

**UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  
**Uzbekistan**



**Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels**

**Evaluation Report**

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The evaluator hopes that this evaluation and its recommendations will further strengthen UNDP contribution to advancing economic policymaking in Uzbekistan.

The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the UNDP Uzbekistan. The consultant remains solely responsible for any errors that may remain in this report.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	
ADB	Asian Development Bank
CCA	UN Common Country Assessment
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CO	Country Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFMR	Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research
ICT	Information Technology
IFO	Institute for Economic Research (Munich)
HDI	Human Development Index
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PR	Public Relations
TNO	Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research
TOR	Terms of Reference
RBM	Results Based Management
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the mid-2000s, Uzbekistan has enjoyed robust GDP growth, due to favourable trade terms for its key export commodities like copper, gold, natural gas, cotton, the government's macro-economic management, and limited exposure to international financial markets that protected it from the economic downturn.

The Government of Uzbekistan, recognizing the need in analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic trends and development scenarios at national as well as sectorial and regional levels, has established the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research (IFMR) under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2008. The Institute's main objectives are to conduct the analysis of macroeconomic tendencies and regional disparities, forecast economic performance, and design government economic policies that further secure economic growth and development. The Institute reports to the Cabinet of Ministers, but the operational coordination and management of the IFMR scientific and practical activities lies with the Ministry of Economy. The IFMR works also with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade, and the Central Bank.

The UNDP "Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and local levels" (IFMR Project) was launched in 2009 to strengthen the IFMR capacity in developing country-specific methodologies for analysis of economic growth factors and poverty indicators, balancing medium term macroeconomic forecasting parameters and elaboration of regional development strategies. The principal objective of the Project was to enhance the IFMR capacity in medium term policy analysis and formulation at national and regional levels. Ultimately, the Project was designed to provide policy makers with effective analysis and forecasting tools, which they can use in assessing the implications of international development on the country, identifying future policy directions and elaborating sector and regional development programs.

This evaluation is commissioned by UNDP Uzbekistan to assess its "Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels" Project's progress, performance, successes and weaknesses. The results of the evaluation will provide the Project stakeholders with an unbiased outcome-level assessment of Project's results, lessons learned and parameters for a potential cooperation framework between UNDP and the IFMR.

More specific tasks undertaken by the consultant included:

- assess the Project relevance to Government priorities;
- assess how the analytical and knowledge products developed through the Project support were used in the decision making process;
- assess the Project effectiveness and capture its results and lessons learned against the expected targets, outputs and indicators laid down in the project document;
- gather substantive feedback from project stakeholders, including among the Institute's key beneficiaries and assess their satisfaction with the Project;
- evaluate the Project's contribution to strengthening the Institute's capacity and contribution to economic and social research and policy development;
- assess the effects of the Institute's key visibility tools (e.g., Forum of Economists, periodic publications, website, internal IT communication systems, etc.) that were supported by the Project;

- assess the Project's partnership strategies, in particular the support provided to the Institute in establishing and maintaining linkages with foreign economic think-tanks; and
- assess the Project sustainability.

This evaluation is based on the belief that evaluation should be supportive and responsive to projects, rather than become an end in itself. Evaluation was tailored to the needs of the intended users as described in the TOR. A mixed-method design was used for this evaluation to ensure triangulation of data. All data gathered was verified through triangulation or ensuring the credibility of data gathered by relying on data from different sources (primary and secondary data), data of different types (qualitative, quantitative and resource information) or data from different respondents (e.g., beneficiaries, stakeholders, UNDP staff, and others). The consultant explored in detail contextual and other factors beyond scope of UNDP influence that affected these outcomes.

A field mission to Uzbekistan (Tashkent and Andijan) validated the preliminary findings and observations through interviewees and collection of additional information. On the last day of the mission the consultant presented his preliminary findings and recommendations to UNDP to validate them and seek advice into the report development.

In its conception and design, the Project responded directly to the largely under-met needs of the Government for evidence-based economic policy research and advice. Overall, the consultant found that UNDP made a significant positive contribution to support IFMR's transition from a typical academic Soviet research institution employing out-dated theories and methods of research to a think tank, contributing high quality economic policy research and analysis and recommendations based on modern economic theories and methods of analysis to Government decision making. A hallmark of the IFMR Project is its flexibility in adjusting to constantly changing Government and IFMR needs. The Project continuous relevance was ensured by the Project Board that was overseeing its implementation.

In 2009, one of the main impediments in moving ahead was the IFMR challenges in attracting and retaining well-qualified researchers and economic policy analysts as salaries were low, a lively and creative academic ambience was absent and career prospects and opportunities for professional development and growth were limited. As a result, young scholars had little interest or incentive to join or stay at the Institute.

As IFMR plays an important role in shaping Government economic and regional strategies and policies, the Project correctly focused on improving quality and impact of IFMR analytical products and building its staff capacity. In 2014, when this evaluation was conducted the situation with recruiting and retaining research staff has improved significantly. Due to UNDP support, the IFMR managed to attract young and well educated staff. In addition to salary top ups that attracted qualified economists, the Project provided a wide range of training opportunities customized to IFMR staff areas of expertise and interests.

Due to Project support, knowledge and skills of young IFMR staff increased that is reflected in a number of publications in internationally refereed journals and involvement of young staff into preparation of the IFMR flagship research publications on macroeconomic analysis and forecasting, business environment surveys, regional development planning and others. The quality of research and publications has improved, as has the frequency and quality of academic discussion and exchange at the Institute.

A number of analytical notes, monographs and methodologies was developed and disseminated. Opinions of interviewed stakeholders on the quality of research papers vary from moderate positive to very positive. In general, all research papers published so far seem to meet the expectations of interviewed stakeholders though the quality differs.

The documentary and anecdotal evidence indicates that the majority of the IFMR Project studies were put to direct use by the Ministry of Economy, and many of them were put to indirect use, in formulating and/or implementing the Government's economic policies. A number of recommendations and research findings were translated directly into governmental policy decisions. The Ministry of Economy identified eleven IFMR Project analytical products as the most widely used in policy development process in 2013. The consultant is confident that the IFMR research and publications informed the policy work of other Ministries and central agencies, but due to the time constraints it was impossible to interview diverse IFMR Project products users.

Many of the IFMR Project studies were intended to have an indirect rather than a direct impact on policy. Methodological and statistical studies are particularly noteworthy in this regard as they were intended for reference purposes and were extensively used in ministries, universities and international organizations.

A number of requests from the Government to the IFMR has increased over the last years that is a good indicator of high quality and policy relevance of the Institute's work. Although such a heavy demand for the solution of immediate problems often limits the Institute's ability to focus on strategic policy issues, it provides the IFMR with multiple opportunities to influence the policymaking process.

The IFMR Project developed and implemented a high quality and well received methodologies for regional plans development. Pilot regions were selected to test the methodologies on regional development planning. The regional development strategies for Andijan, Surkhandarya and Khorezm regions and the Republic of Karakalpakstan were developed and well received by multiple partners at the national and local levels.

Such evidence-informed regional strategies helped to support regional growth patterns fostering job creation and an improved climate for investment and private sector development that ultimately contributes to better social inclusion and improvement of education, health care and social services provision. The overwhelming observations are that the regional authorities that went through the process of regional strategies development have more capacity to assess needs, plan and implement region-specific economic strategies and initiatives.

The Project's Forums of Economists and Young Economists were highly evaluated. The Forums of Economists were organized on an annual basis, attracting participants on a competitive basis from Uzbekistan and abroad, and starting in 2012 the Project started to conduct Forums for Young Economists to provide opportunities for young researchers to present and discuss their work. The opportunities to participate in Forums were highly appreciated by participants and they became a platform for open discussion on current economic developments in Uzbekistan. There is no doubt that the Forums featuring large diversity of views including those of young economists who studied and worked in Western countries generated fresh ideas and contributed to rethinking of economic policies.

The IFMR signed memorandums of cooperation with the Netherlands Organization for applied scientific research TNO, the International Centre for Social and Economic Research - Leontief Centre (St. Petersburg, Russia) and St. Petersburg Economics and Mathematics Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences and German Institute for Economic Research IFO and established very good working relations with UNDESA experts. These organizations contributed their expertise into such critically important aspects of the Project as regional development, business climate surveys and others.

The evaluation identifies a number of lessons learned:

- It takes long time to build capacity of research policy institutes and these reforms are by their nature complex and long-term. The outcomes and impacts of capacity building interventions depend on a number of factors such as increased demand for evidence in decision making, emergence of culture of open discussions of complex economic transformation, clear separation of economic and political spheres and others. The institutes and donors should have a clear long term capacity building roadmap that should acknowledge the importance of these important factors beyond think-tank capacity building focus.
- It is insufficient to focus only on building research capacity of think tanks, equal emphasis should be put on strengthening their ability to develop and express in easy to understand language practical real policy solutions. Policy research should not end up with publishing a high quality analytical product with sound recommendations – the focus should be made on affecting policy change.
- Monitoring and Evaluation framework with inclusion of mechanisms and indicators for collecting evidence and monitoring the use of Project results, with particular emphasis on the policy dimension, is critical in keeping the Project focused and should be established during the inception phase of any project. Lack of this monitoring mechanism limits the assessment of impact and project contribution to policy changes.

This evaluation observed variations in quality and impact of the IFMR publications and other activities resulting from a number of factors. The IFMR operates within its mandate and its work is shaped by the political context and degree of top decision makers willingness to pursue economic reforms. Some other limitations include:

- Overall impression is that the Project has been effective in delivering its outputs and the consultant was positively impressed to find many examples of Project impacts. However, these are difficult to ascertain objectively due to the absence of tangible impact monitoring data for much of the different Project work and a limited feedback mechanism from Project target audiences. The Project reports along with other documentation do not capture specific long-term outcomes and impacts, which is a missed opportunity given its five year duration.
- The IFMR Project has too broad areas of focus that are not aligned with UNDP areas of competitive advantage. As a result, UNDP was unable to provide corporate expertise in some areas of economic research implemented by the Project.
- The IFMR Project analytical products have uneven quality and sophistication of analysis and policy recommendations.

In consultant's view, the IFMR has the necessary expertise and institutional capacity to assume more significant roles in shaping economic and social policies in Uzbekistan. Many policies could



have been improved if ministries' functions of policy advising, appraising and oversight are supported by good quality and timely policy research and debates among policy makers and researchers. The support for strengthening capacity of both demand (policy makers) and supply sides (research institutions) and the linkages between the two should be the main focus of policy capacity building of UN partners for the next UNDAF cycle.

#### Recommendations for the Government and UNDP: Potential Measures to Improve the Policy Cycle in Uzbekistan

- Develop and maintain a strategic, long-term focus in supporting think tanks, including the IFMR, in Uzbekistan. There is a growing government interest in more systemic “policy cycle reform” with particular focus on using more evidence at all stages of decision making, implementation and monitoring. This may require a comprehensive roadmap of “policy cycle reforms”, including the role of think tanks and the IFMR in particular, that will have to reflect local context, historical background of public policy reforms, institutional assessment and clearly outline a sequence of changes required to improve the policy cycle. The overall approach will necessarily be long term, involve all interested UN agencies and will need to be implemented incrementally and flexibly since it is not possible to identify all changing government priorities and uncertainties inherent in such complex reforms.
- Establish a high level Advisory Board with representation from the Government and UN agencies to oversee implementation of a cross-sectoral UN as One policy cycle reform project. In light of declining UNDP budget and taking into consideration successful examples of effective collaboration and commonly identified needs in building state capacities in evidence-informed decisionmaking, the Advisory Board could identify key objectives and milestones of “policy cycle reforms” and outline responsibilities of UN agencies involved. The implementation of UN as One approach can increase effectiveness and impact of the UN System, demonstrate the practical benefits of effective horizontal collaboration to national partners, and reduce UN system transaction costs. Better coordination of donor efforts would help to build intra-governmental coordination and avoid wasteful duplication of efforts. A joint UN policy cycle reform project can support a number of intersectoral socioeconomic actionable research initiatives and capacity building measures identified by the Advisory Group that will include the IFMR and other think tanks. Some of the cross-cutting strategic initiative that can be addressed are inclusive and green growth that the IFMR has already started to explore in its publications. Another cross-cutting area of focus can be monitoring of the effects and impacts of government policies.
- Improve coordination of UN system and national partners in the area of regional and local development to avoid duplication and achieve synergy. To effectively fulfil new responsibilities, capacities of regional and local authorities would have to be strengthened that will require coordinated capacity building efforts of the UNCT.

#### Recommendations to Strengthen IFMR capacity

- Functional review of the IFMR can strengthen its capacity to pursue actionable innovative research. Organizational structure of the IFMR can be improved to create incentives for staff from different units to pursue cross-sectoral research and explore innovative ideas that may not be always agreed with unit leads.
- The IFMR can be supported in strengthening its capacities to undertake actionable policy relevant socioeconomic research and establish and institutionalize partnerships with

- relevant think tanks and research institutes. The IFMR research should be more consistent in its quality, level of sophistication, and policy relevance. Targeted training on how to develop high quality policy papers and briefs can be conducted for the IFMR to make them consistent with the best international practices of policy documents development.
- Technical assistance should be provided to increase the capacity of the IFMR to develop dissemination and advocacy strategies and materials. The IFMR reports should be vigorously disseminated, including to the Government, academic community, the private sector, media, and the general public. The IFMR is advised to conduct periodic briefings to present results of its research and analysis to policy-makers, experts, media, economics students and the general public. All research publications should provide clear justification why they have been produced and identify specific policy issue they address and provide recommendations explicitly linked to analysis conducted.
  - It is necessary to engage a full time Internationally Trained Economic Advisor as an important quality assurance instrument as soon as possible. Ideally, this position can be assumed by a citizen of Uzbekistan with Western degree in economics who would be well familiar with the international approaches to economic policy analysis and have the necessary political acuity and sensitivity of national realities.
  - There is a need to develop a quality control mechanism to ensure that the IFMR products supported by UNDP and other UN partners meet the international standards and reflect successful international practices.
  - The IFMR is advised to involve government officials in the process of preparation of policy studies and place the IFMR staff for at least 6 months secondments into respective state institutions.
  - The IFMR can assume more responsibilities for training of public servants on economic policy analysis and should be supported in this area. Partner ministries' personnel development strategies can be developed and specific areas where the IFMR can provide training should be identified.
  - The IFMR can adopt individualized and better targeted professional development approaches, targeting in particular young IFMR staff. It is advisable to conduct individual assessments and promote self-assessment of training needs among all IFMR employees.

#### Recommendations to UNDP to Improve Project Operations

- Design and implement an effective exit strategy for the IFMR project. UNDP may help the IFMR to group a number of potential research topics into a few cross-cutting areas such as “economy modernization through reduction of dependence on natural resources and innovations” and “inclusive growth” and provide small funding to encourage the interdisciplinary research work in the IFMR. UNDP may support the IFMR in establishing and institutionalizing relations with a number of international leading economics institutions. By the time of potential Project completion, the IFMR would be able to rely on established international networks of expertise. UNDP and other UN partners may also facilitate access of IFMR experts to global and regional UNDP/UN corporate resources. The IFMR capacities in funds raising should be strengthened prior to Project completion. UNDP may strengthen the IFMR capacities in developing successful grant/tender proposals that will improve its competitiveness and will allow generating additional revenue to support the IFMR development.
- Enhance UNDP M&E function of UNDP supports provided to think tanks. Strengthening of M&E function in UNDP of its supports of think tanks can enhance the quality of

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interventions by setting specific and measurable output, outcome and impact measures; improve efficiency of allocation of resources; and support regular and results-oriented reporting on projects' progress and inform corrective actions, if necessary.

## 1. BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Country and Project context

Since the mid-2000s, Uzbekistan has enjoyed robust GDP growth, due to favourable trade terms for its key export commodities like copper, gold, natural gas, cotton, the government's macro-economic management, and limited exposure to international financial markets that protected it from the economic downturn.<sup>1</sup> According to government sources, Uzbekistan's GDP grew by 8.1% in the first half of 2014, up slightly from 8.0% in the same period of 2013. On the supply side, growth was driven by gains of 8.1% in industry and 14.2% in services, the latter reflecting strong performances in finance and telecommunications. Agriculture rose by 6.9%, as favourable weather contributed to a record grain harvest and higher fruit and vegetable output.<sup>2</sup>

Uzbekistan demonstrated significant achievements in the area of human development over the last eight years that can be attributed mostly to its economic growth. Uzbekistan's human development index (HDI) which is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living was 0.661 in 2013 — which is in the medium human development category— positioning the country at 116 out of 187 countries and territories. Between 2005 and 2013, Uzbekistan's HDI value increased from 0.626 to 0.661, an increase of 5.6 percent or an average annual increase of about 0.68 percent. When the HDI value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.556, a loss of 15.8 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the dimension indices. The average loss due to inequality for medium HDI countries is 25.6 percent and for Europe and Central Asia it is 13.3 percent.<sup>3</sup>

The Government of Uzbekistan, recognizing the need in analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic trends and development scenarios at national as well as sectorial and regional levels, has established the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research (IFMR) under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2008. The Institute's main objectives are to conduct the analysis of macroeconomic tendencies and regional disparities, forecast economic performance, and design government economic policies that further secure economic growth and development.<sup>4</sup> The Institute reports to the Cabinet of Ministers, but the operational coordination and management of the IFMR scientific and practical activities lies with the Ministry of Economy. The IFMR works also with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade, and the Central Bank.

Main tasks and activities of the Institute are diverse and include in-depth analysis of national macroeconomic indicators and trends, study of the global economy and the external factors affecting the national economy; development of models and mechanisms supporting sustainable macroeconomic development of the country; preparation of multiple medium- and long-term forecasts of socio-economic

<sup>1</sup> World Bank, Uzbekistan Overview, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/overview#1>

<sup>2</sup> An interesting analysis of Uzbekistan economic development trajectory can be found in В.В. Попов, Высшая школа международного бизнеса РАНХ и ГС, РЭШ, Москва, Экономическое чудо переходного периода: как Узбекистану удалось то, что не удалось ни одной постсоветской экономике, Журнал Новой экономической ассоциации, № 1 (21), с. 136–159

<sup>3</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report 2014, Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience, Explanatory note on the 2014 Human Development Report composite indices: Uzbekistan HDI values and rank changes in the 2014 Human Development Report.

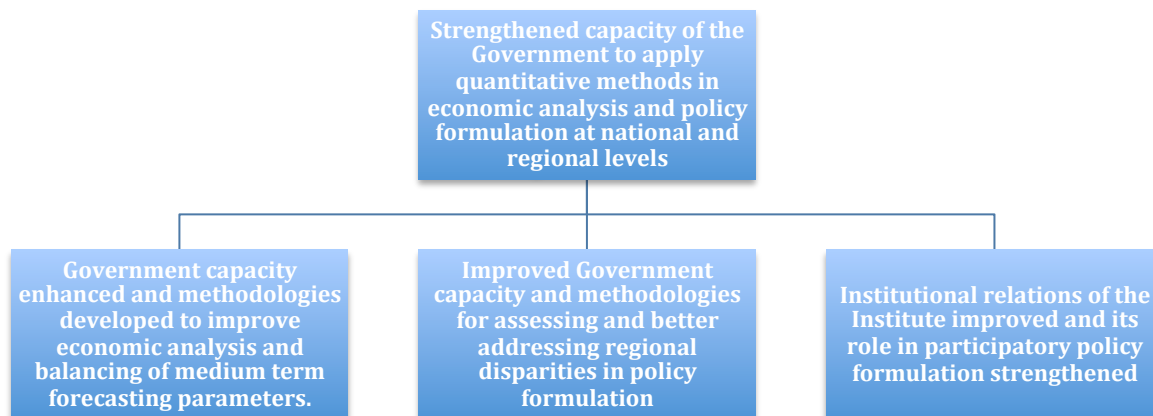
<sup>4</sup> Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, <http://ifmr.uz>

development of Uzbekistan; analysis and development of proposals for further reform and liberalization of the financial and banking system; analysis of sectoral and regional imbalances and making the proposals for regional development; research and forecasting of demographic processes; analysis and advice on the labour market and other areas. On the basis of its research findings and recommendations, the IFMR is tasked with preparation of analytical reports and publications in the media and scientific journals, and public discussions through conferences, round tables and seminars.

The UNDP “Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and local levels” (IFMR Project) was launched in 2009 to strengthen the IFMR capacity in development of country-specific methodologies for analysis of economic growth factors and poverty indicators, balancing medium term macroeconomic forecasting parameters and elaboration of regional development strategies. The principal objective of the Project was to enhance the IFMR capacity in medium term policy analysis and formulation at national and regional levels. Ultimately, the Project was designed to provide policy makers with effective analysis and forecasting tools, which they can use in assessing the implications of international development on the country, identifying future policy directions and elaborating sector and regional development programs.

UNDP’s Project seeks to provide IFMR with technical assistance in elaboration and adoption of modern methodologies of macroeconomic forecasting as well as new tools for designing regional development strategies. Along with continuation of methodological support, strengthening the analytical and technical capacities of the young research personnel of the IFMR is viewed as an important element of the Project. The Project theory of change is presented below:

Figure 1: The IFMR Project theory of change



To achieve a first objective “enhanced Government capacity in economic analysis and forecasting”, the Project was planning to conduct a training needs assessment of the Institute and the Ministry of Economy on using econometric and general equilibrium models in forecasting; implement a number of focused training modules and customized hands-on trainings, including trainings on applying econometric and general equilibrium models in economic analysis and forecasting; exchange of at least two researchers under twinning partnership and develop methodology for balanced midterm economic forecasting. It was planned to develop a number of analytical notes and methodologies (e.g., analysis of monetary transmission mechanism). The Project was planning to conduct training of Government officials in practical application of modelling results in medium term economic forecasting and methods of linking monetary policy with economic growth parameters as well as evidence-based policy formulation, implementation, and M&E.

To achieve a second objective of “improved Government capacity and methodologies for assessing and better addressing regional disparities in policy formulation,” the Project was planning to implement a range of activities that included development of analytical notes on regional economic potential, urbanization; development of methodologies for elaboration of regional development strategies; exchange of researchers under twinning partnership to promote partnership and knowledge sharing on regional development issues with advanced international modelling center; and piloting of methodology of regional development planning with selected regions.

To achieve a third objective “institutional relations of the Institute improved and its role in participatory policy formulation strengthened” the Project was planning to conduct a number of roundtables; improve institute's web-site and launch blogs on various economic issues; conduct annual national Forums of economists; develop PR, outreach and marketing strategy of the Institute; and establish institutional partnerships with other international institutions, including the Economic policy institutions network.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Project Evaluation

This evaluation is commissioned by UNDP Uzbekistan to assess its “Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels” Project’s progress, performance, successes and weaknesses. The results of the evaluation will be used to provide the Project stakeholders with an unbiased outcome-level assessment of Project results, lessons learned and directions for a potential cooperation framework between UNDP and the IFMR.

More specific consultant’s tasks included:

- assess the Project relevance to Government priorities;
- assess how the analytical and knowledge products developed through the Project support were used in the decision making process;
- assess the Project effectiveness and capture its results and lessons learned against the expected targets, outputs and indicators laid down in the project document;
- gather substantive feedback from project stakeholders, including among the Institute’s key beneficiaries and assess their satisfaction with the Project;
- evaluate the Project’s contribution to strengthening the Institute’s capacity and contribution to economic and social research and policy development;
- assess the effects of the Institute’s key visibility tools (e.g., Forum of Economists, periodic publications, website, internal IT communication systems, etc.) that were supported by the Project;
- assess the Project’s partnership strategies, in particular the support provided to the Institute in establishing and maintaining linkages with foreign economic think-tanks; and
- assess the Project sustainability.

The consultant, on the basis of the evaluation, developed recommendations for necessary next-stage support aimed at increasing IFMR’s capacities and strengthening its role as the leading national think-tank in the area of policy analysis.

## 2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is based on the belief that evaluation should be supportive and responsive to projects, rather than become an end in itself. Evaluation was tailored to the needs of the intended users as described in the TOR. The consultant has collected systematic information on how a Project was being implemented and identified barriers to achieving Project objectives. The operational processes through which desired outcomes are pursued were captured and analyzed.

A mixed-method design was used for this evaluation to ensure triangulation of data. All data gathered was verified through triangulation or ensuring the credibility of data gathered by relying on data from different sources (primary and secondary data), data of different types (qualitative, quantitative and resource information) or data from different respondents (e.g., beneficiaries, stakeholders, UNDP staff, and others). The consultant explored in detail contextual and other factors beyond scope of UNDP influence that affected these outcomes.

A field mission to Uzbekistan (Tashkent and Andijan) validated the preliminary findings and observations through interviewees and collection of additional information. On the last day of the mission the consultant presented his preliminary findings and recommendations to UNDP to validate them and seek advice into the report development.

In line with UNDP's results-based management model, the main focus was made on Project outcomes. For the purposes of the evaluation, UNDP definition of outcomes was operationalized.

*"Outcomes describe the intended changes in development conditions that result from the interventions of governments and other stakeholders, including international development agencies such as UNDP. They are medium-term development results created through the delivery of outputs and the contributions of various partners and non-partners. Outcomes provide a clear vision of what has changed or will change globally or in a particular region, country or community within a period of time. They normally relate to changes in institutional performance or behaviour among individuals or groups. Outcomes cannot normally be achieved by only one agency and are not under the direct control of a project manager."*<sup>5</sup>

A large set of different and complementary evidence was collected and analyzed by utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods that included:

- **The project theory of change or logical model was constructed relying on the Project document and other relevant sources.** It described the Project as an intervention with cause and effect connections among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. It helped to clearly separate outputs, which are tangible, time-bound products resulting from Project's activities from outcomes, which are changes in the real world, triggered by a set of outputs.
- **Desk review of relevant project documentation was conducted.** Quantitative and qualitative information was collected and analyzed to capture documented Project's outputs and outcomes. Some of the documents that were reviewed include:
  - Project document
  - Project analytical products and publications
  - Needs assessment report
  - Vision 2030 documents

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<sup>5</sup> UNDP. 2009. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*, p.56.

- Project board minutes
- **Consultations with UNDP management were conducted** to identify key informants for face-to-face and skype interviews and e-mail exchanges and to validate the evaluation methodology and questionnaires. The evaluation was impartial and independent but the UNDP team was regularly updated about the evaluation progress.
- **Project manager and staff were interviewed.** The consultant explored main Project's activities, outcomes, challenges and lessons learned. In addition to validation of the consultant's preliminary findings from the Project documentation review, the interviewees helped in exploring the information about the Project performance and outcomes that may not be captured in official Project's reports.
- **A mission to Andijan was undertaken.** It helped to collect rich evidence on the second component of the Project supporting development of regional strategies. In addition to interviewing the individuals involved into Strategy and Action Plan development, the consultant met the ultimate beneficiaries such as individuals who opened their businesses or got employed due to Project interventions.
- **Semi-structured interviews with pre-determined sets of questions were conducted.** The interviews elicited information on the IFMR Project supports to assess its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Specific questions can be found in Annex 6.2. They are grouped into three main categories – for UNDP management, project management and staff; national partners and beneficiaries; and international partners.
- **IFMR research team leads were asked to share their views on key Project accomplishments and potential areas of future collaboration.** The consultant collected responses, discussed them with the IFMR experts and extensively used throughout the Project evaluation.
- **Validation of preliminary findings and recommendations with UNDP.** The evaluator made a presentation of his preliminary findings and recommendations to UNDP on the last day of his mission. It provided an opportunity for UNDP to contribute their views and ideas to finalization of the report.

The consultant understands that there are risks and constraints to the fulfilment of deliverables, as outlined in the TOR. For this evaluation, the following risks/constraints and related mitigation approaches were identified.

**Table 1. Evaluation Exercise Risks and Mitigation Strategies**

<b>Constraints and risks</b>	<b>Mitigation Approach</b>
Time limitation that makes difficult a comprehensive evaluation across all project dimensions and areas of impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The evaluation started with a skype interview with UNDP and Project management.</li> <li>• Skype and e-mail were extensively used to obtain additional evidence from multiple Project partners and beneficiaries.</li> </ul>
Sensitivity of some Project's deliverables developed for internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries were asked to assess relevance, quality and impact of IFMR products and provide examples of</li> </ul>



Government use	specific Government policies and decisions informed by them.
Some key stakeholders and beneficiaries may not be available for interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultations with main stakeholders/beneficiaries were planned with enough flexibility to account for their schedules.</li> <li>• Some interviews were conducted via phone/skype.</li> </ul>

The evaluator is committed to providing quality products and services. As a deliverable is being developed, the evaluator had at least four check points:

- A discussion of the inception report and plans of action to ensure that the evaluator's understanding of what is required corresponds to UNDP expectations.
- Presentation and discussion of preliminary findings.
- A review of a draft, or mid-point of evaluation.
- An acceptance procedure for completed report.

Adjustments were made to reflect feedback at each of these points.

This evaluation was independent and objective and followed the principles set out in *Guidelines for Outcome Evaluation* prepared by UNDP Evaluation Office. The consultant followed the UNEG code of conduct and ethical responsibilities including guidelines on protection of privacy and conflict of interest.<sup>6</sup> The evaluator exercised his independent judgement and provided a comprehensive and balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the IFMR Project, taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders. The consultant tried to ensure that the evaluation is based on reliable data and observations.

All confidential information obtained by any means was treated in confidence. Personal, confidential and sensitive information was not discussed with, or disclosed to, unauthorized persons, knowingly or unknowingly. The interviewees and others were treated with objectivity and impartiality.

The consultant faced a number of challenges in objectively assessing the IFMR Project:

- The IFMR is not a think tank in its classic Western sense and traditional lens and evaluation methodologies that are applied to evaluate performance of a typical think tank had to be adjusted to reflect the IFMR realities. In the USA, for instance, economic think tanks are normally private sector, non-profit organizations that do research on economic policy issues and then disseminate their findings and advocate for the policy changes that their work implies. Think tanks may conduct data gathering and original research or utilize data gathered by others. The role of the think tank in such cases is to interpret and to draw the policy implications from the research. Think tanks then present those policy implications to a variety of specific audiences. To be successful, think tanks must establish and maintain a reputation for quality analysis and independence. Independence typically means that they are not considered to speak on behalf of a particular political party or faction, industry or special interest group. To maintain independence, most think tanks seek financing through grants from foundations and individuals. Think tanks tend to have their own agenda that may be different from the Government, parties or key players' positions. Think tanks focus on a limited number of policy areas and aspire to

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, March 2008

produce quality scientific analysis to substantiate their position. They seek to use the results of their policy research to draw actionable recommendations and disseminate their findings and recommendations to influence decision making process and inform key groups. Think tanks function best in a democratic society where ideas compete, the appropriate legal framework is in place, capable policy analysts are available on the labour market, there are sufficient financial resources available from foundations, and the independent media is interested in and willing to report on the results of policy work of think tanks and there is a strong public interest in the areas addressed by think tanks. The application of the term “think tank” to the IFMR is highly problematic as it meets only few criteria of a typical think tank outlined above such as quality research with actionable recommendations produced by highly skilled analysts. The IFMR is an institution in transition from a typical Soviet economic research institution towards a modern think tank. In the Soviet period, economic policy analysis was ideology driven and restricted to Communist Party organs and ministries. In the absence of market institutions, State planners determined what was produced, in what quantity, by what methodology, where and by whom. The IFMR does not perform these central planning functions anymore, but it is not yet an independent player providing economic policy analysis and offering policy recommendations. It is funded by the Government and responds to its requests, but enjoys some degree of freedom to propose new ideas and to challenge the current policies. The consultant explored in great depth specifics of the IFMR role and operations and realities of economic policymaking in Uzbekistan to customize typical think tank assessment techniques to address the questions of the TOR.

- Complexity and sensitivity of policy making process does not allow the application of quantitative evaluation methods that could have provided more accurate picture of the Project outcomes/impacts. The evaluator explored a full range of outcomes at all levels, including ripple effects on legislation, policies, perceptions, and intellectual fora. The consultant also tried to obtain as much evidence as possible to examine how the Project deliverables were used in policymaking processes. As some documents that were produced with the Project support are for internal Government use only and the evaluator was unable to review them, he had to rely on interviews to obtain independent assessment of their quality and impact.
- The IFMR Project has been supporting multiple areas of the Institute work that complicated the analysis of the Project attribution. Attribution is a determination to what extent the IFMR Project rather than other factors, including the IFMR work itself have contributed to observed outcomes. Determining attribution for outputs is relatively straightforward as outputs are the tangible products produced through activities. Demonstrating attribution for outcomes is more complicated because a number of intervening factors, in addition to the activities, may contribute to the outcome. As in many instances the Project and the IFMR activities overlapped and were mutually supportive, the consultant had to resort to a contribution approach and exercised his personal judgement to identify a plausible association of the IFMR Project inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- As the Project was developed in 2009, its documentation often does not meet the current UNDP results based management standards. The logical framework is not specific enough in capturing outputs, outcomes and indicators of success. Without an adequate logframe and in the absence of robust M&E system with standard reporting templates and tools, the Project document does not contain well linked quantitative measurable indicators and baseline information for monitoring targets, indicators and activities and tracking results/outcome. The Project did not systematically capture its achievements at the outcome level, including beneficiaries' use and satisfaction with its products and activities. As the Project was extended in 2012, its performance indicators for 2013-14 became more results-oriented. For instance, for 2013 under component 1 of the Project it was planned that “at least 30% of produced

recommendations on social, economic and human development issues reflected in Government policies and programs”. To address these shortcomings, the consultant conducted additional data gathering.

### 3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

From the outset, the evaluator received support from the Project including full access to Project's documents, publications, annual work plans, annual reports, and other resources. UNDP and the Project management and staff, including researchers, were generous with their time and provided multiple opportunities to discuss the Project. UNDP scheduled additional interviewees with partners and stakeholders to obtain additional information.

In its conception and design, the Project responded directly to the largely under-met needs of the Government for evidence-based economic policy research and advice. There are only a few think-tank type research institutions with expertise in macroeconomic policies and regional development in Uzbekistan: Center for Economic Research and Center for Economic Development.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, the consultant found that UNDP made a significant positive contribution to support the IFMR's transition from a typical academic Soviet research institution employing out-dated theories and methods of research to a think tank, contributing high quality economic policy research and analysis and recommendations based on modern economic theories and methods of analysis to Government decision making. A hallmark of the IFMR Project is its flexibility in adjusting to constantly changing Government and IFMR needs.

The IFMR Project is well aligned with and supportive of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2010-2015 that provides a collective, coherent and integrated United Nations response to national needs and priorities. It was designed to address such focus area of UNDAF as enhancing capacity of the central and local authorities to develop and implement economic and social security policies aimed at welfare improvement of vulnerable groups. More specifically, the IFMR project addressed a range of Government priorities that include:

- reduce poverty by half by 2015;
- improve living standards based on robust and inclusive economic growth; and
- form a modern and diversified economy able to compete in world markets.<sup>8</sup>

UNDP utilized participatory processes in developing project documents that ensured both government ownership and alignment with the national priorities, as these have been defined by the President and the Government of Uzbekistan. It addressed the IFMR capacity development needs.

The Project continuous relevance was ensured by the Project Board that was overseeing its implementation. The consultant reviewed numerous Project Board' reports and confirms that it

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<sup>7</sup> More information on Center for Economic Research activities and publications can be found at <http://www.cer.uz/en/>. More information on Center for Economic Development activities and publications can be found at <http://www.ced.uz/ru>.

<sup>8</sup> Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and United Nations, Uzbekistan, United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2010-2015.

played an important role in keeping it on track and adjusting the Project to maintain its relevance and effectiveness, as necessary.

Relevance of the IFMR Project was strongly confirmed through the interviews and consultations with its partners and beneficiaries. UNDP maintained good working relations with the IFMR management and was aware of their current and emerging needs that helped to adjust the Project areas of focus accordingly. UNDP flexibility was appreciated by the IFMR management. The relevance of the IFMR Project was enhanced through localization of international experience of economic analysis and customization of regional development strategies to circumstances of Uzbekistan.

The IFMR Project was responsive to changing needs of the Ministry of Economy. In response to the Ministry request, the Project prepared analytical report "Assessment of the coverage and needs in additional services."<sup>9</sup> The report was based on a survey of consumers in the Samarkand region. Its results were shared with the Ministry of Economy that used them in planning of the service sector development in Uzbekistan.

The expected objectives at the output level were met or even exceeded the original expectations while at the outcome/impact level more reflection and assessment is needed to fully appreciate the extent of changes. Overall, the Project was effective in producing results as they were outlined in the Project document. The IFMR Project effectively supported development of the national economic policy in response to global challenges that helped Uzbekistan to minimize the negative impacts of the global financial crisis. There is a common opinion recognizing the contribution of the Project to increased Government interest in using evidence and research in decision making.

To achieve a first objective "enhanced Government capacity in economic analysis and forecasting", the Project conducted a comprehensive high-quality capacity needs assessment of the IFMR in 2009.<sup>10</sup> The assessment found that the main challenge faced by the IFMR was a shortage of qualified staff. Most of the research staff were not able to conduct their own research, while many of them did not have sufficient theoretical knowledge in micro and macroeconomics. 47% of full-time positions were not filled because it was impossible to find suitable candidates partly due to low wages. In sum, in 2009, one of the main impediments in moving ahead was the IFMR difficulty to attract and keep well-qualified economic policy analysts as salaries were low, a lively and creative academic ambience was absent and career prospects and opportunities for professional development and growth were limited. As a result, young scholars had little interest or incentive to join or stay at the Institute.

As IFMR plays an important role in shaping Government economic and regional strategies and policies, the Project correctly focused on improving quality and impact of IFMR analytical products and building its staff capacity.<sup>11</sup> In 2014, when this evaluation was conducted the situation with

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<sup>9</sup> Д.М. Каримова, Е. Тищенко, Д. Джунайдуллаев, Ф. Шерзодов, Д. Каримов, Ф.Мажидов, АНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДОКЛАД ОЦЕНКА УРОВНЯ ОБЕСПЕЧЕННОСТИ И ПОТРЕБНОСТИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ В ДОПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫХ ВИДАХ УСЛУГ (по результатам опроса потребителей в Самаркандской области), 2012

<sup>10</sup> Юсупов Ю.Б., Отчет Оценка возможностей повышения кадрового потенциала Института прогнозирования и макроэкономических исследований, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Some IFMR departments conducted their own assessment to identify how their respective areas of economic research can be improved. See, for instance, an in-depth study exploring challenges and opportunities in developing macroeconomic models in Uzbekistan prepared in 2009. Чепель С., Тухтарова

recruiting and retaining research staff has improved significantly. Due to UNDP support, the IFMR managed to attract young and well educated staff. In addition to salary top ups that attracted qualified economists to research, the Project provided a wide range of training opportunities customized to the IFMR staff areas of expertise and interests. Such diverse areas as innovation, commercialization and technology transfer, entrepreneurship in innovation, urbanization in Central Asia, econometrics, midterm economic forecasting, evidence-based policy options papers skills & methodologies were covered.<sup>12</sup> Extensive trainings for young staff were conducted jointly with GIZ in such areas as Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, and Statistical Analysis. In 2011, for instance, the Project conducted joint trainings with the IFO Institute (Germany) in both Tashkent and Munich and supported participation of young staff in international conferences in Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Korea.<sup>13</sup> Participation in international conferences and trainings helped to identify relevant international experiences, generate new ideas, reform options and policy choices. Weekly lectures have been arranged by the staff of Westminster International University in Tashkent on how to do modern research and publish in foreign periodicals.

Due to the Project support, knowledge and skills of young IFMR staff increased that is reflected in a number of publications in internationally refereed journals and involvement of young staff into preparation of the IFMR flagship research publications on macroeconomic analysis and forecasting, business environment surveys and regional development planning. The quality of research and publications has improved, as has the frequency and quality of academic discussion and exchange at the Institute. Internal workshops and discussions are often organized to present new research findings and share materials from international conferences.

Due to support and guidance of the international experts, some IFMR staff published their articles in such internationally refereed journals as Modern Economy, Journal of Applied Economic and Business Research, Journal Modern Economy. Vladimir Popov, Senior Interregional Adviser with UNDESA, for instance provided his expert advice to a number of IFMR researchers that helped them to publish their research in respected refereed journals. The IFMR staff publications in refereed journals are good indicators of the Institute increased capacities to produce high quality research.

A number of analytical notes, monographs and methodologies was developed and disseminated. Opinions of interviewed stakeholders on the quality of research papers vary from moderate positive to very positive. In general, all research papers published so far seem to meet the expectations of interviewed stakeholders though the quality differs. The majority of monographs and research papers clearly identify the problem, provide in-depth analysis of factors contributing to it, assess the experiences of relevant countries in addressing it through legislative, policy and other means and

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Н., Ибрагимова Н., Исмаилов Ш., Набиходжаев А., Насретдинов Ф. Развитие макроэкономических моделей в Республике Узбекистан: проблемы и перспективы, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Муинов Д.А., Руководитель проекта, Краткая информация об участии сотрудников ИПМИ Проекта по структурным преобразованиям и диверсификации экономики, привлечению инвестиций в исследованиях и мероприятиях ПРООН за 2011- 2014 гг., а также перспективах дальнейшего сотрудничества; Чепель С., Руководитель проекта, КРАТКАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА о результатах участия специалистов Проекта по анализу и прогнозу основных макроэкономических показателей на средне- и долгосрочную перспективу ИПМИ в исследованиях под эгидой ПРООН и предложения по будущему сотрудничеству;

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Joint Project Board Meeting of “Support to Innovation Policy and Technology Transfer” and “Capacity Building for Economic Forecasting and Planning at National and Local Levels” projects, December 2011.

conclude with a set of Uzbekistan-tailored recommendations.<sup>14</sup> The consultant would like to acknowledge also a very interesting and practical publication on methodology for developing and assessing alternative scenarios of economic development that is a critical component in any economic policy development or budget preparation.<sup>15</sup>

The documentary and anecdotal evidence indicates that the majority of the IFMR Project studies were put to direct use by the Ministry of Economy, and many of them were put to indirect use, in formulating and/or implementing the Government's economic policies. A number of recommendations and research findings were translated directly into governmental policy decisions. The IFMR Project, for instance, conducted analysis of the current Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On investment activity", identified relevant international experiences and provided recommendations on their potential use in Uzbekistan.<sup>16</sup> The Project contributed to development of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On innovation" and prepared the "Concept of development of industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2015-2020".

The Ministry of Economy identified eleven IFMR Project analytical products as the most widely used in policy development process in 2013. Some of them are Outlook for the economy of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2014 - 2016; Macroeconomic conditions and prerequisites for improving the competitiveness of the national economy; Macroeconomic and institutional foundations for long-term development of Uzbekistan; The main macroeconomic trends for 2000-2012 and measures to accelerate economic growth and others. These analytical products were informed by multiple research studies supported by the IFMR Project.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry acknowledged in particular that the IFMR products were used in forecasting socio-economic development of the country in 2014; preparation of the national budget for 2014; development of measures to further improve business environment to promote small business and private entrepreneurship; development of measures to improve investment environment and attract foreign investments, preparation of the draft law "On alternative sources of energy" and other important areas.<sup>18</sup>

The consultant is confident that the IFMR research and publications informed the policy work of other Ministries and central agencies, but due to the time constraints it was impossible to interview diverse IFMR Project products users. Some IFMR studies were produced in response to the Government requests for its internal use that confirms the role and importance of the IFMR in economic policy making in Uzbekistan. The IFMR Project in its publications raised a number of critical points such as that the current growth model is not sustainable and demonstrated the impact of growth on poverty reduction. Once any major research was ready, round tables on the

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Чепель С.В., Ибрагимова Н.М., Салаходжаев Р., Халмурзаев А.А., АНАЛИЗ ФАКТОРОВ ИНФЛЯЦИИ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ (с выделением базовой и импортируемой инфляции), 2012; Ф.У. Додиёв, Н.У. Абдуназарова, Н.Р. Урманова, З.С. Муратова, З.А. Халдаров ОЦЕНКА КАНАЛОВ ТРАНСМИССИОННОГО МЕХАНИЗМА ДЕНЕЖНО-КРЕДИТНОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> С. Чепель, О. Хакимов, А. Набиходжаев, Е. Файзуллаев, Н. Ибрагимова, Е. Тухтарова, Н. Насрединов, Х. Асадов и А. Абдуразаков, Методические подходы к разработке сценарных условий и макроэкономическому прогнозированию, 2010

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Чепель С., Хамидов Б., Асадов Х., Жураев С., Абдужаббаров А., Салохитдинов Х. Экономический рост и инновации: теория, практика и моделирование, 2010

<sup>17</sup> Чепель С., Руководитель проекта, КРАТКАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА о результатах участия специалистов Проекта по анализу и прогнозу основных макроэкономических показателей на средне- и долгосрочную перспективу ИПМИ в исследованиях под эгидой ПРООН и предложения по будущему сотрудничеству.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Economy, Response to the IFMR Questionnaire, 24.01.2014.

results have been held, and feedbacks and comments have been collected and addressed. Currently, the IFMR Project is playing active role in the Vision 2030 process that confirms that its capacities in economic analysis are recognized by the Government and the international partners, including the World Bank.

Although the studies supported by the IFMR Project have been given good marks for their quality, they are not always easily accessible to non-economist readers and were sometimes too technical. Policy advice was uneven in terms of quality and often did not address policy implementation and monitoring aspects. Some interviewees suggested adding to all studies executive summaries, which will clearly and concisely state key findings and recommendations in easily accessible non technical language.

Many of the IFMR Project studies were intended to have an indirect rather than a direct impact on policy. Methodological and statistical studies are particularly noteworthy in this regard as they were intended for reference purposes and were extensively used in ministries, universities and international organizations. While the indirect linkage of some of IFMR Project studies to the Government economic policy efforts complicates the monitoring and evaluation of utilization, this diversity in IFMR portfolio should be viewed as a strength rather than a limitation as the IFMR demonstrated its ability to obtain, verify, consolidate and present the necessary data for economic and social policy research.

The consultant learned that a number of requests from the Government to the IFMR has increased over the last years that is a good indicator of high quality and policy relevance of the Institute's work. Although such a heavy demand for the solution of immediate problems often limits the Institute's ability to focus on strategic policy issues, it provides the IFMR with multiple opportunities to influence the policymaking process.

Some IFMR research initiatives such as business climate surveys were highly evaluated by the Government and their results were discussed on a quarterly basis by the Cabinet of Ministers and since 2012 the Government has been funding these surveys. On the basis of the surveys' results, the Government has identified a number of factors that negatively affect the private sector development and addressed them through targeted policy interventions. The surveys, for instance, informed the development of a national programme on improving the electricity supply as this had been identified as one of the most important barriers to business development in the regions.<sup>19</sup>

The IFMR Project conducted a number of trainings of Government officials in practical application of modelling results in medium term economic forecasting and methods of linking monetary policy with economic growth parameters as well as evidence-based policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. These opportunities were appreciated by the beneficiaries interviewed and the Ministry of Economy requested the IFMR to deliver more advanced trainings that is a good indicator of overall satisfaction with the quality, relevance and applicability of training delivered. The IFMR Project did not collect information on whether the participants found the trainings relevant, applicable and if they used knowledge and skills acquired in their work that does not allow more systemic analysis of the effectiveness and impact of diverse training opportunities.

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<sup>19</sup> Minutes Project Board Meeting "Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and local levels", 14 February, 2014

In order to achieve a second objective of improved Government capacity and methodologies for assessing and better addressing regional disparities in policy formulation, the Project developed a methodology for regional development planning; led development of regional plans in a number of regions and strengthened the IFMR capacity in regional planning. It increased the ability of regional and local authorities to assess their own needs in a more systematic way and to identify and discuss alternative options to advance local economic development rather than simply wait for the national government's solutions and directions.

The IFMR Project implemented a high quality and well received methodologies for regional development. The consultant was not only positively impressed with the quality and country relevance of regional development methodology but also with a logical process of methodology development that started from review of current country practices, exploration of international experiences, development of Uzbekistan-specific methodology and piloting it in a few regions.

A team of IFMR experts was formed to elaborate methodological guidelines on designing regional development strategies and implementation programs. The team reviewed and assessed the existing practice and methodologies of regional development planning in Uzbekistan. The team also prepared a study "Territorial socio-economic differences in Uzbekistan: Assessment methodologies".<sup>20</sup> The documents were discussed during two round tables, feedback was collected, analysed and reflected in the final document.

A study tour to the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) was organized for two employees and TNO experts conducted a series of workshops for IFMR, the Ministries of Economy and Finance on forecasting regional development. The seminars were attended by over 30 participants, including 12 women. TNO experts provided methodological assistance in the development of two policy briefs for the IFMR team. The IFMR regional development team representatives also attended the international conference on regional planning in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Taking into consideration national and international experiences, the IFMR Project team developed methodological guidelines on regional development planning. More than 65 experts in regional development contributed to methodology development.

Pilot regions were selected to test a draft methodology on regional development planning. An agreement was signed with Khokimiyat of Andijan region to develop a long-term strategy of Andijan region development. The regional development strategy for Andijan region was developed and well received by regional and local authorities. Experts working on the development strategy of Andijan region benefitted from advice provided by the international consultant invited jointly with GIZ for a series of training sessions on regional development planning.

In addition, the team conducted a number of supplementary studies such as "The relationships of secondary special and professional education with the priorities of economic development of the Andijan region." A survey of more than 550 college students and teaching staff, and interviews of the employers of these graduates have been conducted for this study. More than 130 professionals attended the seminars and presentations of the study that was shared with the Ministry of Economy.

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<sup>20</sup> Махмудова Р., Садыков А., Абдуразаков А., Абдуназарова Н., Шаулов Д., Муминов Т., Подходы к оценке территориальной дифференциации социально-экономического развития Узбекистана, 2010



Leading researchers from the Leontief Centre (St. Petersburg, Russia) were extensively involved into development of the methodology on regional development planning by providing expert advice and conducting specialized seminars and workshops. The methodological guidelines on regional development planning were revised to reflect the advice of the Leontief Centre experts and the Andijan regional strategy development experience with involvement of a wide range of experts.

Utilizing a revised methodology, a regional development strategy of Andijan region was finalized.<sup>21</sup> Khokhim of the Andijan region, Mr. Abduraxmanov validated the importance and value of regional development strategies and appreciated support provided by the IFMR Project. His deputy confirmed his intent to continue closely monitoring the Strategy implementation to ensure that all its targets and deliverables are met. In Andijan regions, the IFMR Project team conducted surveys, seminars/trainings on the preparation of strategies and plans for regional development, round table discussions on the draft strategy, and strategy presentation. It was a participatory process and such diverse partners as local authorities, businesspeople and farmers contributed to it. The strategy was well received by the regional authorities and the Ministry of Economy and was published in 2012. The regional authorities secured additional national level funding to support its implementation.

In Andijan region the monitoring group was established to control the progress of implementation of socio-economic projects identified in the strategy that regularly reports to regional Khokim, khokims of cities and villages, local people's deputies, representatives of business, and the media. It helped to ensure that the strategy implementation was on track and that all relevant partners, including khokims of cities and villages were involved into its implementation.<sup>22</sup>

The IFMR Project supported preparation of regional development strategies of Surkhandarya and Khorezm regions and the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The IFMR team conducted surveys, seminars/trainings on the preparation of strategies and plans for regional development, round table discussions on the draft strategy, and presentations of strategies. In 2012, for instance, the IFMR Project conducted workshops in Khorezm and Karakalpakstan on "Fundamentals of innovation, technology transfer and commercialization," with the participation of regional and local authorities, large enterprises and public organizations, educational and research institutions, entrepreneurs and farmers.

Such evidence-informed regional development strategies helped to establish growth patterns fostering job creation and an improved climate for investment and private sector development that ultimately contributes to better social inclusion and improvement of education, health care and social services provision. The overwhelming observations are that the regional authorities that went through the process of regional strategies development have more capacity to assess needs, plan and implement region-specific economic strategies and initiatives. The economic department in Andijan region, for instance, has clearly strengthened its capacities in regional planning and there is an expectation that the next regional strategy can be developed with minimal IFMR involvement.

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<sup>21</sup> СТРАТЕГИЯ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ АНДИЖАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ НА ДОЛГОСРОЧНУЮ ПЕРСПЕКТИВУ, 2012

<sup>22</sup> Информация о реализации Программы мероприятий по реализации Стратегии Андижанской области. По состоянию на 1.07.2014

Reflecting the practical experiences of regional strategies development, the IFMR team finalized and published "Methodological guidelines for elaboration of regional development strategies."<sup>23</sup> The guidelines were presented to the Ministry Economy, regional authorities, Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Karakalpakstan and were shared with all 145 khokimiats of Uzbekistan. Interestingly enough, all khokims who attend mandatory trainings at the Academy of Public Administration are required to complete an assignment of applying the methodological guidelines to identify priorities for their locality development.

It is insufficient to develop regional development strategies to advance human development of all people – real changes must happen on the ground. The IFMR Project supported development of a comprehensive Programme of Action for the implementation of the Development Strategy of Andijan region that was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2013.

In Andijan region, the IFMR Project team and the regional authorities developed a concept of small industrial zones and successfully implemented it. The Strategy developers identified a number of closed and non-operational enterprises and other unused land and split them into 0.2-0.3 hectares land plots for business entities to support new production facilities or service sector. Some examples of new enterprises/services include craft workshops, car parking, small manufacturers and others.<sup>24</sup> The consultant visited a number of enterprises supported through the Strategy and confirms that the beneficiaries managed to expand their businesses, employed more local residents and supported local khokims in addressing social problems faced by communities. In the city of Xonobod, for instance, khokim Mr. Alimov who was extensively involved into Strategy development, identified potential business opportunities and effectively used the Strategy document to secure bank loans to support new enterprises in his city. One of such businesses, Lens Textile Invest, managed to expand its production dramatically and hire a number of previously unemployed or underemployed local residents.

In order to achieve a third objective “institutional relations of the Institute improved and its role in participatory policy formulation strengthened” the Project conducted annual national Forums of Economists and Young Economists; hosted a number of roundtables; improved institute's web-site and launched blogs on various economic issues; and supported the IFMR in establishing institutional partnerships with other international institutions.

Many interviewees highly evaluated annual national Forums of Economists and Young Economists. The Forums of Economists were organized on an annual basis, attracting participants on a competitive basis from Uzbekistan and abroad, and starting in 2012 the Project started to conduct Forums for Young Economists to provide opportunities for young researchers to present and discuss their work.

All forums had their own overarching topics and addressed the most important issues for Uzbekistan that included such topics as the impact of global financial and economic crisis on

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<sup>23</sup> А.М. Садыков, Ш.Х.Назаров, С.С.Закиров, Х.М. Сайдахмедов, Э.Т. Якубова, А.А. Рафиев, НАУЧНО-МЕТОДИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ СТРАТЕГИИ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ РЕГИОНОВ НА ДОЛГОСРОЧНУЮ ПЕРСПЕКТИВУ, 2012

<sup>24</sup> ПЕРЕЧЕНЬ земельных участков, на которых предусмотрена организация малых промышленных зон, с последующим предоставлением земельных участков размером в среднем по 0,2-0,3 га субъектам предпринимательства для организации на них новых производств, объектов сферы услуг и сервиса

Uzbekistan's economy and measures to minimize its negative impact; macroeconomic and regional aspects of modeling of sustainable economic growth; and strategies to modernize economy and ensure its long-term sustainable development. In 2013 the Forum of Economists focused, for example, on the methodological aspects of developing regional development strategies. The Forum was held in Tashkent and Nukus and had a wide international representation from Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, China, USA, Germany, Belarus, India and Japan, with more than 300 participants. The Forum proceedings were published and the consultant confirms that many of the articles are of high quality and address important aspects of regional and local development. In 2013 more than 150 individuals participated in the Forum of Young Economists.

The opportunities to participate in Forums were highly appreciated by participants and they became a platform for open discussion on current economic developments in Uzbekistan. The Forums elevated demand for high quality economic discussions and provided young and seasoned researchers with opportunities to express their views on economic policies, share the experiences of other countries and provide recommendations. There is no doubt that the Forums that featured large diversity of views including those of young economists who studied and worked abroad generated fresh ideas and contributed to rethinking of economic policies.

The Forums are also acknowledged for their high networking potential. The Forums could have made a bigger impact if they obtain good media coverage and disseminate their key findings and recommendations in diverse formats such as key messages snapshots, multiple press releases, webinars of the most promising research projects and others.

The IFMR regularly conducted workshops and presentations to share its research findings and recommendations that the interviewees found to be very relevant to the economic context and realities of Uzbekistan. In consultant's view, these activities could have made more significant impact if international experts/organizations were more extensively involved to contribute their expertise and global comparisons. Limited participation of policy makers from diverse ministries hindered the potential impact of these activities on economic policymaking as well.

The IFMR signed memorandums of cooperation with the Netherlands Organization for applied scientific research TNO, the International Centre for Social and Economic Research - Leontief Centre (St. Petersburg, Russia) and St. Petersburg Economics and Mathematics Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences and German Institute for Economic Research IFO and established very good working relations with UNDESA experts. These organizations contributed their expertise into such critically important aspects of the Project as regional development, business climate surveys and others. In consultant's view, the opportunities to promote the IFMR internationally and establish institutional partnerships with other international institutions, including the Economic policy institutions network were underexplored. There is a need to develop systematic and strategic approach to identify reputable institutions in other countries that could partner with the IFMR, provide expert and critical inputs and assessments of IFMR research. In addition to improving overall quality and impact of research, improved international collaboration will strengthen the IFMR positions on the market of economic policy products and increase its competitiveness in seeking grants and tenders of multiple donors such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, UNDP, national businesses and international corporations, line ministries and regional authorities and others.

The Project supported the IFMR with upgrading its Intranet with new equipment and software and developing and launching a new IFMR website. All analytical notes are announced and are available on the website. The IFMR blog was launched in 2014 at <http://ifmr.uz/blog/>

The consultant finds that the IFMR Project could have made more significant impact on changing the economic policymaking processes and capacities if it developed and implemented a comprehensive external partners' training program, public relations, outreach and marketing strategy. The particular focus could have been made on decision makers who are in position to influence and lead broad societal changes. Despite their increased interest in using data in economic policy decision making that can be attributed to the Project interventions, they often do not have sufficient awareness, knowledge and understanding of the importance of economic research and data and do not have sufficient skills to use them. When decision makers are not confident and unable to interpret research and data, they tend to base decisions on their ideology and personal views and perceptions. This creates an environment where policies and programs are developed and implemented without attention to empirical evidence and with weak monitoring and evaluation systems and practices. This in turn further depresses the demand for high quality economic research and data.

The IFMR has sufficient capacities and is well positioned to provide training and capacity building supports to diverse audiences. Some team leads and experts of the IFMR are very well educated, travel abroad to participate in conferences, training and other opportunities, and communicate with international experts. These individuals are well placed to share their experiences and expertise. Some examples of training and dissemination tools include preparation of briefs on key IFMR research initiatives, implementation of a series of webinars on fundamentals of using economics research/forecasting/scenarios/surveys in policy making, targeted training of ministries' staff on economics tools and experiences of other relevant countries in economic reforms.

In terms of efficiency that focuses on the extent to which the Project is producing its planned outputs in relation to expenditure of resources the consultant found that the Project was efficient. Its yearly budget is around 125,000USD, which is much less than the budget of the Centre for Economic Research, another economic and social policy think tank that is also supported by UNDP. The IFMR contributed 50,000USD in soum equivalent for 2013-2014, which demonstrates that the IFMR Project is well respected by the national partner.<sup>25</sup>

The IFMR Project management model is based on the requirements stipulated in the National Implementation Modality. National Implementation is an agreed arrangement between UNDP and the Programme Countries, whereby a national institution assumes overall responsibility and accountability for the formulation and effective execution of UNDP led donor funded technical cooperation programmes and projects.

The project is governed by Project Board with representation from IFMR and UNDP. UNDP is represented on Board by Deputy Resident Representative. The Board was meeting annually and discussed the Project progress and the next year plan, including its activities and the budget. At these meetings the Project manager provided updates on Project's progress, opportunities and challenges in moving forward were discussed. In addition to ensuring relevance of Project's interventions, the Board enhanced its effectiveness and efficiency.

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<sup>25</sup> Minutes of the Joint Project Board Meeting of "Support to Innovation Policy and Technology Transfer" and "Capacity Building for Economic Forecasting and Planning at National and Local Levels" Projects, December 3, 2012

The Project has its office located in the IFMR building that generated some savings on the rent. Many training events were organized on the IFMR premises free of charge to UNDP. The Project team's physical location in the IFMR helped to obtain a good understanding of IFMR needs and maintain good working relations.

In terms of HR structure, the Project has a Project Manager responsible for day-to-day Project management and decision making, a regional development specialist and administrative finance assistant and expert research teams responsible for key elements of components 1 and 2 of the Project. In the original Project Document it was expected to recruit a PR specialist but in December 2009, taking into account the complexities of implementation of the regional development component, the Project Board decided to re-classify the position of PR specialist into a position of "Regional development specialist" with responsibility for the elaboration of the methodology for regional development planning and policy research on the factors affecting regional development.<sup>26</sup> The current management and administrative system copes well with the workload, but the national partner questioned the efficiency of having three people employed full time given a limited Project budget (125,000USD per year) and scope of activities.

In line with the best UNDP practices, UNDP commissioned a Project evaluation in 2012 that provided rich and objective assessment of its performance and contained a range of recommendations that were taken into consideration when the Project was extended.<sup>27</sup>

Usually impacts refer to consequences of the project/program beyond the immediate effects and thus are not necessarily measurable during the implementation phase. Further impacts on capacity building and economic policy making may come into effect later. As all the Project's impacts will materialize in the future, the evaluator identifies a number of key Project's impacts that are evident in 2014 and covers them in the discussion below.

The consultant was positively impressed to find that young Institute staff confirmed their strong interest in working in the Institute. The Government realizing the importance of attracting young economists, increased salaries of the IFMR staff. In addition to improved monetary compensation, the IFMR Project provided multiple professional development opportunities for young economists, including support to participate in international conferences, training opportunities and support in preparation of papers for submission to internationally refereed journals, etc.<sup>28</sup> Skills of the IFMR young researchers improved significantly and some of them are willingly hired by many government agencies and are admitted to PhD programmes in world class foreign universities. Although it negatively affects the IFMR human resources sustainability, it demonstrates that skills and expertise of IFMR staff are well recognized among many partners.

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<sup>26</sup> Minutes of the annual review meeting of the "Capacity Building for Economic Forecasting and Planning at National and Local Levels" project, December 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Юсупов Ю.Б., Оценка работы проекта Программы Развития ООН в Узбекистане "Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels" в 2009-2012 гг., 2012

<sup>28</sup> Sheila Marnie in her evaluation report found that "in comparison with 2009, the situation regarding capacity of the research staff and quality of research has improved notably. As evidence of this, the staffing situation has improved, in that there are less vacancies, and more young people are engaged and working on a long term basis. This is itself a sign that work at the Institute has become more prestigious and rewarding." See Sheila Marnie, Suggestions for Future Support to the Institute for Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, 2012

The IFMR strengthened its expertise in evidence-based national public policy analysis and regional development and has contributed to building of a culture of using evidence and research in decision making at the national and regional levels. The interviews revealed only a few specific examples substantiating this observation and the lack of this information can be attributed to a weak M&E system of the Project that did not track systemically the use and impact of the IFMR Project products and activities. The regional authorities in Andijan region, for instance, confirmed that the IFMR Project strengthened their capacity to plan the region's economic development, better identify business opportunities and address social challenges. As a result, the regional and local authorities that went through the planning exercise with the Project can function at a substantially higher level of effectiveness.

The IFMR Project established a number of important partnerships. It collaborated well with GIZ that provided extensive support to the IFMR. The activities of UNDP and GIZ were well coordinated to ensure synergy and avoid duplication. The IFMR and GIZ, for instance, co-funded Forums of Economists and publications of Forums' proceedings.

The IFMR Project collaborated extensively with the Westminster International University in Tashkent that offers Western education, with UK qualifications. The Project partnered with the University in organizing Forums of Young Economists that helped the University students to present and discuss findings of their research, while the IFMR was able to identify the best students to invite them to work after graduation. The University management expressed their strong interest to continue supporting annual Forums of Young Economists.

Efforts have been made by both UNDP and the Project to coordinate and cooperate with other donors. The IFMR Project office have been regularly inviting international donors and national partners to its major events and shared its publications. The IFMR Project, for instance, was invited to partner on developing a Vision 2030 strategy by the World Bank that demonstrates that the international partners recognize the ability of the IFMR to deliver high quality economic policy analysis.<sup>29</sup>

The IFMR Project collaborated with other UNDP projects as well. For instance, the Project collaborated with "Sustaining Livelihoods Affected by the Aral Sea Disaster", a joint UN Programme funded by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security aimed at improving economic, food, health and environmental security for the population of Karakalpakstan affected by the Aral Sea environmental disaster. The IFMR Project supported development of Karakalpakstan republic development strategy.

The Project Board recommended in 2009 for the Project to collaborate and cooperate more closely with such UNDP's projects as National Human Development Report, MDGs Statistics, and EU-UNDP funded ELS as well as sign a joint Memorandum of Understanding of UNDP, WB, GTZ and ADB to provide effective and coordinated support to IFMR. It looks that these recommendations were not fully addressed by all partners.<sup>30</sup>

In terms of sustainability or the likelihood that the achievements recorded so far will be sustained beyond the Project, the consultant is positive that many elements of the Project are sustainable. In

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<sup>29</sup> World Bank, Uzbekistan Vision 2030: A Synthesis of Background Papers on Markets and Institutions, Human Development, Infrastructure and the Environment, May 2014

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of the annual review meeting of the "Capacity Building for Economic Forecasting and Planning at National and Local Levels" project, December 2009.

some areas the Project activities and practices will not only continue beyond the Project completion but will most likely be advanced to another level. Sustainability will be affected by a range of factors that include Government decisions on economic reforms, current and projected demand for the IFMR products and analytical work, and donors' support of think tanks.

While the IFMR Project offered attractive pay enhancements to the IFMR staff to produce high quality analytical work, some may believe that the skills needed can't be available at the current IFMR pay and without additional donors' funding the quality of IFMR work and staff will deteriorate. Although this may be a point of concern, the consultant believes that the importance of salary top ups should not be exaggerated as the current pay scale in the IFMR, relative to the pay scale in other state funded research institutes, compares favorably for equal skills.

Many graduates of high caliber universities such as Westminster, Moscow State University, Islamic University and others apply to work in the IFMR. The IFMR conducts testing of the applicants in such areas as English language, economics, statistics, econometrics that allows selecting the most talented and competent individuals.<sup>31</sup>

The IFMR changed its remuneration policy and introduced financial incentives for high quality research work. Once a year, all employees are subjected to the review process that determines parameters of the next year contract, including a bonus for good performance. In addition, young staff can benefit from diverse training and networking opportunities and present their findings at numerous conferences and workshops and learn from national and international experts and publish their research jointly with more experienced experts.

The IFMR, due to UNDP support, strengthened its capacity to compete for diverse grants and research opportunities that will help it to generate additional resources (e.g., through paid trainings, regional development) to maintain high caliber experts on board. As the IFMR is a committed counterpart in the Project and as reported, has contributed its own resources, in particular, through cost sharing and providing premises for Project staff and events, it is a good indicator that the Institute will continue with many Project's activities in the future.

The IFMR will continue producing high quality analytical products and support regional planning. Trained young economists employed by the IFMR will continue to use skills acquired either in the Institute or other government institutions. Forums of Economists and Young Economists will most likely be continued by the IFMR in collaboration with Tashkent Westminster University. New tools and methodologies for macroeconomic forecasting and assessing business climate introduced with the Project support will be used and further enhanced by the IFMR. Without further donor funding, some activities – in particular organisation of study tours, engagement of international consultants would unlikely to be continued.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Lessons Learned

The evaluation identifies a number of lessons learned:

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<sup>31</sup> Юсупов Ю.Б., Оценка работы проекта Программы Развития ООН в Узбекистане “Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels” в 2009-2012 гг., 2012

- It takes long time to build capacity of research policy institutes and these reforms are by their nature complex and long-term. The outcomes and impacts of capacity building interventions depend on other factors such as increased demand for evidence in decision making, emergence of culture of open discussions of complex economic transformation, clear separation of economic and political spheres and others. The institutes and donors should have a clear long term capacity building roadmap that should acknowledge the importance of these important factors beyond think-tank capacity building focus.
- It is insufficient to focus only on building research capacity of think tanks, equal emphasis should be put on strengthening their ability to develop and express in easy to understand language practical real policy solutions. Policy research should not end up with publishing a high quality analytical product with sound recommendations – the focus should be made on affecting policy change.
- Monitoring and Evaluation framework with inclusion of mechanisms and indicators for collecting evidence and monitoring the use of Project results, with particular emphasis on the policy dimension, is critical in keeping the Project focused and should be established during the inception phase of any project. Lack of the monitoring mechanism limits the assessment of impact and project contribution to policy changes.

The trajectory of economic reforms in Uzbekistan clearly demonstrates that their direction and depth depends largely on the decisions of the political leadership. It is unlikely that the current economic model of growth would be sustainable in the long run, and further reforms may include opening up of the economy, privatization, decentralization and empowering citizens to contribute to economic developments. Regardless of the extent and direction of economic reforms, the IFMR is well positioned to contribute to this process.

## 5.2 Key limitations

This evaluation observed variations in quality and impact of the IFMR publications and other activities resulting from a number of factors. The IFMR operates within its mandate and its work is shaped by the political context and degree of top decision makers' willingness to pursue economic reforms. Some other limitations include:

- Overall impression is that the Project has been effective in delivering its outputs and the consultant was positively impressed to find many examples of Project impacts. However, the impacts of these outputs are difficult to ascertain objectively due to the absence of tangible impact monitoring data for much of the different Project work and a limited feedback mechanism from Project target audiences. The Project reports along with other documentation do not capture specific long-term outcomes and impacts, which is a missed opportunity given its five year duration. The Project reports do not clearly identify lessons learned and do not include substantiated recommendations for improved performance, including cost-saving strategies. The Project, for instance, did not monitor systemically how many government decisions were influenced by its policy work.



- The IFMR Project has too broad areas of focus that are not aligned with UNDP areas of competitive advantage. As a result, UNDP was unable to provide corporate expertise in some areas of economic research implemented by the Project.
- The IFMR Project analytical products have uneven quality and sophistication of analysis and policy recommendations.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The IFMR plays a vital role in research of economic and social information, and through the credibility, sophistication and depth of that analysis has carved an influential niche. In Uzbekistan, economic and social policies come from the center, while the citizens and civil society have very limited opportunities and capacity to influence state policies. The trajectory of economic reforms in Uzbekistan clearly demonstrates that their direction and depth depends largely on the decisions of the political leadership. The possibilities of emergence of alternative power centers are restricted through formal and informal rules and practices. Within these institutional and political arrangements, policymakers value technocrats' opinions and the IFMR is well positioned to influence Government decisions. It is unlikely that the current economic model of growth is sustainable in the long run, and further reforms may include opening up of the economy, privatization, decentralization and empowering citizens to contribute to economic developments. The economic policies have to ensure that Uzbekistan is not stuck in the middle income trap, when countries that achieve middle income status are losing their competitive edge in the exportation of manufactured goods because their wages are on a rising trend. The issues of potentially increasing inequality will have to be addressed to ensure that all can benefit from and contribute to economic growth. Regardless of strategic direction selected by the country leadership in economic reforms, the IFMR is well positioned to contribute to this process.

Due to UNDP support, the IFMR experts acquired the necessary expertise in the course of their work on policy analysis projects. They have solid understanding of main economic theories, econometrics, research tools and in-depth understanding of specifics of Uzbekistan's economic and political realities. The IFMR Project research products not only employ the modern advanced economic research methodologies but also explore the relevant international experiences and assess their applicability to realities of Uzbekistan.

The IFMR Project reduced gaps between policy makers and research community and provided solid evidence based research to decision makers. The Ministry of Economy staff, for instance, indicated that they highly evaluate analytical work produced by the IFMR. As an intellectual body creating ideas, the IFMR is ready to serve beneficiaries beyond its traditional partners outlined in the Project document. Upgrading the role of IFMR and expanding a range of its beneficiaries to include more line ministries will contribute to better Project results.

In consultant's view, the IFMR has the necessary expertise and institutional capacity to assume more significant roles in shaping economic and social policies in Uzbekistan. Many policies could have been improved if ministries' functions of policy advising, appraising and oversight are supported by good quality and timely policy research and debates among policy makers and researchers. The support for strengthening capacity of both demand (policy makers) and supply

sides (research institutions) and the linkages between the two should be the main focus of policy capacity building of UN partners for the next UNDAF cycle.

### **5.1 Recommendations for the Government and UNDP: Potential Measures to Improve the Policy Cycle in Uzbekistan**

The Government's goal is to make Uzbekistan an industrialized, high middle-income country by 2050 and continue transition to a more market-oriented economy to ensure equitable distribution of growth between regions and to maintain infrastructure and social services. The transformation of Uzbekistan's economy in the long run depends on the time it takes for the government to withdraw from its remaining involvement in state ownership and control of important elements of the economy, reorganize its institutions and retrain its personnel to be compatible with the needs of the market economy.

Although the state investment may remain a main source of growth as the Government will continue implementing large development programs, such growth model is not sustainable in the long run. The Government may want to consider more systemic economic reforms in the short-term perspective in response to such external economic factors as lower global prices for cotton and gold, coupled with declining external demand in such key trading partners as the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, and Ukraine and projected fall in remittances from the Russian Federation.<sup>32</sup>

To further climb to the next phase of development and ensure stable economic growth, the Government will be looking for new sources of growth and practical country-tailored solutions. The need for high quality macro-economic research and policy advice will be growing as the Government will attempt to develop a new and sustainable growth model. As the practice of evidence based decision making is not institutionalized in Uzbekistan, the national partners will be looking forward to obtain good quality, objective and comprehensive analyses of the socioeconomic situation and possible responses and the IFMR is well positioned to address this need.

As the IFMR capacities have been strengthened through UNDP support and it demonstrated its capacity to deliver solid analytical work in diverse areas such as macroeconomic policies and business environment, the Government will rely on it in the following areas:

- advising the government on strategies to maintain macroeconomic stability, including but not limited to conducting analysis of national macroeconomic indicators and making short and medium-term forecasts;
- preparing forecasts and background papers for the budget cycle;
- advice on policies to promote private sector development (e.g., IFMR's comprehensive and regular survey-based assessments of business environment) and assessing the impact of new policies on the business climate;
- supporting regional development through methodological and practical support in developing regional development strategies and action plans and
- contributing to national strategic planning (e.g, Vision 2030, sectoral strategies etc.)

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<sup>32</sup> ADB. 2014. Asian Development Outlook 2014 Update. Manila.

The IFMR and other socioeconomic think tanks in Uzbekistan can play a critical role in advancing policy cycle reforms and promoting evidence based policy making in Uzbekistan. To advance this broad reform agenda and strengthen socioeconomic policy tanks capacity to contribute to it, UNDP is advised:

**Develop and maintain a strategic, long-term focus in supporting think tanks, including the IFMR, in Uzbekistan.** There is a growing Government interest in more systemic “policy cycle reform” with particular focus on using more evidence at all stages of decision making, implementation and monitoring. Given the complexity of tasks involved, the overall approach of UNDP to policy reform needs to be more strategic and cover a long-term agenda. It has to be integrated with the economic and sectoral work on the one hand and the forthcoming UNDAF country programming on the other. This may require a comprehensive roadmap of “policy cycle reforms”, including the role of think tanks and the IFMR in particular, that will have to reflect local context, historical background of public policy reforms, institutional assessment and clearly outline a sequence of changes required to improve the policy cycle. The overall approach will necessarily be long term, involve all interested UN agencies and will need to be implemented incrementally and flexibly since it is not possible to identify all changing government priorities and uncertainties inherent in such complex reforms. It is not sufficient, for instance, to put in place a legal framework but it is necessary to build capacities of key partners in developing and implementing evidence based policies that may take at least a few years. More specifically, in the areas of socioeconomic policies as covered through this evaluation, UNDP can provide additional support in:

- facilitating public policy debates and dialogues between demanders and producers of policy research to create a strong demand for high quality policy research;
- improving knowledge and skills of policy makers in using socioeconomic analysis for policy development, implementation and monitoring; and
- building networks among policy makers and think tanks/research institutions.

Despite the indisputable merits of demand-driven technical assistance to think tanks in Uzbekistan and notwithstanding the increased ability of policy makers to use evidence, there is a danger that purely demand-driven projects will simply meet the parochial needs of specific counterpart agencies and not the needs of the system as a whole or strategic priorities of policy cycle reforms. The consultant believes that think tanks in Uzbekistan have sufficient capacity to undertake policy research projects addressing broad systemic issues and it is time to shift to UN umbrella projects supporting all think tanks and advancing systemic reform agenda. UN partners are advised to strike a balance between typical demand-driven interventions that help the partners to move in a direction in which they want to move and a need to have a vision and strategy and pursue more systemic socioeconomic changes.

**Establish a high level Advisory Board with representation from the Government and UN agencies to oversee implementation of a cross-sectoral UN as One policy cycle reform project.** In light of declining budgets of UNDP and taking into consideration successful examples of effective collaboration and commonly identified needs in building state capacities in evidence-informed decisionmaking, the Advisory Board could identify key objectives and milestones of “policy cycle reforms” and identify responsibilities of UN agencies involved. The implementation of UN as One approach can increase effectiveness and impact of the UN System, demonstrate the practical benefits of effective horizontal collaboration to national partners, and reduce UN system transaction costs. Better coordination of donor efforts would help to build intra-governmental coordination and avoid wasteful duplication of efforts.

In the area of socioeconomic analysis, experts do not always provide a singular solution to a particular problem, and wide variations occur in analyses depending on assumptions, data, and the perspective of the analyst. Consensus-building is an essential part of any policy reform effort. Without all partners on board the policy cycle reform can only be partially effective. The Advisory Board could build consensus and adopt a clear statement of priorities that would allow the IFMR and other think tanks to refuse to take on certain kinds of routine requests from ministries. The consultant found that the IFMR is often engaged into addressing the most pressing Government needs that diverts its attention from more systemic policy research. The Advisory Board will help also to narrow the gap between research recommendations and expectations of policy makers, and increase the practicality and applicability of research results. Clearly articulated, substantiated with evidence policy options presented through public policy debates and dialogues between demanders and producers of policy research will contribute to knowledge improvement of policy makers.

**A joint UN policy cycle reform project can support a number of intersectoral socioeconomic actionable research initiatives and capacity building measures identified by the Advisory Group that will include the IFMR and other think tanks.** Although UNDP has numerous comparative advantages, there is a range of factors beyond UNDP control that can hamper work of UNDP with research institutes/think tanks in Uzbekistan:

- a highly vertical state decision making model that dramatically reduces the incentives for research institutes that are funded by the state and are directly accountable to top Government institutions to challenge the status quo and offer innovative ideas and solutions;
- lack or limited statistical information and unwillingness of authorities to share statistics to develop effective policies and monitor their impact;
- underdeveloped democratic institutions and low public “demand” for innovative economic policy advice; and
- limited number of research institutes/think tanks capable to produce independent and high quality socioeconomic analysis and recommendations.

The consultant finds that the IFMR is well positioned to lead and participate in many cross sectoral socioeconomic policy research initiatives. The IFMR has the following comparative advantages:

- strong staff skills in macro-economic analysis, regional development, banking sector and other areas;
- capacity and skills of carrying out solid analysis utilizing sophisticated models and approaches, including forecasting;
- interdisciplinary capacity that cover such diverse areas as macroeconomics, sectoral and social policies, regional development, business environment and others;
- reliability;
- stability of the core management and staff;
- access to internal government data; and
- direct access to decision makers that allows promoting evidence based approaches in policymaking.

One of the cross-cutting strategic initiative that can be addressed is **inclusive growth** that the IFMR has already started to explore in its publications.<sup>33</sup> Economic growth is fundamentally important for Uzbekistan's development, but it does not automatically result in decreased inequalities and human development of all. Although the importance of economic growth to reduction of poverty and income inequalities is well known and documented, the research undertaken by the IFMR demonstrated that income inequalities negatively affect growth sustainability. High levels of human development cannot be achieved when some groups and individuals are vulnerable and excluded and when some groups face barriers to their participation in economic, social, cultural, and political life. Inequalities cripple participation in decision-making and political processes, undermine the flow of knowledge and information, and isolate people and communities.

It is not sufficient to develop a new economic growth model for Uzbekistan - macroeconomic and structural policies should expand economic opportunities for diverse groups, including job-seekers, employed, self-employed, owners of small and medium size enterprises, women, people living in remote areas, those living in environmentally challenging conditions, persons with disabilities and others. These diverse groups should be empowered to participate in and benefit from growth by enhancing their human capacities through investing in education, health, and basic social services. The budget revenues that increase as a result of economic growth should be used effectively to address multiple inequalities in society to share equitably the monetary and non-monetary benefits of growth through social protection, a balanced territorial development and other measures. The importance of non-monetary benefits should be emphasized because increased material wealth does not necessarily imply better life satisfaction. The consequences of economic growth are more important for human development rather than levels of economic growth.

Another area of strategic importance that can be identified for strategic cross-sectoral policy research is **green growth**. Uzbekistan is facing a wide range of environmental challenges, including those related to the Aral Sea crisis. The acceleration of industrialization and urbanization will continue to have negative effects on natural resources and environmental quality, unless critical policies are reformed and practices are changed. Unaddressed environmental challenges could hamper country's economic growth, lead to major reversals in terms of income, health and education outcomes for some vulnerable groups and jeopardise sustainable development of all. This is particularly visible in Uzbekistan where environmental degradation intensifies inequality through adverse impacts on already disadvantaged people. Agricultural production is of prime importance to Uzbekistan and any negative environmental impacts will negatively affect human development of diverse social groups including the poor.

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<sup>33</sup> Чепель С.В., Системный анализ и моделирование перспектив устойчивого развития национальной экономики Узбекистана, Монография, Ташкент: IFMR, 2014; Чепель С.В., Абдуллаев Р., Хамидов Б., Влияние экономического роста на сокращение уровня малообеспеченного населения Узбекистана, Брошюра ПРООН и ИПМИ. Ташкент 2012 г., Хамидов Б., Алиев А., Формирование институтов инклюзивного роста как фактор устойчивого роста экономики (выводы из опыта успешно развивающихся стран Азии), Сборник Форума молодых ученых экономистов, ИПМИ, Ташкент, 2014 г.; Чепель С., Ибрагимова Н.М., Салаходжаев Р., Хамидов Б. и др. Прогноз социально-экономического развития Республики Узбекистан на 2015-2017 годы, Минэкономики, 2014 г.

The actionable research could explore environmental sustainability in connection with other fundamental development issues, including economic development, equity, social development and human security and identify specific channels that will make green policies contribute to economic growth. The economic growth should be clean and efficient in use of natural resources.

Another cross-cutting area of focus can be **monitoring of the effects and impacts of government policies**. The consultant heard from many interviewees that decision makers and public administration want to know the outcomes or impacts of government decisions. Good results-focused public policies address government priorities, have performance measures embedded into programs and activities so that expectations are clearly articulated and progress is regularly monitored and evaluated, and well coordinated with other strategies and activities across ministries. Continuous policy monitoring and evaluation is critically important to policy success as it helps to evaluate whether policy priorities are correctly identified and whether the policy is achieving its expected outcomes. Monitoring and evaluation help also ministries learn lessons and share successful practices in policy development, coordination and implementation. It informs decisions on whether the policy should be adjusted if intended results are not being achieved or even terminated altogether. The current policy cycle in Uzbekistan does not have a mechanism for ongoing, regular performance measurement capturing how well policies are meeting their anticipated results and think tanks can feel this gap by monitoring key policies identified by the national partners and UN agencies.

**In the area of regional development**, the consultant was positively impressed with the regional development component of the IFMR project. The interviews in Andijan region confirmed the practical utility of the IFMR supports in developing regional development strategies and action plans. The methodology for regional plans development reflects national specifics and was well received by the regions so it would be beneficial to expand it to as many regions and support them with developing their own strategies and action plans. The IFMR is well positioned to continue working in this area, generate lessons learned and promote regional plans country-wide. The importance of regional development is increasing in its significance as it was demonstrated by multiple requests from regions to support them with developing their regional strategies and action plans

**There is a clear need to improve coordination of UN system and national partners in the area of regional and local development to avoid duplication and achieve synergy.**

Local economic development and governance support could become one of the major fields of Government focus in Uzbekistan. Presently, as far as the consultant understands, there is no clearly defined strategy regarding decentralization and the probability that broader decentralization reforms that could re-define the roles and responsibilities of central government bodies, regions and municipalities, decentralize the authority for service provision to the lowest possible level and redefine responsibilities for budget revenue collection and expenditures are extremely low. Most likely, the decentralization will be piecemeal and the regional authorities will be required to assume more responsibilities for economic development. To effectively fulfill new responsibilities, capacities of regional and local authorities would have to be strengthened that will require coordinated capacity building efforts of the UNCT. As UNDP has solid global and regional expertise in supporting decentralization and regional/local plans development, it is well positioned to strengthen capacities of regional and local authorities. It may be important in addition to strengthening technical skills of regional authorities in planning, resource allocation and economic management,

to strengthen the mechanisms allowing the voices of the poor and other disadvantaged groups to be communicated to regional and local decision makers.

**In the area of building capacities of public administration in socioeconomic actionable research**, the IFMR and other think tanks can play an important role in promoting evidence based approaches to policymaking and monitoring. In Uzbekistan, the evidence is not sufficiently used in the policy development process through its core stages and think tanks can play critical role in strengthening capacity of public administration by providing trainings and seminars on practical aspects of using data and evidence through all stages of the policy cycle, including development of policy options, implementation and monitoring. The consultant believes that massive training programs that will be attended by hundreds of government officials and civil servants may be counterproductive as the best approach would be learning by doing on specific examples and tasks that public servants have to address. The IFMR, for instance, can work directly with the Ministry of Economy and the Academy of Public Administration and focus on such areas as forecasting, modeling, macroeconomic policy analysis, use of statistical data in policy work, regional development, etc. Think tanks can provide practical and hands-on training for public servants on how to assess policy alternatives relying on solid evidence (e.g., distributional effects of policy reforms on the well-being or welfare of the targeted groups), identify policy instrument(s) to be used, and outline sequence of implementation steps. Particular attention could be paid to policy implementation, with focus on specific targets, performance measures and indicators capturing policy success. Think tanks could be engaged into implementing distance public administration education programs targeting regional and local authorities. The IFMR, for instance, could develop an on line course on how to develop regional development strategies and action plans.

The Economic Forums can be further supported to build fora for high quality socioeconomic research and innovative ideas. It may be beneficial to:

- focus Forums agenda on key issues for research identified by the Advisory Board to promote broader discussions;
- invite international speakers, including UNDP staff, with relevant practical development experiences. International donors may help in identifying appropriate international experts and cover their costs of participation;
- invite more representatives of the private sector and regional and local authorities; and
- prepare and widely disseminate summaries of Forums' key findings and policy recommendations notes.

UN partners may purchase annual subscription to the leading scientific depository of scientific publications, such as Elsevier, Science Direct, Taylor and Francis, Sage and Wiley, as well as for the global statistical databases such as CEIC Database, Economics Intelligence Unit (Database, etc. and procure the necessary books and monographs than can be shared by all think tanks, research and academic institutes and universities. Economics researchers and practitioners will have an access to the most recent high quality research and international data for their work. Also a training grant fund can be established to support the participation of young think tanks staff in short-term courses, conferences in the most renowned scientific institutes and universities in Asia, Europe and the US.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> These ideas were recommended by Dr. Chepel. Чепель С., Руководитель проекта, КРАТКАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА о результатах участия специалистов Проекта по анализу и прогнозу основных макроэкономических показателей на средне- и долгосрочную перспективу ИПМИ в исследованиях под эгидой ПРООН и предложения по будущему сотрудничеству;

To ensure relevance and practical applicability of socioeconomic research, Advisory Group meetings could be conducted on quarterly basis. In a highly hierarchical decision making system in Uzbekistan, the priorities may change and priorities and implementation approaches will have to be revised to ensure orchestrated response from the UNCT. A joint UN policy reform project should be flexible in supporting specific emerging needs and strengthen both demand (policy makers) and supply sides (research institutions) and the linkages between the two to advance economic policy reforms in Uzbekistan.

## 5.2 Recommendations to Strengthen IFMR capacity

The discussion below identifies specific suggestions for UNDP consideration on how to support the IFMR through the forthcoming UNDAF cycle. The consultant focused on the IFMR but some of suggested capacity building measures can benefit other think tanks in Uzbekistan. There is a low probability of dramatic changes in the state reforms trajectory but the potential has to be built to create a critical mass of economists and social scientists capable to lead more systemic reforms and UNDP should adopt a strategic approach to build their capacities and empower them. The improved capacity of think tanks and better partnerships between national and international research institutes will improve quality and relevance of policy research that will contribute to institutionalization of the culture of evidence based decision making.

The consultant finds that it is unlikely that a market of independent think tanks will emerge in Uzbekistan through the next UNDAF cycle as the policy-making remains a closed process. As a result, a tried model of supporting think tanks in Western CIS countries where grants were provided to non-governmental organizations to stimulate increased public debate and research is not yet applicable to conditions of Uzbekistan. The IFMR would not be able to become a think tank in its Western sense and UNDP support should be developed keeping these realities in mind. On the one hand, the IFMR would not be totally independent in its analysis and will be restricted by political realities. On the other hand, the IFMR will have direct access to decisionmakers and will be able to promote evidence based approaches to policymaking. The IFMR is well positioned to go beyond just evidence based approaches and promote the new cutting edge knowledge in the area of economic analysis into decision-making that can be further enhanced by UN/DP support in facilitating IFMR access to global knowledge networks, including UN system corporate expertise.

The IFMR capacities have been strengthened through the UNDP project, but it will face a number of challenges as demands from its clients for economic analysis will continue to change, becoming more and more advanced. The IFMR has to continue strengthening its own capacity in order to answer Government requests in the future. In addition to building its internal capacity, it will have to accelerate development of partnerships with the best specialized institutions and experts in the region and beyond.

**Functional review of the IFMR can strengthen its capacity to pursue actionable innovative research.** The consultant finds, in particular, that the organizational structure of the IFMR can be improved to create incentives for staff from different units to pursue cross-sectoral research and explore innovative ideas that may not be always agreed with unit leads. It seems there are limited opportunities to “pursue intra-institute discussion, with each team tending to work in isolation, which



also contributed to a lack of esprit de corps, and to lack of healthy academic debate.”<sup>35</sup> Cross IFMR teams working on cross cutting issues reporting to one team lead can be created to promote horizontal exchange of ideas, mutual learning and innovativeness. Ideally, a comprehensive functional review of the IFMR can be undertaken to assess its structure, organization and operations, decision-making processes, personnel policies and management and reporting systems.

**The IFMR can be supported in strengthening its capacities to undertake actionable policy relevant socioeconomic research and establish and institutionalize partnerships with relevant think tanks and research institutes.** The IFMR research should be more consistent in its quality, level of sophistication, and policy relevance. The consultant believes that targeted training on how to develop high quality policy papers and briefs can be conducted for the IFMR to make them consistent with the best international practices of policy documents development.

Policy documents should be written in easy to understand language with ideas expressed in a logical, progressive manner and presented in a reader-friendly format because busy policy makers are much more likely to read a document if it has a clear structure. They should quickly be able to see the main topics covered and the analytical approach. If the structure is clear, even those readers who cannot read the entire document will pick it up, quickly turn to the sections addressing the issues of interest to them, and study these sections. If the structure is clear, the reader can easily grasp the overall message of the policy document and will have a clear view of “the big picture,” making it easier to understand the more detailed arguments.

Often the IFMR products are very technical, and to make them more easily accessible to decisionmakers, the IFMR staff could benefit from a training aimed at developing skills of producing policy documents that will clearly identify the economic issues, examine factors that contribute to the issue, develop policy options, explore experiences of other countries, and recommend one option that could be implemented taking into consideration fiscal, technical and human resources realities. The IFMR products should be easily accessible in terms of format, language and length through such traditional and innovative ways of information dissemination as infographics, one-pagers, executive summaries, and blogs. Although the publications in international refereed journals is a good indicator of the IFMR capacities, the primary focus should be made on developing high quality policy papers and briefs that can be understood by ministers and other policy makers who may not have the necessary technical expertise on the subject and may have difficulties of drawing out relevant information from too technical and/or academic work. Any good policy paper recommends practical and realistic solutions for real-world problems to a broad audience and includes only the relevant knowledge and data necessary as evidence to support the arguments. It takes time and a lot of practical exercise to develop these skills and the IFMR may benefit from the training delivered by an international economic policy practitioner.

**Technical assistance should be provided to increase the capacity of the IFMR to develop dissemination and advocacy strategies and materials.** The IFMR reports should be vigorously disseminated, including to the Government, academic community, the private sector, media, and the general public. Despite the added time and expense, it may well be worthwhile for the IFMR to prepare two versions of key studies and reports: one for government technical staff and decision-makers and another for the press and the general public. Few page policy briefs summarizing key

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<sup>35</sup> Sheila Marnie, Suggestions for Future Support to the Institute for Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research, November 2012

IFMR research could be developed and issued electronically quarterly as a media release to media and other interested parties (Ministries, public agencies, think tanks and donors).

Effective communication with the public and stakeholders are critically important as they help to make sure that policy recommendations are understood and supported, improving the likelihood that they will be accepted. Public consultation has always been an acknowledged means to explore ideas, find effective policy solutions, create consensus and increase transparency in decision-making.

The IFMR is advised to conduct periodic briefings to present results of its research and analysis to policy-makers, experts, media, economics students and the general public. All research publications should provide clear justification why they have been produced and identify specific policy issue they address and provide recommendations explicitly linked to analysis conducted and other implications for policy-making process.

**It is necessary to engage a full time Internationally Trained Economic Advisor as an important quality assurance instrument as soon as possible.** Ideally, this position can be assumed by a citizen of Uzbekistan with Western degree in economics who would be well familiar with the international approaches to economic policy analysis and have the necessary political acuity and sensitivity of national realities. Greater reliance on Uzbek experts seems appropriate at this time when the emphasis should be made on relevant economic policies tailored to the unique features of the economic, political and social environment of Uzbekistan. The IFMR, with UNDP support may consider making an institutional agreement with international organisations and national academic institutions such as the Westminster University that could provide additional experts on different topics on ad hoc basis.

**There is a need to develop a quality control mechanism** to ensure that the IFMR products supported by UNDP and other UN partners meet the international standards and reflect successful practices. Once TORs for policy research tender are developed by UNDP Project office, it could be circulated for comments to beneficiary ministries, agencies and UNDP. It is advisable for some major policy research products to engage either corporate UNDP or outside experts for all stages of research work. The first drafts of policy research reports could be commented by the Project office and peer reviewed by UNDP and independent experts. UNDP could collect and analyse the feedback and communicate it to researchers to ensure that they are addressed in the following drafts. After the second draft is submitted, a technical seminar can be organised with attendance of the Project office, beneficiary agencies, UNDP and peer reviewers for comments. The final approval of the research paper can be issued by jointly UNDP and IFMR's senior management. As a first step towards building the quality control system, a formalized system of peer review could be introduced that will subject key products prepared by the IFMR to peer review. A simple template can be developed for peer reviewers to answer a limited number of questions to assess the quality, applicability, relevance and usefulness of its products.

**The IFMR is advised to involve government officials in the process of preparation of policy studies and place its staff for at least 6 months secondments into respective state institutions.** The consultant found that many research publications produced by the IFMR are academic and technically complex for many public servants and decisionmakers to understand and act upon. On the one hand, the engagement of government officials into actionable research could improve their technical skills and knowledge of sophisticated analytical tools and expose them to

the international approaches to economic policymaking. On the other hand, the IFMR experts will learn policy-making realities and implementation details that will help them to make their research more practical.

**The IFMR can assume more responsibilities for training of public servants on economic policy analysis and should be supported in this area.** Partner ministries' personnel development strategies can be developed and specific areas where the IFMR can provide training should be identified. The IFMR can collaborate with the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Uzbekistan and focus on such areas as economic policy analysis and monitoring, forecasting methodologies, ex-ante policy assessments and other areas. The IFMR can be supported with establishing a system to track training opportunities to records participants who are selected and attend trainings, measure their capacity improvement, level of application and retention of skills and knowledge to collect the necessary information to improve the training programs offered.

**The IFMR can adopt individualized and better targeted professional development approaches, targeting in particular young IFMR staff.** It is advisable to conduct individual assessments and promote self-assessment of training needs among all IFMR employees. These assessments will accurately define gaps between existing staff competencies and the required competency levels. On the basis of such assessments, individual professional development plans could be developed and include knowledge and skills that the staff member would like to acquire along with a list of potential training opportunities. The value of traditional seminars on the basics of different areas of econometrics, statistics, economics is limited when the staff members would like to acquire more specialized knowledge. The professional learning plan will be reviewed and approved by the IFMR management. Potential opportunities include paid internships, collaboration with the internationally recognized experts, access to webinars and other web-based opportunities, etc.<sup>36</sup>

### 5.3 Recommendations to UNDP to Improve Project Operations

**Design and implement an effective exit strategy** for the IFMR project. The project may be extended for one or a few years, but it is necessary to have a clear exit strategy that should ensure that its key achievements such as young professionals retained by the Institute will be secured when the project is completed.

The consultant collected proposals from the IFMR team leads on potential areas of research/policy work that can be supported by UNDP. A list of suggestions is quite extensive and includes such areas as the role of innovations in structural and technological changes in the industry; investment climate and factors to improve it; agricultural development in conditions of limited land and water resources; mechanisms of increasing productivity and effectiveness of the national economy and reducing its dependence on natural resources; energy efficiency; transition to inclusive economic growth, focused on solving social problems and improving the sustainability and efficiency of

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<sup>36</sup> The consultant is indebted to Dr. Chepel for this recommendation. See, Чепель С., Руководитель проекта, КРАТКАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА о результатах участия специалистов Проекта по анализу и прогнозу основных макроэкономических показателей на средне- и долгосрочную перспективу ИПМИ в исследованиях под эгидой ПРООН и предложения по будущему сотрудничеству

resource use; models of spatial regional development; inter-regional and inter-territorial projects to support industrial development in regions; integrated rural development<sup>37</sup>

As a part of its exit strategy, UNDP may help the IFMR to group these topics into a few cross-cutting areas such as “economy modernization through reduction of dependence on natural resources and innovations” and “inclusive growth” and provide small funding to encourage the interdisciplinary research work in the IFMR. UNDP may support the IFMR in establishing and institutionalizing relations with a number of international leading economics institutions. UNDP, with the IFMR, may identify respective countries and institutions and either directly or through UNDP COs establish direct lines of communication. As UNDP is well respected internationally, these strategies may be successful so that by the time of Project completion, the IFMR would be able to rely on established international networks of expertise. UNDP and other UN partners may also facilitate access of IFMR experts to global and regional UNDP/UN corporate resources.

The IFMR capacities in funds raising should be strengthened prior to Project completion. UNDP may strengthen the IFMR capacities in developing successful grant/tender proposals that will improve its competitiveness and will allow generating additional revenue to support the IFMR development.

**Enhance UNDP M&E function of UNDP supports provided to think tanks.** Strengthening of UNDP M&E function of its supports of think tanks can enhance the quality of interventions by setting specific and measurable output, outcome and impact measures; improve efficiency of allocation of resources; and support regular and results-oriented reporting on the project' progress and inform corrective actions, if necessary. It is necessary in particular to survey the Project beneficiaries to assess the relevance, quality and potential impact of economic research. It could be as simple as sending short e-mails to publications recipients, Forums and other presentations attendees requesting their opinions and recommendations about the Project analytical products. Such indicators as numbers of trainings provided, publications and research papers are good output measures, but they do not capture the outcomes. Some outcome measures may be satisfaction of recipients with the trainings received, satisfaction of clients with the quality and timeliness of analytical work, adoption of policy recommendations by the Government, number of regional development strategies drafted, approved and implemented; use of economic research in university curricula, etc.

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<sup>37</sup> Муинов Д.А., Руководитель проекта, Краткая информация об участии сотрудников ИПМИ Проекта по структурным преобразованиям и диверсификации экономики, привлечению инвестиций в исследованиях и мероприятиях ПРООН за 2011- 2014 гг., а также перспективах дальнейшего сотрудничества; Чепель С., Руководитель проекта, КРАТКАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА о результатах участия специалистов Проекта по анализу и прогнозу основных макроэкономических показателей на средне- и долгосрочную перспективу ИПМИ в исследованиях под эгидой ПРООН и предложения по будущему сотрудничеству; Назаров, Предлагаемое сотрудничество ИПМИ с ПРООН,

## 6. ANNEXES

### 6.1 Terms of Reference for the evaluation



#### UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TERMS OF REFERENCE/INDIVIDUAL CONTRACT

#### I. Job Information

Position Title:	International Consultant (Project Evaluator)
Project Title:	“Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and regional levels” (Project ID: 00070560)
Department:	Economic Governance Unit, UNDP Uzbekistan
Duration of the service:	30 working days, including Desk-based work (20 working days) In-country mission (10 days)
Duty Station	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Expected places of travel	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Reports To:	Head of Economic Governance Unit

#### II. Background Information

Taking into account the necessity of conducting thorough analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic trends and development scenarios at national as well as sectorial and regional levels, the Government has established the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research (IFMR) under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Institute’s main objectives are to conduct the analysis of macroeconomic tendencies and regional disparities, forecast economic performance, and design government economic policies that further secure economic growth and development nationwide.

The “Capacity building for economic forecasting and planning at national and local levels” project seeks to provide IFMR with technical assistance in elaboration and adoption of modern methodologies of macroeconomic forecasting as well as new tools for designing regional development strategies. Along with continuation of methodological support, strengthening the analytical and technical capacities of the young research personnel of the IFMR is viewed as an important element of the Project.

This project is intended to support the development of country-specific methodologies for analysis of economic growth factors and poverty indicators, balancing medium term macroeconomic forecasting parameters and elaboration of regional development strategies. The principal objective of this project is to enhance Government's capacity in medium term policy analysis and formulation at national and regional levels. Ultimately, the project is to provide policy makers with effective analysis and forecasting tools, which they can use in assessing the implications of recent crisis on the country, identifying future policy directions and elaborating sector and regional development programs.

In order to take stock of the project’s progress, its successes and weaknesses, the project needs the services of an external evaluator. The results of the evaluation will be used to provide the project

stakeholders with an unbiased outcome-level assessment of project results, while also providing lessons learned and directions for a possible next-stage cooperation framework between UNDP and the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research.

### III. Duties and Responsibilities

Under the direct supervision of the Head of Economic Governance Unit, the International Consultant will perform the following duties and tasks:

- To conduct an impartial and expert assessment of the outcome-level results of UNDP's capacity building project with the IFMR
- Assess the project relevance to Government priorities
- Assess how the analytical and knowledge products developed through the project support were used in the decision making process
- Assess the project effectiveness and capture its results and lessons learned against the expected targets, outputs and indicators laid down in the project document
- Gather substantive feedback from project stakeholders, including among the Institute's key beneficiaries and assess their satisfaction with the project that should cover such areas as its relevance and effectiveness, impact and sustainability
- Evaluate the project's contribution to strengthening the institute's capacity and contribution to economic and social research and policy development. Some specific areas to be explored include the project's contribution to the progress made in building IFMR's capacity to employ modern econometric tools for economic analysis and policy formulation, including in designing regional development policies
- The stakeholders' groups to be consulted should consist of:
  - Government Agencies
  - Academic and research community
  - International Community
  - Staff of the Institute
- Assess the effects of the Institute's key visibility tools (e.g., Forum of Economists, periodic publications, website, internal IT communication systems, etc.) that were supported by the project,
- Assess the project's partnership strategies, in particular the support provided to the Institute in establishing and maintaining linkages with foreign economic think-tanks
- Assess the project sustainability
- Based on the above evaluation, develop recommendations for necessary next-stage support aimed at increasing IFMR's capacities and strengthening its role as the leading national think-tank in the area of policy analysis.
- Assess the degree the degree to which the purpose of the project remains valid and pertinent
- Assess the extent to which a knowledge base is being established so that a sustainable capacity is being built for addressing the relevant development problems as well as the likelihood that the project will endure after active involvement of UNDP has ended
- Present the findings and recommendations to UNDP, and beneficiaries
- Review and elaborate on the comments presented with regard to the draft final report
- Review and incorporate into the final report the inputs provided by UNDP
- Provide quality assurance and ensure timely submission of the final evaluation report

### IV. Work schedule and Key Deliverables

**DELIVERABLES:**

<b>Stage I (10 days, desk-based work)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Liaise with UNDP EGU and formulate the list of necessary information to conduct the evaluation</li> <li>▪ Study the collected information and develop a feasible evaluation work plan, which includes the list of stakeholders with whom meetings of international evaluator should be arranged under the evaluation process</li> <li>▪ Agree upon the work plan and the schedule of meetings with UNDP EGU and IFMR project team</li> </ul>	10 September, 2014 <b>20%</b>
<b>Stage II (10 days, in-country mission)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet with the stakeholders of the project to collect related information and feedback on project's activities, and delivered outputs</li> <li>▪ Share and discuss with the project team and UNDP CO representatives the methodology to be applied for the evaluation of the project</li> <li>▪ Assess the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of delivered outputs within the overall development framework of the country</li> <li>▪ Analyze the level of project's relevance and adherence to strategic goals of the country</li> </ul>	20 September, 2014 <b>30%</b>
<b>Stage III (10 days, desk-based work)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and finalize the final evaluation report</li> <li>▪ Submit the final evaluation report to UNDP Uzbekistan</li> </ul>	30 September, 2014 <b>50%</b>

**Key deliverables:**

- Feasible evaluation work plan
- In-depth outcome-level assessment of the project results, including the review and summary of stakeholders' feedback and lessons learned;
- Final evaluation report with recommendations for further strengthening the capacities of the Institute and its role as the leading national think-tank on pressing socio-economic issues

**V. Competencies**

- Strong data collection, communication, analytical, research, and writing skills;
- Good knowledge and understanding of the project evaluation methodology.
- Extensive and in-depth experience in managing/monitoring/reviewing technical assistance projects in other countries; knowledge of the local context (economic and political situation) in the Central Asia region is desirable. Practical work experience within the United Nations system or international development organizations in countries with transition economies is an asset.
- Knowledge and practical application of RBM principles in programme and project evaluation;
- Client-orientation and excellent interpersonal and cross cultural communication skills;
- Ability to use information and communication technology as a tool and resource;

- Record of active involvement in the development of complex research and/or policy documents will be considered as an advantage
- Strong PC and IT communications skills

<b>VI. Qualifications Requirements</b>	
Education:	Advanced university degree in economics, business administration, management or related studies
Experience:	At least 5 years of experience in conducting programme and project evaluations. Proved record of good work experience in evaluating technical assistance projects in Uzbekistan
Language:	Fluency in English; Working knowledge of Russian is an asset



## 6.2 Additional methodology-related documentation

### Questionnaire for UNDP and project management and staff

#### *Relevance*

- Who are the key project's beneficiaries?
- Does the purpose of the project remain valid and pertinent? Please demonstrate with specific examples relevance of the IFMR project to Government priorities.
- Was the project flexible enough to respond to emerging national needs? What is the evidence?
- What are the mechanisms, if any, to ensure project's relevance?

#### *Effectiveness*

- Please assess project's progress towards the achievement of its expected outcomes. Please substantiate your observations with some examples and data.
- To what extent have the planned results been achieved to date (quantitative and qualitative) according to the Project LogFrame/results framework?
- Did the project activities manage to achieve systemic changes in economic policy making? What is the evidence?
- How were the analytical and knowledge products developed through the project support used in the decision making process? What is the evidence?
- What are the effects of the Institute's key visibility tools (e.g., Forum of Economists, periodic publications, website, internal IT communication systems, etc.)?
- How did the project contribute to strengthening the Institute's capacity and economic and social research and policy development (e.g., building IFMR's capacity to employ modern econometric tools for economic analysis and policy formulation, designing regional development policies)?
- How would you assess project stakeholders' satisfaction with its products and supports?
- To what degree are you satisfied with the project's performance? In your view, what are the most significant results and successes of the project?
- What are the main factors (positive and negative) beyond UNDP's control that affected or are affecting the achievement of the stated project's outcomes/outputs? How have these factors limited or facilitated progress towards the outcome/outputs?
- What are the unanticipated outcomes of the project implementation?

#### *Efficiency*

- How is the project managed?
- What are the benefits and limitations of the NIM implementation modality?
- How much time, resources, capacities and effort does it takes to manage the project and what are the gaps, if any?
- Could similar results have been achieved by other means at lower cost in the same time frame?
- Were the project outputs achieved in expected quantity and quality?
- Did the project management ensure quality and cost-effectiveness of the process of transforming inputs into outputs and outcomes? What is the evidence?
- Have been the timelines of activities always met? If not, why?
- Did the project management ensure proper co-ordination of activities and partners to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?

- How flexible was the project design in adapting to the changing environment and partners' needs?
- Can the costs of project deliverables be lowered while still achieving project objectives?
- Did the project apply cost-saving strategies? What are they? Did they work?
- How do you monitor the outcomes of the project? How is the collected information used to improve the project implementation?

*Partnership and coordination of development partners*

- What is the role of other development partners in the areas supported by the IFMR?
- Is there a coordination mechanism among international partners in place? If yes, how does it work?
- Has the IFMR project established arrangements (formal and informal) with policy makers to ensure relevance of its activities?
- What are the project's partnership strategies, in particular the support provided to the Institute in establishing and maintaining linkages with foreign economic think-tanks?
- How do you monitor and evaluate stakeholders and beneficiaries' satisfaction with the project deliverables?
- Has the Project Board met regularly and has it performed according to its TOR? Was it satisfied with the project performance and outcomes?
- What are the comparative advantages of UNDP in the areas supported by the IFMR?

*Impacts*

- What type of changes we should expect when the project is completed?
- Has the work of the project changed the opinions of government policy-makers, public opinion and public policy?
- What institutions were strengthened as a result of this project?
- What specific policies and legislative changes were informed by the IFMR project?
- What are the hard-to-measure impacts of the project (ones that cannot be easily quantified)?
- What can be done to maximize the project impact?

*Sustainability*

- What will be the project legacy?
- What are the project's sustainability strategies? Does the project have a clear exit strategy?
- How did the project contribute to human and institutional capacity building of IFMR to ensure sustainability of project interventions?
- Is there a strong sense of government ownership of the activities implemented by UNDP? Please substantiate your observations.
- What would happen if UNDP were unable to continue project funding?
- What is the evidence and likelihood that the project achievements will be enhanced by national partners and sustained thereafter?

*Recommendations for future UNDP project(s) in the areas supported by the IFMR*

- Do stakeholders, UNDP management and project management and staff believe that the project or some of its components should be extended beyond 2014? Why? Do you believe that some components of the project are more important than the others? If yes, which components?

## **UNDP Uzbekistan IFMR Report: Evaluation Report**

- What are the innovative approaches developed by UNDP IFMR project that can be replicated/scaled up?
- What are the lessons learned from the IFMR interventions?
- What are the potential areas/interventions that UNDP can pursue in the areas supported by the IFMR project?

### **Questions for National Partners**

- Are you a beneficiary or a partner of the IFMR project?
- Was the IFMR project support relevant to national government priorities?
- Does the purpose of the project remain valid and pertinent?
- Please describe specific IFMR products and activities and assess their relevance to government priorities.
- Was the project flexible enough to respond to emerging national needs? What is the evidence?
- How did you use the analytical and knowledge products developed through the project?
- Are you satisfied with the project's products and supports? In your view, what are the most significant results and successes of the project?
- How and what has changed as a result of the IFMR intervention?
- What are the unanticipated outcomes of the project implementation?
- What can UNDP do better to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and impacts of its IFMR project?
- How did the IFMR project partner with other organizations working in the same areas? Are you satisfied with the project partnership strategy?
- Are you a member of the Project Board? What are your impressions about its effectiveness and role in project implementation?
- What UNDP can do better than other partners in the areas supported by the IFMR project?
- Has the work of the project changed the opinions of government policy-makers, public opinion and public policy?
- What would happen if UNDP were unable to continue project funding?
- Do you think that the national partners will continue working in the areas supported by the project even when it is completed?
- Do you believe that the project or some of its components should be extended beyond 2014? Why? Do you believe that some components of the project are more important than the others? If yes, which components?
- What are the innovative approaches developed by UNDP IFMR project that can be replicated/scaled up?
- What are the lessons learned from the IFMR interventions?
- What are the potential areas/interventions that UNDP can pursue in the areas supported by the IFMR project?

### **Questions for international partners donors**

- Do you partner with the IFMR project?
- What is the role of other development partners in the areas supported by the IFMR project?
- Is there a coordination mechanism among international partners/donors in place? If yes, how does it work?

- Are you satisfied with the partnership arrangements? What can be done to improve partnership and collaboration of development partners in the areas supported by the project?
- Are you a member of the Project Board? What are your impressions about its effectiveness and role in project implementation?
- Does the project remain valid and pertinent to national priorities?
- Did the project activities manage to achieve systemic changes in economic policy making and IFMR capacity building?
- What do you think about project's analytical and knowledge products? Are you satisfied with them? Do you know if they were used by decision makers?
- Are you familiar with the Institute's key visibility tools (e.g., Forum of Economists, periodic publications, website, internal IT communication systems, etc.)? What are your impressions about their quality and potential impact?
- What specific policies and legislative changes were informed by the IFMR project?
- What are the hard-to-measure impacts of the project (ones that cannot be easily quantified)?
- What are the main factors (positive and negative) beyond UNDP's interventions that affected or are affecting the achievement of the stated project's outcomes/outputs?
- What are the comparative advantages of UNDP in the areas supported by the IFMR?
- What type of changes we should expect when the project is completed?
- Has the work of the project changed the opinions of government policy-makers, public opinion and public policy?
- What can be done to maximize the project impact?
- What is the evidence and likelihood that the project achievements will be enhanced by national partners and sustained thereafter?
- Should the project or some of its components be extended beyond 2014? Why? Do you believe that some components of the project are more important than the others? If yes, which components?
- What are the innovative approaches developed by UNDP IFMR project that can be replicated/scaled up?
- What are the lessons learned from the IFMR interventions?
- What are the potential areas/interventions that UNDP can pursue in the areas supported by the IFMR project?

## 6.3 Mission Program

Time	Activity	Participants
<b>WEEK 1</b>		
<b>15 September, Monday</b>		
<b>Arrival in Tashkent Airport at 01:40 (am), flight TK 370; Hotel pick up</b>		
14:00 – 14:30	Meeting with Economic Governance Unit, UNDP - Discussions on the purpose of the mission, review of the agenda, and expectations	UNDP internal meeting
14:30 – 15:30	Meeting with UNDP Management - Introduction, discussions on the purpose of the mission, review of the agenda, and expectations	UNDP internal meeting
16:00 – 17:00	Meeting at the Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research (IFMR)	IFMR management
17:00 – 18:00	Meeting at the Ministry of Economy	MoE representatives
<b>16 September, Tuesday</b>		
09:30 – 12:30	Meetings with key IFMR research teams	IFMR project leaders
14:30 – 15:30	Meeting with the Institute of Social Research (at UNDP or IFMR)	ISR management
16:00 – 17:00	Meeting at the Center for Economic Research	CER management
<b>17 September, Wednesday</b>		
09:30 – 10:30	Meeting at the German GIZ	GIZ representatives
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting at the World Bank	WB representatives
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting at Asian Development Bank	ADB representatives
15:30 – 16:30	Meeting at the Academy of Public Administration	APA representatives
16:30 – 17:30	Meeting at the Tashkent Westminster University	TWU representatives
<b>18 September, Thursday</b>		
09:00 – 18:00	Meeting with CER Meeting with Director of Institute for Social Researchers Deskwork Writing the report	CER management and teams Director of Institute for Social Researchers
<b>19 September, Friday</b>		
TBC	Trip to Andijan Meeting with local khokimiyat (regional municipality)	Team of local experts who have worked with IFMR on Andijan Regional Development Strategy, Khokim and Deputy of Andijan region, Khokims of Xonobod and Asaka
<b>WEEK 2</b>		
<b>22 September, Monday</b>		
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with Economic Governance Unit, UNDP - Joint review of preliminary findings	UNDP internal meeting
<b>23 September, Tuesday</b>		
10:00 – 11:00	Debriefing with the UNDP management	UNDP internal meeting
<b>24 September, Wednesday, Departure from Tashkent Airport at 08:15 am, flight TK 0369</b>		
<b>October 8</b>		
11:00 – 12:00	Skype interview with Dr. Vladimir Popov, UNDESA	Skype

#### 6.4 List of supporting documents reviewed

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UNDP. 2009. Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, p.56. United Nations Evaluation Group, Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, March 2008

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УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ, 2012.

Информация о реализации Программы мероприятий по реализации Стратегии Андижанской области. По состоянию на 1.07.2014

Д.М. Каримова, Е. Тищенко, Д. Джунайдуллаев, Ф. Шерзодов, Д. Каримов, Ф.Мажидов, АНАЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ДОКЛАД ОЦЕНКА УРОВНЯ ОБЕСПЕЧЕННОСТИ И ПОТРЕБНОСТИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ В ДОПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫХ ВИДАХ УСЛУГ (по результатам опроса потребителей в Самаркандской области), 2012

Махмудова Р., Садыков А., Абдуразаков А., Абдуназарова Н., Шаулов Д., Муминов Т., Подходы к оценке территориальной дифференциации социально-экономического развития Узбекистана, 2010

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