

ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

Evaluation Office

► Key Elements of Methodology

This paper spells out some of the basic elements of methodology for the Assessment of Development Results (ADR), based on the Executive Team approval of ADRs in November 2001.

Background and purpose

The request by the Associate Administrator for the Evaluation Office to develop a proposal for assessing development results was based on a number of concerns. The introduction of result-based management; the simplification efforts in UNDP and the recent revamping of the UNDP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework together changed the nature of planning, reporting and analysis around programming and development results. The regular analysis provided through the Results-oriented annual report (ROAR) made redundant other exercises with similar purpose such as the country review. Yet the improved planning and reporting around development results gave rise to more demand for independent validation of achievements of results. At the same time, the aid community is moving towards evaluating results at the country level, rather than at project level, based on the perception that “the country is in most cases the most logical unit of aid management and account” (OECD/DAC).

Hence the ADR responds to the need for an in-depth and independent results assessment mechanism that would provide a measure of development effectiveness of UNDP’s interventions in a country and encourage more learning within the UNDP practice areas.

The Evaluation Office (EO) will conduct between five and ten ADRs per year¹, with the overall objectives to:

- a. Support the Administrator’s substantive accountability function to the Executive Board and serve as a vehicle for quality assurance of UNDP interventions at the country level.

¹ The Senior Management Team (SMT) has endorsed the following ADR countries:

- ADR starting in 2002: Nigeria, Vietnam, Nepal, Egypt, Bulgaria, Colombia
- ADR starting in 2003: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Tajikistan, Macedonia, Jamaica, Haiti

- b. Generate lessons from experience that could inform current and future programming at the country and corporate levels.
- c. Provide to the stakeholders in the programme country an objective assessment of results (specifically outcomes) that have been achieved through UNDP support and partnerships with other key actors for a given multi-year period.

These three objectives may be given different weight for any given country ADR depending on circumstances. The ADR provides an opportunity for a country office to cement its position and vision vis-à-vis partners, as a tool for advocacy, learning and buy-in with stakeholders. See Annex 1 on country selection.

Responsibilities

The Evaluation Office (EO) will be responsible for managing the ADRs and accountable for their quality and independence. The EO will consult closely with the country office and Regional Bureau (RBx) concerned, as well as with the Oversight Group (which includes the Operations Support Group - OSG and the Office of Audit and Performance Review – OAPR) and other corporate units. For each ADR country, an EO staff member will be designated to serve as Task Manager; to lead the ADR process, with key tasks to determine the scope, to identify the evaluation team, to establish the evaluation mission agenda and field visits etc. The financial resources for these evaluations will be provided by corporate funding windows and channelled through the EO.

Country Offices selected will be involved in the exercise from the start. Full support from the CO will be necessary in initiating and managing the ADR by the EO. Beyond the regular evaluation support, the country office management and staff substantive engagement and discussions is critical in particular for the stakeholders meetings and implementation of the findings and recommendations. The role of the government would be similar to that of the Country Office, in terms of engaging in a debate on development effectiveness, national priorities and results.

The **Regional Bureaux** will be closely involved in the process of the ADR exercise. The RBx Directorate would be expected to play a key role in terms of making a strategic choice of countries to undergo such assessments. It would provide core inputs for shaping the development thinking and substantive focus.

The **Regional Bureaux** will be closely associated with the exercise. The RBx Directorate would be expected to play a key role in terms of shaping the development thinking and substantive focus for the country – and within the region. The RBx would advise on the scope, meet with the Evaluation Team and ideally take part on some of the country level discussions. They also have a key role to play in dissemination of lessons learned in the region and for programming.

The ADR will be conducted by a high-level and independent **Evaluation Team** of development experts, evaluators and thinkers, preferably led by an expert with demonstrated development perspective, analytical and innovative skills on the subject of development and more specifically in the UNDP practice areas. The Team Leader will be accountable for drafting the final report. The EO Task Manager of a country ADR will also be part of the Evaluation Team. The extensive use of local expertise, research institutions and leaders within development – beyond the inclusion of a national consultant – should establish the basis for ownership and national follow-up. See **Annex 2** on the composition and selection of the team.

Scope of the ADR

The ADR approach focuses on key observable results, specifically outcomes (anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative) and will cover the totality of UNDP assistance (funded from both core and non-core resources), from the following **two perspectives**:

- **An assessment of UNDP's strategic positioning; and**
- **The development results in the country and UNDP's contribution to them.**

The ADR covers a **given multi-year period**. This will normally mean the last five years before the ADR is conducted (the period may be adapted plus or minus a year or two, depending on circumstances), and will also include an outlook into budgeted activities that are either ongoing or have not yet begun. For each country, an **in-depth focus** will also be determined based on country circumstances and consultations with stakeholders; of one or more thematic areas, strategic areas of support and/or specific issues (e.g. participation, ownership, decentralization.).

Strategic Positioning

The ADRs focuses on the added value that UNDP contributes in relationship to those of its partners (e.g., donors, other UN agencies, private sector) in order to address the development needs of the country. The assessment of UNDP's strategic positioning may include:

- A review of the relevance and contribution of UNDP programmes addressing:
 - National needs and priorities
 - The Millennium Declaration Development Goals (MDGs)
 - The common objectives and strategies defined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)
 - Global Cooperation Framework/Regional Cooperation Framework
 - The range and quality of development partnerships forged and their role in contributing to outcomes. (Note that the ADR does *not* aim to appraise the contribution of other development partners to results)
- A review of the level of CO anticipation and responsiveness to significant changes in the development context.

Development Results

The ADR looks at observable development results in the country and ascertains UNDP's contribution to them. Specifically, the ADR would normally cover:

- Assessment of major achievements in the national development conditions and policies, in particular focusing on major development results in the last five years within the thematic areas in which UNDP is active
- Identification and analysis of factors influencing results, such as key national and political event, systemic constraints etc.
- Developing a brief synthesis of key national priorities as expressed in government plans and documents to support the analysis of relevance, positioning and intended outcomes
- Assessment of UNDP's contribution to development results within certain thematic areas, including what can credibly be linked to the past major achievements at national level

- Analysis of anticipated progress made in achieving outcomes, as defined in the SRF, in a given thematic/strategic area, and the contribution of key outputs to the achievement of outcomes
- Analysis of the sustainability of results.

The ADR will **focus on outcomes**, i.e. changes in specific development conditions, and UNDP's contribution to these (in terms of strategic outputs). The ADR will *not* attempt to assess *impact*, i.e. the longer-term consequences of outcomes. It will also *not* attempt to provide a direct **attribution** of development results to UNDP, but aim at establishing a high plausibility of association between UNDP's output and the observed outcome, i.e. to establish a credible link between what UNDP did and what transpired from it.

In consequence of its focus on results, the ADR does not aim to analyze country office **management** issues or details on programme implementation. Such issues are reviewed by UNDP elsewhere (audits, country monitoring reports, etc.). The ADR would only raise issues of process and management to the extent that such issues are revealed in the analysis to greatly influence the attainment of development results. Similarly, the ADR will not look at the results of a specific **project**, nor will it drilldown into details on individual project activities.

Methodology

The ADR methodology is understood as the approach of how the evaluators will obtain and analyze data to reach conclusions, building up empirical evidence to back up these conclusions. The methodology for the ADRs draws upon the experience from a number of evaluative exercises within UNDP and in the donor community. These include the lessons learned by UNDP in conducting country reviews, and specifically the results-oriented country reviews led by the Evaluation Office (EO), the country-level impact assessments (CLIA) by the EO and other donor Country Programme Evaluations (CPE).²

The ADR is participatory. During the course of the ADR, all relevant stakeholders, such as CO, RBx, governments, donor community, NGOs and beneficiaries will be approached and their perspectives will be systematically documented. The voices of all key stakeholders will help form a complete picture of UNDP's activities and their effects and results.

The empirical evidence, on which the ADR will be based, will be gathered through three major sources of information: perception, validation and documentation (according to the concept of 'triangulation'). Each Evaluation Team will use their evaluative expertise to adapt their analytical approach depending on country circumstances and scope for the ADR in question, following certain key principles:

Principle one: Emphasis on preparation and standard documentation

Lessons from past evaluations stress the importance of solid preparatory research prior to the actual country mission. In particular, the work to be completed prior to the field evaluation mission includes:

- An exploratory mission by the EO Task Manager to prepare for the launch of the ADR in the country and to make the necessary arrangements for local research and review. At this time, the TOR are finalized with the CO management and roles clarified. The Task managers may conduct briefings for

² The EO-led country reviews (2001) took place in India, Fiji, Jordan, Sudan, and Kenya. The CLIAs took place in Malawi, Burkina Faso and the Philippines during 2002-2001.

UNDP staff and partners, and will identify with CO possible national consultants, collect base documentation etc.

- Desk review with development of several Programme Maps by the EO. This includes developing tables and charts to show how the linkages and concentration of different goals and intended results of the programmes, CCF, SRF, UNDAF and MDGs. These will be used as tools by the evaluators both in determining what results to focus on and for illustration.
- Preparatory local research through partnerships with local institutions and/or consultants. The type of local ADR support is generally envisaged to be a thematic study of a focus area and UNDP's contribution to that, but may vary greatly to include a more detailed programme or results mapping; supporting evaluation methods such as surveys, beneficiary assessments, interviews, etc.; desk review of locally available documents such as M&E reports; baseline study within a thematic area and/or logistical support.
- The ADR will use a mixture of evaluative methodologies, including Focus Group Interviews, Sample Surveys, Questionnaires, Minisurveys, Desk Review/ Analysis of Existing Data, Key Informant Interview, Structured Interviews, Statistical Analysis and Field Visits. Evaluators will receive separate guidance on these for the ADR.

Principle two: Start from “the top” when assessing results

In assessing results at the country programme level, there are generally two broad approaches used in evaluation:³

- 1) **“Bottom-up”**. Taking individual projects and aggregating the findings: an “additive” process that uses conventional evaluation techniques. This approach is time-consuming and most applicable when the country programme is quite small.
- 2) **“Top-down”**. Looking at the overall achievements in the country, within a sector or thematic area, and then attempting to explain which parts of the national successes and failures are linked to the efforts of a particular donor. This approach is basically “subtractive”; starting from the top and “drilling down” results to the donor level, but not to a detailed project level.

For the ADRs, UNDP will follow the top-down approach⁴. However, for some ADRs an element of the bottom-up approach may be added for purposive sampling, for example for a large programme that in itself could be expected to have effects; where there is one key project linked to a specific outcome; or the project is considered pilot or innovative with clear links to outcome. The same criteria may be used for deciding on which projects to review in field visits.

Principle three: Combine a goal-free evaluation with assessing specific goals

Based on an assessment of key results and past achievements in the areas UNDP has supported over the last five years or so, the ADR will provide a forward-looking analysis. This requires a mix of methodologies, given that the period covered does not necessarily have the exact same results to assess. The evaluation will look at:

- For past achievements, using a “goal-free” review of UNDP's results. This means looking at “what were the UNDP main achievements in its areas of intervention”, rather than “did UNDP achieve what it planned to do in the last five years” (the latter would entail an extensive analysis of prodocs, CCFs etc.)

³ Key challenges in Country Programme review: A review of experience of DFID and other donors, DFID, 2001

⁴ This is also the method described in the Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators. Evaluation Team members will receive these as background methodology documentation.

- Once the status of achievements has been determined, the next step is a goal-oriented outlook into the future assessing UNDP's progress towards pre-defined goals (i.e., as defined in the SRF), to answer if UNDP is on the right course to where it aims to be.

The ADR Process

The following suggested phases and steps, as illustrated in figure 1, should act as a general guideline for the ADR process. The total anticipated time for the conduct of the ADR is 2-3 months but may vary depending on a variety of factor, such as the type of thematic thrust or the size and complexity of the country. The steps are subject to adaptation depending on specific country circumstances.

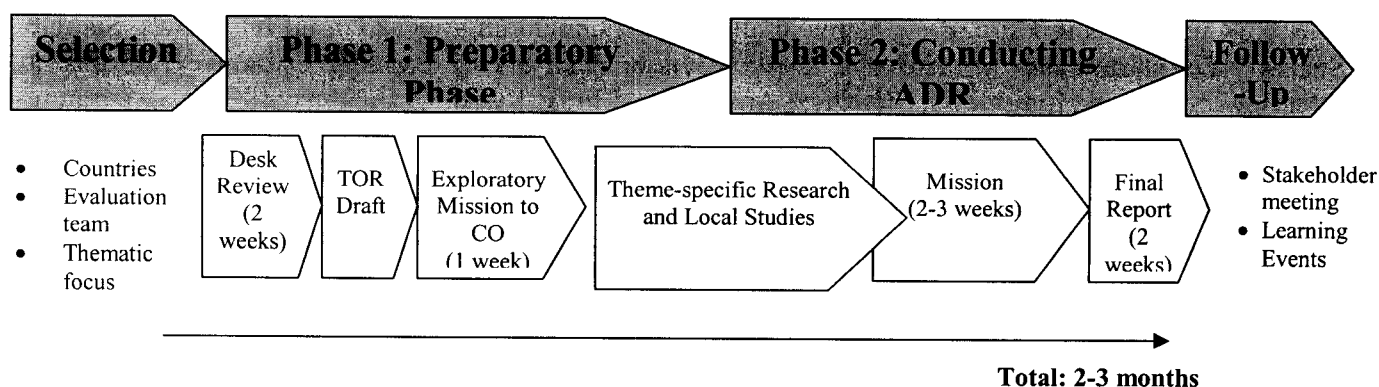


Figure 1: The ADR process

Before the ADR in a specific country starts, certain elements have to be determined. The Senior Management Team (SMT) endorsed the countries for which the ADR will be conducted (see Annex 1 for criteria). The EO identifies and selects the evaluation team members in consultation with the CO and the RBx (see annex 2 for composition and selection of evaluation team). The EO also makes an early identification of country themes for in-depth focus, to be verified during the preparatory phase with the CO. The key steps are described below.

Phase 1 - Preparatory Phase

Desk Review. The EO reviews all relevant documents (e.g., CR, CCF/SRF, ROAR, CCA, UNDAF) and prepares a document package and/or synthesis for the evaluation team's review, and collects financial information and creates programme maps summarizing the UNDP portfolio per ADR country. The EO and RBx may establish liaison with the country permanent mission in New York for briefing. Discussions between the EO Task Manager and the CO and RBx starts on planning and responsibilities.

Terms of Reference (TOR) and Scope proposal. Balancing local (CO, government) with corporate (EO, RBx) concerns, the EO drafts a country specific TOR for the ADR. These draft TOR are then discussed at the country level during the exploratory mission. The TOR are, however, only finalized after consultation with stakeholders and the evaluation team. The scope decided on will help decide on the composition of the team.

Exploratory Mission to the country. The EO travels to the country (estimate one week) to brief and discuss with CO personnel and partners about the purpose of ADR. If the evaluation team leader were already identified, he/she would be involved. The Mission will gather country stakeholders' perspective on TOR of ADR, pre-arrange logistics for main mission and make all necessary preparations for the contracting of local research capabilities. As mission follow-up, the EO revises the TOR and contracts local research organizations.

Theme-specific Research and Local Studies. Once the TOR are ready, further desk review of "in-depth" thematic areas can take place, both at HQ (EO/RBx) level and the local level by a local research institution/consultants. The timeline would vary, but normally 1-2 months is required to conduct studies in time for the main evaluation mission. The EO will take the main responsibility for supervising the studies, with the support of the evaluation team leader and the CO.

Phase 2 - Conducting the ADR in the country

The evaluation mission. At the start of the mission, the EO and the evaluation team meets to develop/refine methodologies and approaches for the specific ADR country, and meets with the RBx and other relevant units at HQ. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the organization and fielding of the country mission with the support of and in consultation with the RBx and CO. In close coordination with the EO, the CO will be responsible for the in-country practical arrangements necessary for the successful conduct of the review. The mission may last 2-3 weeks depending on country situations. The evaluation team sets the mission agenda in consultation with the CO staff, which should allow enough time for necessary analysis and additional team meetings. The mission approach would vary, but normally contain briefs by the Evaluation Team to CO management and staff about the mission; meeting with a number of external stakeholders; very select field/project visits; group meetings with different interest groups (CTAs, national directors, programme staff...). In all cases, a stakeholder Debriefing Meeting is held to present key findings and recommendations on the issues identified in the TOR, and to obtain feedback from UNDP and stakeholders.

The ADR Report. The ADR should suggest clear directions and recommendations, based on past experience, with regard to UNDP future programming at the country level. It should also yield information on good practices and lessons learned. In coordination with the EO, the evaluation team drafts the ADR main report, taking into account the outcome of the discussion of the Stakeholder Debriefing Meeting. The report will be complemented by more detailed papers, statistics, records and proposals. The EO distributes the report firstly to the CO and RBx for factual accuracy review and feedback. The final report will also be shared with other relevant stakeholders and the UNDP management for a management response to the recommendations. As with all other evaluations by the Evaluation Office, the EO will make the final report to the UNDP Executive Board as regular published evaluation (i.e. no "repackaging" or formal submission in EB document format).

Last phase: Follow-Up and use of the ADR

There will be no formal "review meeting" of the ADR with formal records. However, the findings should be disseminated, presented and debated as need at country level to draw maximum benefit from the ADR. Normally a series of encounters of flexible dialogue could be envisaged, such as a comprehensive

stakeholder meeting at country level with all major stakeholders, and other relevant participants (i.e. the RRs of neighbouring countries).

A number of “Learning Events” are also possible, for thematic discussions for policy and practice areas, as well as electronic learning and networking. Such learning events could take place per ADR or groups of ADR (e.g., regional or thematic groups) organized with the relevant RBx and BDP within the UNDP practice areas and knowledge management system. The evaluation team of each ADR will point out emerging good practices. As more ADRs will be completed, the totality of conducted ADRs may lead to documentation on demonstrated best practices. As part of the corporate management response, the RBx would normally also undertake a separate analysis and follow-up for the country.

ANNEX 1 - COUNTRY SELECTION

The Senior Management Team (SMT) makes the final endorsement of the countries selected for ADR evaluation over the next few years, based on decision based on a list of recommended countries by the RBx and the EO.

Obviously, with such a selective approach, the determination of what specific countries to review becomes crucial. For adequate sampling of country situations and results, the ADR evaluations should represent a balance of different types of countries, and of diverse success levels. The most important concern was the country's strategic importance within the region, i.e. countries that either have a great political or economic influence in the sub-region; whose development progress is perceived as interesting and worth learning from; and where the ADR may be particularly useful in the debate on UNDP's future vision and strategy. Other considerations include:

- **Geographical coverage.** All regions will be covered, and over time balanced with the size of the country programmes and number of countries in the region. A balance of UN languages will be observed if possible.
- **Typology of country.** The main considerations will be: (a) human development – the HDI; (b) income - GNP per capita; and (c) size of the country and UNDP programme. Geographical characteristic such as landlocked and small island developing countries will also be taken into account in the scope and selection.
- **Practice/thematic area coverage.** A balance will be sought between countries with different weights in their thematic focus, i.e. while all ADRs will consider the overall thrust of the UNDP support, a more in-depth analysis will be provided for selected themes per country. Also to be considered is the progress level for outcomes as reflected in the ROAR.
- **Countries in special development situations.** A limited number of countries in conflict and post-conflict will also be included. Their scope will be amended to fit the circumstances, for example, more stress on positioning than on development results.
- **Practical considerations.** Practical concerns have been reviewed as an input to the timing of the ADR in each country. These considerations include planned audits, status of CPO and UNDAF preparation, presence of a RR, other planned evaluations, etc.

ADR planning for 2002-2003:

- ADR starting in 2002: Nigeria, Vietnam, Nepal, Egypt, Bulgaria, Colombia
- ADR starting in 2003: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Tajikistan, Macedonia, Jamaica, Haiti

ANNEX 2 - COMPOSITION AND SELECTION OF EVALUATION TEAM

The composition of the ADR Evaluation Team will vary depending on country size and complexity, as well as selected scope and thematic focus. What is essential is to ensure a combination of skills that will make the review a visionary, forward-looking exercise that is firmly based on empirical evidence and is substantially sound. The EO Task Manager in consultation with the EO Management and the CO determines the team composition, ensuring that for all experts, independence is a requirement, i.e. they have not been responsible or closely involved in managing, making decisions on, or implementing any results assessed. As with other evaluations conducted by the EO at country level, the RBx and CO will be informed of the team composition, but the team is not submitted for any clearance at local level. The CO should, however, provide information to the EO on general limitations and concerns with identification of experts (political, nationality concerns, etc.).

In general, the team will *always* consist of:

Team Leader. This would be a top development thinker, i.e. an expert with demonstrated expertise, analytical and innovative skills on the subject of development. He/she would normally have authored books on development subjects. The Team Leader is responsible for the overall quality of the ADR report; leads the Team in methodology application for that particular country ADR, and specifically leads the interactions with government, key development partners and the CO. He/she normally has a thematic expertise and also regional knowledge. The EO Management makes the decision on the Team Leader. He/she is normally recruited for a three-week period, including a minimum of one-week in-country and one week for the report.

The EO Task Manager. This person leads and coordinates the entire ADR process from inception to end, including planning, determines the scope, supervises the research (with the team leader once identified), manages the budget, and ensures the final review of the ADR report. He/she ensures results-orientation and briefs the team on the ADR methodology and UNDP priorities. The Task Manager will be responsible for the exploratory mission and take full part in the country mission, and write part of ADR report. He/she is the focal point for all queries on the ADR in the given country.

National consultant. The profile of the national consultant would depend on the scope. For example, a consultant may be sought to complement the team in a specific thematic area. In all cases, the consultant is expected to bring excellent knowledge of local conditions, and good contacts with local stakeholders. The consultant may be an independent contractor or an independent civil servant nominated by the government. The EO will request support from the CO in identifying candidatures for this expert, to be interviewed and determined during the exploratory mission. NOTE: The ADR will also use local expertise for preparatory studies/desk review, normally by a local research institute. Depending on country circumstances, this preparatory work may be done by independent consultants instead; one or more of which may be retained to serve as the national consultant in the evaluation team.

In general, the team will *normally also include*:

Thematic evaluation expert(s). These are prominent experts within their field with experience in evaluation. The number of experts would depend on the size of the country ADR; for any country one expert, for a large country most likely two. Their profile would depend on the scope; for an ADR focusing on governance and gender, say, you may have two experts with such profile. In practice, one of these

experts would be responsible for the main compilation of the ADR report, and certainly for the in-depth analysis of the area of focus. The EO Task Manager identifies these experts.

A UNDP staff member. For some ADRs, UNDP staff from other offices or units would be invited to take part as team members. These would be persons who have demonstrated strong analytical skills and thematic expertise that would contribute to the ADR in the given country. Their responsibilities would depend on what expertise they bring to the team; they may include RRs, DRRs or ARRs, thematic experts, NPOs and HQ staff. He or she would be expected to spend at least a few weeks in country, with time for report writing, and possibly also support debriefing at Headquarters. Their contribution should be reflected in their annual performance assessment. These members will be identified by the EO through consultations with other UNDP units, and through individuals indicating their interest.

