

# INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OFFICE

United Nations Development Programme



## EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF UNDP IN SUPPORTING NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MDGS

### CONCEPT NOTE MARCH 2014

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## INTRODUCTION

At its 2013 second regular session, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Executive Board agreed that the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) carry out a thematic evaluation on the “role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)”.<sup>1</sup> The Board noted the high strategic importance of MDGs and the potential to extract lessons learned for the post-2015 global development agenda. The evaluation will be presented at the June 2015 session of the UNDP Executive Board.

The evaluation will be carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy with the following purposes:

1. To provide substantive support to the Administrator’s accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board;
2. To support greater UNDP accountability to global and national stakeholders and development partners;
3. To serve as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions globally;

## BACKGROUND

The Millennium Declaration in 2000 and associated MDGs constitute an internationally agreed set of quantifiable and time-bound goals to advance human development. Over for the last decade, they grew into representing the central development ‘paradigm’, defining in simplified terms what development was about. The MDGs differ from prior global goals for poverty reduction in their comprehensive nature and the systematic efforts taken to finance, implement and monitor them.

The MDGs have shaped the UNDP programming framework to a considerable extent, but the focus of this work has changed over time. While the Organisation was initially focused on raising awareness about the MDGs through a series of campaigns, after 2005 its focus moved to supporting the incorporation and mainstreaming of MDGs in national development strategies, and since 2010 to directly supporting the achievements of selected MDGs through the MDG acceleration framework.

In 2003, the Secretary-General nominated the UNDP Administrator to act as the coordinator and “score keeper” of MDGs in the UN system. At the country level, UNDP aimed to work with national partners to fix national MDG targets, establish monitoring mechanisms, mobilize public support for the MDGs, and plan national MDG reports. The 2005 World Summit (14–16 September 2005), convened as a follow-up summit meeting to the Millennium Summit, urged every country to adopt and implement development strategies taking into account the MDGs. From there on, the emphasis in UNDP support moved to policy advisory services to “MDGise” national development strategies, including PRSPs.

The subsequent UNDP Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 highlighted “the urgent need for additional efforts by the international community” to achieve the MDGs by 2015 for all developing countries but particularly for the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states. Among the areas of UNDP support to reduce poverty, the Plan sets out to integrate the pursuit of MDGs into national development strategies and to “analyse data to help governments decide on the relative allocation of resources for health, education, irrigation, transport, and other sectors.”

With the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, concern grew about the ability to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and even about the potential for reversals in development gains. In preparation for the 2010 MDG Summit, UNDP published studies leading to its *MDG Breakthrough Strategy* (May 2010), which encapsulated the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) with an objective to help countries overcome slow and uneven progress and meet the 2015 deadline. The 2010 MDG Review Summit (20-22 September 2010) concluded with the adoption of a global action plan to accelerate progress towards the eight anti-poverty goals. With the 2010 Midterm Review of the UNDP Strategic Plan and its extension to 2013, UNDP aligned its development results framework re. the MDGs with the MAF approach.

## OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To assess the roles played and results achieved by UNDP in support of the achievement of MDGs;
- To identify the factors, decisions and strategies that may have affected UNDP’s contribution and performance in supporting the achievement of MDGs; and

- Based on the above, to provide strategic recommendations for similar work in the future.

UNDP's support to the achievement of MDGs is provided through a broad range of initiatives. The following lines of work are proposed to form part of the evaluation scope:

- UNDP's role as a "champion" of MDG (Millennium Campaign and other awareness raising efforts)
- Normative work of the Millennium Project, and of the BDP MDG Group which took over the MP's role in 2007
- UNDP's role as a "score keeper": MDG reports, MDG Monitor & MDG Gap Task Force
- Policy advisory to mainstream MDG within national development strategies and MDG costing
- MDG Localisation (with UNCDF)
- MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF)
- Joint Korea-UNDP MDG Trust Fund

The initiatives proposed for evaluation are focused predominantly on upstream policy advice, advocacy, awareness raising, and progress monitoring. Evaluating MDG localisation, the MAF and the Joint Korea-UNDP MDG Trust Fund will imply reviewing a limited amount of downstream work. It is proposed *not* to evaluate the Millennium Villages because evaluating them would be a project in itself. The MDG Achievement Fund was excluded primarily because it was recently evaluated. Much of the above work involves other UN entities, NGOs and charitable institutions, and national governments. In some of these initiatives, UNDP is not a leader but a partner. Opportunities for joint evaluations explored, to no avail. As a result, the evaluation may have a limited capacity to attribute success to UNDP, given the inter-agency nature of much of its 'evaluand'. The evaluation will cover the period from 2002-2014, i.e. since the beginning of the Millennium Campaign which was the first significant programmatic involvement of UNDP.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA & QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions below form a tentative set which will be expanded based on further desk study and interaction with key UN/UNDP actors. The final set will be structured using the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

1. What roles did UNDP play in the design, communication, monitoring and implementation of the MDGs?
2. Were these roles appropriate? Which areas made the best use of UNDP's strategic advantage? How relevant and useful were the different MDG tools for countries of different income levels?
3. Were the approaches taken by UNDP to support these different roles efficient and effective? In particular, what was the quality of the UNDP technical assistance and extent of the financial assistance provided?
4. Did the different roles and lines of work add up to form a coherent set of activities?
5. To what extent has UNDP been able to reach out to various partners (governments, civil society, academia, private sector) and support these partners' contributions to the fulfilment of the MDGs? E.g. what impact did UNDP's activity in support of MDGs have on national, ODA and private sector funding for MDGs?
6. How effectively did UNDP use its coordination mandate and links to UN Secretariat to federate UN agencies work on MDG?
7. Did the MDGs help UNDP reposition itself as a relevant actor in policy advisory vis-à-vis IFIs and bilaterals?
8. Which external factors have most influenced UNDP's ability to perform in this area (e.g., democratic governance, national ownership, region, income levels, etc.)?

## APPROACH

The evaluation will rely on multiple sources for data collection and mixed-methods for analysis, validation and triangulation of evidence against the evaluation questions. Sources of data and methods of collection will include: document review and administrative data analysis; meta-synthesis of evidence from independent evaluations conducted by the IEO and some decentralized evaluations commissioned by UNDP units at headquarters, regional and country levels; approximately 12 country case studies. IEO has conducted a preliminary mapping exercise based on Atlas data to identify the geographic distribution and concentration of the different strands of work. This process will feed into the selection of country case studies based on the extent of MDG-related work by the Country Office, UNDP region, income status, and HDI.

As part of the country case studies, focus groups will be conducted with primary stakeholders using participatory methods. Semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data from key informants in the Executive Board, UNDP senior management, UNDP country offices and relevant staff in UNDP and partner agencies. A survey of country offices' MDG focal points will be undertaken and cross-checked with existing survey results. Cyber-metric analysis and social network analysis may be undertaken of knowledge platforms, knowledge and communication products linked to MDG advocacy.

## EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME

The evaluation will be presented to the Executive Board in June 2015 preceded by an informal session with Board members. The final evaluation report will be shared with UNDP Management by January 2015 to allow for time to prepare a management response. A draft report will be shared with UNDP Management and programme units by November 2014. The evaluation's Terms of Reference will be shared with the OPG by the end of March 2014.

## MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The *Independent Evaluation Office* will conduct the evaluation and has the overall responsibility for the conceptualization and design of the evaluation, managing the evaluation process and producing the final evaluation report for presentation of the report to the Executive Board.

An *Advisory Panel* of two experts in the field of evaluation and development will be constituted by March 2014. The panel will play an important role in providing strategic, methodological and substantive inputs into the evaluation process as well as review the key outputs including the main evaluation report.

A *Technical Reference Group* comprising representatives of Regional Bureaus, Policy Bureau, and Regional Service Centres will be constituted in March 2014 to participate in discussions on Terms of Reference and evaluation findings and conclusions.

The *Organizational Performance Group (OPG)* has the responsibility of reviewing of the drafts of the Terms of Reference and evaluation report and providing the consolidated comments of programme and policy units.