

## COUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND EVALUATION PLANS

### *Interim guidance and support*

#### 1. Introduction

At the Annual Session of the Executive Board in 2010, the Administrator assured Member States that the country programme documents to be submitted in 2011, as part of the UNDAF/CPD cycle beginning in 2012, would be of a quality that will enable UNDP to play a lead role in the push towards achieving the MDGs by 2015. At the same session, the Board reviewed the findings of the Independent Review of UNDP's Evaluation Policy and requested UNDP, in Decision 2010/16, "to intensify its efforts to strengthen oversight and support for decentralized evaluation in order to increase the coverage, compliance, quality as well as use, and in this regard, emphasizes the importance of senior management commitment and accountability, in particular of regional bureaux directors."

These twin calls, one for improvements in the quality of CPDs and country programming, and the other to provide credible evidence of signature UNDP contributions to national results, come at a significant time. The country programmes being prepared now and next year as part of the UNDAF preparatory process will be the ones to carry the organization's responses through to 2015. This interim guidance is part of a larger organizational response to these calls. It also reflects changes that have taken place in UNDAF guidance which invite both greater coherence and greater flexibility in the way country teams and country offices identify and respond to relevant national priorities.

#### 2. Country programme document

The guidance and template is intended to help you with both the content and form of the country programme document. In it you will find:

- Brief but specific guidance on the content of the narrative. This is based on lessons learnt from previous headquarters appraisals, as well as emerging organizational priorities related to the MDG breakthrough strategy and the related need for UNDP to demonstrate more integrated UN responses to national priorities
- A results and resources framework format (with example) that reflects changes made since the adoption of one layer of outcome in the UNDAF guidelines of March 2010. UNDP was a lead proponent of this change at the inter-agency level and saw it as an opportunity to promote a more outcome-oriented and integrated focus through the preparation of the UNDAF and the CPD. As such, outputs are only required to be mentioned as "indicative" in the CPD; detailed discussions at that level of results are only useful during the preparation of the operational document: the UNDAF action plan (or CPAP)

#### 3. Evaluation plan

In approving the UNDP evaluation policy (2006) the Executive Board requested that all country programme documents would be submitted with a fully-costed evaluation plan for approval. Evaluation plans must be developed in close discussion with the government and other national partners to ensure ownership, use and relevance of planned evaluations to the national evaluation context.

The first independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy was conducted in 2010. In its decision in approving the review and UNDP management response, the Executive Board requested UNDP to submit for approval at its first regular session 2011 a revised UNDP evaluation policy that reflects the introduction of "*costed and budgeted evaluation plans as the compliance requirement for decentralized evaluations*". The Board further requested that "*the evaluation plans are budgeted no later than at the time of adoption of the CPAP*".

Against this background, the basis for decentralized evaluation compliance has been changed from the planned outcome evaluations to *the full implementation of the evaluation plan*. When developing the evaluation plan, country offices should, therefore, take the following into account:

- The evaluation plan has to be presented to the Executive Board *fully costed*. This implies that formulation of the CPD and evaluation plan must achieve, in dialogue with national counterparts, an understanding of both scope

and cost implications of evaluation. The budgeting of evaluation is expected to follow and should be established no later than the adoption of the UNDAF action plan or CPAP.

- The evaluation plan should include an appropriate mix of outcome-level, project and thematic evaluations, including joint evaluations, and evaluations required by a cost-sharing agreement or partnership protocol (e.g. GEF). Most of these evaluations should have been identified during the development of the UNDAF and should together over the course of the programme cycle form a meaningful picture of how UNDP has contributed to each of the outcomes in the CPD. Also, country offices are invited to promote joint evaluations with government, development, United Nations and other partners while ensuring that these evaluations demonstrate UNDP's own contribution so that such evaluations meet UNDP's accountability and learning needs.
- The evaluation plan can be revised for compelling reasons such as major changes in policy, programme or evaluation context, with the approval of government and clearance by the respective Regional Bureau. Other national counterparts and the UNCT should be consulted as appropriate. This implies an active discussion on the continued validity of an evaluation plan, which should be part of an annual review exercise of the UNDAF/country programme.

The evaluation plan will continue to be carefully reviewed as part of the submission of your CPD for headquarter appraisal.

#### **4. Deadlines**

Suggested milestones leading up to final submission are outlined in the programme and project management section of the [POPP](#). The final deadline for submission of draft CPDs and costed evaluation plans is **11 February 2011** (see the [corporate calendar](#) on the Intranet homepage).

#### **5. Online resources**

Since some of the guidance provided here is *interim* and depends on final approval by the Executive Board of a revised Evaluation Policy in January 2011, you will not find the enclosed information in the POPP. Please refer to the following resources to help you develop your country programme document and evaluation plan.

##### **5.1 Country programme document tool on RBM platform**

This tool was introduced in 2009 on the RBM platform to assist country offices to collaborate with regional bureaux and Practice advisors. Early mobilization and collaboration will enable timely substantive inputs on drafts of the CPD and evaluation plans. This resource also contains all the forms and templates necessary for country offices and regional bureaux to complete a successful submission. To access the tool, click [here](#).

##### **5.2 UNDP leadership of the UNDAF cycle**

This Teamworks service space was set up at the request of the Operations Group in March 2010. It is designed to offer a venue for interaction and learning for managers and staff members at country, regional and headquarter levels on corporate messaging and resources, together with emerging practices and experiences. To register or log on, click [here](#).

##### **5.3 Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results**

The 2009 version of the handbook was launched to support UNDP in becoming more results-oriented and to improve its focus on development changes and real improvements in people's lives. It contains useful guidance, tools and examples that should be fully consulted during the UNDAF and CPD formulation phase. Following the approval of the revised evaluation policy in January 2011, a minor revision of the Handbook will provide expand guidance on evaluation compliance and planning. To access the online version of the handbook, click [here](#).