



EVALUATION OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORTS

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INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the UNDP launched the first global Human Development Report (HDR), and the reports have since been produced nearly every year. The global HDRs include a statistical annex including most Human Development Index and other indices relevant to human development for many countries. The reports explore and expand the understanding and approach to human development on diverse development themes. The General Assembly in a 2003 resolution¹ recognized the *Human Development Report* as ‘an independent intellectual exercise’ and ‘an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world.’ UNDP started to produce regional and national HDRs in 1994 and 1992 respectively.

The independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) included an ‘*Evaluation of the contribution of UNDP Human Development Reports (HDRs)*’ in its medium-term plan (DP/2014/5) approved by the Executive Board in January 2014. The evaluation will be carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy with the following purposes to:

1. provide substantive support to the Administrator’s accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board;
2. support greater UNDP accountability to global and national stakeholders and development partners;
3. serve as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions globally; and
4. contribute to learning at corporate and regional levels.

BACKGROUND

For more than two decades UNDP has promoted the concept of human development as an alternative development approach to the neoliberal models. Using Sen’s capability approach, human development is conceived as a process of widening people’s choices.¹ The people-centered approach of human development has been quite influential in providing an alternative discourse on development. Guided by this approach, HDRs, have measured and monitored progress in human development. The global HDR developed composite human development indices were adjusted overtime. In articulating the human development perspective each of the HDRs focuses on one set of issues to advocate for its improvement. The scope of analysis of HDRs also included themes of wider relevance to UN programme. These reports seek to raise awareness and generate debate on public issues and concerns. Since 1990, 22 global, 33 regional and 686 national HDRs have been produced.

The preparation of the global *Human Development Report* is guided by General Assembly resolution 57/264, in which the General Assembly reaffirmed the Report’s editorial independence as well as the importance of consultations with Member States.² In the resolution, the General Assembly also invited the UNDP Executive Board to include a separate agenda item on the Human Development Report in its annual work plan. In accordance with the General Assembly Resolution, the global HDRs are produced by the HDR office (HDRO). The main task of the office is preparation of the global HDRs and support UNDP in promoting innovative approaches and practical tools for policy-makers in furthering human development.³ The office is autonomous from other programme units, and reports directly to the UNDP Administrator. The regional bureaux take the lead in the preparation of the regional HDRs, and there is no expectation that they are discussed by the Executive Board.

According to UNDP, global, regional and national HDRs seek to accomplish different objectives. The regional and national HDRs levels seek to play a catalytic role through research and data compiled on topics that have policy relevance; create a space for countries to deliberate for a common ground on issues of larger interest and enhance regional consensus on cross-national issues. The regional and national HDRs are considered as advocacy tools, for promoting human development oriented

1 UNDP, 1990. Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, New York (<http://hdr.undp.org/en>); Amartya Sen’s foreword to *Readings in Human Development* (2003) by Fukuda-Parr and Shiva Kumar; UNDP, 2005. From development to human development: Tool for examining themes from a human development perspective. Colombo: UNDP Regional Centre for Asia-Pacific, Colombo Office. [http://www2.undprcc.lk/resource_centre/pub_pdfs/P1030.pdf].

2 General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/57/264). Affirming the editorial autonomy, the General Assembly considered global HDR an ‘independent intellectual exercise’.

3 See Human Development Report Office Website, <http://hdr.undp.org>

policies; and inform policy discussions. It is also intended that the publication of the global human report is followed up by more in depth research analysis on certain key issues that have policy implications. The global HDRs, on the other hand, seek to contribute to generating debate through human development indices and analysis of different perspectives on a development topic.⁴ The global HDRs also provide an opportunity for UNDP to take intellectual leadership in promoting human development approach.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The evaluation will entail an assessment of the use of global and regional HDRs by a range of development actors. The evaluation will assess the extent to which global and regional HDRs inform UNDP programme activities. It will also assess how global and regional HDRs inform the activities of a wide range of development actors including government, NGOs, think tanks, bi-lateral and multi-lateral organizations, donor agencies, academicians and researchers. As will be explained in the next section, the emphasis is on the contribution of HDR to the public policy discourse rather than to the development of policies themselves. The objectives of the evaluation are therefore to:

1. ascertain the contribution of global HDRs to public policy debate.
2. ascertain the contribution of regional HDRs to public policy process, at the regional and national level.
3. identify factors that explain the contribution of global and regional HDRs
4. present key findings, conclusions and recommendations to inform management decisions.

The evaluation will include the assessment of the contribution of global and regional HDRs for the ten years 2004 to 2013, covering the period since the 2003 General Assembly Resolution. The evaluation will cover all five geographic regions where UNDP works. National HDRs are not included in the scope of the evaluation as they were the subject of an independent evaluation completed by the Independent Evaluation Office in 2007.⁵ The evaluation will cover use of human development data (data on indices, data on different themes), background papers for the global and regional HDRs, and the reports themselves. The various tool kits that are produced by the HDRO to support regional and national HDRs will be assessed.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

In making the overall assessment of UNDP's performance, the evaluation will use the following criteria:

- *Relevance:* What is the extent to which global HDRs remain relevant for generating public debate through measurements, innovative concepts, and analysis?
What is the extent to which regional HDRs remain relevant for informing policy process?
- *Effectiveness:* What is the extent to which global HDRs contributed to generating public debate through measurements, innovative concepts, and analysis?
What is the extent to which regional HDRs contributed to policy making processes?
- *Efficiency:* What is the degree to which the HDR production and dissemination processes used resources efficiently?
- *Sustainability:* What is the degree to which the results of the contribution of global and regional HDRs are, or are likely to be, sustainable?

APPROACH

The global HDRs are not guided by a results framework to ascertain their contribution against a predetermined set of objectives. The General Assembly Resolution 57/264 and UNDP Executive Board decisions do, however, specify the broad objectives of the report, resource allocations to the HDRO, and consultative processes to be followed.⁶ In the case of regional HDRs they are part of the outcomes of the regional programme managed by the regional bureau of UNDP; and their contribution to the outcomes, with exceptions, is often broad or non-existent.

4 UNDP, 2007. Measuring Human Development: A primer - guidelines and tools for statistical research, analysis and advocacy.

5 [Evaluation of National Human Development Report System.](#)

6 Until 2008 the global HDR and the work of the HDRO was part of the Global Programme of UNDP, and contributed to a broad set of outcomes to support institutional and development goals of the organization: providing conceptual underpinning to UNDP and as a contribution to knowledge sharing.

The evaluation makes two sets of assumptions considering the distinct nature of the objectives of the global and regional reports. Both global and regional HDRs, are however, considered by the evaluation to contribute to global public goods, by seeking to generate development debate that are of wider relevance across countries. Contribution of global and regional HDRs to global public goods, in some ways, informs public policy, although such linkages may not always lend themselves to evaluation. The primary assumptions of the evaluation, is therefore:

- Global HDRs, human development indices as well as thematic analysis, contribute to global debates and provide a fresh perspective on issues it covers. The evaluation theory considers that global HDRs contribute to generating public debate on human development issues and thematic issues covered by the report that are transboundary in nature.
- Regional HDRs contribute to promoting the human development oriented policy making. Such an assumption entails that the cross-country analysis of the HDRs contributes to processes that promote human development oriented policies. The evaluation theory considers that regional HDRs to have a catalytic influence in informing human development oriented public policy. Areas of policy making process that have causal linkages to policy making, therefore, assume importance for the analysis of the contribution of HDRs: (a) policy discourse (b) advocacy (c) agenda setting. The evaluation therefore focuses on the contribution of regional HDRs to public policy processes at the regional, and national levels rather than to changes in policies themselves.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME

The evaluation will entail broad consultation with government, civil society and NGOs at the country level; representatives of the member states in New York; donor representatives at the country level and in their respective headquarters; UNDP at the headquarters, regional offices and country offices; relevant UN agencies; and academicians and think tanks. Additional data collection and analysis methods will be set out in detail in the Term of Reference for the evaluation.

The evaluation will be presented to the Executive Board in June 2015 and an informal session with the Board will be held before presentation. To allow UNDP management time to prepare the management response, the final evaluation report will be completed and shared by mid-November 2014. A draft report will be shared with UNDP Management and programme units by mid-October 2014.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The *Independent Evaluation Office* will conduct the evaluation and has the overall responsibility for the conceptualization and design of the evaluation, managing the evaluation process and producing a high quality final evaluation report, for presentation of the report to the Executive Board at the annual session in June 2015.

An *External Advisory Panel* has been constituted in January 2014, consisting of two experts in the field of evaluation and development. The panel will play an important role in providing strategic, methodological and substantive inputs into the evaluation process as well as review the key outputs including the main evaluation report.

A *Technical Reference Group* will be constituted in February 2014, comprising representatives of Regional Bureaus, Policy Bureau, Regional Service Centres and Human Development Report Office, who will participate in discussions on Terms of Reference and evaluation findings and conclusions.

The *Organizational Performance Group (OPG)* has the responsibility of reviewing the drafts of the Terms of Reference and evaluation report and providing the consolidated comments of programme and policy units.