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JOINT ASSESSMENT
OF THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP

**Independent Evaluation Office
and Office of Audit and Investigations**

United Nations Development Programme

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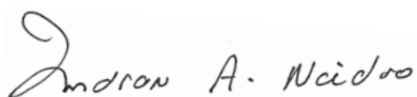**JOINT ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP**

FOREWORD

This report presents the assessment of UNDP institutional effectiveness conducted jointly by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) of UNDP. Both offices embarked on an exhilarating journey to assess how UNDP is transforming itself and enhancing the quality of its programming.

The scope of this assessment extended to all geographic regions, covering country, regional, global and corporate levels of programming and organizational work. Evidence for the assessment was drawn from various evaluation and audit reports, external assessments, interviews, focus group discussions and visits to the five UNDP regional hubs. External partners were also involved in the discussions to collect their views and appreciations.

UNDP was among the first United Nations organizations to introduce as part of its Strategic Plan a chapter on institutional effectiveness and how it intended to achieve all development goals while transforming its way of delivering results and impact on the ground. Three pillars were the focus of this transformation, namely: (a) higher-quality programmes through better project planning, design and evaluation, underpinned by stronger results-based management; (b) greater organizational openness, agility and adaptability to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise; and (c) improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results in a way that is sustainable within projected resource flows.

The joint assessment reviewed the first pillar related to higher-quality programmes with the intension of ascertaining whether the program-matic and operational measures introduced by the organization were likely to impact the quality of UNDP work in the field.
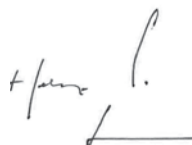
The team recognizes that quality programming is not an end in itself but rather the beginning of an impact at the macro level to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The assessment team was mindful that because some measures were implemented recently, it was very difficult to observe meaningful results.

The assessment identified a number of challenges to successfully implement and reach a higher quality of programming. If not addressed, these challenges could undermine the future efforts and credibility of UNDP. Some of the challenges noted were intrinsic and other were related to the environment in which UNDP operates.

In addition to the staff of UNDP, we are very grateful to the Executive Board members and government representatives in the countries visited who were very generous with their time and ideas.

The report is the result of the dedication and intense teamwork of a number of people in both IEO and OAI and the generous time and inputs from numerous stakeholders, for which we are deeply grateful.

As UNDP prepares to develop a new Strategic Plan, we hope this assessment will shed light on how the organization can further enhance its institutional effectiveness to improve the quality of it programmes.

Indran A. Naidoo
Director, Independent Evaluation Office

Helge Osttveiten
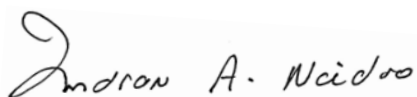Director, Office of Audit and Investigations

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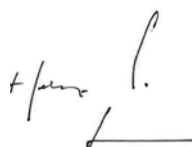
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Indran A. Naido
Director, Independent Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BPPS	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
COSI	Country Office Support Initiative
CPD	Country programme document
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DPC	Direct project costs
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
LDC	Least developed country
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MYFF	Multi-Year Funding Framework
OAI	Office of Audit and Investigations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
POPP	Programme and Operation Policies and Procedures
RBM	Results-based management
ROAR	Results-oriented annual report
RRF	Results and resources framework
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Evaluation Office and Office of Audit and Investigations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) jointly conducted an assessment of the institutional effectiveness of UNDP to assess the extent to which policy and organizational measures, including the associated restructuring process, have enhanced or have the potential to enhance the organization's ability to deliver higher-quality programmes and improve institutional effectiveness. The scope of the assessment covered relevant activities undertaken by UNDP during the period 2010-2015, with particular emphasis on the initiatives undertaken in support of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, including the associated restructuring process and measures, all of which aim at supporting country offices in delivering higher-quality programmes, which was the key focus of the assessment. Considering the early stage of implementation of UNDP reforms, the assessment recognizes that it may be too soon to fully identify all of the results and therefore aims to contribute to enhancing organizational learning by identifying opportunities for improvement

The approach and methodologies of the assessment were designed to inform the analysis of the theoretical framework and underlying assumptions as put forward by the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The assessment drew extensively on a meta-analysis of previous evaluations, audits and surveys as key data sources. Further, UNDP self-reporting data were used as sources of information, taking into consideration the potential limitation that such reports tend to focus on successes rather than on challenges experienced. In addition, substantial primary data collection was undertaken through missions to the five regional hubs, where focus group discussions were also held with staff from 45 country offices. The assessment team consulted with Governments, donors, beneficiaries, United Nations agencies

and headquarters staff. To close triangulation, five different surveys were designed and rolled out to country offices. The aggregation and triangulation of evidence from various sources and methods also provided context and enabled additional in-depth analysis of some emerging trends in the organizational performance of UNDP.

Key findings indicate that UNDP programmes show improved alignment with the priorities of the Strategic Plan and an uptake of the Sustainable Development Goals, but for the most part they fail to reflect on the strategic comparative advantage of UNDP and how UNDP is envisaged to add value to development initiatives. The organizational restructuring changes aimed at strengthening the regional presence and consolidating policy functions contributed to a clearer division of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, but to varying degrees across the different regions, and the sustainability of these changes is uncertain, given the lack of resources to staff regional hubs and for country offices to pay for regional services. The implementation of all programmatic reforms aiming at improving the quality of programmes and projects has not been fully costed and it is not clear if the needed resources can be mobilized. Given the interdependence of financial and human resources, budgetary constraints have caused staff shortages and time constraints, which are likely to adversely affect performance, unless additional prioritization efforts take place. Results-based management (RBM) continues to be associated more with compliance-driven practices to satisfy reporting requirements, with a limited focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making and improved performance and effectiveness with targeted financial allocations. In order to effectively institutionalize RBM, UNDP has yet to find the balance between compliance for reporting, and learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness. A greater understanding of

what RBM can deliver is necessary to meet the pledge that UNDP will be a results-driven and knowledge-based organization.

The assessment concluded that there are signs of improvement in the quality of programmes and that organizational measures such as the structural review, which aim inter alia to strengthen the regional presence and the consolidation of policy functions, have clarified some roles and responsibilities between the regional level and headquarters and are mostly valued by country offices. However, it is not possible to conclude that the measures put in place currently have significant tangible and sustainable effects on the quality of programmes or have the potential for success, given the multiple factors that need to be addressed. UNDP is in the midst of change, and the sustainability of measures to increase institutional effectiveness through the new organizational and programmatic measures might be at risk due to lack of resources and sustainable funding models. Without additional efforts and targeted investments to strengthen capacities, it is unlikely that programmatic and organizational measures can be fully implemented, significantly enhance the quality of programmes and improve institutional effectiveness in a sustainable manner. Leadership in UNDP has yet to adequately support the organization to adapt and implement the new measures and manage knowledge more openly by using evidence of successes and failures to improve the quality of programmes and enhance institutional effectiveness.

For further consideration: If UNDP is to be an evidence-driven learning and knowledge-based organization, it must find a more effective way to invest in RBM beyond focal points for RBM and monitoring and evaluation, webinars and online courses. Knowledge management is still focused mostly on capturing best practices, and not necessarily on the lessons learned in each context of success and failure to contribute to effectiveness and improve results. UNDP leadership will be pivotal to promoting a results culture that encourages critical reflection of success and failures as a value for organizational learning. Unless the new

focus on RBM and the additional oversight and quality assurance measures align with adequate leadership for improved learning from evidence to return benefits, given the current fiscal realities these systems may further constrain country offices instead of improving the quality and effectiveness of programmes. Balance in the level of effort for RBM tasks is advisable so as not to sacrifice the central purpose of UNDP of responding quickly to partners' needs.

1. CONCLUSIONS

OVERALL CONCLUSION: There are signs of improvements in the quality of programmes in UNDP. The CPDs are more strategic and more effectively engage multiple parts of the organization in quality assurance. There has also been progress made in the quality assurance of UNDP programmes in order to facilitate results-based programming and budgeting. Organizational measures such as the structural review, aiming inter alia to strengthen the regional presence and the consolidation of policy functions, have clarified some roles and responsibilities between the regional level and headquarters and are mostly valued by country offices.

However, it is not possible to conclude that the measures put in place currently have significant tangible and sustainable effects on the quality of programmes, or have potential for success, given multiple factors that need to be addressed, such as leadership, communication and resources. In addition, the measures for higher-quality programming have not been costed and therefore it is not clear if UNDP will be able to make all necessary investments.

UNDP is in the midst of change, and the sustainability of measures to increase institutional effectiveness through the new organizational and programmatic measures might be at risk due to lack of resources and sustainable funding models. Without additional efforts and targeted investments to strengthen capacities, it is unlikely that programmatic and organizational measures can be fully implemented, significantly enhance the

quality of programmes and improve institutional effectiveness in a sustainable manner.

High-quality, results-based programming entails more than compliance to quality standards and reporting on results, even though this is important for senior management, donors and other important stakeholders. Results-based programming also entails learning to improve programming with the help of results-based information from evaluations, audits and corporate monitoring and reporting tools. Leadership is needed in UNDP to further develop a results-based culture throughout the organization that effectively uses knowledge to improve results, where successes but also failures are important vehicles of learning.

Conclusion 1: The UNDAFs and CPDs show improved alignment with the Strategic Plan priorities and an uptake of the Sustainable Development Goals, but for the most part fail to reflect the strategic comparative advantage of UNDP and how UNDP is envisaged to add value to development initiatives. CPDs do not reflect a sufficient use and understanding of the theory of change concept that could have provided for a more integrated vision and approach.

Standardizing quality criteria in the heart of the programming process requires the conditions for effective quality assurance to be in place for quality standards to be attainable. This currently is not the case, which has an impact on the planning and design of programmes and projects and is likely to affect the quality of programme results. UNDP has yet to calculate the time and cost involved in implementing effective quality assurance and to date, no additional budgetary provisions* have been set aside or provided to country offices to cover related costs.

Country offices and regional bureaux particularly face difficulties in applying theory of change con-

cepts and in translating the products of the planning process into RRFs.

Almost all country offices and regional hub/bureau staff consistently mentioned that the main problems were and are resources and related capacities. Programmatic measures did not address this root problem; therefore, organizational measures are expected to have only a marginal effect. While country offices do understand that UNDP needs to improve the quality of its programmes and projects, the means to make the necessary investments are lacking, according to the country offices. This condition seems to represent a binding constraint and is likely to affect the effectiveness of the measures.

The broad range of stakeholder consultations held by the assessment team made it clear that most staff members, and in particular managers, need further training in RBM. A corporate-wide assessment of training needs is required for staff ranging from senior management to programme managers and associates. Training also has not been sufficiently extended to implementing partners, whose engagement is essential.

The use of evidence in reporting has increased, but evidence of its use for improved learning, programme design, implementation and course corrections is still limited. A monitoring policy and a strategy to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations have also been launched to improve the use of credible evidence. However, to date limited progress has been made in a consistent way to support learning from evidence for improved results within and among interventions. Because UNDP works in partnerships, measures cannot be implemented by UNDP alone.

Conclusion 2: The organizational restructuring changes aimed at strengthening the regional presence and consolidating policy functions contributed to a clearer division of roles, responsibil-

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*   The resources for quality assurance need to be recovered through DPC. As DPC is new, this change has yet to take root in the organization and it is not clear if country offices are aware of it.

ities and accountabilities, but to varying degrees across the different regions. The sustainability of these changes is uncertain, given the lack of resources for staffing regional hubs and for country offices to pay for regional services.

Country offices particularly welcomed the increased actual or potential availability and proximity of hub staff, with advisers in the region now more likely to better engage and understand the context, needs and challenges of the region's country offices. Roles are not fully understood in all regions, and country offices are at times unclear about the services and reference persons available. In two of the hubs, the new architecture and matrix management have created additional and unclear layers of reporting and bottlenecks, often to and from headquarters. More effective decision-making power and stronger integration between regional bureaux advisers and BPPS advisers is found where hubs are led by Deputy Directors of the regional bureaux. Two regional hubs seem to have further centralized decision-making in New York rather than empowering the regional hubs to strengthen the regional presence and consolidate policy functions.

The uncertainty of financial resources has led to fragile contract situations, and if the prolonged vacancies of key positions persist and demand from country offices increases, the shortage of staff is likely to adversely affect the capacity of the hubs to provide timely and high-quality support. Further, not all country offices and partners are willing to pay the additional DPC charges for the regional services.

According to UNDP, the structural review delivered annual savings of $33 million in salaries and rent. Further review by OAI confirmed this figure. However and at the same time, the organization incurred additional one-time implementation costs of $35 million between 2014 and 2015. The net gain from the structural review for 2014-2015 is thus negative with additional costs of $ 2 million.

Conclusion 3: RBM continues to be associated more with compliance-driven practices to sat-isfy reporting requirements, with a limited focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making and improved performance with targeted financial allocations. In order to effectively institutionalize RBM, UNDP has yet to find the balance between compliance for reporting and learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness. A greater understanding of what RBM can deliver is necessary to meeting the pledge that UNDP will be a results-driven and knowledge-based organization.

RBM remains largely the responsibility of RBM and M&E focal points and experts. This inadequate understanding of the practice and value of RBM for learning purposes to improve results has hindered country offices in securing adequate use of knowledge management in the overall quality of programmes and projects and management for results. Less than half of UNDP staff contacted by the assessment considered themselves fully up to date with UNDP corporate requirements and directives on how to interpret and apply RBM concepts. In addition to this internal challenge, most of the external parties involved in UNDP project development also are not up to date with the UNDP RBM quality requirements.

There is a clear and still unmet demand for knowledge management to play a bigger role in helping the organization better learn from evidence for improved results. Leadership has yet to more effectively encourage a "results culture" which goes beyond reporting and understands RBM in terms of continuous organizational self-learning from both successes and failure and from innovation, and not just M&E for reporting purposes.

Conclusion 4: There may be insufficient human and financial resources to fulfil the corporate requirements of the programming and structural reforms, due to the fact that the measures for higher-quality programming were not properly costed. Given the interdependence of financial and human resources, budgetary constraints have caused staff shortages and time

constraints, which are likely to adversely affect performance, unless additional prioritization efforts take place.

The availability of sufficient financial and human resources is a fundamental factor affecting the sustainability of the regional hubs, which generally are expected to recover costs from services provided to country offices, many of which are not in a position to afford the regional hubs' high charges. The extent to which the regional bureaux and hubs will be able to properly support country offices will depend on the resources the regions and country offices will be able to mobilize to pay the additional charges for regional and policy services. The expectation of recovering the costs of policy support from service requesters (or projects) through direct project costing seems unrealistic in the short term and the lack of resources is likely to affect the strengthening of the regional presence in the near future. Fully implementing DPC will require additional negotiations with project partners and a results-based project budgeting approach which costs out all implementation inputs, including technical expertise irrespective of its source. This may take time.

Many open or planned positions in the regional hubs have been vacant because of financial constraints. Currently, one quarter of BPPS staff positions across the regions and headquarters are vacant. UNDP staff generally have shown resilience and adaptability, but levels of engagement are undermined by a lack of resources to invest in them.

In addition to the investment in RBM capacity, there are other cost factors involved in implementing all measures and reforms to the fullest extent. The measures for higher-quality programming have not been properly costed and therefore it is not clear if UNDP will be able to make all necessary investments. In fact, adhering fully to the quality standards comes at a cost, but this cost has not been properly calculated and the assumption that they can be absorbed by country offices is questionable. Without having better knowledge of all costs involved in adhering to the quality standards, the level of incidental and structural investment cannot be performed.

Further, staff shortages contribute to inadequate adherence to quality assurance procedures because small country offices, with limited numbers of staff, cannot easily segregate roles and responsibilities. This significantly hinders the fulfilment of requirements for independent quality assurance and monitoring functions in accordance with the corporate quality standards. More than half of the country offices contacted stated that they were unable to provide sufficient time for quality assurers to rigorously review all project proposals submitted to them. These constraints are likely to affect the success of the measures to enhance the quality of programmes and to improve the institutional effectiveness of UNDP.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Based on the content of the UNDAF and the guidance provided in the UNDP quality standards, country offices should ensure that the UNDP comparative advantage and value added are adequately identified by providing evidence as to why UNDP is better positioned than other institutions to implement a specific programme.

Recommendation 2: UNDP should ensure that all country offices fully understand and adequately practise the concept of theory of change during the programming process through a thorough assessment of the completeness and internal logic of the theory of change prior to submitting the CPDs to the Executive Board.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should assess the costs of implementing the new programme and project quality assurance system to determine whether and, if so, how the resource requirements of the reformed system can be sustainably met with costed plans for a phased implementation. Based on the budget available, UNDP should prioritize the quality elements to which country offices have to adhere fully.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should reassess the financial sustainability of the regional service centres/hubs model including the posting of the BPPS policy advisers.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should develop greater RBM expertise with improved focus on learning and knowledge management for enhanced effectiveness, shifting the focus from proving results to improving results. To effectively institutionalize RBM, capacity development needs to be delivered through a broad range of approaches and include all staff, from leadership and senior management to programme managers and associates. Capacity development should also extend to implementing partners, whose engagement is essential if national data sets are to improve and contribute to UNDP reporting requirements. Increased attention should also be given to promoting an organizational culture that uses more effectively the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations and audits to contribute to knowledge management and to feed strategic and timely decision-making.

Recommendation 6: UNDP leadership should prioritize investment in knowledge management, going beyond capturing best practices to using lessons learned from each context of success and failure to contribute to effectiveness and improve results. The role of leadership is pivotal in ensuring an enabling environment and support for UNDP to enhance engagement and communication to further develop a results-based culture throughout the organization that welcomes critical reflection on performance and effective knowledge management to improve results, where successes but also failures are important vehicles of learning. Leadership should effectively encourage a "results culture" which goes beyond reporting and understands RBM in terms of continuous organizational self-learning from both successes and failure and from innovation, and not just M&E for reporting purposes.

The final report with recommendations was submitted to UNDP management on 7th February 2017. As of 18th April 2017 no management response had been received.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Approved by the Executive Board in January 2014,[1] the medium-term plan[2] of the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) included a thematic evaluation to cover an institutional effectiveness theme related to chapter V ("Transforming institutional effectiveness") of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The specific theme and focus of the evaluation were to be decided in 2014 after further discussion with management.

Recognizing that institutional effectiveness is important to both the audit and evaluation functions of UNDP, the Directors of IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) decided to undertake this assessment jointly, using both audit and evaluation methods. The UNDP evaluation policy and OAI charter share the same purpose of supporting the organization through oversight, review of governance, risk management practices and institutional learning. This assessment report encompasses the joint findings and conclusions of the two offices for presentation to the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2017.

Following consultations with UNDP management through discussions with the Organizational Performance Group, OAI and IEO agreed on the scope of the joint assessment and its proposed terms of reference (annex 1).

1.2 OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

The objective of this assessment is to assess the extent to which policy and organizational measures,

including the associated restructuring process, have enhanced or have the potential to enhance the ability of UNDP to deliver higher-quality programmes and improve its institutional effectiveness.

The scope of the assessment included relevant UNDP activities undertaken during the period 2010-2015, which coincided with the periods of the Strategic Plans for 2008-2013 and 2014-2017, with particular emphasis on the initiatives undertaken in support of the latter, including the associated restructuring process and measures, all of which aim at supporting country offices in delivering higher-quality programmes.

Within the overall scope of examining institutional effectiveness, specific focus areas were selected to examine institutional effectiveness at the corporate, regional and country levels. The assessment takes into consideration the early stage of implementing UNDP reforms and recognizes that it may be too early to fully identify all of the results. These reforms include strengthening the UNDP regional presence and consolidating policy functions that were central to the structural change process initiated in 2014, and the set of measures piloted in 2015 to enhance country office capacities to deliver higher-quality programmes. Therefore, the assessment aims to contribute to enhancing organizational learning by identifying opportunities for improving the institutional effectiveness of UNDP.

The assessment aimed to answer the following research question: to what extent have the measures taken since 2010, which were aimed at improving the quality of programmes, enhanced
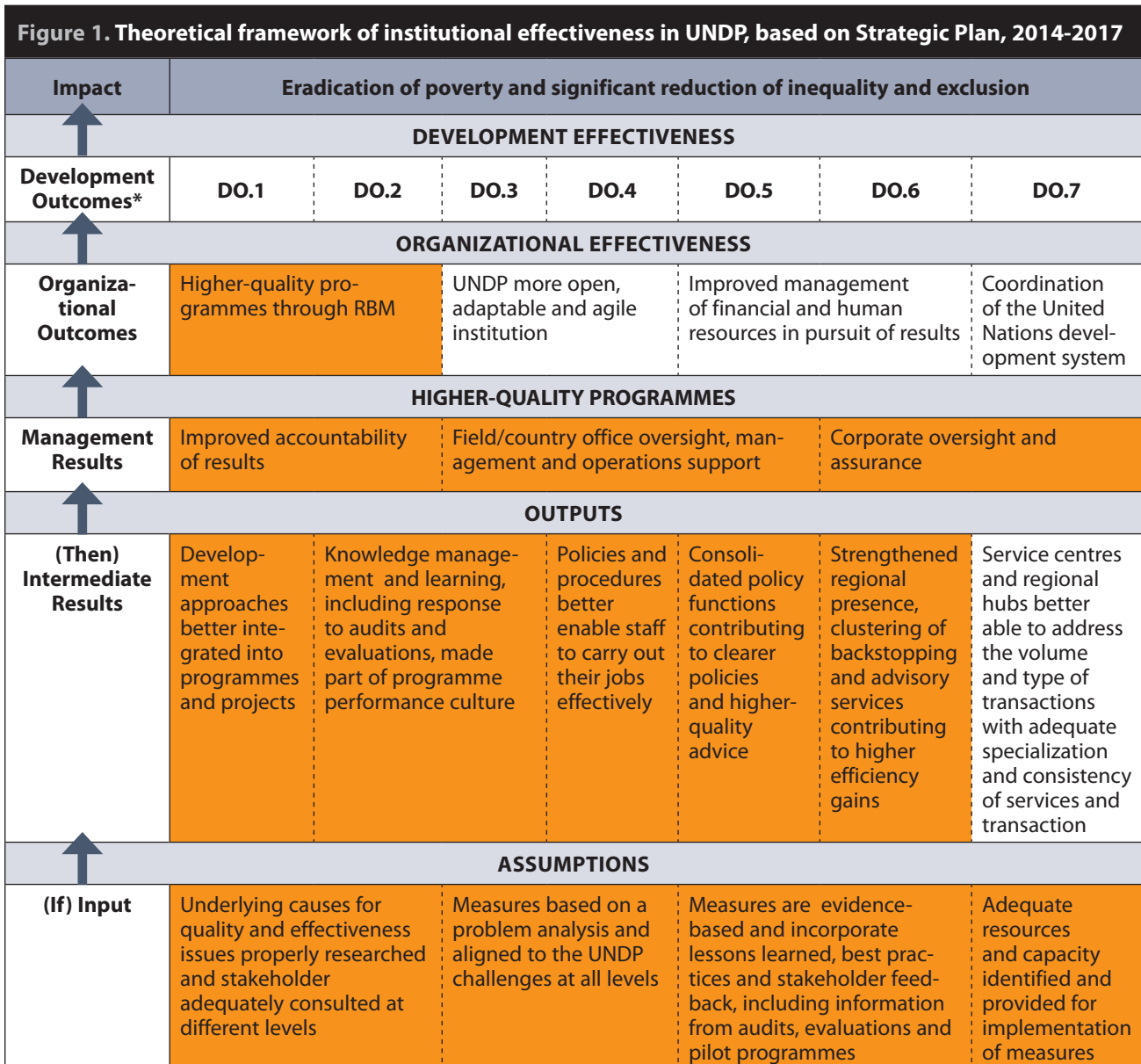
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1   DP/2014/9.

2   DP/2014/5.

or are likely to enhance the ability of UNDP to deliver higher-quality programmes and the organization's institutional effectiveness? More specifically:

a) Are the measures aimed at strengthening the capacity to deliver higher-quality programmes likely to be effective?

b) Are the measures aimed at strengthening regional presence, including consolidation of policy functions, likely to contribute to

strengthening the capacity to deliver higher-quality programmes?

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Considering the complex array of possible pathways towards institutional effectiveness, the assessment team chose the theoretical framework based on the Strategic Plan. This aimed to illustrate the key aspects of the reform process to an adequate degree so that the issues covered in

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of institutional effectiveness in UNDP, based on Strategic Plan, 2014-2017							
Impact	Eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequality and exclusion						
	DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS						
Development Outcomes*	**DO.1**	**DO.2**	**DO.3**	**DO.4**	**DO.5**	**DO.6**	**DO.7**
	ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS						
Organizational Outcomes	Higher-quality programmes through RBM		UNDP more open, adaptable and agile institution		Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results		Coordination of the United Nations development system
	HIGHER-QUALITY PROGRAMMES						
Management Results	Improved accountability of results		Field/country office oversight, management and operations support			Corporate oversight and assurance	
	OUTPUTS						
(Then) Intermediate Results	Development approaches better integrated into programmes and projects	Knowledge management and learning, including response to audits and evaluations, made part of programme performance culture	Policies and procedures better enable staff to carry out their jobs effectively	Consolidated policy functions contributing to clearer policies and higher-quality advice	Strengthened regional presence, clustering of backstopping and advisory services contributing to higher efficiency gains	Service centres and regional hubs better able to address the volume and type of transactions with adequate specialization and consistency of services and transaction	
	ASSUMPTIONS						
(If) Input	Underlying causes for quality and effectiveness issues properly researched and stakeholder adequately consulted at different levels		Measures based on a problem analysis and aligned to the UNDP challenges at all levels		Measures are evidence-based and incorporate lessons learned, best practices and stakeholder feedback, including information from audits, evaluations and pilot programmes		Adequate resources and capacity identified and provided for implementation of measures

Notes: Orange-shaded boxes indicate the scope of the assessment.
* See full UNDP development outcomes in Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

this assessment could be followed in a relatively simple manner.

UNDP associates development effectiveness with effectively fulfilling its mandate as a trusted partner by contributing to the seven development outcomes set out in the Strategic Plan. Institutional effectiveness, in contrast, is associated with the three key interrelated management results shown in figure 2 (also called "Interrelated strategies for an institutional effectiveness breakthrough"), which aim to support the vision and development outcomes presented in the Strategic Plan.
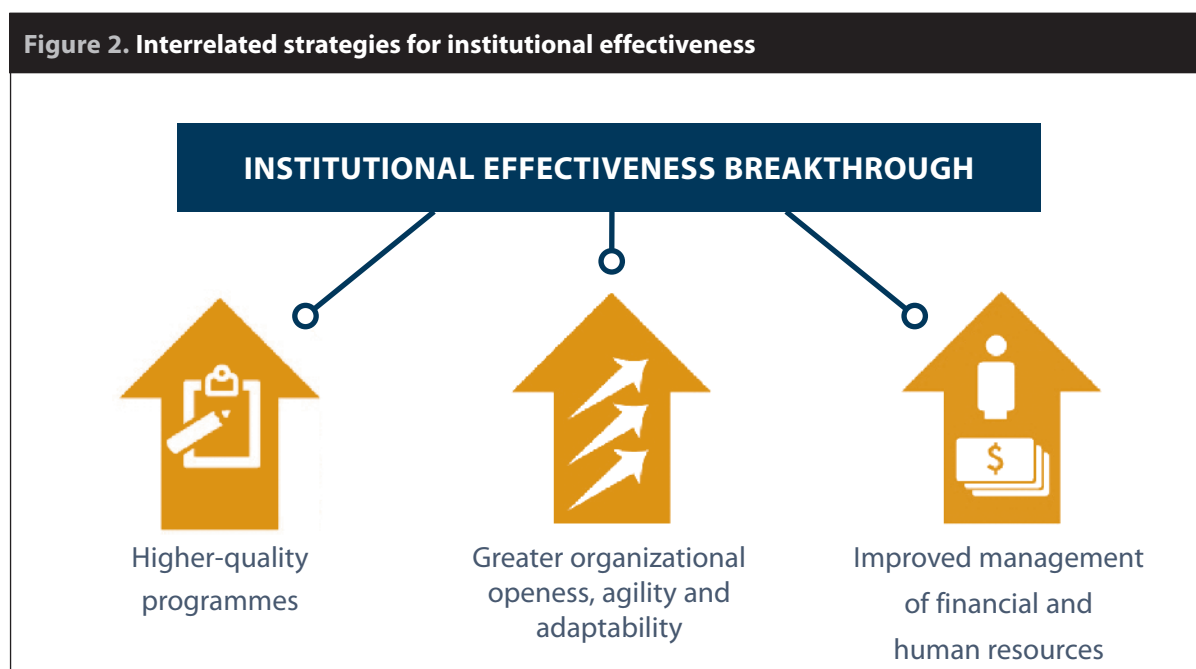
Institutional effectiveness and efficiency (management results/strategies) are determined by measuring direct, accountable and attributable performance over which the organization has control.

The team selected the first pillar, "Higher-quality programmes" (figure 2) as the main focus area for this assessment to build on the findings of the recent audit of results-based management (RBM) and further assess both the effectiveness of specific measures contained in new programming tools and practices and the structural changes to enhance the quality of programmes.

The scope of the assessment was narrowed down for several reasons: to allow in-depth analysis of selected components; to ensure that the exercise adds value by focusing on mature efforts or initiatives that were potentially positioned in a timely manner for course corrections; to promote synergies in the form of the proposed cooperation between OAI and IEO; to ensure complementarity of the assessment approaches of audit and evaluation; and to avoid a duplication of efforts with the assessments of UNDP by the Joint Inspection Unit and Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network.

The other two elements of the UNDP strategy to improve institutional effectiveness were excluded on the assumption that they would be covered in the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, since they were either still in the design stage or had recently begun implementation, and thus it was too early to assess them adequately.

A range of programmatic and organizational changes, including the strengthening of regional presence and the consolidation of policy functions, is expected to help guide and support country offices and other units in enhancing insti-

Figure 2. Interrelated strategies for institutional effectiveness

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS BREAKTHROUGH

Higher-quality programmes

Greater organizational openess, agility and adaptability

Improved management of financial and human resources

Source: UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017

tutional effectiveness towards improved development effectiveness.

The approach and methodologies of the assessment were designed to inform the analysis of the theoretical framework and underlying assumptions put forward by the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The assessment reviewed whether the following conditions were in place for the successful implementation of the measures:

a) Are the underlying causes for quality and effectiveness issues properly researched and were stakeholders adequately consulted at different levels?

b) Are the measures based on a problem analysis and aligned to the challenges facing UNDP at all levels? Are the measures evidence-based and do they incorporate lessons learned, best practices and stakeholders' feedback, including information from audits, evaluations and pilot programmes?

c) Are adequate resources and capacities identified and made available for implementing the measures?

Wherever possible, the assessment reviewed whether or not the various measures positively impacted on the quality of programmes.

The IEO and OAI jointly planned, designed and conducted this assessment, taking advantage of the strengths and different technical skills of both offices. These kinds of approaches used are essential in process assessments of complex institutional change. A particular strength of the joint assessment is that it brings together two sets of evidence bases from audit and evaluation to provide a more holistic view of the performance of UNDP. It raises the discussion on resources and the quality of their management, as well as on the results attained.

The assessment was guided by some of the indicators, baselines, milestone and targets in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF), when available. In addition, a detailed plan of inquiry was developed for the terms of reference and further developed during data collection, specifically identifying what would be collected as evidence to assess change in the quality of programmes across certain dimensions. With this approach, the assessment drew extensively on a meta-analysis of previous evaluations, audits and surveys as key data sources. Using the various audits and evaluations was critical because they were based on a wealth of recommendations on both corporate functions, regional bureaux and country offices. Recommendations that are usually issued by IEO and OAI are addressed through a thorough process of validation of the action plans, corrective measures and progress made towards addressing the root causes of the issues. Further, UNDP self-reporting data were also used as sources of information, taking into consideration the potential limitation that such reports tend to focus on successes, rather than on challenges experienced. In addition, a substantial primary data collection was undertaken specifically for the assessment through missions to the five regional hubs. Discussions were held with country office staff who were brought to the regional hubs for focus group discussions, as well as with Governments, donors, beneficiaries and United Nations agencies and headquarters staff. Five different surveys were also designed and rolled out to country offices.

Data collected were then analysed and whenever possible cross-referenced and triangulated to ensure the necessary depth to the analysis to produce credible findings. The aggregation and triangulation of evidence from various sources and methods also provided context and enabled additional in-depth analysis of some emerging trends in the organizational performance of UNDP.

The assessment was carried out in two main phases: (a) a review of various desk studies and surveys; and (b) a triangulation of the preliminary findings from the first phase and further consultations in the regions with staff from regional hubs and 45 country offices and with Governments, donors, partners and beneficiaries.

Available corporate and regional documentation was reviewed in order to understand the evolution of institutional effectiveness in UNDP. Secondary data covered: the broader context of international development RBM approaches; a detailed examination of components of the structural review; and key drivers of the change processes in the thinking of the organization. This information was used to reconstruct an evolution timeline and the overarching theoretical framework for the institutional improvement of UNDP. This process helped to further develop the problem analyses, which were needed to address specific challenges related to improving the quality of projects and programmes at the country level.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with headquarters units to gather their expectations and feedback on the design of the changes and emerging effects of the measures being rolled out in order to enhance the quality of programmes and institutional effectiveness.

Meta-analyses of 488 OAI audits and 73 IEO independent evaluations from 2010 were reviewed to assess whether lessons learned were effectively incorporated in the measures taken to improve the quality of programmes and projects.

The following **surveys** were carried out to measure the effects of introduced changes and measures:

a) **A general survey** was sent to the 70 country offices (or 100 percent of country offices) that participated in the pilot phases of the quality-of-programme measures. Full responses were received from 47 country offices, representing 67 percent of the targeted population;

b) **A survey on country programme documents (CPDs)** was sent to all 29 country offices that submitted new CPDs to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2015 and first regular session of 2016. Full responses were received from 16 country offices, representing 59 percent of the targeted population;

c) **A survey on project design** was sent to 70 countries; responses were received from 101 staff involved in the design of projects;[3]

d) **A survey of quality assurers** was sent to 70 countries; 70 full responses were received[4] with a mix of responses from various staff including programme specialists and management;

e) **A survey of quality approvers** was sent to 70 countries; 45 full responses were received, of which 34 (76 percent) were from senior management of the country offices.[5]

Corporate and regional surveys[6] **were reviewed** for trend analysis and for cross-checking of the findings from the surveys performed for the assessment.

The methodological quality of selected project documents and results-oriented annual reports (ROARs), which have been formulated since 2014 in the 23 countries that participated in the first pilot phase of the quality assurance and improvement processes, were reviewed in order to establish lessons and the most common challenges.

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3   Because the number of staff involved in project design is unknown, the target population was not defined. However, the responses came from 52 different country offices, indicating that in each office, two different respondents answered the questions.

4   Because the number of staff involved in quality assurance is unknown, the target population was not defined. However, the responses came from 52 different country offices, indicating that more than one person per office is involved in quality assurance.

5   Quality approval is assumed to be a central function carried out by one person only. It is however possible that bigger country offices have more than one approver. Hence, it is not possible to define a target population and set percentages.

6   The Global Staff Surveys in 2013 and 2014, the Partnerships Survey in 2015, surveys for the Global and Regional Programme Evaluations (2012) and client surveys were undertaken by all of the regional hubs.

The **methodological quality was reviewed as well as whether the theory of change was applied** in the 29 CPDs described above.

Recent external publications on institutional effectiveness and its relationship with RBM and development effectiveness were reviewed to analyse whether RBM, as applied in the current Strategic Plan and organizational policies, is being adequately applied by UNDP for institutional effectiveness.

PHASE 2

To complete the triangulation and validate findings from Phase 1, consultations took place with 45 country offices from a total of 70 that were part of pilot initiatives being assessed, as well as with all regional hubs.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with staff of the central bureaux, all five regional bureaux, regional hubs and co-located country offices to assess the changes and effects of the measures put in place and/or being rolled out to enhance the quality of programmes, strengthen regional presence and consolidate policy functions.

Focus groups in the regional hubs were conducted with staff from 45 countries for further consultation and to establish the causes and explore possible solutions for identified shortcomings. Staff members from countries in the region were invited to the regional hubs for two days of focus group discussions on progress, challenges and lessons learned from implementing the changes in their country offices. Most of the invited participants were from the 70 countries involved in the pilot testing of the measures to improve programmes implemented by the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) in 2015. The assessment team selected a sample of country offices from this group, taking into account their geographic distribution and size. Participating staff included project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialists, Deputy Resident Representatives, key RBM staff, heads

of units and team/cluster leaders who had been working with UNDP since at least 2012. The rubric in annex 4 was used to communicate the results of the consultations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 key external stakeholders, including Governments, partners, beneficiaries and donor representatives, at the country level and at their respective headquarters, as well as with relevant United Nations agencies.

Joint analysis and synthesis were carried out across a range of analytical outputs of data collection performed by consultants and the OAI and IEO teams. In addition, an analysis of IRRF performance data and ROARs was carried out by cross-checking the indicative statistical analysis conducted by BPPS to isolate factors correlated with development performance, which is referred to in the midterm review of the Strategic Plan as the performance factors analysis.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT AND ITS FINDINGS

Institutional effectiveness impinges upon complex institutional reforms that are still in the early stages of implementation. The UNDP reform package is unfolding with various components at different phases of dissemination and implementation. Programme quality assurance guidelines, for example, were rolled out to selected pilot countries in 2014 and 2015, and have been revised to some extent, whereas other reform elements have only more recently been rolled out.

Stakeholder experiences and perceptions often form a major component of the evidence base in the process of assessing institutional reform. However, at any point in time there will be significant differences in the extent to which stakeholders will have engaged in and fully comprehended the reform process. Their knowledge and understanding of this process will therefore be partial and variable. This renders problematic the administration and interpretation of quantitative evidence-gathering methods such as sur-

veys, since the knowledge level of respondents cannot be calibrated. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between variations based on differing levels of knowledge and understanding, and those that reflect changes in practices and results due to reform processes.

It is also clear that components of the reform process can be expected to have different "trajectories of change". Some elements might generate relatively rapid change, whereas others can be expected to take some time. Furthermore, delivery of the results by the new regional hubs will vary from early improvements in the delivery of advisory services to country offices (e.g., through improved timeliness of responses) to long-term intended effects on the quality of country programmes.

In response to these limitations and constraints, this assessment therefore adopted a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative), which became essential due to the experimental nature of combining audit and evaluation functions. These functions typically address institutional issues through different methods and with different emphases. The audit team used performance auditing techniques, and the evaluation team used mixed developmental methods with a broader focus on overall accountability, lessons learned and performance and results.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

The report consists of five chapters. Following this introduction, **Chapter 2** discusses the context in which the theory of change of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 was developed and describes perspectives on RBM in international development to understand how well the institutional effectiveness of UNDP is underpinned by the RBM concept. **Chapter 3** assesses the extent to which the measures aimed at improving the quality of projects and programmes underpinned by RBM have enhanced or are likely to enhance the institutional effectiveness of UNDP. **Chapter 4** assesses the extent to which measures aimed at strengthening the regional presence and consolidating policy functions have enhanced or are likely to enhance the institutional effectiveness of UNDP. Finally, drawing on the specific and overall findings, a set of conclusions and recommendations is provided in **Chapter 5**. Annexed to the report are the terms of reference, list of persons consulted and documents reviewed and the rubric.

Chapter 2

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN UNDP

Overall, UNDP associates "development effectiveness" with effectively contributing to the seven development outcomes prioritized in its Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. "Organizational effectiveness" is associated with the three key interrelated management results that are intended to support the vision and development outcomes presented in the Strategic Plan: higher quality of programmes; greater organizational openness; and improved management of financial and human resources.

The organizational effectiveness of UNDP is determined by measuring direct, accountable and attributable performance over which the organization has control. Organizational effectiveness and efficiency are expected to support development effectiveness, leading to "institutional effectiveness". Both terms, "institutional effectiveness" and "organizational effectiveness", will be used interchangeably for the assessment, because this is consistent with the way that UNDP uses the concepts in its day-to-day work.

2.1 RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT IN INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

RBM has been an integral part of institutional effectiveness and the delivery of public value since its adoption by many Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Member Governments in the 1990s and by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members later in the decade. However, there are limitations to RBM in terms of what can be achieved given that the development context is dynamic and non-linear, and that not all issues of performance can be quan-

tified. Nevertheless, it remains a broad management strategy.

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) defines RBM "*as a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher-level goals or impact). The actors in turn use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision-making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting*".[7] UNDP defines RBM as "*a broad management strategy aimed at achieving improved performance and demonstrable results*".[8]

RBM is underpinned by the objective to shift development discourse from the intervention level to linking institutional management functions, interventions (projects and programmes) and results. It aims to align organizational systems (leadership and management routines and processes, culture, knowledge, human and financial resources) and partnership arrangements to achieve strategic outcomes. RBM uses measures to inform decision-making and learning about what works best and where so that successes can be replicated or scaled up, and organizational procedures and processes can be adapted as appropriate to support new interventions.

A major aspect of leadership's role in RBM for institutional effectiveness consists of managing learning from performance results so as to scale up innovations and draw on important lessons.

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7   UNDG Results-based Management Handbook, October 2011.

8   Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

RBM extends beyond the technical functions of planning, monitoring and evaluation to leadership style and institutional culture, where stakeholders and managers ideally seek and obtain the right amount of information at the right time and with the right quality in order to understand the challenges and opportunities, and enable continuous, strategic decision-making.

The discourse of RBM has been part of the United Nations reform agenda since the late 1990s. It has contributed to a shift in governance and managerial focus from interventions/inputs (resources), activities and products to results. This emphasis on results was mostly influenced by funding pressures from donor countries and their demands that the United Nations demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness.[9]

It is clear that results at the **outcome level** are inherently a partnership proposition, causally linked to actions of multiple parties. This horizontal, joint partnership or collective impact management required new forms of governance for policy and programme delivery. Accountability for outcomes had to be shared between donor agencies, beneficiary countries and civil society, because outcomes were possible only with collective action. The 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, Mexico, responded by pledging to change the development relationship from a donor-recipient culture to a culture of partnership through mutual accountability for financing and achieving the Millennium Development Goals through results-based strategies in the host countries.

In such an evolving institutional development environment, UNDP has always been expected to deliver on a number of global, regional and corporate commitments informed by the principles of aid effectiveness outlined in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: ownership, alignment, harmonization, results and mutual accountability.[10] In 2008, UNDP committed to maximizing the use of national capacities and systems, and enhancing mutual accountability in least developed countries (LDCs). UNDP also committed to respond to the outcomes of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of United Nations operational activities for development.[11]

In 2015, Member States committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, guided by principles of mobilizing means of implementation, creating partnerships, supporting the identification of solutions and best practices, and promoting the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system. The Goals offer a new opportunity for the international system to integrate RBM interventions for accelerated learning. Targets and performance metrics can be harmonized with countries for enhanced knowledge management on what works best to advance progress towards the Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals potentially can reduce transaction costs associated with multiple indicators for the same objectives used by different organizations, and a "common currency" of measures will support more strategic conversations within organizations and across partnerships.

2.2 KEY UNDP INITIATIVES IN INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

As illustrated in figure 3, in line with the progress in the development context, RBM has been linked and integrated in various UNDP frameworks over the years, including the Multi-Year Funding Frameworks (MYFF) for 2000-2003

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9   Bester, A., 'Results-Based Management in the United Nations Development System', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Final Draft, 2016.

10   The Paris Declaration (2005) is a road map to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. It provides a set of specific implementation measures and establishes a monitoring system to assess progress and ensure that donors and recipients hold each other accountable for their commitments.

11   General Assembly resolution 67/226 of 21 December 2012.

Figure 3. Key initiatives in institutional effectiveness in UNDP

1999 Introduction of RBM
RBM concept linked to IE. A strategy to achieve demonstrable results and improved performance

2000-2003 MYFF
RBM linked to IE Intended results and financial results identified

2004 - 2007 MYFF
Actions to enhance UNDP organizational capacity

Strategic Plan, 2008-2013
to enhance UNDP organizational effectiveness and RBM

2015
UNDP commitment to **2030 Agenda** guided by principles of effectiveness and coordination (among others)

2016 Programme Project management reform
New quality standards and more precise monitoring introduced

| 1999 | 2000-2003 | 2004-2007 | 2008-2013 | 2014-2017 |

2000 Balanced Scorecard
2001 SURF
2003 UNDP Business Plan
Strategies for more results oriented

2004 Atlas was launched
Integration of budget, financial transaction and some M&E

2005 The Paris Declaration
Set principles of aid effectiveness, including alignment and results

2010 Business Action Plan
Implementation of Strategic Plan

2010 Agenda for change to reinforce organizational effectiveness by improving UNDP internal decision-making, making critical corporate investments and streamlining recruitment processes

Strategic Plan 2014-2017, Focus on RBM, Theory of Change, Integral IRRF

2014 Alignment Exercise, Realigning new structures, KM and Programme Quality Assurance

2014 Accenture Report advised on further restructuring of Bureaux, Regional Service Centres and HQ to play a role in QA, consistency and implementation of policy

RBM = Results-based management; IE = Institutional effectiveness; MYFF = Multi-Year Funding Framework; SURF = Sub-Regional Resource Facilities; M&E = Monitoring and evaluation; KM = Knowledge Management; QA = Quality assurance; HQ= headquarters; IRRF = Integrated Results and resources Framework;

and 2004-2007 and the Strategic Plans for 2008-2011 and 2014-2017.

The first ***MYFF[12] 2000-2003*** outlined the main strategic objectives of UNDP and the financial resources required to achieve them. It identified intended results to be achieved by all country offices, as set out in the Strategic Results Framework.[13] During this period, UNDP monitored the results achieved across several dimensions, including: the extent to which it had been successful at the country level in moving towards a strategic programme focus and positioning; the effectiveness with which it had used advocacy, policy dia-logue and country presence to support national policies; and its use of effective partnerships to further development change.

In parallel with these developments, ***the Administrator's Business Plans 2000-2003*** outlined the strategy to transform UNDP into a more results-oriented organization.[14] This marked the official start of the UNDP internal reform process, which included policy, partnerships, people, performance and resources.[15] Additionally, new performance measurement instruments and tools were established to monitor progress towards achieving goals. This included a Balanced Score-

12   UNDP Executive Board decision 99/23.

13   DP/1999/30.

14   DP/2001/14.

15   DP/2004/16.

card, which helped to establish targets and a system to monitor the Administrator's Business Plans. The first ROAR was introduced as the reporting mechanism of the MYFF. In addition, quality assurance, planning and monitoring and results reporting as principles of RBM were further incorporated through improved programming systems, and major initiatives were undertaken to simplify business practices and reduce transaction costs.

The *MYFF 2004-2007* outlined additional actions that UNDP would implement to enhance its organizational capacity to deliver timely, effective services to promote programme countries' achievement of both the Millennium Development Goals and their national development goals. These actions focused on two key areas: (a) providing coherent, knowledge-based services through the development of practices and service lines;[16] and (b) improving the efficiency and performance of UNDP in delivering these services.

This MYFF introduced the concept of service lines[17] to act as a soft boundary rule on what UNDP should support at the country level, and requirements for setting annual outcome targets were also introduced. As a complement, UNDP designed a new accountability framework, including an oversight policy and an evaluation policy. These instruments established guiding principles and norms for risk-based performance management for accountability and transparency to help the organization learn from findings and from recommendations for RBM.

The MYFF 2004-2007 also introduced the distinction between the concept of "development effectiveness" and "organizational effectiveness": "… *ownership and responsibility for development outcomes (and therefore development effectiveness) must ultimately lie with national authorities. The effectiveness of development organization (referred to as organizational effectiveness) is determined by measuring direct, accountable and attributable performance over which it has control*".[18]

The *Strategic Plan 2008-2011*[19] was approved by the UNDP Executive Board and subsequently extended to 2013[20] in response to the General Assembly's decision to modify the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle, and its strong recommendation that United Nations funds and programmes align their strategic planning cycles accordingly.

This Strategic Plan aimed to: (a) better articulate UNDP priorities, objectives, targets and performance indicators; (b) create a basis for internal resource allocation; and (c) set up a stronger platform for comprehensive results management.[21] An addendum to the Strategic Plan outlined the development and institutional results framework[22]

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16 The development of practices included: establishing them in areas of need and enhancing staff participation in them; strengthening and sustaining policy and substantive support services (e.g. Sub-Regional Resource Facilities, or SURFs); increasing learning and training (Learning Resource Centre and the Virtual Development Academy); and upgrading information and communication technology for knowledge management. UNDP "practices" include an internal culture of knowledge sharing and substantive skills development, capitalizing on the vast experience inherent in its network. Source: MYFF2.

17 The MYFF had a two-tiered arrangement that contemplated a reduced set of 30 service lines within five goals. Service lines represent specific areas in which UNDP will contribute to development results at the country level. These are areas that present an established or emerging demand for UNDP services, and in which UNDP is considered to have comparative advantages through particular institutional strengths and competencies. Source: MYFF2.

18 DP/2003/32, page 14.

19 UNDP Executive Board decision 2007/32.

20 DP/2009/35.

21 Achieving better focus and promoting a culture of results management through the MYFF while ensuring that service lines do not excessively stress sectoral approaches to programming. Source: Strategic Plan, 2008-2011.

22 DP/2007/43/Add.1.

detailing the corporate products and services that UNDP had to deliver to improve institutional effectiveness and efficiency for the provision of development results. These management results focused on: improving accountability; introducing enterprise risk management concepts; and integrating planning, budgeting, performance and human resource management. Since institutional results are entirely the responsibility of UNDP, they are treated as outputs and indicators and targets can be provided for each.[23]

In endorsing the Strategic Plan, 2008-2011, the Executive Board requested UNDP to continue to review and improve the development and institutional results frameworks. The Board further emphasized that indicators should focus on measuring the delivery of outputs and the contribution of UNDP to outcomes, and not on the performance of programme countries.[24]

The following other steps aimed to increase organizational effectiveness and efficiencies during the period of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2011:[25] (a) introduction of a cost classification framework[26] for reporting on management results and development effectiveness; (b) a strategy for fast-tracking the UNDP response in crisis countries; (c) professionalization of human resources management; (d) improvement of procurement efficiency; and (e) adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

The Integrated Work Planning platform was launched in 2010. This integrated platform for planning, monitoring and reporting on results and risk management emphasized: development outcomes; integration of lessons learned; alignment to national priorities and UNDP key areas of focus; and identification of risks. All units were expected to use this online platform which combines development and management activities, including management resources planning and allocation.

Also in 2010, the Business Action Plan,[27] a tool for implementing the Strategic Plan, was launched. The Business Action Plan aimed to improve UNDP performance and sharpen implementation of the Strategic Plan.

In 2011, the Administrator laid out an Agenda for Organizational Change[28] to reinforce organizational effectiveness by improving UNDP internal decision-making structures, making critical corporate investments and streamlining recruitment processes. Specific elements included: efforts designed to control costs and expenditures; and a review of the UNDP business model. Four challenges required attention from management to ensure that UNDP remained effective: staff excellence; surge readiness;[29] organizational readjustment; and budgetary efficiency.

The IEO independent evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013[30] concluded that there was

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23 DP/2007/35.

24 DP/2008/2.

25 DP/2010/17.

26 All resources were classified according to the following major cost classifications: (a) development activities; (b) United Nations development coordination activities; (c) management activities; and (d) special-purpose activities. The four broad classifications of activities increase the visibility and clarity of the UNDP investment in development effectiveness and management activities. Executive Board decision 2009/22.

27 E/2010/35.

28 E/2011/35.

29 "Surge" refers to the swift deployment of experienced coordination experts and other specialized humanitarian personnel. Surge capacity is used when there are unforeseen emergencies and disasters, when a crisis deteriorates or when a force majeure affects an office. http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/crisispreventionandrecovery/focus_areas/immediate_crisis_response.html

30 IEO evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2013, May 2013.

a need both to strengthen country offices and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of headquarters and regional centres and hubs. It also concluded that the performance monitoring and reporting system was not optimal for a decentralized organization working on complex development issues in unique local contexts. It also emerged that most of the country programme portfolios were neither prioritized nor focused on a set of core activities, which affected programming efficiency. Finally, in order to increase effectiveness, UNDP still needed to strengthen internal and external learning capacities at the country level and across the organization.

The ***Strategic Plan, 2014-2017*** was based on guidance from General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review as well as on the Millennium Development Goals and the evolving post-2015 development agenda, which ultimately became the Sustainable Development Goals. In this new Strategic Plan, UNDP states that over the years, significant progress has been made in enhancing its institutional effectiveness, but that a number of challenges need to be addressed. Issues identified included:

a) A lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities, which hinders thematic policy function, decision-making capacity, performance management and accountability;

b) Inefficiencies and duplication of functions, with units performing similar functions across the organization;

c) The need for better alignment of programme delivery with the method of programme implementation.

The last issue above is also confirmed by observations of various internal and external stakeholders. In addition, over the last five years, OAI and IEO made more than 450 recommendations on programme and project issues, including the need for greater focus and to improve strategic programming, programme and project design, as well as management and reporting results. Other

recommendations were to strengthen knowledge management and to use credible evidence.

In addition to the observations made by IEO and OAI, there were also calls from donors and stakeholders to improve the quality of reporting to demonstrate progress towards outcome-level results and the quality of programming. In particular, issues of lack of focus, weak indicators and missing linkages between output, outcomes and impact levels were highlighted. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency in its report, *Development Effectiveness Review of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005-2011,* indicated that the most frequently cited factor hindering objectives achievement was the dispersion of UNDP country programming across too many projects, too wide a geographic area or too many institutions. The Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network reports on UNDP also identified challenges. They indicated that improvements were needed in the formulation of results statements and inclusion of sufficient performance indicators in country programming strategies. Information on programming-related indicators in UNDP covered only one year and a few select outcomes. There was insufficient data on outputs and outcomes, a lack of detailed information on results at the country level, and a poor link between outputs and the achievement of higher-level outcomes.

The introduction of the Strategic Plan resulted in a number of measures for operationalizing the above strategies. Programmatic measures were usually piloted before they were rolled out fully. The following measures introduced since the preparation of the new Strategic Plan will be reviewed in this assessment.

ON A PROGRAMMATIC LEVEL

UNDP country programme outcomes were aligned to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan and limited to a maximum of four outcomes per country programme.

Quality standards for programming were introduced at all levels. Seven quality criteria[31] for programming have been developed with rating tools to assess the quality of programmes and projects at key stages (design, implementation and closure).

A revised, mandatory quality assurance process was introduced during the planning and design phase of country programmes and during the full cycle of UNDP projects. A first pilot of the new quality assurance standards was conducted with 23 country offices in 2014, which helped to identify various issues and areas for improvement. An additional 50 country offices were added to the group of 23 country offices for a pilot phase 2, with adjusted instruments, from June to December 2015. The various policies and programme measures were fully rolled out in March 2016.

CPD and project planning and design standards were launched to support stronger-quality programmes. In 2014 and in December 2015, the CPD template was substantially revised to provide more specific guidance on requirements for a quality programme.

A new monitoring policy was designed and rolled out, requiring the collection and use of appropriate and credible data as evidence for monitoring progress. In addition, the policy requires offices to adequately resource the monitoring function against the yearly programme delivery and requires the regional bureaux to allocate at least 1 percent of annual development expenditures to monitoring and evaluation.

ON AN ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Policy functions were consolidated within UNDP with the merging of the relevant bureaux for policymaking, and streamlining of policy advisory functions and reporting lines.

The UNDP regional presence was increased by transferring headquarters staff to the regional hubs.

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31   The new standards are defined by a set of criteria and programming principles which are each defined by various indicators. The seven criteria are: (a) strategic; (b) relevant; (c) social and environmental standards; (d) management and monitoring; (e) efficient; (f) effective; and (g) sustainability and national ownership.

Chapter 3

ASSESSMENT OF THE PROGRAMATIC MEASURES AIMING AT THE ENHANCEMENT OF PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

This chapter assesses whether measures undertaken by UNDP have impacted the quality of programming at the country level. It describes what measures have been taken by UNDP and how they are being implemented at the field level.

3.1 MORE STRATEGIC UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FRAMEWORKS

Finding 1: There were challenges in highlighting the strategic comparative advantage of the UNDG system and the agencies' added value, including that of UNDP, in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). Weaknesses in the design and content of UNDAFs represent a risk to the quality of further downstream programming for all United Nations agencies, including UNDP country programmes and constituent project portfolios.

The UNDAF is the strategic programme framework that describes the collective response of the United Nations system to national development priorities. The formulation of the UNDAF is the most important programming process for UNDP, because all other UNDP country programming must be fully aligned with the goals and objectives of the UNDAF. The formulation of the UNDAF is only partly under the control of UNDP, but is incorporated in the UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP). The UNDAF is prepared in line with the guidance issued by the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office in 2010, which include five programming principles: (a) human rights-based approach; (b) gender equality; (c) environmental sustainability; (d) results-based management; and (e) capacity development. This guidance was updated in June 2016.

UNDP indicated in the Strategic Plan that the proposed approach for higher-quality programmes would be demonstrated by more strategic UNDAFs (in conjunction with the rest of the United Nations development system) and country strategies that clearly identify the substantive contribution of UNDP to country-led development efforts.

UNDP country planning takes place in coordination with the United Nations system and the starting point is usually the host Government's national development plan, which defines the national development priorities.[32] As a first step in the formulation of an UNDAF, the United Nations Country Team often develops a Common Country Assessment to determine the development challenges in that country. Based on the

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32 This practice of alignment is best tailored to the situation of the LDCs. Not all countries where the United Nations is operating have poverty reduction frameworks or comprehensive development plans. Countries in conflict, for example, may lack a representative government. In these cases, the UNDAF is developed by proxies, involving as many stakeholders as possible.

UNDAF, individual United Nations agencies draw up their respective country programmes.[33]

The UNDG guidance on higher-quality UNDAFs includes the following criteria:[34]

a) Alignment to a range of strategic goals and programming principles of stakeholders involved; national priorities and ownership are imperative;

b) A comprehensive explanation of the comparative advantages that played a role in the programming and operational modalities chosen, including an analysis how these advantages add value over possible programming alternatives;

c) The envisaged partnership strategies, explaining how and why partners work together, building stronger relations;

d) The presence of a comprehensive root-cause problem analysis and logical framework.

Based on the above-mentioned criteria, the assessment team reviewed the 22 UNDAFs associated with the 29 UNDP CPDs submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2015 and first regular session of 2016 respectively. Seven of these CPDs were not accompanied by a completed UNDAF, meaning that almost 21 percent of these CPDs were approved without being linked to verifiable UNDAF outcomes.

All 22 UNDAFs reviewed were aligned to national development plans and showed that the main government counterparts were leading the consultative processes between the United Nations and stakeholders. Notwithstanding the complexities of aligning the UNDAFs with the Sustainable Development Goals, about 65 percent of these UNDAFs made references to the Goals, and 36 percent of UNDAFs linked the Goals to the projected outcomes or integrated them into the results and resources framework (RRF).[35] This uptake of the Sustainable Development Goals in UNDAF programming is a positive sign, especially given that it was not mandatory for the reviewed UNDAFs.

Of the 22 UNDAFs reviewed, only three clearly elaborated the comparative advantages at the country level. A total of 13 countries mention, in a general way, the fact that the United Nations system has comparative advantages, but do not elaborate further. In general, the comparative advantages were repeated as stated in the guidance, reflecting the United Nations system's general world-wide comparative advantages, but without commenting on why they were important in the specific country context. In six of the 22 UNDAFs (27 percent), no textual reference was made to the United Nations' comparative advantages. The analysis of the strategic dimension of UNDAFs shows that only two countries, Azerbaijan and Colombia, scored reasonably well in identifying both the comparative advantage and the value added of the United Nations.

Regarding partnership, none of the reviewed UNDAFs showed how and why United Nations agencies, including UNDP, were positioned strategically in relation to each other within the UNDAF. None of the reviewed UNDAFs provided any evidence supporting the agencies' choices for the division of labour between them. Only four UNDAFs contained specific text on the division

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33 In the case of UNDP, country offices prepare the CPD that is submitted to the Executive Board for approval. In essence, the country programme should be fully aligned to the UNDAF. Although UNDP is an important partner in formulating a UNDAF, it has limited control over designing an UNDAF document, although in some instances it can influence the process.

34 UNDG, UNDAF Action Plan Guidance, updated October 2010. More detailed information is also presented in the Guidance on Comparative Advantage Analyses, UNDG 2011 and the UNDG Handbook on Results-Based Management, October 2011.

35 In these cases, the relevant Goal was mentioned in the RRF table indicating the intended UNDAF outcomes.

of labour, elaborating only on the mandates of the agencies and existing engagements.

In identifying the reasons for not fully meeting the UNDP quality standards for strategic programming, country offices and staff in the regional hubs indicated that they did not have sufficient financial and human resources to prepare an UNDAF and other United Nations-wide country action plans. Preparing an UNDAF requires extensive stakeholder consultations (and also in some cases, the training of stakeholders), the organization of workshops and retreats, data gathering and capacity assessment, among others.

There were additional challenges to managing a complex process that involves many stakeholders and might take over six months to complete. In-depth knowledge of RBM theory and practice by all involved partners is a prerequisite for a high-quality UNDAF. Not all staff and partners have sufficient knowledge and can apply RBM. There are differences in training, and specialized RBM capacities are often limited to programme staff, sometimes even to a single focal point, which is not sufficient to formulate high-quality country assistance frameworks.

3.2 MORE STRATEGIC COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS

Finding 2: The CPDs have become more strategic and progress has been made in improving their quality by more effectively engaging multiple parts of the organization in assuring the quality of the documents to promote more integration between thematic areas and issues, as well as a sharper focus and alignment to the Strategic Plan. The alignment exercise, however, is still ongoing. The CPDs reviewed still provided insufficient information on the added value, comparative advantages and partnership strategies of UNDP.

The CPD articulates and conveys to the Executive Board the UNDP contribution to national results through the UNDAF, and the resources needed for achieving these results. The CPDs are prepared during the strategic planning stage, together with the UNDAF.[36]

Under the previous Strategic Plan, 2008-2013, various issues concerning the quality and alignment of CPDs were noted and further confirmed by evaluations and audits. CPDs contained too many outcomes and outputs, or few outcomes that were too generic, which negatively impacted the internal logic of programmes and effectiveness. Audits and evaluations called for more coherent and comprehensive programmes/programming approaches and for narrowing the range of activities.

In response to these challenges, UNDP committed to ensuring that: all country programmes designed under the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 would be more closely focused on no more than four time-bound outcomes; would be underpinned by explicit theories of change; and would incorporate a robust, aligned, rigorously defined, sex-disaggregated and measurable results framework drawing on a standardized bank of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound) indicators. It also committed to ensure that all UNDP-supported programmes and projects would be designed through the lens of sustainable human development. In addition to limiting the number of outcomes, UNDP engaged all country offices and regional bureaux to align their country/regional programme outcomes to the Strategic Plan outcomes.

This assessment entailed the review of all 29 UNDP CPDs submitted to the Executive Board for approval at the second regular session of 2015 and the first regular session of 2016, including the seven CPDs that were not based on a UNDAF.

The CPDs were found to be fully aligned to the objectives of the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the respective RRFs made clear reference to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan. Alignment to the

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36   Source: Programme and Operation Policies and Procedures.

Strategic Plan was systematized by the new CPD template,[37] which required that each country programme outcome be referenced to an outcome of the Strategic Plan. Although all CPDs were aligned with the Strategic Plan, not all activities or projects under the CPD were well aligned to it. The survey asked UNDP staff involved in project design in the 70 quality assurance pilot countries to what extent project proposals fully matched UNDP programme outcomes. About 45 percent of all respondents stated that there was a high degree of alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan, while about 30 percent stated that this was not the case. A desk review carried out by a team of consultants[38] commissioned by the Executive Office in early 2016 concluded that the thematic alignment was progressing well, but about one third of all country offices still had to make significant improvements.

The comparative advantage and value added of UNDP were not always analysed and documented in the 29 CPDs reviewed. This was adequately carried out in only two cases, Azerbaijan and Colombia. One underlying factor was that this exercise took place as part of the design of the UNDAF rather than of the country programme, and the two country offices identified both the comparative advantage and value added of UNDP.

Reference to partnerships was identified in 22 of the 29 CPDs, although there was little or no comment on how these partnerships were envisaged to function. None of the CPDs specifically elaborated on priorities for strengthening these partnerships.

Although country offices state that they have used the theory of change in their programming, only the Uganda CPD was based on a traceable theory of change. None of the other CPDs indicated the use of a theory of change in their programmatic approaches.[39]

The above observations are contradictory to the statement in the UNDP midterm review, which stated, "Internal reviews show that 71 percent of new country programme documents (out of 30) met the enhanced quality standards upon first submission in 2015."

Reasons for not fully meeting UNDP quality standards for strategic programming were derived from a survey administered to country offices and discussed during workshops and interviews in the five regional hubs. According to the respondents, factors affecting the strategic quality of the CPDs are similar to those affecting on the quality of the UNDAFs, namely insufficient financial and human capacity, lack of in-depth knowledge of RBM concepts and practices, and insufficient training.

In addition to these reasons, open-ended survey responses and interviews suggested that alignment to the demands of national Governments and donor requirements determine to a great extent the content of the programmes' project portfolio, even if this does not fully reflect the UNDP strategy.

3.3 INTRODUCTION OF NEW QUALITY STANDARDS

Finding 3: The introduction of quality standards represented an improvement in the establishment of corporate-wide guidelines on programme and project quality. However, the conditions to meet the standards are not present in all country offices, and it is not likely that country offices will fully adhere to the standards in the short term. The quality standards are complex and to some extent, difficult to attain.

UNDP introduced the Programming Quality Standards as the primary corporate response to

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37 The new format includes a RRF that logically connects the objectives of the UNDAF and the Strategic Plan. It allows for only four outcomes, which enhances the focus of programming.

38 MTR study on alignment prepared for the Executive Office, February 2016.

39 This is confirmed by the authors of the UNDP draft report on alignment, February 2016. Country offices were asked to provide evidence of the use of a theory of change, but no evidence was presented.

deliver higher-quality programmes and projects through clear and objective expectations for quality. Previously, the standards were not mandatory and were listed in a 10-page optional checklist annexed to the POPP called 'Considerations for Quality Programming'. Other quality standards were incorporated in checklists used by programme and project appraisal committees. The standards were implicit, worded as questions and overlapped in many instances. In addition, neither the requirements to be met nor what had to be observed in order to respond were clear.

The old standards were replaced with new standards that are in line with those defined by the DAC and are defined by a set of criteria and programming principles, each in turn defined by various indicators. The seven criteria are: (a) strategic; (b) relevant; (c) social and environmental standards; (d) management and monitoring; (e) efficient; (f) effective; and (g) sustainability and national ownership. In rolling out these standards, no analysis was made of the cost, time and capacities needed to ensure full compliance with the standards or the constraints that affected the implementation of the previous instructions on quality issues.

The 2016 audit of RBM noted that the introduction of corporate standards was a positive development because benchmarks previously were not clear and were scattered. The audit noted that implementation of the new standards at the office level could be hampered.[40] First, the operational criteria for the standards were complex. A number of indicators must be fulfilled for each criterion to be met and the standards to be achieved. Several indicators are repeated in more than one criterion and refer to more than one standard.[41] The audit identified the risk that it was not possible to adhere to all of the standards because, for example, this would often imply extensive consul-

tations, studies and preparatory work. This would only be possible when permitted by circumstances such as time, security, political support and sufficient budget.

Sixty-eight percent of staff in charge of developing project documents and 63 percent of CPD developers found the corporate quality standards to be clear and unambiguous. In the respective survey for quality assurers, 68 percent stated that they fully understood all of the terminology used in the quality standards and could apply them for rating purposes. The highest level of understanding of the standards was expressed among the staff in charge of approving the quality of projects/programmes; 71 percent indicated that they fully understood the quality standards and were able to apply them rigorously when approving projects. However, this pattern was not corroborated by participants in focus groups with country offices.

BPPS piloted the new quality standards and measures providing guidance and trainings, but the survey responses and interview results indicated that not everyone was sufficiently reached by these trainings. Possible reasons may be that the training needs were not assessed correctly in advance or that the conducted training was not sufficiently inclusive. Also, feedback received from the surveys and interviews mentioned that it was often difficult to receive ad hoc advice and support and that training was insufficient. Additionally, some of the material provided was deemed too complex and lacked concrete examples.

Proficiency of partners was identified as a significant challenge in ensuring the quality of programmes. UNDP works on multiple levels with external parties such as consultants, stakeholders, donors or implementing partners. In most cases, third parties are involved in the design of pro-

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40 RBM audit, issue 2, page 8, referring to the quality of indicators. The information in this part of the audit is based on a comprehensive analysis included in the audit's working papers.

41 For example, the criterion "relevance" contains the following sub-indicators: participation rigour; appropriate specification with regard to gender and targeted groups; prioritization; and use of knowledge and lessons learned.

grammes and project proposals,[42] the implementation of projects and obviously, funding. Hence, this cooperation and partner dependency can have an impact on the adherence to UNDP corporate quality standards. Therefore, successful implementation of the quality standards also depends on the extent to which external partners understand, are fully up to date with and accept the new quality standards. In the assessment survey, only 13 percent of all UNDP staff involved in project design stated that external parties were up to date with the UNDP quality requirements. Interviews in the regional hubs indicated that the prescriptiveness of the standards was not well communicated to partners. Governments and external donors often have their own quality standards, mechanisms and priorities. Donors often require use of their own forms/templates for drafting project documents. This makes adherence to the UNDP standards challenging, because the formats of the documents and the guidance on quality standards may not be compatible. Quality standards need to be mutually agreed on to be effective, and to be followed by all parties involved.

Many highlighted time constraints, in part due to short deadlines by UNDP and Governments for proposal submissions, which may leave limited time to fulfil quality requirements. The frequency with which project developers in particular noted time constraints as an issue suggests that this was an important challenge that may affect the design of projects that fully adhere to the corporate standards. Time restriction may partly be a result of financial and staff shortages.

Finally, lack of resources is a constraint to the quality of programmes. Adhering to the quality standards requires the use of specific evidence, which involves rigorous data collection and verification. Such tasks can be resource-intensive because they require, for example, travel and human resources. Hence, successful incorporation of the quality stan-

dards requires the availability of sufficient resources. Overall, 48 percent of staff involved in programme and project planning and design stated that the quality standards were realistically achievable.

Additional comments to the survey and interviews in the regional hubs suggested a strong connection between availability of resources and adherence to quality standards. Some senior managers pointed out that having insufficient resources leads to issues including being unable to hire the necessary experts, difficulties in conducting data collection and verification and proper stakeholder engagement. When asked in the survey for CPD developers if the financial and human resources were sufficient to meet the quality requirements for the planning and design of the CPDs, about 65 percent of respondents were positive, while 30 percent stated that the resources were insufficient. When asked in the survey for project developers if there were sufficient human resources, 45 percent of respondents replied in the affirmative, while 40 percent responded in the negative. When the same question was asked regarding the adequacy of financial resources, only 20 percent of all respondents replied in the affirmative, while 45 percent responded in the negative. Interviews in the hubs strongly confirmed the issue of insufficient resources.

3.4 STRENGTHENING THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Finding 4: The understanding and uptake of the new quality assurance system to improve the quality of programmes and projects were not optimal and the reliability of quality judgments leaves room for improvement. Not all conditions are in place to ensure full implementation of the new system.

The Strategic Plan emphasized the need to establish minimum quality criteria for projects and

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42 Roughly 70 percent of respondents to the surveys for project developers, quality assurers and quality approvers stated that project proposals are primarily done by mixed teams of UNDP personnel and third parties. Among project developers, 2 percent stated that proposals were usually only designed by third parties such as consultants. See final summary survey responses to each survey.

strengthened quality assurance processes at all stages of the programming cycle, from the UNDAF to projects. Prior to 2016, quality assurance was organized at several levels. The quality control of the UNDAF process consisted of a combination of self-assessments through standard checklists, a review of the outcome of the several stages of the planning, and drafting of the outcomes by the various United Nations agencies involved. The CPDs were quality assured by an internal checklist and the final review of the CPD would take place at headquarters by committees representing senior management for final quality clearance (project appraisal committees). At the project level, there was a seven-stage process in which project developers needed approval from senior management to continue the various stages of project planning and design. A final quality check was carried out by a project appraisal committee. Quality assurance during the implementation of UNDAFs and CPDs was carried out through midterm evaluations, at times also at the project level.

Notwithstanding the above mechanisms, audits and evaluations noted weaknesses in the quality of the design and implementation of programmes and projects, indicating that the existing quality assurance process was not effective.

To remedy the situation, UNDP established a quality assurance system that replaced most existing practices. The new system was piloted in two phases, the first involving 23 country offices and in the second increasing to a total of 70 country offices. The new quality assurance policy was rolled out to all offices starting in March 2016. This assessment focused on the group of 70 country offices involved in pilot phases I and II of the quality assurance exercise.

The quality assurance system defines the prescriptive content and templates for all three stages of the project cycle: (a) design and appraisal; (b) implementation and monitoring; and (c) closure. The quality assurance tool is not meant to replace

monitoring activities or evaluations. It takes stock of a programme or project at regular decision points of the implementation in order to determine the need or direction of potential changes and adaptions. The rating tool aims to assure the quality of programmes for the planning and design phase, and the complete project cycle for projects. It therefore includes specific content on the implementation and closure of projects. This tool is commonly used in the development world, particularly at the design phase, commonly known as "quality at entry", for example within the international financial institutions and the European Union.

The quality assurance system involves a two-step process. A programme staff member responsible for the quality assurance is asked to answer specific questions and upload specific evidence to document the various answers. A quality approver who is a senior staff member in an office will then review and approve the quality of the evidence provided in response to various questions.

The tool is not aimed at assuring the quality of UNDAFs. At the programme level, it is aimed at assuring the quality of the planning and design. It is used in addition to the assurance process that includes the preparation of submissions to the project appraisal committee (PAC) and the review by the committee itself. At the project level, the quality assurance tool is replacing the existing internal quality assurance mechanism. The introduction of the quality assurance of project implementation and closure represents an enhancement of the former practice through which, in the project document template, colleagues were asked to identify their own quality criteria that they would use to assure quality during the life of the project. This often was not done because of lack of clarity about what criteria should be used. The quality assurance system provided a standard set of objective criteria for the organization.

The 2016 audit of RBM by OAI[43] noted that quality assurance for the project and programme

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43   Audit Report No. 1549 issued on 22 March 2016.

planning and design phases represented an improvement. [44] However, the audit noted that no in-depth problem analysis had been carried out to identify the constraints that affected the previous quality assurance process.[45] For this reason, it remained uncertain if the underlying challenges could be overcome with the new quality assurance tool. Critical conditions to be met for successful implementation included sufficient knowledge and staffing capacity, and an adequate segregation of duties at the country office level to allow for objective judgment.

A first review by BPPS of the use of the quality assurance system in the pilot phases stated that the quality assessments were becoming more rigorous and credible: "*Following a concerted training effort covering the majority of country offices, thematic, design and operational alignment standards have been institutionalized through programme and project quality standards that became mandatory in 2016. Over 500 projects (8.5 percent of the total) were also rated by 70 country offices in a pilot phase. The findings were encouraging, with 60 percent of new projects (in the design phase) already meeting the new, more ambitious, standards.*"[46]

To validate the statements above, the assessment reviewed project-related quality assurance processes of the 23 country offices that had participated in the first pilot phase, had the most time to adjust to the new measures and had the new quality assurance system at their disposal. The new system did not replace the standard quality appraisal system (the "L-PAC procedure"), but could have been used in parallel by all country offices. According to data from Atlas and the Corporate Planning System, between early 2014 until January 2016,[47] the 23 country offices initiated 337 new projects, of which 94 projects, or 28 percent, were registered to undergo the qual-

ity assurance process with the new online quality assurance tool. However, only 64 of these projects (68 percent) underwent the complete quality assurance process and were approved according to the standards of the new tool. This indicates that the uptake of the new quality assurance system was not optimal in the sample of the 23 reviewed country offices.

This assessment reviewed these 64 approved project documents on completeness. Out of the 64 assessed, 27 (42 percent) either did not include the required evidence or included only very short comments and imprecise references. Since the template explicitly asks for full and documented evidence to justify responses and ratings, the quality of these 27 project documents was approved on an insufficient basis. This implies that 42 percent of all assessed projects were approved without meeting the quality criteria. This indicates that the quality assurance system is not yet fully functional and reported results from the quality assurance self-assessments might lack reliability. The issue of not having quality judgments that are sufficiently evidenced is also demonstrated by the outcome of the survey used for the purpose of this assessment. Seventy-six percent of all quality assurers stated that they required detailed evidence to be uploaded, but the remaining percentage might explain why the 42 percent in our analysis was not sufficiently evidenced. Also, 68 percent of quality approvers stated that they reviewed detailed evidence, indicating that almost one third attach lesser importance to this safeguard. This might explain the reason why 42 percent of all approved project designs did not meet the quality assurance standards when reviewed by the assessment team.

Issues with the implementation of the quality assurance system were confirmed during consul-

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44   RBM audit, issue 2, page 8, referring to the quality of the quality assurance instrument. The information in this part of the audit is based on a comprehensive analysis that makes part of the audit's working papers.

45   The audit asked for written evidence that such an analyses was carried out, but was not provided with any documentation.

46   Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, including the annual report of Administrator for 2015 (DP/2016/9).

47   This period includes phase II of the quality assurance pilot in which these country offices were also included.

tations with country offices. Significant pushback was noted in all regions and from many country offices. Staff perceived quality assurance requirements as excessive and inadequate. It was suggested that more flexibility could be considered. For example, the quality assurance system may not need to be fully applied to all project sizes and typologies. The large majority of country offices indicated that the measures were labour intensive and time consuming.

A first underlying reason hampering the effective implementation of the quality assurance system is the attainability of the standards themselves. Many project documents are still of insufficient quality. For example, quality assessors indicated that due to limited resources, identifying baseline data often was not possible. Yet, disapproving the project and sending it back for redesign is not always possible because stakeholders may not remain committed after a certain period. Comments were received on the influence that donor/partner preferences can have on project and programme quality issues.

Secondly, ensuring understanding of the new quality assurance system requires training of staff. Sixty percent of quality assessors stated that they were sufficiently trained to assume their responsibilities, while 30 percent stated that they were not. The issue of training is even more pressing for quality approvers, about half of whom felt that they were trained sufficiently to assume their approval roles and 31 percent felt that they were not adequately prepared. One aspect that highlights this perceived lack of training is the use of evidence within the quality assurance system. Follow-up interviews and validation of the surveys with focus groups conducted with 45 country offices indicate that most of them agree that there is an inadequate level of training, which supports the observation that many advisers and approvers were not sufficiently trained or may not have fully grasped the use of specific evidence.

Finally, sufficient staff capacities are necessary for assuring a clear segregation of roles and responsibilities, i.e., project developer, quality assessor and quality approver roles should be clearly separated. Considering the number of projects created in the country offices, quality assurance and approval require sufficient staff to manage the workload conscientiously. Regarding the segregation of roles and responsibilities, 60 percent of quality assessors stated that their country offices had sufficient personnel to ensure the segregation of roles and responsibilities, while 29 percent stated that theirs did not. BPPS states that the regional hubs can assume the role of independent quality assurer in these cases, but this arrangement needs further clarification in the guidance and it is not clear if they are actually doing so or are able to do it for all offices in need, given that these regional advisers are also limited in number.

However, from the perspective of senior management, a sharp difference can be noted as 45 percent of quality approvers indicated that it was possible, while 35 percent said that a segregation of roles was not possible. The issue was identified as particularly relevant for small country offices, where human resources are limited and individual staff members often have to assume multiple roles. Along with the staff capacity, sufficient time is necessary. When asked, 45 percent of all quality assessors indicated that they had sufficient time to rigorously perform their roles, while 36 percent stated that this was not the case. Only 18 percent of all quality approvers stated they had sufficient time to perform their duties, while 45 percent stated that they had no time.

3.5 INTRODUCTION OF THE THEORIES OF CHANGE AND NEW TEMPLATES

Finding 5: The introduction of the theory of change is a positive step towards better design and quality of programmes and projects. However, the concept of theory of change is neither fully understood nor adequately practised during the programming process.

Under the previous programme cycle, policies and procedures for design derived from RBM principles and were contained in the Handbook on

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. The planning method was often completed with the use of the log-frame methodology to feed the result frameworks in the programme and project documents.

Notwithstanding the comprehensive guidance, project and programme design were weak across the organization. The meta-analysis of audit and evaluations performed between 2010 and 2015 indicated that about 32 percent of all recommendations referred to issues related to programme and project design. Furthermore, it was noted that there was lack of clear internal logic, baselines and targets, along with insufficient stakeholder analysis. In addition, there was no situation/problem analysis, while this was supposed to be the foundation of the design process. Recommendations included strengthening of the results frameworks and development of appropriate outcome indicators and baselines.

The major change in the planning and design cycle is the application of the theory of change, which is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to occur in a particular context. It focuses in particular on mapping out or "filling in" the "missing middle" between what a programme or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how this leads towards the achievement of desired goals. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to be achieved. These are all mapped out in an outcome framework, which then provides the basis for identifying the type of activity or intervention that will lead to the outcomes identified as preconditions for achiev-ing the long-term goal. Through this approach, the precise link between activities and the achievement of the long-term goals are more fully understood. This leads to better planning because activities are linked to a detailed understanding of how change actually occurs. It also leads to better evaluation, because it is possible to measure progress towards the achievement of longer-term goals that go beyond the identification of programme outputs.[48] The new POPP requires the use of the theory of change and with the systematic use of evidence to feed the theory of change.[49] Both the templates for programme and project design were revised, introducing embedded quality standards and reflecting the new programming principles.

The introduction of the theory of change is an important development and should result in improved quality of programming. A study of its use in international development[50] showed that most of the large international organizations adopted and used the theory of change in the early 2000s, except the United Nations system. By making the use of the theory of change mandatory, the use of evidence in programming is more prominent. The theory of change adds a new layer to the planning and design process; it does not replace the main elements of the previous way that UNDP organized its planning and design. Elements such as problem analysis, stakeholder consultations and analyses, result and resources framework and establishment of baselines remain in place when the theory of change is introduced as a planning instrument.

The 2016 RBM audit (Audit Report No. 1549)[51] concluded that the introduction of the theory of change had the potential to enhance the quality of programme and project design because it represents a standard in development planning.

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48   Centre for Theory of Change, www.thetheoryofchange.org

49   See, for further reference, audit report 1549, March 2016 on RBM in UNDP.

50   Voger, I. 2012. 'Review of the Use of Theory of Change in International Development', United Kingdom Department for International Development, April 2012.

51   RBM audit, pp. 5-7, Issue 1, Theory of Change.

However, the audit noted that the underlying reasons for which quality issues occurred were not analysed in depth. It was not clear why the foregoing set of directives did not result in high-quality design. For this reason, it was uncertain whether or not the new POPP indeed responds to the challenges faced by country offices. Hence, the audit identified the risk that country offices could face significant difficulties in applying theory of change.

It was established in previous sections on CPDs that country offices evidently are not using theory of change as a programming tool for country programme design, although this was required for all countries submitting CPDs to the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2015 and first regular session of 2016. It was also noted that the application of the theory of change was not practised during the UNDAF process as this was not required. Since the CPD outcome statements are directly connected to the UNDAF and the indicators are equal, this omission affects the coherence of the planning process. With the introduction of the new interim guidance on UNDAF design, this omission has been addressed.

One of the conditions for effectively applying the theory of change is that the staff involved in project planning and design have sufficient knowledge and training. Forty percent of project developers indicated that they had sufficient knowledge on how to apply an evidence-based theory of change when designing project proposals. Interviews at the regional hubs confirmed that in some cases, there was insufficient knowledge and understanding to apply the new instructions on planning and design effectively, and 45 percent of project developers indicated that they were conversant with the corporate quality requirements. The more general problem of not having sufficient RBM knowledge at the

relevant levels is confirmed by a study[52] on RBM in the United Nations development system, which found that investments, such as training, are made in M&E staff, while RBM training of programme staff lags behind.

This finding also seems valid for UNDP; interviews and results from workshops at the regional hubs indicate that UNDP staff in many cases considered training incomplete or impractical. Further, when asked if the new project document template provides practical guidelines on how to write an evidence-supported project proposal based on a theory of change, about 50 percent of the project developers responded in the affirmative. Also, according to feedback on the survey and during interviews, guidance and templates were unavailable in French and Spanish, which caused challenges for staff and external partners in some regions.

Finally, time[53] and data constraints were mentioned on several occasions in the open responses to the survey, suggesting that they were major issues preventing project developers from developing detailed theories of change.

3.6 IMPROVING MONITORING PRACTICES

Finding 6: Insufficient resources, staffing and competence to support monitoring have undermined the ability of UNDP to monitor results more effectively in order to manage knowledge for further improving the quality of programmes.

Previous external and IEO evaluations as well as external and internal audits recommended: improving the monitoring function to strengthen the RBM approach and incorporate it in the design of programmes through clear goals and objectives, indicators and baselines; streamlining,

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52 Bester, A., 'Results-Based Management in the United Nations Development System', United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Final Draft, 2016.

53 10 of the 48 open responses referred to time constraints and seven to time constraints.

simplifying and making M&E tools and activities more useful; establishing M&E groups in country offices and/or M&E specialists to strengthen the M&E function; linking monitoring, learning and decision-making; supporting monitoring capacity at the level of implementing partners; and strengthening the data collection capacity of implementing partners.

The audit of UNDP monitoring practices in 2015[54] concluded that monitoring systems and practices were not designed to allow managers to follow project and programme performance. It was also stated that the prescriptive content provided by the POPP was not adequate, which, according to the audit, had led to different interpretations and inconsistent application of the monitoring tools, thus affecting corporate reporting. Resources were insufficient to meet all monitoring requirements and staff did not have enough specific knowledge and skills to properly monitor progress of projects and programmes at a strategic level. There was no written monitoring policy and managers were left to interpret the various requirements. In addition, different monitoring tools were not fully integrated and users needed to compile information from different sources to get a complete picture of their programme and projects. There was no mandatory training that would provide users with comprehensive knowledge on monitoring, including how to use the monitoring tools.

In response to these challenges and the audit, the organization launched a comprehensive review and update of its monitoring practices and launched a monitoring policy with stronger prescriptive content on monitoring. The policy reflected initiatives and decisions that had been

launched since 2013. Among the initiatives was the Country Office Support Initiative (COSI), which sets specific benchmarks for monitoring human capacity for M&E. All offices with annual programme expenditures of $50 million and above are to maintain two full-time specialists dedicated to M&E. Offices with annual programme expenditures between $10 million and $50 million should maintain one full-time specialist dedicated to M&E. Offices with less than $10 million in eligible annual programme expenditures must maintain staff with appropriate time[55] dedicated for M&E. The regional hubs are required to provide full-time equivalent staff dedicated to M&E to support offices that are unable to maintain the benchmark in a 1:4 ratio (one full-time equivalent staff to four countries without adequate capacities). Staff dedicated to project-level monitoring and/or evaluation do not count towards meeting these criteria.[56]

UNDP reported that: *"64 percent of country offices had met the internal standard of spending 1–3 percent of their programme budget on M&E; 56 percent had one or more M&E specialists, bringing total capacity to 12 dedicated staff in regional hubs and 127 full-time equivalent M&E specialists in country offices; 84 percent of country offices reported taking measures to improve their data collection and monitoring capacity; in 56 percent of countries where UNDP has a presence, there had been collaboration with partners to strengthen national statistical systems".[57]*

Based on surveys and interviews, tracking spending on monitoring and decentralized evaluation is not yet possible with specific account codes in Atlas. The actual cost of monitoring activities at the country office level can only be captured

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54 Performance Audit of Monitoring Practices, Report 1397 February 2015, issue A, pp. 3-4.

55 COSI benchmark for country offices with less than $10 million: it recommended that country offices and regional bureaux have capacities in place (e.g., from regional service centres, on-the-ground project staff, retainer/service contracts). A ratio of one dedicated, full-time regional specialist for four country offices (1:4).

56 Time allocated to M&E: 56 percent of the target and 54 percent of country offices have met COSI benchmarks. Source: ROAR 2015.

57 Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2015 (DP/2016/9).

when all monitoring plans are adequately costed and consolidated. This might explain why only 25 percent of country offices consulted during this assessment indicated that the budget for the monitoring function was considered sufficient, while 28 percent considered it only somewhat sufficient. These structural budgetary issues may be one of the factors to explain why the benchmark was met by only 65 percent of country offices.

Although there seems to be an increase in the number of dedicated M&E staff in country offices and the regional hubs, our survey showed that about 45 percent of all country offices completed an assessment of the number of staff needed for the monitoring function. When asked if the benchmark on the staffing for the monitoring function had been met, only 38 percent of the offices confirmed. According to BPPS, 35 country offices still have problems in staffing their monitoring capacity up to benchmark standards. In parallel, regional hubs only provided limited support to country offices. Adequately staffing the M&E function implies more than meeting a quantitative benchmark; the quality of the M&E staff is also crucial. When asked to what extent country offices considered their M&E staff qualified, only 45 percent stated that they meet quality requirements.

The high number of country offices reporting to have measures for improving data collection is promising, as just over 25 percent of all country offices consider the data provided by their implementing partners as sufficiently reliable. This capacity is essential for the proper monitoring and reporting function of UNDP because most country offices have to rely on external parties for data collection. However, the possibilities for country offices to enhance data reliability through verification are likely limited since only 17 percent of all respondents stated that they had sufficient budget to do so, while 21 percent stated that their budget was not at all sufficient to meet this need. Over 30 percent of country offices consulted indi-

cated that they have little or no capacity at all to verify the reliability of the performance data provided by partners.

In summary, UNDP has yet to properly staff many of its offices with more adequate M&E capacities to meet the prescribed levels in its monitoring policy, however, structural constraints, such as ensuring the reliability of data provided by some partners, will continue to further challenge monitoring functions.

3.7 IMPROVING DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS

Finding 7: Resource constraints may impede the success of the recently launched strategy to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations. In addition, the organization is still slowly progressing in the development of a culture that uses more effectively the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations to contribute to knowledge management and to feed strategic and timely decision-making.

Evaluation is a key component of improving the quality of programmes and projects which contributes to promoting the use of credible evidence, data collection and analysis, and advancing the culture of RBM beyond monitoring, reporting, compliance and oversight to identify what, how and why particular actions are working or contributing (or not) to specific goal(s).

Improving the quality of decentralized evaluations is a commitment made by UNDP in advancing RBM. Since the 2014 evaluation policy review, IEO has paused quality assessment of the decentralized evaluations, due to the need to add measures to ensure their improved independence and reliability, highlighted as an issue in the 2014 evaluation policy review. According to this independent policy review,[58] the overall reliability of decentralized evaluations had been compro-

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58   Baastel, Review of UNDP Evaluation Policy, 2014.

mised because of interference by management at the country office level during the evaluations, an inconsistent quality assurance system and inaccurate reporting. The review recommended the introduction and enforcement by management of effective quality assurance systems for decentralized evaluations supported by updated and additional guidelines.

In response to the evaluation policy review, a strategy to improve the quality of the decentralized evaluations was rolled out in late 2015 by the Development Impact Group, aimed at strengthening the use of evaluation for learning and accountability. In addition, the new evaluation policy[59] endorsed by the Executive Board in 2016 established that at the overall organizational level, UNDP will aim at allocating 1 percent of combined programmatic (regular and other) resources to the evaluation function, with 0.8 percent reserved for the work of decentralized evaluations, representing a clear mandate and opportunity for UNDP to allocate additional resources to decentralized evaluations and to strengthen the capacities to ensure the quality and utility of the inputs provided by these evaluations. Nevertheless, it is still not very clear how much should be invested in evaluations by regional bureaux and country offices because the monitoring policy also indicates that a minimum of 1 percent of annual development expenditures by region must be spent on monitoring and evaluation.[60] This information is confusing and it is still not very clear how much should go to monitoring and how much should go to evaluation, and whether the resources should come from the regions or the country offices.

Based on consultations with country offices and the 2015 ROAR data, improvements in the quality of decentralized evaluations still require improving the utility of the evaluations and training to enable staff to manage and provide quality assurance to country-level evaluations while still preserving the independence of the exercises. Staff indicated that they would value more templates for terms of reference and inception reports. Further, country offices expressed the need for additional guidance on the quality assurance of evaluation reports, and the need for constant updating of the Evaluation Resource Center evaluation roster, including a rating function for the evaluators.

Training evaluators on how to produce more credible and useful reports and training staff on how best to commission the right evaluators and manage decentralized evaluations may help to improve the quality of the decentralized evaluations. However, a cultural change is also needed to ensure that decentralized evaluations are not only independent and credible but also more effectively used to enhance knowledge management and decision-making.

There has been an increase in the compliance with management responses and rate of implementation of recommendations (from 78 percent in 2014 to 85 percent in 2015), which could be indicative of an increase in the utility of evaluations. Nevertheless, in 2015 the ROAR included a question related to the usefulness of decentralized evaluation recommendations, and country offices indicated that only 33 percent of recommendations were assessed as being supported by an evidence base, credible, practical, action-oriented, and specific in terms of the responsible party for action and with notable decision-making use. Most recommendations were perceived as either not relevant, specific and/or action-oriented for subsequent follow up (35 percent) or credible enough to be used in decision-making (32 percent). Meta-analysis of evaluations and CPDs, as well as interviews with country offices and partners, also indicate there is limited evidence that the organization is making effective use of lessons learned from evaluations and reviews to more effectively contribute

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59 DP/2016/23.

60 PPM Programming Standards and Principles Monitoring Policy, page 4.

to knowledge management and to feed strategic and timely decision-making.

Recognizing the above limitations, UNDP is seeking measures to incentivize the further exploration of ways to learn from evaluations and critical reviews. One example is the effort to develop a database of lessons learned and the recently introduced questions in the ROAR to reflect about failure. The information, however, has yet to go beyond reporting on knowledge-sharing and make the transition to knowledge management in a way that UNDP is able to document the evidence of how lessons from success and failure have influenced change and improvement.

In summary, improving the quality of decentralized evaluations is a commitment by UNDP in advancing RBM. While efforts are being made by headquarters and regional bureaux, to date limited progress has been made towards improving the quality of decentralized evaluations. Unless proper attention is given to strengthening procurement processes, evaluability, evaluation management, guidelines and supporting materials, resource availability, and utilization and learning of the evaluations, the strategy being rolled out may not be sufficient to significantly improve the quality of decentralized evaluations. Further analysis of the problem is required to design a more comprehensive change path to address key weaknesses in the evaluations but also to promote its use for learning and knowledge management to improve programmes.

3.8 IMPROVING RESULTS REPORTING

Finding 8: The use of quantitative and qualitative evidence to demonstrate progress in UNDP reporting has improved. Challenges remain for country offices undertaking reporting activities in terms of usefulness, timing, length and frequency of the reports, as well as ensuring the reliability of how the performance data are reported and, for external users in countries, in terms of the language used and the length of the reports.

UNDP produces multiple reports, but two key formats mostly capture UNDP results in the field: the ROAR and the IRRF.

UNDP introduced the ROAR in 1999 to document annual progress towards strategic programme outcomes. All country offices are required to report their results in a given year and a consolidated report is then prepared corporately to feed into the annual report of the Administrator. The ROAR is also intended to help UNDP headquarters carry out analyses for corporate oversight and monitoring, as well as to report to the Executive Board, including on the Board's specific request that UNDP include a more analytical narrative on challenges and lessons learned.

The format of the ROAR was last revised in 2014 in order to adjust to the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and when it was integrated as part of the corporate planning system. The redesign aimed at a more reflective exercise for country offices to consider the factors facilitating and hindering progress, lessons learned and future actions. The most recent version of the ROAR platform introduced a reflection both on development results and on organizational performance results to integrate the ROAR with the integrated workplan year-end reporting exercise The ROAR online platform, content and tools have been updated, incorporating feedback from various offices, including field users. The ROAR scoring methodology was further refined in 2014-2015 in order to: (a) enhance the robustness of the scoring, including for the criteria for awarding points; (b) increase the focus on evidence by inter alia assessing the country office's completion of the CPD and IRRF reporting; and (c) align the ROAR with the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The 2016 OIA audit on RBM noted that reporting in UNDP had improved over the years, enhancing the use of quantitative and qualitative evidence in demonstrating its progress.

The Executive Board has noted in decisions on the annual report on evaluation as well as on the adoption of the evaluation policy the progress in the use of evidence in both programming and

reporting. Starting in 2012,[61] the then Operations Support Group[62] in the Executive Office carried out a ROAR quality assessment that rated country offices according to compliance and the quality of results reporting and evidence provided.

Consultations with staff from 45 country offices and regional hubs showed that despite continuous improvements in the format of the ROAR, this was still widely perceived as a headquarters-driven exercise, underutilized by country offices in terms of learning, knowledge management, decision-making and reporting to external partners. Survey results showed that 70 percent of respondents use the ROARs only to some extent for decision-making on budget allocation and 67 percent for communication with donors and partners. This information could not be validated in interviews and focus groups where staff indicated even more limited utility for the ROARs. Even though the Executive Board welcomed the improved quality of the annual report of the Administrator and expressed appreciation for the systematic reporting, in-country interviews with donors and partners indicated issues with the utility of the ROARs and the IRRF, indicating challenges with the language, content and length of the reports.

The timing for opening/accessing the ROAR platform for country offices to complete the report overlaps with the period when offices are focusing on their year-end closures and other corporate and project deadlines, frequently affecting the attention given to these reporting exercises. One larger country office shared with the assessment team the overwhelming number of deadlines country offices would need to follow to be able to plan everything ahead (e.g., 55 deadlines between November and January). However, some country offices have mechanisms in place to collect data throughout the year, enter it in the corporate system as they go along and work on their ROAR narratives in December. The ROAR can be prepared much earlier if properly planned by country offices, but it is a challenge for many country offices.

Another significant challenge mentioned was that the current online system does not capture the results achieved at the regional level or by the regional programmes and bureaux. The ROAR platforms for regional and global programmes could not be developed in 2014 or 2015 because of the lack of resources. Therefore, results had to be captured offline. It is not clear if lessons learned and the complementarity of the regional and global programme to country programme results were properly captured or lost for timely use.

Moreover, the frequent (annual) changes in the structure of the ROAR increased the burden of learning on country office staff to familiarize themselves with new requirements and maintain consistent quality. Staff who attended the five workshops in the regional hubs suggested that ROARs be produced biannually. It is not clear what would be the ideal frequency, but according to many parties consulted in all regions, the frequency and length of the ROAR should be reconsidered.

The IRRF is another tool used by UNDP to monitor and report on results. The IRRF includes indicators for development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency to measure progress towards development and institutional effectiveness and the relationship between results and resources.

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61 Organizational Performance Group (OPG) 18 January 2012, Decision OPG-2012.01.18-1A: The OPG agreed to the criteria and approach for the ROAR assessments for 2012, to establish the ROAR quality rating for the new Balanced Scorecard indicator. During that meeting, the OPG also insisted on: (a) the importance of the ROARs as part of the efforts towards improving results management, monitoring and reporting; (b) the responsibility of the Resident Representatives for the quality of the ROAR; (c) indication that the ROAR quality ratings would be reflected in the Balanced Scorecard; and (d) acknowledgement of the technical problems with the platform, which the Office of Information Systems and Technology is working to resolve.

62 The function of the Operations Support Group was moved to the Development Impact Group/BPPS in October 2014 as a result of the structural review exercise.

The IRRF and the ROAR are supposed to function as complementary instruments to collect results once a year to support multiple purposes. In addition to inputs to the annual report of the Administrator, other analytical products include lessons learned and reviews of both M&E capacity and spending and the utility of evaluations, but it is not clear how the organization uses this information for learning what works and what doesn't and for improving institutional effectiveness across countries. Some country offices have started using lessons learned from the ROAR in their country programme formulation and presentations to the headquarters project appraisal committee, but there is limited evidence of further use of this information.

An analysis of the IRRF indicators in the area of "improved accountability of results" within the scope of this assessment against the five qualities of SMART indicators (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound)[63] highlighted that some indicators are of limited utility for future analysis of the relationship between development and management, as well as results and resources for decision-making.

For example, to measure programme effectiveness, UNDP uses the indicator of "percentage of all programme outcomes reported on track or achieved". In 2015, similarly to 2014 and 2013, UNDP has reported that over 95 percent of all programme outcomes are on track or achieved. Aggregating outcomes are organizationally self-assessed as "on track" together with those assessed as "achieved" can also be misleading and would be better reported separately. Moreover, for certain indicators, the organization presents results by aggregating data from country offices, including outliers[64] that skew averages, masking distinct levels of achievement or non-achievement that may require attention.

Overall, in terms of attainability of the milestones/targets, the extent of positive progress reported at the aggregate level is so high that it raises concerns. For example, in the 2015 annual report of the Administrator and midterm review of the Strategic Plan, achievement reached on average 90 percent of all milestones within the areas covered in this assessment. Compounded by the problematic nature of self-reported data, the additional risk of bias using aggregates that include outliers raises concerns about the possibility of an inherent positive bias within the data set.

A desk review of the "streamlined and populated"[65] IRRF indicators shows that changes made by UNDP to improve the IRRF were not sufficient. The IRRF system still has 148 indicators. Beyond compliance for corporate reporting, many country offices still fail to fully understand the relevance of the IRRF and stated that the instrument and indicators did not adequately represent the results at the national level. It was further noted that IRRF indicators do not allow sufficient flexibility to accommodate the full range of UNDP results at this level. Although this perception may be linked to communication challenges, it also suggests low understanding of RBM in the organization beyond work planning, compliance and reporting, which in turn shows the lack of understanding of the IRRF by many. The purpose of the IRRF indicators is to enable aggregation of common results across contributing programme countries, and for the sake of RBM and by definition they should not capture the full range of UNDP results at output level. As explained by management but perhaps not yet effectively and widely communicated, the IRRF is designed to complement but not replace country-level monitoring of the most relevant specific indicators for each country programme and project.

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63   UNDP, 'Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation', 2011 (addendum).

64   For example, see the use of outliers in output indicator 1.1.1 in the updated IRRF (annex II to the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017), page 13.

65   Desk review of IRRF indicators 2014-2017, as part of this assessment, May 2016.

In summary, results and resources reporting has improved in UNDP but has yet to balance the focus between documenting what was accomplished for compliance, oversight and accountability, and reflecting on what worked, what did not and in which contexts, for learning purposes to improve results and better contribute to strategic decision-making. Reports continue to focus on describing UNDP actions and contributions to results but are less useful in reporting on what was most effective or ineffective in supporting transformational change, what knowledge was captured and what was learned from achieving or not achieving results.

Chapter 4

REGIONAL PRESENCE AND CONSOLIDATION OF POLICY FUNCTIONS

This chapter assesses whether measures aimed at strengthening regional presence, including consolidation of policy functions, contributed or are likely to contribute to the capacity of country offices to deliver higher-quality programmes and thus enhance the institutional effectiveness of UNDP.

As discussed in chapter 2, the structural review identified several organizational challenges to be addressed during the period of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. Various audits, evaluations and reviews by donors and partners highlighted issues of insufficient governance arrangements, inadequate coordination between the regional centres and the regional bureaux, as well as lack of clarity on the role of the policy advisers, who often were seen as competing with country advisers sitting in other regional bureaux or at headquarters. Headquarters and regional bureaux also needed to cut costs given the decrease in resources, particularly from core funding/regular resources, to show that UNDP could be more effective and efficient. In addition, a number of donors and other assessments highlighted the need for UNDP to report results at a more strategic outcome level.

To address these weaknesses, UNDP launched a structural change process. Headquarters and regional hubs were restructured and a new policy bureau – BPPS – was created. During the structural change, organizational charts were redesigned and business processes re-engineered.

Consultations for this assessment with 45 country offices highlighted, however, that the 2013

structural review and subsequent enhancement measures may fail to achieve the expected results because key challenges faced by country offices were not properly considered in this process. The main issues raised by the majority of country offices included:

a) Inadequate financial and human resources for country offices to deliver effective and efficient quality programmes in a timely manner;[66]

b) Inflexible corporate norms and rules that do not adequately address varying contexts at the country level;

c) Inadequate operational tools and instruments, which can help efficient and timely project implementation, effective budget management and progress towards development results;

d) Too many bureaucratic steps, poor IT systems and excessive reporting requirements, which take time away from development work, as well as from the enhancement of the quality of programmes.

4.1 STRENGTHENING REGIONAL PRESENCE AND CONSOLIDATING POLICY FUNCTIONS

Finding 9: Measures aimed at strengthening the UNDP regional presence are mostly valued by country offices, and the process of consolidating policy functions is largely operational. It is not clear, however, to what extent the measures have contributed or can contribute to strengthening of capacities to deliver higher-quality

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66   Supported by the survey, as indicated in previous chapters.

programmes, given that key challenges facing country offices were not properly addressed; the lack of resources and capacities is of particular concern, which can affect the strengthening and sustainability of the regional presence.

Policy development and technical advisory services were integrated into a new Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) to deploy multidisciplinary development solutions teams. Policy development was concentrated at headquarters, and policy and programme implementation and support to country offices were addressed mainly by outposted policy and programme advisers in the regional hubs.

To strengthen the regional presence, regional centres were reorganized into regional hubs,[67] to which regional bureaux transferred some of their staff. At the same time, regional bureaux relocated the country office desk officers and country advisers to the regional hubs to work closely with the policy advisers. Since regional hubs now work in a matrix structure, with heads of policy advice clusters reporting to both the directors of the hubs and to relevant policy units within BPPS.

The new structure was expected to offer UNDP the following advantages:

a) Cost reduction, since travel allowances and costs will be reduced by greater proximity to country offices;

b) Clearer reporting lines on policy issues, since mandates are more clearly formulated;

c) Better quality of support to country offices, since proximity and a better understanding of their context would have a positive impact.

After the restructuring, the situation differs on the following main points:

a) All policy functions are now incorporated in BPPS;

b) With few exceptions, all policy advisory services have been transferred to the hubs;

c) With few exceptions, all country support functions have been transferred to the hubs;

d) Advisory services to country offices are streamlined in the hubs where the country support teams are responsible for central intake of the demand for the advisory. The country advisers are responsible for linking this demand to the relevant policy advisers;

e) Reporting lines are centralized; all staff in the hubs report directly to relevant management in the hub and only managers of policy clusters also report to BPPS.

The changes have contributed mostly to clearer reporting lines and division of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, but to varying degrees across the different regions. More advisers are now closer and more available to engage with country offices and understand their contexts, needs and challenges. However, the uncertainty of financial resources has led to fragile contract situations, and if the prolonged vacancies of key positions persist and demand from country offices increases, the shortage of staff is likely to adversely affect the capacity of the hubs to provide timely and high-quality support.

Additionally, the process resulted in a reduction in staff and a shift in the ratio of staff between headquarters and regional hubs, from 60:40 in 2013 to 45:55 in 2015. Further, there was a reduction in regular resources spent on institutional costs in favour of the programmatic component, from 42 to 38 percent, and a rebalancing of resources within the institutional component of the integrated budget by decreasing the proportion allocated to management and increasing the proportion allocated to development effectiveness activities from 62 percent in 2014 to 49 percent in 2015. According to UNDP, these measures delivered annual savings of $33 mil-

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67 Outposting of policy advisers was not new to UNDP; this process started in the 1990s. In 2008, regional support centres were transformed into regional centres, hosting both operations staff and policy advisers.

lion in salaries and rent. Further review by OAI confirmed this figure, and the details are as follow: (a) staff costs decreased from $303 million per annum to approximately $273 million; and (b) rent decreased by $3 million. However, at the same time the organization incurred additional one-time implementation costs of $35 million between 2014 and 2015 related to staff separations and relocations, refurbishment of the regional hubs, technical support for implementation and investments in capacity. The net gain from the structural review for 2014-2015 is thus negative with additional costs of $2 million, with the understanding that this net amount does not include the potential gains and savings that may occur in coming years.

Further measures currently are being taken to shift more staff costs to direct project costs (DPC) in country offices. DPC are considered by UNDP as legitimate organizational costs incurred in the implementation of a development activity or service that can be traced and attributed to that activity (project or programme) or service. However, this measure is so far facing some pushback from some country offices and partners, who do not feel it is appropriate to pay charges additional to those they already pay in indirect costs.

This assessment also confirms some initial positive trend related to matrix management arrangements with a dual reporting system to headquarters and regional hub leadership, which are in most cases functioning better, although not in all hubs. Despite joint inductions conducted at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, which should have clarified the structure and reporting arrangements, in Panama (Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Hub) Addis Ababa (Africa Regional Hub), the new architecture and matrix management have created additional and unclear layers of reporting and bottlenecks, often to and from headquarters. This has slowed some processes that appear to be rooted in decreased deci-

sion-making autonomy for the regional hub and confusing lines of accountability for the staff.[68]

Interviews indicated that in particular, the regional hubs led by the Deputy Directors of the Regional Bureaux for Asia and the Pacific and for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States have clearer reporting roles and more timely decision-making than others. Regional and BPPS staff in these hubs stated that they now work in a more integrated way. From a country office perspective, the reporting lines on policy issues are clear only to 35 percent of the respondents to our survey; almost 35 percent stated that they are clear to some extent; and almost 30 percent stated that they were unclear. This assessment also identified a possible underlying reason why reporting lines and accountabilities still lacked the intended clearness: UNDP was lagging behind in formulating the correct job descriptions for staff appointed to the hubs. Of 34 job descriptions of the BPPS policy advisers (team leaders) reviewed, only 11 had been updated to reflect the new Strategic Plan, including the new BPPS and the updated role of the policy advisers. Another 11 job descriptions made no reference to policy function in the regional hub; 10 made no reference to knowledge management; and nine made no reference to the regional contribution to policy research and development.[69] Since most job descriptions for the policy advisers (team leaders) have not been updated to reflect the dual reporting lines, this might create risks of unclear expectations, inadequate reporting lines and lack of accountability for results.

Overall, reviews of UNDP regional and global surveys from 2013 to 2015 indicated that country offices generally were satisfied with the quality and timeliness of support services. This perception is consistent with the results of the surveys conducted for this assessment in 2016. The small difference in the degree of their appreciation

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68   Latin America and Caribbean Regional Hub.

69   These are old job descriptions for positions created in 2006, 2008 and 2012.

might indicate that the impact of the measures strengthening the regional functions was neutral. However, interviews revealed that country offices particularly welcomed the availability and proximity of hub staff. This proximity, according to country offices, has improved relationships and facilitated communication. Responses to basic requests from country offices for information and follow-up were reported to be improved. The regional advisers in the hubs can quickly consult policy advisers and provide more detailed and timely feedback to countries. The cost of travel for support missions where staff are in the regions has been reduced, which is an important gain in a time of increased financial pressure. The roles in the hubs are still not completely clear to all staff, and a few country offices indicated still being confused about the available services and reference persons. Many country office staff voiced interest in a "menu of services and a skills mapping" of the hubs so that they would better know whom to contact for which needs and the kind of services that could be offered. Subsequent to the joint assessment fieldwork, the Regional Bureau for Africa indicated that it was introducing a regional hub gateway in December 2016 to address the issue of available resources and communication channels, following a similar initiative by the Regional Hub for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, in Istanbul.

Interviews and the institutional effectiveness survey indicated that support provided by the hubs was timely for 96 percent of the respondents. Around 90 percent of the respondents agreed that when they were in need of a hub service, it was easy for them to identify and access the service or advice. Over 86 percent of the respondents indicated that the support provided by the regional hub was also practical and useful.

One result of the additional guidance, quality assurance measures and the support and involvement of bureaux and hubs has been the improved design of some CPDs. In all regions, it was reported, and desk reviews confirmed, that to some extent the integrated support provided by the hubs and bureaux contributed to enhance-

ments in the quality of CPD design, including by mainstreaming Strategic Plan priorities in programme approaches and improving the RRF. Such improvements need to be validated over time so as to assess whether initial gains can be sustained and whether long-term trends have been triggered sufficiently to affect the implementation and sustainability of the programmes' improved quality.

When asked to assess the quality of specific advisory services, country offices surveyed highly valued the advice on programme alignment and CPD design but were to a lesser extent positive about services rendered on programme and project implementation. About 65 percent of survey respondents agreed that there had been improvements in the quality assurance process, with the support from the hub positively contributing to the quality assurance of programme and project design. This is consistent with findings from interviews, which indicate that at the level of support services, regional hub services have been particularly useful in improving the quality of CPDs and some project documents. In all regions, it was reported that the integrated support provided by the hubs and bureaux contributed to some enhancements in the quality of design of CPDs, including by mainstreaming Strategic Plan priorities in the programme approach and improving RRFs.

The highest level of satisfaction among country offices on the services provided by the regional hubs were in the areas of: (a) support to country offices on Strategic Plan alignment; (b) CPD/CPAP design and formulation; and (c) support for improved RBM. The survey also indicated that the areas where regional advisers and specialists are most needed are those related to programme and project design and implementation, and quality assurance. In most regions, an increase in the oversight of the quality of programmes since the structural change is, to some extent, promoting compliance with measures to improve the design of CPDs and projects, as well as improvements in monitoring and reporting with enhanced use of evidence.

There were also variations across the regions in terms of levels of satisfaction. These variations may to some extent be explained by the current set-up of the regional hubs. In some of the hubs, the policy advisers contribute to both the regional programmes and the provision of policy support. In the Regional Bureau for Arab States, the policy advisers were tasked mainly with provision of policy support to country offices and were not responsible for regional programmes.

Notwithstanding the positive trend as described above, this assessment identified two related risks that might impact negatively the ability of UNDP to enhance the capacity of country offices.

First, the staffing of the policy function at headquarters and in the regional hubs is facing constraints because of a significant reduction in the number of staff members due to the structural change required to adjust to declining resources. These resources declined more than expected, with 124 of 524 policy advisory positions, or almost 24 percent, not staffed by the end of 2015. An analysis of current contracts issued to policy advisers and other staff in BPPS and the regional hubs found that over 70 percent of contracts were due to end in December 2016. Subsequent to the joint assessment fieldwork, BPPS indicated that all contracts have since been extended through December 2017. The extension was processed in September 2016, only four months before the contracts were due to end. Some staff had indicated that it was difficult to plan their children's school year or rent housing when the contracts had only three or four months remaining. One bureau raised the issue that contracts are extended only on an annual basis and thus do not offer adequate job security.

Due to budget limitations, not all positions have been filled. The Asia Pacific Regional Hub in Bangkok was the least affected, with only 18 percent of positions unfilled, whereas the Africa

Regional Hub in Addis Ababa was most affected, with 37 percent of posts unfilled. Since 70 percent of all country office requests for assistance are related to programme policy issues,[70] there is a risk that this shortfall in staffing could affect the intended results of the restructuring. In addition, interviewees stated that efforts were still needed to ensure the consistency and availability of quality and timely advice in key areas such as sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk resilience, and knowledge management, which country offices identified as critical to maintain UNDP thought leadership and provide value to programme delivery.[71] The staff shortage is also affecting the organization's ability to advance to some new policy advisory areas committed in the Strategic Plan. Staffing positions in newly emerging areas that have been identified as strategically important to UNDP (e.g., extractive industries, innovation) have remained vacant, which leads to the risk that UNDP might not be able to fulfil its ambition to become a "leader of thought". One bureau indicated that it would be prudent to review and adjust the regional imbalances in policy and programme staff deployments within the prevailing resource constraints, in order to maximize the intended results of the structural review.

Second, under the implementation strategy for strengthening the UNDP regional presence, the cost of deploying policy advisers was to be recovered. This is necessary because core funding/regular resources are still declining and do not provide for funding of policy advisers for the longer term. The target for cost recovery for 2016 was set at $12 million, or 30 percent of the cost involved. This assessment could not establish the extent to which this goal is likely to be achieved: however, interviews with the hubs, country offices and external stakeholders suggest that there are challenges in this respect.

The uncertainty over budgetary provisions is also impacting the UNDP working climate. On aver-

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70   Cosmos reporting system data, May 2016.

71   As identified in the Accenture report.

age over 70 percent of contracts (308 of 441) had been renewed until December 2016. In all hubs, about 60 percent of all contracts were about to expire by the end of 2016, but in one hub, this figure was 100 percent (21 posts). Interviews in the hubs confirm that the financial sustainability and the related continuity of the policy advisory function are of concern.

In summary, the measures taken to strengthen the regional presence and consolidate the policy functions have yet to be translated into an effective response to the key challenges affecting country offices, much less a financially sustainable model for the structure of the regional hubs.

4.2 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REGIONAL PRESENCE

Finding 10: The restructuring of the organization and measures to strengthen the regional presence and consolidate policy functions were affected by the shortage of resources and sustainable funding models. However, the extent to which the regional bureaux and hubs will be able to properly support country offices will depend on the resources which the regions and country offices will be able to mobilize to pay the additional cost of regional and policy services. The expectation of recovering the costs of policy support from service requesters (or country offices) through direct project costing seems unrealistic in the short term, and the lack of resources is likely to affect the strengthening of the regional presence in the near future.

Regular (core) resources have been decreasing in the last five years, and in 2016, account for less than 20 percent of UNDP funding. This "accentuates organizational risks due to adverse effects on institutional capacity for [quality assurance], monitoring, accountability and oversight".[72] Interviews with some donors and senior managers indicate a shift in funding from core/regular resources to individualized programme and project

other resources (non-core funding), when not for humanitarian assistance.

As seen in figure 4, funding for regional bureaux shows large cuts in core funding/regular resources since 2010 across each region, ranging from 47 percent (Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States) to 63 percent (Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific). This has been offset, however, by increases in mobilization of other (non-core) resources, especially from government cost sharing, which has increased in almost all regions. In addition, there is a strong push to accelerate the implementation of direct project costing.

As identified in some previous evaluations and interviews, another commonly reported challenge posed by reduced resources is that staff at times focus more on financial opportunities and project delivery rather than on the pursuit of cross-thematic, cross-outcome and multidimensional integrated approaches. When UNDP relies heavily on government cost sharing, there could be some reputational risk, since there is additional pressure on staff to mobilize resources and they may feel compelled to negotiate projects that do not align with UNDP priorities.

UNDP efforts to break down silos and focus increasingly on aligning projects to its strategic priorities may be strongly challenged by the lack of resources. With decreasing resources and fewer staff, the organization needs to work more with individual contractors, causing institutional memory to be lost. Moreover, some staff perceive that their own technical skills are becoming obsolete due to inadequate resources for professional development and an overreliance on external consultants.

In comparing these key challenges faced by country offices with the corporate measures rolled out, no additional financial or human resources were provided to country offices except for techni-

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72 Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, including the annual report of the Administrator for 2015 (DP/2016/9).

Figure 4. Changes in regular and other resources funding for the regional bureaux and UNDP as a whole, 2010 – 2015

Programme budget by regional bureaux

RBA: Regional Bureau for Africa; RBAP: Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific; RBLAC: Regional for Latin America and the Caribbean; RBEC: Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States; RBAS: Regional Bureau for Arab States

cal support offered by the hubs for an additional cost, at daily rates likely ranging from $1,600 to $2,100. Country offices stated that these rates were not competitive and that their programmes and budgets did not have funds to cover the costs involved. High DPC charges for services provided by hub advisers may in particular reduce the chances for small country offices with limited resources to benefit from hub services.

These small country offices are likely to be those most in need of support from the bureaux and hubs, but they are the least likely to be able to pay the high charges. This may likely have negative implications over time in the level of support provided and capacities to deliver high-quality programmes. Given the high daily rates for UNDP staff which are expected to be applied, even country offices that are well positioned financially are likely to seek less expensive alternatives.

Middle-income countries with strong national capacities are often able to contract national or even international consultants for lower rates than those charged by UNDP. This in turn decreases the chances of the ongoing financial sustainability of the model, and the UNDP cost-recovery strategy may have the unintended consequence of pricing hub staff out of the market.

The regional hubs are exploring different coping mechanisms to deal with the financial constraints, but to date no path appears financially sustainable in the long term. Unless there are improvements in resource mobilization, it is unlikely that the UNDP will meet the targets to recover 30 percent of the costs of BPPS advisers in 2016 and 70 percent in 2017.

It is also increasingly challenging to invest in building the skills of the existing staff in the hubs, who need cutting-edge knowledge to remain competitive and add value. Some hubs are preparing to manage multiple consultant rosters in order to respond to the demands from countries. However, all hubs mentioned that in order for UNDP to promote itself as a knowledge-based organization, cutting-edge policy advisory capacity is needed in-house to consistently push for innovations in the integrated multidimensional approach, which is necessary for countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In August 2016, UNDP adopted a new planning and budgeting approach to allow the organization to leverage its resources in the most effective and cost-efficient way, and to ensure both the continuation of its universal presence and the continued financial sustainability of all country offices, including those that are not self-sustainable. The Executive Group and the Operational Performance Group explored ways in which planning and budgeting for institutional resources can be improved to maintain global development effectiveness and raise performance.[73] One of the key decisions relates to the consolidation of extrabudgetary resources, or the "pooling of the XB". Country offices consulted raised concerns regarding this pooling of extrabudgetary resources, which first occurred in the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and is being extended to other regions. Country offices expressed concern over no longer having this reserve under their direct control for manoeuvring and investing funds they had generated themselves. In the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the understanding of the rationale underlying the pooling was weak among the eight country offices consulted in the region, despite written communication issued by the regional leadership. This resulted in unfounded rumours that may have also contributed to the pushback from country offices in other regions. There is evidence of e-mail communications and discussions between regional and country office senior managers to ensure a good understanding of these measures, but country office representatives consulted did not perceive this to be the case, and communications may not have reached beyond senior management.

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73   Refer to Administrator's message of 23 August 2016 on Improved Planning and Budgeting Approach.

According to some staff in the regional hubs and country offices, there were also some, albeit insufficient, improvements in the integration of IT systems and more flexible operational processes to accelerate delivery. Staff also highlighted the significant increase in oversight associated with complicated quality assurance and reporting requirements added to the challenges, according to country offices. Without additional resources, country offices now spend a larger proportion of their time and human resources on what some offices interpret as "compliance requirements with limited added value". In interviews and surveys, many country office representatives stated that the new quality standards and quality assurance measures were not realistic or aligned to available resources.

In summary, the financial sustainability of the consolidation of policy function and strengthening of the regional presence are challenged by diminishing regular resources and inadequate mobilization of other resources and funding models to recover costs of the services provided by regional staff to country offices, because country offices are also facing financial constraints.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

OVERALL CONCLUSION: There are signs of improvements in the quality of programmes in UNDP. The CPDs are more strategic and more effectively engage multiple parts of the organization in quality assurance. There has also been progress made in the quality assurance of UNDP programmes in order to facilitate results-based programming and budgeting. Organizational measures such as the structural review, aiming inter alia to strengthen the regional presence and the consolidation of policy functions, have clarified some roles and responsibilities between the regional level and headquarters and are mostly valued by country offices.

However, it is not possible to conclude that the measures put in place currently have significant tangible and sustainable effects on the quality of programmes, or have potential for success, given multiple factors that need to be addressed, such as leadership, communication and resources. In addition, the measures for higher-quality programming have not been costed and therefore it is not clear if UNDP will be able to make all necessary investments.

UNDP is in the midst of change, and the sustainability of measures to increase institutional effectiveness through the new organizational and programmatic measures might be at risk due to lack of resources and sustainable funding models. Without additional efforts and targeted investments to strengthen capacities, it is unlikely that programmatic and organizational measures can be fully implemented, significantly enhance the quality of programmes and improve institutional effectiveness in a sustainable manner.

High-quality, results-based programming entails more than compliance to quality standards and reporting on results, even though this is important for senior management, donors and other important stakeholders. Results-based programming also entails learning to improve programming with the help of results-based information from evaluations, audits and corporate monitoring and reporting tools. Leadership is needed in UNDP to further develop a results-based culture throughout the organization that effectively uses knowledge to improve results, where successes but also failures are important vehicles of learning.

Conclusion 1: The UNDAFs and CPDs show improved alignment with the Strategic Plan priorities and an uptake of the Sustainable Development Goals, but for the most part fail to reflect the strategic comparative advantage of UNDP and how UNDP is envisaged to add value to development initiatives. CPDs do not reflect a sufficient use and understanding of the theory of change concept that could have provided for a more integrated vision and approach.

Standardizing quality criteria in the heart of the programming process requires the conditions for effective quality assurance to be in place for quality standards to be attainable. This currently is not the case, which has an impact on the planning and design of programmes and projects and is likely to affect the quality of programme results. UNDP has yet to calculate the time and cost involved in implementing effective quality assurance and to date, no additional budgetary provisions[74] have

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74 The resources for quality assurance need to be recovered through DPC. As DPC is new, this change has yet to take root in the organization and it is not clear if country offices are aware of it.

been set aside or provided to country offices to cover related costs.

Country offices and regional bureaux particularly face difficulties in applying theory of change concepts and in translating the products of the planning process into RRFs.

Almost all country offices and regional hub/bureau staff consistently mentioned that the main problems were and are resources and related capacities. Programmatic measures did not address this root problem; therefore, organizational measures are expected to have only a marginal effect. While country offices do understand that UNDP needs to improve the quality of its programmes and projects, the means to make the necessary investments are lacking, according to the country offices. This condition seems to represent a binding constraint and is likely to affect the effectiveness of the measures.

The broad range of stakeholder consultations held by the assessment team made it clear that most staff members, and in particular managers, need further training in RBM. A corporate-wide assessment of training needs is required for staff ranging from senior management to programme managers and associates. Training also has not been sufficiently extended to implementing partners, whose engagement is essential.

The use of evidence in reporting has increased, but evidence of its use for improved learning, programme design, implementation and course corrections is still limited. A monitoring policy and a strategy to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations have also been launched to improve the use of credible evidence. However, to date limited progress has been made in a consistent way to support learning from evidence for improved results within and among interventions. Because UNDP works in partnerships, measures cannot be implemented by UNDP alone.

Conclusion 2: The organizational restructuring changes aimed at strengthening the regional presence and consolidating policy functions contributed to a clearer division of

roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, but to varying degrees across the different regions. The sustainability of these changes is uncertain, given the lack of resources for staffing regional hubs and for country offices to pay for regional services.

Country offices particularly welcomed the increased actual or potential availability and proximity of hub staff, with advisers in the region now more likely to better engage and understand the context, needs and challenges of the region's country offices. Roles are not fully understood in all regions, and country offices are at times unclear about the services and reference persons available. In two of the hubs, the new architecture and matrix management have created additional and unclear layers of reporting and bottlenecks, often to and from headquarters. More effective decision-making power and stronger integration between regional bureaux advisers and BPPS advisers is found where hubs are led by Deputy Directors of the regional bureaux. Two regional hubs seem to have further centralized decision-making in New York rather than empowering the regional hubs to strengthen the regional presence and consolidate policy functions.

The uncertainty of financial resources has led to fragile contract situations, and if the prolonged vacancies of key positions persist and demand from country offices increases, the shortage of staff is likely to adversely affect the capacity of the hubs to provide timely and high-quality support. Further, not all country offices and partners are willing to pay the additional DPC charges for the regional services.

According to UNDP, the structural review delivered annual savings of $33 million in salaries and rent. Further review by OAI confirmed this figure. However and at the same time, the organization incurred additional one-time implementation costs of $35 million between 2014 and 2015. The net gain from the structural review for 2014-2015 is thus negative with additional costs of $ 2 million.

Conclusion 3: RBM continues to be associated more with compliance-driven practices to sat-

isfy reporting requirements, with a limited focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making and improved performance with targeted financial allocations. In order to effectively institutionalize RBM, UNDP has yet to find the balance between compliance for reporting and learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness. A greater understanding of what RBM can deliver is necessary to meeting the pledge that UNDP will be a results-driven and knowledge-based organization.

RBM remains largely the responsibility of RBM and M&E focal points and experts. This inadequate understanding of the practice and value of RBM for learning purposes to improve results has hindered country offices in securing adequate use of knowledge management in the overall quality of programmes and projects and management for results. Less than half of UNDP staff contacted by the assessment considered themselves fully up to date with UNDP corporate requirements and directives on how to interpret and apply RBM concepts. In addition to this internal challenge, most of the external parties involved in UNDP project development also are not up to date with the UNDP RBM quality requirements.

There is a clear and still unmet demand for knowledge management to play a bigger role in helping the organization better learn from evidence for improved results. Leadership has yet to more effectively encourage a "results culture" which goes beyond reporting and understands RBM in terms of continuous organizational self-learning from both successes and failure and from innovation, and not just M&E for reporting purposes.

Conclusion 4: There may be insufficient human and financial resources to fulfil the corporate requirements of the programming and structural reforms, due to the fact that the measures for higher-quality programming were not properly costed. Given the interdependence of financial and human resources, budgetary constraints have caused staff shortages and time constraints, which are likely to adversely affect

performance, unless additional prioritization efforts take place.

The availability of sufficient financial and human resources is a fundamental factor affecting the sustainability of the regional hubs, which generally are expected to recover costs from services provided to country offices, many of which are not in a position to afford the regional hubs' high charges. The extent to which the regional bureaux and hubs will be able to properly support country offices will depend on the resources the regions and country offices will be able to mobilize to pay the additional charges for regional and policy services. The expectation of recovering the costs of policy support from service requesters (or projects) through direct project costing seems unrealistic in the short term and the lack of resources is likely to affect the strengthening of the regional presence in the near future. Fully implementing DPC will require additional negotiations with project partners and a results-based project budgeting approach which costs out all implementation inputs, including technical expertise irrespective of its source. This may take time.

Many open or planned positions in the regional hubs have been vacant because of financial constraints. Currently, one quarter of BPPS staff positions across the regions and headquarters are vacant. UNDP staff generally have shown resilience and adaptability, but levels of engagement are undermined by a lack of resources to invest in them.

In addition to the investment in RBM capacity, there are other cost factors involved in implementing all measures and reforms to the fullest extent. The measures for higher-quality programming have not been properly costed and therefore it is not clear if UNDP will be able to make all necessary investments. In fact, adhering fully to the quality standards comes at a cost, but this cost has not been properly calculated and the assumption that they can be absorbed by country offices is questionable. Without having better knowledge of all costs involved in adhering to the quality standards, the level of incidental and structural investment cannot be performed.

Further, staff shortages contribute to inadequate adherence to quality assurance procedures because small country offices, with limited numbers of staff, cannot easily segregate roles and responsibilities. This significantly hinders the fulfilment of requirements for independent quality assurance and monitoring functions in accordance with the corporate quality standards. More than half of the country offices contacted stated that they were unable to provide sufficient time for quality assurers to rigorously review all project proposals submitted to them. These constraints are likely to affect the success of the measures to enhance the quality of programmes and to improve the institutional effectiveness of UNDP.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Based on the content of the UNDAF and the guidance provided in the UNDP quality standards, country offices should ensure that the UNDP comparative advantage and value added are adequately identified by providing evidence as to why UNDP is better positioned than other institutions to implement a specific programme.

Recommendation 2: UNDP should ensure that all country offices fully understand and adequately practise the concept of theory of change during the programming process through a thorough assessment of the completeness and internal logic of the theory of change prior to submitting the CPDs to the Executive Board.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should assess the costs of implementing the new programme and project quality assurance system to determine whether and, if so, how the resource requirements of the reformed system can be sustainably met with costed plans for a phased implementation. Based on the budget available, UNDP should prioritize the quality elements to which country offices have to adhere fully.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should reassess the financial sustainability of the regional service

centres/hubs model including the posting of the BPPS policy advisers.

Recommendation 5: UNDP should develop greater RBM expertise with improved focus on learning and knowledge management for enhanced effectiveness, shifting the focus from proving results to improving results. To effectively institutionalize RBM, capacity development needs to be delivered through a broad range of approaches and include all staff, from leadership and senior management to programme managers and associates. Capacity development should also extend to implementing partners, whose engagement is essential if national data sets are to improve and contribute to UNDP reporting requirements. Increased attention should also be given to promoting an organizational culture that uses more effectively the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations and audits to contribute to knowledge management and to feed strategic and timely decision-making.

Recommendation 6: UNDP leadership should prioritize investment in knowledge management, going beyond capturing best practices to using lessons learned from each context of success and failure to contribute to effectiveness and improve results. The role of leadership is pivotal in ensuring an enabling environment and support for UNDP to enhance engagement and communication to further develop a results-based culture throughout the organization that welcomes critical reflection on performance and effective knowledge management to improve results, where successes but also failures are important vehicles of learning. Leadership should effectively encourage a "results culture" which goes beyond reporting and understands RBM in terms of continuous organizational self-learning from both successes and failure and from innovation, and not just M&E for reporting purposes.

The final report with recommendations was submitted to UNDP management on 7th February 2017. As of 18th April 2017 no management response had been received.

Chapter 6

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Overall, it is too early to attribute improvement in terms of the quality of programmes, much less development results, to the recently introduced programming measures, since most have yet to be effectively implemented. Leadership has yet to provide adequate support for the organization to adapt and implement the new measures and manage knowledge by more openly using evidence of successes and failures to improve the quality of programmes and enhance institutional effectiveness.

Although the requirements of the enhanced RBM and quality assurance systems are increasingly understood, country offices and regional bureaux face multiple capacity and financial challenges to effective implementation of the new measures and RBM. The timing, sequencing, content and the way the measures were introduced generated significant implementation constraints.

The measures aimed at improving the quality of programmes, underpinned by RBM, insufficiently highlight the component of learning from successes and failures and the importance of knowledge management – the key essence of RBM – to enhance effectiveness of results. RBM is still understood by many in UNDP as M&E, work planning and reporting for compliance.

Based on interviews with key stakeholders and meta-analysis of evaluations and ROARs, it was found that knowledge management was still focused mostly on capturing best practices, not necessarily the lessons learned in each context of success and failure to contribute to effectiveness and improve results. UNDP has only recently introduced as part of its reporting opportunities (ROAR 2015) questions to promote learn-

ing from failure. This can be a significant step towards a cultural shift if leadership is able to value these inputs and commit to changes based on the evidence presented.

For UNDP to be an evidence-driven, learning and knowledge-based organization, it must find a more effective way to invest in RBM beyond the RBM/M&E focal points, webinars and online courses. To effectively institutionalize RBM, capacity development needs to be delivered through a broad range of approaches and include all staff, from leadership and senior management to programme managers and associates. Capacity development should also extend to implementing partners, whose engagement is essential if national data sets are to improve and contribute to UNDP reporting requirements.

UNDP is aware that this condition is critical and the annual workplan for 2016 acknowledges that the organization "*still has some way to go in changing attitudes, behaviours, processes, practices and skills… There are signs that a majority of the staff may still see efforts as a "passing phenomenon as well as compliance- and [headquarters]-driven. The task is made more difficult by what is still substantial under-investment by the organization in RBM capacity which is hampering country offices, in particular, from securing a step change in the use of data and in the overall quality of programme and project design, management and M&E*".[76] Nevertheless, the annual workplan gives no indication of how exactly this underinvestment in RBM capacity will be addressed, although it highlights three lines of action to raise funds: (a) expand the funding base; (b) higher turnover to secure more income from overhead fees; and (c) better cost

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75   UNDP Annual Business Plan 2016, Final, 2 December 2015, page 7.

recovery. There is, however, no indication that any of these lines of action will be successful in the short term.

UNDP will be using the full potential of RBM when its staff and partners also become comfortable with testing and adjusting theories of change, and learning from evidence to understand what works better, for whom and in which contexts. However, to date, analysis of ROARs indicates that country offices are still more focused on proving results with improving albeit still limited credible evidence, instead of improving results based on credible evidence gathered from lessons learned from successes and failures.

Despite successful investments, such as the earlier case of communities of practice in Teamworks and Yammer to promote learning resources, according to country offices, regional hub staff and meta-analyses of assessments of development results, the hubs and bureaux can play a greater role in knowledge management aimed at improving effectiveness. A knowledge management strategy has been developed to allow for communities of practice, skill mapping, talent pools and a lessons learned database, among other innovations. However, according to knowledge management staff interviewed for this assessment, the financial burden is pressing heavily on the investment needed for knowledge management.

There is much value in learning particularly from failures, but according to staff overseeing ROARs and quality assurance and some senior managers, including Resident Representatives, this is improving but still far from a comfort zone for an organization with financial constraints, where staff fear reporting failures and potentially incurring additional financial cuts.

Staff in some regions indicated that the committed push for innovations, when coming from leadership, is helping to share best practices, but UNDP is still slow in welcoming learning from failure and in disseminating this knowledge for more effective investments.

There are also examples of limited knowledge management due to separate and uncoordinated efforts to capture lessons. For example, while one region reported facing methodological challenges in trying to capture the lessons from ROARs, another region made similar efforts without having consulted the former. During the same period, BPPS was also trying to capture lessons learned from ROARs. Poor coordination processes lead to duplication of efforts, missed opportunities, poor knowledge management and ineffectiveness.

Country offices are optimistic about the potential transformational role that the regional hubs can play in facilitating UNDP to become a more effective knowledge-based organization. They suggest a range of possibilities that would help to improve a results- and knowledge-based culture in UNDP, such as supporting more consistent cross-country exchanges and structured compiling of information about what has failed in the past and what are practical solutions to similar programming and operational challenges.

UNDP leadership is pivotal to promoting a results culture that encourages critical reflection of success and failures as having value for organizational learning. Hence, both successes and failures must be acknowledged, and more importantly, a climate must be promoted that encourages staff to reflect critically on performance as a means to improve. The trend among staff interviewed in the field and at headquarters indicated that this ideal was not realized. Unwillingness to talk openly about failure stymies innovative thought and innovation, and does not allow staff to take full advantage of opportunities for learning towards improving effectiveness and efficiency. An open culture will, in the long term, help the organization to become more self-reflective and thus relevant.

Staff also often fear not only losing resources but also damaging the future chances and reputation of UNDP when highlighting failure. However, true commitment to the organization should transcend concern with short-term reputational risk and rather examine the adverse effect of

negative results and look towards the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of an organization that is credible.

Failure is part of development and highly important for learning. Hence, any workplan, while important and necessary, should in a development context be regarded as aspirational at best, which is difficult to implement in a linear fashion within planned timelines, with limited resource commitments, when the external environment is constantly changing. The judgment of the successes and failures of UNDP at all levels needs to be understood within a context where the organization operates in delivering results in dynamic and at times unpredictable environments, with other partners and where it has to negotiate its country programmes in cooperation with Governments, the results of which may not be ideally aligned to the corporate strategic plans or local UNDP workplans. Further, a failure to deliver specifically as expected in the workplan needs to be contextualized.

It is difficult to evaluate an organization with such a large and complex portfolio at an aggregated level, given the plethora of results committed to and delivered at multiple levels. However, open and critical reflection on successes and failures, together with credible independent assessments of performance, can validate corporate reporting, provide useful feedback necessary for course correction and improve institutional effectiveness. Focusing on critical reflection for learning purposes will ensure course correction in real time and in real contexts, which together will dem-onstrate that UNDP is a learning and responsive organization and attest to its value as a development partner.

To work with RBM for institutional effectiveness in delivering quality programme and project results, UNDP has to gain comfort in testing theories of change which will often fail to prove the veracity of the theory/hypothesis that a programme is pursuing, and this is normal. Development, indeed, requires outcome-level objectives to remain steady, but staff need agency to change plans when justified by evidence to allow for course correction.

Alignment, harmonization, new quality standards, new quality assurance processes, new templates and new monitoring, compliance and evaluation requirements are all recent introductions to enhance the quality of programmes and institutional effectiveness of UNDP. However, unless the new focus on RBM and additional oversight and quality assurance measures align with adequate leadership for improved learning from evidence to return benefits, given the current fiscal realities, these systems may further constrain country offices instead of improving the quality of programmes and effectiveness. Too much is being requested too fast for country offices to be able to comply while delivering quality results and remaining a partner of choice in an increasingly difficult funding environment. From the perspective of country offices perspective, balance in the level of effort for RBM tasks is advisable so as not to sacrifice the central purpose of UNDP of responding quickly to its partners' needs.

Annex 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

Approved by the Executive Board in January 2014 (DP/2014/9), the medium-term plan (DP/2014/5) of the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) included a thematic evaluation to cover an institutional effectiveness theme related to chapter V ("Transforming institutional effectiveness") of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The specific theme and focus of the evaluation were to be decided in 2014 after further discussion with management.

Recognizing that institutional effectiveness is an important area within both the UNDP audit and evaluation functions, the Directors of IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) have conferred and agreed to have both offices jointly carry out the assessment, using both audit and evaluation methodologies and tools. The UNDP evaluation policy and OAI charter converge in the shared purpose of strengthening the organization through oversight, review of governance and risk management practices and organizational learning.

The Directors of the two offices have agreed on the current terms of references following consultation with UNDP management through initial discussion with the Organizational Performance Group (OPG) in May 2014 and again, on the basis of the "Concept Note" in September 2015.

The outcome of this exercise will feed into the development of the next Strategic Plan for 2018-2021.

2. RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

Over the past 20 years, UNDP engaged in various organizational initiatives to deliver on its evolving and yet complex development mandate and to adapt to changes in its core resources. This process continues, and UNDP will soon begin preparations for the next Strategic Plan.

The main purpose of this joint assessment will be twofold: (a) to support UNDP oversight, governance and risk management practices; and (b) to enhance organizational learning by identifying opportunities for improving UNDP programming and operations. The assessment will be presented at the UNDP Executive Board's first regular session of 2017. It will be made available publicly, including to UNDP offices and a wide range of stakeholders.

3. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN UNDP

Within UNDP, the term "institutional effectiveness" has been associated with a wide range of organizational strategy, restructuring, monitoring and reporting initiatives (e.g., related to corporate oversight and assurance, leadership and corporate direction; financial, information and communication technology; administrative management; human resources management; results-based management (RBM); and security, among others).

The Executive Board approved the **first UNDP Multi-Year Funding Framework 2000-2003 (MYFF)**[76] that laid out for the first time the main strategic objectives of UNDP and the financial

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76   UNDP Executive Board decision 99/23.

resources required to achieve them. The MYFF identified intended results as set out in **the strategic results frameworks** that were produced by all country offices.[77] During the first MYFF period, UNDP monitored the extent to which the organization was successful at the country level in moving towards a strategic programme focus and positioning; the effectiveness with which UNDP used advocacy, policy dialogue and country presence to support national policies; and the effectiveness with which UNDP used partnerships to further development change. At that time **'The Way Forward: The Administrator's Business Plans'** (2000-2003) outlined the UNDP strategies which were to transform UNDP into a more results-orientated organization.[78] This marked the official start of UNDP internal reform covering: policy; partnerships; people; performance; and resources.[79] Additionally, new performance measurement instruments and tools were established to monitor progress towards achieving goals including the "Balanced Scorecard" with set targets and a system capturing the monitoring of the business plans.

The second **MYFF 2004-2007** outlined additional actions that UNDP needed to implement in order to enhance its organizational capacity to deliver timely, effective services that promoted programme countries' achievement of both the Millennium Development Goals and their individual national development goals by focusing on two key areas: (a) provision of coherent, knowledge-based services through the development of **practices** and **service lines;** and (b) improving the efficiency and performance of UNDP in delivering such services. The MYFF 2004-2007 was the first instance of distinction between the concept of "development effectiveness" and "organizational effectiveness", noting that: "… *ownership and responsibility for development outcomes (and*

therefore development effectiveness) must ultimately lie with national authorities. The effectiveness of development organization (referred to as organizational effectiveness) is determined by measuring direct, accountable and attributable performance over which it has control" (DP/2003/32, p.14).

As the MYFF 2004-2007 drew to a close, various assessments found that it had helped to shape the focus of UNDP towards developing a robust RBM system. Yet, it was also noted that the RBM system that was put in place did not easily accommodate measurement of progress and reporting on cross-sectoral programmes or cross-cutting issues and that it consisted of a number of effective but fragmented instruments.

The **Strategic Plan, 2008-2011**[80] sought to further enhance organizational effectiveness and the RBM system by: (a) better articulating UNDP priorities, objectives, targets and performance indicators; (b) creating a basis for internal resource allocation; and (c) setting a stronger platform for comprehensive results management. In outlining the efforts to improve institutional effectiveness and efficiency for delivering development results, the focus was placed on: improving accountability; introducing enterprise risk management; strengthening resource management; and integrating planning, budgeting, performance and human resource management.[81]

The midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013 presented an analysis of the performance of UNDP from 2008 to 2010 and, at that time, the Administrator laid out her "**Agenda for Organizational Change**" in 2010,[82] the main elements of which included: the UNDP Action Plan; efforts designed to control costs and expenditures; and a review of the UNDP business model.

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77   DP/1999/30.

78   DP/2001/14.

79   DP/2004/16.

80   Adopted through the UNDP Executive Board decision 2007/32, and subsequently extended to 2013 in response to the decision by the General Assembly to modify the comprehensive policy review of operational activities from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle and urging United Nations funds and programmes to align their strategic planning cycles accordingly.

81   DP/2007/35.

82   E/2011/35.

IEO carried out an independent evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013 in which it concluded that the move to strengthen country offices and to clarify roles and responsibilities of headquarters and regional centres was urgent and that the performance monitoring and reporting system was not optimal for a highly decentralized organization working on complex development issues in unique local contexts. In its response to the evaluation, UNDP senior management committed to a results framework with "SMART" indicators; adequate tools to support and monitor implementation; targeted support to country offices; annual reporting founded on data and reflective of country context; and a more integrated performance system and business analytics that provides a stronger evidence base.

The current Strategic Plan, 2014 -2017[83] focused on RBM, developing theories of change for each of the seven development outcomes and producing an Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF). In the IRRF, UNDP organizational effectiveness and efficiency have been presented as being comprised of three elements: (a) development effectiveness – improved accountability for results; (b) management results; and (c) United Nations development system coordination. The IRRF was aiming to improve monitoring of how UNDP achieves results and spends resources.

In the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, the notion of institutional effectiveness was central to efforts of transforming the organization. UNDP undertook the **structural review process** at headquarters and the regional level during the initial period under the rationale that the review would ensure that the organization is 'fit for purpose' to deliver its new Strategic Plan. The anticipated outcomes were: higher-quality advice; more effective and efficient operations; and a more knowledge-driven, innovative and open institution. Similarly, the Strategic Plan aimed to "**Transform Institutional Effectiveness**" through three interrelated strategies expected to result in an organization that "…visibly and measurably supports countries to achieve their development goals", with improved effectiveness.

1. Higher-quality programmes through better project planning, design, monitoring and evaluation, underpinned by stronger RBM;

2. Greater organizational openness, agility and adaptability to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise;

3. Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results in a way which is sustainable within projected resource flows.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS BREAKTHROUGH

Higher-quality programmes

Greater organizational openess, agility and adaptability

Improved management of financial and human resources
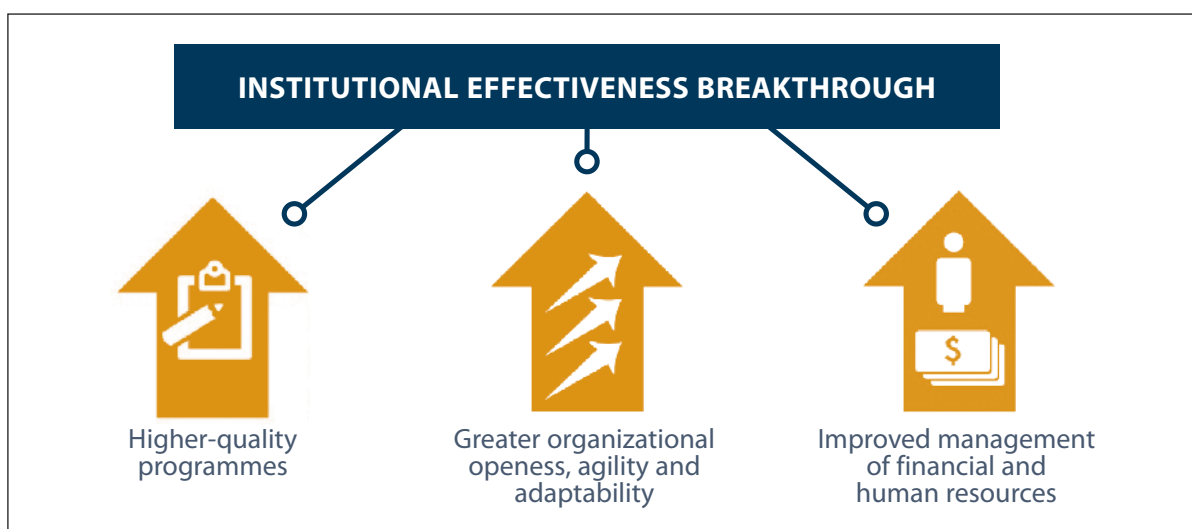
Source: UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017

83 Approved by the UNDP Executive Board in decision 2013/11.

The UNDP 2013-2014 annual report indicated progress on the institutional effectiveness agenda and noted that the new architecture of headquarters and regional business units was designed to bring staff together to cut through traditional programme "silos", recognizing that development's many dimensions interconnect and build on each other. A process of aligning country programmes was initiated, aimed at achieving better results, greater focus and increased value for money. Most recently, the 2014-2015 'UNDP In Focus' report described continued progress on the institutional effectiveness agenda through an ongoing reduction of New York headquarter staff by 30 percent and reallocation of resources to regional hubs closer to the countries served.

4. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE JOINT ASSESSMENT

The objective of this exercise is to assess the extent to which organizational measures taken have enhanced, or have the potential to enhance, the UNDP ability to **deliver higher-quality programmes.** The assessment has a prospective character in its application of methods to provide the best possible information estimating the likely outcomes of proposed interventions.[84]

By way of time frame, the current assessment will cover the relevant work of UNDP undertaken during the period 2010-2015, which includes results from the previous Strategic Plan period and give particular emphasis on the latest initiatives of the current Strategic Plan and the restructuring process, where possible, and on **measures aiming at higher-quality programmes.** Specific aspects will be selected within the overall focus of examining institutional effectiveness at the corporate, regional and country levels, with the understanding that UNDP is in the midst of ongoing reforms and some initiatives may be too recent

to allow conclusive findings. The assessment will also explore measures aimed at enhancing the capacity of country offices to deliver higher-quality programmes by means of strengthening the UNDP regional presence and consolidating policy functions. These measures were contained in the structural change process initiated in 2014.

Efforts to achieve higher quality programmes are not new to UNDP, but what makes the current approach to institutional effectiveness different is the determination to make RBM the driving force behind the organization's institutional culture and practice, and to develop and apply a corporate methodology for this purpose. The assessment will build on the audit of RBM conducted by OAI in 2015 and further explore the extent to which the organization's enhancement of its programming tools and policies effectively contributed, or are likely to contribute, to higher-quality programming for the achievement of credible and sustainable development results at country level.

As this assessment has a prospective character and focus only on the quality of programmes, it will be complementary to a number of other initiatives that will look into some of these sub-areas over the same time period.[85]

In addition to the above theoretical framework generated based on the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, a simplified model was developed to orient the assessment as detailed in the plan of inquiry matrix (see below). In simple terms, the theory to be tested with this assessment is whether increasing the capacity of the organization will lead to higher-quality programmes through a number of measures, including the strengthening of regional presence and consolidation of policy functions, which will lead to enhanced organizational and development effectiveness, therefore promoting greater institutional effectiveness.

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84 GAO/PEMD-10.1.10.

85 Including: the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network assessment, Multilateral Aid Review November 2015), various audits, the Joint Inspection Unit, the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and the IEO evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

Theoretical framework of institutional effectiveness in UNDP							
Impact	Eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequality and exclusion						
DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS							
Development Outcomes*	DO.1	DO.2	DO.3	DO.4	DO.5	DO.6	DO.7
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS							
Organizational Outcomes	Higher-quality programmes through RBM		UNDP more open, adaptable and agile institution		Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results		Coordination of the United Nations development system
HIGHER-QUALITY PROGRAMMES							
Management Results	Improved accountability of results		Field/country office oversight, management and operations support			Corporate oversight and assurance	
OUTPUTS							
(Then) Intermediate Results	Development approaches better integrated into programmes and projects	Knowledge management and learning, including response to audits and evaluations, made part of programme performance culture	Policies and procedures better enable staff to carry out their jobs effectively	Consolidated policy functions contributing to clearer policies and higher-quality advice		Strengthened regional presence, clustering of backstopping and advisory services contributing to higher efficiency gains	Service centres and regional hubs better able to address the volume and type of trans- actions with adequate spe- cialization and consistency of services and transaction
ASSUMPTIONS							
(If) Input	Underlying causes for quality and effectiveness issues properly researched and stakeholder adequately consulted at different levels		Measures based on a problem analysis and aligned to the UNDP challenges at all levels		Measures are evidence-based and incorporate lessons learned, best prac- tices and stakeholder feed- back, including information from audits, evaluations and pilot programmes		Adequate resources and capac- ity identified and provided for imple- mentation of measures

Notes: Orange-shaded boxes indicate the scope of the assessment.
* See full UNDP development outcomes in Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

There is complex array of possible pathways driving institutional effectiveness, and therefore the simplification above is not a holistic representation, but should guide the limited scope to be covered in this assessment. The diagram will be further refined throughout the exercise based on the joint team's desk review, interviews and other processes of dialogue with UNDP colleagues and key stakeholders.

5.   ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND PLAN OF INQUIRY

The questions provided below shall be answered by the assessment and help provide strategic conclusions for UNDP and the Executive Board's decision on institutional effectiveness. These questions have been prepared on the basis of the preliminary desk review of relevant documents,

including the results framework of both strategic Plans, as well as based on the initial consultations with stakeholders at headquarters.

OVERARCHING ASSESSMENT QUESTION: To what extent have measures taken since 2010, aimed at improving the quality of programmes, enhanced or are likely to enhance UNDP institutional effectiveness?

Question 1: Are measures aimed at strengthening the capacity to deliver higher-quality programmes likely to be effective?

Question 2: Have measures aimed at strengthening regional presence, including consolidation of policy functions, contributed to strengthen the capacity to deliver higher-quality programmes?

The matrix below provides a plan of inquiry that will help to further narrow the scope of analysis, including how the assessment team will answer the overarching assessment question. The assessment will therefore not judge UNDP institutional effectiveness against all possible elements of organizational effectiveness and efficiency, but rather within the limited scope of this exercise as defined in these terms of reference.

PLAN OF INQUIRY MATRIX				
Overarching Joint Assessment Question: To what extent have measures taken since 2010, aimed at improving the quality of programmes, enhanced or are likely to enhance UNDP institutional effectiveness?				
Questions	**Sub-questions**	**Evidence to be collected**	**Methodology**	**Source(s) of info/ Documentation needed**
PLAN OF INQUIRY				
1. Are measures aimed at strengthening the capacity to deliver higher-quality programmes likely to be effective?	1.1 Were the proposed measures to improve programme quality aligned to the challenges faced by the organization?	1.1.1 Evidence of an in-depth problem and complete analysis, made the underlying causes for quality issues at regional and country office level clear.	1. Desk/literature review of relevant documents to map a theory of change to identify the logic and relevance of assumptions/hypothesis/ theories behind the proposed change paths; 2. Inventory of problem analysis conducted by the organization; 3. Assess the quality of the methodologies used in the quality of evidence processes; 4. Reassess a sample of ROARs previously assessed by BPPS; 5. Reassess a sample of the quality assured CPDs; 6. Spot check compliance of a sample of recommendations provided by BPPS to improve ROARs and CPDs; 7. Trend analysis of ROARs; 8. Review the quality of evidence of the annual report to the Executive Board; 9. Meta-analysis of evaluations and audits; 10. Analysis of corporate surveys: survey of Executive Board members and Member States, partnership surveys;	1. Relevant corporate documents: 2. IRRF, quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews; 3. Strategic Plans (2008-2013; 2014-2017); 4. Reports of the Executive Board (2010 to 2015); 5. Agenda for Change documents; 6. External consultants documents (e.g., Accenture's Report and terms of reference of its contract, to analyze what was the need expressed by the Executive Group); 7. Midterm review of the Strategic Plan (2008-2013); Evaluation of the Strategic Plan (2008-2013); 8. Annual Reports of the Administrator to the Executive Board (2010-2015); 9. Relevant corporate reporting documents; 10. Relevant external assessments of UNDP (Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, Multilateral Aid Review, etc.); 11. Perceptions of key stakeholders at headquarters, Executive Board, regional bureaux, country offices (Global Staff Surveys and other surveys) key national partner (partner's survey and others); 12. Minutes of consultations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups);
		1.1.2 Evidence of lessons documented and learned, good practices, findings and recommendations from pilot initiatives, reviews are being used as part of enhancement measures.		
		1.1.3 Evidence that the change path was clearly mapped, and that resources and capacity were identified and provided		
	1.2 Have the measures taken and/or underway (potentially) improved the quality of programmes?	1.2.1 Evidence of UNDAFs and country strategies identifying clearly the UNDP comparative advantage and strategic value added contribution to country-led development efforts.		
		1.2.2 Evidence of sharper focus in new country programmes around the Strategic Plan's areas of work.		
		1.2.3 Evidence of progress in the implementation of action plans on programme alignment to the Strategic Plan.		

(Continued)

(Continued)

PLAN OF INQUIRY MATRIX

Overarching Joint Assessment Question: To what extent have measures taken since 2010, aimed at improving the quality of programmes, enhanced or are likely to enhance UNDP institutional effectiveness?

Questions	Sub-questions	Evidence to be collected	Methodology	Source(s) of info/ Documentation needed
PLAN OF INQUIRY				
		1.2.4 Evidence that the new guidelines and standards for programming can be effectively implemented at country office level and can potentially enhance the quality of programmes.	11. Check alignment, focus and uptake of Strategic Plan and Sustainable Development Goal coding in Nvivo,[86] a sample of old (2010 - 2012) and new (2014 - 2015) CPDs;	13. Audits and evaluations; 14. Alignment documents; 15. Major components of UNDP RBM system, e.g., IRRF, ROAR, Integrated Work Plan, Balanced Scorecard, Enterprise Risk Management, Annual Reports of the Administrator, Annual Business Plans;
		1.2.5 Evidence that the quality assurance system and revised processes for the organization-wide programming documents can effectively be implemented at country office level and have enhanced the quality of projects, CPDs, regional and global programmes.	12. Code in NVivo of select ROARs and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) reports to assess trends in effectiveness since 2010; 13. Desk study of select countries' RBM data; 14. Field studies/visits to regional hubs and select countries;	16. Quality of evidence processes information; 17. Regional bureaux/service centres/hubs developed, architectures and re-organization documents; 18. Central Learning Management System reports on completion of trainings on programme/project management;
		1.2.6 Evidence that the measures to strengthen capacities for data collection and analysis as well as high-quality decentralized evaluations have been effectively implemented.	15. Semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders; (Headquarters, regional bureaux and hubs, country offices, key national/regional partners,	19. Organizational quality standards for programmes (introduced in 2015); 20. Project quality assurance system information; 21. Internal appraisals of CPDs;
		1.2.7 Evidence of improved reporting (including ROAR, Annual Report of the Administrator) with better quality of evidence, focus on reliability of data and results.	Executive Board and Staff Council) focus on validating or refuting lines of inquiry – collecting perceptions and observations on the "why" and factors that influence or	22. Guidance on alignment (alignment handbooks);23. Guidance on project quality assurance processes; 24. Guidance on the preparation and internal appraisal of new CPDs;
2. Have measures aimed at strengthening regional presence, including consolidation of policy functions, contributed to strengthen the capacity to deliver higher quality programmes?	2.1 Have the measures aimed at strengthening UNDP's regional presence contributed to Country Offices' efforts to effectively deliver higher quality programmes?	2.1.1 Evidence of Regional Bureaux/Regional Hubs effectively overseeing the quality of programme performance	impede effectiveness; 16. Apply most significant change protocol in select country offices and check for unintended outcomes;	25. Guidance/recommendations on improving country office ROARs; 26. ROARs before and after quality assurance;
		2.1.2 Evidence that increased UNDP regional presence resulted in a timely and higher quality of thematic and operational policy advisory services.	17. Survey (s) to cover gaps or validate preliminary findings; 18. Focus group at headquarters to validate preliminary findings.	27. CPDs before and after quality assurance; 28. Global Staff Survey and corresponding actions plans; 29. Procurement dashboard and Advisory Committee on Procurement documentation;
		2.1.3 Evidence that offices are satisfied with the support services provided by the regional hubs		30. Prototype of the corporate lessons learned database; 31. Evaluation Resource Center, OAI databases;
	2.2 Have the measures aimed at consolidating the policy functions contributed to clearer policies and higher- quality advice that would support offices more effectively in delivering higher-quality programmes?	2.2.1 Evidence that the policy functions consolidation process is operational and integrated		32. Executive balanced scorecard; 33. Annual reports on evaluation; 34. Financial data quality standards and dashboard; 35. IPSAS indicators;
		2.2.2 Evidence that the consolidated policy functions contributed to offices receiving quality and timely feedback on questions pertaining to policy issues.		36. Office of Financial Resources Management data; 37. UNDP POPP, new policies, and guidelines; 38. OPG decisions and documents.

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86   NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR International. It has been designed for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based and/or multimedia information, where deep levels of analysis on small or large volumes of data are required.

6. APPROACH, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

A joint approach. The IEO and OAI will jointly plan, design and conduct this assessment, taking advantage of the strengths and different technical skills of both offices, and as such will enrich the process, bring depth to the analysis and strengthen the credibility of results. There will be one final assessment report with joint findings and conclusions for presentation to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2017.

A sequenced approach. The assessment will be carried out in two main stages and sequenced to allow the emerging findings from the first phase to feed into the design of the field studies. This will allow testing of a stronger hypothesis for conclusions to be drawn.

The **first phase** comprises the following elements of **desk studies**:

■ **Review of available corporate and regional documentation** to understand the evolution of institutional effectiveness in UNDP, including: the broader context in the field of international development management; the structural review; and the drivers of the change processes in the thinking of the organization. This information will be used to reconstruct the overarching theoretical framework for the process of institutional improvement in UNDP. This work will also reconstruct problem analyses that address specific challenges related to improving the quality of projects and programmes at country level.

■ **In-depth semi-structured interviews** with headquarters units and other relevant stakeholders to gather expectation and feedback on the changes and effects of the measures put in place and being rolled out to enhance quality of programmes and institutional effectiveness.

■ **Meta-analyses of OAI audits and IEO independent evaluations** since 2010 in order to assess whether lessons learned were effectively incorporated in the measures taken to improve the quality of programmes and projects.

■ **Review of corporate and regional surveys** for trend analysis and to analyze if critical notions have been taken into account when the measures targeted at improving the quality of programmes and projects were formulated.

■ **Review of the methodological quality of select projects, country programme documents and results-oriented annual reports** that have been formulated since 2014 in the 23 selected countries that participated in the pilot phase of the quality assurance and improvement processes. Based on this study, lessons and most common challenges will be established.

■ **Survey** to close gaps and validate preliminary findings, but mainly measure the effects of the increased UNDP regional presence on the capacity of country offices to deliver higher-quality programmes.

The **second phase** will consist of triangulation of the preliminary findings, causes, conclusions and learning points from the first phase with **field studies:**

■ **In-depth semi-structured interviews** with staff of regional bureaux, regional hubs/centres as well as co-located country offices to assess the changes and effects of the measures put in place and being rolled out to enhance quality of programmes and institutional effectiveness.

■ **Focus groups** in the regional hubs with regional and country office staff to validate the findings of the desk studies and establish causes and possible solutions for the identified shortcomings. During the field visits to regional hubs, RBM staff from other countries in the region will be invited to travel to the hubs for focus group discussions of progress, challenges and lessons from their country offices.

■ **Semi-structured interviews with key external stakeholders** (government, civil society, donors, partners, beneficiaries and donor representatives at the country level and in their respective headquarters and relevant United

Nations agencies) may be conducted to fill in any remaining gaps for validation of preliminary findings.

- **Joint analysis and synthesis** across the analytical outputs of data collection will be performed jointly by OAI and IEO.

Desk studies as well as field studies will look into corporate, regional and country-level data and while in-person visits are envisaged to all regional hubs, country-level travel will later be considered if necessary, in consultation with UNDP.

7. TEAM COMPOSITION

The assessment team will be led by Ana Rosa Monteiro Soares on behalf of IEO and Moncef Ghrib on behalf of OAI. Other team members include Reyn Dijk from OAI and a team of consultants to be hired by IEO who will: contribute to overall methodological guidance; help design the assessment tools and instruments; assist with data collection and analysis; identify

emerging findings, areas for conclusions and recommendations; and help write portions of the draft report.

Team leaders will be responsible for collecting inputs from members of the team and drafting a joint final report.

8. ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND TIME FRAME

The joint assessment will be presented to the Executive Board in January 2017. An informal session with the Board will be held before the presentation to allow members to discuss the findings and conclusions and the draft management response. To allow UNDP management time to prepare the management response, the final report will be completed and shared by the end of September 2016. To achieve this time frame, a draft report will be shared with UNDP management and programme units by the end of July 2016. The table below sets out additional milestones.

Timeframe with key phases and milestones			
Year	**Month**	**Phase**	**Milestone**
2016	January	Scoping and design	Design tools and instruments
	February	Data Collection Phase 1 – Desk studies	Desk studies – headquarters data collection
	March	Data Collection Phase 2 – Field studies	Field studies – regional/country data collection to fill gaps, close triangulation, validate preliminary findings
	April	Analysis	Analysis across products
	May	Synthesis	Synthesis to arrive at joint findings and conclusions. Preliminary findings workshop with reference group.
	June	Report writing	Initial draft for OAI/IEO for Director's quality assurance
	July	Draft Report for comments	First draft report to UNDP management for comments (four – five weeks for review and revision)
	August	Audit trail/ Adjustments	Second draft report
	September	Management response	Final report provided to management (at least a month in advance of above deadline in order for management to prepare and clear the management response)
	October	Executive Board paper	Mid-October deadline for uploading Executive Board documents (report summary and management response)
	November	Report editing and design	Production of the full report (editing and design)
	December	Final report uploaded	Mid-December full report uploaded to Executive Board website
2017	January	Board presentation	End-January first regular session of the Executive Board

9.   MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

To ensure efficient and effective implementation, engagement with UNDP and quality assurance of this joint assessment, the following management arrangements will be put in place:

- Internal quality assurance mechanisms in both offices, including: (1) IEO Internal Review Group, chaired by the Deputy Director with two IEO evaluators who are not participating in the joint assessment; and (2) The OAI Deputy Director, along with the Quality Assurance and Policy Unit.

- A reference group: To ensure that stakeholder perspectives are considered, an advisory reference group will be convened by OAI and IEO. The reference group is designed to obtain data on individuals' perceptions and opinions related to a specific issue. Reference group discussions will typically involve a group of 8-10 participants who have similar characteristics and are knowledgeable about RBM and other programming issues in UNDP. Discus-sions will be informal and participants are encouraged to freely share their thoughts and experiences. The following will be discussed with the focus group: preliminary findings and draft report. It may include staff from the regional bureaux, Bureau for Management Services, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy, Crisis Response Unit and Bureau for Policy and Programme Support.

- An External Advisory Panel of two evaluation experts and two internal audit experts will provide strategic, methodological and substantive inputs into the evaluation process as well as review the key outputs including the main evaluation report.

- UNDP headquarters management will have the opportunity to provide comments on the draft report of the joint assessment.

- The final assessment report will be cleared and issued by the Director IEO and the Director OAI and presented to the Executive Board in January 2017.

Annex 2

PERSONS CONSULTED

UNDP HEADQUARTERS AND REGIONAL MEETING/INTERVIEWS, MARCH – MAY 2016

UNDP HEADQUARTERS NEW YORK

Bayriyev, Serdar, Policy Specialist, Evaluations and Lessons Learned, BPPS/Development Impact Group (DIG)

Caen, de Sophie, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Regional Director Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS)

Cocco, Bernardo, Knowledge and Innovation Adviser, BPPS/DIG

Dam-Hansen, Susanne, Strategic Planning Adviser, RBAS

Davis, Randi, Chief of Profession, BPPS Gender Team

Frankinet, Bénédicte, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations

Fukuoka, Fumiko, Partnership Adviser, RBAS

Gettu, Tegegnework, Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate Administrator

Laguna, Raquel, Policy Adviser, Gender Mainstreaming, BPPS Gender Team

Lemarquis, Bruno, Deputy Director, Crisis Response Unit (CRU)

Lopez, Helena Martha, Director Office of Human Resources (OHR)

Marinescu, Simona, Chief, DIG (BPPS)

Martinez-Soliman, Magdy, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and Director, BPPS

Mergler, Holly, Social and Environmental Standards Programme Specialist, DIG/BPPS

Mnatsakanyan, Zohrab, President of the Executive Board, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations

Montfort Van Georges, Regional Adviser, Regional Bureaux for Africa (RBA)

Murray, Jessica, Programme Specialist Results and Quality of Programming, BPPS/DIG

Nakamitsu, Izumi, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator, Director, CRU

O'Neill, Michael, Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Administrator, Director Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA)

Poole, Sarah, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director, BPPS

Rayee, Guy, Minister Counselor, Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations

Saleh, Turhan, Strategic Plan Coordinator, UNDP Executive Office

Sandhu-Rojon, Ruby, Deputy Director, RBA

Schunter, Johannes, Policy Specialist, Knowledge Services, BPPS/DIG

Shah, Darshak, Deputy Director, Chief Finance Officer

Siao K, Sussanne, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Adviser

Simonyan, Sofya, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Armenia to the United Nations

Simpson, Heather, Special Adviser to the Administrator

Singla, Radha, Programme Specialist, BPPS/DIG

Sudha, Srivastava, Chief of Resources and Operations, BPPS

Turkoz-Cosslett, Gulden, Deputy Director, BERA

Wang Grace, Xiaojun, Lead Adviser, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, BPPS

Woll, Bettina, Crisis Response Coordinator

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL CENTRE, BANGKOK

Bilgrami, Razina, Officer in Charge, Country Office Support and Quality Assurance

Collins, Nan, South-South Cooperation Programme Specialist

D'Cruz Joseph, Regional Team Leader, Inclusive Growth

Gopalan, Ramya, Innovation and Knowledge Specialist

Inaba, Mitsuhiko, Management Support Services Manager

Jaiyen Kamolmas, RBM and Evaluation Specialist

Johnson Gordon, Regional Team Leader

Matsheza, Phil, Regional Team Leader, Effective Governance

Rasheed, Nadia, Team Leader, HIV, Health and Development Practice

Rieger, Ricarda, Chief Afghanistan Support Division

Rosellini, Nicholas, Deputy Regional Director

Stevens, Luc, Resident Representative, UNDP Thailand

Tshering, Pem, Regional Programme Specialist

Wiesen, Caitlin, Chief Regional Policy & Programme Support

Xu, Haolian, Assistant Administrator and Director

Bhatta, Lazima Onta, Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist, Nepal

Germer, Carsten, Head of Environment Unit, China

Hart-Hansen, Martin, Deputy Resident Representative, Thailand

Hossain, Munir, Interim Head of the Results Resources and Management Cluster, Bangladesh

Lim-Jolongbayan, Maria Luisa Isabel, Programme Analyst, Management Support Unit, Philippines

Marzouki, Dania, M&E Specialist, Myanmar

Ngo, Natharoun, Assistant Country Director, Cambodia

Rahmatsyah, Teuku, Head of Quality Assurance and Result Unit, Indonesia

PARTNERS

Baker, Lee, Chief of Party, ADAPT-Asia Pacific

Patarachoke, Kanchana, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Organization, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

Sirimanne, Shamika N., Chief of Division Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (by telephone)

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Duman, Nuri, Programme Specialist, New Partnership and Emerging Donors

Galvankova, Barbara, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Team

Grigoryan Armen, Team Leader and Regional Adviser, Energy Climate Change and Disaster Resilience Team

Harfst, Jan, Country Support Team Leader

Harfst, Jan, Team Leader, Country Support Team

Kawada, Mao, Result Based Management and Quality Assurance

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Mariyasin, Dmitry, Team Leader, New Partnerships and Emerging Donors

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Ten, Maria, Results-Based Management Specialist

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COUNTRY OFFICES

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Grabus, Alisa, Programme Associate, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Hovhannisyan, Armine, RBM, M&E and Gender Equality Focal Point, Armenia

Rustamov, Mubin, Head of Programme Unit, Tajikistan

Untila, Aurelia, Programme Associate, Moldova

PARTNERS

Ege Alper Ahmet, Director General, General Directorate of Social Sector and Coordination, Ministry of Development, Turkey. (Skype interview)

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CENTRE, PANAMA

Arias, Rebeca, Director, Panama Regional Hub

Asuncion, Miguel, Governance and Peacebuilding Team

Barathe, Richard, Chief, Country and Regional Programme Support Team

Basz, Pablo, Programme Specialist South-South Cooperation

Bauza, Maria, Cluster A – HIV/AIDS Team

Fernandez, Alfonso, Chief Business Solutions & Operations

Guerra, Gonzalo, M&E and RBM

Herrera, de Smutt Marcela, Governance and Peacebuilding Team

Hiraldo, Fernando, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Panama.

Itziar, Gonzales, Specialist Integration and Coordinator, South-South Cooperation

Juana, Carlota Cooke Camargo, Cluster A – HIV/AIDS Team

King, Ian, Country Adviser, CORE

Landau, Maribel, M&E and RBM

Luz, Daniel, Governance and Peacebuilding Team

McDade, Susan, Deputy Regional Director (video conference)

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Herwig, Malin, Programme Adviser, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Khattab, Huda, Operations Manager

Khurshid, Atif, Programme Specialist, Social Protection

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Mananme, Minako UNDP Livelihood Project

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Murshed, Zubair, Disaster Risk Reduction Specialist

Okoko, Jutus Programme Specialist

Pronyk, Jason, Development Coordinator

Qudua Al, Lina, Programme Specialist, Gender

Reda, Jawahir Ali Country Programme Specialist

Rifaat, Noha, Regional RBM & Evaluation Specialist

Shamalah, Ibrahim Abu, Programme Specialist: Rule of Law, Justice & Security

Tasala, Sanna (Abu Jaoude), Programme Specialist, Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Vallejo, Marta, Programme Specialist, Justice and Human Rights

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Gharaibeh, Firas, DRR, Saudi Arabia

Kibranian, Gaelle, Governance Programme Officer, Lebanon

Labe, Ayshanie, DRR, Morocco

Sahibdza, Sayed, Head Puntland Office, Somalia

Wally, Nermine, M&E, Egypt

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Alomari, Mukhallad, Secretary General of Jordan Investment Commission

Bany Hary, Qasem, Chairman of Joint Services Council, El-Ekaider landfill

Bashede, Ali Omaymah Hasi, Youth Representative Council

Belbeisi, Bedrieh, Former Deputy Secretary General of Arab Organization for Electoral Management

Callan, Michael, Director, Middle East and North Africa, Canada

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Dore-Weeks, Rachel, Head of Response, Recovery and Resilience Unit, UN-Women

Etter, Manuel, Regional Head of Cooperation, Switzerland

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Annex 4

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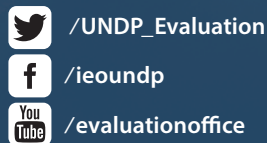| Category	Mostly	Often	Sufficient	Adequately	Limited
Processes	More than 50% completed	More than 50% of the time	Meeting minimum standards	Meeting standards	Not meeting minimum requirements
People	More than 50% participation	More than 50% of the time	Meeting minimum human capacities (in numbers and quality)	Meeting quality and quantity requirement	Not meeting minimum requirements
Survey	More than 70% of the total number	More than 2/3 response frequency	Meeting minimum standards	Meeting standards	Less than 20% response rate

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