialized projects which were still active during the present programme cycle, and are thus covered by this evaluation:

- The **Good Governance for Development Initiative** (GfD): A vast collaborative effort with members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to identify and promote, through dialogue among policy practitioners from Arab and OECD countries, a workable reform agenda to modernize Arab public governance. The UNDP GfD project was closed in 2011. The OECD maintains its own GfD website and still implements some activities under the GfD Initiative, but the original mixed working groups (OECD-Arab States) no longer meet.
- The **Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices**: Building the capacity of public prosecutors and advocating respect for human rights in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen. The project has been without a management team since 2010 and is due to formally close at the end of 2012.
- The **Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries** initiative was launched in October 2010 as a follow-up to the rule of law pillar of GfD/POGAR, and started implementation in June 2011. In contrast with the broad mandate of POGAR or GfD, ACIAC was conceived as a specialized regional instrument to strengthen cooperation and promote collective action against corruption in the Arab region. The project focuses on two inter-connected areas of work: i) anti-corruption and integrity assessments; and, ii) implementation of UNCAC provisions. It does so mainly by supporting the secretariat of the Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network (ACINET), a regional network of anti-corruption governmental agencies and civil society organizations through which most of the activities are planned and implemented. ACIAC draws on a large network of anti-corruption experts from the region and beyond.

[22] The project is currently being implemented under a no-cost extension of the 2007 project document.

[23] UNDP HARPAS/OFID, 'Joint Initiative on the Response to HIV/AIDS In the Arab States Region', Progress Reports 2010 & 2011.

[24] Its extensive website <http://www.undp-pogar.org> was accessible until September 2012, at which time most of its content was disabled, officially for review and maintenance.

The **Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region**, launched in 2004, was a joint project between POGAR and the UNDP's Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS) to enhance the role, capacity and image of the legislative institutions and support the work of their members and administrations. The project activities included support for the drafting of political parties' laws and strengthening the role of parliaments in achieving the MDGs. It closed in 2011.

Finally, a small project has recently been approved in **Support to Arab Countries' Efforts in Transitional Governance Processes**, focusing mainly on constitution drafting and governance reforms in transitioning countries such as Tunisia and Egypt.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environment and sustainable development is a relatively new thematic area for the regional programme. The first project in this area, the **Water Governance Programme for Arab States**, was formulated through a preparatory assistance over the period 2007-2009 and launched in 2009 at a LAS event to address the issue of the effective governance of scarce water resources in Arab countries. It aims at supporting the achievements of MDG #7, with respect to improved water supply and sanitation, by promoting improved water governance through Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the Arab Region. It was originally meant to last for only one year, but was extended several times, the last until May 2013. The list of planned outputs has changed several times, but the main output remains the Arab Water Report,[25] still to be issued. A component called Every Drop Matters and funded by the Coca Cola Company is devoted to local management of water resources, and provided UNDP country offices with seed funding for innovative water projects.

A second environmental project was formulated in 2010-2011 through an extensive consultative process involving several background papers and four regional consultative events.[26] The **Arab Climate Resilience Initiative** aims at strengthening the capacity of RBAS countries to "mainstream climate change adaptation policies into national development plans", through the following outputs: i) strengthened institutional capacity to address climate change adaptation, mitigation and negotiations; ii) resilience to climate change strengthened and opportunities for the production and use of sustainable energy created; and iii) advocacy and awareness in countries of the Arab region on building climate resilience improved. ACRI had not started at the time of the evaluation. A project manager was being recruited and funds were being sought from donors.

KNOWLEDGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The programme document stresses the centrality of this area: "the main contributions of the regional programme to developing capacity for human development in the Arab States region will be building knowledge for development and developing the capacity of stakeholders to generate, acquire and apply knowledge in policy processes."[27]

The main project and knowledge product in this focus area is the Arab Human Development Report, first published in 2002 and then in

[25] Referred to as 'The State of Water in Arab Region Report' in the project document.

[26] Three workshops on water scarcity, drought and desertification (Damascus, Syria, 15-16 September 2010); sea level rise and coastal erosion (Cairo, Egypt, 20-21 September 2010); and, sustainable energy and energy efficient paths to growth (Manama, Bahrain, 6-7 October 2010), capped by the ACRI Regional Forum held on 3-5 November 2010 in Rabat, Morocco. A fourth regional analysis was presented at the forum, on local and territorial approaches.

[27] UNDP RBAS, 'Regional Programme Document for the Arab States, 2010-2013', November 2009.

2003, 2004, 2005 and 2009[28], and focused on challenges and opportunities for human development in the Arab region. The AHDR builds on the tradition of UNDP's global Human Development Reports, and was the first regional HDR ever published. The reports are penned by an independent team of leading Arab scholars and researchers and published by the RBAS regional programme. They cover a broad range of issues (e.g. education and knowledge production, gender, governance, human rights, poverty, economic reform, globalization, water scarcity, climate change, HIV/AIDS) in a fact-based manner and argue that change is imperative for human-centred development in the Arab states.

The AHDRs' central theme is the revival of Arab societies. The first AHDR (2002) provided a diagnostic of factors accounting for development shortfalls in the region and summarized its findings as three cardinal deficits, in freedom, women's empowerment and knowledge. This diagnosis created a platform for three subsequent reports, on knowledge (AHDR 2003), freedom and good governance (AHDR 2004), and women (AHDR 2005) exploring those gaps in greater depth. The fifth report, AHDR 2009, re-examined the situation of the Arab countries through the lens of human security, adding new dimensions such as climate change, water, conflict and identity to the analysis.

A new AHDR was planned during the current programme cycle, originally for 2010, then postponed several times. At evaluation time, the draft – tentatively entitled 'Empowerment: The Will of the People' – was undergoing extensive review after the events of the Arab uprisings.

The AHDRs are funded largely from TRAC[29] to safeguard their independence. Additional donor funding from the Swedish International Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and Germany is used to support dissemination events.

Another key knowledge product is the Arab Knowledge Report produced in partnership with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation (MBRF). There are two such reports so far, published in 2009 and in 2011, and focused on educational improvements and the building of a knowledge society. These reports offer a deeper analysis to the knowledge gap identified in the AHDRs. The AKRs maintain the AHDRs' premise that a knowledge society can only exist in an enabling environment where freedom of expression is guaranteed and quality education available to all. The AKR 2011 commissioned and analysed four country studies with questionnaire surveys of students and teachers forming the basis of the report's recommendation.

In order to disseminate the AHDR, a number of dialogues were organized in the region, starting with the AHDR 2009 that was launched in Beirut, followed by participation at a dialogue regarding water challenges at the Bibliotheca Alexandrian, Alexandria, Egypt. Among other events, in May 2010 a dialogue on freedom, citizenship, identity and the state was hosted by Al Jazeera and the Centre for International and Regional Studies at Georgetown University in Doha, Qatar; the Centre pour le développement de la région de Tensift (CDRT) held an international conference on the 2009 AHDR in Marrakesh, Morocco in April 2011; and a social media workshop was held in June 2012 in Beirut, Lebanon. A number of national events were also held.

A specific website (www.arab-hdr.org) has been set up for the AHDRs as an outlet for dissemination, as well as for posting information on follow-up events. The site contains resources

[28] UNDP RBAS, AHDR <http://www.arab-hdr.org>.

[29] TRAC – Target for Resource Assignment from the Core.

pertaining to the content of the reports, including a human development database and other relevant outreach material, such as the AHDR Research Paper Series. An AHDR Facebook page was established following the launch of AHDR 2009. AKRs are posted on pages of the MBRF site and were also hosted on the RCC website. They are currently being transitioned to headquarters. Both AKRs were launched at the Arab Strategy Forum (ASF) in Dubai. The AKRs have not followed a precise dissemination strategy until now, though several initiatives are in the pipeline.

In June 2012, a new regional project document was approved by UNDP (entitled 'Fostering Knowledge for Human Development in the Arab Region') to fund both the AHDRs and the AKRs during the period 2012-2016.

2.5 MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES

The regional programme document estimated financial resource requirements for the regional programme at USD 47.5 million over the four-year implementation period, broken down per source and focus area as indicated in Table 3. A fairly even spread of resources was envisaged across focus areas. Resources to be mobilized from donors were estimated at USD 30 million. The actual amount of TRAC allocated to the regional programme was comparable to the planned amount (USD 15.8 million allocated against USD 17.5 million planned), but resources mobilized from donors were much less than planned (total USD 14.8 million mobilized against USD 30 million planned, see Table 4).

This being said, all UNDP regional programmes have suffered from poor resource mobilization: from 2006 to 2010, regular resources have accounted for approximately 40 percent of all contributions for regional programmes, compared to an average of 15 percent for all UNDP programmes.[30] This ratio (40 percent TRAC to 60 percent external resources) also applied to RBAS regional programme during its previous cycle. However, during the present programme cycle, the ratio was closer to 50 percent TRAC and 50 percent external resources. Donor resources mobilized by the RBAS regional programme so far during the present programme cycle (USD 14.8 million) represent two thirds of the amount mobilized during the previous cycle (USD 22 million).

Table 3. Estimated Financial Resources Required for the RPD 2010-2013

Focus Area	UNDP (TRAC) resources	Other (donor) resources	Total
	(all figures in US$ millions)		
Poverty Reduction & MDGs	4	7	11
Democratic Governance	3.5	10	13.5
Environment and Sustainable Dev.	4	7	11
Knowledge for Human Development	6	6	12
Total	**17.5**	**30**	**47.5**

Source: UNDP Regional Programme Document for the Arab States, 2010-2013, 1 November 2009.

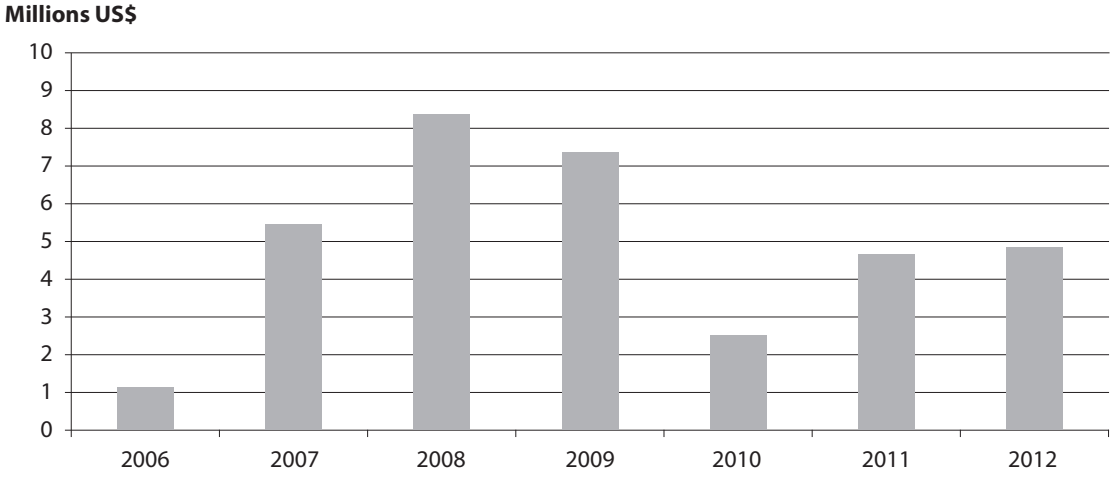
[30] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Contribution at the Regional Level to Development and Corporate Results', New York, December 2010, pp.19-20.

Table 4. Projects Operationalizing the RBAS Regional Programme 2010-2013

Focus Areas and Projects	Year launched	Year closed	TRAC Budget (in US$ as per project doc.)	Geographic area of operation	Donors	Mobilized from donors since 2010 (in US$)	Received from donors since 2010 (in US$)	Expenditures (in US$)* 2010	2011	2012
Focus Area 1. Poverty & MDGs										
HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS)	2002	-	3,500,000	Djibouti, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen	OFID	3,500,000	1,950,326	1,162,807	712,515	450,071
Focus Area 2. Democratic Governance										
Modernization of the Public Prosecutor's Offices	2005	2012	-	Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen	CIDA, France, Netherlands, Norway, UK,UNF	-	-	756,443	368,336	129,893
Good Governance for Development (GfD)	2005	2011	-	Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen	US State Dept, France	-	-	1,872,759◊	262,658	-
Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR)	2008	2011	-	Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen	Belgium, DGTTF∞	220,000	220,000	435,434	433,810	-
Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC)	2010	-	1,000,000	Regional (ACINET)+ Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen	US State Dept, Belgium, Siemens, Qatar	10,182,781	5,050,781	-	749,632	1,270,786
Transitional Governance	2011	-	800,000	Egypt, Tunisia	None secured yet		-	-	54,122	110,416
Focus Area 3. Environment & Sustainable Development										
Water Governance Programme for the Arab States (WGP-AS)	2009	-	1,400,000	Regional (Water Governance Report)+ Jordan, oPt, Tunisia, Yemen	Coca Cola, DDC, SIDA, Japan+	593,750	493,750	1,057,427	1,060,656	542,048
Arab Climate Resilience Initiative (ACRI)	2010	-	2,500,000	Not started yet	None secured yet	-	-			59,128
Focus Area 4. Knowledge for Human Development										
Arab Human Develop. Reports (AHDR)	2002	-	6,600,000§	Purely regional	Germany, SIDA	266,666	266,666	3,845,357	1,824,377	725,973
Arab Knowledge Report (AKR)	2009	-		Purely regional	MBRF		2,552,063	915,678	744,610	718,781
Total			**15,800,000**			**14,763,197**	**10,533,586**	**10,045,905**	**6,210,716**	**4,007,096**

* ATLAS, as of 14 February 2013
∞ DGTTF is an internal UNDP funding mechanism
\+ Through the UNDP South-South Cooperation Unit
§ AHDR and AKR TRAC: Project Document for 2012-2016
◊ includes USD 835,052 from 43049-POGAR and 49176-Rule of Law and Integrity in Arab Countries, now closed

Figure 2. Resources Received From Donors Since 2006



2.6 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

In contrast with most other regional programmes managed by the regional centres located in the respective regions, the Regional Programme for Arab States is supervised and to a significant degree managed from New York by the Regional Programme Division of RBAS. All its constituting projects are implemented by UNOPS through a series of 'project management units'.

The Regional Centre in Cairo is tasked to provide technical support and advice to country offices in the region. The RCC manager also chairs the UNDG Peer Support Group tasked with reviewing Common Country Assessments and the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) drafted in the region. However, the RCC does not provide the same services to the regional programme. In fact, the RCC is seldom involved in the design and planning of regional projects, and has no role in their oversight.

The project management units and their staff are physically based in the region. POGAR has been based in Beirut. The staff of its most recent off-shoot, ACIAC, is still located in Beirut but will be moving to Cairo shortly. Two projects management units are located in Cairo: HARPAS and WGP-AS. A third one should be joining them soon: ACRI. Ultimately, RBAS policy is that most regional projects will be hosted in Cairo, including the Arab Knowledge Report, which has been managed from Dubai by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation over most of the current cycle.

CHAPTER 3.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNDP REGIONAL PROGRAMME TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed review of the regional programme against the evaluation criteria laid out in the ToR (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). In so doing, the chapter also builds the basis for an assessment of the regional programme's strategic positioning, which is the subject of the next chapter.

The criteria of relevance and effectiveness are reviewed at the level of each focus area – including the focus area dedicated to knowledge and human development funding the Arab Human Development Reports – because the issues to be discussed and the regional programme performance under these criteria tend to be specific to each focus area. Conversely, the team found that the issues relative to efficiency and sustainability were quite similar across all focus areas. Those criteria are therefore analysed across all focus areas, at the end of the chapter.

The regional programme's contributions in gender equality, empowerment of women and youth are also presented below alongside the regional programme's performance in specific focus areas, primarily as a way to streamline the report structure.

3.1 POVERTY REDUCTION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGS

The sole project implemented in this focus area is HARPAS. It is meant to contribute to a reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS by way of policy advice, capacity-building, the promotion of comprehensive multisectoral HIV responses (as opposed to purely medical responses), and by reducing AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

RELEVANCE

Addressing national development challenges and priorities

Arab states tend to assign a rather low priority to combating HIV/AIDS. Development challenges and priorities articulated by governments tend to minimize the threat posed by HIV/AIDS. However, the disease is still spreading and could, according to UNAIDS, burst into a real challenge to development if left unattended.

At a regional level, HARPAS interventions have aimed at opening spaces for addressing sensitive issues that often could not be addressed at a country level. For instance, issues of sexuality, poverty, migrant and mobile communities, religious beliefs, vulnerable and at-risk groups, and stigma and discrimination against PLWH can be addressed more effectively in regional forums than in national contexts.

Much of HARPAS' early activities centred on 'breaking the silence' surrounding HIV/AIDS. HARPAS undertook extensive campaigns of training and sensitization of thousands of religious leaders across the Arab world. These campaigns resulted in the creation of Chahama, the network of religious leaders formed during the first HARPAS programme cycle (2002-2005)

– a network that is still in existence and praised to this day as a demonstration of effective outreach. In a region where religious leaders command considerable respect and their pronouncements hold considerable sway, these interventions remain invaluable in raising public awareness and lending legitimacy and authority to the effort to break the silence surrounding HIV/AIDS in the Arab world.

HARPAS has built on results, best practices and lessons learned during previous programming cycles. In the current regional programme, HARPAS has focused on increasing awareness, advocacy and policy dialogue to support mainstreaming HIV into development areas and national development plans. This is being pursued by supporting UNDP country office initiatives, such as integrating responses to HIV in the poverty reduction and/or governance practice areas (for example, in Egypt). More recent initiatives include HARPAS support to the creation of microcredit enterprises for PLWH and their families (Egypt, Tunisia, Djibouti). HARPAS has also focused on awareness-raising, advocacy initiatives and capacity-building of civil society organizations – particularly those supporting specific high-risk populations, notably MSM, female sex workers (FSW), IDUs and those working with PLWH.

Even after a decade of drawing attention to HIV/AIDS, HARPAS – and indeed all international programmes responding to HIV/AIDS in the region – continues to face an uphill battle. The seriousness of the issue is often belittled. As one interlocutor in Jordan put it: "There is no problem of HIV/AIDS in the country. HARPAS had done such a wonderful job over the years that people are well aware of the issue and the government took care of the rest" – that is, providing screening and free treatments. There are of course exceptions, such as Morocco, where HARPAS, UNAIDS and other agencies are able to work effectively due to the strong and open commitment of the King and religious leaders to respond to HIV. Both these examples demonstrate that raising the profile of HIV/AIDS remains highly relevant, especially when confronting an atmosphere of persisting taboos, denial, and indifference.

UNDP mandate and promotion of UN values

HARPAS has been closely aligned with UNDP's mandate, as co-sponsor of UNAIDS and in the division of labour in the UNAIDS Joint Theme Group. UNDP is tasked with responsibility in three priority areas: i) addressing human rights and the legal environment; ii) meeting the needs of women and girls; and, iii) empowering most at-risk populations – notably MSM – to protect them from HIV. These provide a clear mandate for HARPAS.

Some of its interventions are well established and unquestioned; for example, manuals and toolkits developed in earlier phases for sensitizing and training Muslim and Christian religious leaders. These manuals draw on respective religious texts to establish compatibility with non-discrimination and acceptance of PLWH. The same applies to materials used in raising awareness of PLWH of their human and legal rights. However, at least three separate stakeholders interviewed expressed concern that HARPAS may have fallen short in upholding UN values and standards on a few occasions, including one training event during which an invited presenter told the audience point blank that MSM was a disease [sic].

Comparative strength

There is no question that at a regional level HARPAS enjoys comparative strengths in its ability to raise sensitive and taboo issues that otherwise may not be tackled at a country level. HARPAS has also built on these strengths in forming regional partnerships (e.g. with LAS during earlier cycles), regional networks (e.g. the Regional Arab Network against AIDS - RANAA), and in using its comparative advantage as a co-sponsor and convener in the UNAIDS Joint Programme.

Two concerns mitigate these effects. First, UNDP's role in the UNAIDS division of labour is increasingly centred on high-risk and vulnerable groups, mainly MSM – a topic and sector also increasingly central to HARPAS interventions. As many interlocutors have pointed out, this is not currently a niche in which UNDP enjoys comparative advantage, capacity or expertise. Second, over the last couple of programme cycles, starting around 2007 and more pronounced in the 2010-2013 phase, HARPAS continued its regional interventions while simultaneously turning its attention to piloting small grassroots assistance and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into relevant development areas at the country level, in an effort to demonstrate applicability and enhance national ownership and sustainability. However, it seems that in doing so, HARPAS has at times intervened directly at the country level instead of working with and through UNDP country offices. Such direct country-level work by a regional project is counter-productive, in that it tends to antagonize country offices rather than persuade them to address HIV/AIDS in their own programmes. While the persisting taboos and stereotypes about PLWH, and the continued reluctance on the part of many governments – and hence UNDP country offices – to tackle the issue underscore the relevance of a regional project on HIV/AIDS, HARPAS' country-level activities need to be carefully contextualized and well coordinated with country offices in order to succeed.

HARPAS goals of integrating and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into country office development areas and national development plans were judged highly relevant when they coincided with UNDAF outcomes and already identified priorities in national strategic plans. Absent such outcomes, UNDP country offices and national partners questioned the relevance of HARPAS' interventions and resented HARPAS impositions. This is especially evident where HARPAS funding is minimal and UNDP country offices are not prepared – or are not in a position – to allocate staff time and resources to such projects. HARPAS' focus on MSM generated the most objections in this regard – UNAIDS, CSOs working with PLWH, religious leaders and other stakeholders and partners pointed out that it was simply impractical and unthinkable to raise this sensitive issue in an explicit and public manner as HARPAS was insisting on. Even organizations working with and for MSM were concerned that singling out this sector would backfire against both HARPAS and the people it was intended to help.

The events of the Arab uprisings have put awareness-raising on the potential risk of spreading HIV/AIDS on the back burner – both in countries in transition such as Egypt and countries not currently affected by the Arab uprisings, such as Jordan. However, general government inattention to HIV/AIDS has been counter-balanced in several countries by heightened civil society mobilization, activism and advocacy – particularly among CSOs working with PLWH and MARPS. HARPAS' interventions in building awareness, capacity and expertise, developing leadership skills and providing the impetus for the creation of new country and regional based networks demonstrates its relevance and responsiveness in this regard.

The Arab uprisings highlighted the relevance of some of the initiatives planned for in the regional programme document under the poverty reduction focus area, but never implemented: analysing policy options for inclusive growth, especially for the youth; the creation of an 'Arab trust fund for poverty reduction'; and support to regional cooperation and trade.[31] Even though HARPAS is relevant to the needs of the region, it is targeted at a rather narrow segment of the population, and not meant to reduce poverty or promote inclusive growth for society as a whole.

[31] A project called the Arab States Regional Initiative on Trade was launched in 2006 and closed in 2009.

EFFECTIVENESS

The most salient and enduring results of HARPAS include sensitization and training of religious leaders. These comprise Muslims and Christians, male and – to a lesser degree – female (preachers). The second area underscoring HARPAS' effectiveness has been in empowering and strengthening civil society actors working with PLWH in a range of capacities, including leadership training and assertion of human and legal rights. Since the current evaluation covers HARPAS' third programme cycle and since many other agencies are active in this area, it is difficult to distinguish direct results of the current HARPAS project. Results and impact may be cumulative and multifaceted.[32]

As noted, the current phase of HARPAS is guided by a programme document formulated during an earlier programme cycle, 2007-2009. Activities and focus areas outlined in this document changed over the ensuing years: e.g. reduced focus on the media and the private sector and more emphasis on microcredit, MSM, and mainstreaming HIV into development areas. The results framework of the earlier document is, therefore, no longer applicable for assessing results – and overall effectiveness – of more recently implemented activities.[33] Complicating assessments of HARPAS results and effectiveness is duplication and overlap of activities and interventions due to the existence of two regional HIV programmes, HARPAS itself and the RCC's regional practice on HIV (see Section 3.5).

Despite these caveats, successive cycles of HARPAS have clearly raised the profile of HIV/AIDS in most countries of the region, reduced taboos surrounding HIV and made it easier for country offices to approach national counterparts on common strategies to address these issues.

One of HARPAS' most salient achievements during the evaluated period is the development of a strategy on vulnerabilities of migrants and mobile populations in the Horn of Africa (Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia). HARPAS' focus on these three countries demonstrates that it has begun to account for subregional specificities: Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia share common characteristics that justify a joint HARPAS initiative, such as higher incidence of HIV than in other parts of the region. The ensuing 2010 Djibouti declaration on "Mobility, migration and HIV vulnerability of populations along the ports of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden" received support from high-level government officials and non-governmental organizations alike. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is committed to host the launching ceremony of the report on this initiative.[34] This move by a prominent conservative government in the region may provide an invaluable opportunity to raise the profile of HIV in the Arab world and underscore the legitimacy of addressing it.[35]

Efforts to advocate for HIV mainstreaming in country programmes have produced mixed results during the programme period under review. Successful examples include Somalia, where the UNDP Somalia office in Kenya has established a dedicated unit to mainstream HIV/AIDS into all practice areas by joining forces with the Community Capacity Enhancement (CCE)

[32] See Section 1.3 regarding methodological limitations that affect assessments of results. These include lack of clear connections between outcomes, outputs, and indicators listed in the 'Annex of the Results and Resources Framework' of the regional programme document with those of specific programmes. The same limitations apply to HARPAS.

[33] It is difficult to track HARPAS' results absent a revised project document detailing the rationale for various changes. Progress reports for the entire period (2008-2012) are inconsistent. For example, outputs specified in earlier progress reports differ from those of later progress reports. Successive HARPAS progress reports since 2010 refer to the development of a new project document and the hiring of a consultant for this purpose. It is unclear what became of this effort since the only (new) project document to emerge was for the upcoming 2013-2016 project period.

[34] UNDP, 'Mobility, Migration and HIV Vulnerability of Populations Along the Ports of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden', 2011, p.4.

[35] KSA heads the committee to respond to HIV at the League of Arab States.

project. The goal of the CCE is to build capacity and empower Somali CSOs working with PLWH by linking them with their counterparts, primarily those in Sudan.

In Lebanon, mainstreaming HIV has been pursued mainly via integration of HARPAS interventions directly within the National AIDS Programme (NAP), and hence with the Lebanese Ministry of Health. The HARPAS project officer maintains an office at NAP and tries to complement its activities: NAP focuses mainly on medical aspects of HIV/AIDS while HARPAS focuses on social issues such as reducing discrimination, training on the legal rights of PLWH, conducting outreach to religious leaders, and otherwise engaging with relevant CSOs. This collaboration and division of labour is a highly effective model in several ways: it affords HARPAS a direct link to the government entity responsible for the fight against HIV; it provides support to NAP; it puts NAP in contact with CSOs actively working in the field; and it provides the UNDP country office with a direct link to important government and non-government counterparts – all key ingredients of effective mainstreaming. For instance, NAP, the UNDP country office and HARPAS have formed a working group with Lebanon's parliamentary Health and Social Committee in order to review laws for discrimination against PLWH, an interesting initiative even though it had yet to make significant progress at the time of the evaluation.

Since its launching, HARPAS has always incorporated attention to building capacity, awareness, legal knowledge, confidence and empowerment of PLWH. Some examples during the current programme cycle include a student and religious leaders' competition to produce a TV spot in Lebanon, entitled "Aid, don't discriminate". The winning spot was broadcast around 1 December 2011 on World AIDS Day.[36] This initiative demonstrated successful partnership and collaboration between HARPAS and the local CSO *Soins Infirmierset Développement Communautaire* (SIDC). However the TV spot was only aired a few times and there was no follow-up. Other activities to strengthen capacities of PLWH included new ventures into microcredit. In Djibouti, Egypt and Tunisia, HARPAS partnered with selective CSOs to pilot these interventions for PLWH and their families. The most successful of these initiatives was in Egypt, where HARPAS (and the regional practice on HIV) partnered with a well-established organization, the Women's Health Improvement Association (WHIA) to support 25 PLWH – mainly women – establish small enterprises. This intervention in turn provided an opportunity for this prominent women's organization in Egypt, with its own network and vast outreach around the country, to explore integration of PLWH into its services.

Strengthening the capacity of organizations of and for PLWH is a continuation of activities begun in previous cycles. These interventions are especially important in a changing regional context and in countries where CSOs of every type are being established and assuming a more public role. In Tunisia for example, Rahme – a community group formed by and for PLWH and an offshoot of the *Association Tunisienne de Lutte contre les Maladies Sexuellement Transmissible et le Sida* (ATL) – is the first CSO to be officially registered in the country after the revolution. Rahme was supported by HARPAS (capacity-building, responsible for the microcredit project there). Similar examples include formation of the regional MENAROSA network by women living with HIV, including those trained in HARPAS' Leadership Development Programme (LDP), as well as the training of female parliamentarians and municipal council members in Morocco on HIV/AIDS. These women leaders went on to form their own forum on sexual and

[36] The winning spot can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HE88X9dv1zw>.

reproductive health and to develop a programme for continued outreach and education. This initiative awaits further funding, but is designed to target male Members of Parliament (MPs), other municipal council members and youth.

HARPAS pilot projects, such as microcredit enterprises for PLWH with CSOs in Egypt and Tunisia may not have yielded demonstrable economic results, but are said to have increased self-confidence and self-sufficiency among PLWH. Other catalytic interventions, such as specific interventions for MSM, FSW and IDUs, are likely more effective – and lasting – when targeted appropriately (e.g. Tozeur area in Southern Tunisia; select areas of Morocco) rather than imposed on countries across the board.

Whereas outreach to FSW is a long-standing and somewhat less problematic activity (e.g. in Lebanon), specific attention to MSM has drawn the most controversy and criticism; particularly in view of traditional cultural taboos and sensitivity to the issue. MSM is not restricted to gay men, but (theoretically) includes men having sex with younger boys – an equally taboo and sensitive subject. Even in countries where male homosexuality is practiced more openly, CSOs and other agencies working directly with these communities are rather wary of an explicit, public and exclusive focus on these groups and are concerned that this will draw unwanted attention by government or emerging Islamist groups. One example is in Tozeur, Tunisia, where male homosexuality is reportedly culturally acceptable, and where organizations such as ATL in collaboration with HARPAS, have provided outreach and services, training peer educators and training of trainers.

Excessive attention to MSM may undercut HARPAS' outreach to other populations potentially at risk, especially young people who have little knowledge about risk and transmission of HIV, and women (wives and mothers in particular) who are powerless to protect themselves from the consequences of their male partners' high-risk behaviours.

In conclusion, over the years the HARPAS project has tested a number of interesting channels for advocacy, such as the media, civil society organizations and religious leaders, an approach which other regional programme interventions may wish to emulate. Recently, the project turned its attention to piloting assistance at the grassroots, such as microcredit for PLWH in Egypt and Tunisia, sometimes at the risk of intervening directly at the country level instead of working through country offices. A broader issue is that HARPAS was the only project implemented under the focus area devoted to poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs. No project was devoted to youth employment, regional cooperation and trade or inclusive growth, in spite of these areas being appropriately mentioned in the regional programme document and their relevance highlighted by the Arab uprisings.

3.2 DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

RELEVANCE

The projects implemented in this focus area and covered in the evaluation are: i) the Good Governance for Development Initiative working through mixed OECD-Arab States working groups to identify a reform agenda to modernize Arab public governance (closed project); ii) the Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices, a project building the capacity of public prosecutors and advocating respect for human rights in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen (closed); iii) the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region, a joint project between POGAR and UNDP's Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening to enhance the role, capacity and image of the legislative institutions (closed); iv) the ACIAC initiative launched in October 2010 to support the implementation of UNCAC; and v) the project recently approved in Support to Arab Countries' Efforts in Transitional Governance Processes, which aims to support political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt.

Addressing national development challenges and priorities

As in other focus areas, democratic governance illustrates the tension between advocating for sensitive issues while also responding to national priorities expressed by governments. The RBAS regional programme has opted to advocate for sensitive issues, assuming that country offices and programmes are better placed to respond directly to articulated national priorities. A direct, logical consequence of this strategic choice is that governments in the region will often not agree that the sensitive issues advocated by the regional programme are relevant to their needs and priorities.

In the democratic governance portfolio, this was particularly true before the Arab uprisings. Prior to this, the programme was advocating for 'international standards' in democracy and the rule of law, in a context where countries of the region were somewhat reluctant to hear this message. Some Arab governments showed no interest in the governance programme altogether; others adopted a more encouraging, if not entirely sincere attitude towards it: participate in the process so as to prove good will and improve the country's image internationally, but not to the point of actually reforming governance systems in a meaningful way.

By virtue of its more distant position vis-à-vis national governments, the regional programme enjoys greater independence from governments than do UNDP country programmes, but even the former cannot operate in a given country without the host government's approval. The regional programme, therefore, had to take into consideration the limited desire for reform displayed by some of the regimes in the region. This reluctance to engage in reform explains in part why the regional programme's footprint at the national level is rather uneven in the governance area: in some countries such as Egypt or Tunisia, any political work of this nature was simply unwelcome prior to the Arab uprisings and would have had limited impact due to the absence of national ownership of the process.[37]

The situation changed significantly after the Arab uprisings, which highlighted the importance of good governance, not as a foreign imposition or as a front for maintaining a positive international image, but as a necessity for stability, prosperity and indeed sovereignty. The themes and issues advocated by the UNDP regional governance programme – the fight against corruption and parliamentary support in particular – proved in retrospect extremely pertinent.[38]

The level of regional governments' interest in these issues grew suddenly, in countries directly affected by popular uprisings but also in other states trying to pre-empt similar uprisings through accelerated reforms. This has significantly boosted the degree of governmental support to the ACIAC project, which was launched in October 2010 (three months before the beginning of the first Arab uprising in Tunisia).[39] However, calls for support go beyond the fight against corruption. Egypt, Libya and Tunisia need assistance in other domains as well, such as asset recovery, constitution building, electoral processes, capacity-building for NGOs/CSOs, and other emerging political priorities.

The Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices project aimed at improving the level of citizen security in terms of increased protection of human rights and access to justice – issues relevant to the region both before and after the Arab uprisings. Even though the project trained prosecutors on respect for human rights,

[37] See UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Assessment of Development Results (ADR): Tunisia', New York, 2012 for an analysis of how UNDP initiatives in the areas of good governance and MDGs were systematically ignored by the Ben Ali regime.

[38] UNDP/IPU 'Global Parliamentary Report - The Changing Nature of Parliamentary Representation', by Greg Power, April 2012.

[39] Seven countries have already signed the project document (Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, oPt, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen).

building the capacity of public prosecutors was not without risks in some of the countries where the project was working.[40] However, in both Egypt and Yemen – two of the countries undergoing transition – project beneficiaries brought their contributions to the Arab uprisings:

- Yemeni Attorney-General Abdullah Al-Ulufi refused to prosecute demonstrators or to dismiss charges filed against the snipers who shot at demonstrators in Sana on 18 March 2011. He was subsequently removed from his position on 16 May 2011.
- Abdul-Maguid Mahmoud, Egypt's Prosecutor-General, prosecuted former president Hosni Mubarak for his actions during the Egyptian uprising. However, he also faced criticism for presenting weak evidence in the case against Mubarak-era officials who were accused of planning attacks on protesters in Tahrir Square.[41] The current government removed him from office on 22 November 2012.

UNDP mandate and promotion of UN values

The persistent effort to advocate for international standards, even in the face of government resistance, remained a hallmark of the democratic governance portfolio throughout successive cycles of the regional programme. These standards are clearly reflected in the intended outcomes of governance projects in the current programme (inclusiveness, participation, transparency and accountability, etc.).

Prior to the Arab uprisings, the most relevant governance-related work was demonstrated by the PDIAR project, a joint project between POGAR and UNDP's GPPS to enhance the role, capacity and image of Arab legislative institutions and support the work of their members and administrations. The focus on political party legislation reflected the importance of these organizations in political development. As the custodians of specific political agendas and platforms, political parties are extremely important for the future of democracy in a region where parliamentarians are often more preoccupied with defending family, ethnic, business or religious interests than developing a reform agenda for the country. More recently, the project also offered Arab parliamentarians various mechanisms they could utilize to promote MDGs achievement in their countries, demonstrating in a practical manner the important linkages between governance and development.

However, the PDIAR project was not designed to address a central issue plaguing many Arab parliaments: the lack of democratic representation of citizens, admittedly a difficult topic to address.

Comparative strength

As with other projects in the regional programme, a key strength of the democratic governance programmes lies in its ability to advocate at a regional level for issues which may be too sensitive to tackle in a given country context.

UNDP enjoys a reputation for neutrality; this lends legitimacy and respect for its interventions and places it – and the regional programme – in a better position to bring diverse parties together to engage in dialogue and debate. This reputation is an important asset. According to a donor, it was useful to secure a facilitation role with OECD and Arab countries in the GfD initiative, for instance. UNDP's neutrality and use of South-South cooperation approach were also important factors in the success of the international forum

[40] The project was active in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen.

[41] On 2 June 2012, former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his former interior minister Habib al-Adli were convicted to life in prison for their failure to stop the killings during the first six days of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The court ruling was met with widespread discontent because it acquitted police officials directly responsible for the killings, and because it dismissed corruption charges against Mr. Mubarak and his sons. All 24 defendants in the Cairo 'Camel Battle' case were acquitted on 11 October 2012.

on "Pathways of Democratic Transitions: International Experiences and Lessons Learned," held in Cairo on 5-6 June 2011 and co-funded by the RBAS regional programme and BDP.[42]

EFFECTIVENESS

The intended outcomes listed in the regional programme document in the area of good governance include: 1) to foster inclusive policy reform on key issues related to justice policy and citizen rights; 2) to improve inclusive participatory processes in policy-making; and, 3) to increase levels of transparency and reduce incidence of corruption in beneficiary countries. These targets are defined rather broadly and their correspondence to specific components of the UNDP regional programme are (as explained in the Methodology section) difficult to establish. Available data suggest that projects under the governance portfolio have generally not achieved expected results, to the notable exception of the anti-corruption programme.

Before the period currently under evaluation, one of the key successes of the GfD was the ratification of UNCAC by 16 Arab states. This represented an important milestone towards increasing transparency and reducing corruption and demonstrates the effectiveness of the GfD initiative. In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, ACIAC is now supporting implementation of UNCAC through capacity-building of anti-corruption bodies and technical support to UNCAC self-assessments, thus contributing to enhance reporting to the UNCAC Conference of State Parties.

The Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network is ACIAC's main focus and most useful line of work; facilitating exchanges of information and experience between anti-corruption governmental agencies and civil society organizations. Emulation between participating countries and the sharing of experiences and best practices within the region play an important role in the dynamism of ACINET. The regional conferences and training events organized by ACIAC under ACINET provide a platform for governments to showcase their achievements and create a stimulative environment that encourages reluctant countries to experiment with gradual change. Many ACINET members testified to the evaluation team of the particular value, for them and their fellow ACINET members, of advice and lessons learned from their peers in Arab countries and/or communicated by Arab experts, in contrast with the *modus operandi* of the GfD initiative that relied primarily on expertise from OECD countries.

Civil society organizations – such as national chapters of Transparency International – participate in ACINET through a specific NGO sub-network (established in 2011) that has its own by-laws and can launch its own initiatives. ACINET also involves parliamentarians through the Arab Region Parliamentarians against Corruption (ARPAC). ARPAC supports the right to access information and promotes implementation of UNCAC. Non-governmental participation in the network is essential to 'keep it honest' and to challenge official pronouncements when needed.

In spite of these encouraging developments, much remains to be done to promote the implementation of UNCAC and thereby reduce the incidence of corruption. According to the Transparency International report for 2011[43], the problem of corruption remains as serious as ever in the region. The degree of popular frustration with the issue has reached such high levels that the fight against corruption became a powerful motivation behind the 2011 revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt. There is a growing realization across the region that corruption defeats any effort towards human development.

[42] <http://www.undp.org.eg/Portals/0/INT%20FORUM/1110_Cairo%20Report%20WEB_FINAL.pdf>.

[43] Transparency International, '2011 Corruption Perceptions Index', <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/>.

The contribution of the project on the Modernization of Public Prosecutor's Offices to development results was more limited. The project initially supported trainings of Arab prosecutors on human rights, and increased the exposure of public prosecutors on matters related to intellectual property crimes and modern forensic techniques. The project also tried to link prosecutors and civil society organizations, but as acknowledged in project progress reports, "complex hierarchies for the prosecution offices resulted in delays" and "sensitive relations between Public Prosecution and CSOs" minimized the project's impact in this sphere.[44]

A more recent achievement of this project was training on environmental crimes in Jordan and support provided to strengthening the capacity of local judges to pursue environmental infractions in Errachidia, Morocco. The project seems locally owned, comprehensive and successful in Morocco; whereas in Jordan, it reportedly culminated in a few workshops with no follow-up. Though these activities may contribute to sound environment management in their respective locales and may represent interesting cross-sectoral achievements, they are largely by-products of the project[45], and do not really reflect the main objective "to support national efforts in the Arab Region to strengthen institutional capacity within the context of good governance and the rule of law with an aim to enhance citizen security"[46].

In 2008-2009, PDIAR worked with MPs in the Arab region to develop standards for political party legislation.[47] Two pilot projects were launched in Jordan and Morocco, aimed at developing country-specific draft laws based on regional guidelines. The Jordanian pilot project, coordinated by the Al-Quds Centre for Political Studies, attracted significant visibility at the national level but the government did not adopt its recommendations.[48] In Morocco, the project resulted in several political party representatives meeting in 2010 under the aegis of the *Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes en Sciences Sociales* from the Mohammad V University, and agreeing on key areas and proposals for reform. These proposals were later submitted to the commission in charge of drafting the new Moroccan Constitution, a process launched in March 2011 and concluded by a national referendum and the adoption of a new constitution in July 2011. Political party legislation was subsequently revised to align it with the new constitution; so it appears that the project was both timely and useful. In Tunisia, the law on political parties promulgated on 24 September 2011 as the basis for the election of the *Assemblée Constituante* was reportedly inspired by the PDIAR project.

One of the main activities of PDIAR during the current programme cycle was to strengthen the capacity of Arab parliaments to vote on legislation that would contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. UNDP implemented these activities in partnership with the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) – a coalition of socially-conscious Arab NGOs based in Beirut. This work was funded out of the 2010 budget of the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund (DGTTF) in the amount of USD 220,000. The

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44 UNDP RBAS, 'Project on the Modernization of Public Prosecution Offices', Annual Project Progress Report, January 2009.

45 These environmental crimes activities were completed with leftover funds after the departure of the project management team.

46 UNDP RBAS, 'Strengthening the Rule of Law in the Arab States – Modernization of Prosecutors' Offices', Project Document, March 2005.

47 <http://www.arabparliaments.org/publications/books/politicalpartieslegislationgp-e.pdf>.

48 The number of party-sponsored, nationally elected seats in the next parliament has been set at 27 out of a total of 150 seats, while the parties' proposal was for a 50-50 divide between individual MPs and party-sponsored members. As a result of this small space left to political parties, opposition parties have refused to participate in the next legislative elections, envisaged towards the end of 2012.

project identified promising pieces of legislation promoting MDGs in an inclusive manner, e.g. with women NGOs involved for MDG 3, and showcased these pieces of legislation in a 'Guide for Arab Parliamentarians on MDGs'.[49] The guide, in Arabic, was finalized in April 2012 and launched at a regional conference in Beirut in May 2012. The project evaluation report[50] recommended additional efforts to translate the MDG guide into French and English, and to disseminate it in the region including to UNDP country offices.

It is unclear whether these efforts will lead to MDG-sensitive legislation. According to an ANND report, "although the declared official positions show a positive attitude towards the MDGs and highlight the necessity of their achievement, such positions remain strictly verbal and are not translated into actual governmental policies or into concrete national strategies or plans of action."[51]

As for the recently launched project on Support to Arab Countries efforts in Transitional Governance Processes, its operating space is limited both by other UNDP units competing for funding opportunities and by the new authorities in Egypt and Tunisia, who were initially rather cautious of external interference and not necessarily eager to engage with UN agencies or donors.

Achievements of this project to date include a translation to Arabic of Interpeace's manual on 'Constitution-making and Reform: Options for the Process'.[52] Intended as a tool for empowering constitution drafters, the manual was received with appreciation in Egypt and Tunisia, particularly in light of the scarcity of similar documentation in Arabic. The project also co-funded the international forum on "Pathways of Democratic Transitions: International Experiences and Lessons Learned," which was held in Cairo on June 5-6 2011.[53] This initiative, focused on transitional justice, proved a success precisely because it offered a forum for discussing various options for transition to democracy in a non-prescriptive manner. UNDP's perceived neutrality and its use of a South-South format were particularly valuable. Guest speakers included former president of Chile Michelle Bachelet, former president of Indonesia Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, senior African National Congress negotiator in post-apartheid South Africa Mac Maharaj, and former Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Celso Amorim – all credible voices from the South who would not be perceived as imposing a 'western' agenda. The forum also provided the Egypt country office with a much-needed opening, the contacts and the good will required to move a step further and support parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011 and 2012.

In conclusion, before 2011 the regional programme was advocating for governance reforms, but its message was not always given sufficient attention by the governments of the Arab region. The themes and issues promoted by the regional programme in democratic governance were always relevant, but this only came in full view after the Arab uprisings. However, by that time the size and diversity of the regional programme governance portfolio had contracted significantly. The regional programme was nevertheless able to provide some transitional

[49] UNDP/ANND, 'A Parliamentary Guide on MDGs', 2012 (Arabic), available online at <http://www.arabparliaments.org/publications/legislature/2012/parlmdgs-a.pdf>.

[50] UNDP RBAS, 'Strengthening Parliamentary-Civil Society Collaboration for Monitoring the Progress towards the MDGs in the Arab Countries', PDIAR Evaluation Report, Rouba Beydoun, July 2012.

[51] ANND, 'The Arab States and the MDGs: No Progress Without Social Justice', by Ziad Abdel Samad, 2010, available online at <http://www.socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/ArabStatesMDG2010_eng.pdf>.

[52] Interpeace, 'Constitution-making and Reform - Options for the Process', Michele Brandt et al., undated, available online at <http://www.interpeacetemp.ch/constitutionmaking/sites/default/files/Constitution-Making-Handbook.pdf>.

[53] <http://www.undp.org.eg/Portals/0/INT%20FORUM/1110_Cairo%20Report%20WEB_FINAL.pdf>.

assistance to Tunisia and Egypt, in collaboration with other UNDP units. The manner in which the regional programme responded to the Arab uprisings is analysed further at the programme level in the next chapter (Section 4.3. Response to Emerging Issues).

3.3 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environment and sustainable development is a new thematic area for the regional programme. It includes two projects: i) the Water Governance Programme for Arab States, which was launched in 2009 to address the issue of the effective governance of scarce water resources in Arab countries; and ii) ACRI, which aims at strengthening the capacity of RBAS countries to mainstream climate change adaptation policies into national development plans.

RELEVANCE

RBAS regional programme initiatives in the environment and sustainable development focus area were found generally relevant to the expressed needs and priorities of Arab states. Unlike in other focus areas, projects in this area advocate for issues with a strong technical content and somewhat lower political sensitivity.

The relevance of the WGP-AS stems primarily from the fact that fresh water supply has become an issue of life-and-death importance for the region. The large number of countries that signed the project document[54] and the project launch under the aegis of the League of Arab States testify to its relevance in the eyes of the region's governments.

Microprojects that address water conservation at the household and community level, funded by the 'Every Drop Matters' partnership between UNDP and the Coca-Cola Company, have been found very relevant by the officials interviewed by the mission, because they see these as directly responding to the problem of water scarcity. The idea of issuing a report on water (a key deliverable of the WGP-AS) received much less support from the same officials.

The project started initially to make plans for conducting national assessments of the state of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in Arab countries, but there was little government support for this activity. The project document's insistence on supporting the development of IWRM plans tends to weaken the relevance of WGP-AS, and is symptomatic of a poor understanding of what IWRM really is. IWRM is a continuous process of negotiation and mediation, involving such stakeholders as water user groups, utilities, regulatory organs, and local governments to promote participatory decision-making and arbiter between conflicting interests about water regulations, management and use. It is not about drafting a plan once and for all. Aid agencies often forget this slow and painful negotiation aspect of IWRM, and tend to focus on developing IWRM plans because they make for a well-defined deliverable they can report upon and claim credit for.

The fact that most of the fresh water supply originates from countries outside the region undermines the rationale for the inclusion of transboundary waters issues in the design of the WGP-AS, inasmuch as the regional format does not accommodate for key neighbours and upstream countries such as Turkey, Israel or Ethiopia. This is perhaps the reason why the WGP-AS project stopped working on transboundary waters after 2010.

While the WGP-AS (and other regional projects before it) had been developed with limited involvement of UNDP country offices, a more participatory approach was adopted for the design phase of ACRI. An extensive consultative

[54] Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Palestinian Authority, Qatar and Yemen.

process was supported by dedicated country office staff (e.g. in Morocco) and involved four regional consultative events with participation by many of the stakeholders met by the present evaluation. All our interlocutors stressed that this participatory design process was very thorough and useful. As a result, the ACRI project document appears well prepared and topical. It is also well anchored in the regional programme document. ACRI focuses on three areas: a) supporting institutional capacity to address the impact of climate change (including capacity to access international funding mechanisms in the areas of climate change adaptation and mitigation); b) supporting local approaches to climate change adaptation; and c) advocacy and awareness on building climate resilience (a component concerned with knowledge products). Ambitious resource mobilization targets have been set and no external funding has been secured so far.

The level of interest in climate change varies across the region, depending on the anticipated national impact. While the economy and livelihoods of some Arab countries depend primarily on agriculture, and are consequently vulnerable to climatic variations, oil-exporting countries (Algeria, GCC countries) are vulnerable to any policy aimed at reducing oil consumption through energy savings or the promotion of renewable energy sources. This dichotomy has reportedly led to some debate during the formulation of the ACRI project. No oil-producing country has signed the ACRI project document to date. However, even oil-producing countries are interested in certain aspects of climate change, so the ACRI project may still be signed by some of these countries.

UNDP mandate and promotion of UN values

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011 affirmed water governance and resource management and climate change mitigation efforts as valid UNDP niches within the energy and environment practice area.[55] The UNDP goal in this regard is to strengthen national capacity to manage the environment in a sustainable manner while ensuring adequate protection of vulnerable populations, including the poor. The Strategic Plan outlines specific initiatives that UNDP undertakes in environment, including "addressing increasing threats from climate change" and "building local capacity to better manage the environment and deliver services, especially water and energy". Both WGP-AS and ACRI fall clearly within the mandate of the UNDP Strategic Plan in this regard.

Comparative strength

While the general issues of water governance and climate change are of relevance to the region and congruent with the UNDP mandate, UNDP's comparative advantage in this sector and region gives rise to concerns. Various stakeholders have questioned why, as a relative newcomer to these regional environmental issues, UNDP would want to implement its own separate activities rather than join forces with like-minded and established UN agencies.

Given the severity of the water crisis in the Arab region, the water sector is already quite 'crowded' by other organizations with a longer track record and more resources than UNDP can mobilize. The WGP-AS project document lists a long series of actors and concludes that "there is a need to coordinate with and complement the work undertaken by the multiple regional and international actors and donors currently active in assisting the water sector in the Arab region." Indeed, ESCWA, the World Bank, the European Union, the Union for the Mediterranean, the German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) all have significant water programmes in the region and have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in this sector. ESCWA is particularly well

[55] UNDP, 'Strategic Plan, 2008-2011: Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development', paragraph 105.

placed to contribute at the policy level through its interactions with the Arab Ministerial Water Council under the aegis of LAS.[56]

The strong focus of the WGP-AS project on publishing a knowledge product on water reinforces the 'crowded market' issue. Apart from the global 2006 HDR on the same subject, the 2009 AHDR also closely analysed water scarcity in the context of human security in the Arab region. Moreover, a large number of other publications have been issued on water governance in the Arab region:

- Since 2005, ESCWA has published its own bi-annual 'Water Development Report' to complement the 'World Water Development Report'. The most recent ESCWA report was published in August 2012.[57]
- In Egypt, two well-connected NGOs, the Arab Water Council (AWC) and the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, publish a report on 'The State of the Water in Arab Region'. The first volume was issued in 2004 and a new issue was being prepared for publication at the time of the evaluation.[58]
- The World Bank has devoted an entire report of its own to water-related challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa: 'Making the Most of Scarcity: Accountability for Better Water Management Results in the Middle East and North Africa' (2007).
- The Swiss Cooperation and Swedish International Development Agency published 'Blue Peace - Rethinking Middle East Water' (2011). This report argues that the current water crisis in the Middle East can be transformed into an opportunity for a new form of peace.
- The Brookings Institution Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World has just issued a paper on the same subject, 'Water Challenges and Cooperative Response in the Middle East and North Africa'.[59]

The fact that several reports have been published on this topic already does not automatically suggest that the report to be produced by WGP-AS will be redundant or useless. However, it means that it may find it more difficult to establish its comparative advantage, demonstrate its relevance and reach a significant audience than if its subject had received less attention from development partners.

In the area of climate change, the new ACRI project document comes across as too ambitious technically. It includes support in scientific domains that seem beyond UNDP's recognized areas of comparative advantage, such as "supporting capacity in the field of scientific research on climate change, linking the relevant centres of scientific excellence in the Arab countries and contributing to the dissemination of scientific production in this regard"; or "supporting the establishment of monitoring systems for sea-level rise and land subsidence". In any case, the technical complexity of the subject calls for a more robust technical backstopping strategy than is described in the project document, e.g. with BDP and/or the UNDP GEF Unit providing structured, periodic technical assistance. The project document could also benefit from a more collaborative approach with other actors already involved in the sector, such as ESCWA or the

[56] ESCWA is also expanding its membership to Maghreb countries so as to cover more of the Arab region. Tunisia, Libya and Morocco joined in September 2012.

[57] ESCWA, 'Water Development Report 4: National Capacities for the Management of Shared Water Resources in ESCWA Member Countries', August 2012.

[58] AWC is supported by the World Bank. It is worth noting that AWC helped formulate WGP-AS and was at some point considered as the executing agency for the project. This would have helped AWC produce future issues of 'The State of the Water in Arab Region' report. However, implementation of WGP-AS was later entrusted to UNOPS.

[59] D. Michel et al., November 2012.

World Bank, that are leading efforts to assess the impact of climate change on freshwater resources and on coastal settlements, respectively.

EFFECTIVENESS

As the ACRI project has not yet started and none of the outputs of WGP-AS have been completed, an evaluation of the projects' effectiveness would be premature. Even more modest and realistic goals in such a time-frame are yet to be achieved, such as the implicit goal to establish the regional programme's credibility in the environment sector via the Water Governance Report.

Early efforts by WGP-AS to promote IWRM led to disappointing results and a sense that more studies and plans were not what the region needed. Most Arab countries had already conducted some form of IWRM process. According to project reports, Qatar, Palestine and Egypt were reluctant to undergo needs assessments for IWRM because, as put by the former project manager, "most Arab states do have some sort of IWRM plan under several titles such as IWRM strategy, sustainable water resources management, integrated planning for water resources, etc. […] Many Arab states found that UNDP-WGP National Needs Assessments are no more than a simple reiteration of what they are already familiar with and deemed this effort as redundant & irrelevant to their immediate needs."[60]

In the oPt, it was agreed in consultation with the Palestinian Authority (PA) that instead of the IWRM needs assessment, a water sector 'integrity review' should be conducted. The PA receives much funding from Europe and the US in the water sector and was eager to verify that the Palestinian Water Authority and various utilities could make good use of the funding. The assessment was co-funded by the Stockholm-based Water Governance Facility, and successfully completed in 2012. The country office is now developing a project document for capacity building in the Palestinian Water Authority. This perfectly legitimate water governance result, probably more useful to the average Palestinian than an IWRM needs assessment, illustrates the value of flexibility and demand-orientation in programme management.

Among other notable WGP-AS outputs is the funding of pilot water management projects in four countries (2012). These projects have entered the construction phase in Yemen (rainwater and grey-water reuse schemes), and in Gaza (two sand filter beds for waste water treatment in Khan Younis). In Tunisia, NGOs have been selected for the rehabilitation of 12 rural water supply schemes in Kasserine, Bizerte, Beja and Zaghouen. The project also includes a local governance dimension building upon a previous WGP study of water user associations. In Jordan, three microprojects were selected in a competitive process, and deal with optimal use of groundwater for olive grove irrigation and rehabilitation of water supply in the districts of Al-Azraq and North Badiya. This work has the potential of demonstrating good water management and governance practices at the local level, and is quite well received by national counterparts and country offices.

3.4 PROMOTION OF KNOWLEDGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The regional programme has invested heavily in knowledge products, over and beyond the focus area of the same name. Many knowledge products such as reports, books or websites have been produced under other focus areas as well. POGAR in particular built a large website and a number of ambitious legal databases in Arabic, still accessible online.[61] However, the most visible and well-known regional programme knowledge products, produced under the specific focus area entitled "promotion of knowledge for human development", are the AHDRs and the AKRs.

[60] WGP-AS, 'Handover Report on Status of all Project Activities', Hosny Khordagui, January 2011.

[61] <http://www.arablegalportal.org/>.

RELEVANCE

Addressing national development challenges and priorities

While the vision for the reports clearly came from the leadership of UNDP/RBAS at the time, the rationale behind them was a sense of urgency among Arab thinkers over the situation of Arab countries at the start of the new millennium. The perception was that, while the rest of the world was making rapid progress, the Arab world remained immobile and was being left behind in economic globalization. Another important message was that Arab nations urgently needed to confront their own weaknesses rather than always blame external factors for their predicaments.

This emphasis of the regional programme on knowledge products was highly relevant in view of the Arab region's 'knowledge gap', fundamentally linked to a lack of freedom of expression, which, as the reports have shown, constrains the capacity of society to reflect upon issues, take on new challenges and promote change.

The first AHDR (2002) was launched at LAS, reflecting the report's objectives in addressing the highest levels of policy makers in the region, and the Arab League's genuine interest in promoting a healthy debate on development priorities among its members. However, the subsequent launching of the rest of the series in country offices indicates that subsequent reports were not well received by some regional governments. But as in the democratic governance focus area, the degree of governmental support for the AHDRs changed significantly after the Arab uprisings. The Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions highlighted the importance of several topics covered in the reports. In Tunisia, for instance, an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained to the evaluation mission that before the Tunisian revolution, the Government strongly shunned global, regional and national HDRs because they contradicted the favourable image of the country that the regime wanted to project. However, many civil servants did read these reports in secret and shared them with colleagues and friends, as they provided relief from the oppressive, almost suffocating party line. The situation has now changed radically, so much so that the new Tunisian Government has expressed interest in launching the next AHDR.

UNDP mandate and promotion of UN values

AHDRs promote human development and people's empowerment, address significant equity issues in the region (e.g. the poorest and most marginalized, gender, ethnic or religious minorities), and promote generally UN values such as good governance and gender equality.

The main contributors include academics, intellectuals, opinion leaders and former policy makers from various professional and national backgrounds in the region, all external to UNDP. There are no contributions from country office staff or national institutions in order to maintain the reports' neutrality.

The promotion of UN values and of the UNDP philosophy of human development necessitated a selection of contributors on the basis of their development philosophy. This was appropriate, given that the AHDR, like the global HDR, is both a UNDP 'flagship product' and an independent report. The only way UNDP could influence AHDRs was to select the reports' advisory board and core team[62] among high-calibre contributors close to UNDP's own development philosophy, one encapsulated in the human development concept and postulating that people are the true wealth of nations.

The percentage of women contributors has steadily increased over successive reports, with a peak in the 2005 report that focused on women's

[62] The advisory board sets the overall themes and is responsible for quality control. The lead author and core team are the principal drafters of the reports. Contributing authors are the authors of background papers commissioned and synthetized in the main report. The report draft is reviewed by a readers' group, which ascertains that the reports met the UNDP Corporate Policy on HDR standards.

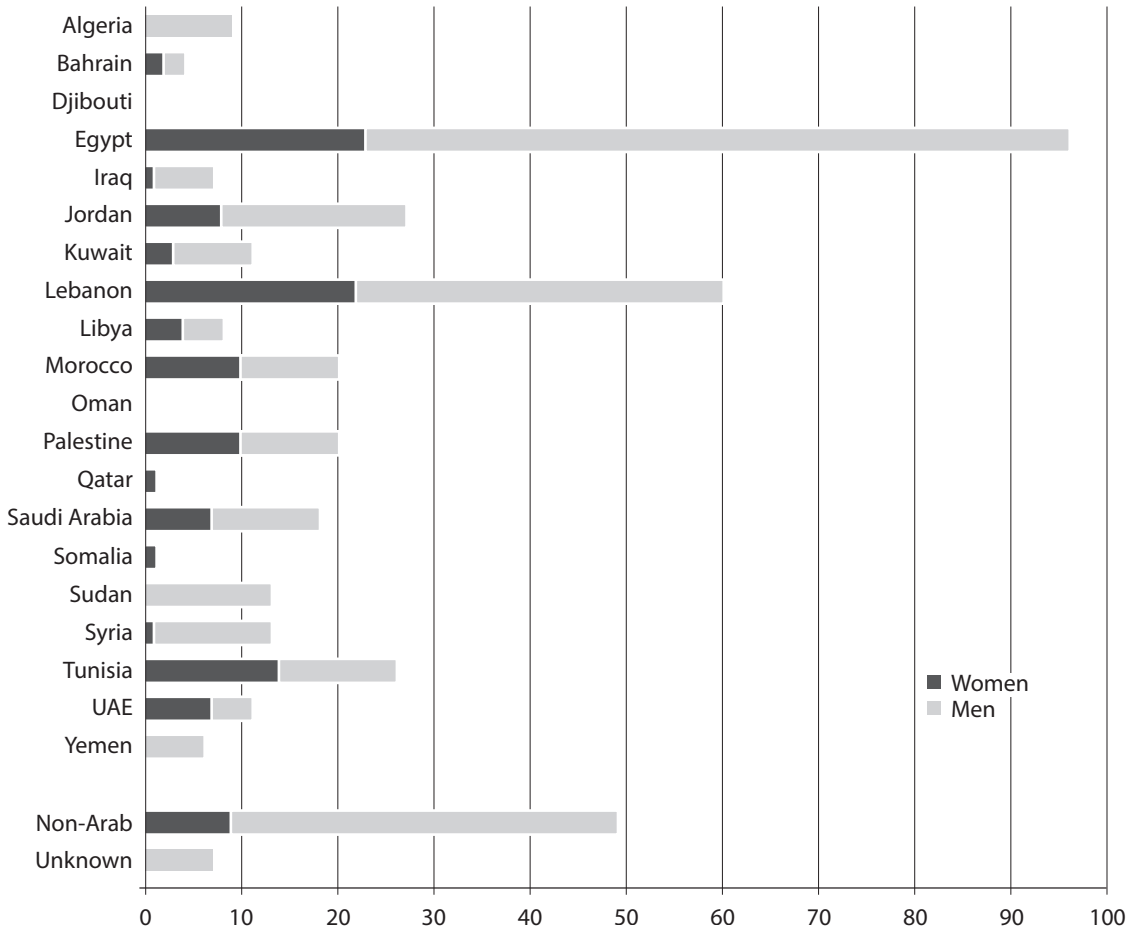
rights. Overall, 30 percent of AHDR contributors were female, indicating a serious effort towards gender equality. In the case of the AKRs, the ratio was lower (25 percent). The list of contributors seemed to favour certain nationalities: Egypt and Lebanon accounted for 38 percent of all contributors (Figure 3).

This group of contributors could therefore be characterized as composed of western-educated Arab academics with strong pro-democratic, pro-poor and secularist values, a profile similar to that of other HDR authors. There have been calls for more diverse demographics – from a broader geographic origin, representing other intellectual traditions or including less academic profiles – in order to better represent the region and strengthen the relevance of the reports.

Comparative strength

In this focus area, the regional programme made use of key UNDP comparative advantages. Building upon the methodological foundations of the global HDRs, the programme actively defended the reports' neutrality against attempts at silencing or misusing their message. It gave the authors a protected space where they could freely express themselves and contribute to the regional debate, all the while maintaining a high level of quality and reliability throughout the years.

Figure 3. AHDR Contributors by Nationality and Gender



EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation tried to assess the extent of dissemination and influence of the five AHDRs and the two AKRs through an analysis of available download statistics and a review of how much the Internet and other media have quoted and/or relayed key messages from UNDP publications. This analysis extended over a longer timeline than the rest of the evaluation, looking at the AHDR since its inception in 2002 until the current programme cycle. It was hampered by a lack of corporate attention to web metrics.[63] The analysis relied on metrics that were external to the UNDP servers, such as citations in the media and number and types of websites linking to the UNDP knowledge products.

The results from this analysis show that AHDRs helped shape the Arab debate about governance and development, exactly as they set out to do. Ten years after the launch of the first report, AHDRs command deep respect and credibility as an authoritative source of facts and analysis, regardless of the political orientation of the persons quoting them. AHDRs represent an Arab-owned analysis of the region, and are widely seen as credible, in the region and beyond.

The first report was described as a true eye-opener by LAS officials, and redefined their relationship with UNDP. A subsequent Arab Summit (Tunis, 22-23 May 2004) talked of the need to reform the Arab world.

Indeed, the AHDR 2002 was addressed to the Arab world, but was almost immediately covered extensively by western media, e.g. *The New York Times, CNN* and the *Wall Street Journal*, pouncing on the critiques presented in the report rather than on the solutions that it recommended. How much this affected the perception of Arab governments towards the report cannot be ascertained, but it seems that the western media coverage diverted attention from the AHDR 2002 programmatic objective.

The AHDR message emphasizing the need for endogenous reforms was quickly seized upon to justify a more exogenous process of change: the first two AHDRs were abundantly quoted in the 'working paper' describing the US administration's Greater Middle East Initiative (February 2004).[64] The document, intended for presentation in June 2004 at the annual summit of the G8, was leaked by the pan-Arab daily, *Al Hayat* and quickly attracted objections from most governments in the region.[65] Angry at the way Washington appropriated his work, Nader Fergany, chief editor of the first four AHDRs, published an article in *Al Hayat* lashing out at "the arrogant mentality of the current US administration in respect of the rest of the world, which causes it to behave as if it can decide the fate of states and peoples."[66] This debate might have overshadowed the AHDR recommendations and temporarily hurt their credibility in the region.

The third report (2004), entitled 'Towards Freedom in the Arab World' was distinctly more vocal about Iraq and Palestine, perhaps as a way to distance itself from the US or simply because the issue of the war in Iraq was impossible to ignore in 2004. As a result, UNDP was pressured not to issue this particular report.[67] An evaluation of the regional programme conducted in 2008 explains that: "UNDP was negatively criticized

[63] None of the websites hosting the regional programme's knowledge products collect the type of systematic traffic monitoring data required to reliably assess the number of people downloading reports or browsing through databases.

[64] International Crisis Group, 'The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: Imperilled at Birth', Middle East/North Africa Brief No. 14, Brussels, 7 June 2004, available online at <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/B014-the-broader-middle-east-and-north-africa-initiative-imperilled-at-birth.aspx>.

[65] <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/05/20084914585082787.html>.

[66] Fergany, Nader, 'Critique of the Greater Middle East Project: The Arabs Sorely Need to Refuse a Reform From Abroad' (in Arabic), Al-Hayat, 19 February 2004, (quoted in <http://mondediplo.com/2004/04/04world>).

[67] <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/12/200849132753742554.html>.

by some countries for the fourth [sic, in fact the third] report handling of the issues of invasion of Iraq, Israeli-Palestinian issues and war on terrorism, with threats to reduce their contributions to UNDP should the report be published. The firm stance taken by UNDP after some fine-tuning to the report was well perceived in the region."[68]

Because of its openly political topic, the 2004 AHDR was a 'hard sell' to country offices that were not eager to engage their governments about it. The 2009 issue on 'Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries' broadened the debate to a variety of threats to human security, and was easier to disseminate at the country level.

One AHDR was planned to be produced during the present cycle but has been postponed several times. At evaluation time, the draft – tentatively entitled 'Empowerment: The Will of the People' – was undergoing extensive review after the events of the Arab uprisings.

Over the years, AHDRs have managed to establish their strong credibility. Nowadays, country offices are proud of them and quoted them often in the country office survey commissioned for this evaluation. AHDRs are mentioned and linked to online by a wide variety of news, academic or citizens' sources. However, the Arabic versions of AHDRs are still much less linked to than the English ones. The online popularity of AKRs is about half that of AHDRs, but they generate a significant audience among Arabic sites (Table 5).

Strikingly, there was nearly universal agreement with the content of the reports in the sampled websites, irrespective of their political orientation. The reports are widely considered authoritative, and quoted as such.

The English editions of AHDRs are cited first and foremost by the media, then by academia, and finally by NGOs and bloggers. Media channels citing AHDRs feature several leading international channels like *Reuters, The Guardian, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, CNN, The New York Times, Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Al Jazeera*. In terms of political spectrum, they encompass liberal to neoconservative. Academia was represented by many top-ranking universities, especially in the US and Western Europe. The American University in Cairo referenced English AHDRs nearly twice as much

Table 5. Identified Internet Links to RBAS Regional Programme Knowledge Products (as of November 2012)

Title referenced	No. of links to report in English	No. of links to report in Arabic
AHDR 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations	100	34
AHDR 2003: Building a Knowledge Society	147	74
AHDR 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World	109	32
AHDR 2005: Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World	126	35
AHDR 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries	145	38
AKR 2009: Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge	69	52
AKR 2011: Preparing Future Generations for the Knowledge Society	32	48
Total	**728**	**313**

[68] UNDP RBAS, 'Outcome Evaluation of Regional Projects - Regional Programme Document 2006-2009', by Ragaa Makharita, New York, August 2008, p.32.

as the second highest referencer. Bloggers for English citations were found to a marked degree to be Islamophobic and Arabophobic. NGOs were mixed, with some using the information to analyse the region's human development status, and others cherrypicking the most critical parts of the reports to justify their anti-Arab leanings.

Among the websites citing or linking to AHDRs in Arabic, individual blogs were the most frequent, followed by the media and NGOs. These active Arab bloggers tended to be predominantly educated, with a high number of academics and researchers. Arabic bloggers tended to use AHDRs as reference to describe (and lament) the status quo in the Arab region. Quotations regarding education and knowledge in the Arab region predominated among the Arabic blogs, followed by women's empowerment issues.

Among media sources, *Al-Ahram Daily*, the official organ of the Egyptian government, had the highest number of citations. This shows that the reports were publicly discussed at large, despite the fact that their content was critical of the incumbent regime at the time. The regional programme and the UNDP office in charge of the global HDRs (HDRO) engaged *Al Jazeera* in 2010 to widen AHDRs' audience in the Arab world. AHDRs have been extensively discussed on the Arabic *Al Jazeera* channel since then. *Al Jazeera* websites in Arabic and English also record a large number of AHDR quotes. Table 6 offers a list of media outlets that have reported on AHDRs.

As compared to HDRs from other regions, RBAS's AHDRs are holding quite well in spite of not having produced a recent issue – the last being in 2009 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Estimated Website Quotes of HDRs Versus Other Knowledge Products

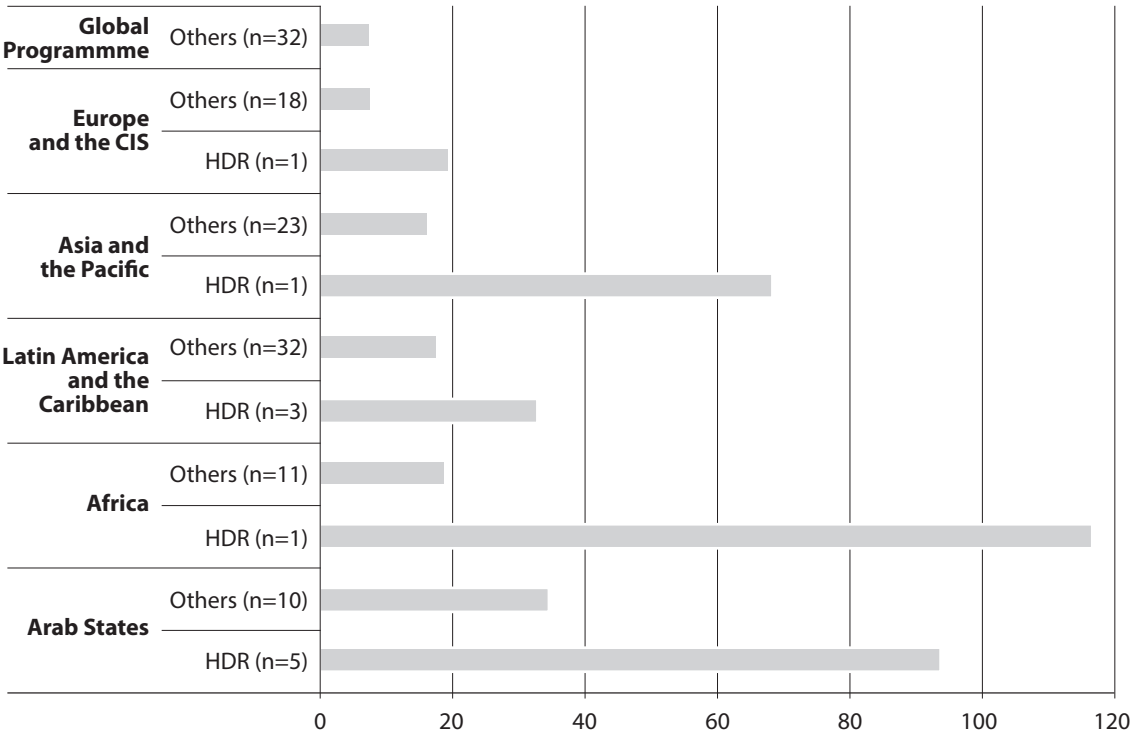


Table 6. Examples of Media Outlets that Covered the AHDRs		
Title	**Description**	**URL**
26 September	Daily newspaper (Yemen)	http://www.26sep.net
Africultures	Digital review of African cultures and arts (France)	http://www.africultures.com
Al Jazeera	TV channel in Arabic and English, owned by the State of Qatar	http://www.aljazeera.com
Al-Ahram Daily	Daily Al-Ahram newspaper (Egypt)	http://digital.ahram.org.eg
Al-Ahram Centre for Political & Strategic Studies	Monthly periodical, affiliated with Al-Ahram daily newspaper (Egypt)	http://www.acpss.ahram.org.eg
Al-Bayan	Daily newspaper (UAE)	http://www.albayan.ae
Al-Marefh	Monthly educational and literary magazine (Saudi Arabia)	http://www.almarefh.org
Al-Tasamoh	Theological quarterly magazine, issued by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (Oman)	http://www.altasamoh.net
Al-Wasat	Daily newspaper (Bahrain)	http://www.alwasatnews.com
Al-Watan	Daily newspaper (Oman)	http://www.alwatan.com
AllAfrica.com	Digital news aggregator for African affairs, Pan-African	http://www.allafrica.com
Ashark Alawsat	Pan-Arab daily newspaper close to the Saudi royal family (headquartered in London)	http://asharq-e.com/
CNN	Cable news channel (U.S.A.)	http://www.cnn.com
France 5	Public television network, focuses on documentaries and discussions (France)	http://www.france5.fr
Foreign Affairs	Foreign policy journal published by the Council on Foreign Relations (New York)	http://www.foreignaffairs.com
Foreign Policy	Bimonthly American magazine	http://www.foreignpolicy.com
Gulf News	National daily newspaper (Dubai, UAE)	http://www.gulfnews.com
Human Events	Conservative newspaper (Washington, USA)	http://www.humanevents.com
Jeune Afrique	Regional magazine with focus on francophone Africa and the Maghreb (Paris)	http://www.jeuneafrique.com
IRIN	UN humanitarian news	http://www.irinnews.org
Le Monde Diplomatique	English edition of major French leftist newspaper focused on foreign affairs	http://www.mondediplo.com
L'Économiste	Daily independent newspaper covering economic and financial news (Morocco)	http://www.leconomiste.com
Le Quotidien D'Algérie	Daily newspaper (Algeria)	http://www.lequotidienalgerie.org
Ms. Magazine	American feminist magazine	http://www.msmagazine.com
New Straits Times	Daily newspaper (Malaysia)	http://www.nst.com.my
New York Times	Major American daily newspaper	http://www.nytimes.com
PBS	Public TV and radio channel (USA)	http://www.pbs.org
Reuters	Global news agency	http://www.reuters.com
Sudanese Online	Independent digital daily newspaper (Sudan)	http://www.sudaneseonline.com
The Guardian	Daily liberal newspaper (Manchester, UK)	http://www.guardian.co.uk
TBS Journal	Analyses Satellite Television in the Arab Worlds (AUC & Oxford U.)	http://www.tbsjournal.com
Thara	Women & children's rights weekly magazine (Syria)	http://www.thara-sy.com
UAE Interact	Independent digital news site supported by the National Media Council of the UAE	http://www.uaeinteract.com
Wall Street Journal	Daily newspaper focused on business and economic news (U.S.A.)	http://online.wsj.com

There was a noticeable and substantial rise in media coverage of these reports following the events of the Arab uprisings, generating significant traffic to the UNDP website.[69] The similarity between the themes highlighted by AHDRs over the years and those underpinning the Arab uprisings has struck commentators.[70] A number of parallels can be drawn:

- The uprisings were predicated on Arab citizens taking charge of their own destiny, precisely as AHDRs had been advocating.
- The Arab authors of AHDRs attempted to break a 'wall of silence', to say the unsaid, to be intellectually honest, while the uprisings led to a freer expression of ideas and grievances in Arab media and by other Arab intellectuals.
- Arab bloggers dominate among the people quoting AHDRs in Arabic, and formed an important demographic in the Arab uprisings.
- The importance attributed to knowledge and information technology in AHDRs/AKRs and in the Arab uprisings.

The link between AHDRs and the Arab uprisings should not be overstated. The Tunisian revolution did not start because someone read a UN report. There have always been voices calling for freedom in the Arab world, and local Arab cultures were never short of references to freedom and responsibility. The rise of regional mass media provides a more powerful explanation for the cultural change involved. However, AHDRs have undeniably helped break the 'wall of silence' protecting regional autocrats.

Some AHDRs contributors have even played a direct role in the Arab uprising, such as Yadh Ben Achour, a respected Tunisian lawyer and a member of the AHDR advisory board in 2008 and 2009, who was appointed president of the *Haute Instance de réalisation des objectifs de la révolution, de la réforme politique et de la transition démocratique* and performed a vital role in Tunisia's transition to democracy at the helm of this institution.

AHDRs have been less successful in influencing development programming and investment. Rare are the governments or aid organizations that explicitly based their programmes on AHDRs. As explained above, the somewhat contentious debates generated by the reports have overshadowed the recommendations they put forth. That being said, the current Regional Programme for Arab States is largely inspired by AHDRs, including the Good Governance for Development Initiative and the environmental portfolio (WGP-AS and ACRI). The reports have also led to the founding of MBRF (which finances AKRs), a fund meant to bridge the knowledge gap between the Arab region and the developed world, improve the standard of education and research in the region, and stimulate job creation. This was one of the largest charitable donations in history.

The 'knowledge for development' focus area may have fallen victim of its own success, in that there is now a proliferation of Arab-related reports, including some produced by UNDP itself (Arab Knowledge Report, Arab Water Report, Arab Development Challenges Report), which creates confusion and results in a degree of dilution of the messages carried by each. After the Arab uprisings, the 'Arab knowledge' area is suddenly much more crowded than it used to be.

There is also a trend towards thicker, more academic reports. AKRs in particular are quite lengthy, and this negatively affects their dissemination and use. Likewise, the drafts of the AHDR 2012 and of the Water Governance

[69] In September 2011, a single story by CNN's Fareed Zakaria quoting the 2002 AHDR triggered over 300,000 downloads of the report from the UNDP website over a few days.

[70] For example, Thomas Friedman ('If Not Now, When?' *New York Times*, 22 February 2011, available online at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/23/opinion/23friedman.html?_r=0) or Fareed Zakaria of CNN.

Report (of WGP-AS) were found bulky and unwieldy, and are in the process of being downsized. It is important to stress that one of the greatest strengths of the original AHDRs was that they were aimed at a broad audience.

3.5 GENDER EQUALITY, EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND YOUTH

Informed by the Strategic Plan and lessons learned from previous regional cooperation frameworks, the RBAS Regional Programme Document for 2010-2013 treats gender equality, youth issues and capacity development as cross-cutting issues to be thoroughly mainstreamed in all programme focus areas.[71] Special emphasis is placed in this document on mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment within regional projects, building knowledge and developing the capacity of leaders by implementing catalytic gender empowerment activities, and developing capacity for debate through analysis and advocacy on policy options for mainstreaming women's empowerment and gender equality into national and regional development plans.

RELEVANCE

Addressing national development challenges and priorities

Gender equality and empowerment have long commanded attention among the 'deficits' characterizing the Arab world. The first AHDR (2002) warned that "development not engendered is endangered"[72] and highlighted the impact of pervasive gender inequality in all sectors in the Arab region. An entire subsequent AHDR was devoted to analysing the roots, manifestations and implications of gender inequality.[73] It traces the roots of gender inequality in culture and religious heritage and describes widespread discrimination in a range of social, political and economic settings. The last AHDR to be published (2009) repeated similar warnings about implications of gender inequality on human development, emphasizing as well the devastating consequences of ongoing wars and conflict in the region on prospects for human security in general and on vulnerable populations, including women in particular.[74]

There is hence little doubt that gender equality and empowerment are important regional issues. The Arab uprisings, which many women actively supported, have only heightened those concerns following the subsequent rise of Islamist parties to power in Tunisia and Egypt. Most Arab governments – whether in transition or not – are preoccupied by other priorities: establishing new governments, rewriting constitutions, addressing pressing economic needs and challenges, heading off citizen impatience, and generally restoring security and stability.

The evaluation mission also encountered the perception, among some Arab men in particular, that gender equality has been referred to so persistently, in each and every project, document, process, conference or report issued in the region, that it is on the verge of becoming an empty phrase, a trite slogan people pronounce for good effect in meetings but with no relation to reality. The drive for systematic gender mainstreaming in international cooperation efforts may have led to a degree of dilution, if not tokenism.

In view of the youthful demographic profile of the region and in line with the recommendations from the previous regional programme evaluation, the regional programme document also highlights the issue of youth, which, like gender, was to be mainstreamed across all focus areas of the regional programme and managed as a

[71] UNDP, 'Regional Programme Document for the Arab States 2010-2013', 1 November 2009, p.3.

[72] AHDR 2002, p.2.

[73] UNDP, Arab Human Development Report 2005, 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World', 2006.

[74] UNDP, Arab Human Development Report 2009, 'Challenges to Human Security in Arab Countries', 2009.

cross-cutting issue. Specific interventions benefiting the youth were also envisaged, such as the analysis of "policy options for inclusive growth, in particular in the areas of […] unemployment, women and youth." This planned work on inclusive growth has not been implemented. The absence in the current regional programme portfolio of any project on inclusive growth is problematic, as it leaves unattended the crucial development issue of youth unemployment in the Arab world. With the exception of HARPAS (that collaborated with students on producing TV ads in Lebanon, and provided training on legal rights of PLWH, MSM and other at risk groups that include youth) there is little evidence of conscious attention to youth integration in the regional programme.

UNDP mandate and promotion of UN values
UNDP commitment to gender mainstreaming and achieving women's equality and empowerment is firmly rooted in its Strategic Plan for 2008-2011, which emphasizes a three-pronged approach, combining the continued mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all practice areas; specific initiatives to benefit women and help reach MDG 3 - "promote gender equality and empower women"; and the provision of gender-responsive policy advisory services. The regional programme has focused on the first of these three strategies: the continued mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all practice areas. It was not designed to develop specific initiatives to benefit women.

Comparative strength
AHDRs have made clear use of UNDP's comparative strength in the analysis and monitoring of gender equality and women empowerment. The use of UNDP comparative strength by the rest of the regional programme was perhaps weaker in the area of gender than in focus areas with dedicated projects and resources (i.e. poverty, governance, environment or knowledge), due to the regional programme's lack of access to in-house advisory services. A cross-cutting issue such as gender without a dedicated staff has arguably a greater need of linking up with the corporate 'knowledge architecture' of UNDP than projects that can procure technical expertise in the form of staff or consultants. This being said, the regional programme has linked up occasionally with the RCC gender policy specialist (e.g. on the question of gender in constitutions) and with country office gender focal points (e.g. in Lebanon) to help address gender in the implementation of country-level activities.

EFFECTIVENESS

Most regional projects gave significant attention to gender mainstreaming, in the sense of ensuring women's participation (as CSO partners or beneficiaries, for example), incorporating gendered perspectives located in international human rights standards and principles into project design and implementation and also more strategically, as in activities designed to advocate for MDGs. The degree to which these projects effectively promoted gender equality and women's empowerment varied, as follows.

In the poverty reduction focus area, HARPAS activities integrated gender in very concrete ways, for example through microcredit projects run by women CSO; women's leadership programmes (e.g. the training of women leaders in Egypt or of female MPs and municipal council members in Morocco); capacity-building among CSOs such as the Women's Health Improvement Association in Egypt; advocacy for PLWH including women and girls on their legal rights; and attention to special vulnerabilities among high risk groups such as Female Sex Workers or IDUs.

Gender mainstreaming in HARPAS is not restricted to women; similarly targeted interventions focus on specific vulnerabilities of men, for example MSM, IDUs (more commonly men, including youth), or migrant workers[75], and

[75] See for instance, UNDP/OFID/UNAIDS/IOM/IGAD, 'Mobility, Migration and HIV Vulnerability of Populations along the Ports of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, Situation and Response Analysis', 2011.

training has been given to male and female religious leaders of different faiths. This constitutes a rare case of abiding to the core philosophy of gender in development, which calls for attention to be given to *both genders* rather than focusing exclusively on women.

As pointed out by various community organizations working with PLWH, HARPAS' focus on MARPs has neglected a critical segment of society that may be the next front in the struggle against HIV – ordinary citizens, women and men, and the youth. These concerns appear valid, considering the danger that HIV/AIDS might jump the barrier between those currently most at risk and the general population. In response to these very concerns, OPALS, HARPAS' partner in Morocco, plans to support further outreach to the general population, including women and youth. More awareness-raising activities towards the general public would seem logical, if the aim is to remove or reduce the stigma associated with AIDS. The work of HARPAS with religious leaders in Egypt did not remove the stigma about HIV, for instance. Issues related to sexuality are still not debated openly. In Tunisia for example, religious people refuse categorically to meet with prostitutes unless they refrain from working as such.[76]

Several projects **in the democratic governance focus area** also demonstrate commitment to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. PDIAR (headed by a female project manager) focused one of its main activities on Strengthening Parliamentary-Civil Society Collaboration for Monitoring the Progress towards the MDGs in the Arab Countries. This work duly covered MDG 3: promote gender equality and empower women, and involved female MPs and CSOs advocating for women's rights. Other relevant activities under PDIAR included research on gender-sensitive parliaments in the Arab region, conducted in collaboration with the Inter Parliamentary Union, with a view to identifying ways in which parliaments could best become gender sensitive and effectively mainstream gender into their work. Case studies were published assessing gender sensitivity in the Jordanian and Tunisian parliaments – two examples where national governments are firmly committed to advancing gender equality and representation at the political level. PDIAR support to political party legislation was also an opportunity to promote women's representation as party members and candidates. Related discussions in Jordan also addressed the issue of quotas for women and youth in political parties. Finally, PDIAR contributions to gender mainstreaming included support to the Arabic platform of iKnow Politics[77] through the translation of selected materials. This constitutes an important knowledge resource for analysis, information sharing, dialogue and programming regarding the status of (Arab) women in political life in the Arab world.

Compared to PDIAR, the ACIAC project has not addressed gender issues. None of the project reports refer to gender or women; nor does the UNCAC itself. Only one member of ACINET is female (representing the Arab Region Parliamentarians against Corruption).

The recent project in the area of transitional governance plans a regional conference on engendering constitution making, with participation from Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Yemen, Jordan, Somalia and Sudan.[78] Morocco

[76] The situation analysis carried out in 2011 on Migration in the Red Sea verifies the strong intersection between gender inequality, HIV and sexuality throughout its numerous case studies, especially the one carried out in Sudan.

[77] The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKnow Politics) is "an interactive network of women in politics who share experiences, resources and advise, and collaborate on issues of interest." Its partners include UNDP and UN Women <http://iknowpolitics.org/>.

[78] Women organizations in Sudan, for example, have exerted considerable effort to incorporate gender issues and women's rights in the Interim Constitution of 2005, which was adopted following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by government of Sudan and Sudan Liberation Movement that year.

and Jordan, whose constitutions have recently been amended, will provide substantive input and insight to the process.[79]

In the **environment and sustainable development focus area**, WGP-AS (also headed by female project managers in recent years) has made serious attempts at promoting gender equality. The IWRM approach followed by the project carefully considered gender among the various relevant social and economic dimensions. In Tunisia, WGP partnered with CAWTAR to conduct a national needs assessment, ensuring that a gendered analysis is incorporated into this vital sector.[80] The forthcoming report on the state of Arab water resources devotes a chapter to gender differences in access, use, and control of water resources. The local level pilot projects launched in Jordan, the oPt, Tunisia and Yemen provide seed money for catalytic interventions to test innovative methods of water consumption and preservation at the household level. In Jordan, one of the three winning bids was proposed by a female community-based organization, the Northern Azraq Women's Association for Social Development, for a project to improve household water networks and install water conservation devices on water taps.

In the **knowledge for human development focus area**, AHDRs have consistently and powerfully argued that gender inequality is a major obstacle to human development in the Arab region.[81] The first AHDR (2002) lists gender inequality among the three main deficits to challenge and hinder development. Since then each of the subsequent AHDR series has drawn attention to the roots, manifestations, implications and impact of gender equality at every level. AHDR 2005, titled 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World', focused entirely on gender and provided strong arguments for change based on evidence and a candid assessment of the context. The report contends that "the long hoped-for Arab 'renaissance' cannot and will not be accomplished unless the obstacles preventing women from enjoying their human rights and contributing more fully to development are eliminated and replaced with greater access to the 'tools' of development, including education and healthcare."[82] Low female employment rates in the region are presented as an injustice but also a missed opportunity, a "failure to use human capital, […] which might otherwise contribute to achieving economic development for all."

The 2005 AHDR acknowledges the development that has been made for the advancement of Arab women and cites many 'Arab women luminaries' in the fields of politics, science, art or business. However, it also warns against undue optimism[83] and points out that many of these advancements emerged out of 'state feminism' rather than from a more rooted, indigenous process of cultural evolution. It recognizes that efforts by development aid organizations to promote gender equality have led many Arabs to consider it a foreign, 'western' import. As a consequence and while it recommends institutional and policy reforms, affirmative actions, improved access to health and education services, and the full ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by all states in the region, the report also calls for deeper cultural change through "the emergence

[79] UNDP, 'Regional Conference on Engendering Constitution-Making in the Arab Region' (Concept Note).

[80] UNDP/CAWTAR, 'Gender and Water Management in Tunisia', by Alia Gana, 22 June 2010, available online at <http://www.wgpas-undp.org/Reports/Gender%20mainstreaming%20in%20water%20resources%20managment-Tunisia-final%20version%2022-6-2010.pdf>.

[81] The production of AHDRs and AKRs themselves was reasonably gender sensitive, though still dominated by male authors. Overall, 30 percent of AHDR contributors were female, against 25 percent for the AKRs.

[82] UNDP, The Arab Human Development Report 2005, 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World', 2006, p.I.

[83] The Arab Human Development Report 2005 uses the term 'Arab Spring' rather dismissingly, to highlight that as of 2005, regional states had failed to embark on comprehensive governance reforms (p.29).

of a widespread and effective movement of struggle in Arab civil society [involving] Arab women and their male supporters in carefully targeted societal reform."

At the programme level, the regional programme lacked dedicated human resources to ensure that gender equality and empowerment are systematically integrated into inception, formulation, design, implementation and monitoring of component programmes.[84] Component programmes in each focus area approach gender mainstreaming independently from one another, without any overarching coordinated gender strategy. As a result, the interesting but isolated approaches and activities implemented by the RBAS regional programme in pursuit of gender equality are not sufficiently communicated and visible.

Lacking an overarching gender strategy, with no dedicated gender programme, no defined quantitative and qualitative gender-sensitive indicators, and absent sufficient staff, resources and partnerships for the purpose, gender remains relegated to 'cross-cutting' issues that officially exist everywhere but are subsequently diluted everywhere. Successes achieved have been achieved through individual efforts in each of the focus areas rather than through a coherent approach backed by institutional systems and mechanisms. This is particularly evident where gender mainstreaming has been understood and implemented as showcasing more female figures. The real – and largely unattended – challenge is to address differences in gender access to services and opportunities, participation in decision-making, power relations and the like, that commonly underlie women's inequality.

3.6 EFFICIENCY

Efficiency of programme operations emerged as an issue of concern during this evaluation. It appears to have weakened during the current programme period. Many external factors intervened, including delays in obtaining the necessary country signatures or disruptions caused by the Arab uprisings. However, efficiency was also constrained by two internal factors. One is 'remote management', that is, the fact that important decisions regarding the management of the regional programme are taken from headquarters in New York rather than by project managers located in the region. The other is the lack of sufficient human resources allocated to some projects. Finally, the implementation of the programme by UNOPS adds complexity to programme management and may affect its efficiency.

Remote management

As noted earlier, RBAS has since 2008 embarked on a process to streamline the regional programme, as a way to refocus the programme for greater impact. According to the 2008 outcome evaluation, some projects, notably in the area of higher education, "no more fit in the new UNDP corporate lines of business."[85] The 2008 regional programme evaluation also recommended the programme should "be aligned with the directions and principles of the UNDP Strategic Plan" and "concentrate on fewer areas with clearly defined outcomes and strategic thrust."[86]

The streamlining process led to the closures of a number of projects in 2009 and 2010. In this process, it appears that the decision-making power was to a significant degree centralized at headquarters in New York. Many interviewed

[84] At headquarters, the RPD includes a regional programme adviser who also acts as gender focal point, but this arrangement appears insufficient to ensure that gender be addressed strategically at the programme level.

[85] UNDP/RBAS, 'Outcome Evaluation of Regional Projects - Regional Programme Document 2006-2009' by Ragaa Makharita, August 2008, p.72.

[86] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006–2009)', New York, May 2009, Recommendation 1.

staff working for regional projects (including some projects now closed) spoke of a disruptive and demotivating degree of micromanagement from headquarters, a factor that might explain why some of them left the programme earlier than planned.

In 2010, for example, the management team of the Public Prosecutors Project left without being replaced and from then on, the project was managed directly by the Regional Programme Division in New York. Without a team on the ground in the region, project activities had to be severely curtailed. In 2010/2011, WGP-AS went through a similar experience, resulting in a complete change of its management team and of the team of writers for the Arab Water Report. This move added significant cost to the programme, as the new team of writers was hired while the first team still had to be paid before being disbanded.

According to some project staff, remote management from New York tends to give rise to a lack of transparency and predictability in the use of programme resources. Programme staff complained about having little say and information about their budget, whether or not they will still have a job next year, or where their offices will be located. For instance, the AKR team, originally located within the MBRF offices in Dubai, moved to Beirut in mid-2012 only to be informed they would be moving again in the near future, this time to Cairo.

However, this issue does not affect all projects: ACIAC is currently managed by an experienced project manager who was formerly with the POGAR/GfD programme. He enjoys trust and backing from Regional Programme Division, and manages ACIAC human and financial resources with adequate autonomy.

Judging from their responses to the country office survey, some country offices also perceive a lack of transparency in the regional programme's management: the statement "the management of the regional programme has been open, transparent and accountable" was agreed to by four country offices, and disagreed by seven (two strongly). Five country offices did not know (Figure 5, see page 57).

Presented with these complaints, the Regional Programme Division pointed to their responsibility to oversee the regional programme, explained that project staff contracts are renewed on an annual basis as per UNDP rules, and stated that project staff are well informed about the available resources, since they develop a budgeted work plan on an annual basis. Whatever uncertainties remain after this step are reportedly linked to possible reductions in TRAC allocations during the year, which have been an organization-wide phenomenon in the last few years.

Insufficient human resources

The low decision-making power delegated to some project managers is compounded by insufficient human resources at their disposal to deliver their planned outputs in a timely manner. With only one project coordinator and half of the time of a research assistant each (the research assistant is shared by the two units), the programme management units for HARPAS and WGP-AS are severely understaffed. Both projects have suffered from significant delays as a result, particularly WGP-AS, whose initial management team left the project in 2010.

The Regional Programme Division points at the need for 'lean project structures' in view of limited resources, adding that project teams can rely on outsourcing and contracting of expertise as and when needed. WGP-AS is also now scheduled to close in May 2013, and thus according to the Regional Programme Division it would not be wise for the project to recruit staff at this late stage. However, the project team could have been (and could still be) strengthened through short-term consultancies.

One should note that the Arab uprisings also caused delays for WGP-AS and particularly to

the downstream Every Drop Matters pilot projects, in that there were no available national interlocutors for an entire year in Egypt and Tunisia. More delays are to be expected if the project team is not strengthened significantly. The scope of the project and the attention it attracts in the region call for greater operational and managerial capacity. After all, 10 governments have signed the WGP-AS project document and expect some action in their country.

UNOPS implementation

The fact that the RBAS regional programme is implemented by UNOPS simplifies its administration by taking over responsibility for procurements, travel arrangements and recruitments from the Regional Programme Division. On the other hand, placing these processes within UNOPS also adds to isolation and costs in several ways, for instance:

- UNOPS evidently charges an administrative fee on top of the general management support fees already charged by UNDP.
- Whenever a regional project needs to provide seed funding to a country office for a small operation in a given country (e.g. the WGP-AS Every Drop Matters microprojects), this translates into an inter-agency fund transfer between UNOPS and UNDP, more complicated and lengthier than if the transaction took place within UNDP.
- There has been some difficulty in obtaining expenditure records from UNOPS in a timely manner, making project accounts and expenditures harder to track than if the projects were implemented by UNDP.
- Regional programme staff are all contracted by UNOPS and therefore are technically not UNDP staff. According to the 2008 audit report, this impacted negatively on the maintenance of proper programme documentation and files in UNDP, since those files typically remained in UNOPS.

The programme's administrative processes were run out of the Copenhagen office until January 2012, when UNOPS opened a small unit for the RBAS regional programme within their Iraq support office located in Amman, Jordan. This move may have added a further layer of operational complexity to the programme, since many procurements and recruitments still have to be approved by Copenhagen.

Questions about the valued added of UNOPS in implementing the RBAS regional programme are not new. The evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (2002-2005) found that this value added was "unclear and [the UNOPS role] largely preserved for bureaucratic reasons"[87], and recommended that "more direct programme management mechanisms should be considered". The evaluation of the third RCF (2009) was more circumspect on the issue. It simply noted that "for some projects, this [UNOPS] arrangement has not been satisfactory due to lack of substantive backstopping and delays in administrative support."[88]

Typically, UNDP uses UNOPS to implement large, complex engineering projects, where the additional transaction costs highlighted above are negligible or offset by the strong operational capacity of UNOPS. UNOPS enjoys much less comparative advantage in the implementation of small projects, such as those in the RBAS regional programme. This being said, the only way to assess if UNOPS brings clear value to the implementation of the regional programme would be through a systematic audit of programme expenditures, compared with a realistic scenario for direct implementation.

[87] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (2002-2005)', New York, 2005, p. 54.

[88] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006–2009)', New York, 2009, p. 23.

3.7 SUSTAINABILITY

Previous sections described how remote management from New York generates a disconnect with other UNDP units, in particular those located in the region. The lack of strong link with the RCC also deprives the regional programme of potentially useful partners within civil society or in regional organizations (LAS, ESCWA), two groups of stakeholders with whom RCC has established partnerships. This in turn tends to weaken the sustainability prospects of the regional programme. However, different projects and focus areas fare differently in this respect.

In the environment focus area, prospects for sustainability are hard to assess. Most activities are just starting and it is too early to tell whether they will be implemented through the type of strong regional partnerships that would ensure a degree of continuity and sustainability.

Sustainability is not really an issue in the knowledge for development focus area. UNDP has used knowledge products such as the AHDRs as *independent flagship products*, i.e. as products that UNDP needs to keep supporting over the long term, both because they provide a unique space for fact-based debates and the promotion of progressive ideas, and because UNDP finds it advantageous for its own visibility to "keep the flag flying" over these products.

In the poverty focus area, evidence of sustainability of HARPAS interventions abound, the enduring involvement of religious leaders in awareness raising and removing the stigma of HIV being the most powerful one. Religious leaders have gone on to form their own networks (e.g. in Morocco and Lebanon). They have adopted the training manuals for their respective religions and to train novices and students of religion, as well as other male and female imams and preachers of their respective faiths. In Morocco, for example, imams reportedly offer sessions on health and well being in which they include HIV. Some imams reportedly still include HIV in occasional Friday sermons as a way of keeping the issue alive and in the public eye in Morocco.

HARPAS contributions to capacity development, technical expertise and knowledge sharing have also paid off in contributing to the multiplication of CSOs by and for PLWH in countries like Lebanon, Morocco, and Sudan which have vibrant civil society sectors. The most promising indication of sustainability will become evident in the mainstreaming of HIV into country office practice areas and from there into national development plans. HARPAS interventions have clearly provided an impetus for country offices like Egypt and Somalia to integrate HIV into critical practice areas, mainly governance and poverty reduction.

The situation is more complex in the governance focus area. Sustainability prospects are good for ACIAC, the main ongoing governance project, which enjoys stronger relationships with country offices than most regional projects, and – because anti-corruption is also drawing the attention of governments in the region – is more readily integrated into UNDP programming at country level than HARPAS. Moreover, ACIAC works extensively through the ACINET network, whose continued existence over the long-term seems relatively secure so long as the regional programme is able to provide for secretariat support.[89]

The closure of POGAR, GfD and PDIAR early in this programme cycle and the departure of the management team for the project supporting public prosecutors resulted in a significant loss of momentum and institutional memory, at a critical juncture in the region's history. Some of the results achieved by PDIAR during the previous programme cycle may lead to sustainable changes

[89] The project has secured funding from Qatar for this purpose over the next few years.

in political party legislation in Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, but the clearest prospect for sustainability among these projects concerns the work on environmental infractions with leftover funds of the Modernization of the Public Prosecutor's Office project. The Government of Morocco recently requested UNDP to expand its capacity-building on environmental infractions from Errachidia to the rest of the country.

A large part of the governance programme was shut down in a matter of months, with none of the concerned projects having a clear, defined and implemented exit strategy. This undermined the sustainable impact of the most visible activities. The fact that the extensive POGAR website was not maintained regularly since 2009 is a case in point. It was pulled down in September 2012 (except for the ACIAC segment) because it was becoming severely out of date. Meantime, POGAR's website's proven popularity in the region has encouraged AGORA[90] to consider hosting it. This could be a positive development if it allowed for the continued maintenance and expansion of the website, but it would also mean that the regional programme would lose control over its most significant knowledge products in the governance focus area.

[90] AGORA is a collaborative portal about parliamentary development, physically located at the UNDP office in Brussels, Belgium <http://www.agora-parl.org>.

CHAPTER 4.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME

In order to assess whether the regional programme has positioned itself effectively to contribute to development results in an optimal way, this chapter examines how effectively the programme has been able to position itself so as to liaise in the more efficient way with other internal and external stakeholders.

By definition, a regional programme cannot work alone. Country offices are best placed to translate the regional programme's advocacy on sensitive issues into concrete action at the country level, and therefore the link with country offices is crucial to achieving impact and sustainability of regional programme development results. Moreover, by liaising with other UNDP units, the regional programme could benefit from the expertise available in BDP, BCPR or RCC. It is therefore useful to analyse the degree to which the regional programme has been able to link up effectively with other UNDP units, which is the subject of the first section.

Since the effectiveness of any development programme is also conditioned in important ways by its capacity to forge strong partnerships and alliances within the very society it is trying to help as well as with donors, the second section reviews partnerships and resource mobilization efforts. The chapter concludes with a brief analysis of the implications of the Arab uprisings for the regional programme.

4.1 STRATEGIC POSITIONING WITHIN UNDP

REGIONAL ROLES

In an effort to assess against objective corporate criteria whether the RBAS regional programme was well positioned within UNDP to collaborate with other units and contribute to development results, the evaluation team first attempted to identify what were the expected roles and functions of a UNDP regional programme vis-à-vis other UNDP programmes. It turns out that this area represents a gap in corporate guidance. According to a 2009 evaluation of UNDP contribution at the regional level[91], there is a lack of clear corporate guidance and much confusion about where various roles should be located. The evaluation recommended that "UNDP should establish **'regionality' criteria for regional programming** in consultation with governments, building on existing good practice, to determine when a regional approach is appropriate [flowing] from an assessment of what works and what does not, when using a regional or subregional approach; the identification of when such an approach adds value; and an analysis of why and how countries cooperate. […] A clear understanding of when the regional approach should or should not be used could be key to UNDP positioning in resource-constrained situations." The management response to the regionalization evaluation provided a few ideas as to what a list of the regionality criteria could look like.

[91] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution at the Regional Level to Development and Corporate Results', New York, December 2010, Recommendation 1, p.40.

Based on these sources and its own findings and analysis, the evaluation team arrived at the conclusion that UNDP regional programmes can justifiably perform the following 'useful regional roles':

1. The clearest niche is for programmes addressing significant regional issues where the country offices are less able to advocate or interact (e.g. sensitive issues, multi-country/transboundary issues, or public goods that are either of a regional nature or more conveniently addressed at that level);
2. Regional programmes have a clear role as a knowledge hub, a place where the global UNDP knowledge and expertise is contextualized and transmitted to the country level, where experiences and best practices are shared between countries and country offices at regional, subregional and South-South level, and where flagship reports encapsulate and disseminate knowledge about issues of a regional nature;
3. Regional programmes can provide seed funding and technical assistance to country offices in order to help them test at the country level the applicability of approaches promoted at the regional level. They may also relay (or help country offices access) global programme funding – this intermediary role between the global and country levels does not seem to be formalized in any document, although it is practiced quite often.
4. Multi-country projects designed to capture economies of scale (allowing for cost-saving when implementing parallel activities in several countries) are also theoretically possible, although the rationale for this type of regional projects is weaker;
5. Another important role is to support regional organizations in order to contribute to regional development, enhance regional coordination efforts, and ensure sustainability.

The regional programme has a long established comparative advantage and effectiveness in advocacy, policy advice, and facilitating debate and dialogue at the regional level. Sharing knowledge, policy debate and dialogue and emulation have all been powerful means of tackling sensitive issues and promoting change. The first two roles listed above are therefore fulfilled to a significant degree.

The next section analyses the manner in which the RBAS regional programme liaised with country offices, either through seed funding to test the applicability of approaches promoted at the regional level, or to help country offices access other sources of funding. A subsequent section devoted to partnerships will, among other issues, review the support extended to regional organizations.

WORKING WITH COUNTRY OFFICES

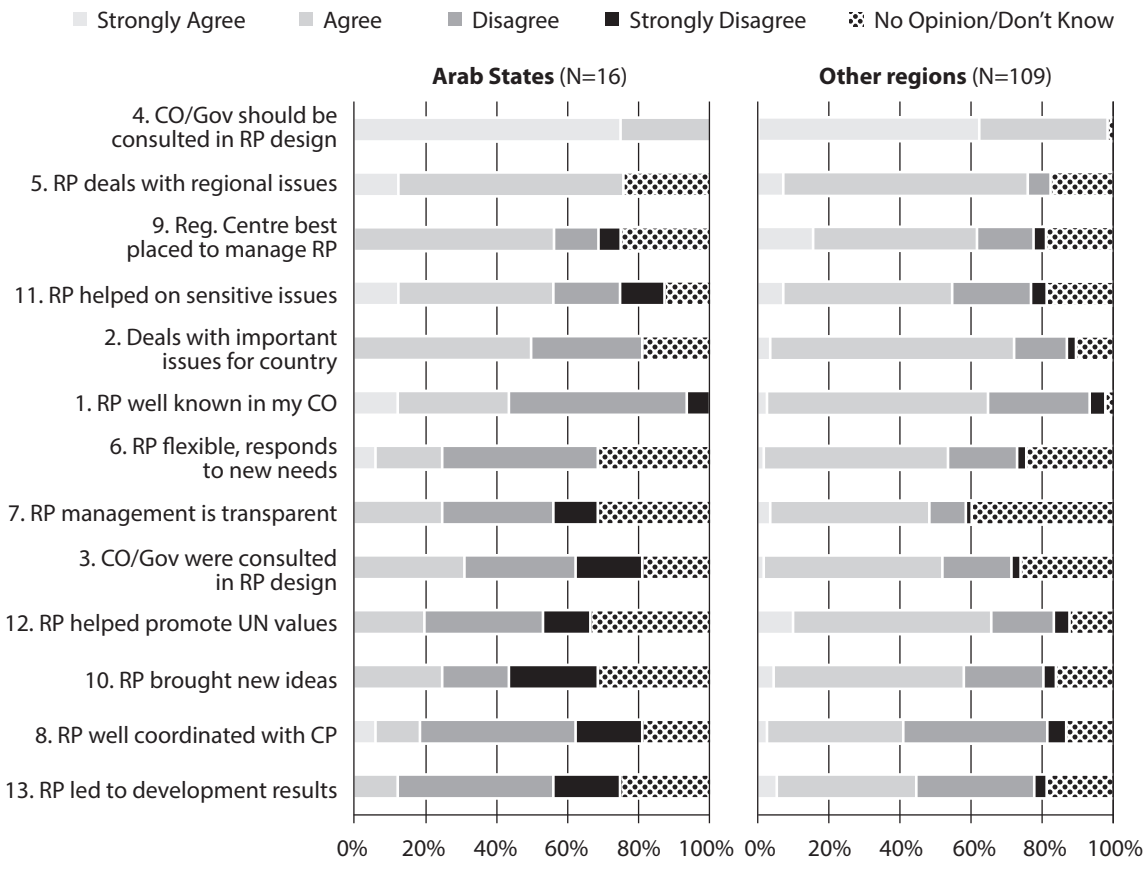
Knowledge sharing and emulation are not enough to translate regional debate and advice into specific country-level innovative and successful activities. In order to successfully integrate a new line of work into their programmes, country offices require support in designing projects and in resource mobilization. This is where the quality of the relations and collaboration between the RBAS regional programme staff and specific country offices come into play. Some RBAS regional projects have had a tendency to implement country-level activities themselves, contacting stakeholders directly and limiting the role of the country offices to logistical support. This is an issue because country offices are frequently unprepared and reluctant to integrate projects into their development areas where they have not been closely consulted from the outset. For instance, HARPAS has been faulted for contacting stakeholders and arranging events independently from country offices. ACIAC presents a more constructive example of a regional project that complements the niches of other UNDP units and collaborates with them based on a clear division of labour. ACIAC respects the country offices' lead role at the country level, and only intervenes at that level through technical expertise to support the concerned country

office in the design and implementation of its own programme. This includes support to project document drafting and resource mobilization, a service much appreciated by country office staff.

These different ways of liaising with country offices result from personal inclinations and actions rather than from a full-fledged strategy for strengthening national ownership and sustainability in the regional programme. Generally speaking, the disconnect with country offices appears deeper than in any other UNDP region. The country offices survey undertaken by the Evaluation Office as part of the 2012 regional programme evaluations indicates that, when asked to rate the regional programme, country offices in the RBAS region are more critical than country offices from any other region (Figure 5).[92] Agreement with statement 8 – "the regional programme activities are well coordinated with country programme activities" – was found particularly low, with 10 out of 16 country offices disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

The RBAS country offices that answered the survey tended to be on average more satisfied about the global programme than about the regional programme. Satisfaction with the

Figure 5. Country Office Survey, Question 4: 'Do you agree with the following statements concerning the regional programme in your region?'



[92] In the same survey, RBAS country offices were also more critical of their Regional Service Centre than COs from any other region, see p.84.

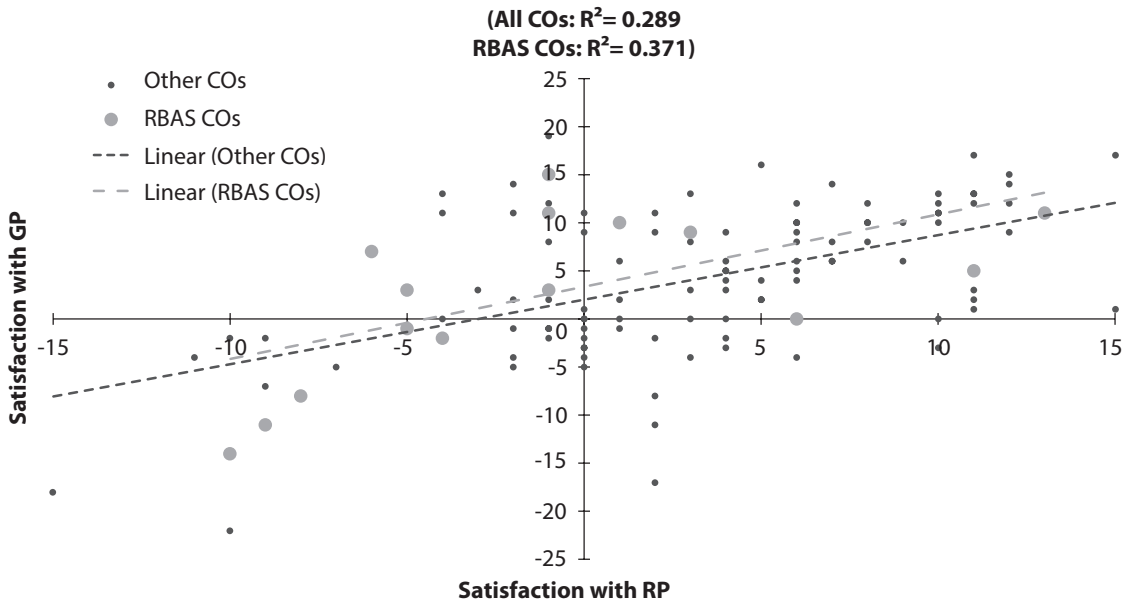
global programme was found weakly correlated with satisfaction with the regional programme (Figure 6). In the case of RBAS, this statistical correlation probably reflects some degree of geographic overlap between the two programmes rather than any in-built coordination between them.

As already pointed out, the regional programme has had a limited footprint in country, particularly in recent years. Its activities in Algeria, GCC countries, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti are very limited. This narrow footprint explains the wide variability observed in terms of satisfaction with the regional programme at the country office level. Quite logically, country offices where the regional programme has had little or no activity tend to be more critical than those where the programme is active.

This limited geographic footprint is due to a number of factors, neither of which is easy to overcome:

- The regional programme focus on touchy issues such as good governance means that many countries do not sign the regional programme project documents, which results in the projects not being able to work in these countries;
- All the oil-producing countries except Algeria and Iraq are NCCs, meaning that they cannot receive core UNDP funds. Since all the regional programme projects have regional programme funding except AKR, none of them can work in NCCs, except the AKR;
- Countries in conflict or post-conflict situations such as Somalia or Iraq tend to be heavily supported by BCPR; typically, the type of resources the regional programme could bring in to these countries would pale in comparison with the amount of resources available to the country offices, and past evaluations have discouraged regional programme work in crisis recovery; and
- Decreased regional programme funding available during the current programme cycle. Regional programme expenditures during the current programme cycle represented 2.9 percent of all RBAS country

Figure 6. Correlation between CO Satisfaction with the Global and Regional Programmes



offices programme expenditures during the same period, against 4 percent during the previous cycle.

Even in countries where the regional programme has been active in recent years, the level of involvement is often perceived by country office staff as insufficient, to some notable exceptions such as HARPAS. The overall perception among RBAS country offices is that the regional programme is isolated, disconnected and unapproachable.

Some Country Directors and Resident Representatives explained that, even when they travel to New York for their introductory briefings (a process during which they typically meet with a wide range of UNDP units), they rarely meet with Regional Programme Division staff.

Country offices visited during the evaluation have faulted regional projects for ills large and small: not providing advance notice about upcoming regional and country meetings; contacting national counterparts in government or civil society directly without coordinating with the country offices involved; imposing topics and agendas which may not be seen as appropriate by the countries concerned; and putting country offices in the position of having to scramble to participate in new and unplanned interventions.

Many of the recommendations from the country office survey touched upon the need for better collaboration and involvement of country offices in the regional programme, particularly at the programme and project design stage. Aware of similar critiques from previous evaluations, the Regional Programme Division decided in 2010 to formulate the ACRI project with the strong involvement of regional partners and country offices. In doing so, the Regional Programme Division demonstrated the value of a process that harnesses the knowledge and expertise available from within the region in the design of a regional programme.[93]

Another example of good practice in this area is demonstrated by HARPAS, the oldest active regional project in the regional programme. Over the years HARPAS developed a system of project officers placed directly within the National Aid Programme (NAP) or as focal points in UNDP country offices. These project officers and focal points provided critical liaison services, such as enabling HARPAS to benefit from country office relationships with national counterparts, and allowing country offices to benefit from expertise, knowledge and technical resources available at the regional level. The number of these project officers and focal points has decreased over the course of the programme. As of late 2010, HARPAS had collaborated with 12 focal points in country offices and had five project officers in each of Djibouti (NAP), Egypt, Lebanon (NAP), Tunisia and Yemen. By 2012, only two of the project officers remained (Lebanon and Egypt).

RELATIONS WITH THE REGIONAL CENTRE IN CAIRO

In the present architecture of the RBAS regional programme, it delivers projects, while RCC is tasked with the delivery of advisory services. The two roles are separated and RCC has no functional relationship with the regional programme. It does not provide the regional programme with advisory services, is seldom involved in the design and planning of regional projects, and has no role in fund-raising and programme management, monitoring or oversight.

A few remarks about RCC itself are in order, as they have implications for the regional programme. The country office survey mentioned above also tested RBAS country offices' perceptions of RCC. Nine RBAS country offices

[93] The formulation of prior projects (e.g. that of ACIAC in 2009) also involved consultations with country offices and regional partners, but not as extensive as for ACRI.

agreed with the statement "The Regional Service Centre is best placed to manage the regional programme," with only three country offices disagreeing and four responding they 'don't know'. This probably reflects a desire (widely shared by country office staff) to bring the management of the regional programme back to the region, rather than an unreserved endorsement of RCC as presently structured and staffed. When asked to rate the quality of support from the Regional Centre in Cairo in each practice area, RBAS country offices generally tend to be more critical of the capacity of their regional centre than country offices in other regions, with a few exceptions such as the support provided in knowledge management, CPR and HIV/AIDS.

RCC has been unable to recruit and/or retain staff at the highest echelon. Five out of seven of its team leaders positions are currently vacant: governance, capacity building; knowledge management; gender and environment and energy. Without programmatic resources, the Centre must rely almost entirely on funding from country offices for specific, time-bound missions and advisory services in country. Like other regional centres, RCC is not encouraged to raise funds directly, but unlike other regional centres, the Cairo Centre is not entrusted with any role in the regional programme's management. It is therefore starved of operational capacity, all the while being generously staffed.[94]

In response to the challenges facing it, RCC has tried to develop its own regional programme, with modest success so far, and has also issued knowledge products (notably the Arab Development Challenges Report) in an attempt to raise its profile and visibility with governments, partners and donors.

The physical location of some regional programme projects (WGP-AS, HARPAS) and the future relocation of other projects (ACIAC, ACRI) in Cairo do not imply a greater programmatic role for RCC: currently, the regional programme project management units located at RCC premises have very little interaction with RCC management and advisers. This affects the RBAS regional programme's capacity to liaise with other UNDP units and mobilize in-house advisory services. RCC is well-connected with BDP, which has paid for most of its staff since its inception. In addition, each regional service centre is guided by an advisory committee[95] that provides a mechanism for accountability, transparency and connectedness with country offices and headquarter units. In other regions, the advisory committee also serves the regional programme, since the latter is managed by the regional service centre. However, in RBAS the regional programme is a 'stand-alone' programme without any similar mechanism to facilitate coordination and collaboration with other UNDP units working in the region.

In this context, any substantive cooperation between a regional project and RCC or country offices relies largely on personal relations and good will, and contacts of individual programme staff. A small number of *ad hoc* collaborative mechanisms have been developed, such as weekly staff meetings at RCC and to which regional programme staff have been invited (since the end of 2011) or the envisaged ACRI Project Board involving country office representatives, RBAS management and UNOPS. However there is no institutionalized mechanism for regular meetings between Regional Programme Division, regional programme project managers, country offices and RCC management that would help reduce the regional programme's isolation and promote more efficient implementation.

[94] The RCC personnel is currently composed of 40 staff.

[95] These advisory committees are meant to provide guidance and advices to regional centres. They are composed of representatives from regional country offices, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, BCPR and BDP. The RCC advisory committee met for the first time in March 2012.

The disconnect between the regional programme and RCC creates confusion for country office staff having to deal with two distinct regional units, each supposedly performing distinct functions, but in practice competing for the same regional space. If one tries to use the typology of 'useful regional roles' from the previous section to map the roles actually played by the regional programme and those played by RCC and other UNDP units in the region, one can see significant overlap (Table 7).

Since AHDRs have always been produced independently to protect the reports' independence, RBAS has in effect divided its regional services in three separate, independent streams: programmatic funding; knowledge products; and advisory services. Such a strategy assumes that there is little synergy to be found in a more integrated offer of services. In fact, the potential for synergy is quite significant. From the point of view of the country offices, more integration of services into some sort of 'full package' combining seed funding, technical expertise and knowledge from one single source would be desirable. Parallel evaluations of other regional programmes have shown that UNDP is more effective at the regional level when it coordinates its advisory services and regional programme under one single office located in the region, than when these functions are delivered in a disjointed manner.

The logic of the situation is to integrate funding, advisory services and knowledge products. This is why RCC has actively tried to develop its own programme, and has also issued knowledge products in an attempt to raise its profile and visibility with governments, partners and donors. Attempts to demarcate the functions to be played by each of these units have not worked; they have made the problem worse.

4.2 PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Building strong partnerships with civil society, local governments, donors, private sector, and regional and international development partners is indispensable to the regional programme, as it is to any developmental effort. Partnerships with regional institutions are important for sustainability and those with emerging civil society organizations are central to delivering certain services and keeping governments accountable to citizens.

Many projects have been able to contract NGOs and CBOs as implementing partners for discrete activities. The two most successful projects, HARPAS and ACIAC, have forged strategic, long-term partnerships with important players. HARPAS has galvanized PLWH to form their own networks (e.g. Friends of Life in Egypt, and Rahme in Tunisia) and has long worked with religious leaders and their networks. ACIAC's core asset is a strong network of governmental and non-governmental anti-corruption agencies (ACINET). A funding agreement was recently secured with the Government of Qatar for the ACIAC project, this being the first UNDP partnership engaging a donor from the region in the area of governance.

Table 7. Regional Functional Overlaps in the Arab States Region

Regional roles	RBAS RP	RBAS COD	RCC	BDP
1. Regional issues where country offices are less able to advocate	✓		✓	
2. Knowledge hub and knowledge products	✓		✓	
3. Provide seed funding or relay global programme funding to country offices	✓	✓		✓
4. Multi-country projects to capture economies of scale		✓		
5. Support regional organizations			✓	

At a more strategic level, there have been missed opportunities in liaising with LAS and ESCWA, two important regional organizations with wide outreach and influence throughout the region. ESCWA staff met by the mission clearly perceived the UNDP regional programme as not collaborative. LAS representatives were more positive due to a history of collaboration (particularly for official launches, e.g. the first AHDR and the WGP-AS project were launched at LAS), but their relationship is clearly stronger with RCC – located in the same city as the LAS headquarters, Cairo – than it is with the regional programme. HARPAS' relations with UNAIDS is also reportedly inadequate.

Partnerships were not strategically developed in the area of gender as well, in spite of the existence of many strong regional and national players. The regional programme could have benefited from a partnership with CAWTAR, an important regional organization created by the first UNDP Regional Programme for Arab States.[96] In 2012, CAWTAR partnered with the UNDP country office in Tunisia, UN Women and iKnow Politics to offer summer sessions to train to female candidates in their parliamentary electoral campaigns. These trainings proved so successful that CAWTAR was later approached by Libyan women officials to conduct similar trainings in their country. Although the regional programme document emphasizes collaboration with UN Women (then UNIFEM), there is a general absence of such collaboration. Some governmental or quasi-governmental institutions could also be used to a greater extent as change agents. For instance, the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW) has long been engaged in reviewing national strategies on women, working with parliament and governance, monitoring Jordan's commitments and reporting to CEDAW, etc. but was not a partner in PDIAR or other governance project. These and other women's and gender-related organizations across the RBAS region could have been powerful agents of change that could have enriched the regional programme with expertise, access to decision-makers and strengthened national ownership and sustainability.

In the environment sector, UNDP's regional programme is a new player in the Arab region. Other established actors, such as ESCWA, GIZ or the World Bank, tend to enjoy greater visibility, credibility and funding than does UNDP. Yet the development of strong partnerships with established actors seems absent from the regional programme strategy in this area. From the point of view of these actors, UNDP is behaving as a competitor rather than as a team player. ESCWA in particular mentioned that UNDP would be a welcomed partner in the ESCWA-led Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change in the Arab Region, which has enlisted the support of LAS, specialized UN organizations and numerous bilateral donors.

This lack of a collaborative approach towards existing actors can also be witnessed in the relationship of WGP-AS with the Arab Water Council. This well connected 'governmental NGO', which produced a 'State of the Water Report for the Arab Region' in 2004, was involved throughout the formulation of WGP-AS and expected to be selected as implementing partner. The project, as designed, was meant to support the future iterations of their water report. However, once the design phase was over, the project implementation was assigned to UNOPS and AWC was left without any role in the project. Instead, the project set up to develop a competing regional water report, using originally

[96] Originally created by UNDP as a regional project, CAWTAR became an independent organization in 2006 and 'weaned off' of UNDP funding. After difficult times, the organization has regained its status as a regional centre of excellence for research, training and advocacy on gender and development, and now works with a range of partners, including governments, CSOs, the World Bank, the European Commission and various UN agencies. The UNDP Resident Representative in Tunisia still sits on CAWTAR's executive board, representing RBAS, but the amount of collaboration between the two institutions is now minimal.

the very same title as the AWC report ('State of the Water Report for the Arab Region').

The absence of a strong partnership strategy is problematic on several accounts. It affects the prospect for sustainability of programme results, as only strong regional partners would be able to 'carry forward' regional programme products. It also likely affects the regional programme's capacity to raise funds, since donors investing in a sector tend to be aware of parallel initiatives and opportunities and can compare UNDP's strengths with that of other actors. For donors, one of the main strengths of UNDP lays its network of country offices, which provides significant operational capacity throughout the region. UNDP's technical know-how, especially in the areas of good governance and environment, is also generally appreciated. Other important characteristics are the traditional proximity and contacts with governments, as well as the coordination mandate of UNDP within the UN system. These strengths can only be realized by the regional programme if it manages to link up and collaborate with UNDP country offices, BDP and RCC, but also with other actors especially within the UN system.

An illustration of this link between partnerships and resource mobilization is provided by the story of how PDIAR came to an end. The Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region project started as a joint project of the Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS, a BDP-led global programme) and POGAR, and was funded by the Belgian Cooperation until 2009. Once the funding allocated by GPPS to PDIAR was exhausted, the Regional Programme Division opted to design the next phase as a purely regional project, independent from the GPPS. Unfortunately, the Belgian Cooperation declined to fund this project and PDIAR came to an end at a time when it was most needed, especially in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings. In the meantime, BDP, in collaboration with BCPR, launched a project aimed at building the capacity of Arab national parliaments to prevent conflict and armed violence, and later formulated and launched a second project on Inclusive and Participative Political Institutions in Select Arab States. This project, funded by the Belgium Cooperation, is implemented in due consultation with RBAS and its country offices, but independently from the RBAS regional programme. An important lesson here is that the regional programme has better chances of mobilizing funds successfully when it is allied with other UNDP units than when acting alone.

Other factors also played a role in constraining resource mobilization, including the global financial crisis; RPD's acknowledged lack of aggressive resource mobilization efforts and over-reliance on maintaining existing partnerships; and a policy adopted by UNDP management following the Arab uprisings to "mobilize resources through the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Thematic Trust Fund (CPR TTF) as the corporate mechanism for supporting planning, preparedness and crisis response".[97] The CPR TTF is managed by BCPR, which was therefore *de facto* given a leading role in resource mobilization for the UNDP response to the Arab uprisings. Such a role did not amount to a monopoly on resource mobilization, and BCPR coordinated with Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, RBAS and concerned country offices in developing strategies and responses, but the Regional Programme Division was apparently less involved in this process.

4.3 RESPONSE TO EMERGING ISSUES - THE ARAB UPRISINGS

The RBAS Regional Programme 2010-2013 was designed and launched before the Arab uprisings of 2011. At the time, UNDP was

[97] Decision taken on 20 April 2011 by the Executive Team for Protracted Crises and Complex Emergencies, the highest-level decision-making forum in UNDP on crisis-related issues.

among the very few aid organizations trying to promote good governance in the region. The regional programme was advocating for the rule of law, the fight against corruption, and parliamentary representation, while AHDRs were calling for freedom of expression and respect for human rights. As was made clear in Chapter 3, this message was not always well received, with some regional governments showing no interest while others participated in the process without necessarily committing to reform. One effect of the Arab uprisings for the RBAS regional programme is that they generated renewed impetus for governance reforms in a number of countries that wanted to avoid similar uprisings. A project such as ACIAC has benefited from more open debates and generally a more favourable reception of its work.

The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt also created a need for transitional assistance in the governance sector, e.g. support in constitution writing, the conduct of elections, or transitional justice. As far as UNDP is concerned, this need has been responded to by BDP and the country offices playing a leading role within UNDP, in collaboration with BCPR and UNDPA. RCC played a strategic role by being the first unit to propose and draft a response strategy, which would become the 'Strategy of Response to Transformative Change Championed by Youth in the Arab Region'[98], and has since then participated in a number of initiatives. In comparison, the role played by the regional programme was of limited significance and visibility. This would not necessarily be a problem if other UNDP units were best positioned to respond to the uprisings. However, the events had a clear regional dimension, and the UNDP response *de facto* combined country-specific and subregional assistance.[99] Moreover, the goals pursued by the regional governance programme for the past decade proved extremely relevant to the Arab uprisings.

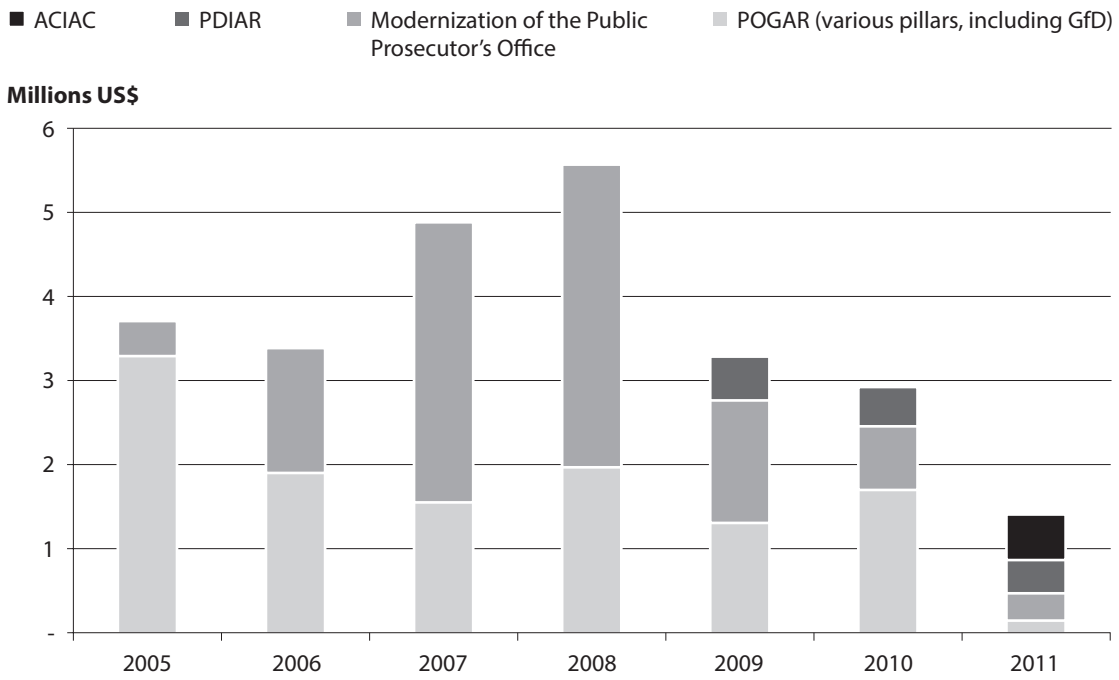
One reason that the regional programme assumed a limited transitional role is that the Arab uprisings were regarded as 'crises' situations, and BCPR was therefore given a leading role in resource mobilization and in developing appropriate responses for the UNDP response to the uprisings. Another reason is that the regional programme's once large and visible governance portfolio shrank significantly with the closure of POGAR and the GfD initiative, leaving the regional programme in a poor position to respond to the Arab uprisings. The volume of assistance provided by the regional programme in the democratic governance focus area decreased markedly (Figure 7). The governance focus area, which under POGAR used to be quite broad and visible, has now come to centre almost exclusively on support to UNCAC implementation. The contraction in the range of governance-related interventions has probably constrained the capacity of the programme to respond to the challenges of the Arab uprisings. It also left a 'void' in the regional field, wide open for other UNDP units to invest.

The slow and limited response of the regional programme may also have to do with the programme being largely managed at a distance by the Regional Programme Division in New York. Remote management was perhaps a workable arrangement (albeit frustrating for field staff) when the region appeared immutable, but it is now undergoing a profound transformation. The rapidly evolving context requires agility and flexibility, an ear to the ground, a continuous updating of assumptions, opportunities and plans, fast decision-making, direct personal contacts and exchanges so as to forge strong partnerships, the confidence to pledge assistance and the ability to follow up on one's pledges. None of these things absolutely requires the physical presence of decision makers in the region, but they would all be greatly facilitated by it.

[98] UNDP RBAS, 'Strategy of Response to Transformative Change Championed by Youth in the Arab Region', New York, 2011.

[99] Three national projects were set up in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia to support the transitions, but they share the same chief technical adviser.

Figure 7. Expenditures of RBAS Regional Governance Projects Since 2005



A broader issue is related to the image and reputation of UNDP – and more generally of the UN – in the region and how they were affected by the uprisings.

Although UNDP, through its Regional Programme for Arab States, has historically alerted Arab citizens and governments about the need for reform, and while it has implemented interventions to address deficiencies long identified in the region by the AHDRs, it has also been hesitant in the past to address core issues and roots of these challenges in unfair political and economic structures, corruption and waste in the provision of services and the management of natural resources, foreign intervention and occupation, and globalization's exacerbation of poverty among vulnerable groups. As evidenced by the AHDR, addressing deep-rooted development issues carries significant political risk, but *not* addressing them also carries risks, e.g. in terms of damaged credibility and lack of effectiveness. The UNDP 'Strategy of Response to Transformative Change Championed by Youth in the Arab Region' rightly concludes that "positioning UNDP effectively in the context of the current transformational processes is not only a programming imperative; it is also an essential element for rebuilding the UN's credibility and moral authority in the region."[100] This is also the message that the evaluation team heard when asking a diverse group of youth involved in the Egyptian uprising what they thought of the UN, and what the UN could do to help the country at this point in time (Box 1).

[100] Ibid, p.24.

Box 1. A Few Ideas from Tahrir Square Youth on How the UN Can Support Change in the Region

In Cairo, the evaluation team exchanged with a diverse group of youth involved in the Egyptian uprising. Several of them expressed the view that the UN has become dissociated from the people and thus irrelevant to its own development goals.

The team asked them what they thought the UN could do to help the country at this point in time. The list below is merely a summary of their views. It does not pretend to be exhaustive or representative, and is only meant to illustrate what a more systematic effort to capture popular demand could yield.

- Make space for people's direct expression in UN reports and conferences, for instance an AHDR which would be the voice of the people, with sections written through social media and street interviews
- Reach out to common people, make more movies or documentaries and fewer reports
- Work with poor people more directly: e.g. clean the cities and the suburbs to create jobs; or support microcredit for self-employment and enterprise creation
- Help create a credible federation of Egyptian youth organizations
- Work on transitional justice and reconciliation
- More trade and freedom to travel between Tunisia, Libya and Egypt
- Education and cultural development are major issues – the illiterate will always be poor
- Work on recycling used water
- Hepatitis C is an important public health issue in Egypt, more so than AIDS
- Don't try to engender everything; focus more on a few key issues that the people can relate to, like violence against women and circumcision in rural areas
- Research Islamic history to highlight Muslim women's contributions to society
- Advocate human rights among the youth, including girls
- Dignity is an entry point for accountability; respect people's dignity and you will have more efficient programmes
- Why not a Model (Youth) UN conference in the region?

Youth – the demographic majority in the Arab world and a major driver in the Arab uprisings – represents a significant omission in the Regional Programme for Arab States, and has been generally left out of the programme interventions, even though youth employment was articulated as a priority in the regional programme document. Women represented another key demographic group in the uprisings. Defying stereotypes, they have made their visible and vocal presence in mass demonstrations a defining feature of the Arab uprisings. However, the ensuing rise of Islamist parties to political prominence in such countries as Tunisia and Egypt highlighted the need to prevent potential setbacks to women's equality and protect women's rights in the region. Arab feminists and liberal reformists are concerned that the revolutions in Tunisia or Egypt might follow the past example of Iran, where women played an active role during the revolutionary period, only to lose their role in the public sphere once the new regime was established.

Compounding these fears is the fact that gender equality has historically – and paradoxically – been promoted in these countries by now-deposed authoritarian regimes, and is therefore perceived as somewhat tarnished, at least momentarily, by its association with these former regimes:

- In Egypt, women's rights were barely ever mentioned in the media over the past decade without being directly associated with former First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, who, together with the National Council for Women, played an important role in promoting changes in the status of women, such as personal status laws, laws banning female genital mutilation and allowing women to become judges. These laws – routinely called "Suzanne Mubarak's laws" in the country – still stand, but they are under attack in some quarters.
- Tunisian laws grant equal divorce rights to men and women, outlaw polygamy and legalize abortion, legacies of former presidents Habib Bourguiba and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, who furthered women's education and employment. After the revolution, the National Union of Tunisian Women[101], close to the deposed regime, went through a prolonged crisis. The current government has pledged to protect gender equality and has adopted the principle of gender parity in electoral lists for the Tunisian Constituent Assembly, but women's rights nevertheless attract fierce criticism from some extremist religious groups.

These developments provide opportunities for UNDP and other development agencies to engage governments, legislatures and civil society in concerted efforts to ensure that emerging constitutions, institutions, policies and laws are fully consistent with international human rights principles and aligned with international human rights conventions, including CEDAW.

[101] *Union nationale de la femme tunisienne* (UNFT).

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations provided below build upon the evaluation findings described in Chapters 3 and 4, which analysed the main axes of the RBAS regional programme contribution to development in the region, and highlighted the unique challenges and opportunities present in the current regional context. Both the conclusions and recommendations should be seen as mutually reinforcing. The conclusions attempt to encapsulate the key lessons derived from the evaluation, emphasizing issues that may require correction. The recommendations aim to provide clear, actionable orientations for the management of the regional programme and the design of the next regional programme document.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The RBAS regional programme 2010-2013 has been implemented at a challenging time in the region's history. It was designed and launched before the Arab uprisings of 2011. At the time, UNDP was among the very few aid organizations trying to promote good governance in the region. Its efforts were often met with little success, as governments from the region and beyond were content with the status quo and appeared more interested in debating reform than in actually reforming their governance systems.

Conclusion 1. The Arab uprisings presented an opportunity to build upon years of advocacy for governance reform and support real change. However, the regional programme's once large and visible governance portfolio has shrunk significantly with the closure of POGAR in 2009, leaving the regional programme with limited capacity to respond to the seminal events of 2011.

The most recent regional project to support political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt has been well received, but has provided only limited assistance so far. In contrast, the Bureau for Development Policy and the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery have responded to events in the region more actively than the RBAS regional programme.

Conclusion 2. The regional programme is not sufficiently 'anchored' in the region, not well connected to UNDP 'knowledge architecture', and still perceived as distant by country offices in spite of recent and much welcomed examples of collaboration at country level by HARPAS, ACIAC or WGP-AS. It is important to further strengthen the regional programme's relationship with other UNDP units. By nature, the regional programme cannot work alone. It depends on country offices to translate the regional programme's advocacy on sensitive issues into concrete action, and cannot perform well as a 'knowledge hub' if disconnected from other UNDP knowledge centres.

The regional programme's positioning in the region would be enhanced by linking it more closely with the regional centre's technical capacity and advisory services. In spite of being severely understaffed and under-resourced, RCC has shown great agility in its responses to the Arab uprisings. Its established relationships with LAS, ESCWA and Arab civil society are important assets in this regard.

Conclusion 3. The regional programme built on established strengths and successes of a regional focus: the ability to draw attention to issues that may be too sensitive and

controversial to address at the country level, and to provide opportunities for dialogue, policy debate and sharing of knowledge and best practices.

In this respect, the regional programme has continued to position itself strategically in key focus areas where it enjoys the clearest comparative advantage: democratic governance and poverty reduction. For the first time, the regional programme has also entered the somewhat 'crowded' area of environment and sustainable development, with initiatives on water governance and climate change. In this focus area, the regional programme has yet to carve a niche for itself and demonstrate its comparative advantage.

Conclusion 4. Compared to previous regional programmes, the current programme has devoted more attention to working at the country level so as to help introduce regional programme themes into UNDP country programmes and national development plans. While this is in principle appropriate, some regional projects have tended to implement pilot activities at the country level without sufficient involvement from the concerned country offices.

The results have been mixed: some country offices have perceived these pilot activities as impositions and infringements on their lead role at country level, while others (often those with a clear substantive role in the definition and implementation of the pilot activities) were more appreciative.

Conclusion 5. Some projects have fared better than others in realizing the strategic aims of the regional programme. HARPAS and ACIAC are noteworthy in this regard.

- HARPAS has partnered extensively with civil society, organizations of persons living with HIV, the media, youth, and religious leaders of all faiths, in a concerted effort to reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. The avenues explored by HARPAS over the years – specific attention to vulnerable groups, awareness raising through religious leaders and media outreach activities, to name a few – constitute good practice that other programme areas could usefully replicate. Recently, the project has implemented pilot projects, such as microcredit to support persons living with HIV, at the local level, with more mixed results.
- ACIAC works with anti-corruption bodies and civil society to build the capacity of Arab states to implement UNCAC. ACIAC is noteworthy for its reliance on regional expertise, its use of emulation between participating countries as a driver for change, and the formal, structured participation of civil society organizations to promote the right to access information and challenge official pronouncements when needed.

Evaluating the effectiveness of other projects was sometimes a challenge, as a number of them were either cut short (PDIAR), much delayed (WGP-AS), or not yet launched at the time of the evaluation (ACRI).

Conclusion 6. In the 'knowledge for development' focus area, the regional programme has attracted the attention of a wide audience both within and outside the region since the launch of the first AHDR in 2002. The AHDR series has prompted much debate, and encouraged Arabs to work towards their own developmental solutions.

These publications were found unsavoury by some and were misused by others, but in hindsight, there is now widespread agreement in the region that their analysis was correct and their diagnosis confirmed by events. Indeed, the reports were ahead of their time. The AHDR series has contributed to the Arab uprisings in a modest way, by making a candid, daring and highly credible assessment of the development state in the region widely available. However, there now is a proliferation of UNDP Arab knowledge products (Arab Knowledge Report, Arab Water Report,

Arab Development Challenges Report) and an evolution towards a more academic style, two trends that dilute impact.

Conclusion 7. Meeting the challenges of the emerging era, particularly the rising expectations of the people of the Arab world for employment, freedom, dignity and security, will require more coherence in the ways the organization works. UNDP has the right track record, the right skills, intelligence and values, significant regional assets, and a good image in the region. However, it needs to pull these strengths together and bring them to bear in a coordinated fashion.

The Arab uprisings have opened up new possibilities and created new needs. They form a regional phenomenon. Over the past decade, the regional programme has been calling for change. It has now a special responsibility to support real political reform, protect human rights and gender equality, fight corruption more aggressively, and promote inclusive growth in Arab countries. This is an opportune time to formulate a new regional programme, one that may be closer to the Arab people, allow citizens themselves to express their concerns, and be grounded more firmly in the regional reality.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. In order to enhance its visibility in the region and increase its chances of success and sustainability, the Regional Programme for Arab States should be more firmly anchored in, and managed from, the Arab region, and should strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations.

Engaging in closer partnership with organizations such as LAS, ESCWA and CAWTAR, and with the regional office of UN Women would give the regional programme access to their outreach and influence throughout the region, may help UNDP promote genuine reform, and could strengthen sustainability since some UNDP regional initiatives could ultimately be handed over to strong regional institutions.

Recommendation 2. Project managers located in the region should be empowered to manage their project's personnel and financial resources; encouraged to cultivate a rapport with donors and to participate in resource mobilization efforts; and allowed to strengthen links with other UNDP units and external partners.

As per UNDP standard procedures, project managers are responsible for managing project resources and to ensure that their project produces the results or outputs specified in the project document. Some programme management teams – especially that of WGP-AS – also need urgent strengthening to deliver against the commitments made to country offices, governments and donors.

Recommendation 3. The regional programme should be better connected to the UNDP knowledge architecture. The most effective way to achieve this would be to place regional projects and project managers under the responsibility of the regional centre, as is standard practice in other regions, with RBAS at headquarters retaining only an oversight role.

This would reduce the isolation of the regional programme from other UNDP units; allow it to disseminate its knowledge further within UNDP and benefit from in-house technical expertise (particularly important in highly technical areas such as climate change); and reduce duplication and confusion. Over time, it could also generate economies of scale in operations, and result in a more coherent, useful 'package' of programmes, advisory services and knowledge products.

Recommendation 4. The regional programme should strengthen its internal coherence; connect projects outputs and activities with expected outcomes more systematically in the regional programme document; strengthen

collaborations between regional programme components; and document and communicate regularly about the funding, activities and results of the regional programme as a whole.

At the moment, programme information tends to be scattered at the project level, difficult to access, and at times inconsistent. The programme deserves more consolidated documentation and communication of its goals, resources, achievements, progress and challenges at the overall programme level. It would also benefit from greater congruence between the actual programme components as implemented and the regional programme document as approved by the Executive Board, for instance by translating into practice the commitment made in the current regional programme document to work on inclusive growth and youth employment.

Recommendation 5. The regional programme should build upon the current positioning as a source of carefully contextualized regional knowledge and expertise in Arabic, English and French, and build on the comparative advantages of regional projects and programmes in advocacy on sensitive issues, socio-economic and political context analysis, knowledge sharing, regional debates and dialogue and use of South-South cooperation.

Interventions at the country level should always be implemented through country offices, respecting the country office's leadership at the country level and avoiding the tendency to implement country-level activities directly. This may at times result in some pilot activities not being implemented in countries where the country office displays insufficient interest, but the goal of such country-level pilot activities is to demonstrate applicability, build the capacity of country offices and facilitate the mainstreaming of regional programme themes into country programmes and national development plans. This goal can only be achieved with the active participation and interest of country offices.

Recommendation 6. The regional programme should take into account the changes transforming the region, articulate a more explicit support to regional efforts to protect human rights, and attempt to translate information and knowledge into action so as to contribute to concrete outcomes that can improve people's lives.

The domains where UNDP regional support could prove the most useful to Arab states during the next cycle include:

- In the democratic governance focus area, transitional justice and reconciliation; anti-corruption and asset recovery; support to parliamentary representation; advocacy for human rights and gender equality; legal protection of the poor.
- In the poverty and MDGs focus area, a new dedicated project specific to youth is recommended, avoiding short-term fixes to focus on inclusive growth and structural barriers to employment. In the area of HIV/AIDS, awareness raising efforts may need to pay greater attention to ordinary citizens, women and men, and youth at risk.
- In environment and sustainable development, WGP-AS should assess the usefulness of its outputs and its own comparative advantage in a somewhat 'crowded' sector, to determine whether the next phase should emphasize knowledge production or practical ways to improve water governance through pilot projects. Over the long term, closer collaboration with established actors such as ESCWA would help reduce duplication of efforts and improve the regional programme's effectiveness and prospect for sustainability in the environment sector.
- In knowledge for human development, there is a need to democratize knowledge products from formulation to dissemination, by defining their purpose and audience; including more diverse, less academic voices; exploring other media such as television; reducing report length; and disseminating more widely.

- In gender, the regional programme should strengthen efforts to mainstream gender in all projects, and complement them by a specific project or dedicated activities designed to advance and protect women's equality and empowerment, addressing specific issues associated with violence against women, marginalization, education, and economic and political empowerment.

Recommendation 7. UNDP in the Arab states should expand its partnerships with civil society and engage with community organizations, religious leaders, the media and academia in debates, awareness raising activities, and assessment of public policy, in order to promote openness in the public sphere, enhance accountability and credible governance reforms, better reflect the range of opinions and views in a given context and apply more pressure for change on important social issues.

Recommendation 8. RBAS should conduct more frequent outcome evaluations and audits of its regional programme. This should include an audit of programme management costs geared to determining the cost-effectiveness of UNOPS implementation.

ANNEX 1.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. OBJECTIVE OF THE EVALUATION

The 2012 programme of work approved by the Executive Board indicates that the Evaluation Office should conduct independent evaluations of regional programmes implemented under the responsibility of UNDP's five regional bureaux.[102] The objectives of a regional programme evaluation are to:

- Provide substantive support to the Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board;
- Facilitate learning to inform current and future programming at the regional and corporate levels, particularly in the formulation and implementation of the new regional programme to be approved in 2013 and to start in 2014; and
- Provide stakeholders in regional programme countries and among development partners with an objective assessment of the development contributions that have been achieved through UNDP support and partnerships with other key players through the regional programme during a given multi-year period.

The Evaluation Office will conduct an independent evaluation of the Regional Programme of the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RP-RBAS) in 2012. A set of recommendations will be drawn at the end of the evaluation. It is expected that evaluation results will be used in the formulation of the next regional programme document. Results should also feed into other relevant evaluations planned by the Evaluation Office in 2012, such as the Global Programme Evaluation.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The region covered by RBAS – a total of 17 countries plus the Occupied Palestinian Territories – represents a cultural grouping rather than one based on physical geography. Most of these nations share the use of Arabic as an official language. Ethnically, most inhabitants in the region define themselves as Arab and Muslim, although varied ethnic minorities and religions co-exist in the region. The region covered by RBAS overlaps to a great extent with the member states of the Arab League.[103] Other commonalities present at various degrees in the region include:

- High overall unemployment rates, particularly for women and the youth.
- Pervasive illiteracy and more generally, a perceived 'knowledge gap' as compared with other regions with similar economic development levels.
- Economic growth inhibited by corruption, political instability, conflicts and rapid population growth.
- High income inequalities within each country.
- Challenges to gender equality stemming from tradition and religion.

[102] DP/2011/24, Programme of Work for the Evaluation Office for 2011-2012, 'Annual Report on Evaluation in UNDP 2010', Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 6-17 June 2011.

[103] Except for the Comoros and Mauritania, which for UNDP are part of the Regional Bureau for Africa, and Oman and Qatar where the UNDP offices were closed at the request of the governments concerned in 1992/1993 and 1998, respectively.

- Water scarcity increasingly constraining economic growth and social well-being.
- Historically low HIV/AIDS prevalence rates.

Despite these similarities, the region also exhibits a wide heterogeneity in terms of economic, social and political development. Some Arab states are rich in natural gas and oil deposits while others are not and remain predominantly agricultural and/or orientated towards tourism. Some have reached per capita GDP levels that are equivalent to those in industrialized countries, while others remain critically poor.[104] Politically, most Arab countries have long been controlled by authoritarian regimes, but some have made progress on the road to democratization, especially in 2011 with a series of popular uprisings that started in Tunisia and spread to other countries in the region, in particular to Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria.

2.2 UNDP PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

UNDP delivers support to its programme countries through the following three programme frameworks:

- Global programmes run by two global sectoral policy bureaux, the Bureau of Development Policy (BDP) and Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Recovery (BCPR);
- Regional programmes run by five regional bureaux (respectively for Africa, Arab States, Asia and Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and Caribbean), often through its regional centres; and
- Country programmes and multi-country programmes run by country and multi-country offices under each regional bureau.

Each of these programmes is defined by a programme document approved by UNDP's Executive Board, which allocates core funding for the delivery of the programme. In addition, activities in each programme are financed by funds from external sources, usually provided to achieve specific objectives within each programme.

2.3 THE RBAS REGIONAL PROGRAMME

a. Focus areas

Since its inception, UNDP has been extending support to groups of countries at regional and subregional levels in addition to its global and country-level operations. Most recently, with the introduction of UNDP's corporate Strategic Plan 2008-2011, the current regional programmes were introduced, replacing the former regional cooperation frameworks. These regional programmes, as compared to the former cooperation frameworks, have a clearer programme structure with a more explicit result framework, and their programme cycle was aligned to that of the Strategic Plan 2008-2011. In 2010, the Strategic Plan was extended to complete in 2013. Accordingly, all the regional programmes were also extended to 2013.

Typically, a regional programme is designed around UNDP's four focus areas (poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy, crisis prevention and recovery), and involves the following types of activities:

(a) Regional public goods, such as regional-level analysis, advocacy materials, tools that can be used by any party concerned in the region, or facilitation of regional processes.

(b) Subregional or cross-border activities that are delivered in multiple countries, addressing an issue of a cross-border nature, such as illegal drug trafficking.

(c) Multi-country activities that are put together to achieve cost efficiency by organizing a group event, address politically sensitive issues, or any other purposes where participation of multiple countries in a project managed by the regional bureau would be deemed more appropriate than a

[104] Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen are considered Least Developed Countries.

country-specific intervention implemented by a single country office.

(d) Technical support to UNDP country offices to help them implement their own programmes and advocacy activities.

The RP-RBAS has been streamlined recently; a number of old projects were closed and the remaining re-structured around four focus areas, as follows:

1. In **poverty reduction and MDGs**, the main project is the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS), which aims to strengthen awareness about AIDS in the region and supports the mainstreaming of HIV in national development planning. The project, started in 2002 through the support of the HIV/AIDS Thematic Trust Fund, was prolonged in 2008 thanks to additional funding from the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID).

2. **Promotion of good governance** has been the mainstay of UNDP's Regional Programme in Arab States for the past decade, notably through the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) launched in 2000 and closed in 2009. POGAR worked in partnership with key governance institutions, including legislatures, judiciaries and civil society organizations to identify needs and deliver a wide range of services. POGAR has had a number of 'offshoots', such as the Initiative on Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries (GfD) launched in 2005 and focusing on supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), followed in 2010 by the Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC) project. Together with UNDP's Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS), POGAR also sponsored the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region (PDIAR, started in 2008) to enhance the role, capacity and image of legislative institutions in the region. The Project on the Modernization of Public Prosecution Offices, started in 2005 and implemented in seven pilot countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen), is expected to come to an end in 2012. Finally, a small project has recently been approved to support transitional governance processes (e.g. constitution drafting).

3. In the area of **environment and sustainable development:** launched in 2009 in 10 countries (Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Yemen), the Water Governance Programme for Arab States (WGP-AS) aims to promote effective water governance through the provision of technical and policy support, capacity-building as well as seed funding for improved local management of water resources, water supply and sanitation. The project edits the 'State of the Water Report for the Arab Region'. It is supported by the UNDP Dryland Development Centre (DDC) and the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation (SU/SSC). More recently, the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative (ACRI) is currently being formulated based on a series of regional consultative events held in 2010.

4. **Knowledge for Human Development:** the main intervention in this area is the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), first published in 2002 and then in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2009. The AHDRs have been seen as instrumental in defining the key issues that face the Arab region today, with media coverage of the recent events featuring references to them. The next edition will be launched during the first quarter of 2012 and will focus on 'Empowerment for Human Development'. Another key product stemming from the AHDR is the Arab Knowledge Report (AKR) produced in partnership with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation (MBRF). The first AKR was launched in 2009 and another one is scheduled for 2012.

The regional programme also addresses cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, chiefly among which the support provided over the years to the Centre for Arab Women Research and

Training (CAWTAR) based in Tunisia. UNDP funded studies to CAWTAR on mainstreaming of gender into water resources management in Tunisia and on youth employment in the Arab region with particular emphasis on females, commissioned gender-related studies to feed into the next Arab Human Development Report, and supported a regional initiative on women empowerment through raising awareness on legal rights. Youth, South-South cooperation and capacity development are other themes reportedly mainstreamed throughout the programme.

The congruence between this combination of projects and the programme outcomes as envisaged in the regional programme document is only partial. In particular, the envisaged work on trade policies and regional economic integration has not yet materialized.

The inclusion of 'knowledge' as a specific focus area is noteworthy. The programme has invested heavily into knowledge products, over and beyond that particular programme focus area, as many knowledge products such as reports, books or websites have been produced under the other focus areas as well. The programme document states that "the main contributions of the regional programme to developing capacity for human development in the Arab States region will be building knowledge for development and developing the capacity of stakeholders to generate, acquire and apply knowledge in policy processes."[105] The fact that most of the region speaks Arabic may facilitate knowledge sharing, as compared to more linguistically diverse regions such as Asia or Europe.

Finally, the RBAS regional programme does not include interventions in the focus area of crisis prevention and recovery, because the last independent evaluation[106] recommended that "Given the serious resource constraints of the regional programme, and the existence of a dedicated bureau in UNDP, the [programme] should refrain from addressing crisis prevention and recovery."

b. Management of the Regional Programme

The Regional Programme for Arab States is largely managed from New York by the Regional Programme Division (RPD) of RBAS, and implemented by UNOPS. A series of regional projects are physically based in the region. POGAR has been based in Beirut. Its most recent upshot, ACIAC, will be moving to Doha shortly. The Arab Knowledge Report is managed from Dubai by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation. Two projects management units are located in Cairo: HARPAS and WGP-AS. A third one should join them in 2012: ACRI. Ultimately, RBAS policy is that most regional projects will be hosted in Cairo.

In 2008-2009, RBAS RPD embarked on a process to streamline the regional programme and reduce the until-then large number of projects by consolidating and/or closing down old projects. Between 2008 and end of 2010, 19 out of 26 projects were closed down. Some of these were long defunct projects, while others were projects that were found misaligned with the UNDP Strategic Plan or the new regional programme document 2010-2013. This significantly narrowed and sharpened the scope of the regional programme document 2010-2013 to areas with a clear link to the framework provided by the UNDP Strategic Plan.

An effort was also made to improve programme management processes. An 'Assessment of Management Reforms within the Regional Programme Division (RBAS)'[107] called for better filing and reporting, highlighted the need to develop regional projects in closer consultation with relevant country offices, donors and other

[105] UNDP, 'Regional Programme Document for the Arab States, 2010-2013', November 2009.

[106] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006–2009)', New York, May 2009.

[107] Steve Munroe, March 2010.

stakeholders to improve sustainability, and in better alignment with UNDP's Strategic Plan to provide focus, purpose, coherence and continuity, and noted that for many years, UNDP abdicated its oversight role for the regional projects to UNOPS, an oversight role which has been appropriately reclaimed by RPD.

UNDP being an organization that provides most of its assistance through its country programmes, its regional programmes often provide for technical support to country programme activities. In RBAS, the role of providing technical support to country offices and programmes is mainly played by the Regional Centre in Cairo (RCC). However, RCC is seldom involved in the design and planning of regional projects, and has no role in their oversight. Its role is only to provide technical support to country offices. The RCC manager also chairs the UNDG Peer Support Group tasked with reviewing CCAs and UNDAFs drafted in the region. All RCC practice leaders and many policy advisers are financed by BDP through global programmes, with only a few advisers and consultants paid out of the RBAS regional programme.

3. SCOPE, CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

3.1 SCOPE

The evaluation will analyse the contributions made by the regional programme during the current programme period 2011-2013, as well as UNDP's strategic position within the region at a time when it is undergoing significant change.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the 'regional programme' will be defined as a set of programme activities designed to implement the programme as set out in the regional programme document approved by UNDP's Executive Board, as well as any activity funded by RBAS RPD resource.

The work of RCC, being largely funded by the global programme, will be evaluated by the parallel evaluation of the global programme.

Given that the last regional evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Office in 2009 covered the period 2006-2010, any activities implemented after that evaluation will be addressed in the present evaluation. UNDP's contributions to the five areas through a range of activities, as well as its strategic position in the region will be examined.

3.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

While all EO evaluations apply a standard list of evaluation criteria, it is good practice to try and adapt the evaluation questions to the context and specificities of the interventions being reviewed. The evaluation will address the following issues.

Main evaluation criteria

1. Relevance: How relevant are the regional programme document's intended outcomes and programme interventions to (a) the priority development challenges and emerging needs of the region; (b) promotion of UN values and UNDP mandate; and (c) its comparative strengths?

- Is the programme, as designed and implemented, aligned with the main priorities for development, as expressed by national governments and relevant regional organizations? Is it addressing pressing development challenges that are regional (or subregional) in nature or scope?
- How responsive has the programme been to important needs and opportunities that may have arisen in the region after programme design, such as those stemming from the 'Arab awakening'?
- Were the balance between the different types of activities (regional public goods, subregional issues, technical support to country offices, etc.) and the strong emphasis on

knowledge products appropriate in view of regional needs?

- Are programme interventions clearly within UNDP's mandate and congruent with its Strategic Framework? In particular, is the relative weight given to each practice area in the programme appropriate?
- Was the programme designed to contribute to people's empowerment and an improvement in people's lives?
- Is the programme addressing significant equity issues in the region (e.g. the poorest and most marginalized, gender, ethnic or religious minorities, etc.)? Were there attempts to foster inclusiveness, promote dialogue and reduce social stigma?
- To what extent was the regional programme designed to make use of UNDP's comparative strengths, e.g. promoting capacity development, impartiality/neutrality, convening capacity and public-private partnerships, and South-South cooperation?
- Does the regional programme include types and areas of activities that are best implemented at a regional level rather than through UNDP country or global programmes?

2. Effectiveness: To what extent has the regional programme contributed to the realization of the intended outcomes as outlined in the regional programme document and key project documents?

- What are the most salient results achieved by the programme under each of the focus areas? What are the areas and interventions with the most promising impact?
- How do these achieved results compare with planned results?
- How responsive is the programme to technical backstopping needs expressed by country offices? Was such technical support of high quality and effective? Examples of country office results achieved with the help of the regional programme and/or RSC.

3. Efficiency: Has the regional programme made good use of its financial and human resources?

- What resources have UNDP and donors made available to the regional programme (staff, financial resources)?
- How judiciously were these resources managed and utilized? Could the programme have achieved more with the same resources, or made the same contribution with fewer resources?
- Has the regional programme been the most efficient vehicle to deliver the programme results, given the amount of resources available?
- Did the programme compete for resources with country offices? Did it add resources or substitute for country offices resources?

4. Sustainability: To what extent are the results that UNDP contributed to through the regional programme sustainable?

- Were appropriate exit strategies included in project design and implemented?
- Did UNDP engage adequately and successfully in national/regional capacity development? With what results?
- Are the results achieved well known and 'owned' regionally and nationally?
- Are catalytic interventions and pilot projects capitalized upon? Are lessons learned from them and disseminated?
- What other factors and externalities may reduce or strengthen sustainability (e.g. Arab uprisings, world financial crisis, etc.)?

Cross-cutting issues

Even though the regional programme is implemented in a wide range of contexts, the evaluation is looking at a standard programming framework. As a result there are some standard explanatory factors that can be assumed to affect performance, for example covering:

5. Partnerships: How well did the regional programme use its partnerships (e.g. with civil society, private sector, local government, donors, regional organizations and international development partners) to improve its performance, while at the same time protecting UNDP's neutrality? To what degree are there coordination, collaboration and synergies between the different interventions, entities and practices that make up the programme, and what is the extent of information sharing between the different programme 'hubs' (New York, Cairo, Beirut)?

6. Gender and human rights: Did the regional programme incorporate gender equality and human rights aspects into its programme?

7. Capacity development: Did the regional programme adequately invest in, and focus on, national capacity development to ensure sustainability and promote efficiency?

8. Project/programme design: Did the projects and programmes have a well-established design and strategy to ensure their performance (e.g. an appropriate mix of modalities, i.e. regional public goods, subregional activities, multi-country interventions, technical support to country offices, and country-level activities) to maximize performance in view of regional needs?

9. Knowledge management: Are the knowledge products (reports, studies, etc.) delivered by the regional programme adapted to country needs? Are they of high quality and credibility? Did they succeed in reaching, influencing and motivating their audience? How much 'filtering up' of knowledge happens (from country offices to the regional programme or to the global programme) as compared to the 'trickling down' of knowledge produced centrally or regionally?

3.3 METHODOLOGY (DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS)

Data will be collected through various means, including the following:

- **Desk reviews:** The evaluation team will collect and review all relevant documentation, including the following: i) regional programme documents; ii) project documents and activity reports; iii) past evaluation and self-assessment reports; iv) knowledge products from the regional programme, e.g. published reports and training materials; v) client surveys on support services provided to country offices; vi) country office reports; vii) UNDP's corporate strategies and reports; and viii) relevant government, media, academic publications.
- **Analysis of download statistics and citations:** The extent of dissemination and influence of key knowledge products will be assessed through an analysis of available download statistics and a review of how much the media have quoted and/or relayed key messages from UNDP publications.[108]
- **Peer review:** Funds permitting, selected, high-visibility knowledge products may be reviewed by a group of external experts to review their technical quality and credibility.
- **Field visits in sampled countries:** The evaluation team will visit selected countries and/or programme sites to observe first-hand progress and achievements made and to collect best practices/lessons learned. The sample of countries will be based on a thorough mapping of programme interventions and will take into account the diverse levels of development in the region. A case study approach will be used to identify and highlight issues that can be further investigated across the regional programme.

[108] Within UNDP, there might also be opportunities to exploit data from the corporate knowledge system called Teamworks to try and chart knowledge flows, given that the region appears to have been an early adopter.

- **Stakeholder interviews:** The evaluation team will conduct face-to-face and/or telephone interviews with relevant stakeholders, including: i) UNDP staff (managers and programme/project officers) at headquarters, RCC and country offices; and ii) policy makers, beneficiaries, civil society organizations and donors in the sample of countries visited by the evaluation team. Focus groups may be organized as appropriate.
- **Survey:** A general survey will be conducted to collect feedback from all UNDP country offices and practice leaders in the region. A common survey form may be prepared by the Evaluation Office that can be used for other regional programme evaluations planned in 2012.

4. EVALUATION PROCESS

(a) Preparatory phase
The Evaluation Office task manager will hold consultations with the regional bureau and the regional centre to define the evaluation purpose and scope, and develop the terms of reference. The Evaluation Office will identify and recruit external consultants to form an evaluation team (see Section 6. Team Qualifications).

(b) Knowledge products assessment phase
A list of key knowledge products will be prepared by the Evaluation Office in consultation with RBAS RPD, for in-depth review of their dissemination and influence on opinion makers and decision makers. A research assistant will be hired to review download statistics and perform a citation analysis focusing on key national, regional and global news media.

(c) Inception phase
During this phase, an appropriate list of regional projects and activities should be prepared by the Evaluation Office with the help of the team leader and in consultation with RBAS RPD, for in-depth reviews during the evaluation. This sample should focus on the most important and visible interventions and reflect different programme focus areas and types of regional activities that exist in the regional programme.

Each evaluation team member will conduct a desk review of relevant materials, documents and programme information provided by the Evaluation Office, including key knowledge products and the result of the knowledge products assessment phase.

At this stage, travel plans should be drawn for each team member based on his/her specialty and the types of activities implemented in each sampled country. It is likely that not all team members will need to travel to each and every sampled country.

(d) Main evaluation phase
The evaluation team will convene in UNDP headquarters in New York for three days to receive a briefing from the task manager on the general evaluation process and methodology and to consult with headquarter staff in RBAS and other central bureaux.

The team will then travel to Cairo (together with the EO task manager) for two weeks to consult with country office and regional centre staff. Egypt should also be sampled for in-depth country case study, so as to make use of this visit to collect feedback from the country office, national counterparts and partners. Conducting the Egypt case study with the whole team together will help the team members develop a common understanding of the evaluation criteria and draft an outline for country case study reports.

Each team member will move on to the other sampled countries and field visits, in accordance with the travel plans drawn during the inception phase (from four to seven days in each country depending on the work to be assessed).

Once team members have completed their data collection, the team (as well as the EO task manager) will reconvene in Cairo for a joint analysis of the information collected (one week). The

data analysis session by the team should clearly identify the following:

- Findings: corroborated, consolidated facts and statements
- Assessments: examination of the findings by using the evaluation criteria and questions, identifying factors behind the assessments made
- Preliminary conclusions: general statements about the value and performance of the programme, and common factors and features of the programme that affected its value and performance
- Preliminary recommendations: addressing each of the conclusions with a view to enhancing relevance, performance and results

A debriefing session by the evaluation team on a preliminary set of conclusions and recommendations will be organized for the regional centre and RPD staff at the end of the main evaluation phase, as an additional opportunity for validation and commenting purposes.

The team leader will then travel to New York to debrief with headquarters staff in RBAS, EO and other central bureaux (two days).

(e) Report preparation phase
The evaluation team will prepare a draft report based on the analysis conducted and the feedback received in the debriefing session. This draft (so-called 'zero' draft) will be reviewed by the Evaluation Office, and the team will revise it if there are any comments. Once the Evaluation Office has cleared the report, the draft ('first draft') will be shared with all concerned for comments. Based on the comments received, the team will revise the report, while recording any changes made in an audit trail.

Once the report has been further revised in a final draft ('second draft'), one or several stakeholder workshops may be organized with a) the UNDP Resident Representatives from the region; b) relevant regional institutions and partners, if appropriate, for the presentation of evaluation results and general discussions. Comments received will be incorporated in the final report, as deemed appropriate by the evaluation team.

Results of the final evaluation report will be presented to the Executive Board, and will be made available in public.

5. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- **UNDP Evaluation Office:** The Evaluation Office task manager will manage the overall evaluation and ensure coordination and liaison with the regional bureau, the regional centre and other offices at headquarters. The task manager will provide reference materials and methodological guidance to the evaluation team and research assistant, and ensure that an appropriate quality assurance mechanism exists during the evaluation. Given that there are five regional programme evaluations planned in 2012, the Evaluation Office will facilitate the standardization of data-collection methods across regions as much as possible, including through a common questionnaire survey to country offices and practice leaders.
- **The evaluation team:** A team of independent external consultants will be established to carry out the evaluation. The evaluation team, collectively, is responsible for undertaking data collection activities and preparing the draft and final reports for submission to the Evaluation Office, as well as any supporting documents prepared during the evaluation. The team will consist of:

a) A team leader, with overall responsibility for providing guidance and leadership to team members, and coordinating the drafting of the report; the team leader will also cover the HIV/AIDS portfolio (HARPAS project).

b) A governance expert, who will provide expertise in the subject of governance and be responsible for drafting sections of the report pertaining to governance and anti-corruption projects, including: Initiative on Good

Governance for Development in the Arab Countries; Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries; Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region; Modernization of Public Prosecution Offices; and Support to Arab Countries efforts in Transitional Governance Processes.

c) A gender expert, who will provide expertise in the subject of gender mainstreaming and human rights, and be responsible for drafting sections of the report pertaining to the gender and human rights dimensions in all projects, knowledge products and technical advice provided by the regional programme. He/she will give particular attention to UNDP's support to CAWTAR; the quality and usefulness of UNDP regional knowledge products touching on gender and human rights; the analysis of UNDP regional undertakings in other sectors such as water and environment, democratic governance and HIV/AIDS, from a gender mainstreaming and human rights perspective; and ways and means for UNDP to further support gender equality in the region.

d) The EO evaluation manager may join the mission to evaluate the environmental portfolio (Water Governance Programme and Arab Climate Resilience Initiative).

e) In addition, a research assistant will be hired to review download statistics and perform a citation analysis for key knowledge products, focusing on key national, regional and global news media.

- **Regional Bureau:** RBAS/RPD will take a lead role in supporting the evaluation team in liaising with the key partners and make available to the team all necessary information regarding UNDP activities in the region. A focal point will be identified to liaise with the Evaluation Office and the evaluation team.
- **Regional Centre:** RCC will be requested to provide any logistical and administrative support necessary to the evaluation team during the evaluation, including suitable office space during the data analysis week. It will make available to the team all necessary information regarding its activities related to the regional programme. A focal point will be identified to liaise with the Evaluation Office and the evaluation team.
- **Country offices:** UNDP country offices in sampled countries will facilitate the evaluation by providing necessary information and documents as required, and organizing field visits and appointments with partners, as appropriate.

6. TEAM QUALIFICATIONS

The Evaluation Office will seek to hire a team with experience and qualification in the following fields (it is expected that some team member will be able to cover more than one domain):

- Good governance
- Public transparency programmes and the fight against corruption
- Knowledge management
- Gender in development
- Water management in arid and semi-arid environments
- Public health and HIV/AIDS awareness programmes

The evaluation team leader should have a demonstrated capacity in leading a complex evaluation, as well as in strategic thinking and policy advice and excellent writing skills in English. All team members, including the team leader, should have substantive experience and in-depth knowledge of development in the region under evaluation. Gender balance will be ensured in the evaluation team. All team members, including the team leader, are expected to be able to converse, read and write in English and Arabic. A working knowledge of French is desirable, in order to cover the Maghreb region in the evaluation.

7. DELIVERABLES

The evaluation team will produce the following deliverables:

- Draft report and revisions, as follows:
  - The evaluation team will prepare a draft report ('zero draft') for review by EO and make appropriate revisions to the report based on comments provided by EO. The draft will be written in accordance with the format and style as instructed by the Evaluation Office. The main text will have a maximum of 80 pages.
  - Once cleared by the Evaluation Office, the revised report ('first draft') will then be submitted to RBAS and the Regional Centre in Cairo for comments.
  - Based on the comments received from RBAS and RCC, the team will further revise the report, while recording any changes made in an 'audit trail' matrix. This version ('second draft') will then be shared with participants of any stakeholder meeting that may be organized in Cairo and/or New York, for the presentation of evaluation results and general discussion (to be decided).
  - Based on the comments received in such stakeholder meetings, the evaluation team will produce its 'final draft' and submit it to the Evaluation Office for finalization. The final evaluation report will be presented to the Executive Board, and will be made available to the general public.
- An evaluation brief, to be used for reporting to the Executive Board and for publicity materials
- PowerPoint presentations to the regional bureau, RCC, stakeholder meetings, and the Executive Board.

8. TIME-FRAME

A tentative schedule of activities is provided below. It will be finalized by the Evaluation Office in consultation with the regional bureau, the regional centre and the selected consultants.

- Recruitment of the evaluation team and preparatory work – January-May 2012
- Knowledge products assessment phase – June-September 2012
- Main evaluation phase – September-October 2012
- Report preparation phase – October-November 2012

ANNEX 2.

PEOPLE CONSULTED

EGYPT

Government of Egypt

Al Tawila, Sahar, Director, Social Contract Centre,

Giordani, Marcello, Deputy Director, Social Contract Centre

Other National Partners

Abdel Karim, Mahmoud, Credit Director, Women's Health Improvement Association (WHIA)

Abdelwahab, Ashraf Hassan, Head, Computers and Systems Department, Ministry of Scientific Research, Electronics Research Institute

Ahmed, Nahla, Director, WHIA

Al Saiid, Dalia, Regional Coordinator for the WB-funded Public Engagement for Water Management Project, Arab Water Council

Al-Ansary, Wael, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Al-Fakharany, Abdallah, Director of foreign affairs, RASSD news network

Al-Fakharany, Abdullah, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Ali, Mostafa Mahmoud, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Ashour, Ahmed Sakr, Professor of Management, Faculty of Commerce, Alexandria University

Attia, Sawsan, President, WHIA

El-Atfy, Hussein I., Member of Executive Council and Acting Secretary-General, Arab Water

El Zenari, Sayed, International Health and Development Expert Council

Elnawawy, Abdelrahman Ahmed, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Khaled Gamal El Din, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Mansour, Abeer, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Mohammed, Noha Wagih, Tahrir Square youth panel member

Shalaby, Alaa, Secretary-General, Arab Organization for Human Rights

Regional and International Partners

Alshejni, Elham A., Director, Department of Human Rights, League of Arab States (LAS)

Amin, Ahmed, Head of Elections Division, Political Sector, LAS

Diaa, Aya, Crisis Department, LAS

Douay, Dina, Director, Crisis Department, LAS

El Beih, Wessam, Egypt UNAIDS Country Officer

El-Roupy, Hatem, Third Secretary, Humanitarian Aid Department, Social Sector, LAS

Ghanaam, Alia, Economic Sector, LAS

Hassan, Hussein, Anti-Corruption Project Manager, UNODC

Lamontagne, Erik, Regional Programme Adviser, Regional UNAIDS Office

Marii, Ahmed, Head of Operations, Crisis Department, LAS

Nasser, Mohammed, Crisis Department, LAS

Salem, Simone, Regional Portfolio for Civil Society and Mobilization, Regional UNAIDS Office

Youssef, Hesham, Assistant Secretary-General, LAS

UNDP Country Office

Arafa, Nagla, Assistant Resident Representative for Democratic Governance

El Tokali, Sherif, Assistant Resident Representative, ICT for Development

Hedeya, Rania, Programme Analyst, Governance

Nirody, Anita, Resident Representative

Shafik, Magid, HIV/AIDS Programme Officer

Tabet, Mounir, Country Director

JORDAN

Government of Jordan

Al-Azzam, Assad, Director, Political Parties Directorate, Ministry of Political Development (MPD)

Hassan, Yosser, Awareness Section Head, Independent Elections Commission

Kannan, Bassem, Head of Coordination Planning and Development Projects, Projects and Programme Directorate, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC)

Khalaf Mousa, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, Ministry of Labour

Shkakhwa, Khulud, Director of Planning and Funded Projects, MPD

Soufan, Zein, Head of Social Studies Division, Policy and Strategies Department, MOPIC

Subah, Ali, Assistant Secretary General, Technical Affairs, Ministry of Water and Irrigation

Tamerjan, Lina Targan, Assistant Secretary-General, MPD

Other National Partners

Al Nimri, Jameel, Member of Parliament

Al Rantawi, Oraib, Director General, Al-Quds Centre for Political Studies

Al-Khashman, Mohammad, Chairman, Jordanian National Union Party

Alshawahneh, Amal , Project Director, Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies

Assaf, Nizam, Director, Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies

El-Masry, Khauloud, Women's Committee, Jordanian National Union Party

El-Masry, Samer, Assistant to the President, Jordanian National Union Party

Elbeh, Abla Abu, MP and Head, Jordanian Democratic People's Party

Hussainy, Mohammed, Director, Identity Centre

Khader, Asma, Secretary-General, Jordanian National Commission for Women

Murad, Hala, Coordinator, Youth Unit, Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies

Sarhan, Yousef, Officer in charge, Jordanian National Union Party

Shamroukh, Nadia, General Manager, Jordanian Women's Union

Regional and International Partners

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UNDP Jordan Country Office

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Farina, Costanza, Resident Representative

Gharaibeh, Sawsan, Governance Programme Analyst, Human Rights Focal Point

Leyrit, Mathilde, Intern, Poverty and MDGs portfolio

Madanat, Katia, Reporting Associate & M&E Focal Point

Marouan, Rania, Small Grants Project

Nabusli, Basma, Youth Development Specialist

Souhajah, Khaled, Youth Project Manager

Williams, Josiah, Intern, Poverty Programme

UNDP Iraq Country Office

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Awabdeh, Omar, Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst

Cox, Richard, Participatory Governance Coordinator, Programme Adviser

Deeb, Ghimar, Programme Specialist, Rule of Law and Justice

LEBANON

Government of Lebanon

El-Nakib, Mostafa, Manager, National AIDS Control Programme

Sarkis, Charbel, Senior Legal Adviser, Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform

Other National Partners

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Awada, Leila, Co-Founder and Lawyer, KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation)

Aya, Hadi, President, Association Justice and Mercy (AJEM)

Badran, Nadia, HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinator, Soins Infirmier Développement Communautaire (SIDC)

Bazzi, Zahra, Programme Manager, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

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Hakim, Yahya, Board Member, The Lebanese Transparency Association

Kiwan, Fadia, Executive Board Member, National Commission for Lebanese Women

Yahya, Hicham, Senior Research Officer, The Arab Anti-Corruption Organization

Makhoul, Josiane, Social Worker, SIDC

Moukheiber, Ghassan, MP in the Lebanese Parliament and President of the Arab Region Parliamentarians Against Corruption

Wahab, Rita, Secretary General, Vivre Positif

Regional and International Partners

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Khalidi, Ramla, Chief, Technical Cooperation Section, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division, ESCWA

Laurenti, Roberto, Director, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division, ESCWA

Nemeh, Adib, Chief, Governance and State Building, ESCWA

Youssef, Maisaa, Programme Officer, Office of the Director, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division, ESCWA

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Kibranian, Gaelle, Programme Officer, Democratic Governance

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Government of Morocco

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UNDP Country Office

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TUNISIA

Government of Tunisia

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Hendaoui, Afif, Director, Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA)

Laabidi, Boutheina, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Louati, Ramzi, Adviser, Directorate of Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ouerfelli, Ahmed, Legal Adviser to the President of the Republic

Other National Partners

Belhadj, Ahlem, President, Tunisian Association for Democratic Women

Ben Jemaa, Anis, Treasurer, Rahme

Benzied, Souhaela, Health Mediator, Tunisian Association for the Fight against STDs and AIDS

Mahjoubi, Bilel, Executive Coordinator, Tunisian Association for the Fight against STDs and AIDS

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Srafi, Firdous, President, Rahme

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Hedhli, Mohamed Slim, Project Coordinator, CAWTAR

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Louveaux, Olivier, BDP-GPPS-BCPR Parliamentary Development Project

Soua, Mohamed Lassaad, HIV/AIDS Focal Point & Project Manager, Livelihoods and Social Cohesion in Medenine and Tataouine

Yamadjako, Selomey, Deputy Resident Representative

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Abdellatif, Adel, Chief, Regional Programme Division (RPD), Regional Bureau for Arab States

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Hudson, Andrew, Technical Adviser, GEF Technical Team, Bureau for Development Policy

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El Serety, Ibtihal, Procurement Associate

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Mohieddin, Mohamed, Poverty Reduction

Moltagh, Mitra, Human Rights and Justice Specialist

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Owaygen, Marwan, Regional Climate Change Policy Adviser Project Manager

Pournik, Mohammad, Poverty and MDGs Practice Leader

Prewitt, Geoffrey, Practice Coordinator, Deputy Head

Saleh, Intisar Ali, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

Samra, Marwan Abi, Social Policy and Civil Society Adviser

Tarek, Radwa, Executive Associate

Vannier, Etienne, HIV-AIDS Practice Leader

Zubeir Murshed, Disaster Risk Reduction Management Adviser

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Badr, Karine, Regional Project Analyst, ACIAC

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El Korri, Karima, former project manager, PDIAR

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Itani, Mariam, Research Assistant, Arab Knowledge Report

Kalot, Joumana, Project Manager, HARPAS

Torky, Hany, Socio-economic Specialist, Arab Knowledge Report

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O'Brien, Denise, Senior Political Affairs Office, Africa II Division

Ono, Kyoko, Political Affairs Officer, Policy Mediation Division

Pasquini, Vincent, Political Affairs Officer, Policy Mediation Division

Schlapachenko, Dmitry, Senior Political Affairs Officer, Africa I Division

Valenzuela, Carlos, Chief Electoral Adviser, UN Electoral Support Team

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Benli, Bogachan, UNDP-SIWI Every Drop Matters, Stockholm

Byrne, Catriona, HIV Programme Specialist, Somalia Country Office

Jägerskog, Anders, SIWI, Stockholm

Tropp, Håkan, Director, Water Governance Facility, SIWI, Stockholm

RBAS Regional Programme

Harb,Wassim, former Coordinator, GfD

Khordagui, Hosny, former Coordinator, WGP-AS

Donors

Anwer, Nadeem, Cluster Compliance Officer for the Middle East, Siemens Integrity Initiative

Leventhal, Robert, Director, Anti-Corruption and Governance Initiatives, US State Department, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Ozen, Kadri, Public Affairs and Communications Manager, Coca-Cola Eurasia and Africa Group

ANNEX 3.

DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

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ANNEX 4.

RESULTS FROM THE COUNTRY OFFICE SURVEY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

In 2012, UNDP conducted the present survey as part of the series of global and regional programme evaluations. Since a large part of these programmes' development results was achieved at the country level, the survey was designed as an efficient way to collect some feedback from a large, representative number of country offices, in order to complement country visits by evaluators. The survey is intended to substantiate emerging findings of the evaluation and also fill data gaps.

The present analysis is a selection of the full survey analysis, with particular attention to the results concerning the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS). It aimed to inform the regional programme evaluation through an interpretation of the survey results.

B. METHODOLOGY

The survey questionnaire consists of four sections on: (1) regional programmes, (2) the global programme, (3) advisory services and technical support, and (3) knowledge management. Each country office was asked to complete one questionnaire and given the option to collate the responses of several programme managers. Questions were a mix of rating (Likert) scales and open-ended textual questions. Multiple Correspondence Analysis and Principle Component Analysis – two of the most frequently used multivariate data analysis methods – were both performed to assess correlation among questions and among countries within regions.

C. COUNTRY OFFICE RESPONDENTS

A high 95 percent rate of response was achieved thanks to a dedicated staff member hired to monitor the country office responses. Responses represent the perceptions of UNDP staff, and their tone may be biased by the survey design (i.e. country office dissatisfaction due to the staff member repeatedly following up).

Regions	Responded	Did not respond	Response rate
Africa	41	4	91%
Arab States	16	2	89%
Asia and the Pacific	24	0	100%
Europe and CIS[109]	20	0	100%
Latin America and the Caribbean	24	0	100%
Grand Total	125	6	95%

[109] Responses from Bulgaria, Lithuania, and the Russian Federation were not included since they do not qualify as country offices.

II. SURVEY ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. REGIONAL PROGRAMMES (Q3-Q7)

Feedback from the country offices suggested a mixed assessment of regional programme presence and satisfaction. Responses from Q3 indicate that regional programme presence varies significantly across regions with the highest rated presence in RBEC (71 percent or 171/240 responding positively) and lowest in RBAS (43 percent or 83/192 responding positively) compared to the average across all respondents of 63 percent (975/1500).[110] Regional programme presence also varies across different products/services with the most positive feedback for country-level programme development (Q3.2) and most negative for regional cooperation facilitation (Q3.9).

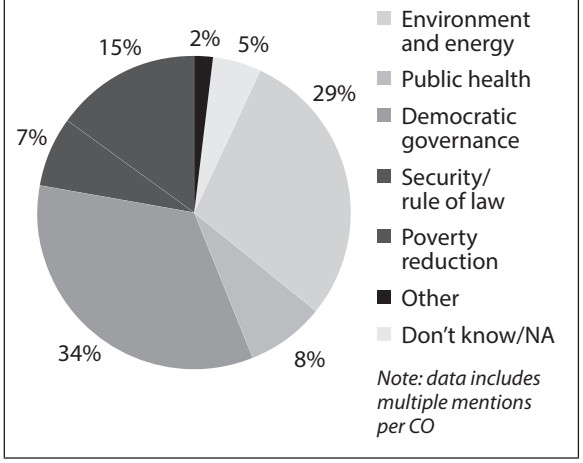
Several indicators received consistently positive reviews across all regions, including regarding country-level programme development (91 percent or 114/125 positive for Q3.2), other types of advisory services (87 percent positive or 109/125 for Q3.5), and intra-regional knowledge sharing (82 percent or 102/125 positive Q3.7). Country offices rated regional programme presence more negatively regarding regional cooperation (57 percent or 44/125 positive for Q3.9), administrative support (45 percent or 56/125 for Q3.3), and M&E support (46 percent or 66/125 positive for Q3.4).

For regional programme satisfaction (Q4), respondents rated regional programmes most negatively in coordination of country programme activities (48 percent or 60/125 negative for Q4.8). The second lowest rating regarded the regional programme contribution to development results (40 percent or 50/125 negative for Q4.13), indicating a relative lack of confidence of regional programme's impact at the national level. As a result, the areas of cooperation and coordination are identified as the weakest for regional programmes when taking into account the most negatively rated sub-questions of Q3 and Q4. These concerns were substantiated in the country office recommendations (see Q7).

Responses to Q4 show that regions varied distinctly in satisfaction with regional programmes. RBAS offered the most negative assessment over a majority of dimensions by a significant margin excluding regional programme relevance (roughly 15 percent more negative), while RBEC gave the highest level of satisfaction.

Sixty percent of country office respondents (75/125) agree with the statement: "the Regional Service Centre is best placed to manage the regional programme" (Q4.9), and all but one respondent indicated the need to be consulted in the design of the next regional programme (Q4.4).[111]

Useful RP Projects/Activities by Sector (Q5)



[110] Positive response being for Q3 "much" or "some".

[111] One respondent selected "no opinion/don't know". Note that question 4.4 was designed to contrast with question 4.3 ("The regional bureau consulted with my country office and government counterparts when the current regional programme was developed").

Respondents most commonly cited useful projects and activities in the sectors of (1) democratic governance and (2) environment and energy.

Seventy-six percent of respondents (72/95)[112] called on the regional programme to be informed and oriented by country office priorities and needs in programme planning, project design and implementation. For many respondents, this translates into increased relevance and capacity at the country level, including through involvement of national representatives. Other themes that were commonly suggested by respondents included: (1) better coordination both among country offices and between country offices and their regional programmes, (2) use of existing regional institutions to leverage knowledge and coordination[113], and (3) increased support in resource mobilization (and simply more funding). Both the predominant recommendation of closer involvement of country offices as well as coordination naturally follow the negative rating of these indicators in Q3 and Q4.

RBAS Summary

In general, RBAS comes across as more negative in its judgement of its regional programme than other regions. Responses to question 3 indicate a lesser presence of the RBAS regional programme at the country level than is the case in other regions.

In spite of its many "don't know" responses (4 or 5 country offices over a total number of 16 respondents), question 4 offers a largely negative assessment over a majority of sub-questions or dimensions of the regional programme. The only positive statements are about the general relevance of the programme ("focused on issues of importance to this country's government", "addresses issues that are essentially regional"). Against all other variables, such as coordination with the country office, flexibility or transparent management, the country offices' assessment is negative. Only 2 country offices consider that the regional programme "contributed to significant development results in [their] country".

Nine out of 16 RBAS respondents agree with the statement: "the Regional Service Centre is best placed to manage the regional programme"[114], in spite of the country offices from the region having on average a lower appreciation of the regional centre than in other regions (see section C).

The textual examples of country-level results (Question 5) include 5 mentions of the anti-corruption work of ACIAC, 4 mentions of HARPAS (HIV/AIDS) and 2 mentions of the recent youth project (in fact a "multi-country" project implemented by the Country Office Division of RBAS). Support to parliaments is mentioned only by Somalia (but apparently pertaining to the BCPR project rather than to PDIAR). Egypt describes the support to constitutional drafting and the Regional Workshop on Transitional Justice, and also some work of RCC to develop a "Local Development Observatory" to monitor governance and service delivery provisions within an ongoing country office decentralization programme. In environment, Morocco mentions the "Environmental crimes project" 2010-2011 (part of the regional project supporting public prosecutors). Other country offices complained about the absence of regional projects implemented in their countries.

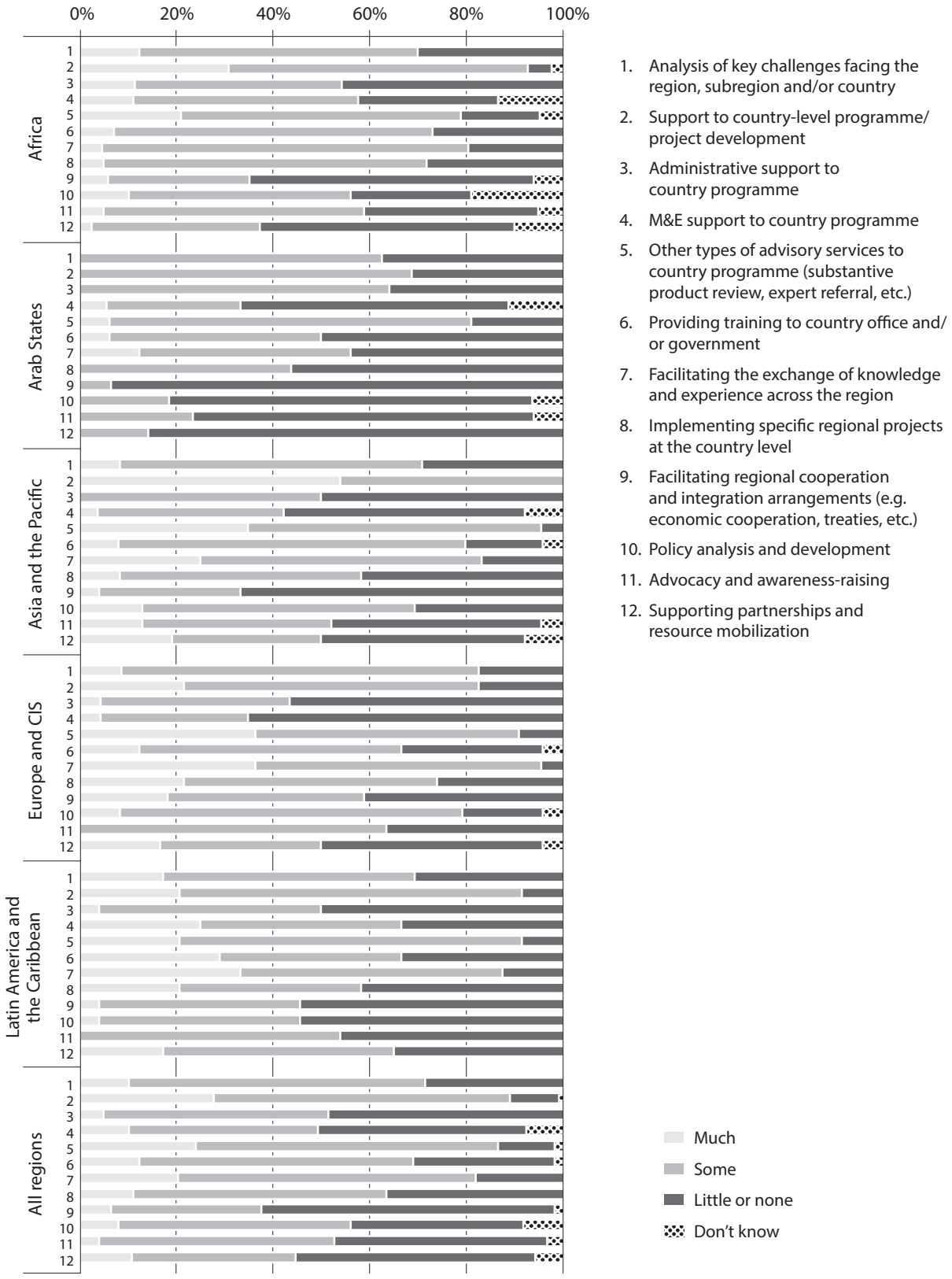
RBAS respondents frequently recommended the regional programme be more agile and flexible in responding to emerging needs (e.g. in reference to the Arab uprisings).

[112] This includes multiples mentions per country office of thematic recommendations.

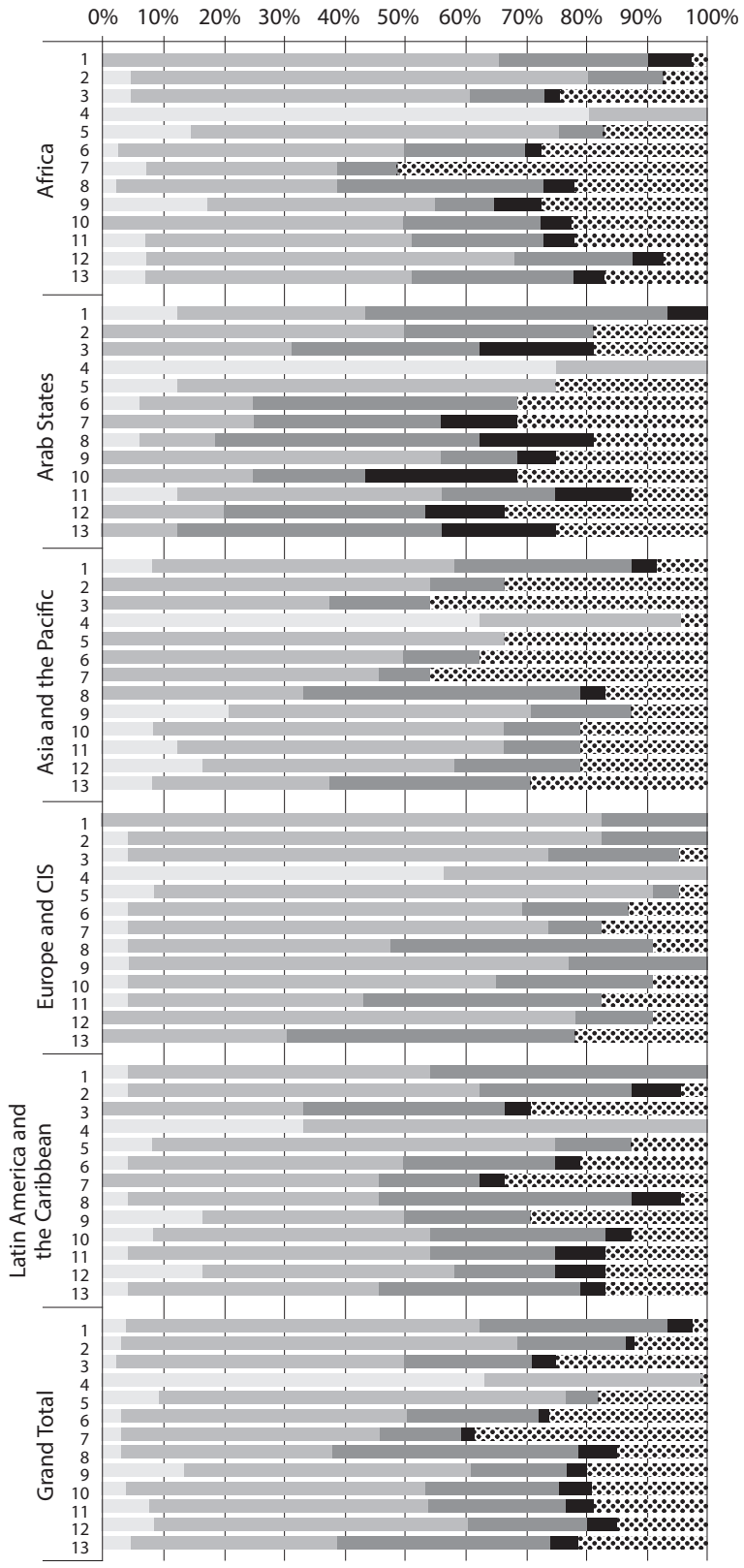
[113] This includes ASEAN and SAARC in Asia (referenced by Indonesia and Afghanistan), as well as SADC and COMESA (referenced by Zambia).

[114] In the case of RBAS, the regional centre is NOT in fact managing the programme.

3. How much of the following regional products and services were delivered to your country office or in your country over the current programming period?



4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning the regional programme in your region?



1. The regional programme is well known by programme managers in my country office
2. The regional programme is focused on issues of importance to this country's government
3. The regional bureau consulted with my country office and government counterparts when the current regional programme was developed
4. My country office and government counterparts should be consulted in the design of the next regional programme
5. The regional programme addresses issues that are essentially regional, sub-regional and/or inter-country
6. The regional programme is flexible enough to respond to emerging needs and opportunities
7. The management of the regional programme has been open, transparent and accountable
8. The regional programme activities are well coordinated with country programme activities
9. The Regional Service Centre is best placed to manage the regional programme
10. The regional programme or projects brought new ideas and piloted new approaches in this country
11. The regional programme helped address sensitive issues (e.g. corruption, HIV/AIDS) in this country
12. The regional programme helped promote UN values in this country (e.g. gender and human rights)
13. The regional programme and/or projects contributed to significant development results in this country

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
No Opinion/Don't know

B. GLOBAL PROGRAMME (Q8-Q12)

All Country Offices

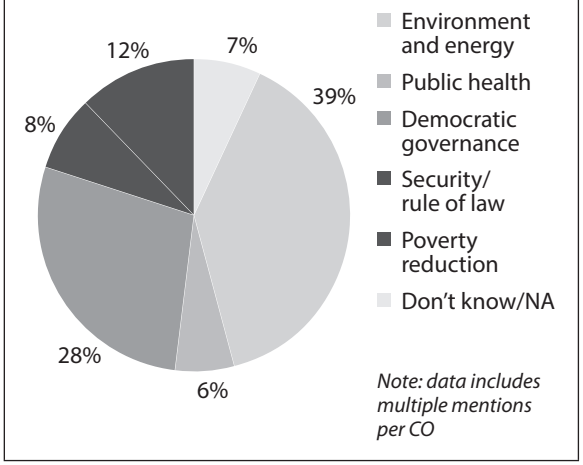
A significant proportion of feedback regarding the global programme was "no opinion/don't know", constituting 31 percent of all responses (579/1875) excluding Q9.4.[115] In addition, almost half of country offices (59/125) believe that the global programme is not well known by their programme managers (Q9.1). This feedback indicates that the global programme's visibility is on average relatively weak at the country level. [116]

Not surprisingly, 90 percent of respondents (112/125) agreed that country offices and government counterparts should be consulted in the design of the next global programme (Q9.4). This corresponds with recommendations (Q12), which highlighted the need more involvement of country offices in planning and design. If one excludes Q9.4, overall 46 percent of respondents (856/1875) agree with the positively phrased evaluation statements about the global programme, while 19 percent (363/1875) disagreed with the statements. For the correlating Q4 about the regional programmes (and similarly excluding Q4.4), these ratios are 54 percent (817/1500) and 26 percent (392/1500) respectively, indicating a slightly greater appreciation on average for the regional programmes based on the rating scale survey responses. However, this may be more a result of a lack of visibility of the global programme than a preference of one over the other.

Across regions, the most cited sector for useful projects related to environment and energy (39 percent of responses or 33/85 for Q10, see examples below) followed by democratic governance.

Mirroring recommendations for regional programmes, 47 percent (35/75) of country offices called for more consultation at the country level in the design and implementation of global programmes to more closely align country needs and reinforce capacity and ownership. These recommendations typically point to greater programme flexibility and availability to meet country offices' need. Knowledge management and communication also reappeared as an important theme, with many country offices pointing to the need to better articulate areas of global programme support and promote experience sharing. Several respondents requested more support in resource mobilization at the country level, including from regional teams (see Palestine quote below). Finally, it should be noted that several countries called on the global programme to provide programmes that specifically address issues relevant to Middle Income Countries or Least Developed Countries.

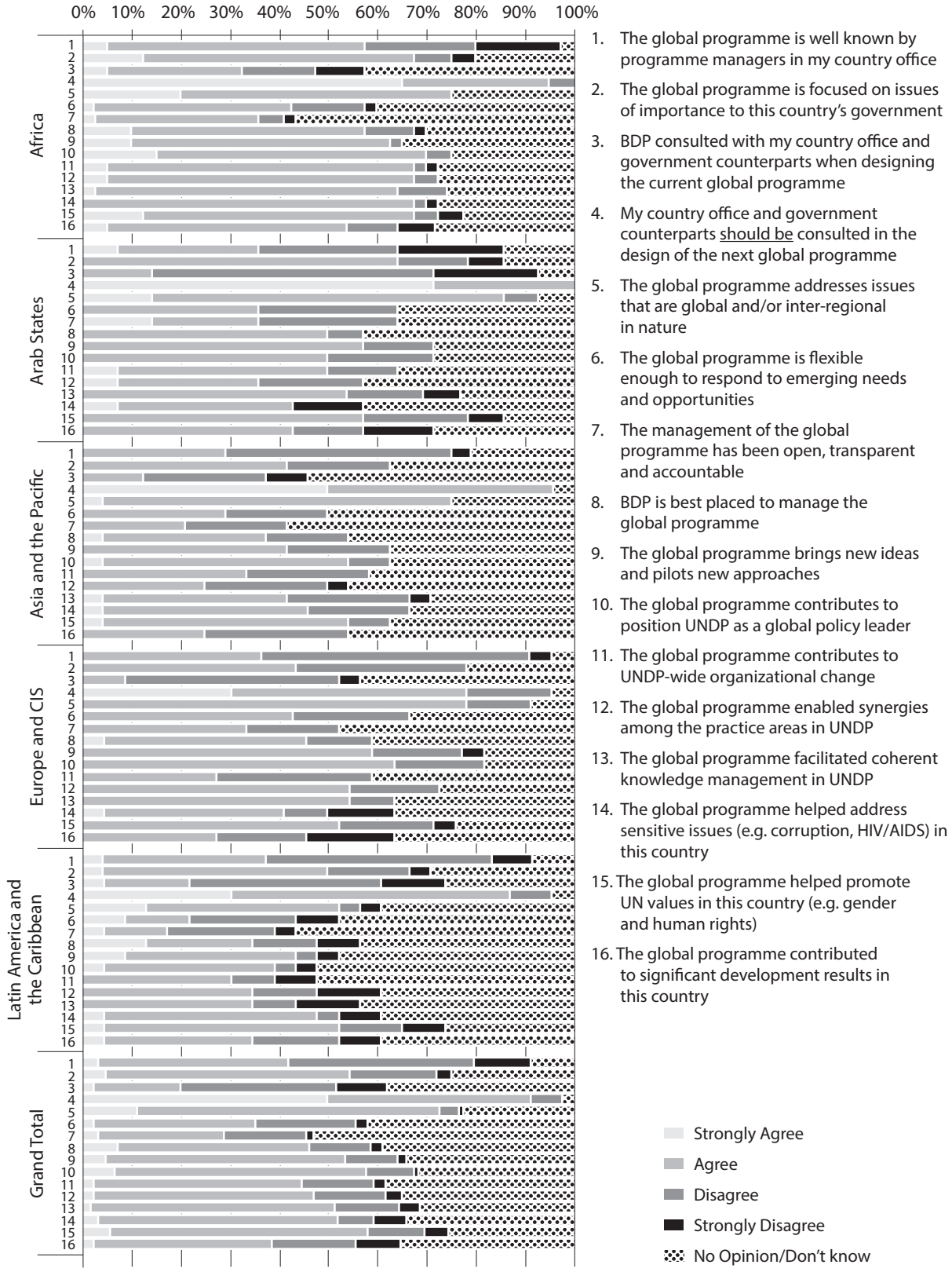
Useful GP Projects/Activities by Sector (Q10)



[115] Question 9.4 ("My country office and government counterparts should be consulted in the design of the next global programme") was designed to contrast with Q9.3 ("BDP consulted with my country office and government counterparts when designing the current global programme").

[116] In this respect, a comparison of Q8 responses ("When you think of the global programme's footprint in your country, what projects come to mind") with actual global programme projects could complement this finding.

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements concerning the global programme?



RBAS Summary

Contrary to country offices in other regions, RBAS country offices make a more positive assessment of the global programme than of their regional programme. If one excludes sub-question 4 ("My country office and government counterparts should be consulted in the design of the next regional/global programme") with which everyone agrees, an average of 41 percent agree with the positively phrased evaluation statements about the global programme, while 23 percent on average disagreed with the statements. For question 4 about the regional programme, these ratios are 36 percent and 41 percent, respectively.

C. ADVISORY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT (Q13-17)

All Country Offices

Across all regions, national consultants are the most frequently used source of expertise for country offices, followed by international consultants, RSC advisers and BCPR advisers. The responses from all regions indicate a high level of similarity in terms of which expertise is most frequently solicited. That said, several regions (RBAS, RBLAC and RBAP) appear to call on BCPR advisers much more often.

Respondents across all regions underlined the need to have advisers more readily available, with others adding the importance of being able to pool experts for a broader range of areas. This comes in addition to what all other recommendation sections from the survey underline: the importance of the country offices' early involvement in planning, in this case regarding the work of the regional centre.

The most negatively assessed technical area (Q14) across all regions related to partnerships and donors. This category was also the most cited for no support at all, suggesting both a general dissatisfaction with and lack of such services. The degree of satisfaction and support received in specific areas varies significantly across regions. Taking the example of monitoring and evaluation, RBLAC respondents indicated a 67 percent rate of satisfaction (16/24) with received support, while RBAS and RBAP countries claimed on or below 40 percent satisfaction (6/16 and 11/24 respectively) and indicated a much higher level of "no support". There was a high overall response rate for Q16, the preponderance of which mentioned useful environmentally focused support.

RBAS Summary

According to the answers to question 13, national consultants are the most frequent source of advice and technical support, followed by international ones. The third most frequent source of advice for RBAS is BCPR, followed by the Regional Service Centre in Cairo.

Overall, RBAS respondents claim to use expertise and advice the least (for Q13, 34 percent or 49/144 selecting "seldom to never" across all nine sub-questions compared to the global average of 28 percent or 314/1125).[117] They also state that they call on advisers in the Cairo RSC less often than other regions, and call on their regional bureau colleagues even less often.

In terms of particular technical areas for technical support received from RCC (question 14), two areas come out as rated rather negatively: partnerships and donors, and poverty reduction & MDGs. The first item may simply reflect a lack of support (rather than poor quality support) in this area. In contrast, knowledge management, HIV/AIDS and crisis prevention and recovery are viewed more positively.

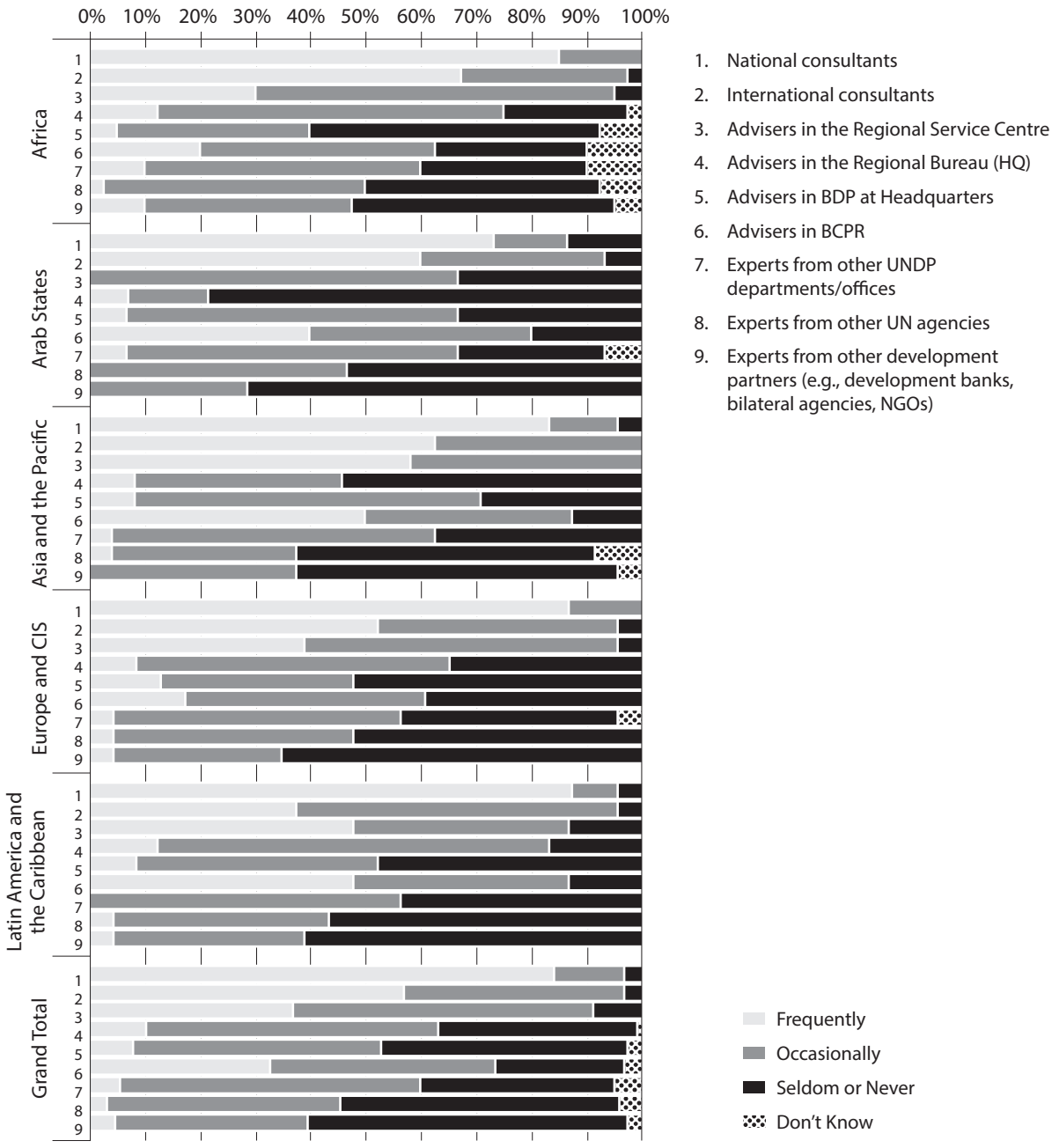
Among the types of support listed by respondents as most useful, one finds four mentions of support to country programming, through support to UNDAF and CPD/CPAP preparation. On this question (16), the mention by Egypt of

[117] This being said, the questionnaire may have been slightly unfair to RBAS here since a large part of the technical advice provided by the regional programme is channelled through regional projects, and the questionnaire lacked a sub-question about how much such regional projects were used as a source of technical advice.

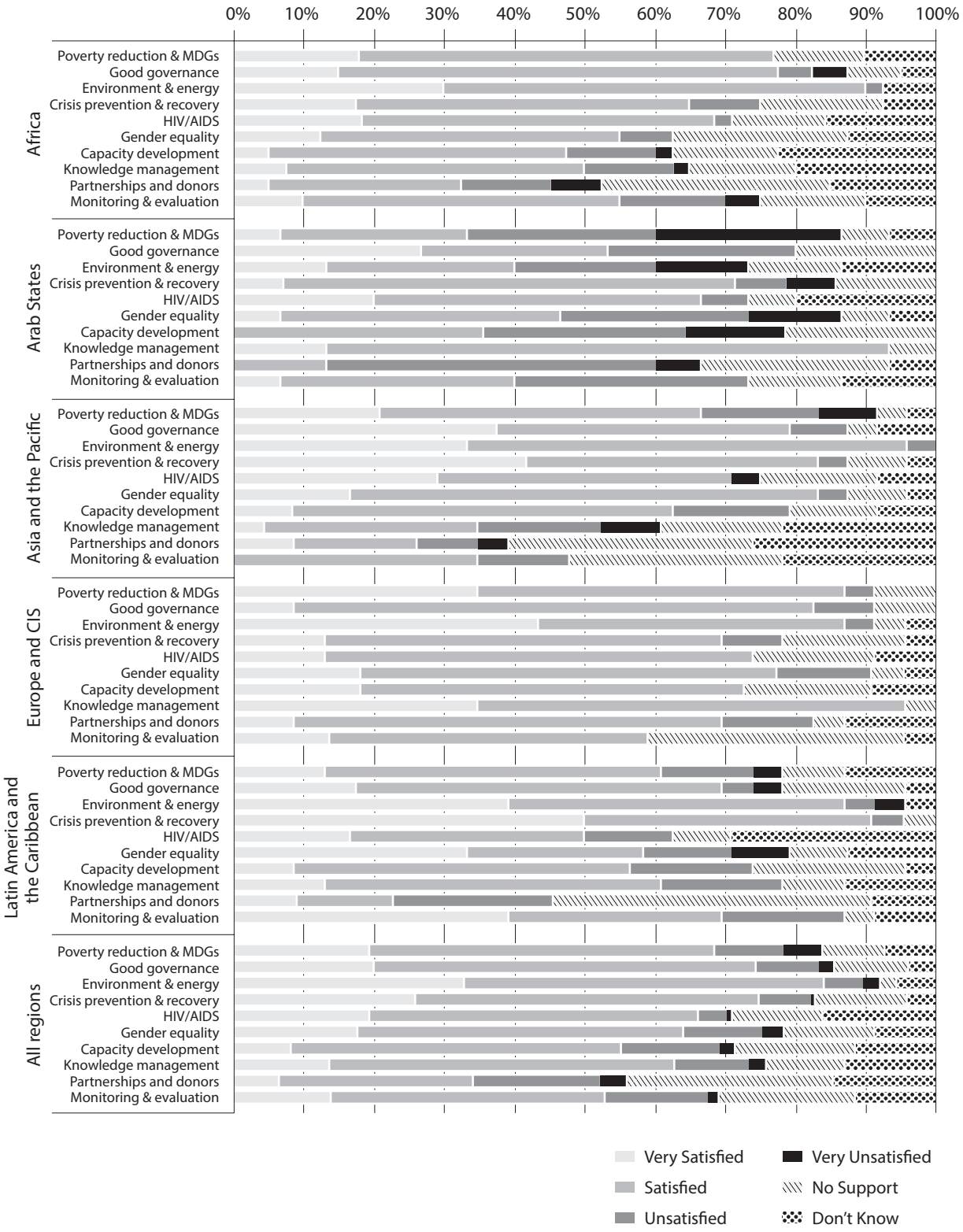
the Transitional Justice Forum on Democratic Transitions (June 2011) is interesting for the regional programme evaluation.

The recommendations stress (again) the importance of country office's early involvement in planning for the work of the regional centre. The lack of RCC role in regional programme implementation was addressed in a detailed recommendation. Other country offices noted the many vacant posts in the RCC, and a GCC country office highlighted the potential role of the Gulf countries as donors, deplored the lack of engagement by the RCC at their level, and recommended to hire a RCC Resource Mobilization Adviser to be based in the Gulf.

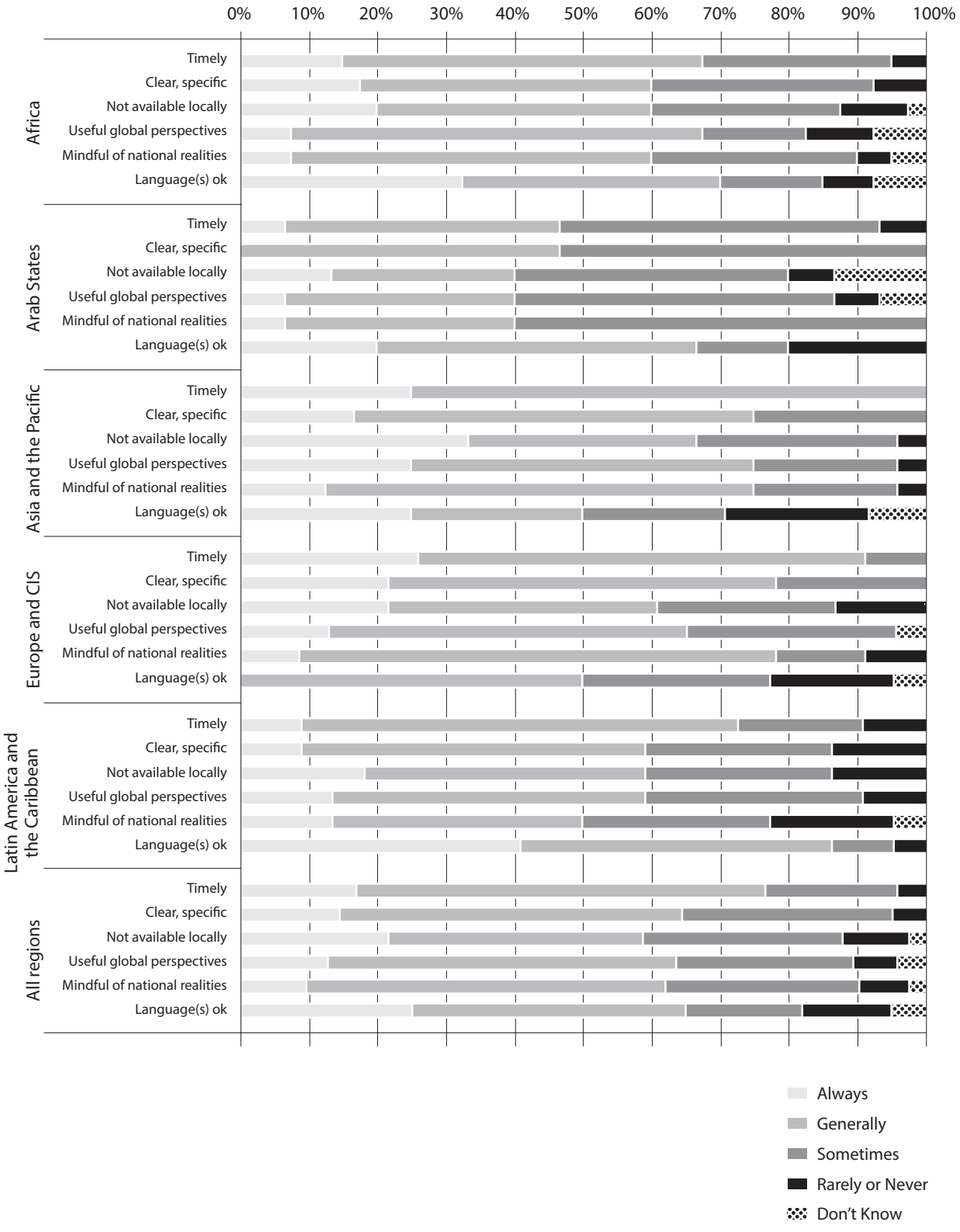
13. In your office, how frequently did you use the following sources of expertise over the current programming period?



14. How satisfied is your country office with the quality of support received in the following areas?



15. Thinking about the way in which support was provided by your Regional Service Centre, would you say the following statements applied always, generally, sometimes or never?



D. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (Q19-Q24)

All Country Offices

According to responses to Q20, most country offices deem UNDP knowledge products credible and reliable. Respondents note however a greater lack of confidence in (1) the impact of knowledge products in country (Q20.6), and (2) the degree to which knowledge at the country level is taken up (Q20.4). Although RBAP was markedly the most pessimistic regarding their assessed impact, there was relative homogeneity across regions for Q20 as well as Q21. Indeed, regions generally stated that Teamworks had caused an improvement in knowledge management. At the same time, they do not indicate a broad-based usage of the platform (Q21.7).

Across all regions, Human Development Reports (HDRs) are repeatedly cited as useful (Q22), primarily for helping frame national debates around development priorities, as well as dialogue with national stakeholders. Respondents also commonly mentioned the UNDP Handbook on M&E for its utility in helping the country offices carry out M&E functions and as well as inform and structure partner relationships. There were little to no substantive comments on less useful knowledge products (Q23).

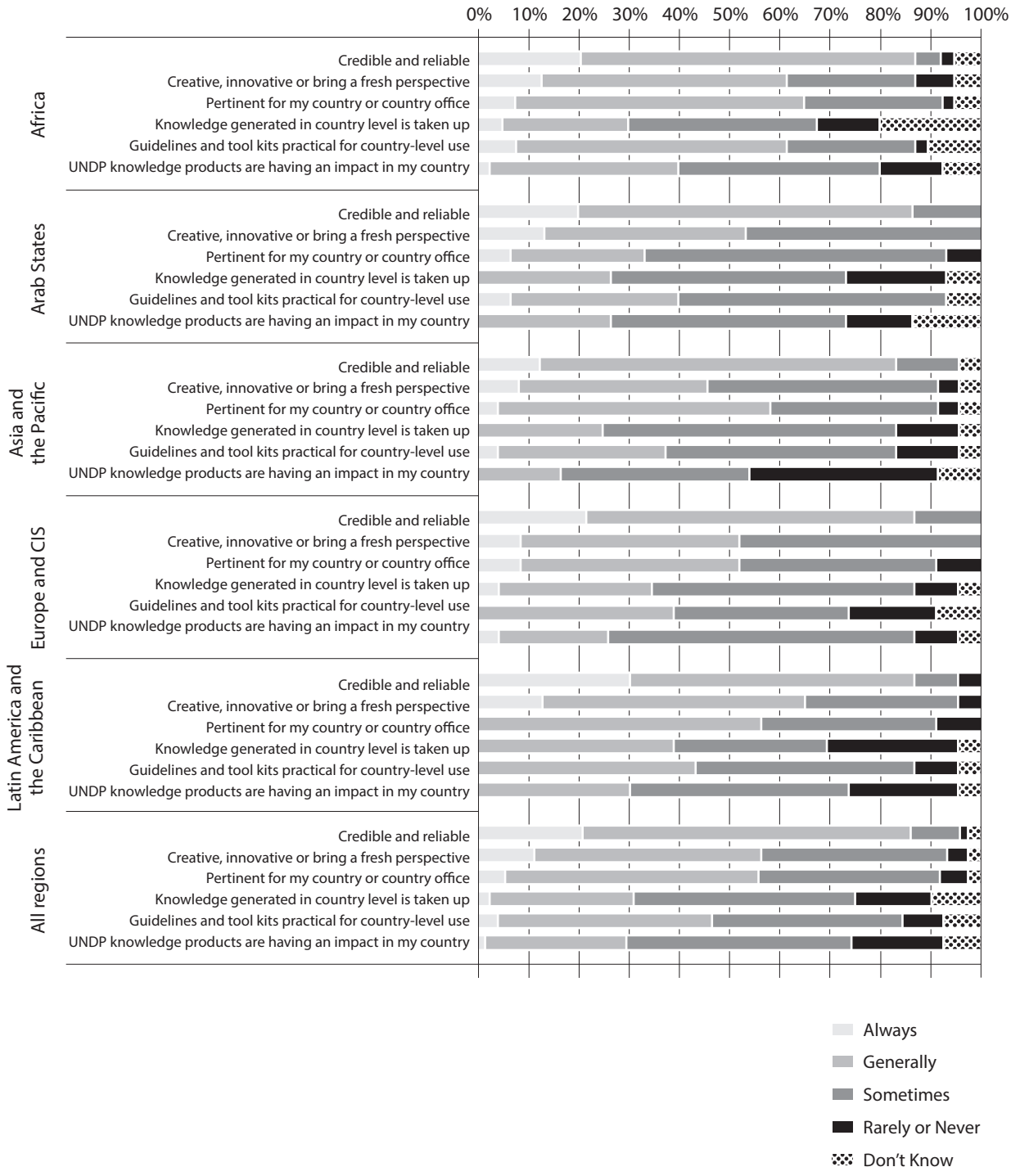
While recommendations varied across all respondents, one of the most common themes was to the need to make Teamworks more user-friendly and/or to provide some training or orientation to use the platform. Country offices appear to recognize the tool's utility, but state that it lacks in usability. This finding follows closely after Q21, where 64 percent of country office respondents (80/125) recognize Teamworks as always or generally an important resource for finding information (Q21.1), but 60 percent (75/125) also admit to occasional, rare or null usage (Q21.3).

RBAS Summary

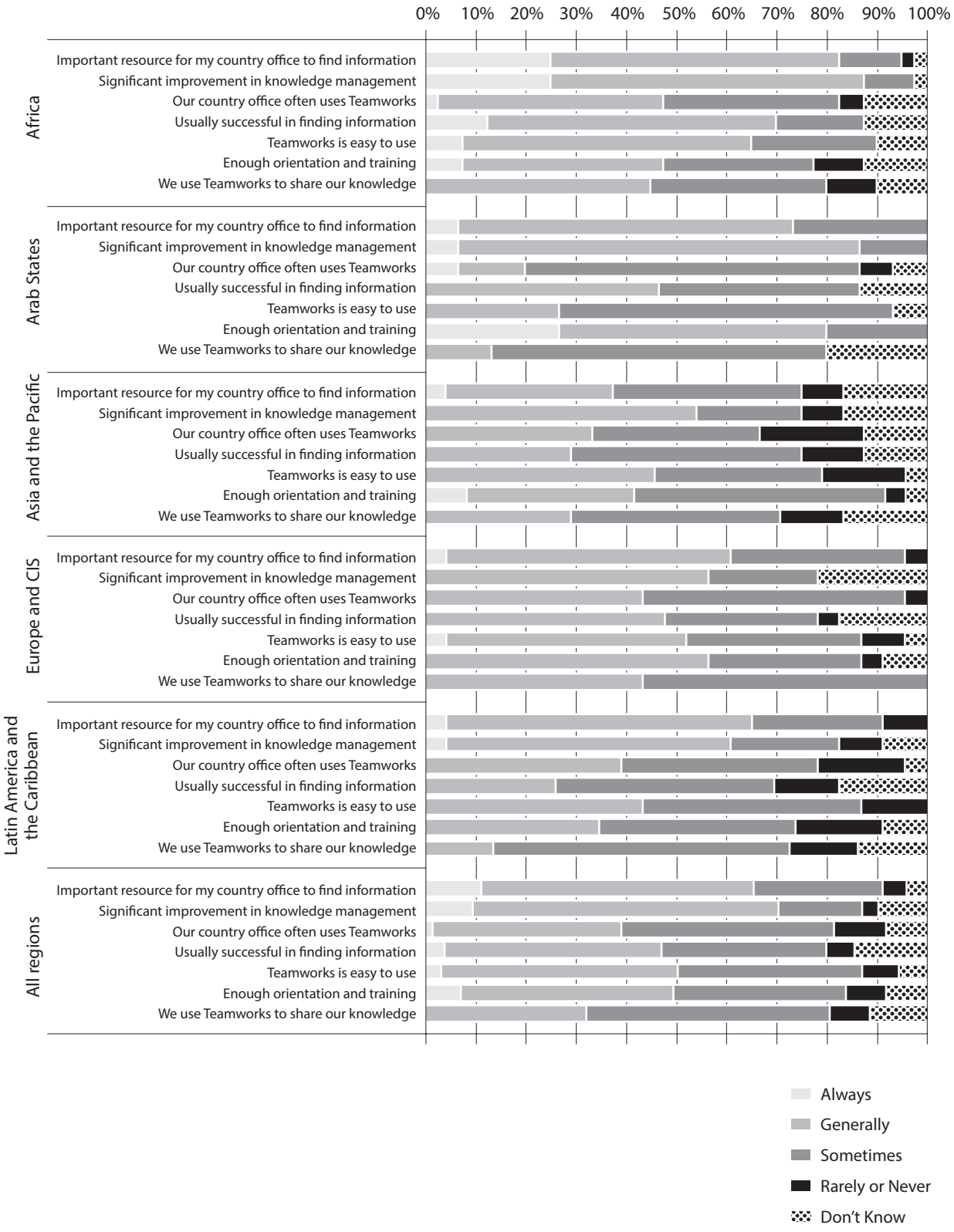
The Arab HDRs and the Arab Knowledge Report are mentioned frequently, together with a report from the RCC poverty unit, called the 'Arab Regional Development Challenges Report' (one issue in 2011), as well as the 'UNDP Strategy of Response to Transformational Change in the Arab Region (2011)'.

The answers to the rating questions 20 and 21 do not indicate marked difference with other regions. RBAS country offices are perhaps slightly less prone to use Teamworks than in other regions on average, although they report receiving better orientation and training on Teamworks than in other regions.

20. Would you say the following statements applied always, generally, sometimes or never to UNDP knowledge products?



21. Teamworks has been developed by BDP to foster knowledge sharing. Please consider the following statements and indicate your opinions.



ANNEX 5.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

TO THE EVALUATION OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ARAB STATES, 2010-2013

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS

The present document constitutes the response of UNDP management to the independent evaluation of the UNDP Regional Programme for the Arab States, 2010-2013. The regional programme was approved by the Executive Board in decision 2010/12 at its first regular session 2010. The evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the regional programme. A meta-evaluation of the programme assessed its strategic position, achievement of intended goals and results, performance of policy advice, knowledge management and capacity development activities, synergies and partnerships.

The evaluation, conducted in 2012, is intended to feed directly into the development of the fifth regional programme document for the Arab States, 2014-2017. The aim of the evaluation is to provide accountability for the achievement of results and resources used, identify successful approaches and challenges, and learn lessons from implementation in a regional setting. The evaluation was structured around the customary international evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It presents findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the assessment of UNDP performance and its strategic positioning in the region.

The evaluation concluded that the Regional Programme for the Arab States, 2010-2013, has been implemented at a challenging time in the region's history. It was designed and launched before the Arab uprisings of 2011 and, at the time, UNDP was among the very few aid organizations trying to promote good governance in the region. It will now need to adapt and take into account the changes transforming the region.

Management notes that the evaluation focused largely on implementation and structural aspects of the regional programme's management, and less on the substantive focus that the Regional Bureau for Arab Sates (RBAS) considers key. In the annex to the present document, following the standard template, UNDP management presents detailed responses to each of the recommendations and some key issues, and proposes follow-up action with time-frame specified.

Annex. Key recommendations and management response

Evaluation recommendation 1

In order to enhance its visibility in the region and increase its chances of success and sustainability, the regional programme for the Arab States should be more firmly anchored in, and managed from, the Arab region, and should strengthen its partnerships with regional organizations.

Management response

Noted and partially initiated. While the regional programme is firmly anchored in the region, with all regional projects based in and managed from the region, it is agreed that additional efforts need to be made to further engage with regional organizations. RBAS signed a memorandum of understanding with the League of Arab States in September 2012. Since 2011, the League of Arab States has been involved in regional projects development. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia was involved in the development of the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative. The League of Arab States is also a partner in the new regional project on trade entitled Aid for Trade in Arab States – implementation starting in 2013.

Key actions	Time-frame	Responsible unit(s)
Pursue ongoing consultations with the League of Arab States to better identify possible opportunities for cooperation and provision of support.	2013	RBAS
Ensure greater involvement and coordination with regional organizations in the development and implementation of regional projects, particularly through the regional United Nations Development Group mechanism.	2014-2017	RBAS

Evaluation recommendation 2

Project managers located in the region should be: empowered to manage their project's personnel and financial resources; encouraged to cultivate a rapport with donors and to participate in resource mobilization efforts; and allowed to strengthen links with other UNDP units and external partners.

Management response

Partially relevant. Project managers contribute to resource mobilization efforts. However, they cannot be in charge of resource mobilization on their own, as there would be an issue of segregation of duties. Furthermore, it is a corporate agreement that for regional projects, regional bureaux, in cooperation with the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, Bureau for Development Policy and Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, should take the lead in resource mobilization efforts in order to ensure better coherence and avoid duplication and donor fatigue.

As per the UNDP Internal Control Framework, "The broad responsibilities of project managers include:

- Preparing annual budgets and workplans for approval by office management;
- Achieving the outputs described in the workplan;
- Reviewing budgets and workplans on a monthly basis and bringing to the attention of senior management any proposed changes;
- Prepare procurement and recruitment plans for the project, and monitor activities based on the plans developed."

Project managers manage human and financial resources within this framework, while the ultimate accountability for the use of regional funds rests with the Regional Director.

Partners and other UNDP units are always invited to participate and contribute to regional projects organized events.

Ensure project managers continue to reach out and involve other UNDP units and external partners in project activities, subject to availability of funds.	2013-2017	RBAS

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Evaluation recommendation 3 The regional programme should be better connected to the UNDP knowledge architecture. The most effective way to achieve this would be to place regional projects and project managers under the responsibility of the Regional Centre in Cairo, as is standard practice in other regions, with RBAS at headquarters retaining only an oversight role.		
Management response Noted. The Regional Bureau for Arab States is currently undergoing a change management exercise, looking at reviewing the bureau's structure in order to optimize efficiency. Currently, projects are all based in and managed from the region, with headquarters only having an oversight role.		
Upon completion of the work of the UNDP Management Consulting Team (MCT), revise the current bureau architecture and implement changes as appropriate.	2013-2014	RBAS
Evaluation recommendation 4 The regional programme should strengthen its internal coherence; connect more systematically project outputs and activities with expected outcomes in the regional programme document; strengthen collaboration between regional programme components; and document and communicate regularly about the funding, activities and results of the regional programme as a whole.		
Management response It is agreed that the regional programme should strengthen its internal coherence and enhance its documentation and communication of the programme's achievements.		
Align the new regional programme with the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, and emphasize resilience as the cross-cutting theme to strengthen connections and linkages across different areas of focus on poverty reduction, governance, and energy and environment for improved internal coherence. Further underline the importance of inclusion, especially targeting youth and gender, in all focus areas, and reflect them in relevant knowledge products and communication materials.	2014-2017	RBAS
Organize annual knowledge cross-sharing meetings in order to provide a platform of exchange between regional projects, and to use as a basis for consolidation of project outputs at the outcome level.	2014-2017	RBAS
Develop a quarterly newsletter that includes main achievements of the regional programme.	2014-2017	RBAS
Evaluation recommendation 5 The regional programme should build upon the current positioning as a source of carefully contextualized regional knowledge and expertise in Arabic, English and French, and build on the comparative advantages of regional projects and programmes in advocacy on sensitive issues, socio-economic and political context analysis, knowledge sharing, regional debates and dialogue and use of South-South cooperation.		
Management response Partially agreed and initiated. The regional programme recognizes the importance of making knowledge products accessible to most, and for this reason has been developing knowledge and making it available in mainly Arabic and English for the past few years. Whenever possible, and subject to availability of funds, French versions of publications have also been produced. The regional programme will also continue building upon its current positioning to provide a platform for debate and knowledge production in the region. The ongoing change management exercise is looking at various implementation options for regional projects. Country-level activities are always planned, coordinated and implemented in full cooperation with country offices.		
Review implementation arrangements of regional projects based on MCT recommendations.	2013-2014	RBAS
Continue producing knowledge and making it available in Arabic, English, and where possible, in French, and maintain its role in addressing issues that may be sensitive when tackled at the national level.	2013-2017	RBAS

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Annex. Key recommendations and management response		
Evaluation recommendation 6 The regional programme should take into account the changes transforming the region, articulate more explicit support to regional efforts to protect human rights, and attempt to translate information and knowledge into action, so as to contribute to concrete outcomes that can improve people's lives.		
Management response Agreed. The new regional programme, 2014-2017, will consider the various development issues, including gender, affecting the region following the changes transforming it, and prioritize interventions subject to availability of funding. In doing so, RBAS will be guided as well by the outcomes of national and regional consultations on MDG post-2015 development priorities.		
Ensure the new regional programme, 2014-2017, focuses on development issues affecting the region, taking into account the changes transforming it, and within the framework of the Executive Board approved UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.	2014-2017	RBAS
Evaluation recommendation 7 UNDP in the Arab States should expand its partnerships with civil society and engage with community organizations, religious leaders, the media and academia in debates, awareness raising activities, and assessment of public policy.		
Management response Noted and applied in several regional projects (for example, HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States, Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries). The regional programme has been successful in building networks, bringing together governmental and non-governmental actors and stakeholders, particularly in the area of anti-corruption, through the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network. The regional programme has also adopted this participatory approach in regional project development, and will continue doing so during the next programming cycle, 2014-2017.		
Ensure the new regional programme, 2014-2017, continues to foster participation of all stakeholders, and clearly mention this approach in the regional programme document, 2014-2017.	2014-2017	RBAS
Evaluation recommendation 8 RBAS should commission more frequent outcome evaluations and audits of its regional programme.		
Management response It is agreed that RBAS should commission more regular outcome evaluations.		
Commission at least two outcome evaluations during the programming cycle, 2014-2017	2014-2017	RBAS

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