



IEO | INDEPENDENT
Evaluation Office
United Nations Development Programme

Independent Country Programme EVALUATION SYNTHESIS

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Independent Country Programme
EVALUATION
SYNTHESIS

SYNTHESIS OF UNDP INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS

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is advised by members of the independent Evaluation Advisory Panel. We are grateful for all their contributions.

The IEO could not have carried out this work without the full support of UNDP staff from the multiple country offices and regional bureaus that welcomed the ICPEs and our evaluation teams. We also greatly appreciate the valuable insights and information provided by national government partners, colleagues from other UN agencies and civil society representatives.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the most comprehensive synthesis to date of Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPE). The synthesis, conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office, draws on 105 evaluations over a period of 15 years, from 2002 – 2017, to reflect on findings and lessons on UNDP performance. It is conceived as a knowledge product, to consolidate and share acquired knowledge and strengthen feedback and learning from UNDP evaluations.

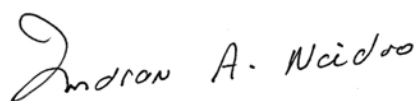
The synthesis provides an overarching picture of UNDP performance across the country offices evaluated and indicates trends and regional variations. It reflects a wide diversity of approaches and results, deriving from the organization's broad mandate and the complex development landscape in which it operates. There is much to be learnt through these evaluations about how UNDP approaches development challenges in line with its mandate and strategic focus, and patterns of performance across its programme areas. This allows for a greater appreciation of the complexity of development interventions, and the extent to which UNDP has responded to country needs within an overarching UN normative framework and its own specific mandate and focus.

A permeating message is that UNDP is a trusted development partner, a neutral actor who can work closely with governments, civil society and other development actors. Its niche has been its contribution to building democratic governance and institutions, its adherence to human development approaches, and its track record on mobilizing resources.

These observations, which are part of the ongoing development dialogue, need to be converted into concrete learning and insights for better programming. This synthesis exercise supports the important role of evaluation in enhancing international development support to governments by increasing probity, discussing and debating results, strengthening transparency and accountability and closing the learning and improvement loop.

UNDP is committed to ongoing critical review and adjustment, based on a robust evaluation system. The fact that it has an independent evaluation office (IEO), that has independently evaluated all of its programmes, is a strong contribution to transparency, accountability and learning. Notably, from 2018, all new country programme documents (CPDs) are required to have an ICPE to inform the following programme.

This report marks the beginning of a series of ICPE synthesis studies that the IEO plans to produce over the coming years, which will enable it to provide a deeper analysis of trends and results of UNDP work at country level. Future reports will scrutinize more closely the management responses that accompany ICPEs, using objective evaluative evidence to examine the full chain of the evaluation cycle, from assessment to programme redesign and modification.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acronyms and Abbreviations | ix |
| Executive Summary | xi |
| Chapter 1 Introduction – Independent Country-Level Evaluations Assessing Contributions to Development | 1 |
| 1.1 Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Objectives and Purpose of the ICPE Synthesis | 1 |
| 1.3 The Meta-Synthesis Methodology | 2 |
| 1.4 Scope of Analysis | 4 |
| 1.5 Challenges and Limitations | 4 |
| Chapter 2 History – Overview of International Country Programme Evaluations | 7 |
| 2.1 The First Generation of ICPEs | 7 |
| 2.2 Reviews and Reforms | 7 |
| 2.3 Adding Independence to the Name | 8 |
| 2.4 The Transition from ADRs to ICPEs | 8 |
| 2.5 The ICPE Timeline | 9 |
| Chapter 3 Key ICPE Synthesis Findings | 11 |
| 3.1 Efficiency | 11 |
| 3.2 Relevance | 17 |
| 3.3 Effectiveness | 19 |
| 3.4 Sustainability | 33 |
| 3.5 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment | 35 |
| Chapter 4 Most Frequent Recommendations from Past ICPEs | 39 |
| Chapter 5 Key Lessons from the Synthesis | 41 |
| Annexes (available online) | 45 |

Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1. ADRs/ICPEs completed between 2002–2017 | 7 |
| Figure 2. Total programme delivery at the country level, 2002–2016 | 11 |
| Figure 3. Share of total programme expenditure by region – 2002, 2006, 2010, 2016 | 12 |
| Figure 4. Expenditure of government cost sharing funds by region, 2002–2016 | 13 |
| Figure 5. Core funded expenditure by region, 2002–2016 | 14 |
| Figure 6. Bilateral/multilateral fund expenditure by region, 2002–2016 | 15 |
| Figure 7. Vertical Trust Fund expenditure by region 2008–2016 | 15 |
| Figure 8. Management Efficiency Ratio, Global and UNDP regions, 2008–2016 | 16 |
| Figure 9. UNDP alignment to national priorities and UN mandates | 17 |
| Figure 10. Most frequently mentioned comparative strengths of UNDP | 18 |
| Figure 11. ICPE findings on balance between short-term requests for assistance and long-term development needs | 19 |
| Figure 12. Comparison of effectiveness of results across thematic areas | 20 |
| Figure 13. Percentage share of thematic areas in total programme expenditure | 20 |
| Figure 14. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to democratic governance | 21 |
| Figure 15. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to poverty reduction | 23 |
| Figure 16. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to environmental sustainability | 26 |
| Figure 17. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to crisis response and disaster risk reduction | 29 |
| Figure 18. Extent of evidence found of sustainable results across thematic areas | 33 |
| Figure 19. Factors contributing to sustainability | 34 |
| Figure 20. Factors limiting sustainability | 35 |
| Figure 21. Contributions to gender equality and women’s empowerment results | 36 |
| Figure 22. Percentage of results according to the gender results effectiveness scales | 36 |
| Figure 23. Number of ICPEs with gender-disaggregated data | 37 |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| ADR | Assessment of Development Results |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CPD | Country Programme Document |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| DRR | Disaster risk reduction |
| EO | Evaluation Office |
| GCF | Global Climate Fund |
| GCS | Government cost sharing |
| GEF | Global Environmental Facility |
| GFATM | Global Fund to fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria |
| GIS | Geographic information system |
| GRES | Gender Results Effectiveness Scale |
| ICPE | Independent Country Programme Evaluation |
| IEO | Independent Evaluation Office |
| LDC | Least developed country |
| LIC | Low-income country |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| MAF | MDG Acceleration Framework |
| MAPS | Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MIC | Middle-income country |
| MYFF | Multi-Year Funding Framework |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NHDR | National Human Development Report |
| NIM | National Implementation Modality |
| OECD-DAC | Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| RBM | Results-based management |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SDS | Special development situation |
| SIDS | Small island developing states |
| SWAP EPI | UN System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women – Evaluation Performance Indicator |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| VTF | Vertical Trust Fund |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts “Independent Country Programme Evaluations” (ICPEs), that until 2016 were called “Assessments of Development Results” (ADRs). To further strengthen the use of evaluation findings, IEO has carried out this synthesis of 105 ICPEs conducted between 2002 and 2017 in 93 countries, to identify and capture evaluative knowledge and lessons.

The overall objective of the synthesis was to give UNDP and the Executive Board an overview of how country programmes have contributed to development results in the past 15 years, and to inform their future strategies for programme design and delivery, drawing on reflections from a broad range of ICPEs. The **key purpose** was to capture accumulated knowledge, lessons and common issues across the countries where UNDP operates, and to feed into further learning and collective reflection about key barriers and opportunities for achieving expected results and improving UNDP performance.

The scope of the synthesis covers 105 ICPEs conducted between 2002–2016, covering 93 countries in all 5 regions¹ where UNDP operates. Of the 93 countries covered, 12 were covered by two ICPEs. **The methodology** was a desk review, with quantitative and qualitative analysis of coded data² from all 105 ICPEs. The coded data was filtered, categorized and organized according to the evaluation questions, based on the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. This allowed for comparison and correlation and to capture factors influencing and affecting results.

To isolate factors enabling and hindering success, a sample of 25 ICPEs in each of the four thematic focus areas (democratic governance, poverty, environmental sustainability, and crisis response and disaster risk reduction) were analyzed in more depth, maintaining parity in representation of regions and income levels.

The synthesis found that, in 75% of the ICPEs reviewed, UNDP was considered efficient in delivering on budget, though only 41% of ICPEs found that UNDP met results within the original deadlines. An overall increase in programme delivery and implementation rates was observed, but only modest progress was made on the management efficiency ratio, with high variations across UNDP programmes.

Over the period of ICPEs assessed there have been significant changes in the UNDP financial picture, with steady to increasing expenditure on programming in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Arab States and Europe and CIS but diminishing UNDP funds for work in Latin America and the Caribbean. Core funding decreased from 20% of total programme expenditure in 2002, to around 10% since 2011. One notable change is a constant increase in Africa’s share of expenditure from UNDP core funding, from 46% in 2002 to 63% in 2016, while Asia and the Pacific accounted for 36% in 2002 and only 21% in 2016. In 2002, Government Cost Sharing (GCS) represented over 60% of total programme expenditure, especially in Latin America, but decreased to under 25% in 2016. Bilateral and multilateral funds have increased from under \$250 million in 2002, to a peak of \$2.4 billion in 2010. Although they have decreased again since 2010, this source

1 UNDP works in approximately 170 countries and territories and has country offices in approximately 130 countries, divided in the following UNDP regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, and Europe and CIS.

2 See Annex 1 for more details on the coding structure.

of funding still accounted for almost half of total programme expenditures in 2016. Vertical Trust Funds (VTF) were the only steadily growing source of funding from 2008 to 2014 with a small decrease since. These funds predominantly targeted countries in Africa and, to a lesser extent, Asia and the Pacific.

From the perspective of government, partners and civil society represented in ICPEs, UNDP was mostly considered to be a relevant, reliable and responsive development partner, strategically positioned to contribute to the development of a country. UNDP has successfully managed to align with national priorities and UN mandates, targeting its programmes to countries' development needs. However, about 38% of the ICPEs reviewed found that UNDP had limited resources and was overstretched, involved in more areas than it could add value to.

The UNDP contribution was perceived as especially noteworthy in the areas of governance and poverty reduction, which are also the areas where the greatest amount of funding is allocated. Environment and disaster risk reduction are also perceived to be important areas of UNDP contribution. The environment portfolio has demonstrated consistent growth, especially through UNDP implementation of environmental vertical funds, such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the Global Climate Fund (GCF). UNDP contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment were considered limited or moderate. Across all thematic areas, long-term sustainability remains a major concern, and most ICPEs note that sustainability of UNDP programming and results is likely to be partial or limited, with high degrees of variation in each thematic area.

The most frequent institutional recommendations from the country programme evaluations focused on: strengthening monitoring and evaluation practices; leveraging and implementing initiatives in areas where UNDP has comparative strengths; adapting staffing and internal systems to meet changing landscapes and programming;

using responsive approaches to address emerging issues in alignment with long-term commitments; and developing more holistic and operationalized gender equality strategies and plans.

The most frequent programmatic recommendations encouraged: better coordination and connection between local and national needs and interventions; stronger national ownership through increased capacity building; enhanced UNDP capacity for policy advice; increased civil society and community-level engagement in interventions; new spaces for civil society influence in policy and decision making; and more realistic programmatic timeframes to achieve longer-term development outcomes.

Key lessons of the synthesis include:

1. **Relevance of comparative strengths** – at country level UNDP is more successful, with a stronger programme fit and better results, when it takes a human development approach and focuses its efforts on institutional strengthening, resource mobilization and UN system integration.
2. **Results-based management and knowledge management to improve effectiveness** – results-based management (RBM) is most often associated with compliance practices to satisfy monitoring and reporting requirements. There is limited understanding and application of theories of change as a tool for modeling and testing programme theory to predict an interventions' logic, risks and assumptions, and insufficient focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making, adaptive management and performance. Successful country offices are developing theories of change for each outcome and monitoring progress and identifying lessons for continual feedback loops, integrated into internal learning and improvement processes.
3. **Key success factors for democratic governance** – successful results in democratic governance were enhanced by UNDP work to strengthen national capacity for policy devel-

opment and action. A focus on assessment of gaps and needs is useful to ensure that interventions are demand-driven. Greater buy-in from stakeholders increases the likelihood that results are sustainable.

4. **Key success factors for poverty reduction** – key to successful results in poverty reduction was UNDP support to strengthen national capacity to develop national multidimensional poverty strategies and initiatives that identify vulnerable and marginalized populations.
5. **Key success factors for environmental sustainability** – UNDP achievements in this area are predicated on the design and implementation of financing schemes that bring together governments, donors, international development banks, NGOs and the private sector to jointly address complex environmental issues.
6. **Key success factors for crisis response and disaster risk reduction** – UNDP is perceived to be especially effective in crisis response and recovery situations where it can effectively coordinate contributions from the UN system – upstream for institution-building and policy advice, and downstream to support livelihood recovery and resilience building.
7. **Factors influencing sustainability** – the sustainability of UNDP programme results is most often directly related to: the extent of national ownership; sustained attention to national capacity building; and engagement with civil society. Limits to sustainability are most often perceived to be due to: lack of exit strategies and adequate monitoring; insufficient attention to evaluation and learning for adaptive management; and missed opportunities to upscale and replicate successful initiatives.
8. **Gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross cutting issue** – many country offices are operating without adequate gender strategies and are overly dependent on one gender focal point. Offices with dedicated holistic and operationalized gender equality strategies and plans are better prepared to contribute to equitable development results in any context. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment cuts across all areas of intervention and therefore should not be confined to a gender expert. All staff should have sufficient gender expertise. Gender mainstreaming remains weaker in environment, energy and crisis response thematic areas.
9. **NIM and efficiency challenges** – initiatives implemented under the National Implementation Modality (NIM) can help to increase national ownership and the sustainability of results. However, country offices often lack adequate strategies to deal with the risks and challenges associated with managing NIM projects, including additional administrative layers and low capacity of government counterparts, which can impede implementation and jeopardize results.
10. **Diversifying sources of funding** – country offices face increasing challenges relating to the decline of core funding. Country offices that have developed resource mobilization strategies managed to better diversify their sources of funding, balancing government cost sharing with vertical funds and incrementally adding other sources of co-financing such as the private sector.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION – INDEPENDENT COUNTRY-LEVEL EVALUATIONS ASSESSING CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts “Independent Country Programme Evaluations” (ICPEs), that were until 2016 called “Assessments of Development Results” (ADRs). This IEO synthesis of 105 ADRs and ICPEs conducted between 2002 and 2017 in 93 countries, is intended to capture evaluative knowledge and lessons, and thereby strengthen the use of evaluation findings.

Country-level evaluations are a key building block of the IEO evaluation portfolio. They assess the results of UNDP programmatic work across a wide variety of development contexts. The IEO assessments contained in them help to determine whether UNDP is providing relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable support to countries to pursue their development objectives.

Since 2002, the IEO has been conducting ICPEs to capture evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of the UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts to achieve development results.

The purpose of ICPEs and the evaluative input provided by IEO has been to:

- support the development of the subsequent UNDP Country Programme Document;
- strengthen UNDP accountability to national stakeholders; and
- strengthen UNDP accountability to the Executive Board.

The goals of the ICPEs are to:

- provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations to enable corporate accountability, decision-making and improvement; and
- enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function, and its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of United Nations reform and national ownership.

The main intended audience of ICPE reports is:

- members of the Executive Board;
- UNDP country offices and regional bureaux;
- national government counterparts;
- UNDP senior managers, particularly the top management and those in the regional bureau, and other UNDP headquarter bureaux and units; and
- other national stakeholders and partners, including other UN and cooperation agencies in the country.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF THE ICPE SYNTHESIS

Overall there were two broad objectives for this synthesis exercise:

1. To give the Executive Board and UNDP an overview of how country programmes were considered to have contributed to development results over the last 15 years (looking back).

2. To inform future UNDP and Executive Board strategies for programming and programme delivery, drawing on reflections from a broad range of past ICPEs (moving ahead).

The specific purpose of collecting, consolidating and analyzing existing evaluative evidence for the ICPE synthesis was to:

- Capture knowledge, lessons and common issues across countries where UNDP operates to further reflect on future strategic directions, priorities, instruments and approaches for UNDP.
- Promote learning and collective reflection on key barriers and facilitators for achieving expected results, as well as opportunities and challenges for improving UNDP operations and corporate performance and effectiveness.
- Enhance the general understanding of the overall contribution of UNDP to development results and highlight the strategic implications of aggregated findings from 15 years of UNDP work at country level.
- Generate a baseline for monitoring the extent to which IEO evaluations influence how UNDP operates and improve effectiveness.

This aggregate analysis of UNDP performance yields critical insights into the ability of UNDP to contribute to development results. It also allows for the rich body of country-level evaluations to feed more coherently into other IEO work, such as thematic and corporate evaluations.

This ICPE synthesis also sought to create a framework to inform the methodological approach of future synthesis work, enabling a global database for purposes of regional comparison and thematic analysis.

1.3 THE META-SYNTHESIS METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this synthesis was a desk review, with quantitative and qualitative analysis of coded data³ from 105 ICPEs. The coded data was filtered, categorized and organized following evaluation questions based on OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability). This allowed for comparisons and correlations and to capture factors influencing and affecting results. The coded data was organized by:

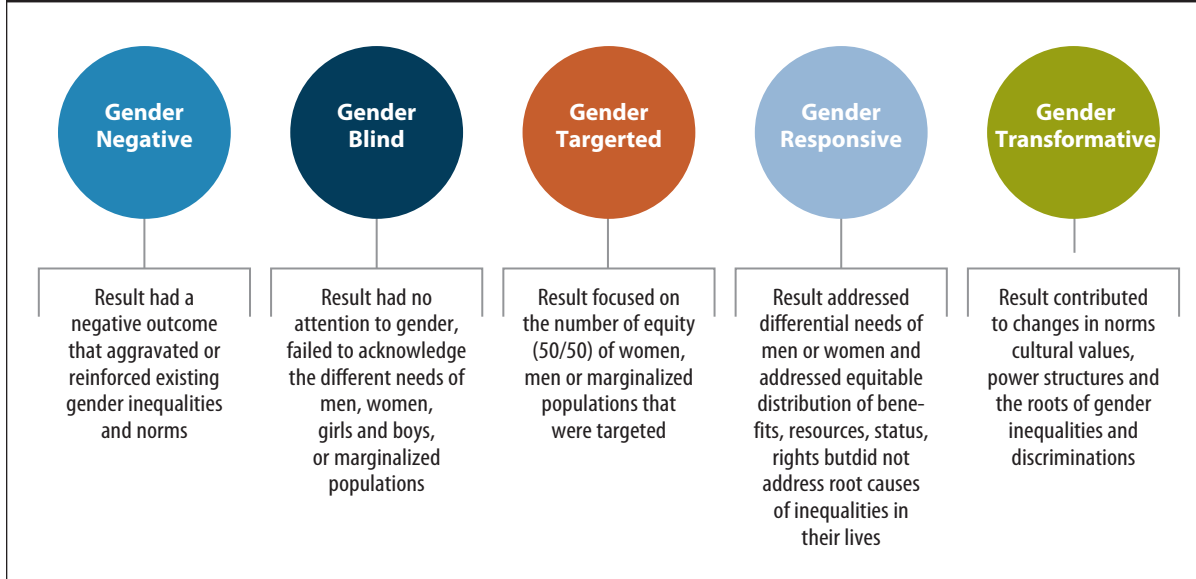
- corporate cycles linked to specific strategic documents (MYFFs 2000-2003 or 2004-2007, Strategic Plans 2008-2013 or 2014-2017);
- key thematic areas (poverty, governance, environment, crisis and disaster risk reduction and gender);
- income groups (low-income, middle-income, high-middle-income, high-income);
- other status variables (SIDS, conflict situation, etc.); and
- UNDP regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa and Arab States).

Next, to isolate factors affecting success and explore key lessons emerging from UNDP work over the past 15 years, a sample of 25 ICPEs were analyzed in more depth. These covered four thematic focus areas (democratic governance, poverty, environmental sustainability and crisis response and disaster risk reduction) and sought to maintain parity across regions and income levels.

For results relating to gender, analysis was restricted to a subset of 81 ICPEs conducted since 2008 when the first corporate gender strategy was launched. This analysis builds on the gender database created for the 2015 UNDP

3 See annex 3 for more details on coding structure.

Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment evaluation⁴, coding ICPEs with the same coding structure called the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) as set out above⁵.

To ensure consistency, accuracy and comparability, financial analysis was based on data directly sourced from the corporate system ATLAS, rather than from individual ICPEs.

The set of questions used to synthesize the coded data were based broadly on the OEAC/DAC criteria with additional gender focus. They were:

Efficiency

1. How well have programmes been implemented – within deadlines and cost estimates?
2. How well has UNDP invested its resources to contribute to results?

Relevance

3. How well aligned were UNDP initiatives to national needs, national priorities and UNDP

mandates? How appropriate have the UNDP approaches, resources, models and conceptual framework been?

4. How strategically has UNDP been positioned in countries to contribute to development?
5. How responsive has UNDP been to development challenges and national priorities over time in considering short-term requests for assistance balanced against long-term development needs?
6. How well did UNDP leverage its comparative strengths to maximize results?
7. Which UNDP comparative strengths were used to increase its contributions and how?

Effectiveness

8. How successful have UNDP initiatives been in contributing to development outcomes?

Sustainability

9. How likely to be sustainable were UNDP contributions to results?

⁴ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/gender.shtml>

⁵ See Annex 4 for more details on the coding structure for gender results.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

10. How strategically was UNDP able to contribute to positive changes in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment?

1.4 SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

The synthesis covered 105 ICPEs conducted between 2002 and 2016, covering 93 countries in all 5 regions where UNDP operates⁶. Of the 93 countries covered, 12 were covered by two ICPEs.

Africa had the highest number of ICPEs, covering about 60% of the region, and the Arab States had the highest regional coverage, with 72% of its countries included. ICPEs covered 53% of countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, 56% in Europe and CIS and 41% in Latin America and the Caribbean. In total, by 2017, 54% of all UNDP country programmes had been the subject of at least one ICPE. In total 26 low-income countries, 41 middle-income countries, 27 upper-middle-income countries

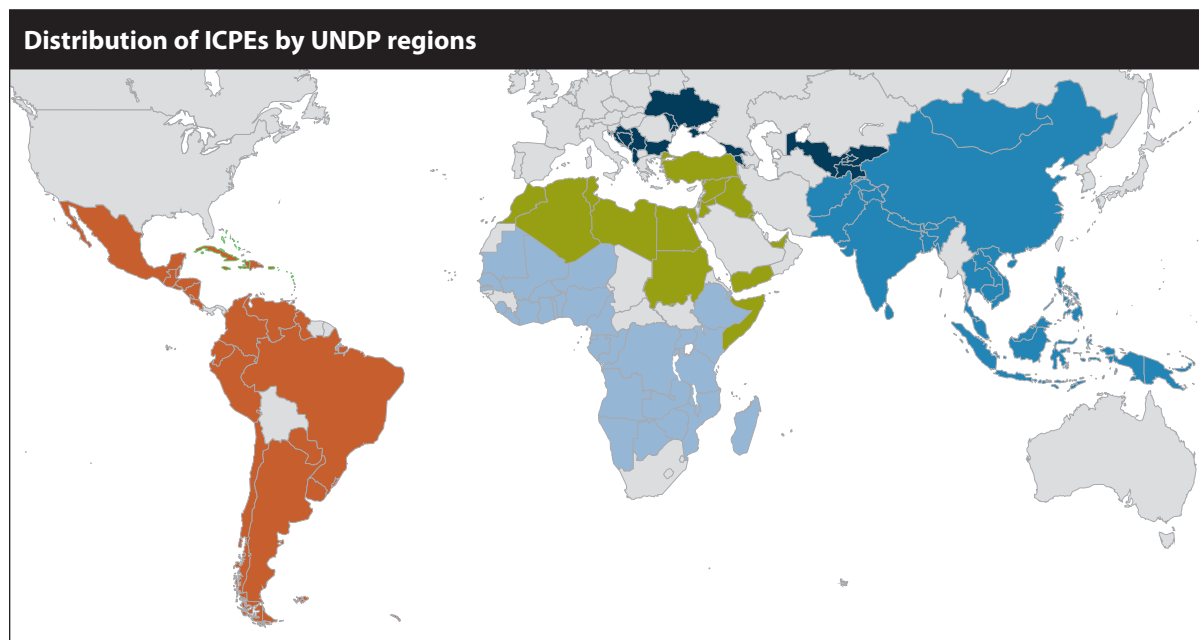
and 4 high-income countries were covered by at least one ICPE.

1.5 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Given the changes in ICPE models over the years, data from the evaluations was not consistent. This made it challenging to systematically code, analyze and synthesize information with adequate rigour, while maintaining the richness in variability found. Therefore, for this initial synthesis, explanatory (why) questions about success and failure in different contexts have not been synthesized. Instead, the synthesis presents key factors found to affect the likelihood of success and offers examples.

When assessing effectiveness in each thematic area, the scale and diversity of the work, and the scope of the analysis required, meant that weighted averages had to be used as a proxy.

The exercise of coding ICPEs revealed some key issues for IEO evaluators to address in future evaluations and syntheses. For example, the need



⁶ UNDP works in approximately 170 countries and territories and has country offices in approximately 130 countries, divided into the following UNDP regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

for further standardization of reporting in ICPEs, which would allow for more comparative synthesis in the future. IEO will add to the current database and develop a common coding strategy and coding book to enable this work to continue.

The lack of consistency in the way financial information was presented in reports was also a challenge. As a result, the synthesis team had to extract data directly from the ERP ATLAS,

and from annual reports for years prior to 2008, instead of from the relevant ICPE report.

Recognizing these challenges and limitations, IEO presents this report as a first synthesis of past country programme evaluations; a sound initial basis and robust design on which future syntheses can build. And as ICPEs improve in quality and consistency this will allow for more in-depth syntheses across years, contexts and themes.

Chapter 2

HISTORY – OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATIONS

2.1 THE FIRST GENERATION OF ICPEs

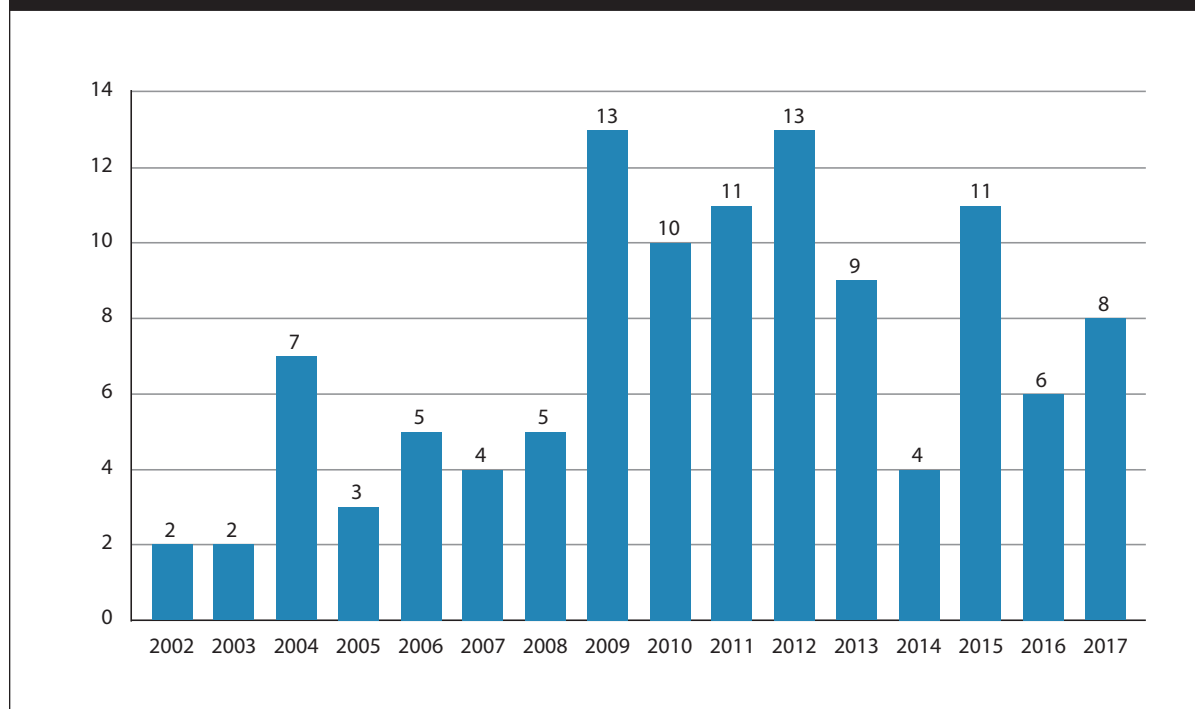
The first country programme evaluations, known as the Assessment of Development Results (ADR), were developed in 2002 in response to the introduction of a new results-based management (RBM) system in the organization. The UNDP Executive Board increasingly demanded greater accountability for results at the country and organizational levels. The organization needed a credible and evidence-based mechanism with which to respond to that demand. The UNDP Evaluation Office (EO) developed guidance setting out basic elements of country programme evaluation methodology and started conducting ADRs at country level.

The first phase of ADRs, later described as a pilot or exploratory phase, was of consultant-led evaluations focused on key results, specifically outcomes, of UNDP assistance at the country level. The evaluations typically covered two country programme cycles. Evaluative evidence was collected through desk review, one explanatory mission and a data-collection mission in the country.

2.2 REVIEWS AND REFORMS

A 2005 peer review of the UNDP evaluation policy (Cole et al., 2005) found that the accountability and performance assessment purposes of evaluations were underexploited relative to those of learning.

Figure 1. ADRs/ICPEs completed between 2002–2017



Subsequently, a revised UNDP evaluation policy was approved by the Executive Board in 2006, which changed the framework for all evaluations at UNDP. It stipulated that ADRs should be made available to the Executive Board and conducted at the end of each programme cycle, before developing a new country programme document (CPD). Subsequent years saw an increase in the number of ADRs conducted by the evaluation office, as can be seen in figure 1.

Following an independent review in 2010, a revised evaluation policy was approved by the Executive Board in 2011, which sought to clarify the roles and responsibilities for evaluation in the organization, laying the foundations for an independent EO. The increased coverage and number of evaluations called for more consistency and rigour in the evaluation process, leading the EO to update its ADR Method Manual to guide members of evaluation teams in collecting data and preparing reports using a more consistent methodology.

2.3 ADDING INDEPENDENCE TO THE NAME

In January 2014, the EO was renamed the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), a decision made by the UNDP Executive Board, to distinguish the office from internal evaluation units, and demonstrate its impartiality in sensitive contexts. This was a major step in the evolution of the evaluation function in UNDP, and the IEO in particular. With more experienced evaluators on the staff, the IEO developed a model in which evaluations were led by its own staff, rather than external consultants, reducing costs and promoting consistently high-quality products.

The same year, the IEO began annexing full management responses to its evaluations and summarized versions with related recommendations in the executive summary. In 2016, a new Evaluation Policy entrenched IEO's indepen-

dence and established solid oversight mechanisms for the office and its work. These oversight mechanisms included:

- the Audit and Evaluation Advisory committee set up to oversee the IEO workplan, acting as an impartial monitoring body;
- an Evaluation Advisory Panel set up in 2013 to address the methodology of all evaluations; and
- a mandatory budget allocation for evaluation entrenched in the policy, and a term limitation of 5 years set for the IEO Director.

In combination, these measures served to provide legitimacy to the office and enhance its credibility and ability to engage with diverse stakeholders on its findings and recommendations.

2.4 THE TRANSITION FROM ADRS TO ICPEs

At the January 2017 session of the Executive Board, the IEO announced its intention to conduct Independent Country Programme Evaluations for all UNDP programme countries submitting a new CPD to the Board for approval, starting from 2018.

This was a departure from the rather vague concept of “assessing development results”, which may be difficult to achieve within a programme cycle, to a more evidence-based assessment of UNDP achievements against the CPD results framework, taking into account how theories of change had been adapted to the needs and the context. ICPEs now focus on one programme cycle only, and capture lessons to inform the new CPD.

The IEO also introduced a shift in its methodology, from the standard application of the OECD/DAC criteria⁷ for all countries in past ADRs, to pay closer attention to each individual country's unique development context and specific factors

7 The OECD/DAC criteria are also under review by the evaluation community to assess whether different criteria are needed for this new era of the SDGs.

which shape the UNDP engagement strategy and influence its performance in the country.

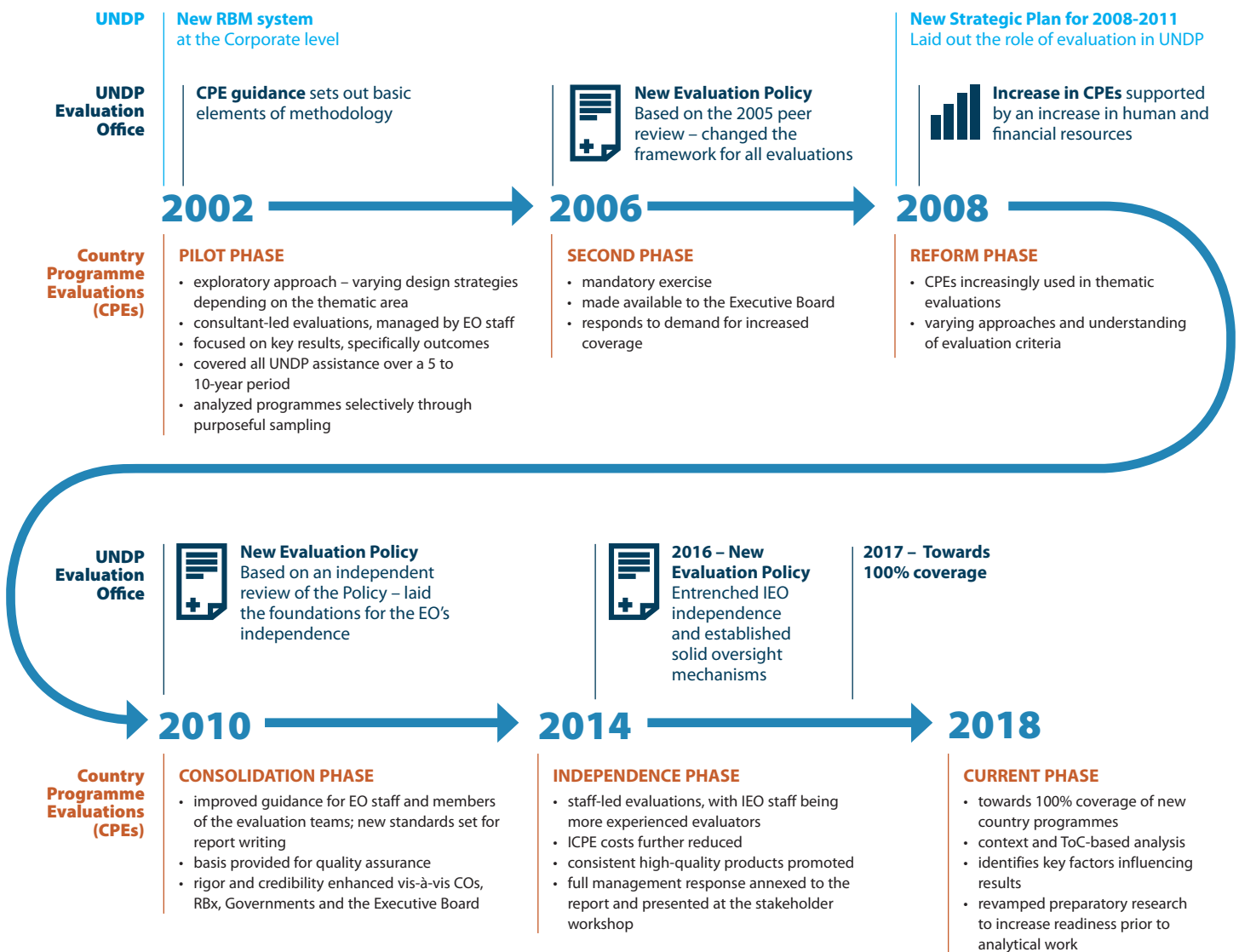
Beyond this methodology shift, IEO made some further changes to be able to provide evidence-based assessments for all countries submitting a new CPD for Board approval. These included efforts to:

- Maximize its efficiency in all operational aspects of an evaluation (e.g. procurement/

recruitment of consultants, mission planning and report production processes).

- Revamp its preparatory research to increase evaluators' readiness prior to their analytical work, exploiting all available data for countries due for a new CPD preparation.
- Ensure that its evaluations reflect UNDP core operational principles underlined in its new Strategic Plan.

2.5 THE ICPE TIMELINE



Chapter 3

KEY ICPE SYNTHESIS FINDINGS

Looking across the 105 evaluations conducted between 2002 – 2017, wide variation can be seen in the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level. This is hardly surprising given the decentralized nature of the organization, which operates in 170 countries with varying scope and roles. The findings presented here indicate high-level trends and variations, derived from the thematic and categorical structure of ICPEs. These findings are presented in alignment with the OECD/DAC criteria, which informed the framing of the assessments. Some examples are also shared to illustrate factors affecting success under each assessment criterion.

3.1 EFFICIENCY

The efficiency of UNDP contributions to development results relates to management efficiency

and the execution of interventions and delivery of results within deadlines and budgets.

Key finding 1: Efficiency of UNDP contributions

In 75% of the ICPEs reviewed, UNDP was found to be efficient at delivering within budget, but only 41% of ICPEs found UNDP to be meeting results within initially set deadlines. An overall growth in programme delivery and implementation rates was observed, but only modest progress in improving the management efficiency ratio, with high variations across UNDP programmes.

Programme delivery has increased more than twofold since 2002, although with regional variations. As seen in figure 2, UNDP total programme expenditures were 2.5 times higher in 2016 than the 2002 figure. Although total

Figure 2. Total programme delivery at the country level, 2002–2016

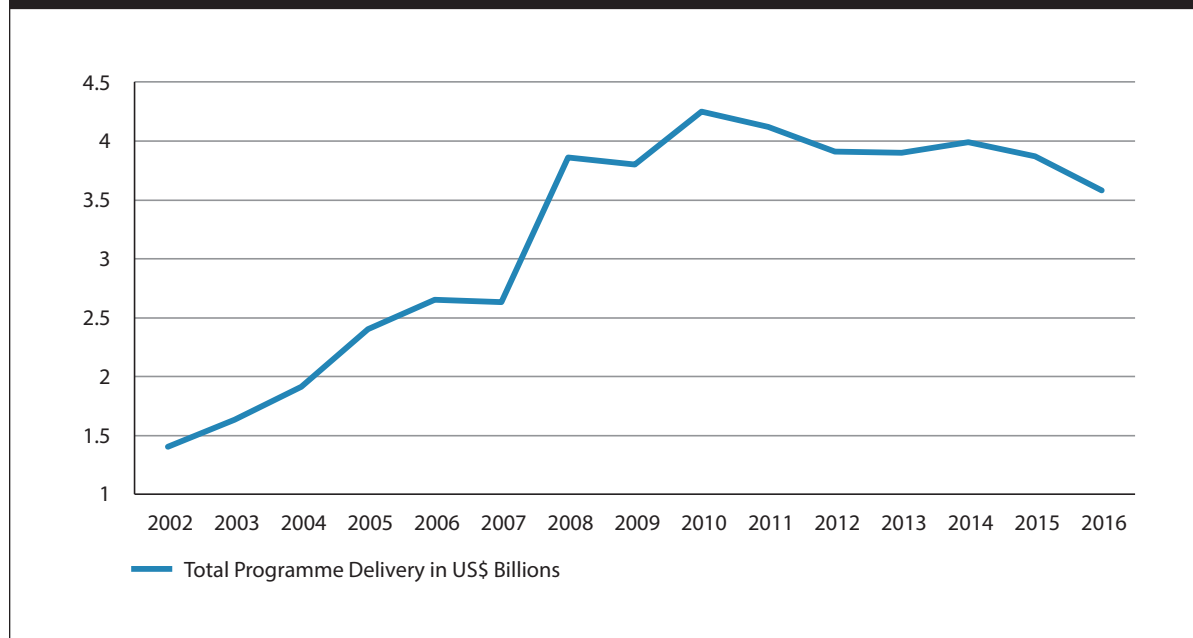
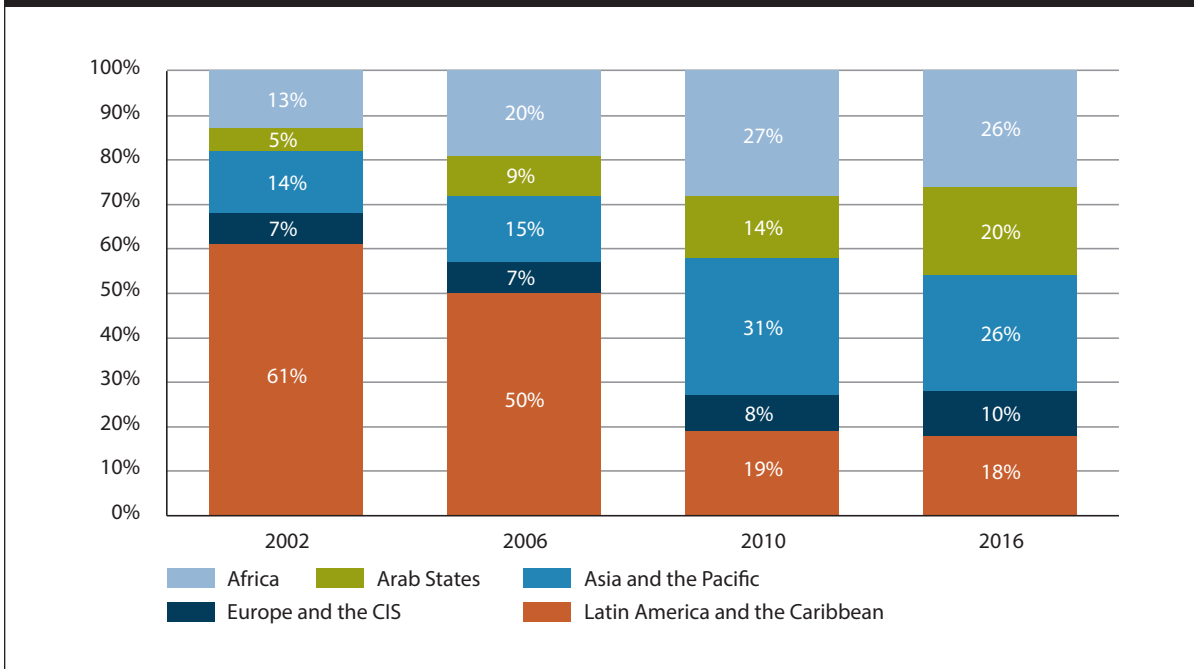


Figure 3. Share of total programme expenditure by region – 2002, 2006, 2010, 2016



programme delivery has been in decline since 2012, it has significantly grown between 2002 and today.

In the past fifteen years, the largest share of programme expenditure has shifted from Latin America to Africa and Asia and the Pacific. The upward trajectory in programme delivery has been most pronounced in Asia and Africa. Though levels of expenditure for these two regions has decreased recently, their share of global expenditures has remained between 25% and 30% each since 2010.

The most significant change in delivery comes from Latin America and the Caribbean, which represented 61% of programme expenditure in 2002, and 18% in 2016. Over the years, expenditure in Latin America was mostly driven by resources from Government Cost Sharing (GCS), a source of funding that has dramatically decreased for UNDP in this region.

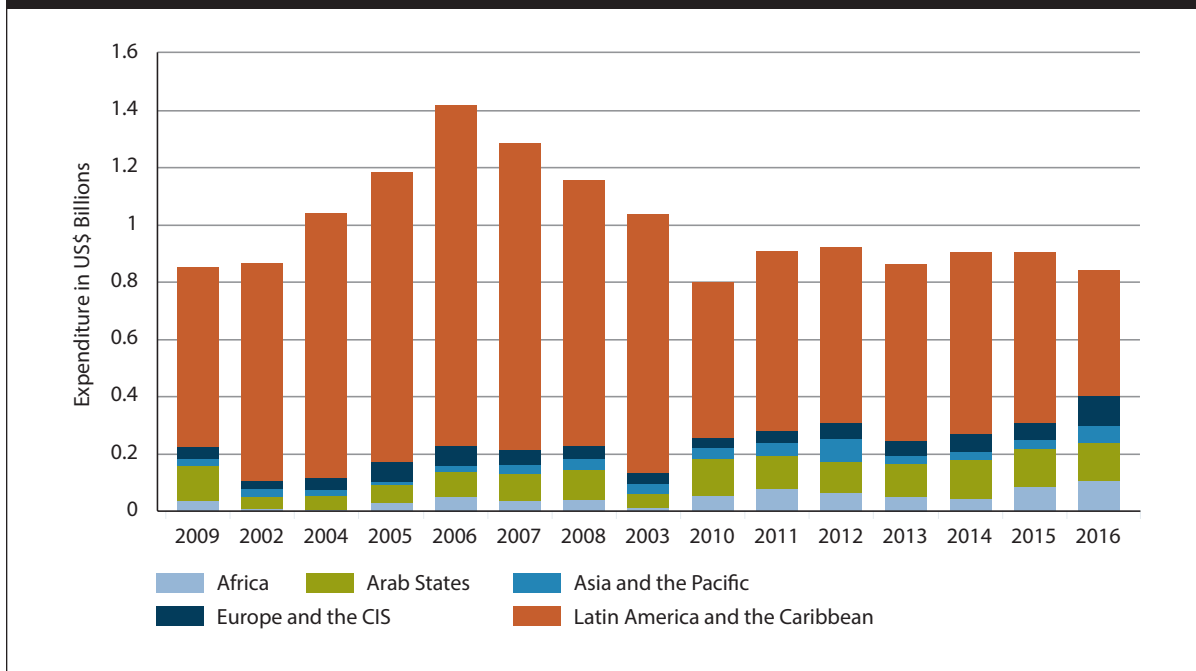
The decrease in GCS in Latin America could be interpreted as a positive development for the region, a sign that governments have strengthened their capacity to manage public funds over

the last 16 years, as well as the success of governments in significantly improving their economies and governance during this period. In other regions, increasing government contributions for UNDP programmes could also reflect the ability of UNDP to build solid partnerships with programme countries for their development.

Spending from Government Cost Sharing represented over 60% of total programme expenditure in 2002, and under 25% in 2016. Trends in GCS funding reflect the changing environment in which UNDP operates, and highlights differences between regions. Overall, GCS reached a peak in 2006-2007 with a total of \$1.4b in contributions received from programme governments, before sharply decreasing and stabilizing at around \$0.9b since 2011.

The largest decreases in GCS happened in Latin American countries, such as Brazil. Although GCS continues to fall in Latin America, other regions show promising signs of being able to compensate for that. Regions with a high proportion of middle-income countries (MIC) – Arab States, Asia and Europe and CIS – have shown the most growth in GCS. This growth was driven

Figure 4. Expenditure of government cost sharing funds by region, 2002–2016



by a few countries in Arab States (Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Lebanon), and amongst some countries from Europe and CIS. Over half of Africa’s GCS contributions come from two countries: Senegal and Tanzania.

This shift over time is clearly illustrated in the figure 4, showing both the overall decline of programme government funds and the changes in each region’s relative share.

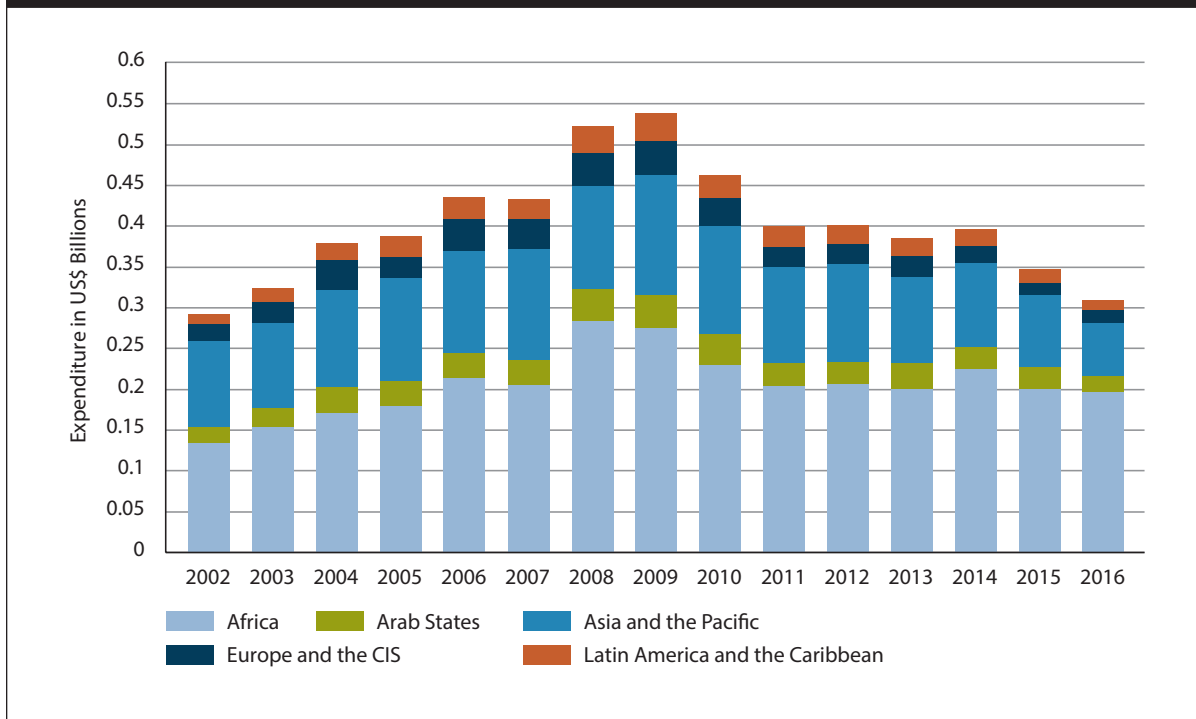
Despite Government Cost Sharing being a growing source of funding in middle-income countries, it is where UNDP has been the least able to spend available resources. The average implementation ratio is 72% and, despite a peak at 84% in 2014, there is no visible trend of improvement in UNDP capacity to efficiently spend GCS funds, as it takes longer to get projects funded, launched, implemented and completed. This lower implementation ratio is explained by a comparatively high use of national implementation modalities (NIM), with lower capacity as compared to direct implementation modalities and additional administrative layers. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that the UNDP have a strategic focus on capacity building, with

the aim to increase the use of the NIM modality and government management, even if this affects efficiency. Strategies can be developed to mitigate some risks associated with low implementation rates under this modality.

The best average implementation ratio overall was for core funding, illustrating the fact that country offices have better control of procedures to spend UNDP funds in comparison with other funds. As can be seen in figure 5, core-funded expenditure reached a peak in 2008-2009, and has decreased since. The significant increase of total programme expenditure over that period, however, has meant that the share of core funding has been halved, from 20% of total expenditure in 2002, to 10% in 2016.

Historically, Africa and Asia have been the recipients of most UNDP regular resources, together representing more than three quarters of expenditure from core funds over the years. One notable change is the constant increase of Africa’s share, from 46% in 2002 to 63% in 2016, while Asia and the Pacific accounted for 36% in 2002 and only 21% in 2016. The decrease in core funding in Asia parallels strong economic growth in the

Figure 5. Core funded expenditure by region, 2002–2016



region during this period, in China in particular. Since 2008, between 40% and 45% of core funds were directed towards low-income countries (LICs) or least developed countries (LDCs) (some countries being in both categories), and between 25% and 30% to countries in special development situations (SDS). In comparison, 80% of GCS was originated and spent in middle-income countries, with around 5% on average going to SDS and crisis countries.

Bilateral and multilateral funds have significantly increased and account for over half of programme expenditure today. As shown in figure 6, bilateral and multilateral funds have increased since 2002, going from under \$250 million in 2002 (17% of total programme expenditure), to a peak of \$2.4 billion (56%) in 2010. Although it has decreased since 2010, this source of funding still accounted for almost half of total programme expenditure in 2016.

The region attracting most of these funds, consistently since 2004, is Asia and the Pacific. It is important to note, however, that most of these

funds go to one country, Afghanistan, which accounts for roughly 30% of all bilateral and multilateral funding since 2010. In comparison, the second and third largest countries represent around 5% of this category of funds. Funds going to Sudan, Iraq and the Programme for Palestinian People have also driven the growth of this source of funding in Arab States. This illustrates that conflict and post-conflict situations are clear drivers of funding in this category.

Vertical Trust Funds (VTF) were the only steadily growing source of funding from 2008 to 2014, with only a 5% decrease since. Vertical Trust Funds comprise 55-60% Global Fund (GFATM) and 35-40% environmental funds, of which the majority – about 88% – are from the Global Environmental Facility, the rest consisting of 9% Montreal Protocol and 3% Special Climate Change funds. Vertical funds have mostly targeted African countries and, to a lesser extent, countries in Asia and the Pacific.

As illustrated in figure 7, regional distribution varies between the two funds, with GFATM funds

Figure 6. Bilateral/multilateral fund expenditure by region, 2002- 2016

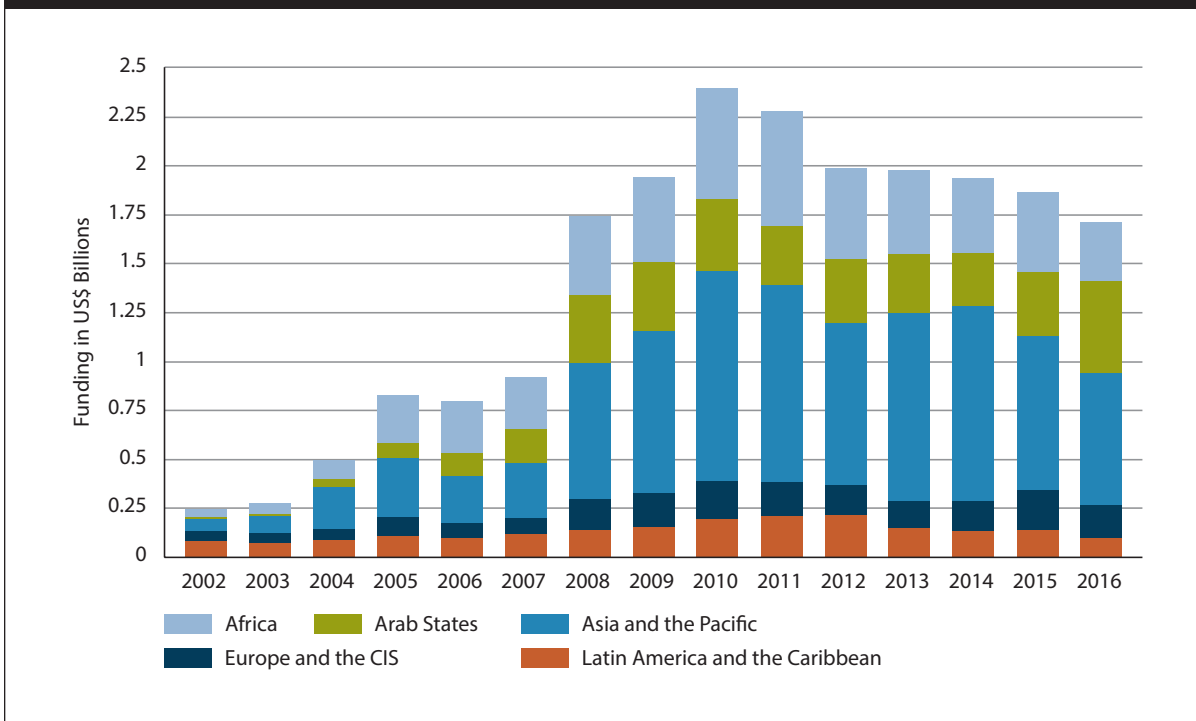
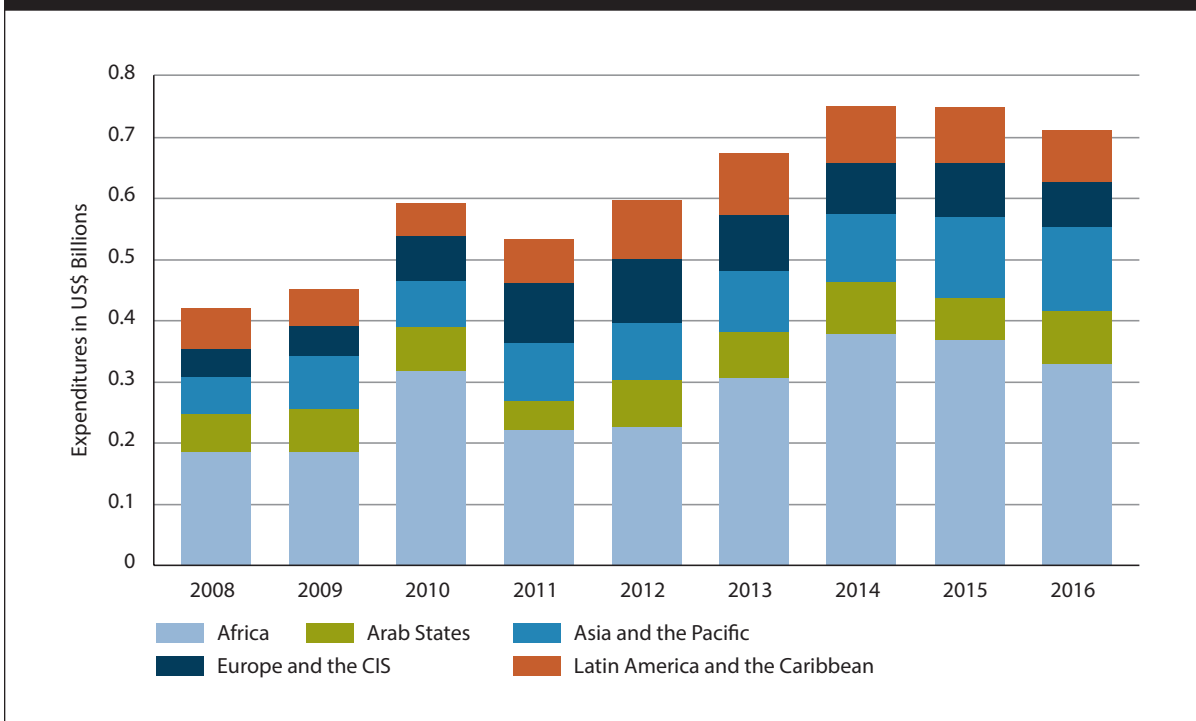


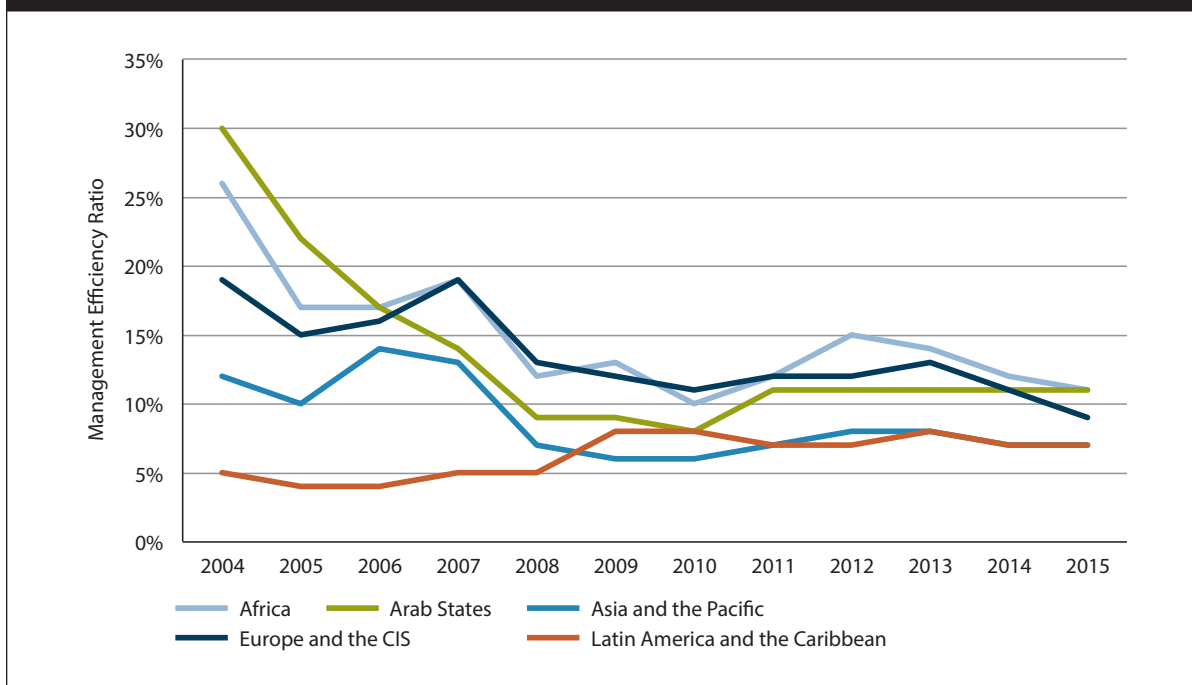
Figure 7. Vertical Trust Fund expenditure by region 2008–2016



predominantly targeting Africa (up to 66%), and environmental funds, especially in recent years, increasingly targeting countries in Asia and the

Pacific (33% in 2014-2016), followed by Arab States (around 24%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (20%).

Figure 8. Management Efficiency Ratio, Global and UNDP regions, 2008-2016



Management efficiency ratios⁸ have remained relatively stable globally (at around 9%) with regional fluctuations, going as low as 6% in Asia in 2010 and as high as 15% in Africa in 2012. As seen in figure 8, Europe and the CIS region shows the most improvement, going from 13% in 2008 to 9% in 2016. Latin America and the Caribbean, on the other hand, despite diminishing management expenditure, saw management ratio rates increase due to a significant reduction in expenditure from Government Cost Sharing funds.

It must be noted that the management efficiency ratio is highly dependent on the amount of funding obtained where UNDP plays a major procurement role. Therefore, the ratio alone may not always be a good indicator of management efficiency. For example, in Asia, the ratio was lowered because UNDP managed the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which distributed \$700 million through UNDP for police salaries. As UNDP moves further into a strategic advisory role this ratio may increase, if the administrative cost is not reduced.

Where inefficiencies were highlighted, the following factors were found to be at play:

Key factors hindering efficiency

1. Challenges with NIM requirements that depend on bureaucratic government processes or approval;
2. UNDP corporate bureaucracy slowing the efficient functioning of country offices;
3. Projects not clearly defined and overly ambitious, leading to inefficiencies and bottlenecks that prevent projects from being implemented in a timely fashion or from being easily understood and adopted by local partners;
4. Lessons and insights about efficiency not used in subsequent programmes or projects; and
5. Weak sharing of lessons across countries and thematic areas.

Examples of factors hindering UNDP efficiency:

- In Vietnam (2015), the Access to Justice Project missed opportunities to link overlapping issues, the human rights component

⁸ Obtained by dividing management expenditure by programme expenditures.

should have been connected to other stand-alone human rights projects running in the country to optimize efficiency.

- In India (2012), poverty reduction programmes were reportedly poorly planned. Slow procurement of funds and slower functioning of the country office often meant that projects had short and unrealistic timelines for success. In addition, poverty reduction projects often lacked research to establish a baseline or assess needs which contributed to weak programme design, and limited understanding of the project aims by stakeholders.
- In Afghanistan (2009), massive delays in procurement, payments and administrative tasks almost undermined the achievements of the country office due to ill will created by inefficiency.
- In Malawi (2011), efficiency ratings were below average in all programme areas predominantly due to bottlenecks in funding disbursements, staff changes and lack of synergy between the government and UNDP. The latter issue was underscored by stakeholder feedback that UNDP should be engaging more with civil society organizations (CSOs) to limit the inefficiencies of working through government. UNDP could have optimized its efficiency in this example by improving coordination between government and civil society where tensions clearly existed.

3.2 RELEVANCE

The relevance of UNDP contributions to development results relates to the extent to which UNDP responds to national needs and government priorities, in alignment with its own commitments to positively affect people’s lives while also in alignment with UN mandates and promoting a human development approach. It is a critical lens and criterion, relating to national ownership, and whether UNDP is responsive to demands on the ground, considering national contexts as well as long-term results.

Key finding 2: Relevance of UNDP contributions

ICPEs assessed that, from the perspective of governments, partners and civil society, UNDP was most often considered to be a relevant, reliable and responsive development partner, strategically positioned to contribute to the development of a country. UNDP has successfully managed to align with national priorities and UN mandates, targeting its programmes to the development needs of countries. However, in about 38% of the ICPEs reviewed, with limited resources, UNDP was found to be involved in more areas than it could add value to.

UNDP was perceived to be more strategically relevant when it optimally leveraged its comparative strengths, as a neutral and trusted partner of governments with unique convening power to promote the human development approach, mobilize resources and strengthen institutions.

Where UNDP was involved in too many areas with very limited resources, its contribution to development results tended to suffer. When UNDP operated through multiple small funds it often failed to establish strong and strategic partnerships. At times, UNDP engaged in areas

Figure 9. UNDP alignment to national priorities and UN mandates

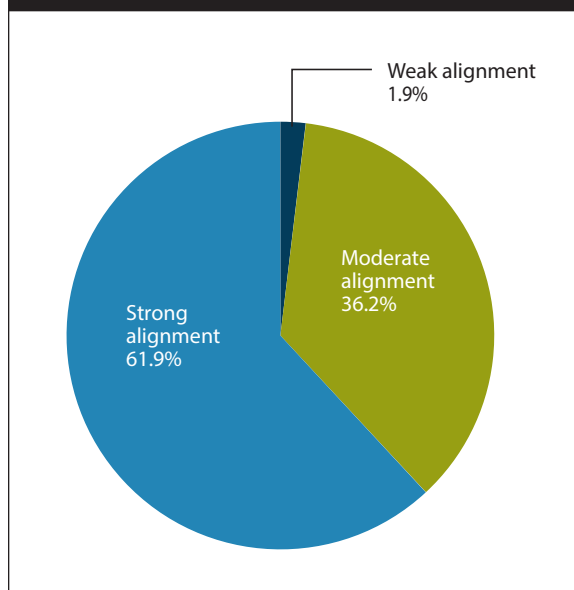
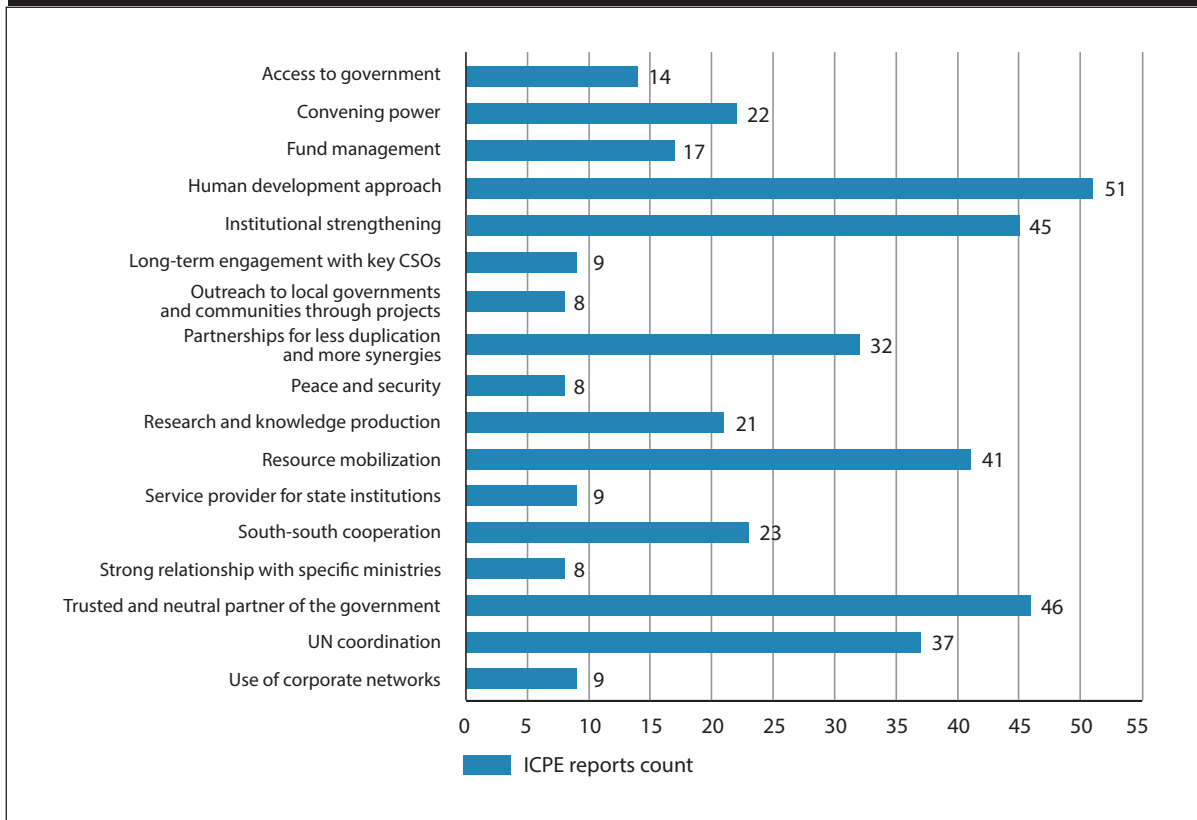


Figure 10. Most frequently mentioned comparative strengths of UNDP



outside its core expertise and comparative advantage, which risked not only underperformance but also pushback from other international agencies working in those areas. UNDP also experienced programming limitations in some thematic areas due to political sensitivities and development realities. This is particularly true in countries where capacity and political will are low on issues such as gender equality, human rights and transparency in governance.

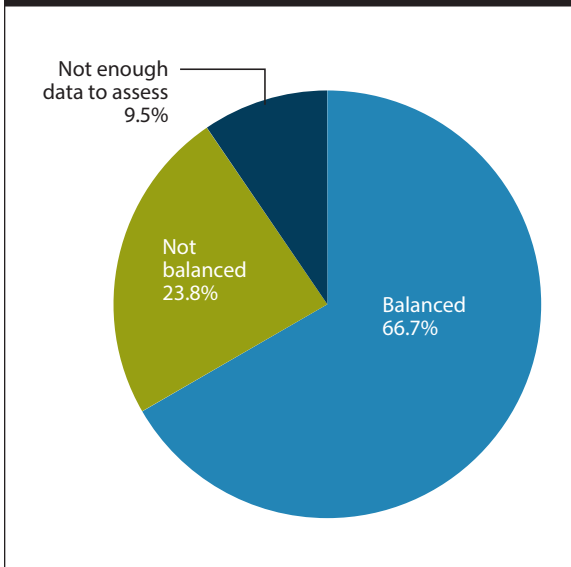
Factors hindering UNDP strategic alignment with national priorities and UN mandates

1. Alignment with human rights and gender perspectives conflicts with government priorities; and
2. Disconnect between government and civil society goals.

Examples of factors hindering UNDP strategic alignment with national priorities and UN mandate:

- In Syria (2005), UNDP tried to promote its core corporate mandate of supporting human development while also responding to requests from the Government, but was unable to integrate key cross-cutting factors. The challenging working environment made it difficult for UNDP to implement a holistic and efficient portfolio. The evaluation found that “*While the UNDP Syria country office has ‘done the right thing’ in terms of focusing on strategic goals of relevance to Syria’s development needs and priorities, it has not necessarily ‘done things the right way’ in its efforts to implement its strategic interventions in the thematic areas of its focus*”.
- In Papua New Guinea (2011), UNDP faced challenges to deliver on results because of differences between government priorities and the UNDP mandate in areas such as gender equality and human rights. Furthermore, resources were spread too thinly amongst too many interventions in different areas.

Figure 11. ICPE findings on balance between short-term requests for assistance and long-term development needs



In 70% of ICPEs reviewed, UNDP did well in balancing short-term requests for assistance with long-term development needs. With rapidly shifting political and environmental events, country offices often proved ready to adapt to emerging circumstances, while remaining mindful of the need to achieve longer-term strategic objectives. That was not always the finding of ICPEs, but overall most country offices skillfully navigated shifting realities, as noted in figure 11.

Examples of UNDP balancing short-term requests with long-term development needs:

- In Jordan (2016) programming shifted from a national refugee response to the Syrian crisis to a more resilience-based approach, moving from immediate crisis engagement, to supporting refugee integration into society, to longer-term recovery and resilience.
- The Dominican Republic (2010) country office supported assistance to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. While immediate efforts went to earthquake relief, longer-term development priorities in the Dominican Republic stayed at the forefront. This type of balancing act becomes especially relevant in crisis settings.

3.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of UNDP contributions to development results considers how well it did in meeting its development objectives through changes in context. The following findings pertain firstly to the overall effectiveness of UNDP contributions to development results, and then presents disaggregated information by the four thematic areas typically covered in ICPEs: democratic governance, poverty, environmental sustainability, and crisis response and disaster risk reduction. For each area, the most frequent factors influencing or hindering success found in the ICPEs are presented with examples.

Key finding 3: Effectiveness of UNDP contributions

Governance and poverty reduction are the areas where UNDP contributions are perceived as especially noteworthy, and where the greatest amount of funding is allocated. Environment and disaster risk reduction are also perceived to be important areas of contribution. The environment portfolio has demonstrated consistent growth, especially through UNDP implementation of environmental vertical funds, such as GEF and GCF.

The areas of democratic governance and poverty reduction saw higher proportions of effective results, and also had more significant funding. Together they have represented between 60% and 75% of all programme expenditure over the years observed. It is, however, important to highlight that many of the results achieved are linked to the investment and focus of other development partners in related key areas. Other thematic areas are not always a priority for partners, especially in government, and investment can take longer to bear results.

It is important to continue to track the correlation between resources and results in the environment area, the only thematic area where expenditure has consistently increased, from 10% of all expenditure in 2008, to 15% in 2016. This was driven, in part, by increasing funding from

Figure 12. Comparison of effectiveness of results across thematic areas

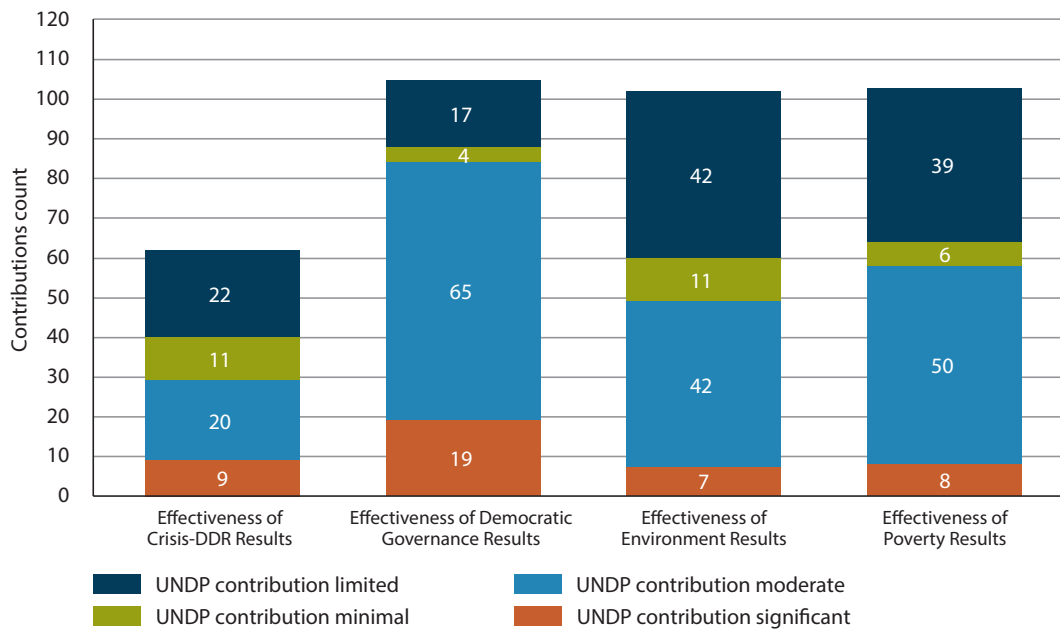
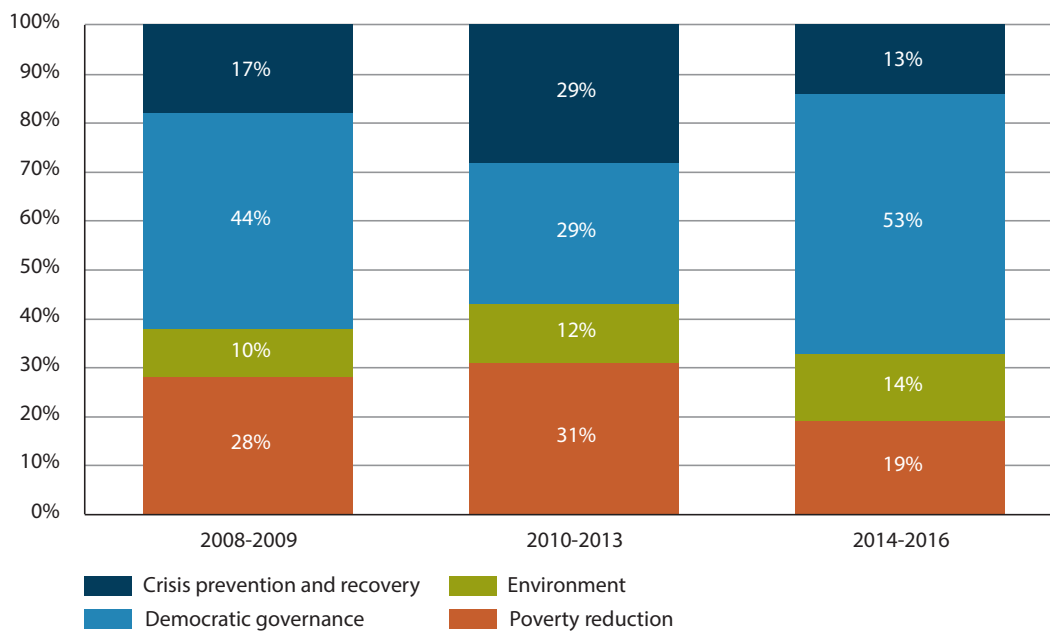


Figure 13. Percentage share of thematic areas in total programme expenditure



Vertical Trust Funds, and GEF funds in particular. A simple correlation may be misleading, however, not always indicating causality, and require observation of issues beyond funding such as timescale, scope, number of stakeholders and so on.

Other shifts in the share of different thematic areas in the total programme relate more to changes in programme classifications, rather than in the overall direction of UNDP. For example, in the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan some programmes previously linked to poverty reduction (e.g. access to basic services) or crisis prevention (e.g. rule of law), were reclassified under governance-related outcomes.

3.3.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

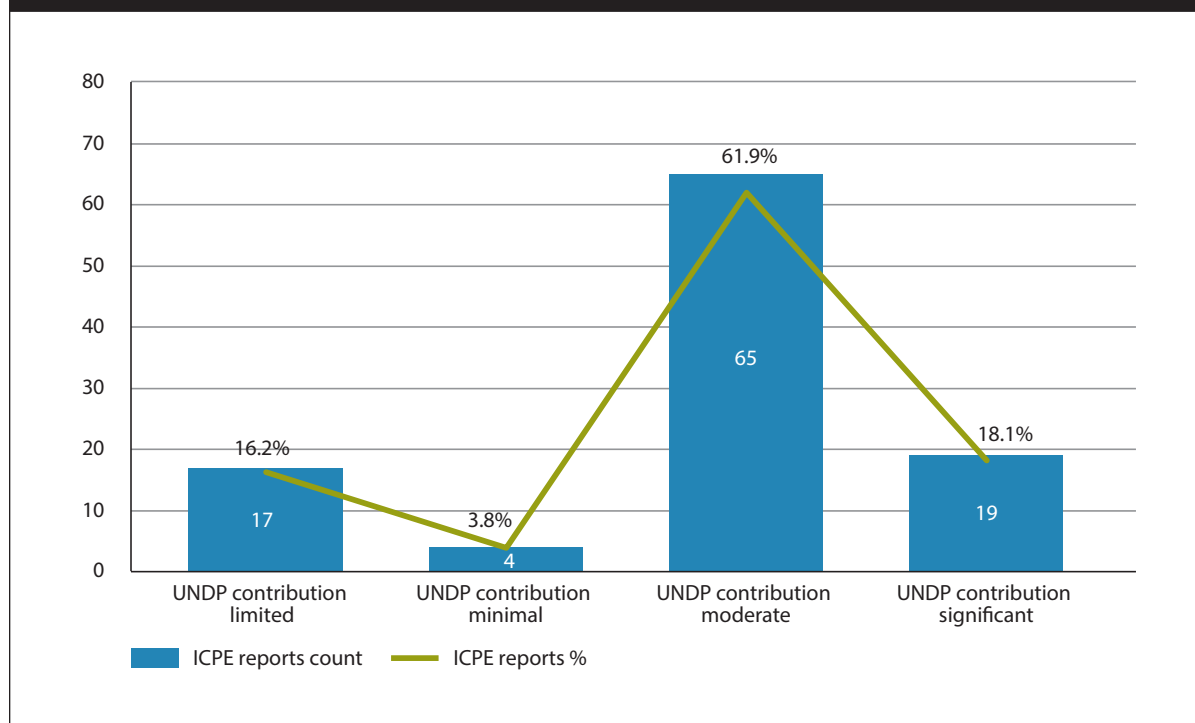
In the ICPEs analyzed, 62% demonstrated moderate results and 18% revealed significant contributions to democratic governance results. A key factor contributing to democratic governance has

been UNDP strengthening of national capacity for policy and action, and its focus on assessing gaps and needs to ensure that interventions are demand-driven, improve buy-in from stakeholders and commit to longer-term engagement to ensure sustainability of results.

Key areas of democratic governance work and results reported in the ICPEs included:

- institutional strengthening through capacity building of government stakeholders and development of legal and policy frameworks;
- strengthening of systems for governance and public-sector accountability such as anti-corruption measures and strengthening audit, tax management and RBM systems;
- strengthening of decentralization and decision-making in governance and increasing civil society and community participation in politics and decision-making spaces; and
- strengthening access to justice, rule of law and protection of human rights.

Figure 14. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to democratic governance



Key factors contributing to UNDP effectiveness in democratic governance

1. Increased focus on gap and need assessments to ensure that interventions are demand-driven, improving the buy-in from government and the public sector in terms of a willingness to invest resources as well as stronger commitment to change, longer-term engagement and institutional capacity building at all levels of government;
2. Effective public outreach and relationship-building amongst central and local stakeholders and effective coalitions with civil society, the international donor community and UN agencies;
3. Increased focus on participatory and inclusive decision-making processes; and
4. Leveraging of internal and external technical expertise and best practices in areas where the government and public sector lacks capacity.

Examples of factors contributing to success in democratic governance:

- In Turkey (2014), UNDP played an important role in catalyzing greater participation and empowerment of local government and communities through its flagship Local Agenda 21 programme. The main element of the programme entailed the establishment of City Councils, city-level participatory mechanisms for decision-making. These councils brought together community-based organizations, NGOs, labour unions, academics, the private sector, individual citizens and local government into a consultative forum that raised and discussed issues of direct concern to the communities themselves. The blueprint of this programme has drawn from UNDP links with global environmental initiatives, such as the Rio Conference, and is a direct result of the participation of Turkey's Government and mayors in HABITAT II, the major environmental UN Summit, which was held in Turkey in 1996. UNDP contribution to governance in Turkey, most notably at the level of transparency and accountability of local authorities, received national recognition. Local officials and citizens displayed

considerable pride in their association with UNDP and, through it, with the international community.

- In Pakistan (2016), UNDP played a significant role in the electoral process, strengthening the Election Commission by providing needed capacity building and institutional support. This included training commission staff, supporting development of a strategic plan, and supporting the development of voter education campaigns.

Where problems were highlighted, the following factors were found to be hindering effectiveness in democratic governance:

Key factors hindering the success of UNDP efforts in democratic governance

1. Lack of political will and poor buy-in of ministries and public sector service providers;
2. Change in government priorities leading to reforms and scaling-up of efforts falling through;
3. Staffing delays or high staff turnover in UNDP, national and subnational government entities;
4. Delays in programme implementation and resource constraints; and
5. Poor budgeting, planning, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Examples of factors hindering success in democratic governance:

- In Tajikistan (2009), baseline data was lacking for outcomes set out in the country programme. Several projects in the democratic governance programme were essentially local pilots which were neither scaled up nor informed government planning and practices. There was little ability to learn from that data, what worked, and whether other programmes could be designed to address key challenges, leading to inefficiencies.
- In Zimbabwe (2015), the lack of capacity to coordinate, as well as draft, enabling legislation for a new Constitution, threatened the sustainability of the results achieved in the democratic

governance programme. In this case, UNDP was criticized by other international development partners for what they perceived to be an absence of a strategic framework to allow better coordination with the government.

- In Turkey (2004), in the areas of governance reform and capacity building there was not a clear strategy for engagement. Many initiatives which in principle could have been complementary and mutually reinforcing, were started and terminated without clear reason or reference to each other. Thus, the benefit of these initiatives was limited and most had no apparent lasting results (e.g., the e-Government initiative).

3.3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS TO POVERTY REDUCTION

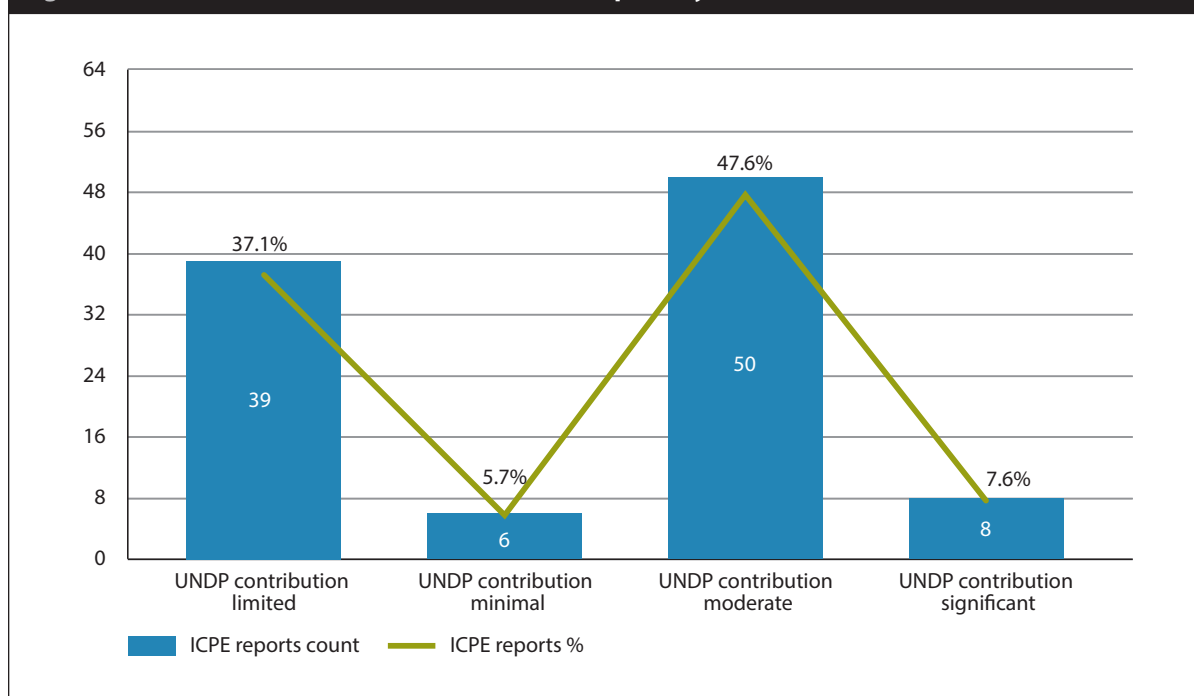
In the ICPEs analyzed, UNDP has made moderate (47%) to limited (37%) contributions to poverty reduction. A key factor contributing to poverty reduction has been UNDP strengthening of national capacity to correctly identify vulnerable and marginalized populations more likely

to experience multidimensional poverty, and to develop adequately designed national strategies and initiatives.

The key areas of poverty reduction work and results reported within the ICPEs were:

- stronger poverty reduction and increased economic opportunity programmes for vulnerable groups;
- increased empowerment of women and youth for greater opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship;
- stronger national and local capacity to ensure common approaches and methodologies in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and development of poverty reduction strategies;
- stronger government institutional capacity to plan, implement and budget for poverty reduction strategies and policy frameworks;
- increased access to social services such as health, education, food security and social protection;

Figure 15. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to poverty reduction



- increased coordination with other UN agencies for the development of strategies and multi-sector initiatives for poverty reduction.

Where UNDP was most valued and found to be most effective in poverty reduction, the key factors included:

Key factors contributing to the success of UNDP efforts in poverty reduction

1. Helping to correctly identify vulnerable and marginalized populations that are more likely to experience multidimensional poverty, so that national strategies and initiatives are adequately designed;
2. Strengthening national capacity for policy and action; and
3. Leveraging UNDP technical and research expertise and its advocacy and coordination role.

Examples of factors contributing to success in poverty reduction:

- In Benin (2008), UNDP strengthened economic livelihoods and leveraged its capacity to mobilize funds for two income-generating projects. The Support to Municipalities' Development and Self-Help Project in Bogou led to more than 4,000 people (95% women) from grassroots organizations receiving microcredit loans; 409 people from local communities receiving support to develop income generating activities; and 111 municipal infrastructure and community facilities being developed. The Employment for Youth project generated a large investment from the Government (US 11.1 million) aimed to reduce the 50% youth unemployment rate in Benin. This investment, and the institutional support generated through this project in its early stages, showed great potential to increase the incomes of vulnerable groups.
- In Armenia (2014), UNDP has contributed to social protection programming and was viewed as a trusted partner by the Government, civil society and the private sector. Inter-

ventions have used participatory approaches to promote national ownership and capacity for inclusive development. Community members have been directly engaged in planning, implementing and monitoring processes.

UNDP has been recognized as an important provider of technical support to governments on poverty programming. Direct UNDP support has been buttressed by policy papers such as its Poverty Reduction Strategies that provide technical methodologies to policy makers, including how to revise the poverty line index, and the use of information technology tools such as interactive maps and geographic information systems (GIS).

Poverty analyses made by UNDP in Human Development Reports have been strategically used as an advocacy tool to raise awareness on poverty issues at the national level. These analyses have been used as the basis for effective programming that targets and responds to existing and pronounced deprivations. Technical expertise and data, and policy support, have helped countries to deepen their analysis of how to reduce poverty, moving from a purely economic perspective, to a more differentiated and multidimensional one. The *Multidimensional Poverty Index*⁹ outlined in the Human Development Reports was considered an innovation, which not only assessed the financial dimension of poverty but also other overlapping deprivations in health, education and standard of living.

Another key area where UNDP engaged in successful strategies, leveraging their coordination, capacity strengthening and technical advisory roles, was around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and more recently the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP helped to strengthen national and local capacity to ensure a common approach in tracking progress towards the MDGs and to establish poverty reduction mechanisms through govern-

⁹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi>

ment institutional support. For example, in 2010, as evidence emerged that many countries were lagging behind on progress towards 2015 MDG targets, UNDP launched the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) process. The MAF process helped countries to develop multi-stakeholder, nationally-owned plans to address lagging MDG progress and create specific action plans. Over 50 countries developed action plans, a majority of which focused on gender indicators, given that MDG5 and MDG3 were among the goals with the slowest progress. More recently, UNDP and UNDG launched MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support), creating a common UNDP approach to support the SDGs.

Where problems were highlighted, the following factors were found to be hindering effectiveness in poverty reduction:

Key factors hindering success in poverty reduction

1. Uneven implementation of poverty reduction strategies and policies;
2. Lack of government ownership;
3. Shifting government priorities;
4. Changes in government staff, reducing the likelihood of ownership of the work over time; and
5. Low technical and data expertise to continue with analysis and research on poverty.

A recurrent challenge has been establishing effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems for poverty reduction at the country level. These are too often centered on assessing operations and short-term development results (outputs), rather than contributions to mid- and long-term results (outcomes).

Most often, poverty reduction projects and programmes focus on outputs and the number of men and women that experienced economic benefits, but less often on multidimensional factors of poverty required to measure programmatic effectiveness. This quantitative focus, without qualitative analysis of complex programmes and

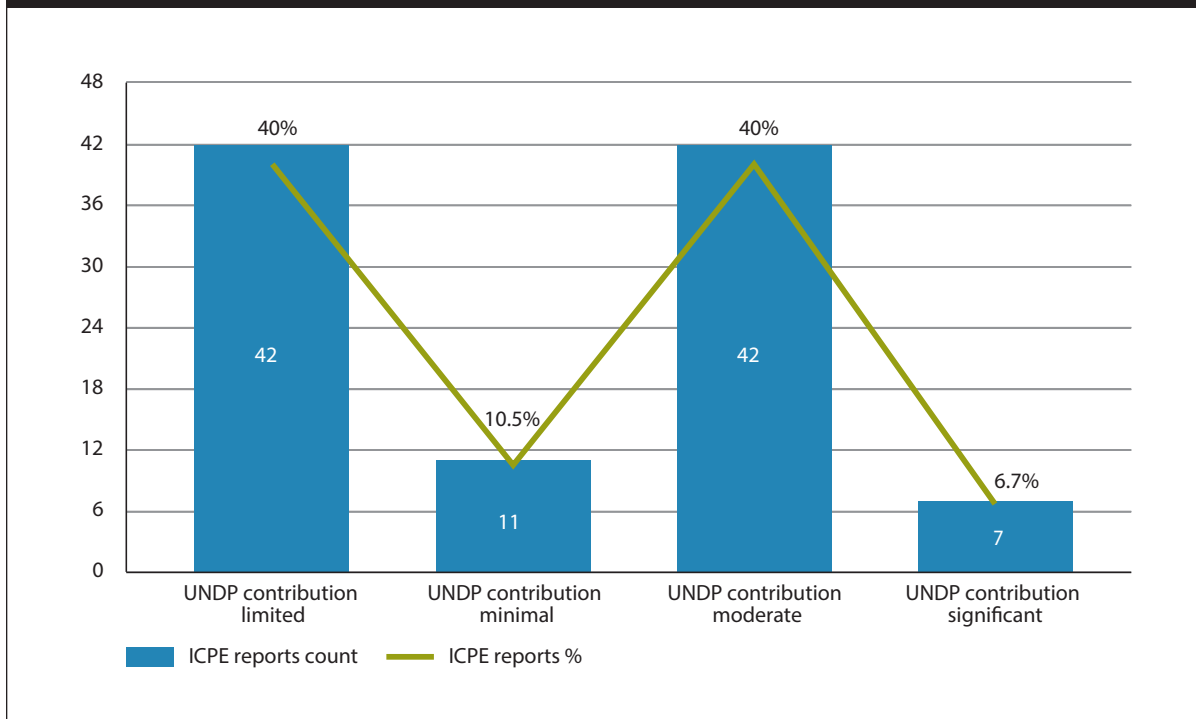
contexts, points to an overall compliance bias in internal units and an inability to engage more analytically and holistically.

Longer-term assessments of the sustainability of programme gains are not typically made, and assessments do not typically explore if there have been shifts in the social, community, and policy structures that created existing inequalities and discriminations in the first place. These realities constrain the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions now and in the future.

Example of factors hindering success in poverty reduction:

- In Benin (2008), a database, *BenInfo*, was developed to collect gender and regional disaggregated data in the country. However, the database was plagued with quality control issues, including inaccurate, incomplete and unconfirmed data. The ICPE reports: “*Not only did quality control seem weak, but UNDP support was also criticized by Benin’s National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The criticism suggested a lack of appropriate support and cast doubts on the INSAE capacity to sustainably maintain the database.*”
- In India (2012), the effectiveness of some projects was adversely affected by the fact that they had to be terminated before they had a chance to make a difference. This was partly due to the rigidity of the country office programming, which did not allow for continuation of programming beyond the original short time-frame.
- In Timor-Leste (2013), UNDP support to poverty reduction varied over the two programmes assessed. Overall, the scale and scope of the UNDP poverty reduction programme was not commensurate with the challenges of addressing multidimensional poverty in Timor-Leste. The micro-level activities did not demonstrate viable options for government programmes to advance.

Figure 16. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to environmental sustainability



3.3.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In the ICPEs analyzed, UNDP has made moderate (40%) or limited (40%) contributions to environmental sustainability. A key factor contributing to environmental sustainability has been UNDP capacity to assist countries in designing financing schemes that bring together strategic partners, like the Global Environmental Facility. This is an umbrella facility hosting an array of vertical funds such as special climate change fund (SCCF), Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT), Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NPIF) and Adaptation Fund. UNDP also receives funding through the Green Climate Fund, which is a rapidly expanding source of finance, and through the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

Some of the key areas of environmental sustainability work and results reported within the ICPEs included:

- increased attention to national and regional conservation initiatives;
- increased community ownership and awareness of environmental protection;
- stronger environmental regulations and policies;
- increased institutional capacity to create and implement environment and climate change policies; and
- increased opportunities for employment and income production.

Where UNDP was most valued and found to be most effective in the area of the environment, key factors included:

Key factors of success in environmental sustainability

1. Stronger government capacity for effective implementation and enforcement of environmental policies and legislations;
2. UNDP capacity to assist countries in designing environmental financing schemes that bring together multiple local and global strategic partners to tackle complex environmental issues;
3. UNDP capacity to promote dialogue, knowledge building and information sharing;
4. Use of national experts to mainstream best practices for conservation; and
5. Inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of national policies.

Examples of factors contributing to success in environmental sustainability:

- In Moldova (2012), various policy dialogues were initiated as part of the development of the National Human Development Report (NHDR) on the topic of climate change by UNDP. This contributed to Moldova's agreement to ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets as part of the Copenhagen Accord. The awareness created by the NHDR also led to the creation of a parliamentary commission on environment and climate change. Public discussions that followed the launch of the NHDR were catalytic in creating the parliamentary commission. With UNDP support, Moldova also achieved full compliance with the chlorofluorocarbons phase-out targets under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and recently finalized preparation of the phase-out management plan for hydro-chlorofluorocarbons. UNDP assistance on biodiversity conservation focused on improving coverage and strengthening the management effectiveness of Moldova's Protected Area System, including laying the basis for the creation of Moldova's first national park.
- The Dominican Republic ICPE (2015) found that "Notably, the Sabana Yegua Basin

Project, the Small Grants Programme (SGP), the Conversion of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons and the Binational Artibonite Basin Project have exceeded goals. The first two have been recognized internationally as outstanding projects, and they all benefit from a solid partnership process with nongovernmental organizations, community groups at the local level or the private sector. There is consensus among respondents on the high level of the current UNDP coordination team and how this has considerably strengthened the strategic support to partners and greatly improved communication and working relations." Capacity building with government officials involved in the National Council on Climate Change and the Ministry of Environment was also successful. The Council also created a Directorate for Climate Change in 2013, ensuring continued attention to the issue in the country.

- In Egypt (2012), the GEF-financed 'Lake Manzala Engineered Wetlands' demonstration project helped UNDP to collaborate with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to pilot a low-cost system for treating polluted agricultural waste prior to discharge into the Nile. While this started as a water treatment research effort, it expanded into an aquaculture project, with treated effluent waste being used for an onsite fish farm. Nine similar solid waste management projects have been replicated in other areas in the region.
- In Zimbabwe (2015), for the past 20 years UNDP has managed a series of small environmental projects through the GEF Small Grants Programme. Through this mechanism, UNDP has been able to build long lasting partnerships with local CSOs and community-based organizations, rolling out highly relevant projects in areas such as water management and land degradation, with special emphasis given to measures that can reduce the devastation of frequent drought and flood problems experienced there.

- In Jamaica (2011), the GEF portfolio has become the largest revenue stream for UNDP. The GEF funded ‘Integrating Watershed and Coastal Area Management’ regional project has been successful and has been appreciated for being both effective and innovative, with potential for replication on a wider scale. In partnership with GEF, UNDP has also been able to make a positive impact on outputs such as strengthening government capacity to implement policies and plans, land, water and sanitation management and energy efficiency in the public sector. The main UNDP contribution to these outputs has been capacity building, partnership building, awareness raising and piloting innovative and replicable approaches.

Where problems were highlighted, the following factors were found to be hindering effectiveness in environmental sustainability:

Key factors hindering success in environmental sustainability

1. Externalities and countervailing development pressures impeding the implementation and enforcement of environmental protection laws and regulations;
2. Lack of coordination amongst stakeholders leading to the fragmentation of environmental efforts;
3. Silos across projects minimizing institutional capacity and the promotion of synergies; and
4. Misunderstandings in policy implementation, and delays in obtaining jurisdiction to implement projects.

Examples of factors hindering success in environmental sustainability:

- In Papua New Guinea (2011), the GEF funded Small Grants Programme should have been more proactive in seeking implementing partners, rather than simply soliciting proposals. The perception of Small Grants

Programme partners was that it should have taken a more cohesive approach, bringing grantees together to share experiences at the end of their projects. Programme staff should have identified needs at the provincial level and sought recommendations from key champions, thus adopting a strategic perspective. Further, UNDP should have created a database of results and lessons from past projects, to encourage improvements in subsequent project execution. Countervailing development pressures have also been a major issue in the country. Both the Government and the private sector have been keen to exploit the rich natural resources – a serious threat to the country’s ecological balance.

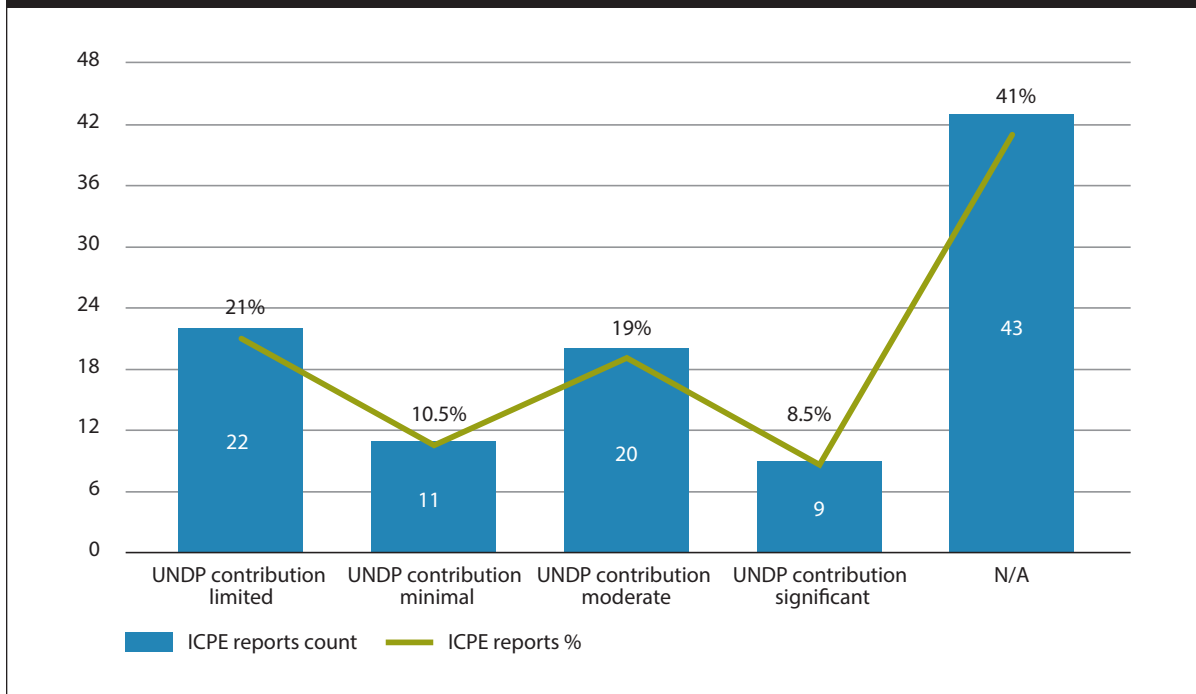
- In India (2012), the effectiveness of the UNDP environment portfolio has been limited by a lack of coherence which has led to fragmented efforts across different projects. This has led to missed opportunities where projects such as Community Based Natural Resources Management could have been integrated with programmes around income and livelihood diversification, while at the same time protecting the environment and natural resources.

3.3.4 EFFECTIVENESS OF UNDP CONTRIBUTIONS TO CRISIS RESPONSE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

In the ICPEs analyzed, UNDP has made limited (21%) to moderate (19%) contributions to crisis response and disaster risk reduction (DRR).¹⁰ The component of crisis response was typically better covered and resourced than that of DRR. A key factor contributing to success in this area has been the UNDP ability to leverage its neutrality in times of political complexity, to effectively coordinate UN system contributions to upstream institution building and policy advice, and downstream support to livelihood recovery and resilience building.

¹⁰ 41% of the evaluations reviewed did not have enough data on the effectiveness of this thematic area, which is why the graph only shows the numbers for 60% of the evaluations.

Figure 17. Effectiveness of UNDP contributions to crisis response and disaster risk reduction



The analysis of the two areas of work and results, crisis response and disaster risk reduction, are presented separately below.

3.3.4.1 Crisis prevention and recovery

UNDP work in the crisis prevention and recovery area covers responses to human-caused crises, such as armed or security conflicts and forced migration, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, tsunamis or famine. In both areas, one of the main outcomes to which UNDP expects to contribute is the resilience of countries at national and local levels to recover from negative shocks, and the creation of opportunities for development.

Some of the key areas of UNDP work and results reported within the ICPEs for human-caused crisis response included:

- increased capacity of institutions to respond to crisis;
- stronger local-level ownership over crisis prevention;
- stronger policies and legal frameworks for conflict resolution, and Security Resolution

1325 to include women in peacebuilding processes;

- increased reach in crisis prevention services and programming; and
- increased cooperation among humanitarian response actors.

Where UNDP was most valued and found to be most effective in crisis response, the key factors included the following:

Key factors for success in crisis response

1. Ability to leverage neutrality in times of political complexity;
2. Effective coordination of contributions of the UN system;
3. Fostering of national, local and community ownership;
4. Capacity to forge partnerships with governments, religious groups and civil society organizations; and
5. Clarity in project design, populations identified and implementation.

Examples of factors contributing to success in crisis response:

- In Nepal (2012), after a decade of armed conflict, UNDP worked to support peace-building, reintegration and reconstruction in the country. Among the successful UNDP interventions were: support provided to the newly established Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to strengthen its strategic management and capacity; assistance to the Government to establish and manage the Nepal Peace Trust Fund; and support for the reintegration and rehabilitation of minors and recruits from the Maoist Army.
- In Serbia (2006), the country office was highly successful in delivering projects to maintain peace building, including the South Serbia Municipal Improvement and Recovery Programme and the Rapid Employment Programme which injected economic recovery elements into the post-conflict environment. 84 sub-projects were locally implemented, opening work for over 6,000 former combatants, youth, unemployed workers, or ethnic minorities and thereby reducing tensions. In addition, participatory methods were used to gain trust and encourage cooperation across ethnic lines. UNDP successfully engaged local government officials to foster cooperation at community level.
- In Somalia (2015), “programming through a peacebuilding lens” supported the establishment of peacebuilding units in Puntland, Somaliland and Mogadishu to develop roles, responsibilities and partnerships among authorities at all levels. In Puntland, the country office supported Government to formalize a common framework, under a Community Security and Peacebuilding Policy, to institutionalize partnerships between state actors and civil society. UNDP also supported an evidence-based programme design tool with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research for use by reintegration practitioners. A second phase called ‘Youth for Change’ targeted social rehabilitation activi-

ties, including training 491 youth on a wide range of skills and topics in 2014. The successful implementation of the joint ‘youth at risk’ programme demonstrated that an alternative to the usual disarmament, demobilization and reintegration approach can be implemented in countries facing high levels of violence, organized crime and conflict. Some of the parents interviewed reported that, prior to the training, their children had sympathized with Al-Shabaab, but were now moving away from extremist ideology. Many beneficiaries reported that the lessons provided through the Resource Centers for Peace were effective, and that they were now able to read and write, having previously been illiterate.

Where problems were highlighted, the following factors were found to be hindering effectiveness in crisis response:

Factors hindering success in crisis response

1. Lack of fully developed needs assessments for poorer, rural communities and marginalized groups;
2. Short-term development solutions versus longer-term sustainable change;
3. Poor analysis of the context leading to interventions that inflamed tensions instead of quelling them;
4. Changing political environment requiring more efficient project delivery in terms of funding and timing; and
5. The need for gender-responsive post-conflict and recovery strategies.

Examples of factors hindering success in crisis response:

- In Liberia (2012), considerable delays in funding and project delivery led to reduced reintegration activities. UNDP created an incentive-based programme where cash rewards were given for arms alongside reintegration programming, but the country office was not able to handle the number of ex-combatants that were eligible for the programme. Also, there was confusion about

the benefits given in this programme, many ex-combatants left after receiving the cash, and violence ensued as a result of the bad planning. *“Some ex-combatants with links to former armed factions precipitated violence as a result of confusion over payment of school fees and other benefits that they believed were due to them by the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration.”* Furthermore, after ex-combatants had received training in income generating activities, they found that jobs were scarce and grew frustrated. Poor planning, a more limited focus on disarmament, a lack of gender integration, and lack of exit strategies created barriers for success of the project.

- In Jordan (2016), there were missed opportunities for creating cross-sector partnerships to strengthen the impact of the crisis response programme. This had implications for the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole UN system, to which UNDP contributes as coordinator of the UN resident coordinator system. For example, UNDP is responsible for guiding UN coordination for the resilience pillar, but ICPE interviewees were not clear about these coordination structures and considered that UNDP coordination mainly focused on compiling progress reports.
- In Colombia (2007), the lack of a monitoring and evaluation system significantly limited the extent to which assessments of progress and sustainability could be made. The initial and tentative evidence of the REDES projects suggested that this approach could help to reduce local conflicts and provide alternative mechanisms for dispute resolution (via efforts to organize citizens and greater participation on the part of citizens in the local political process). The sustainability, however, could not be demonstrated due to lack of data.

3.3.4.2 Disaster Risk Reduction

Some of the key areas of UNDP disaster risk reduction work and results reported within the ICPEs included:

- reduction of disaster risk through systematic efforts to analyze and reduce the causal factors of disasters and hazards;
- reduced vulnerability of people in disasters and climate-related change;
- stronger national and subnational policy frameworks, such as disaster management plans;
- increased awareness of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation; and
- improved access to risk information and early warning systems and stronger preparedness and response measures.

Where UNDP was most valued and found to be most effective in disaster risk reduction, the key factors included:

Key factors for success in disaster risk reduction

1. Strategy developed to strengthen institutional and government capacity and ownership for risk management;
2. Capacity for upstream institution building and policy advice, and for downstream support to livelihood recovery and resilience building;
3. Use of a responsive approach to address emerging issues, in alignment with long-term commitments and priorities;
4. Synergistic relationships with relevant ministries and stakeholders; and
5. Effective coordination among stakeholders. government

Examples of factors contributing to success in disaster risk reduction:

- In Bangladesh (2011), the UNDP disaster management portfolio supported a paradigm shift from emergency relief to disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh. The provision of policy advice, technical assistance and community-level intervention helped to improve the capacity of the Government, local communities and local institutions to prepare for, and respond to, natural disasters. UNDP

helped approximately 250,000 people get back on their feet following cyclone Sidr and the 2007 floods with cash-for-work, early recovery livelihood opportunities, and emergency relief. The country office developed a Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan in cooperation with DFID, which was used by local governments to develop local disaster mitigation plans. The plan included local committees, action plans and risk assessments that were carried out with the cooperation of local ministries. “[T]he UNDP strategy was to enhance the capacity of central government and local government agencies for better environment management to enable the local people to perform their ownership role vis-a-vis environmental projects.” This increased the effectiveness of the programme, by engaging the Government in increasing community ownership and identifying and targeting more vulnerable communities for local-level disaster management trainings.

- In Mexico (2016), UNDP contributed to strong local-level results by strengthening capacity to recognize early warning signs of emergencies. UNDP worked with the National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity to adapt a risk atlas and map to local contexts. Partnerships and roundtables were created to increase awareness and strengthen government preparedness.

Where problems were highlighted, the following factors were found to be hindering effectiveness in DRR:

Factors hindering success in disaster risk reduction

1. Lack of longer-term focus in economic development projects, impeding the likelihood of sustainable change;
2. Poor gender mainstreaming to address the different needs of women and men in disasters;
3. Lack of knowledge management to make available lessons from previous examples of successful disaster management strategies;

4. The assumption of similar requirements across multi-hazard environments; and
5. A large number of activities being implemented, without strategic focus.

Examples of factors hindering success in disaster risk reduction:

- In Liberia (2012), a project for Disarmament, Demobilization Rehabilitation and Reintegration for former women combatants was carried out jointly with a DRR programme for men, even though the possibility of trauma from sexual violence and gender-based violence in women and girls was significantly higher.
- In Bangladesh (2011), constraints were experienced due to the remote location of some communities targeted, and lack of adequate oversight and training. In addition, in one project, poorer communities targeted were unable to maintain shelters financially. Opportunities were missed to engage and partner with community-level organizations, whose engagement during planning could have improved project effectiveness.
- In India (2012), the sheer size of the country requires diverse and locally-specific strategies to address the varying nature of vulnerabilities and capacities of communities and other key stakeholders. These considerations were not taken into account in the design of the disaster risk response strategy, which resulted in low sustainability of the actions implemented.
- In Uganda (2009), discussions with the Government and donor agencies indicated that more effort was needed to align recovery and reconstruction policies with national development strategies. There was also a perception of a need for more participatory processes, better reintegration and the enhancement of social service delivery at the local level. It was not evident that UNDP engaged in any of these issues. There was minimal attention paid in the UNDP programmes to the links between post-conflict reconstruction and governance, poverty reduction and the MDGs.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

ICPE findings on the sustainability of UNDP contributions to development results covered in ICPEs refer to whether the results or benefits are likely to continue once the project is concluded or UNDP withdraws from the intervention.

Key finding 4: Sustainability of results

Across all thematic areas, on average, the highest number of results fell into the partially sustainable category with a high degree of variation in sustainability of initiatives and programmes within each thematic area.

The factors most highly connected to sustainable results included:

Factors contributing to sustainable results

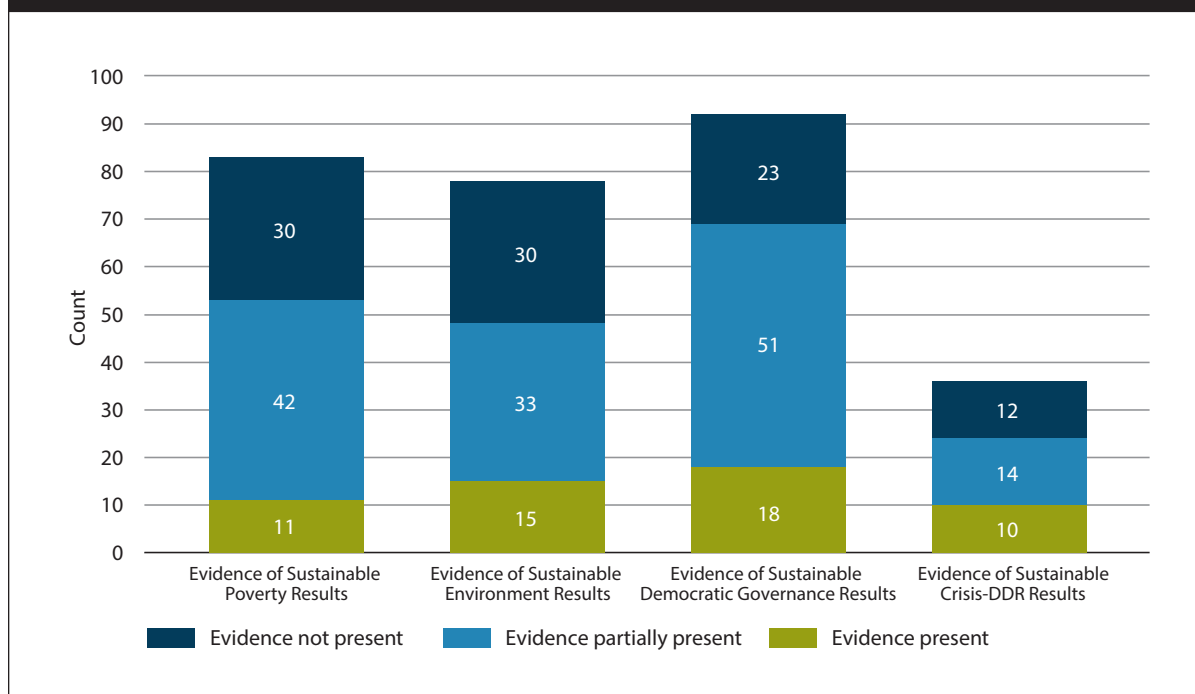
1. National ownership of initiatives and political will;
2. Sustained enhanced national capacity to manage initiatives; and
3. Civil society engagement in initiatives.

Community and CSO engagement was found to be a key element of sustainability. Sometimes, this manifested in deeper relationships and coordination between government and civil society. Other times, it was evidenced in the community taking collective ownership over initiatives and finding sustainable means of financing them after UNDP left. Some examples of good sustainability came about through countries having the political will to carry the work forward after UNDP ceased its support.

Examples of factors contributing to sustainability:

- In Pakistan (2016), the Government’s strong political will (manifested in cost-sharing of project efforts) and the justice sector’s commitment to restore public trust, enabled governance projects in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to perform well, with a positive outlook in terms of sustainability.
- In Peru (2009), the increased involvement of state agencies in managing governance projects created good conditions for sustainability as UNDP exited from the work.

Figure 18. Extent of evidence found of sustainable results across thematic areas



The main factors limiting sustainability included:

Factors hindering sustainable results

1. Lack of exit strategies;
2. Inadequate monitoring, evaluation and learning in programmes;
3. Lack of capacity or political will;
4. Funding shortfalls; and
5. Excessive focus on short-term projects

Factors limiting sustainability were often linked to a lack of capacity or political will on the part of the government or partner institutions due to take over projects or programmes from UNDP. Inconsistency between government ownership and ownership at a local level can also reduce a country’s ability to take over projects. Sometimes one group is ahead of another in accepting social change and progressive moves forward.

Initiatives tended to focus on short-term objectives and 2-3-year timelines, which are out of sync with efforts to contribute to large scale goals such as poverty reduction, overarching development objectives and long-term sustainable impact. Finally, monitoring and evaluation processes were often not designed to capture lessons over time and ensure longer-term sustainable impact.

Example of factors hindering sustainability

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina (2009), the ICPE highlighted the challenges of implementing a human development and rights-based approach, which can be constrained over the long-term by political and private sector interests. This means that stronger civil society monitoring processes and capacity are needed to hold government to account.

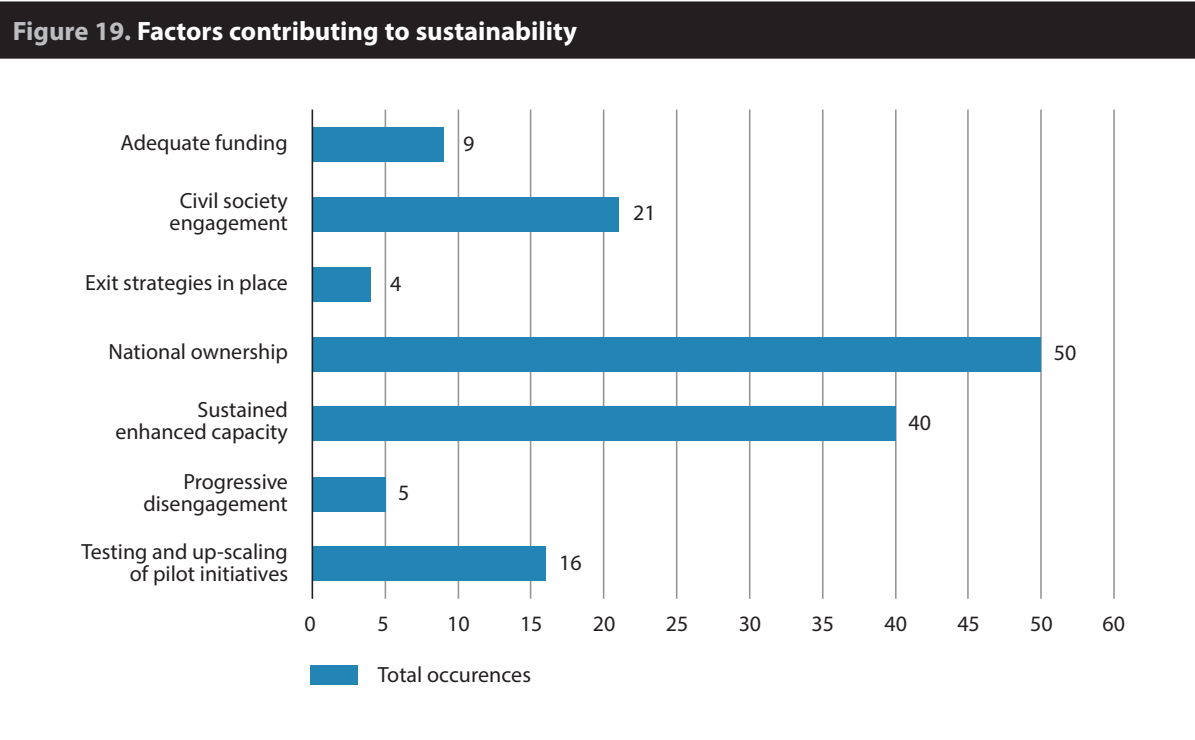
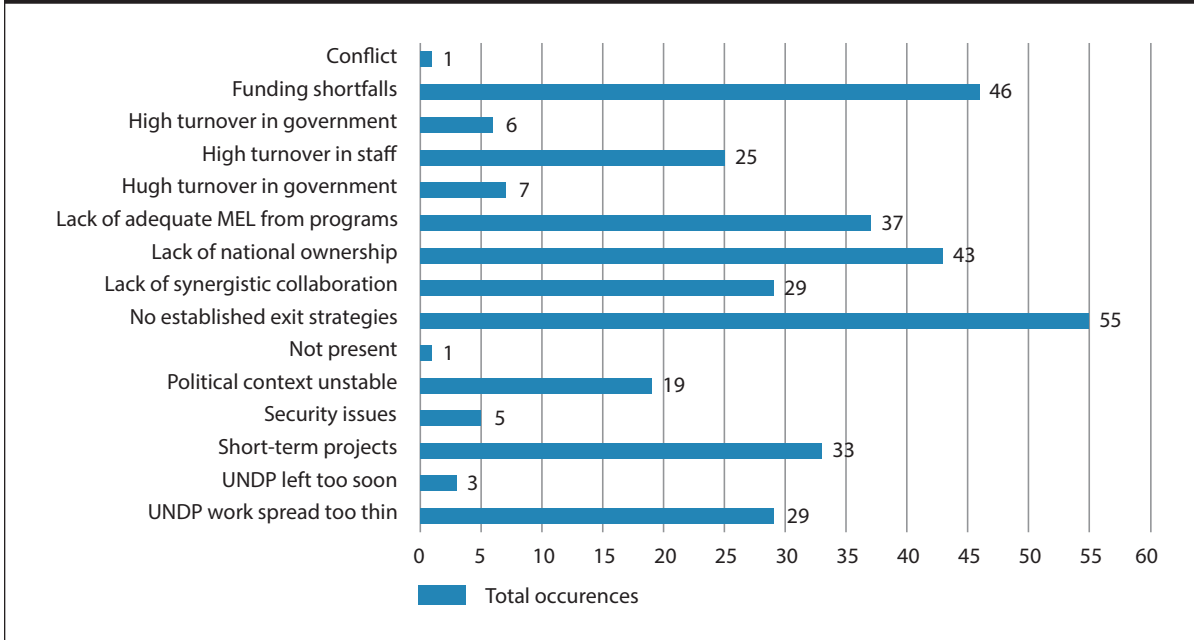


Figure 20. Factors limiting sustainability



3.5 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a cross-cutting commitment of UNDP, recognized as integral to successful human development. As such, UNDP has adopted gender mainstreaming for all its initiatives and programmes, which are assessed for contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key finding 5: Gender equality and women's empowerment cross-cutting contributions

44% of ICPEs demonstrated limited contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment and 30% found the UNDP contribution to be moderate. Most results focused on integrating gender equality into institutions, policy and law reforms and increasing knowledge and skills.

Results reported after 2008, when the first Gender Equality Strategy was published, have been

assessed in accordance with the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES).¹¹ As seen in figure 22 below, most contributions were aimed at increasing attention to gender equality in institutions and policies, followed by enhanced skills, improved awareness of gender issues and increased income for women. Little has been invested in transformative results such as changing social norms and collective behavior.

In the 81 ICPEs analyzed since 2008, 61% of the reports had some gender-disaggregated data, yet few fully illuminate the differential impact of development results on men and women. This is, in part, because data is missing at the country office level, but mostly it is due to insufficient attention of evaluators. IEO staff started to receive training to assess gender in 2015, and since then the UN System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Evaluation Performance Indicator (SWAP EPI) has noted improvements in reports. Today, on average, IEO evaluations meet SWAP EPI requirements.

11 Of 377 gender results in 81 ICPEs analysed for the level of detail and evidence related to gender results, 82 of the gender results were superficial in nature and not detailed enough to warrant inclusion in further analyses, leaving 295 gender results that were analysed.

Figure 21. Contributions to gender equality and women’s empowerment results

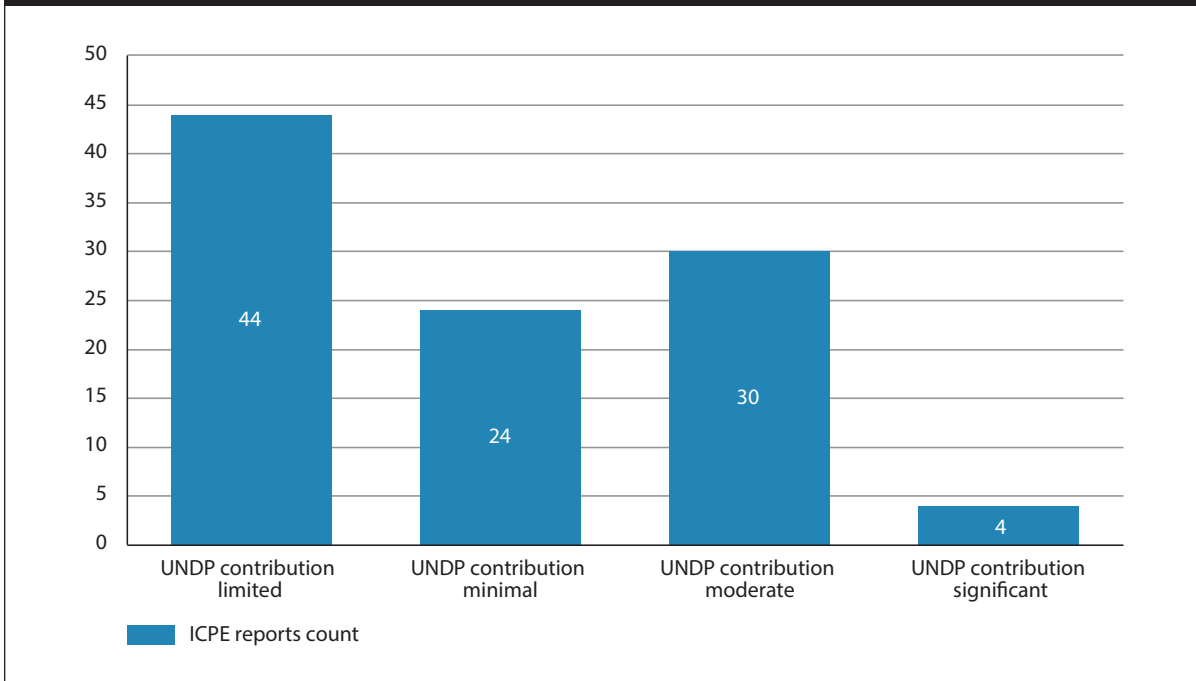
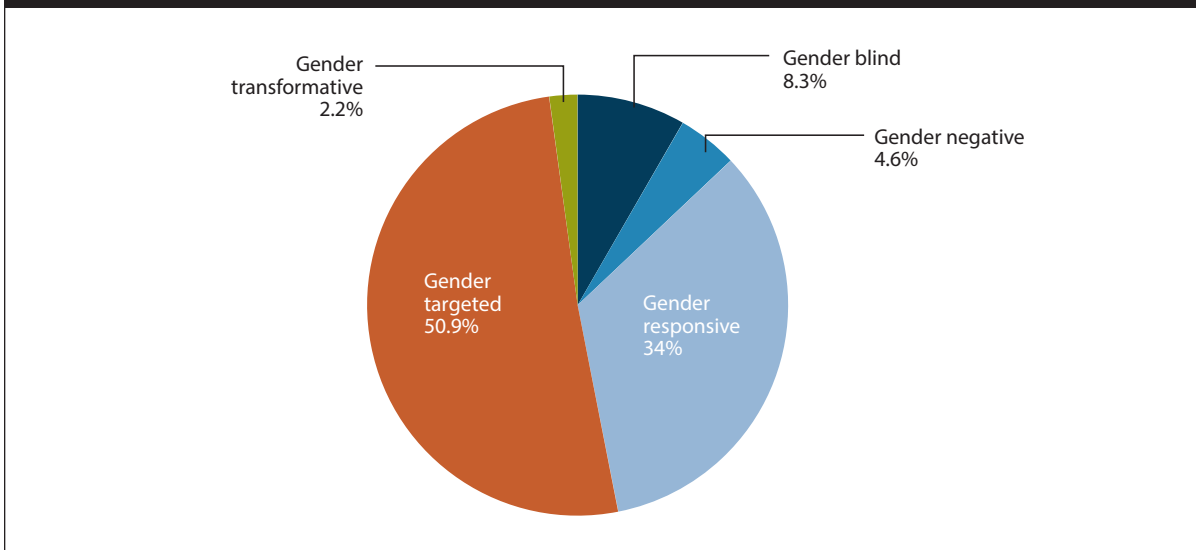


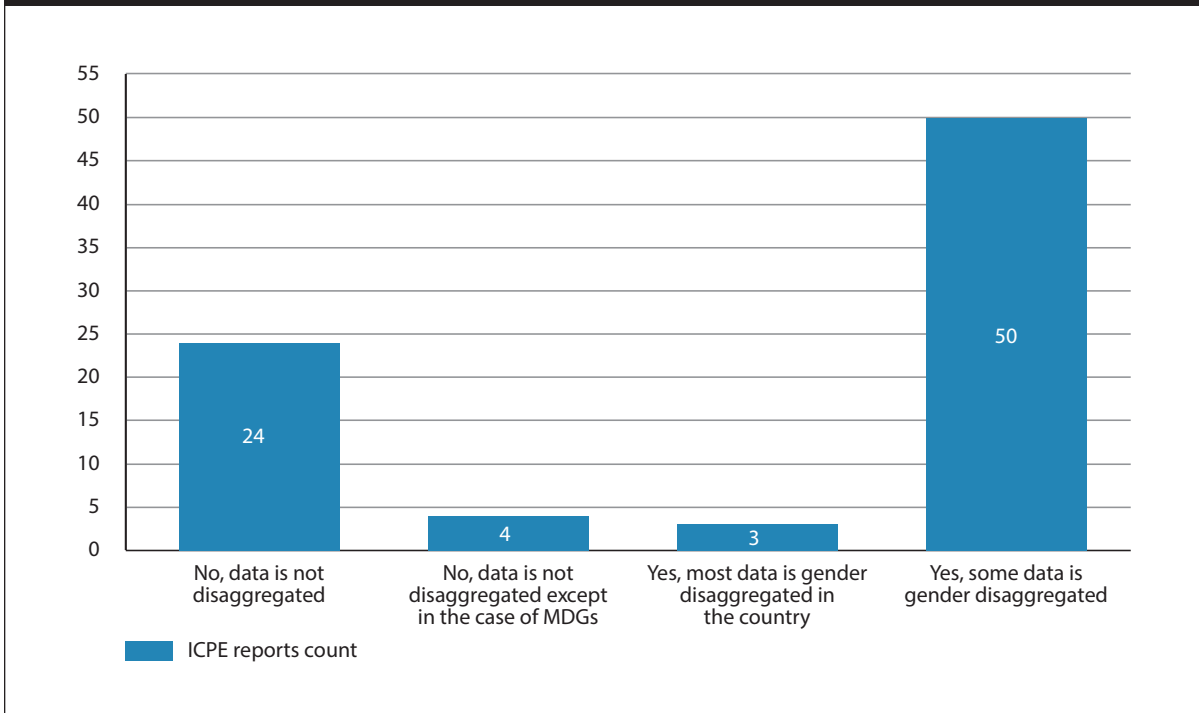
Figure 22. Percentage of results according to the gender results effectiveness scales



Reports that included parity data revealed there was considerable work to be done to achieve parity in management and staff roles in UNDP country offices. Nine of them (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Malaysia, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe) included some evidence that parity was being approached. While many of these country offices met gender parity standards

at lower-levels, parity at the mid- or senior-levels was still in progress and more dedicated efforts were needed. The majority of reports did not have enough data to assess whether parity was being achieved, and were excluded from the analysis. The lack of data around core gender issues is related to the fact that UNDP started tracking gender issues and parity more systematically in 2008 with the first Gender Equality Strategy.

Figure 23. Number of ICPEs with gender-disaggregated data



Chapter 4

MOST FREQUENT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST ICPEs

Two main areas of learning emerged from the coding of top recommendations across all 105 ICPEs: Institutional and programmatic. The results from that analysis are described below.

TOP 10 INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen M&E practices (n=50)
2. Leverage and further implement in areas where UNDP has comparative strengths (n=45)
3. Adapt staffing and internal systems to meet changing landscapes and programming (n=32)
4. Use a responsive approach to addressing emerging issues in alignment with long-term commitments (n=30)
5. Develop holistic and operationalized gender equality strategies and plans (n=28)
6. Maximize synergies across thematic areas in the country office to be more efficient and effective (n=25)
7. Develop an effective knowledge management, communication, and IT strategy for the country office (n=23)
8. Leverage UNDP role and value add in UN coordination (n=22)
9. Develop a systematic and operational approach to capacity development (20)
10. Strengthen the contribution of the UNDP role in coordination and programming (n=18)

TOP 10 PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure better coordination and connections between local and national needs and interventions (n=23)
2. Strengthen national ownership through increased capacity building (n=22)
3. Enhance UNDP capacity for policy advice (n=21)
4. Increase civil society and community-level engagement in interventions (n=22)
5. Create additional spaces for civil society influence in policy and decision making (n=19)
6. Establish realistic programming timeframes to achieve longer-term development outcomes (n=18)
7. Strengthen national ownership through deeper alignment with national or international priorities (n=17)
8. Incorporate well-defined exit strategies into all programmes and projects (n=15)
9. Conduct situation and gender analysis to ensure programming is responsive to country needs (n=15)
10. Adapt and test successful initiatives in new contexts (n=14)

Chapter 5

KEY LESSONS FROM THE SYNTHESIS

The following key lessons have been identified from the meta-synthesis.

1. **Relevance of comparative strengths** – UNDP is more successful at the country level, with a stronger programme fit and better results, when it takes a human development approach and focuses its efforts on institutional strengthening, resource mobilization and UN system integration.
2. **Results-based management and knowledge management for improved effectiveness** – Results-based management is most often associated with compliance-driven practices, required to satisfy monitoring and reporting requirements. There is limited understanding and application of theories of change, and insufficient focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making, adaptive management and improved performance. Successful country offices are developing theories of change for each outcome and use monitoring of progress and knowledge management of lessons as continual feedback loops, which become integrated into internal learning and improvement processes.
3. **Key success factors for democratic governance** – A key factor contributing to successful results in democratic governance has been UNDP strengthening of national capacity for policy development and action. A focus on gaps and needs assessments is useful to ensure that interventions are demand-driven. Greater buy-in from stakeholders heightens the likelihood of sustainable results.
4. **Key success factors for poverty reduction** – A key factor contributing to successful results in poverty reduction is UNDP support to the strengthening of national capacity to develop national multidimensional poverty strategies and initiatives that identify vulnerable and marginalized populations.
5. **Key success factors for environmental sustainability**– UNDP achievements in support to countries on sustainable development and environmental protection are predicated on the design and implementation of financing schemes that bring together governments, donors, international development banks, NGOs and the private sector to jointly address complex environmental issues.
6. **Key success factors for crisis response and disaster risk reduction** – UNDP is perceived to be especially effective in crisis situations where it can effectively coordinate contributions of the UN system for upstream institution-building and policy advice, and downstream support for livelihood recovery and resilience building.
7. **Factors influencing sustainability** – The sustainability of UNDP programme results is most often directly related to: the extent of national ownership; sustained attention to national capacity building; and engagement with civil society. Limits to sustainability are most often due to: the lack of exit strategies and adequate monitoring; insufficient attention to evaluation and learning for adaptive management; and missed opportunities to upscale and replicate successful initiatives.
8. **Gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross cutting issue** – Many country offices are operating without adequate gender strategies and are overly dependent on one gender focal point. Offices with dedicated holistic and operationalized gender equality strategies and plans are better prepared to contribute to equitable development

results in any context. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment cuts across all areas of intervention and therefore should not be confined to a gender expert alone. All staff should have sufficient gender expertise. Gender mainstreaming remains weaker in environment, energy and crisis response thematic areas.

9. **Challenges with NIM and efficiency** – Nationally implemented initiatives (under the NIM modality) can help to increase national ownership and the sustainability of results. However, country offices often lack adequate strategies to deal with the risks and

challenges associated with managing NIM projects, including additional administrative layers and low capacity of government counterparts, which can impede implementation and jeopardize results.

10. **Diversifying sources of funding** – Country offices face increasing challenges with the decline of core funding. Country offices that have developed resource mobilization strategies have managed to better diversify their sources of funding, balancing government cost-sharing with vertical funds, and incrementally adding other sources of co-financing such as the private sector.

ANNEXES (available online)

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/ICPE_synthesis.shtml

Annex 1. List of ICPEs

Annex 2. Documents Consulted

Annex 3. Coding Structure for ICPEs

Annex 4. Gender Coding Structure

Annex 5. Case Studies by Thematic Group, Region, and Country Income Level




Independent Country Programme


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