INTERMEDIATE EVALUATION OF THE UNDP GLOBAL ART INITIATIVE

ANNEX 8– Main findings of questionnaires to ART framework programmes

Country Framework Programs from a Multilevel Perspective

In order to collect relevant information for the evaluation of the ART program a questionnaire was sent to a selected number of Framework Programs at the country level.

This Annex systematically analyses the results of this exercise.

The results broadly represents the overall International ART Framework Program since the selected sample reflects country programs which have different characteristics. The selected countries are: Albania, Bolivia, El Salvador and Mauritania. Seventeen questionnaires were completed by different institutions:. Two at national level from ART UNDP Country offices (Mauritania and El Salvador); four from National Ministries in each of the four countries; one from a local stakeholder and two from local NGOs.

The questionnaire is divided into five main sections in accordance with the evaluation framework Sought to collect information on:

- **Section / EQ1**: how the ART framework is evolving in relation to international strategic development priorities (i.e. Busan Process, Aid Effectiveness (AE), Sustainable Development Rio +20) and within the context of the decentralization process put in place by national governments;
- **Section / EQ2**: if and how the Framework Programme is contributing to the development of capacities towards improved systems and institutions for Sustainable Human Development (ISHD) at the territorial level;
- **Section / EQ3**: on the extent to which the multilevel governance system (international, national and local levels) put in place by the ART Initiative contributes to improve coordination and resources for ISHD at the territorial level;
- **Section / EQ4**: on if and how the programme is contributing to improved policy frameworks for decentralization and local development;
- **Section / EQ5**: on if and how the global ART initiative is facilitating the integration of territories within national and international development processes (Aid Effectiveness – Sustainable Human Development framework).

Each section and core issue is broken down into a number of specific questions, with corresponding sub items. The questionnaires are tailored to different type of actors. For example questions relating to the coordination of the UNDP\ART program vis-à-vis other UNDP activities in the country are specifically aimed at ART Framework Program country staff. In each section, the informant is asked to introduce a combined qualitative judgement on the different dimensions of a program through a short narrative analysis based on evidence (facts and figures, examples, statements or behaviours showing perception and appreciation by specific stakeholders).

The main goal of this analysis is to highlight aspects of the UNDP/ART Framework Program described in the questionnaires completed by stakeholders. The focus of the analysis is on cross-cutting issues with concrete examples from an integrated local sustainable human development perspective.

As witnessed in Section 2 of the questionnaire, ART is moving in the right direction: All the stakeholders interviewed rate the impact of ART Framework Program in the range of "very good" to sufficient (Only one informant described ART as merely "sufficient"). For example: the experience of local human development laboratories (organised via cooperation between Marche Region in Italy and ART program in Albania) is often cited as an important step for expanding the capacities of Public Administration and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) by local and national agents.

According to respondents, the pervasive presence of "platform-organisations" working as "arenas" that enable local actors to meet each other to collaborate is a recurring feature of the ART\UNDP Framework Program. These organisations differ according to the domain they focus on; moreover more than one "platform-organisation" may exist in a given country. In Mauritania, for example, Regional Work Groups (called GTR) have a wide domain of intervention involving large numbers of development related issues (e.g. gender, sustainability, etc.). Local Economic Development Agencies (LEDAs or *ADELs*) are present in Albania, Bolivia and El Salvador and usually focus their attention on economic and productive development and the elaboration of framework that allow the joint action of public and private actors. These kinds of agencies usually participate to wider groups (such as Grupos Gestores in El Salvador and Bolivia) where they coordinate their actions with other actors dealing with different aspects of development. The questionnaire results in Section 3 show how the "platform-organisations" are the real pivot of the UNDP/ART Framework Program as they represent the way in which the idea of multi-level governance is operationalized. For example, as observed by the General Director of Territorial Communities of the Home Office in Mauritania, *"GTRs have two objectives to coordinate, to produce planning and bargaining. It exploits existing structures by including civil society, private sector cooperation partners and education institutions"*. These organisations are both main actors in the production of strategic outcomes (e.g. the ability to build up relationships in an international context, planning skills, etc.) and are the starting point for generating sustainable future results The development of a multi-level governance system is an on-going process, but has already had a positive impact. According to the stakeholders interviewed the work of these organisations through the UNDP\ART program is a real training opportunity for both national and local actors – since the impact on local context is channelled in many ways.

One of the overriding actions of the ART Framework Program is to improve actors' capacities to build in the domain of strategic local development planning. Section 4 of the questionnaire captures the positive impact of ART in this area. The main outcome of this kind of activity is the elaboration of strategic plans such as the Plan Régionale de Lutte contre la Pauvreté (PRLP) in Mauritania, the Strategic Plan for Vlora and Scutari region (Albania), and the Plataformas de Desarollo Humano Sostenible (El Salvador). Furthermore, stakeholders state that the positive impact of ART can be seen at different levels: it provides the opportunity to become confident in applying an effective strategic planning tool that can be used to incorporate interventions and relations between local and national actors and donors. In many cases the ART program is too recent to ascertain whether or not strategic participatory planning has speeded up the implementation of tangible project interventions. Several results are reported from countries in which ART has been active for at least two years and for sectors that are especially relevant for local governance such as the economic inclusion of marginal groups (e.g. indigenous minorities, young people and women in Bolivia) and water resources management (e.g. in El Salvador

where a project concerning the improvement of water management in the Cuenca del Rio Torola was implemented thanks to the cooperation of the Agencia Vasca Del Agua).

It is worth noting that all questionnaires (irrespective of organisation, country of origin or stakeholder) underline the fact that the participatory planning process should be viewed as a goal itself (intrinsic value) and as an instrument (instrumental value) that impacts on actors. Many interviews suggest that *learning by doing* is typical of these processes and crucial for building the capacity of actors. Such a phenomenon can have deep consequences even if they are not easy to capture. For local actors, the opportunity to be protagonist induces fruitful and active involvement in the implementation of the UNDP/ART Framework Program and generates a higher degree of ownership. For national level actors (e.g. National government representatives), the participatory planning process facilitates a structural change in the way they perceive their territory: local realities are no longer merely contexts, but a reservoir of valuable experiences and resources that need to be cultivated and help boost processes of local ISHD. This is why the need for a deeper knowledge of territory is arising and it is becoming possible to explain actions, such as the elaboration of a diagnostic report on gender issues in Mauritania. The new role played by local realities and central governments' awareness of local matters is generating fertile ground for the implementation of multi-level governance practices that are at the core of UNDP/ART Framework program as the questionnaires results show. It is possible to discern potential positive spill-overs in other relevant policy domains. An example often mentioned in the questionnaires is administrative decentralization: even if ART does not directly deal with decentralization, it is clear that local institutions capacity building processes fostered by ART constitutes an essential prerequisite for administrative decentralization as it brings institutional and process change. For instance, in Mauritania central government representatives think that ART could speed-up the implementation of administrative decentralisation which has been slowing down lasting recent years due to the lack of managerial capacity of local institutions. Moreover, it is clear that in many countries the experience of the ART program has the potential for facilitating cross-fertilization with other policy and governance domains. In fact there are many cases of actual and planned up-scaling of ART programs and outcomes: for example the experience of the LEDAs in Ciudad-Puerto de la Union in El Salvador will be extended to four other areas and is recognized as a pilot experience in the framework designed by the National System for Productive Development. In Mauritania too, the experience of GTRs will be extended to two other regions (Gorgol and Guidimakha).

Another relevant issue emerging from the questionnaires is the ART program's ability to facilitate the reproduction and dissemination of information, experience, and good practice at both the National and International levels. This happens thanks to the structure of the ART program that favours stakeholders' participation at various levels of governance. One of the newest and most interesting aspects of ART is the attempt to build a direct link between local communities and the international arena. The first International Congress of Local Development Agencies held in Seville in 2011 is an example cited by all the interviewees that is described as extremely relevant for capacity building and best practice. Another worthwhile initiative was the discussion tables organized prior to Busan and RIO+20 in Albania, Bolivia, El Salvador, e Mauritania. These discussion tables dramatically increased the local systems' ability to relate to and interact with global topics and debates.

The questionnaires show that the role of ART emerges in the build-up of a bi-directional linkage between local systems and the global level: local stakeholders awareness of the relevance of issues such as policy coherence, coordination and harmonisation, and the need of increasing national and local policy coherence in line with international strategic guidelines. In fact, the guidelines elaborated during the conferences of Paris, Accra and Busan are often cited in the questionnaires as milestones for the elaboration of local and national policies. Section 1 and 5 of the questionnaire aim to assess the impact of ART in this area and confirm that the performance of ART is largely satisfying as the impact is rated as "sufficient" or "more than sufficient" in all the questionnaires.

The impact of ART on the capacity of local systems to produce proactive actors on the international stage is particularly clear if we take into account the responses relating to decentralized cooperation and South-South cooperation.

With regard to decentralized cooperation, ART has both a direct effect (through the development of new partnerships) and an indirect effect (through the improvement of local institutions' capacity to manage decentralized cooperation partnerships). It is clear that improvements of this kind succeed in promoting the actor's ability to attract decentralized cooperation and funds. In all the countries, it is possible to identify rising local level partnerships and increased central governments' awareness of the potentialities of decentralized cooperation. For example, let's take into consideration the case of El Salvador where thanks to the technical assistance provided by ART, it has been possible to develop a national strategy for decentralized cooperation

As already mentioned, the role of ART as the catalyst of relations and partnerships is even more evident if we consider South-South cooperation which is often cited as one of the areas in which ART has been especially successful. In this case too, the partnerships born from the ART initiative in terms of both the "new" practices introduced (e.g. cooperation in the domain of ante-natal health care between Albania and Sri Lanka), and the capacities generated (e.g. through joint workshops and administrative decentralization organized by Morocco and Mauritania).

To conclude, the questionnaires paint a positive picture of the impact and the implementation of the ART/UNDP program. The robustness of these observations is even greater if we recall that there is a substantial consensus amongst national and local governmental and non governmental actors. Some critical factors, however, could be taken into account.

First, joint involvement of public and private actors in the same organisations (the "platform-organisations") and activities could create some governance issues since in many countries they are quite new. This is exactly the problem encountered in the metropolitan ADEL of La Paz in Bolivia where the role of public actors are well defined relative to private actors domains.

A second issue concerns the institutional ownership of the new practices and processes introduced by ART. The resources that the various organisations and institutions decide to devote to new practises and processes are often rightly identified as indicators of institutional ownership. Another indicator is the rate of attendance of institutional representatives in the meetings organised by ART. It seems reasonable to remember that the scale-up process of the ART program and its pilot projects requires solid foundations. Consequently it should be

possible to achieve the desired results through legislative initiatives such as framework law on International cooperation in El Salvador or the law on the promotion of small enterprises in Bolivia.

Finally, one of the threats to the UNDP/ART program is that it become the victim of its own success. The potential of ART is clear even in countries where the ART program is relatively young. The demand for scaling-up programs on the one hand and the desire to expand ART activities in other domains (such as "hardware cooperation") on the other are widespread. In order to avoid the risk of endangering the achieved results, the ART initiative needs to be consolidated also to foster a sustainable expansion of the programme i.e. to respond to the rapid on-going expansion of the number of the countries and local actors involved.

In sum, as observed through other tools and methodologies during the evaluation process, it is appropriate to include a second phase of consolidation and support at the end of the cycle to grant more stability and to scale-up the program. This could facilitate an exit strategy for the ART program which is one of the few cooperation program based on a clear transfer of capacities, planning skills, participatory processes and coordination capabilities that has a final goal of realising autonomy at each and every level of governance together with full local ownership of the processes. The support of ART\International remains crucial to create the relational networks and capacities for proactive actors in the international scenario to influence global processes from the bottom up.