



# Independent Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy

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Final Report

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January 2009

## Preface

This is the first independent review of UNDP Evaluation Policy that was requested by the UNDP Executive Board in decision 2006/20 that approved the policy in 2006. The review assesses the performance of the evaluation function and the extent to which the organization has responded to the requirements of the policy and identifies lessons and recommended areas for the attention of the Executive Board, UNDP senior management and the Evaluation Office. The team of consultants conducted the review through two visits to NY headquarters and select country visits to interview UNDP staff and partners.

Comments on the final report of the Senior Independent Advisors, who guided the team of consultants, are also included in this publication. Their role was critical as the Evaluation Office did not manage or assure the quality of the report.

A number of people contributed to the review. I would like to especially thank the independent team composed of Sulley Gariba (Ghana), team leader, Paul Balogun (UK), co-author, Thanh An (Vietnam), team member and Viktoria Hildenwall (Sweden), contributor. We are deeply grateful to the senior independent advisors, Bob Picciotto, former Director General, Evaluation at the World Bank and Mashwahle J. Diphofa, currently Deputy Director-General of the Public Service Commission in South Africa, for their invaluable advice throughout the conduct of the review.

The review team interacted with UNDP senior management and UNDP colleagues in headquarters and country offices, associated funds and programmes, as well as members of the UNDP Executive Board, and I would like to thank them for their cooperation. Given the independent nature of this review, no Evaluation Office staff participated in the exercise as a team member. I would, however, like to thank colleagues, including Azusa Kubota, Concepcion Cole, Anish Pradhan and Florencia Tateossian, for providing management and logistical support.

Saraswathi Menon  
Director, Evaluation Office

January 2010

## Statement by the Senior Independent Advisors

As senior independent evaluation advisers we were tasked to attest to the relevance and quality of UNDP Evaluation Policy Review commissioned by the Evaluation Office (EO). This is the purpose of this note. It comments on the process, the coverage and the major recommendations of the Review

### Adequacy of the process

We are satisfied that the evaluation process was well managed and fully independent. We had an opportunity to comment on the evaluation approach and we were given full access to relevant documentation and to successive drafts.

EO management remained at arm's length from the evaluation process at all times. Our comments were given serious consideration by the independent evaluators. In response to the guidance we provided, they focused their analysis on the most salient issues.

EO was fully responsive when we suggested that more time and resources should be allocated to the Review to ensure its quality. Its decisive action to beef up the evaluation team helped bring the evaluation process to a satisfactory conclusion.

### Compliance with the terms of reference

As highlighted in our comments on the inception report, the resources initially allocated to the review were tight and the terms of reference unusually demanding. Given these constraints, the evaluators could not examine all features of evaluation excellence covered by the comprehensive terms of reference of the Review.

For example the final report does not examine the strategic relevance of evaluation programs, the quality of evaluation reports; their impact on management practices; the adequacy of evaluators' competencies; the quality of training, etc. Nor does it evaluate the role of UNDP in domestic evaluation capacity development, e.g. the extent to which UNDP's country assistance programs have increased the supply of evaluation skills and promoted the governance reforms required to enhance their effective use.

Notwithstanding these gaps, the Review provides a competent, objective and well reasoned assessment of the design of the Evaluation Policy and its implementation. It is fluently written; its conclusions are adequately grounded in evaluative evidence and its limitations are acknowledged by the authors. Thus, within its selective scope, the final report meets acceptable quality standards.

### Relevance of the Policy

The Review concludes that the UNDP Evaluation Policy was highly relevant and that its adoption has had a very positive impact on the workings of the Evaluation Office. We endorse this conclusion.

We also agree with the need to remedy the design weaknesses identified by the Review. Through judicious benchmarking with relevant comparators it brought out good practices that UNDP should emulate – IFAD with respect to evaluation independence and UNICEF with respect to decentralized evaluation.

In particular, we fully support the recommendation to strengthen the institutional safeguards of EO's independence. As long as EO reports to the Board through the Administrator and as long as the Administrator appoints the EO Director and oversees EO's personnel management and budgets EO cannot be said to be structurally independent or protected from external interference.

In addition, the grade of the EO Director should be appropriate to the function and explicit safeguards regarding conflicts of interest should be put in place. A stronger role of the Board may

also be justified to enhance the quality of self evaluation: other multilateral development agencies have equipped their boards with oversight committees of development effectiveness covering independent and self evaluation.

Finally, as stressed by the Review, the time has come for the UNDP Evaluation Office to explore innovative ways of helping to adapt development evaluation practices to the requirements of the Accra Agenda for Action (improved harmonization of evaluation processes, better alignment geared to developing countries ownership, strengthened coordination of evaluation processes on a UN wide basis).

#### Impact of the policy

As stressed by the Review, the major constraint to evaluation excellence lies in the weak implementation of the Policy by operational managers. Too many of them do not comply with its mandatory provisions. The results based management initiative requires adjustment.

The “evaluability” of UNDP activities is still very weak due to methodological gaps, scarce technical skills and inadequate allocation of budgetary resources for monitoring and evaluation by managers.

A multi-prong effort is needed: stronger Board oversight, greater commitment by managers to create a learning culture within the organization as well as more effective EO technical support to operational managers. Of major concern is the inadequacy of country program outcome evaluations. Both their quantity and their quality are well below par.

To help improve on this record, the lack of methodological clarity regarding the attribution of various development actors to country level outcomes should be tackled by EO. In this connection, we do not agree with the Review’s conclusion that performance assessment of individual UN agencies is no longer relevant given the UNDAF results framework.

While it is axiomatic that country program outcomes cannot be assigned in full to any single development partner, good evaluation practice requires the use of assessment tools that disentangle the distinctive contribution of UNDP to UNDAF development outcomes. To this end, the 2009 Evaluation Handbook should be supplemented by more detailed “hands on” guidance that takes into account the UN reform agenda.

#### Conclusion

The basic diagnostic of the Review is sound. Its recommendations are well articulated and backed by evidence. Their implementation would make a substantial contribution to UNDP’s development effectiveness. We urge timely remedial action on the recommendations by the UNDP board, UNDP management and EO.

Mashwahle J. Diphofa and Robert Picciotto

January 9, 2010

# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

1. UNDP's first evaluation policy was approved by the Executive Board during its annual session in June 2006. The policy aims to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function; and seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organisational learning, managing for results and to support accountability. This review responds to the decision of the Executive Board requesting the Evaluation Office (EO) to commission a review of the implementation of the evaluation policy and function in 2009 following the approval of the policy. The main purpose of the review is to look at experience and performance to date and make forward looking recommendations on measures and adaptations required.

2. In UNDP, there are two categories of evaluations: independent evaluations conducted by the EO and decentralised evaluations commissioned by programme units. The EO evaluation unit is supposed to be independent of management. It is headed by a Director who reports to the UNDP Executive Board through the UNDP Administrator. The EO has a two-fold responsibility: (a) to provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision making and improvement; and (b) to enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function as well as its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of UN reform and national ownership. The programme units (UNDP country offices, regional and policy bureaux, and practice areas) are responsible for decentralised evaluations as outlined in their respective evaluation plans and ensuring that these evaluations provide adequate information about the overall performance of UNDP support in the given context.

3. Terms of Reference for this review were drafted and agreed in early 2009 and consultants appointed in March of that year. The process started with a scoping mission at UNDP's headquarters April 2009 to identify the different sources of demand for the evaluation policy and discuss the experience of implementation with key stakeholders within the EO and more widely. Key documentation was also reviewed and, in particular, use made of evidence from an earlier evaluation of UNDP's country-level evaluation activities. An inception report, outlining the proposed review methodology and the key instruments for data gathering, was then drafted—discussed with both the review's Independent Advisory Panel<sup>1</sup> and the EO—and adjustments to the approach and methodology proposed were identified. For 10 days in May field visits were made to three countries—Vietnam, Egypt and Swaziland—and one regional centre, the African sub-regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa in Johannesburg. In June a follow-up visit was made to New York to validate the findings and observe Executive Board deliberations on the role and use of the evaluation. The initial draft of the review was completed in the August and initial findings and preliminary

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<sup>1</sup> This panel was responsible for assuring the quality of the process and products of the review by providing guidance on the process and approach/methodology applied and the degree to which the ToRs are adequately addressed.

recommendations then presented informally at the September 2009 Executive Board session. At this stage the decision was made to extend the review period until late 2009 to allow acknowledgment and consideration of the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, reflecting the importance of this new guidance for implementation of the policy. Two iterations of the revised draft report were then assessed by the Independent Advisory Panel and checked for factual accuracy by the EO and senior management before being finalised in December.

4. The review has covered the questions identified in the ToRs to varying degrees, choosing to focus on what the reviewers consider as key in terms of the depth covered and the resources available. But the reviewers should identify where more work could have been usefully carried out. First, the original intent to review the impact of the policy in UNDP's associated funds and programmes was not fully met. Second, we acknowledge that the review would have been strengthened by greater attention to the issues of evaluation dissemination, follow up and knowledge management. Lastly, the Web-based survey implemented was not entirely successful at providing robust evidence from the country and regional levels on the status of the decentralised evaluation system and the utility of decentralised evaluations for management decision making and learning, or the degree to which the policy has affected behaviour and why. These three issues have been covered by use of evidence from other studies, and we have little reason to believe that our findings and conclusions would have been significantly different if we had devoted the necessary resources—nevertheless this is an assumption.

5. Divided into three main sections, the review examines the related issues of:

- The relevance of the evaluation policy. This is assessed by asking whether the Policy sets out the right things to be done, given that the purpose of the policy is to “establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function.”
- The influence of the policy on the EO's performance in conducting independent evaluation. This is examined against what was specified in the policy and practice and the experience of other international organisations.
- Finally the influence of the policy on performance of the decentralised evaluation system is examined.

6. The concluding section then identifies major recommendations on measures and adaptations required to enhance the value of evaluation to the organisation.

## **2. The impact of the evaluation policy on the associated funds and programmes**

7. The Review's ToRs included assessment of implementation of the evaluation policy by the associated funds and programmes of UNDP (United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM; United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNCDF; and United Nations Volunteers, UNV). This requirement was not fully met because of time limitations; therefore the review focuses on UNDP. However it should be noted that the basic approach to evaluation to be found in the associated funds and programmes will be similar to that found in UNDP, since

all use the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards. However there is a significant difference within the evaluation policy on how evaluation is treated between UNDP and associated funds and programmes. The evaluation policy is explicit about the role of the Evaluation Office in conducting independent evaluations and its relationship with the Executive Board. The policy makes no such commitment in terms of the central evaluation offices found within the associated funds and programmes being independent. Discussion with heads of evaluation in UNIFEM and the UNCDF reveal that they have used the evaluation policy primarily as a lever for strengthening their evaluation functions through increasing staff numbers and budgets. There is no evidence of a comparable effect within UNV, where the major impact of the policy has been to facilitate the introduction of a management response system to evaluation findings. UNIFEM has used the evaluation policy as a broad framework within which to elaborate more detailed perspectives and new tools and methods relevant to gender work, which have increased the number and scope of its evaluations. In consequence a strong evaluation unit with an approach distinct from that in UNDP has emerged in UNIFEM

### **3. Relevance of the evaluation policy**

8. The policy envisaged a strengthened and independent Evaluation Office within UNDP, primarily responsible for evaluations aimed at supporting corporate level oversight. By contrast decentralised evaluations, commissioned by programme units, were to be primarily used for management decision making and learning at the country level

9. Those consulted during the review were generally of the opinion that the policy is relevant and adequate. However staff and some senior management see the emerging evaluation function as aspirational; "...describing more-or-less the way things ought to be done by others within the structure of evaluation, without showing clearly where the changes are expected to occur." This is most evident in terms of the distinction between independent and decentralised evaluation, where some staff, including senior ones, continue to struggle and reminisce about the days when "evaluation in UNDP was just one entity."

10. Judged against the relevant standards in the UNEG Norms and Standards agreed upon in 2006, the present policy is also relevant but not entirely comprehensive. Issues where the UNEG Standards would suggest more detail be included are: (i) how evaluations are prioritized and planned; and (ii) how evaluations are organized, managed and budgeted. However these issues have instead been addressed through the Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP), an online based platform to share corporate "prescriptive content" that was introduced by UNDP in 2007, and in the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results introduced in September 2009.

11. Comparison of content with the evaluation policies of comparable UN agencies—i.e. UNICEF and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)—shows little difference in terms of the broad issues addressed across the three policies; but there are some areas in

which these other evaluation policies provide significantly more detail and therefore raise issues of the adequacy of the policy.

12. The UNICEF evaluation policy deals in much more depth with the decentralised evaluation system and what should be in place, but these issues have been covered in detail in the POPP and the 2009 Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. As such, there is no need to include them in the policy.

13. The IFAD evaluation policy provides far more detail on how the operational independence of the Office of Evaluation will be established and maintained, and shows that it is possible for a UN agency to specify institutional safeguards for evaluation independence in considerable detail. It is also important to note that the UNEG Norms and Standards are not the only standards that can be used to assess the independence of an evaluation office in a multilateral organisation. For example the Evaluation Coordination Group (ECG), a comparable group to UNEG but focused on the international financial institutions (IFIs), has issued specific guidance aimed at establishing and maintaining the independence of the central evaluation functions in the international financial institutions. This guidance is different in several key aspects from the UNEG Norms and Standards, paying much more attention to: (i) establishing the preminent role of the Board or designated committee in the development and approval of the evaluation office's work programme and budget; and (ii) the HR rules and procedures that need to be in place to ensure that the organisation's senior management, including the equivalent of the Administrator, have no authority over the staff of the evaluation office and their management. We also note that the 2005 Peer Review of the UNDP Evaluation Office<sup>2</sup> included a number of recommendations on institutionalising and safeguarding the independence of the EO, which go beyond what is prescribed in the UNEG Norms and Standards and what is found in the present policy. While acknowledging that the ECG approach to independence is very much aligned with the governance structure and practice found within the international financial institutions, which has significant differences from the practice and structures found in the UN more widely, the reviewers would note that the policy is inadequate in terms of specifying the full range of institutional safeguards that many in the broader evaluation community would say need to be in place to sustain independence.

14. There is mixed evidence of the degree to which the policy, and its contents, is well known throughout the organisation. While the results from the survey commissioned as part of this review suggest that the policy is well known internally, other evidence presents a different picture. The survey findings were not confirmed by all interviews with senior management, several managers and specialists involved in M&E training stated that most staff still lack a basic understanding of the policy. This dissenting view is somewhat confirmed by the survey results themselves, where a significant proportion of respondents thought that the policy was intended as a manual on how to commission and plan evaluation and M&E within UNDP. This was clearly never the purpose of the evaluation

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations – UNDP, January 2006. Paragraphs xi and xii.

policy, as these needs should logically have been addressed in UNDP's Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results.

#### **4. Independent evaluation in UNDP – changes relative to the policy?**

15. The policy, in its Section II, states that UNDP evaluations will operate under the UNEG norms for evaluation in the UN system, and identifies eight themes that need to be addressed—*independence, intentionality, transparency, ethics, impartiality, quality, timeliness and utility*. For the purposes of this review these eight themes were grouped under three issues—*independence, the conduct of independent evaluations and their quality, and evaluation use*. The degree to which the EO and the evaluation policy have allowed, at a corporate level, UNDP to contribute to the wider UN mandates of promoting national ownership and capacity and enhancing system wide progress in collaboration in evaluation—also identified as responsibilities of the EO—are considered separately.

##### ***Independence***

16. In terms of independence, the main conclusion from the evidence is that the EO demonstrates the behaviours one should expect of an independent evaluation unit. The review also found little evidence of senior management actively seeking to undermine the independence of the EO. This independence reflects the efforts of the EO Director and has relied on both the active support, and forbearance, of the Administrator. This confirms the findings from the 2005 Peer Review of the UNDP Evaluation Office.

17. However we find less evidence that the institutional safeguards sustaining this independence are in place. While in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards, the fact that the policy assigns responsibility to the Administrator to maintain the independence of the EO is a potential conflict of interest. In the policy the Executive Board is also charged with ensuring the EO's independence; how the Board will do this is not detailed and we find no evidence that processes are in place that would allow the Board continued oversight in this area, barring through periodic reviews, such as this one.

18. In particular, the head of an independent evaluation function should have the final say in HR and budget issues to guard against the danger of senior programme managers using such processes to adversely influence the independence and level of discretion of the Head of the Evaluation Unit. This independence should, of course, be subject to use and transparent application of the HR and financial systems and procedures of the organisation, as independence should not mean a lack of accountability on the part of the head of the evaluation function.

19. The current policy does not give the EO Director the final say in these areas and at least one instance of senior management overruling the selection of a new staff member made by the EO Director indicates the potential for undue influence by programme management. As such, independence has not been “institutionalised” within UNDP and this is a key threat to the longer-term sustainability of independence. This conclusion would probably be the same

if the recent UNICEF evaluation policy were reviewed, but the IFAD evaluation policy shows that it can be addressed, and thus move closer to what would be considered good practice by the wider evaluation community and what is already found in both IFAD and the multilateral development banks. The IFAD policy deals with many of these issues in detail, including a commitment by the IFAD President to delegate his or her HR authority over staff in the Evaluation Office to the Head of Evaluation within IFAD.

### **Quality**

20. Interviews revealed no evidence that the increase in the budget has been restricted deliberately to either restrain the independence of the EO or to influence its effectiveness. We would note that the present approach to setting the budget has still not adequately addressed the conclusion of the December 2005 Peer Review of the UNDP Evaluation Office in terms of ensuring very clear links between the planning and budgeting of the evaluation programme and ensuring that the Executive Board has the opportunity, and the required information, to take an informed position on whether or not the EO's budget is adequate. We would further note that while care should be taken when comparing the budgets of individual evaluations carried out by different agencies, the Peer Review's opinion that the budgets for individual EO managed evaluations appear to be lower than found in many other agencies still applies.

21. Areas identified in the Norms and Standards as key to quality assurance have been strengthened and a number of the suggestions made by the Peer Panel on enhancing quality have been acted upon. The reviewers commend the EO and other parts of UNDP for the progress made in the past four years towards increasing the focus on quality within the independent evaluation process, as required under paragraph 29, bullet (a) of the policy. Having assessed a number of recent EO evaluations our overall conclusion is that the quality and credibility of evaluations produced by the EO have been maintained and are generally adequate.

22. Notwithstanding the significant progress made in the past few years, there remains a considerable quality gap between what could, and should, be achieved and what is currently being delivered. The binding constraint to enhancing quality of independent evaluation is the evaluability of the programmes and projects. All independent evaluations rely, to a significant extent, upon evidence drawn from the planning, monitoring and decentralised evaluation systems of the organisation. Independent evaluation quality is therefore dependent upon the quality and availability of information from these systems. The importance of decentralised evaluation for independent evaluation is clearly recognised in paragraph 24 of the policy, which states that "The information also provides the basis for strategic and programmatic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office as described above." But recent Assessments of Development Results (effectively evaluations of the contribution of UNDP country programmes) and corporate level Thematic Evaluations consistently identify: (i) the lack of decentralised outcome evaluations (see statistics from the Annual Reports on Evaluation around this issue), (ii) the unreliability of the databases on basic portfolio issues and (iii) poor performance reporting. Thus for the EO the challenge is that the most significant factor affecting quality lies outside of its ability to directly resolve

and is of a systemic nature. As discussed below decentralised evaluation is an area that the organisation has been slow to invest in and where it can be questioned whether management placed sufficient priority.

23. The review also identifies a potential threat to maintaining quality. The EO can be seen as a victim of its own success, with the rapid increase in budget and evaluations delivered and increasing demand for evaluation products from the Executive Board. However, responding to this demand has required a change in the way that the EO manages evaluations. The use of in-house expertise has evolved to strengthen the focus on quality. Initially, the EO created three teams around (i) the programme levels, for evaluations at the country level (ADRs) and of the regional and global cooperation frameworks; (ii) thematic/strategic evaluations and (iii) methodology. This structure was instrumental in fostering a high level of evaluation activity, while at the same time producing and/or refining methodological instruments for enabling centralized evaluation activities to be guided. More recently the structure of the EO has been changed to allow for EO staff members with subject matter and methodological expertise to work on different types of evaluation in their areas of expertise. The EO now also uses external, quality assurance panels for all of its evaluations, which further enhances quality. But despite these positive developments, the EO continues to expand outsourcing of evaluations to independent consultants and consulting entities; this process is fraught with many challenges, including the scarcity of high-calibre consultants who know the UN system, understand and are highly skilled in the evolving field of development evaluation, and are sufficiently diversified culturally by gender and geographically. Therefore, quality is contingent upon the degree to which the EO can assemble teams of consultants to meet these demands and there is evidence that this has been challenging for the EO.

### ***Use***

24. Interview responses suggest to the reviewers that the use of independent evaluation at Executive Board level is good. The reviewers found conclusive evidence that UNDP's accountability to the Executive Board at the corporate level has been considerably enhanced. This is thanks to the acceptable quality and increased scope of the independent evaluation programme, which from interviews with Board members have been found relevant by the Executive Board. Evidence from Executive Board decisions also suggest that the significant increase in the number of independent evaluations conducted by the EO is directly associated with increased demand for the use of these evaluations to inform pending decisions and a closer collaboration with the users of the evaluation findings.

25. Management's responses, and use, of independent evaluation findings and recommendations is improving. A review of the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) database<sup>3</sup> suggests that the requirement for management responses to corporate-level evaluations is also increasingly fulfilled although there is still room for improvement. The EO reports that 75 percent of the 40 independent evaluations completed between January 2006 and

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<sup>3</sup> The ERC is a Web-based publicly accessible database of evaluations maintained by the Evaluation Office. Programme units upload their evaluation plans, terms of reference, reports and management responses directly into the database. In 2008 the database was expanded to include the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme. UNIFEM will be integrated from early 2010.

November 2009 had a management response entered and tracked in the ERC. Systems for monitoring and tracking actual implementation of management undertakings are still evolving and the extent to which evaluation recommendations really influence programme design and reformulation at the country level is unknown and needs to be addressed. However various interlocutors at the corporate and country-level indicated to the reviewers that the focus of programme managers is still on ensuring the ticking of boxes and their subsequent colour-coded results under the present ERC tracking system, rather than on ensuring that the lessons underpinning the recommendation are acted upon.

26. Evidence is more mixed on whether independent evaluations are found to be useful by partner governments. Country case studies and an assessment of conducting independent ADRs both suggest that the process involves intense consultations with County Office and partner country representatives. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are also discussed with both government representatives and civil society participants. However the management response is not shared with partner governments; so as far as the partner government representatives are concerned, there is actually a break in the chain from recommendations to management response to changes in programming. This has obvious implications for country ownership of the evaluation products, how they are used to influence decisions that partner countries endorse and for which UNDP is eventually accountable to the Executive Board.

27. For the EO enhancing national ownership and capacity, as identified in the policy, remains very much a work in progress and needs to be a greater priority for the future. The review concludes that a nuanced approach should be taken to identify when national ownership is vital. For corporate evaluations national ownership may not necessarily be a major objective, but confusion is caused by the fact that these evaluations require significant country-level evaluation; partly to compensate for deficiencies in the evidence available from the decentralised evaluation system. However, the reviewers believe that greater investment in building national ownership of the ADRs and decentralised evaluations is required, and although acknowledged in the policy, is a major implementation issue that must be addressed seriously by both the EO and programme management.

28. The review notes successful and credible efforts by UNDP to work within the UNEG to play a facilitating role in meeting some of the demands for evaluation that are broader than the UNDP's mandate. The evaluation policy correctly anticipates this collaboration and participation of key stakeholders by advocating the strengthening of professional collaboration under the aegis of UNEG. This should be commended.

## **5. Decentralised evaluation in UNDP – changes relative to the Policy?**

29. The purpose of decentralised evaluation, as specified in the policy, is to enhance management decision making and learning. The Web-based survey commissioned as part of this review was not successful at providing robust evidence from the country and regional levels on the degree to which decentralised evaluation is actually being used to meet these

two purposes. However major conclusions of the 2008 evaluation of RBM in UNDP<sup>4</sup> were that the culture of results in UNDP remains weak and there has been a lack of leadership and prioritisation by senior management. These conclusions are equally relevant to the decentralised evaluation system and would suggest that the objective, as envisaged in the policy, has not yet been achieved.

### ***Capacity and Guidance***

30. Progress has been made in terms of putting the needed guidance and capacity in place, but either slowly or only in parts of the organisation. Guidance under the POPP was issued in 2007 and the new Handbook issued in late 2009, but with hindsight, these should have been issued earlier.

31. Evidence from EO annual reports suggest a growing professionalization of the monitoring and evaluation function at the country level; the number of dedicated M&E staff increased from 38 to 46 between 2007 and 2008<sup>5</sup> with an increased diversity in their M&E support functions. However these reports also note that where there is dedicated M&E expertise in an office, such staff have limited opportunity to engage with senior management. M&E personnel are also often hired on non-core, funded, short-term contracts, which inhibit the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system and its sustainability; while in smaller country offices M&E focal points are dealing with M&E as one of several tasks.

32. The gap between what is in the policy and reality is clearly illustrated in the case of the role of the regional bureaux. Regional Directors are assigned significant responsibilities for exercising line oversight, ensuring compliance by country offices with mandatory requirements of the evaluation policy, and supporting and guiding country office capacity in evaluation. They also should endorse the quality of the draft evaluation plans, as outlined in the quality criteria, before submitting them as an annex to the Country Programme Document to the Executive Board. Finally they are also responsible for ensuring the quality of evaluation products, including the evaluation ToRs and reports, produced by their respective country offices. While this detailed set of functions are relevant to the overall needs of the organisation, the level of expertise to perform these functions—in addition to increasing demands for advisory services and oversight for monitoring and evaluation at the decentralised levels of UNDP—are not in place. An examination of the situation in the regional bureaux revealed that, apart from the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), the number of relevant staff positions in other bureau either remained constant or even declined after 2006. We also find that although the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery has recruited evaluation expertise, the other policy bureau have not.

### ***Funding***

33. The challenge of funding evaluation is more pronounced at the level of the decentralised evaluation function. Paragraph 20 of the policy states “the senior management of country offices, regional bureaux, practice and policy bureaux, and the associated funds and programmes will ensure adequate resources for evaluation.” However the reviewers would question whether this policy intent is realistic. In practice evaluation resources are allocated

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<sup>4</sup> UNDP (2007) Evaluation of Results-based Management in UNDP, December 2007

<sup>5</sup> This still means that most country programme teams do not have an M&E specialist and the distribution of the specialists is not based on an overall assessment of need and opportunity.

from the monitoring and evaluation lines of the project budget and are subject to negotiation with those funding the projects. There is no central funding available for country programme outcome evaluations, and therefore sourcing and securing financial resources for monitoring and evaluation of these outcomes or programmes poses additional challenges—there is not one project to which these costs can be directly charged. The most commonly observed financing mechanism therefore is to draw resources together from relevant projects. The new Handbook is correct in stating it is therefore critical to set aside adequate financial and human resources at the planning stage, but the reviewers would suggest that this key issue is not given enough prominence in the Handbook.

### ***Compliance***

34. A tracking system to allow assessment of compliance with the mandatory requirement for outcome evaluations was put in place in 2006. UNDP should be commended for having such a system; while such systems are common across the IFIs, most other UN agencies and bilateral donors do not have systems in place that track their decentralised evaluations. This compliance system depends upon programme units having evaluation plans in place and we note that none of the regional bureaux or the main policy bureau had such plans in place during the review period, which is an indicator of the lack of importance given to decentralised evaluation by most of the bureaux.

35. Between January 2006 and November 2009 only 37 percent of the 279 planned country programme outcome evaluations were actually completed, but things may be getting better. The reviewers note that in 2008, nine of the 15 country programmes completing their programme cycle had delivered the mandatory outcome evaluations identified in the original evaluation plan. In terms of the regional and policy bureaux, while some outcome evaluations have been commissioned, the reviewers find no evidence suggesting that the situation has improved significantly from 2006, when the EO discovered that it could not use a meta-evaluation approach in the Regional Cooperation Framework evaluations because of insufficient outcome evaluations.

36. The perception of many appears to be that outcome evaluations are mandatory requirements imposed by the evaluation policy, and are seen by country office level staff as "...a burden after time has been spent undertaking other forms of evaluation and reviews." The reviewers see little evidence of a desire by either the Executive Board or senior management to ensure compliance with this rule, even though mandatory, and bearing in mind that the lack of compliance has had adverse effects on the quality of evaluations produced by the EO and also adversely affected UNDP's ability to specify its contribution to country-level partners.

### ***Quality***

37. The Evaluation Office conducted a pilot quality assessment of 18 outcome evaluations that were completed in 2007, in response to concerns from the Executive Board. That assessment concluded that 34 percent of the reports were moderately to highly satisfactory, while 66 percent of the reports were less than satisfactory. This review finds no evidence for

why the situation should now be any better. The introduction of the POPP in 2007 and the new Handbook in 2009 may address poor quality and coverage to a degree, but this remains to be tested. However the review also acknowledges that the quality of decentralised evaluation is a challenge for all agencies.

### ***Country Ownership and UN reform***

38. The needs of country ownership, corporate performance reporting and wider UN reform at the country level all raise issues over both the purpose and use of decentralised evaluations at the country level. While the policy recognises these issues, and therefore remains relevant, the challenge is with how programme management learns to manage these agenda.

39. The 2009 Handbook states that when formulating an outcome statement to be included in a UNDP programme document, managers and staff are encouraged to specify these outcomes at a level where UNDP and its partners (and non-partners) can have a reasonable degree of influence. This corresponds to what was commonly known as an agency or country programme outcome. But under the reform agreed in late 2009 by the undg as part of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) simplification agenda of moving to one level of outcome under UNDAF results frameworks, country programme outcomes will cease to be used. Instead UNDAF results frameworks will only include UNDAF outcomes. By implication outcome evaluation by individual UN agencies will become increasingly irrelevant and the need for joint evaluation of UNDAF outcomes by both government and the contributing UN agencies will increase. This decision makes good sense from the point of the UN country team as a whole and the government, and does not conflict with the UNDP evaluation policy, which calls for more joint evaluation.

40. However if country programme outcomes cease to be used in the UNDAF process, this raises significant issues with how the present UNDP decentralised evaluation approach is operationalised, it presently focuses on evaluation at the country programme outcome level. It is beyond the remit of this review to lay out the alternative responses to this issue and their relative pros and cons, but it is clear that UNDP needs, as a matter of urgency, to consider how it will respond and ensure that both the POPP and new Handbook are revised to reflect this response.

41. Recent guidance issued by the undg in response to the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) 2007 request that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. This will also increasingly mean that decentralised evaluations will need to be designed to contribute to this report. This can only be a positive move, as it increases the opportunity for governments to effectively demand results information and therefore increase the usefulness of evaluation to partners at country level. However it will also raise issues for the individual UN agencies and their central evaluation units, which would also want to use evidence from the decentralised evaluation system to evaluate against corporate-level objectives to meet Governing Board level accountability. This is clearly an area in which the EO will need to work within UNEG on crafting a response.

42. If outcomes are shared between several partners, this would imply that they be jointly evaluated, and the move towards joint evaluation is recognised in the policy. Evaluating contributions from multiple partners working towards a single outcome requires a strong programme logic showing how each will contribute towards the shared outcome and a clear “theory of change.” This implies that all the partners have operationalised a results-based management approach, based on planning and managing for results at the outcome level. UNDP management should be given credit for assigning greater priority to strengthening the performance measurement system by simplifying and integrating results-based management tools and processes in the past two years. This initiative, known as the Enhanced Results-Based Management platform, was implemented in close consultation with the primary users, i.e., country office and regional bureau managers responsible for managing and overseeing development programmes. The initiative seeks to simplify the planning, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting cycle for both country offices and headquarters units and to integrate all key corporate tools for and sources of information on development, United Nations coordination, and management results into one online platform that can be customized to suit the specific needs of the user. However RBM approaches are still not harmonised across the UN agencies, let alone with external partners.

43. The reviewers therefore conclude that the evaluation policy’s approach to decentralised evaluations is broad and permissive enough to allow country programmes and UNDP more widely adapt to this changing context at country level, while also meeting corporate-level needs. The challenge is not with the policy per se, but with the EO and senior management maintaining a strategic overview of the internal and external initiatives, which affect how staff at the country level respond to these evolving agenda.

## **6. Overarching conclusions**

44. There are seven headline conclusions that frame the forward looking recommendations of this review. These are:

- I. That the evaluation policy was, and remains, relevant.
- II. On the whole there is little need to revise the present policy document, as the correct principles are identified. The challenge lies in implementing, rather than changing, the policy.
- III. The one exception is the lack of specification on the changes in operational procedures for budget preparation and HR that would be required to institutionalise the independence of the EO.
- IV. Independent evaluation is now established in UNDP, although not sufficiently institutionalised in systems and procedures, and proving useful to the Executive Board; this is a solid achievement. The challenge now is to increase its use by senior management in programming and planning decision making. Addressing the systems to institutionalise independence, as flagged in the UNEG Norms and Standards, will not put in place all of the safeguards that would be considered desirable by many in the evaluation community; as shown by comparison with practice in the international financial institutions and the recommendations from the peer review of evaluation in

UNDP carried out in 2006. The issue of country ownership, and its implication for evaluations such as the ADRs, also needs to be seriously addressed, as does what UNDP should do in the area of building evaluation capacity at the country level.

- V. EO has invested in strengthening the quality of its evaluations, but there is a risk in the rapid increase in the volume of work of the EO to the quality of the evaluations. This is not the reality at present, but the risk should be monitored.
- VI. However significantly increasing the quality of independent evaluations depends upon strengthening the basic evaluability of UNDP's interventions, which hindsight suggests requires that senior management significantly increase the urgency, and level of commitment, attached to implementation of the approach and commitments made in the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.
- VII. Decentralised evaluation, as envisaged in the evaluation policy is not yet established in UNDP. We find little evidence of decentralised evaluations contributing significantly to management decision making and learning, as envisaged in the policy. Whether UNDP's senior leadership have given enough attention to ensuring development of the decentralised evaluation system and building a "culture of results" is questionable. Challenges remain for increasing the coverage, quality and utility of these products. However a greater challenge will be to ensure that UNDP's approach to decentralised evaluation recognises and adapts to UN reform initiatives at country level, which imply both greater government ownership and leadership and mean that evaluation at the outcome level will increasingly require joint evaluation by those UN agencies contributing to shared UNDAF outcomes.

## 7. Recommendations

45. While several of the recommendations made below are addressed to the EO, many are systemic in nature and will require action by the senior management of UNDP with active support from the Executive Board.

### **Recommendation 1: To Senior Management and the Executive Board**

46. The review has found evidence that the most significant challenge lies with the pace and commitment of senior management to drive through improvements in the decentralised evaluation system as envisaged in the policy. Most of the problems and challenges have been diagnosed and solutions and responses laid out in the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results:

**Recommendation:** UNDP senior management needs to decide whether decentralised evaluation is a sufficiently high priority that they are willing to commit the focus and resources needed to implement the approaches envisaged in the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results. It needs to do this by:

- acknowledging the magnitude of the challenge;
- taking a clear lead in ensuring that the forthcoming changes are implemented as quickly and effectively as possible;
- ensuring that UNDP's Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures are revised where necessary, to ensure alignment between the Handbook and policies and procedures;

- defining the means, capacities and timeline required to implement the changes needed to strengthen the decentralized evaluation system and ensure that resources are allocated and implementation is properly monitored and corrective action taken, if needed.

This will require changes in systems and practices across the whole planning and project cycle, with “evaluation” built into all new initiatives as they are being developed, as well as in staff appraisal systems.

### **Recommendation 2: To Senior Management and the EO**

47. Principles on national ownership, as outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan, should be translated into the approach to evaluation. Recent initiatives from the UNDG, supporting reform of how the UN works at country level, will have significant effects upon the meaning and role of decentralised evaluation at country level from 2010 onwards. First, the move to the use of only one outcome under UNDAF results frameworks and the removal of the country programme outcome, under the UNDAF simplification agenda, will mean that outcome evaluation by individual UN agencies will become increasingly irrelevant and increase the need for joint evaluation of UNDAF outcomes by both government and the contributing UN agencies. Second, recent guidance issued by the UNDG in response to the TCPR 2007 request that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which will increasingly mean that decentralised evaluations will need to be designed to contribute to this report.

**Recommendation:** UNDP’s senior management will need to build on the opportunities to build national leadership and ownership in evaluation. In this connection and in response to the changes introduced by the UNDG on results reporting and the results frameworks used at country level, UNDP’s senior management will need to revise the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures and other tools and guidelines

However these revisions will also need to recognize that there will be an ongoing need for the EO to be able to draw on this data for both the ADRs and corporate level evaluations, which will still be needed to meet corporate-level accountability and learning objectives. The EO therefore needs to reassess its methodological guidance in the light of these changes and also work within UNEG to craft a common response on how to balance corporate and national level needs for evaluative evidence.

### **Recommendation 3: To the Executive Board**

48. While the EO may be structurally separated from the programme side of the house, its independence is still contingent upon the forbearance of the Administrator. This can be contrasted with the precedent and approach found in the IFAD evaluation policy. Therefore:

**Recommendation:** The Executive Board should amend the evaluation policy document to institutionalise the independence of the EO. This would include:

- Who controls the process of recruitment of the EO Director is an important aspect of independence. The present policy is that the Administrator appoints the Director of the Evaluation Office, in consultation with the Executive Board, and ensures that there is no conflict of interest in employment, including limiting the term of appointment to four years, renewable once and barring reentry into the

organization. Institutionalisation of independence would be significantly strengthened if the role of the Executive Board in appointment of the Director were both strengthened and clearly laid out in the policy.

- In particular, as long as standard UNDP HR practice is followed, the power of the Quarry<sup>6</sup> to overrule decisions made by the Director should be removed.
- Clarifying the relationship of the Director of the EO to other senior managers within UNDP and on what basis the Director would participate in strategic planning processes within UNDP.
- Strengthening the possibilities for evaluation staff to move into the wider organisation by ensuring that staff continue to be core UNDP staff with the opportunity to rotate and be promoted in line with standard UNDP procedures.
- The process for setting the EO's budget, which is currently only described in broad terms within the present policy and where the Administrator is responsible for provision of sufficient resources, and the budget actually negotiated biannually with the Bureau of Management. The guiding principle should be that the budget should be set to adequately fund the work programme agreed between the EO and the Executive Board. Good practice would be for the budget to be approved by the Executive Board as part of process of agreeing the EO's work plan.
- However the above recommendations need to also ensure that this independence is not abused, and this means that the EO must continue to use UNDP's basic HR and budgeting procedures in a totally transparent and predictable manner. Suggestions here would include: (i) ensuring that UNDP staff are members of the final round of interview panels in addition to EO and UNEG members; and (ii) making it explicit that all staff rights (including protection from abuse of authority/harassment, performance disputes, etc.) remain subject to standard UNDP procedures.

#### **Recommendation 4: To the EO and Senior Management**

49. The EO has successfully established an approach to producing corporate evaluations that are useful to the Executive Board. The next challenge is with ensuring that the principle of country ownership is implemented where appropriate in its programme of evaluation. This is particularly applicable for the ADRs.

**Recommendation:** The EO is to consider the degree to which the present approach to development and implementation of ADRs truly builds country ownership. Issues that should be considered in particular are participation of government partners in deciding the scope and focus of the ADRs, and in consideration of the recommendations and the management response to the evaluation.

#### **Recommendation 5: To the EO and Senior Management**

50. This review finds some evidence of the EO, and UNDP more widely, contributing to building evaluation capacity at country level. The logic would be that UNEG is the best forum in which to clarify UNDP's role and possibly the role of the UN more widely.

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<sup>6</sup> The Quarry is the committee that maintains oversight in the recruitment process.

**Recommendation:** The EO is to work through UNEG to clarify (i) what UNDP's comparative advantage is in building capacity for evaluation at country level and (ii) therefore what the EO and country programmes need to do to build upon this comparative advantage.

**Recommendation 6: To the Executive Board**

51. While the Executive Board is charged in the policy with ensuring the independence of the evaluation function, periodic reviews, such as this one, appear to be the only tool available for the Executive Board to assess the EO's independence. The reviewers also note that the further significant implementation of the approach envisaged in the evaluation policy depends upon successful implementation of the commitments made in the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.

**Recommendation:** The Executive Board should consider requesting a review to be presented to the Board in 2012 covering:

- The degree to which the roles and responsibilities laid out in the 2007 POPP and 2009 Handbook have been fully and effectively implemented.
- The degree to which adoption of approaches advocated in the Handbook has strengthened (i) RBM and (ii) decentralised evaluation at the country level.
- The degree to which independence of the EO has been institutionalised.
- The degree to which the policy has been implemented and made a positive contribution in UNDP's associated funds and programmes.
- Whether an effective approach to strengthening country ownership and capacity building has been identified and is being implemented.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. UNDP's first evaluation policy was approved by the Executive Board during its annual session in June 2006. The policy aims to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function and seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organisational learning; managing for results and to support accountability. This review responds to the Executive Board's request, following the approval of the policy, for the Evaluation Office (EO) to commission a review of the implementation of the evaluation policy and the evaluation function in 2009. The main purpose of the review is to look at experience and performance to date and make forward looking recommendations on required measures and adaptations. Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the review can be found in Annex 1 and a list of acronyms used is in Annex 2.

2. In UNDP there are two categories of evaluations: independent evaluations conducted by the EO and decentralised evaluations commissioned by programme units. The EO evaluation unit is supposed to be independent of management. It is headed by a Director who reports to the UNDP Executive Board through the UNDP Administrator. The EO has a two-fold responsibility: (i) to provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations of corporate accountability, decision making and improvement; and (ii) to enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function as well as its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of UN reform and national ownership. The programme units (UNDP country offices, regional and policy bureaux, and practice areas) are responsible for decentralised evaluations as outlined in their respective evaluation plans and ensuring that these evaluations provide adequate information about the overall performance of UNDP support in the given context.

3. ToRs for this review were drafted and agreed upon in early 2009, with consultants appointed in March. The process began in April with a scoping mission to UNDP's headquarters to identify the different sources of demand for the evaluation policy and to discuss the experience of implementation with key stakeholders within the EO and more widely. A list of all those interviewed during the entire review process is included in Annex 3. Key documentation was also reviewed<sup>7</sup> and, in particular, evidence from an earlier evaluation of UNDP's country-level evaluation activities<sup>8</sup> was reviewed. An inception report, outlining the proposed review methodology and the key instruments for data gathering, was then drafted and discussed with both the review's Independent Advisory Panel and the EO, and adjustments to the approach and methodology proposed were identified. The methodology is discussed in more detail in Annex 4. For 10 days in May field visits were made to three countries—Vietnam, Egypt and Swaziland—and one regional centre, the African sub-regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa in Johannesburg. In June a follow-up visit was made to New York to validate the findings and observe Executive Board deliberations on the role and use of the evaluation. The initial draft of the review was completed in August and initial findings and preliminary recommendations were then informally presented at the September 2009 Executive Board session. At this stage the decision was made to extend the review period until late 2009, to

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<sup>7</sup> See Annex 4.

<sup>8</sup> Viktoria Hildenwall was one of the participants in the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV) study on "Strengthening the Results-orientation in Sweden's Engagement in Multilateral Development Cooperation—an evaluation of UNDP's country level evaluation activities." She supported the review team in initial conceptual thinking, participated in the scoping mission, and collected information from the Egypt Country Office.

allow acknowledgment and consideration of the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, reflecting the importance of this new guidance for implementation of the policy. Two iterations of the revised draft report were then assessed by the Independent Advisory Panel<sup>9</sup> and checked for factual accuracy by the EO and senior management before being finalised in December.

4. The review has covered the questions identified in the ToRs to varying degrees, choosing to focus on what the reviewers consider as key in terms of the depth covered and the resources available. But the reviewers should have identified where more work could have been usefully carried out. First the original intent to review the impact of the policy on UNDP's associated funds and programmes was not fully met. Second, we acknowledge that the review would have been strengthened by greater attention to the issues of evaluation dissemination, follow up, and knowledge management. Lastly, the Web-based survey was not entirely successful at providing robust evidence from the country and regional levels on the status of the decentralised evaluation system and the utility of decentralised evaluations for management decision making and learning, or the degree to which the policy has affected behaviour and why. These three issues have been covered by use of evidence from other studies, and we have little reason to believe that our findings and conclusions would have been significantly different if we had devoted the necessary resources—nevertheless this is an assumption.

5. The review is divided into three main sections, each ending with a summary of main findings and conclusions, which examine the three related issues of:

- The relevance of the evaluation policy. This is assessed by asking whether the policy sets out the right things to be done, given that the purpose of the policy is to *“establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function.”*
- The impact of the policy on the EO's performance in conducting independent evaluation. This is examined against what was specified in the policy and practice and the experience of other international organisations.
- Finally, the impact of the policy on performance of the decentralised evaluation system is examined.

6. The concluding section then identifies major recommendations on measures and adaptations required to enhance the value of evaluation to the organisation.

## **2. RELEVANCE OF THE EVALUATION POLICY**

### **2.1 What does the UNDP evaluation policy cover?**

7. Whilst the introduction section of the policy identifies a number of results that can be expected from implementation of the policy, the rest of the document is not structured around delivery against these results.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the evaluation policy is split into eight sections, covering:

1. **Guiding principles.** This section identifies four guiding principles—human development and human rights, United Nations system coordination and partnership, national ownership, and

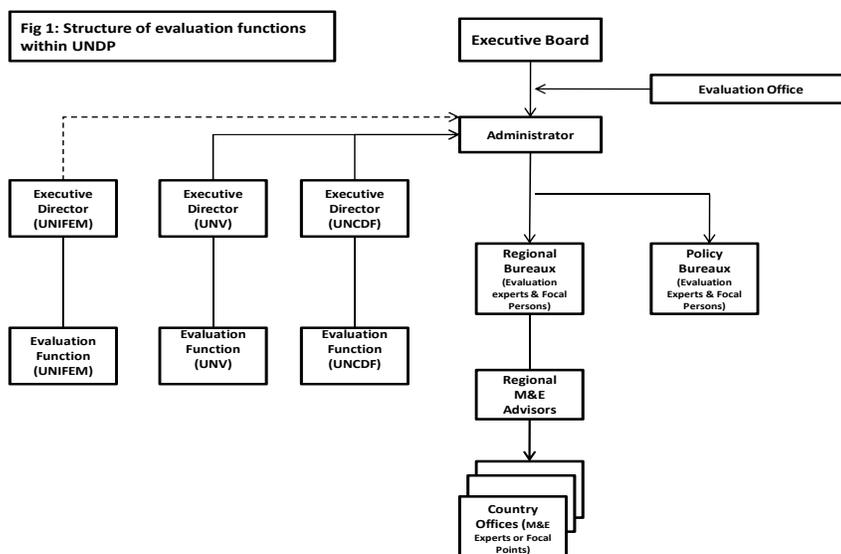
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<sup>9</sup> This panel was responsible for assuring the quality of the process and products of the review by providing guidance on the process and approach/methodology applied and the degree to which the ToRs were adequately addressed.

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF's Evaluation Policy of January 2008 by contrast can be seen as more closely structured around delivery of results in particular areas: scope of the policy; purpose and use of evaluation and guiding principles for the evaluation function; accountability for evaluation in UNICEF; measures to strengthen the evaluation system; and evaluation with partners.

managing for results—which are common across the UN and are, for example, identified in the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

- II. **Norms.** Reiterates the key, broad areas identified in the UN Evaluation Group’s evaluation norms, which were established in 2005. The norms seek to facilitate system-wide collaboration on evaluation by ensuring that evaluation entities within the UN follow agreed-upon basic principles. They provide a reference for strengthening, professionalizing and improving the quality of evaluation in all entities of the United Nations system. The norms are much more detailed than the evaluation policy and therefore should also be seen as part of the policy.
  - III. **Key concepts.** Seeks to define key concepts and terminology, based on those used in the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards.
  - IV. **Roles and responsibilities.** Identifies roles and responsibilities for the key internal stakeholders, including the Executive Board.
  - V. **Types of evaluation conducted by UNDP.** Explains the major division in UNDP between evaluations managed and conducted by the Evaluation Office (termed independent evaluations, which are intended to meet corporate accountability and strategic planning needs and produce information for global knowledge use) and evaluations commissioned by programme units (termed decentralised evaluations, which are intended for programme improvement and the development of new programmatic frameworks and provision of the evidence needed for strategic and programmatic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office).
  - VI. **Types of evaluations conducted by the associated funds and programmes.** Lays out types of evaluations to be conducted by the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and UN Volunteers (UNV). Note that no division between independent and decentralised evaluation included in this section.
  - VII. **Mandatory evaluations.** Simple listing of what evaluations are mandatory.
  - VIII. **Use of evaluation findings and recommendations.** Subject matter covers basic use of evaluative evidence and recommendations, but also discusses resourcing for evaluation, partnerships and building capacity.
8. The policy envisaged a strengthened and independent Evaluation Office within UNDP, primarily responsible for evaluations aimed at supporting corporate-level oversight. By contrast, decentralised evaluations, commissioned by programme units, were to be primarily used for management decision making and learning at all levels, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



9. As shown in Table 1, respondents<sup>11</sup> to an Internet survey interpreted the policy as a response to both external and internal demands for evidence to meet accountability needs.

**Table 1: Perceptions of Why There is a UNDP Evaluation Policy from the Internet Survey<sup>12</sup>**

<b>Normative Indicators</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Indifferent (%)</b>
The introduction of UNDP evaluation policy is an institutional response to the internal growing demand for accountability and results	82.88	6.31	12.61
The UNDP evaluation policy is an institutional response to the external call for greater UNDP accountability and results	88.89	2.79	13.89
UNDP evaluation policy is the right instrument to reinforce the UN system core value of human development and human rights, national ownership and managing for results	57.41	12.96	29.63
UNDP evaluation policy is a response to the need for UN system coordination and global partnership, and reinforces professional collaboration in evaluation under the aegis of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)	64.81	13.89	31.48

<sup>11</sup> A total of 1,466 people were invited to complete the survey, which was offered in English, French and Spanish. Of these, 1,160 were UNDP staff registered on the internal evaluation network and therefore assumed to have some interest in monitoring and evaluation. The remainder were government officials involved with previous EO evaluations and workshops and consultants hired by the EO. The overall response rate of 9 percent was low; therefore findings from the survey should be treated with care, because they may present a biased picture of the real situation.

<sup>12</sup> Summarized from Internet-based survey, May 2009.

## 2.2 The Policy and the Associated Funds and Programmes

10. The Review's ToRs included assessment of implementation of the evaluation policy by the associated funds and programmes of UNDP (UNIFEM, UNCDF and UNV). This requirement was not met because of time limitations; therefore the review focuses on UNDP. However it should be noted that:

- The basic approach to evaluation within the associated funds and programmes should be similar to that of UNDP, since all use the UNEG Norms and Standards.
- However there is a significant difference within the evaluation policy on how evaluation is treated between UNDP and associated funds and programmes. The evaluation policy is explicit about the role of the Evaluation Office in conducting independent evaluations and its relationship with the Executive Board. The policy makes no such commitment in terms of the central evaluation offices found within the associated funds and programmes being independent.
- Discussion with the heads of evaluation in UNIFEM and the UNCDF reveal that they have used the evaluation policy primarily as a lever for strengthening their evaluation functions through increasing staff numbers and the budgets. There is no evidence of a comparable effect within UNV, where the major impact of the policy has been to facilitate the introduction of a management response system to evaluation findings.
- UNIFEM has used the evaluation policy as a broad framework within which to elaborate more detailed perspectives and new tools and methods relevant to gender work, which have increased the number and scope of its evaluations. In consequence a strong evaluation unit with an approach distinct from that in UNDP has emerged in UNIFEM.

## 2.3 Is the policy clearly understood by key constituents within UNDP?

11. The M&E focal points in UNDP country offices and staff in the regional and policy bureaux were surveyed, and results on what is known of the policy are presented below in Table 2.

**Table 2: Knowledge of UNDP Evaluation Policy from the Internet Survey**

KNOWLEDGE	Normative Indicators	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
	A framework on the evaluation function within UNDP and its associated funds	91.02	2.65
	A manual on how to commission and conduct evaluation in UNDP	46.67	40.0
	A guide to the roles and responsibilities for evaluation within UNDP and associated funds	80.37	6.54
	A manual for planning, monitoring and evaluation within UNDP	42.86	34.29
	A summary of the types of evaluations conducted by UNDP and its associated funds	64.49	14.02
	An understanding of the key concepts for monitoring and evaluation	67.60	18.52
	A review of the principles, norms and standards for conducting evaluation in UNDP	80.0	5.56

12. These findings, which should be treated with caution given the survey response rate, suggest that the investment in a series of workshops in all the regions, followed by active on-the-job

training offered in some country programmes, has been successful at developing an understanding of the content and purpose of the evaluation policy by key internal stakeholders. The responses also show strong agreement about the purposes of the policy to: (i) set the framework for evaluation within UNDP and its associated funds and programmes; (ii) clarify roles and responsibilities across the organisation and (iii) review the principles and UNEG Norms and Standards for conducting evaluation in UNDP. However these findings have not been confirmed by all interviews with senior management, several managers and specialists involved in M&E training state that most staff still lack a basic understanding of the policy. This view is somewhat confirmed by the survey results themselves, where a significant proportion of respondents thought that the policy was intended as a manual on how to commission and plan evaluation and M&E within UNDP. This was clearly never the purpose of the evaluation policy, as these needs should logically have been addressed in UNDP’s “Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results.”<sup>13</sup>

13. Review of the policy and interviewee responses indicate that the policy’s intentions are the right ones in terms of scope and coverage:

- providing a wide enough set of objectives to respond to growing demand for development effectiveness measures both within UNDP and among its partners,
- clearly elaborating in the description of roles and responsibilities associated with the evaluation function at each level of the organisation,
- outlining the types of evaluation in UNDP, and
- appropriately highlighting UNEG as a network for collaboration in evaluation.

14. As shown in Table 3 below, perceptions of usefulness of the evaluation policy to individuals relative to the organisation as a whole are strikingly divergent. While only 52 percent of respondents in the Internet survey rated the policy as having enhanced the evaluative and learning culture of the organisation as a whole, 80 percent felt the policy provided them with guidance on making decisions about what type of evaluation they needed and support in understanding their roles and responsibilities.

**Table 3: Perception of Usefulness of the UNDP Evaluation Policy**

Normative Indicators	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
Evaluation policy provided me guidance on making key decisions on type of evaluation I needed to conduct/commission	81.80	5.69	11.36
The policy provided me the needed support and guidance for designing and managing the evaluations for which I am responsible	61.36	17.05	19.32
The evaluation policy enabled me to understand my roles and responsibilities in the evaluation cycle	79.78	2.25	17.98
The UNDP evaluation policy and process provided me directions on the planning and utilization of results from evaluation	61.80	15.73	22.47
The policy enabled me to understand how to design and conduct evaluations in a manner that will satisfy the main norms and standards of good quality evaluations in UNDP	60.67	17.98	21.35
The policy has enhanced the evaluative and learning culture in the organisation	51.72	17.25	28.74

<sup>13</sup> Updated as the “Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,” September 14, 2009.

15. However interviews with staff and some senior management suggest that they see the emerging evaluation function as aspirational; "...describing more-or-less the way things ought to be done by others within the structure of evaluation, without showing clearly where the changes are expected to occur."<sup>14</sup> This is most evident in terms of the distinction between independent and decentralised evaluation, where some staff, including senior ones, continue to struggle and reminisce about the days when "evaluation in UNDP was just one entity." These issues are discussed in more detail in later sections of the review. Among partner country officials knowledge about the policy itself is rather low. Programme counterparts may be aware of the policy, but do not use it on a routine basis.

## 2.4 Does the policy meet professionally recognized international standards for an evaluation policy for multi-lateral agencies similar to UNDP?

16. Table 4 reviews the contents of the UNDP evaluation policy against what is stated under UNEG's Standard 1.2 and should be covered in an agency's evaluation policy.

**Table 4: Assessment of the Policy Against the UNEG Standard**

What Standard 1.2 suggests should be covered in the policy	How is it addressed in the UNDP policy?	Judgment, if adequately covered
Clear explanation of the concept and role of evaluation within the organisation	Yes, evaluation concepts covered in Section III and role of evaluation covered as part of Section IV. Also note that UNEG Norms and Standards deal with this issue in detail.	✓
Clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the evaluation professionals, senior management and programme managers	Yes, detailed definition of roles and responsibilities covered in Section IV of the policy. No evidence that significant internal stakeholders not covered.	✓
An emphasis on the need for adherence to the organisation's evaluation guidelines	Implicit in the policy, as staff are accountable, is the implementation of UNDP evaluation policy, which is partly operationalised through the evaluation guidance found in the handbook and POPP. However challenge has been to actually operationalise these commitments, especially for decentralised evaluation.	✓
Explanation of how evaluations are prioritized and planned	Not covered in detail. Policy identifies who has responsibility but not what should be done. Standards suggest that the draft plan should be developed by the evaluation office through the consultation with key stakeholders.	<b>Partial</b>
Description of how evaluations are organized, managed and budgeted	Not covered in detail. Policy identifies who has responsibility but not what should be done. Significant weakness within UNDP for both independent and decentralised evaluation. In 2007-2009 EO developed appropriate and robust guidance for independent evaluation. Decentralised evaluations, not covered in detail in the 2002 "Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results," were addressed rigorously in 2009 update of the Handbook.	<b>Partial</b>

<sup>14</sup> Interview at UNDP HQ

An emphasis on the requirements for the follow-up of evaluations	Yes, see paragraph 32 of the evaluation policy	✓
Clear statement on disclosure and dissemination	Yes, see paragraph 33 of the evaluation policy	✓

17. Table 4 would suggest that the present policy is relevant if judged against what is highlighted by the UNEG Standards, although not all issues are explicitly addressed in the policy document itself. Whether the policy was relevant in terms of effectively influencing the systems and practices of the organisation and in improving the performance of UNDP is a broader judgment, which is covered under the discussion of use of EO managed and decentralised evaluations.

18. Exploring the detail found within the policy, two other major UN agencies established evaluation policies during the same period—UNICEF in December 2007 and IFAD in December 2003. Comparing these policies, although there is little difference at the broad level of what is covered, shows two areas in which significantly more detail is provided in the policy documents:

- The UNICEF policy specifies what needs to be in place to ensure functioning of the decentralised evaluation system. This starts with a more detailed role of UNICEF’s regional functions in ensuring engagement with and oversight of decentralised country-level evaluation; this includes ensuring that regional evaluation advisors are in place and providing needed support. The policy further identifies technical support to its staff through guidance notes and other external resources, while the resourcing required to guide and implement evaluations at the country-offices level are also identified. While some of these issues are dealt with in the UNDP’s 2009 revision of the “Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results,” the question remains as to whether it would be better to include such issues in UNDP’s evaluation policy, as this would increase the possibility that the Executive Board could track their implementation status. However it is the reviewers’ opinion that it isn’t necessary to be more detailed in the policy document itself, as long as the relevant guidance is then produced by the organisation.
- How to maintain independence of a central evaluation office is an issue much discussed in the evaluation community. The UNICEF policy explicitly states that it is the role of the Executive Director to maintain independence of the UNICEF evaluation office, while in UNDP’s policy ensuring the independence of the evaluation function is one of the roles of the Executive Board. It can be said the IFAD evaluation policy takes the UNDP policy position further and closer to that found in some other international development organisations—such as the multilateral development banks and the general view in the evaluation community—by addressing in detail the issue of operational independence for the evaluation function. These issues are discussed in more detail in Section 3.1 of this review.

## 2.5 Summary of major findings and conclusions on the relevance of the evaluation policy

19. Major findings and conclusions on the relevance of the policy are as follows:

- There is mixed evidence of the degree to which the policy, and its contents, is well known throughout the organisation. The evidence does suggest that the policy is less well known outside of the organisation.
- It is relevant in the opinion of those consulted and, in broad terms, covers the major issues flagged in the UNEG Standard on the role and content of an evaluation policy.
- While the basic approach to evaluation in the associated funds and programmes will be the same as in UNDP, as all subscribe to the UNEG Norms and Standards, there is a significant difference in how the policy treats evaluation in UNDP as compared with within the

associated funds and programmes. The policy is much more explicit about the role of the EO in identifying and then carrying out independent evaluations and its relationship to the Executive Board. The policy makes no such commitments in terms of the role of the central evaluation functions of the associated funds and programmes.

- Comparison with the evaluation policies of comparable UN agencies – i.e. UNICEF and IFAD – shows little difference again in the broad issues addressed, but some areas in which these other evaluation policies provide significantly more detail. The UNICEF evaluation policy deals in much more depth with the decentralised evaluation system. The IFAD evaluation policy provides far more detail on how the operational independence of the Office of Evaluation will be established and maintained.

### **3. Independent evaluation in UNDP – changes relative to the Policy?**

20. In Section II of the policy, it is stated that UNDP evaluations will operate under the UNEG norms for evaluation in the UN system and eight themes that need to be addressed are identified— independence, intentionality, transparency, ethics, impartiality, quality, timeliness and utility. For the purposes of this review, these eight themes are discussed under three headings— independence, the conduct of independent evaluations and their quality, and evaluation use. The degree to which the EO and the evaluation policy have allowed, at a corporate level, UNDP to contribute to the wider UN mandates of promoting national ownership and capacity and enhancing system-wide progress in collaboration in evaluation are then discussed separately.

#### **3.1 Progress in establishing an independent Evaluation Office**

In examining independence two key questions are asked. First, does the EO behave in an independent manner? Second, is this independence safeguarded by the institutional systems?

21. Section II, paragraph 8(a) of the policy states: “The evaluation function should be structurally independent from the operational management and decision-making functions in the organisation so that it is free from undue influence, more objective, and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision making. Management must not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports. To avoid conflict of interest, evaluators must not be directly involved in policy-setting, design, implementation or management of the subject of the evaluation either before, during or after the evaluation.” This is a restatement of what the relevant UNEG norms says is needed for an independent evaluation function. The reviewers note that the UNEG Norms and Standards are not the only standards that can be used to assess the independence of an evaluation office in a multilateral organisation, and that the Evaluation Coordination Group (ECG) has issued specific guidelines aimed at establishing and maintaining the independence of the central evaluation functions in the international financial institutions.<sup>15</sup> We also note that while the late 2005 Peer Review of the UNDP Evaluation Office<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Within this context, the review has assessed the independence of the EO against the concept of independence and how it should be institutionalised within an agency that is found in the UNEG Standards and Norms and the ToRs for this review. However it should be noted that the approach to establishing and institutionalising independence found in the comparable guidance of the Evaluation Coordination Group (ECG) of the international financial institutions (IFIs) is different in several key aspects, paying much more attention to: (i) establishing the preeminent role of the Board or designated committee in the development and approval of the evaluation office’s work programme and budget; and (ii) the HR rules and procedures that need to be in place to ensure that the organisation’s senior management, including the equivalent of the Administrator, have no authority over the staff of the evaluation office and their management. However the ECG approach to independence is very much aligned with the governance structure and practice found within the IFIs, which in some

concluded that the culture and practice of independent evaluation seemed well established, the present policy does not reflect all of that review’s recommendations on strengthening the independence of the EO Director, namely:

- First and foremost, the panel suggests a clear and direct reporting line from the Director of Evaluation to the Executive Board to ensure that the Director of Evaluation is directly accountable to the Board rather than to the Administrator.
- The sustained ability of the Director to maintain independence would be strengthened if the evaluation policy explicitly stated that the Administrator delegates authority to the EO’s Director to make operational decisions concerning the recruitment, promotion and dismissal of EO staff and consultants in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures.
- Similarly the Panel considers that independence could be further strengthened if the Director of the EO were appointed by the Executive Board.

22. Table 5 sets out evidence on two issues. Column two examines the degree to which these issues are further addressed in the policy document (outside paragraph 8(a)); column three examines whether there is evidence of behavioural independence and the degree to which this has been buttressed by changes in systems and procedures within UNDP.

**Table 5: The Evaluation Policy and the Experience of Independence of the EO**

What is said in UNEG Norms	How is it addressed in evaluation policy? <sup>17</sup>	Behavioural independence achieved and institutionalised?
<p>The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence, and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured.</p>	<p>17. <i>The Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA</i> is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The Executive Board:</p> <p>(b) ensures the independence of the evaluation function;</p> <p>(c) approves the annual work programme for the centralised evaluation function;</p> <p>19. <i>The Administrator of UNDP</i> is accountable for UNDP results, and:</p> <p>(b) safeguards the integrity of the evaluation function and its independence from operational management;</p> <p>40. Evaluations of global, regional and country programmes and strategic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office will be funded with resources approved as</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved.</b> EO acts independently, but in several issues, is not safeguarded by being institutionalised in UNDP’s internal systems and procedures.</p> <p>(+) The EO Director used to be member of Executive Team/Operations Group, but is now only an observer.</p> <p>(+) In the UNDP organogram, the EO reports directly to the Administrator.</p> <p>(+) The Administrator writes the Director’s RCA. It used to go to the Senior CRG (which reviews RCAs of RRs and unit heads); now with a recent change it will no longer be reviewed by the CRG to avoid conflict of interest.</p>

aspects, is distinctly different to those found in the UN. This raises issues over the degree to which the entire ECG approach to independence can be applied to the UN agencies without recognising this fact. If the UNDP Evaluation Policy were to be assessed against the ECG standards on independence, it would be found to only be partially in compliance, even if the EO were behaviourally independent.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations – UNDP, January 2006. Paragraphs xi and xii.

<sup>17</sup> Paragraph numbers referred to in this column reflect those in the actual policy document.

	part of these respective programmes.	<p>(-)The EO budget is part of UNDP oversight budget line, which also includes Audit. The budget is negotiated biannually with Bureau of Management (BOM) (and adjusted annually). [In 2010, it will take a budget cut alongside the rest of UNDP.]</p> <p>(-) The lack of budget independence affects EO hiring, as posts can only be filled when the budget is made available.</p> <p>(-) In hiring EO staff, standard UNDP practice and process is followed. The Quarry Board, which comprises Bureau directors and is chaired by the Associate Administrator, is responsible for the final decision on staff selection, not the EO. There has been one example of overruling the Director's choice in the recruitment process.</p> <p>(+/-) Evaluations of global and regional programmes conducted by EO are funded with resources from the respective programmes. The budget is made available to EO upon request and often after negotiation regarding the amount.</p>
It needs to have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision making pertaining to the subject of evaluation.	<p>19. The <i>Administrator of UNDP</i> is accountable for UNDP results, and:</p> <p>(d) safeguards the independence of the Evaluation Office by ensuring that the Director has the final say on the contents of all evaluation reports issued by the Evaluation Office; and</p> <p>(e) provides sufficient resources and capacity for evaluation in the organisation.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved.</b> In practice, the EO Director has full discretion but is not safeguarded by being institutionalised in UNDP.</p> <p>(+)Both thematic and programme evaluations are provided directly to EB by EO.</p>
The Head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations as well as to track follow-up of management's response resulting from	<p>17. <i>The Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA</i> is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The Executive Board:</p> <p>(d) requires management response</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> In practice the Director of EO has full independence to supervise and report on evaluations and maintains system for tracking management</p>

<p>evaluation.</p>	<p>and follow-up to evaluation by UNDP.</p> <p>19. The <i>Administrator of UNDP</i> is accountable for UNDP results, and:</p> <p>(f) ensures that UNDP prepares a management response to evaluations that are submitted to the Executive Board; and</p> <p>(g) ensures that senior management responds to and utilizes evaluation in their operational, strategic, policy and oversight functions, and that appropriate follow-up to the findings and recommendations of evaluation is taken by the relevant units.</p>	<p>responses.</p> <p>(-) EO only maintains tracking system of management responses. Responsibility for analysis, follow-up and action is with management, but response rate is highly uneven. In June 2009 EB asked for a report on follow-up to management responses. However, this is not institutionalised and EB Secretariat says that it is unlikely to happen in 2010. There's a need for EB decision on this.</p>
<p>To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.</p>	<p>No further mention in policy.</p>	<p><b>Achieved.</b> In place, consultant evaluators must sign and adhere to UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct as part of contractual process; this is dealt with in the code.</p>
<p>Evaluators must have no vested interest and have the full freedom to conduct impartially their evaluative work, without potential negative effects on their career development.</p>	<p>19. The <i>Administrator of UNDP</i> is accountable for UNDP results, and:</p> <p>(c) appoints the Director of the Evaluation Office, in consultation with the Executive Board, and ensures that there is no conflict of interest in employment, including limiting the term of appointment to four years, renewable once, and barring re-entry into the organisation;</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved.</b> No evidence that future careers will be adversely affected. EO evaluation task managers have moved into programme positions, but a number of factors mean that there are few safeguards in place against negative effects on their career development.</p> <p>(-) EO staff (task managers) are often under pressure from country offices/regional bureaux, especially with regard to ADRs. Understanding of independence and accountability is poor and ADRs are only seen as inputs to CPD.</p> <p>(-) There is no technical track for evaluators in UNDP. Especially external recruits, who face challenges in career development. Recruitment into programme</p>

		<p>positions is in the hands of the regional bureaux that place a premium on specific UNDP programme administration and management experience, which excludes many EO evaluation staff.</p> <p>(+) There is now career movement between evaluation units in different agencies (EO now has three professional-level staff who came from other UN agencies' evaluation units). This is facilitated by UNEG standard competencies for evaluators and job descriptions.</p>
Evaluators must be able to express their opinion in a free manner.	No further mention in policy.	<b>Achieved.</b> Yes in practice.
<p>The independence of the evaluation function should not impinge the access that evaluators have to information on the subject of evaluation.</p> <p>A disclosure policy should ensure the transparent dissemination of evaluation results, including making reports broadly available to the Governing Bodies and the public, except in those cases where the reasonable protection and confidentiality of some stakeholders is required.</p>	<p>No further mention in policy.</p> <p>33. All UNDP evaluation reports will be made public. The Director of the Evaluation Office is responsible for authorizing the dissemination of evaluation reports and related material.</p>	<p><b>Partially achieved.</b> Yes, achieved in practice, although not a formal requirement of programme staff.</p> <p>While access to information is granted, quality is highly variable and information is often unreliable or nonexistent.</p> <p><b>Partially achieved.</b> All the independent evaluations have been made public on EO's website and the ERC. In terms of the decentralized evaluations, the programme units are required to make their evaluations available. There is no mechanism for us to know what percentage of decentralized evaluations commissioned by programme units is actually uploaded in the ERC; the regional bureaux are supposed to monitor this.</p>

23. Key findings include:

- The UNEG Norms and Standards on independence focus on the behaviours that are needed for independence. The main conclusion drawn from the evidence is that the EO shows the behaviours, which one would expect in an independent evaluation unit.
- Interviews conducted during the review process did not identify people, who thought that the EO did not act independently. However slightly less than 60 percent of respondents

agreed with the statement in the May 2009 Web-based survey: "Evaluations conducted in UNDP by the Evaluation Office are increasingly more independent as a result of compliance with the requirements of the UNDP evaluation policy." This suggests that not all would agree with this conclusion.

- Beyond the general statement found in Section II, paragraph 8(a), several aspects of the Norms and Standards are not further mentioned in the policy. For example, rotation between the EO and the organisation as a whole may affect the attitude of evaluation managers within the EO. While the UNEG standard on competencies for evaluators and job descriptions has facilitated movement between evaluation units of the different UN agencies, movement into the wider UNDP is more difficult. Recruitment into programme positions is in the hands of the regional bureaux, but the policy says nothing on this issue or how to mitigate fears that evaluators will be discriminated against.
- While the Executive Board is charged with ensuring the EO's independence, how it should discharge this role is not specified and there is no evidence that the Executive Board has developed tools or systems that would allow it to monitor this issue on a regular basis beyond this review.
- It is the responsibility of the Administrator to maintain the independence of the EO, which is a potential conflict of interest.
- Changes in key HR procedures for personnel recruitment, management and annual performance assessment required to institutionalise independence for the EO Director are not in place. An instance of senior management overruling the selection of a new staff member made by Director indicates the potential for undue influence by programme management.
- The relationship of the EO Director with other senior managers within UNDP and procedures for how the Director would participate in strategic planning processes within UNDP are not codified in the policy.
- The process for setting the EO's budget is only described in broad terms within the policy, and the Administrator is responsible for provision of sufficient resources and capacity for evaluation in the organisation. The budget is actually negotiated biannually with the Bureau of Management and adjustments are made annually. In 2010 the EO budget will be cut alongside that of the rest of UNDP. The key issue here is that the budget process, which is managed by management, is disconnected from the agreement of the work plan, which lies with the Executive Board. Good practice would be for the budget to be approved by the Executive Board as part of process of agreeing the EO's work plan.
- There is a strong consensus within the evaluation community that the head of an independent evaluation function should have the final say in HR and budget issues to safeguard against the danger of senior programme managers using such processes to adversely influence the independence and level of discretion of the head of the Evaluation Unit. Whilst the finding would be the same if the recent UNICEF evaluation policy were reviewed, the IFAD evaluation policy shows that it is possible for a UN agency to have a policy which describes in detail how the above issues can be addressed, and thus move closer to what would be considered good practice in the multilateral development banks and wider evaluation community. The IFAD policy deals with many of these issues in detail; including a commitment by the IFAD President to delegate his or her HR authority to the Head of Evaluation within IFAD. Independence should not mean a lack of accountability on the part of the head of the evaluation function. This independence would, of course, be

subject to using the HR and financial systems and procedures of the organisation, as well as be transparent in its application

24. The overall conclusion therefore is that independence of the EO is not truly institutionalised. While the EO may be structurally separated from the programme side of the house, its independence is still contingent upon the forbearance of the Administrator. This can be contrasted with the precedent and approach found in the IFAD evaluation policy.

### 3.2 Progress in enhancing the conduct of independent evaluations and their quality

#### Resourcing and what's been delivered?

25. The UNEG Standards state that the institutional framework should “Ensure adequate financial and human resources for evaluation in order to allow efficient and effective delivery of services by a competent evaluation function and enable evaluation capacity strengthening.” In response the policy states it is the Administrator’s responsibility to provide sufficient resources and capacity for evaluation in the organization. Both the budget of the EO and the number of evaluations have increased rapidly over the past four years, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Resourcing in the EO, 2006-2009**

	Calendar Year Undertaken			
	2006	2007	2008	2009 (provisional)
<b>EO budget (US\$ million)</b>				
<i>Approved budget</i>	3.7	4.4	7.7	9.2
<i>Budget expenditure</i>	3.6	4.3	6.4	N/A
<b>EO professional staff (number)</b>				
<i>Number</i>	13	14	17	17
<b>Evaluations completed (number)</b>				
<i>Assessment of Development Results (ADR)</i>	5	2	10	15
<i>Global Cooperation Programme</i>	0	0	1	
<i>Regional Cooperation Framework</i>	3	0	1	1
<i>Thematic Evaluations</i>	2	3	6	2
<i>Total</i>	10	5	18	18

Source: EO

26. Interviews revealed no evidence that the increase in the budget has been restricted deliberately to either restrain the independence of the EO or to influence its effectiveness. However we would note that the present approach to setting the budget has still not adequately addressed the conclusion of the December 2005 Peer Review of the UNDP Evaluation Office<sup>18</sup> to ensure very clear links between the planning and budgeting of the evaluation programme and that the Executive Board has the opportunity, and the required information, to take an informed position on whether or not the EO’s budget is adequate. We would also note that, while difficult to compare budgets directly between agencies, the Peer Review comments on, the budgets for individual EO managed evaluations appear to be towards the lower end of the spectrum of what is found more widely.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations – UNDP, January 2006. Paragraphs 37-39.

27. The range of technical expertise available within the EO has increased both in numbers and in diversity. Professional staff numbers have increased only modestly, although careful matching of its work programme with the requisite expertise assembled by the EO has been a major strength. In terms of quality, the 2005 “Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP” identified ambiguities in the relative roles of the EO evaluation managers and lead consultants as a potential threat to the quality of evaluation reports.<sup>19</sup> This issue has been addressed, with a clearer definition of the role of the EO evaluation manager and their role in quality assurance, while lead consultants are explicitly charged with the design, conduct, analysis and drafting of the evaluation reports.

28. In terms of the consultants used, redefinition and clarification of the role of the EO evaluation managers has required the EO to also respond to the “2005 Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP.” Too much value had been attached to recruiting consultants with in-depth knowledge of the countries and UNDP’s internal workings, to the detriment of identifying consultants with solid evaluation skills. EO now attaches greater weight to sourcing consultants with evaluation skills. Progress has been made in geographical diversity and gender balance, but more remains to be done especially at the team leader level. This was clearly flagged in the 2008 Annual Report on Evaluation in UNDP,<sup>20</sup> which noted that: (i) 80 percent of the team leaders recruited in 2008 were from donor countries, albeit there had been more success at the team-member level, where 35 percent of international consultants came from the programme countries<sup>21</sup>; and (ii) while there might be gender parity in terms of the numbers of women consultants used, not enough female team leaders were employed.

#### Quality evaluations?

29. The relevant UNEG standard states that:

- a. Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection, analysis and interpretation.
- b. Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. They must be brief, to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology followed and highlight the methodological limitations of the evaluation, key concerns and evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations, and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.

30. We start from the main conclusion of the “2005 Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP” in this area, which was:

“Our overall conclusion is that the credibility of evaluations produced by the EO is acceptable and improving in relation to international practice in this area when assessed against the relevant UNEG Norms, and could be further strengthened by a number of relatively straightforward measures. The Director, staff and consultants used are professionally competent, while the processes used to manage evaluations process is basically conducive to quality While some perceptions of bias within evaluations were

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<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP, January 2006. Paragraphs 83-84.

<sup>20</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP, January 2006. Paragraphs 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> EO reports that in 2009, two-thirds of evaluation team members were from programme countries.

identified in the course of our discussions, we do not conclude that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the system as a whole is vulnerable to significant bias.”<sup>22</sup>

31. Having assessed a number of recent EO evaluations, our overall conclusion is that the quality and credibility of evaluations produced by the EO has been maintained and a number of the suggestions made by the Peer Panel have been executed. The reviewers commend the EO and other parts of UNDP for the progress made in the past four years towards increasing the focus on quality within the independent evaluation process, as required under paragraph 29, bullet (a) above. Examples include:

- Since the adoption of the policy, the Evaluation Office has worked with the Operations Support Group (OSG) within UNDP to streamline the interfaces between planning, monitoring and evaluation, and to assist programme units in developing programmes that are evaluable.
- To improve the skills and knowledge of its staff, the Evaluation Office organized seminars by renowned experts. The topics include impact evaluations, concept mapping and case-study methods.
- Knowledge and technical inputs gained through those learning opportunities contributed to methodological advancement. The EO has invested significant time, money and technical resources in creating methodological tools and guidance for conducting ADRs, thematic and strategic evaluations, and improving their quality. The recently completed revision of the ADR Manual provides a comprehensive guide for both those who manage ADRs and those who conduct the evaluations. The thematic evaluation guidelines, although not yet released for wider circulation, present a substantive discussion of the context and strategic directions of UNDP; reviews the key challenges for evaluation in that context; and provides direction on methods, tools, ethics and a step-by-step chronology of evaluation processes, roles and responsibilities of various actors.
- The use of in-house expertise has also evolved to strengthen the focus on quality. Initially, the EO created three teams around (i) the programme levels, for evaluations at the country level (ADRs) and of the regional and global cooperation frameworks; (ii) thematic/strategic evaluations and (iii) methodology. This structure was instrumental in fostering a high level of evaluation activity, while at the same time producing and/or refining methodological instruments for guiding centralized evaluation activities. More recently the structure of the EO has been changed to allow for EO staff members, with subject matter and methodological expertise, to work on different types of evaluation in their areas of expertise.
- The systematic establishment of external, quality assurance panels for every evaluation is a positive move towards increased quality.
- ADRs now evaluate against intended results, as well as evaluate what actually occurred.

32. Notwithstanding the significant progress made in the past few years, there remains a significant quality gap between what could, and should, be achieved and what is actually being delivered currently. This gap would partly be addressed were the EO to conduct more focused evaluations, with fewer evaluation questions in the ToRs, allowing more time to be spent looking in depth at each question. We would also note that the EO has still not adequately addressed the need to evaluate performance against the intended results for the ADRs. However, the greatest factors adversely affecting evaluation quality lies in the evidence base used or the evaluability issue. Since all independent evaluations rely upon evidence drawn from the planning, monitoring and decentralised evaluation systems of the organisation to a significant extent, their quality is therefore dependent upon the quality of such information. This issue was clearly picked up in the 2005 Peer Review which found:

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<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations – UNDP, January 2006. Paragraph 117.

“For the purposes of evaluation, at present there are deficiencies both in the organisation’s central monitoring and reporting system and the decentralised evaluation system, and it is not feasible to cost-effectively compensate for these deficiencies within the scope of a higher-level evaluation (e.g. by using or commissioning evaluability and local consultancy studies). The EO’s evaluations, while making the best use of the information to hand, therefore lack a basis for rigorously documenting achievements against stated and benchmarked objectives, and tracing linkages between activities, outputs, results and impact. They have value as an informed, professional and independent judgement, but fall short of an evidence-based account of UNDP’s impact and effectiveness.<sup>23</sup>”

33. While some progress may have been made by UNDP in this area, as discussed later in the context of the decentralised evaluation system, the overall conclusion is that to date too little has been done to expect significant improvement in the situation.

34. The importance of decentralised evaluation for independent evaluation is clearly recognised in paragraph 24 of the policy, which states that “The information also provides the basis for strategic and programmatic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office as described above.” Review of ADR and Thematic Evaluation documentation however consistently identifies: (i) the lack of decentralised outcome evaluations (see statistics from the Annual Reports on Evaluation around this issue); (ii) the unreliability of the databases on basic portfolio issues and (iii) poor performance reporting. These issues are also discussed in paragraph 66 of this review, which deals with the quality of outcome evaluations in the decentralised evaluation system. The challenge remains that the most significant factor affecting quality lies outside of the EO’s ability to directly resolve and is of a systemic nature.

35. Within the EO, the reviewers also identify a potential threat to maintaining quality. The EO can be seen as a victim of its own success, with the rapid increase in budget and evaluations delivered and increasing demand for evaluation products from the Executive Board. However responding to this demand requires a change in the way the EO manages evaluations. The EO continues to expand outsourcing of evaluations to independent consultants and consulting entities, but interviews with EO evaluation managers suggest that this process is fraught with many challenges, including the scarcity of high-calibre consultants who know the UN system, have a sound understanding of the organisational complexities of UNDP, understand and are highly skilled in the evolving field of development evaluation, and are sufficiently diversified culturally by gender and geographically.

### **3.3 Progress in enhancing the use of independent evaluations**

36. A key achievement since the policy launch has been the strengthening of the use of evaluative findings and recommendations by the Executive Board. The reviewers found conclusive evidence that UNDP’s accountability to the Executive Board at the corporate level has been enhanced considerably. This is thanks to the acceptable quality and increased scope of the independent evaluation programme, which the Executive Board found relevant. Executive Board decisions also suggest that the significant increase of independent evaluations conducted by the EO is directly associated with increased demand for the use of these evaluations to inform pending decisions and create a closer collaboration with the users of the evaluation findings. For example, the requirement that Country Programme Documents and other programme plans presented to the Board for consideration must, to the extent possible, be accompanied by evaluations of previous performance, has tightened the linkage between evaluation and decision making. Board discussions have been further enriched by evaluation findings for corporate evaluations and the accompanying management responses, which allow Board members to see how management has reflected upon the findings. Individual Board members also frequently refer to critical issues in evaluation findings

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP, January 2006. Paragraph 71.

to inspire some questions, and these in turn provoke the attention of programme management to address the salient issues.

37. Use by senior management is a work-in-progress. Efforts were made to improve the timeliness of the assessment of development results evaluations in 2008. Through extensive consultation with the regional bureaux, only countries whose new programmes would be presented to the Executive Board in 2009 were selected as subject to evaluation; the EO made the draft assessments of development results available to country offices and their national partners in time to prepare new country programmes.<sup>24</sup> The evaluation stakeholder workshops, held at the end of the process, were to be completed by April 2009 for all assessments conducted in 2008, so that final reports would be available before the annual Executive Board session at which new country programmes are reviewed. A review of the ERC database<sup>25</sup> suggests that the requirement for management responses for corporate-level evaluations is also increasingly complied with, although there is still room for improvement. The EO reports that 75 percent of the 40 independent evaluations completed between January 2006 and November 2009 had a management response entered and tracked in the ERC. Systems for monitoring and tracking actual implementation of management undertakings are still evolving and the extent to which evaluation recommendations really influence programme design and reformulation at the country level is unknown and needs to be addressed. However various interlocutors at the corporate and country level indicated to reviewers that programme managers still focus on ensuring the ticking of boxes and their subsequent colour-coded results under the present ERC tracking system, rather than on ensuring that the lessons underpinning the recommendation are acted upon.

38. Evidence is more mixed on whether independent evaluations are found to be useful by partner governments. Country case studies and an assessment of conducting independent ADRs both suggest that the process involves intense consultations with Country Office and partner country representatives. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are also discussed with both government representatives and civil society participants. However, as far as the partner government representatives are concerned, the management response is not shared with partner governments and there is actually a break in the chain from recommendations to management response to changes in programming. This has obvious implications for country ownership of the evaluation products, and how management responses are used to influence decisions that partner countries endorse, for which UNDP is eventually accountable to the Executive Board.

### **3.4 Contributing to promoting national ownership and capacity**

39. One of the explicit principles identified in the policy is that of promoting national ownership and building capacity at national level. The policy notes “evaluation should be guided by national priorities and concerns...and it should build capacity of national institutions to implement, monitor and evaluate.”<sup>26</sup> In terms of the evaluation approach, the policy also encourages joint evaluations and partnerships with programme countries, and under paragraph 43 states: “Success in carrying out development evaluation requires partnerships in evaluation, with national and international actors. UNDP will promote joint and country-led evaluations to respond to the expanding sectoral and programmatic nature of development cooperation.” These intentions are further reinforced by various demands from the Executive Board, encouraging UNDP, in collaboration with other members of the United Nations Development Group, “... to make increased use of national systems,

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<sup>24</sup> The Philippines assessment of development results contributed to a two-year country programme extension, the stakeholder workshop will be held in mid 2009.

<sup>25</sup> The ERC is a Web-based publicly accessible database of evaluations maintained by the Evaluation Office. Programme units upload their evaluation plans, terms of reference, reports and management responses directly into the database. In 200, the database was expanded to include the UNCDF and UNV programme. UNIFEM will be integrated from early 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from UNDP Evaluation Policy, p. 3, June 2006.

when appropriate and to the benefit of programme countries, in order to strengthen national capacities and reduce transaction costs....”<sup>27</sup>

40. The 2005 “Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP” concluded:

“Our examination of evaluation practice in UNDP has revealed relatively little emphasis to date on the involvement and ‘ownership’ of partner country stakeholders in these evaluations, beyond serving as interviewees, and participants in follow-up workshops where these are held. The UN Norms for Evaluation do not address this as a major issue while the present draft evaluation policy for UNDP sets out more ambitious principles, for example through more joint evaluations and capacity building. While the nature of some of UNDP’s thematic evaluations may not be especially conducive to intensive engagement by programme countries, we suggest that the Evaluation Office seeks creative ways of strengthening programme country involvement and partnership in all its work as well as in UNDP’s decentralised evaluation activity. To make this a priority would be consistent with good practice and especially UNDP’s own vocation to support country ownership and capacity building.”<sup>28</sup>

41. In assessing ownership and capacity building, the review examined two issues: Who decides what will be evaluated; and how to meet those needs and the conduct of evaluations.

42. Ownership and leadership in the evaluation process will invariably be affected by the degree to which there is already an evaluative culture within the member-state government and whether there are government officials who are familiar with the commissioning and management of evaluations. The joint evaluation of the UN’s role in South Africa—led by the government and successfully completed through the collaborative efforts between multiple stakeholders in the South African government, UNDP and UNEG—shows what is possible when operationalising these principles. But in most partner countries, there are either no institutions championing evaluation within government, or, where they exist, the mandate is often dispersed among several institutions located in sector ministries and their activities may not be coterminous with UNDP’s specific programme areas. Opportunities to engage with member-state governments through increased use of national statistics in partner countries are also often limited. This is because national level statistics are normally focused at too high a level within the results hierarchy, or cannot be sufficiently disaggregated to be used in examining UNDP contribution.

43. Within this context, findings from the survey of UNDP staff and partners confirm weaknesses in evaluation capacity development, especially of partner countries, which can be seen as an indicator of the challenge for many governments in articulating effective demand for evaluation. Overall less than 40 percent of respondents felt that capacity to plan and implement evaluations was improving. Specific discussions on capacity development within EvalNet<sup>29</sup> also suggest that the capacity of national evaluators to both understand and apply the principles, methods and tools for independent evaluation are especially weak.

44. On partnership for evaluations, and support for joint evaluations with partner countries, the review found a strong intent in the policy but no clear mechanisms articulated to work towards

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<sup>27</sup> Executive Board Decisions, p. 19, June 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (2006) Peer Assessment of Evaluation in Multilateral Organisations–UNDP, January 2006. Paragraph xviii.

<sup>29</sup> EvalNet is an ‘e-knowledge’ network of UNDP, intended to support knowledge management and the community of practitioners in evaluation. By end 2008, the total EvalNet membership had increased to 1,226.

those goals. For independent evaluations, practice has been for the EO to plan and conduct these evaluations, in consultation with programme country governments. Evidence suggests that while the EO takes care to ensure and maximise opportunities for engagement by government and other stakeholders in the evaluation process, these evaluations are still perceived to be led from the outside and are not seen as owned or driven by the partner countries.<sup>30</sup> The reviewers would however point out that for corporate-level evaluations the issue of country ownership is a complex issue. For example present evaluation methodologies mean that there is a need to evaluate what has happened in a range of countries to inform an assessment at the corporate level, which is intended to be of use primarily to senior management and the Executive Board rather than the individual member state governments. The fact that these processes are extractive in nature reflects the deficiencies in the decentralised evaluation system, and in an ideal world corporate-level evaluations would draw upon evidence from country-owned, and preferably led, decentralised evaluations, where the results have been validated by the independent evaluators.

45. The reviewers do however believe that the constraints to national ownership of the ADRs discussed in paragraph 42 above need to be addressed. In these evaluations the initial challenges include strengthening governments' engagement in identifying whether the evaluation will meet the government's needs and its design, and then strengthening communication and use of the evaluation findings and the management response by the member-state stakeholders and country-programme management.

46. The review also notes good progress in evaluation capacity development at the corporate level. Collaborations through UNEG have resulted in a systematic training programme on evaluation management involving managers and evaluation focal points. While these training efforts are targeted more at the UN system, some partner country management and staff have been included in training programmes. Hands-on, field-based training efforts have involved counterparts, but observations during country visits suggest that partner-country staff and institutions have not been the main focus of these training exercises. No partner country evaluators appear to have been involved in these training and capacity building efforts.

47. The UNICEF evaluation policy makes reference to a wide range of capacity building initiatives for partner countries and regional bodies. UNICEF was also more frequently cited during this review as the agency that provides facilitation and capacity development for partner countries, notably in their support to national and regional evaluation associations. However, since 2006, UNDP has supported regional evaluation networks, notably the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA). Observations in the field suggest that this appears to be a more natural niche for UNDP, as the agency relates with the lead institutions for planning at the national, regional and local levels.

### **3.5 Enhancing system wide progress in collaboration in evaluation**

48. The review notes successful and credible efforts by UNDP to work within the UNEG to play a facilitating role in meeting some of the demands for evaluation that are broader than the UNDP's mandate. The evaluation policy correctly anticipates this collaboration and participation of key stakeholders by advocating the strengthening of professional collaboration under the aegis of UNEG. In recognizing the increasing engagement of UNDP in global initiatives and partnership programmes with other donors, the policy further endorses the need to move towards joint evaluations as a

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<sup>30</sup> Field observations in visits to Southern Africa and Egypt.

means to enhance global partnerships. The policy therefore clearly anticipates a future in which there is a greater focus on evaluating the contribution of the UN as a whole, as exemplified in TCPR 2007, paragraph 96. In which the General Assembly underscored that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team should report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.<sup>31</sup> The policy also anticipates country programme managers across the UN agencies identifying the rapid increase in reporting and M&E requirements triggered by UN reform as one of the major challenges.

49. As UNDP EO is one of the prime movers and the host of the UNEG secretariat, and its Director is the current elected chair, the UNDP evaluation office is well positioned to facilitate the development of a comprehensive strategy for evaluation in the context of UN reform at the country level and evaluation of the UNDAF. UNEG has made significant progress in strengthening communication and collaboration between the evaluation functions of the UN agencies. The clearest example of UNEG actually doing this has been through its support in developing evaluability assessments for the eight “Delivering as One” pilots, which was managed through UNEG with UNDP played an active part. As a technical exercise, this work was well received, but it also illustrated one of the major challenges in working towards system wide coherence—once working above the level of the individual agencies, roles and responsibilities are not always clear cut. The reviewers note that responsibility for coordinating system-wide coherence for RBM, monitoring, evaluation and reporting actually lies with the Working Group on Programming Issues that is supported by the UN Development Operations Coordination Office (UNDOCO). Given that these issues are intimately connected it makes sense that they are looked at as a whole, but possibly the greatest weakness in the present approach for evaluations is that neither UNEG nor the EO formally participate in this working group.

### **3.6 Summary of major findings and conclusions on the independent evaluation in UNDP**

50. Major findings and conclusions on independent evaluation are as follows:

- The reviewers conclude that the changes envisaged in the policy of independent evaluation serving the needs of the Executive Board, and, to a lesser extent, senior management have been well met.
- However the challenge now is to enhance national ownership and capacity. The reviewers conclude that a more nuanced approach should be taken to identifying when national ownership is vital. For corporate evaluations, national ownership may not be a major objective, but confusion is caused by the fact that these evaluations require significant country-level evaluation; partly to compensate for deficiencies in the evidence available from the decentralised evaluation system. However the reviewers believe that greater investment in building national ownership of the ADRs and decentralised evaluations is required, and although acknowledged in the policy, it is a major implementation issue that must be addressed seriously by both the EO and programme management.
- The evidence suggests that the EO behaves as if it were an independent evaluation office, confirming the conclusion of the 2005 Peer Review.

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<sup>31</sup> This request was reiterated in paragraph 10 of the 2009 ECOSOC Resolution, which further requested that the Secretary General, through the United Nations Development Group and its member agencies develop a standard operational format on reporting for this purpose; bearing in mind the need to reduce the administrative burden and transaction costs.

- The policy does not cover all aspects of independence outside of its principles section and, more importantly, independence is not institutionalised and safe-guarded by changes in the roles of the Director relative to the Administrator on key HR and budget procedures. Independence therefore depends primarily upon the attitudes of the Administrator and Director. The example of the IFAD evaluation policy shows that it is possible for a UN agency to deal more robustly with such issues within its evaluation policy and should be emulated.
- The main finding is that the EO has made significant progress in strengthening quality assurance within the evaluation process.
- While both the EO budget and number of independent evaluations have increased rapidly since the policy was approved, the increase has not been matched by a comparable increase in professional staffing. While there is no evidence that this has led to a decline in the quality of evaluations to date, the EO is now actively testing alternative approaches to delivery of evaluations. The reviewers therefore identify a potential risk to evaluation quality if the level of outputs continues to increase or the alternative approaches to evaluation delivery prove unsuccessful. This risk needs to be monitored.
- Notwithstanding progress on strengthening quality assurance within the evaluation process, a significant gap exists between what is produced and what could be produced. This reflects the fact that independent evaluation relies on evidence from the decentralised evaluation system and the quality of programme planning, and this evidence base is not strong enough.
- Responses suggest that the use, and relevance, of independent evaluation at the Executive Board level is good. Management’s responses, and use, of independent evaluation findings and recommendations is improving. Although questions remain about the degree to which management responses are focused on “box ticking” rather than really taking the lessons onboard and integrating them into planning and programming decision making.
- The review notes successful and credible efforts by UNDP to work within the UNEG to play a facilitating role in meeting some of the demands for evaluation that are broader than the UNDP’s mandate. The evaluation policy correctly anticipates this collaboration and participation of key stakeholders by advocating the strengthening of professional collaboration under the aegis of UNEG. This should be commended.

#### **4. Decentralised evaluation in UNDP – changes relative to the Policy?**

##### **4.1 What did the policy intend?**

51. Under the policy country offices are supposed to commission evaluations of selected outcome areas under their programmes and projects when required by a partnership protocol or national priority. Likewise regional bureaux are supposed to evaluate outcomes identified in their evaluation plans, as are the policy bureaux. The number of evaluations should be decided with stakeholders at the outset of the programme cycle, and the focus should be producing information for programme improvement and the development of new programmatic frameworks.

52. The policy does not state how many outcome or project evaluations should be carried out, but this was covered in other documents. The 2002 “Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for

Results” stated: (i) the requirement for any mandatory project evaluation was abolished<sup>32</sup>, and (ii) the number of mandatory outcome evaluations during a programming cycle would be based on the financial size of the programme (so the number of mandatory outcome evaluations per country programme could vary from none to six). This guidance was updated in the Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures (POPP), an online-based platform to share corporate “prescriptive content” that was introduced by UNDP in 2007. Under the POPP, the “conduct of Outcome Evaluation is mandatory for programme units (Country Offices, regional bureaux, and practice and policy bureaux). Based on the guidance provided by EO ... the programme units are required to select and commission outcome evaluations that provide the necessary information for decision-making, performance improvement and learning. At least one outcome evaluation should be conducted in each programme area of the country, regional and global programme documents. Priorities should be given to joint (outcome) evaluations, led by the government with other partners, of sectors and areas of UNDP’s interventions (e.g. PRSPs, sectors, etc).” Guidance issued in the September 2009 Handbook now recommends commissioning outcome evaluations that cover 20 percent to 30 percent of the country programme.

## 4.2 What has happened?

*Perceptions are that things are improving but only slowly.*

53. Perceptions reported below in Table 7 from the Internet survey suggest a slow improvement in the situation, but that financing and capacity remain areas of concern. These findings are confirmed by other evidence collected or assessed as part of this review and expanded upon below.

**Table 7: Perceptions of Effectiveness and Efficiency in Implementation of the UNDP Evaluation Policy**

Normative Indicators	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)
Evaluations commissioned in UNDP by programme units are increasingly more independent as a result of compliance with the requirements of the UNDP evaluation policy	57.84	9.80	27.45
Quality standards are stipulated and adhered to in the conduct of evaluations within UNDP	56.44	11.88	27.72
Evaluation decisions, plans, methods and budgets are discussed among all stakeholders in the UNDP decision-making process, and these are made public in a transparent manner	37.62	22.77	34.65
The evaluation process within UNDP exhibits a high sense of impartiality by adopting objective design, valid measurement and analysis, and using appropriate benchmarks agreed upon by various stakeholders	55.88	11.76	28.43
Human and financial resources for planning and implementing evaluations are deployed and managed in an efficient, cost-effective manner	30.69	25.74	39.60
The capacity to plan and manage evaluations within UNDP is strong and improving	39.62	23.58	31.13
The capacity of the programme units to conduct its evaluations (evaluation expertise contracted and used by UNDP) is strong and improving	37.25	22.55	34.31

<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that while project evaluation is no longer mandatory under UNDP procedures, it continues to be the major form of evaluation found at country level, because evaluations are often required by funders of projects managed by UNDP and its partners.

Compliance may be increasing, yet there is still not full compliance

54. A tracking system to allow assessment of compliance with the mandatory requirement for outcome evaluations was only put in place in 2006, so it is too early to tell if the policy has really affected the level of compliance. UNDP should be commended for having such a system, for while such systems are common across the IFIs, most other UN agencies and bilateral donors do not have systems in place that track their decentralised evaluations. Between January 2006 and November 2009, only 37 percent of the 279 planned outcome evaluations were actually completed, but things may be getting better. The reviewers note that in 2008, nine of the 15 country programmes completing their programme cycle had delivered the mandatory outcome evaluations identified in the original evaluation plan<sup>33</sup>. However the perception of many appears to be that outcome evaluations are mandatory requirements imposed by the evaluation policy, and are seen by country office level staff as "...a burden after time has been spent undertaking other forms of evaluation and reviews."<sup>34</sup> The reviewers see little evidence of a desire by either the Executive Board or senior management to ensure compliance with this rule, even though mandatory, and the lack of compliance has had adverse effects on the quality of evaluations produced by the EO and also adversely affected UNDP's ability to specify its contribution to country-level partners.

55. Assessing compliance by the regional bureaux and BDP is difficult, as the bureaux and BDP have not had evaluation plans. However, while evaluations have been commissioned, the reviewers find no evidence suggesting that the situation has improved from that in 2006 when the EO found that it could not use a meta-evaluation approach in the Regional Cooperation Framework evaluations because of the lack of enough outcome evaluations.

The regional bureaux have a central role in quality assurance and enhancement that remains largely unfilled.

56. The gap between what is in the policy and reality is clearly illustrated in the case of the role of the regional bureaux. Regional Directors are assigned significant responsibilities for exercising line oversight, ensuring compliance by country offices with mandatory requirements of the evaluation policy, and supporting and guiding country office capacity in evaluation. They also should endorse the quality of the draft evaluation plans, as outlined in the quality criteria, before submitting them as an annex to the Country Programme Document to the Executive Board. Finally they are also responsible for ensuring the quality of evaluation products, including the evaluation ToRs and reports, produced by their respective country offices. While this detailed set of functions are relevant to the overall needs of the organisation, the level of expertise to perform these functions, in addition to increasing demands for advisory services and oversight for monitoring and evaluation at the decentralised levels of UNDP, are not in place.

57. An examination of the situation in the regional bureaux revealed that, apart from the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA), the number of relevant staff positions in other bureau either remained constant or even declined after 2006. RBA is the only bureau that has established Regional Evaluation Advisor positions in the two Regional Service Centres in Dakar and Johannesburg. They have begun to undertake training needs assessments for all country offices on evaluation capacity

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<sup>33</sup> By November 2009, according to data found in the ERC, only two of the 16 country programmes (one of which had planned no outcome evaluations), completing their programme cycle had delivered the mandatory outcome evaluations identified in the original evaluation plan. However this low rate probably doesn't reflect the true situation; country offices normally update their data in the ERC around the time of Annual Report on Evaluation (ARE) preparation (Jan-Feb), even though in principle they are supposed to be updating it on an ongoing basis

<sup>34</sup> Comments and observations from field interviews at the country level.

development. In addition a dedicated Evaluation Advisor at the RBA headquarters is expected to coordinate bureau efforts in M&E across the region. The Regional Bureau for Latin America has recruited a specialist at its regional office. Ambiguities regarding funding continue to limit the speedy establishment of these positions, and the discontinuation of the M&E advisor post in the Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States is ample testimony to the implementation issues. However it is important to note that even in RBA, regional advisory capacity is still perceived as insufficient to meet country office demands.

Capacity for both monitoring and evaluation within the bureaux remains limited.

58. While the policy and practice bureaux may not have the same role in terms of quality assurance, they are still responsible for commissioning evaluations in the programmatic frameworks for which they are responsible. Evidence suggests that the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery has responded to this requirement, recruiting an M&E specialist based in Geneva, supported by another officer who dedicates 25 percent of her time to monitoring and evaluation in New York. However other policy and practice bureaux—the Bureau for Development Policy, Bureau of Management and the Partnerships Bureau—still have no dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialist for their respective programme or strategy, and only BDP had an evaluation plan in place in 2008.

UNDP capacity is growing at country level from a low base.

59. The evaluation policy states explicitly that EO should “build knowledge of good practice standards and approaches for evaluation management in UNDP; and strengthen programme country evaluation capacity....” Revised guidance on decentralised evaluation for programme staff, reflecting the new evaluation policy, was only issued in September 2009, three years after the policy was launched.<sup>35</sup> Hindsight suggests that this was too slow a response. In one case a regional evaluation adviser developed his own training material to service the needs of the 27 country offices under his care. The SADEV evaluation also found that some UNDP country offices had begun to fabricate their own “country-specific guidelines for evaluation,” which complement the evaluation policy, suggests the need for such guidance that was needed earlier.<sup>36</sup>

60. Evidence from EO annual reports suggest a growing professionalization of the monitoring and evaluation function at country level, with the number of dedicated M&E staff increasing from 38 to 46 between 2007 and 2008<sup>37</sup>; and an increased diversity in their M&E support functions. However these reports also note that where there is dedicated M&E expertise in the office, such staff have limited opportunity to engage with senior management. M&E personnel are often hired on non-core funded short-term contracts, which inhibits the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation system and its sustainability.<sup>38</sup> It is also a fact that in smaller country offices, M&E focal points are dealing with M&E as one of several tasks and funding is a challenge.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Three groups within UNDP led on development of the “Handbook-Bureau for Development Policy, Evaluation Office and Operation Support Group.”

<sup>36</sup> SADEV, “Strengthening the Results-orientation of Sweden’s Engagement in Multi-lateral Development Cooperation: An evaluation of UNDP’s country-level evaluation activities,” June 2008, pp. 28-32.

<sup>37</sup> This still means that most country programme teams do not have an M&E specialist, and the distribution of the specialists is not based on an overall assessment of need and opportunity.

<sup>38</sup> Annual Report on Evaluation in UNDP, 2008, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> In one country office visited, the programme finance focal point also doubles as the evaluation focal point. In addition to programme finance, the staff member is also responsible for NIM audits and tracking/monitoring of aid flows into the Country Office. The small allocation of core resources and lack of development assistance from external partners (an issue in middle- income countries) also inhibits the amount of resources that can be devoted to decentralized evaluations, with serious implications for the level of external consultants who can be engaged and the resulting quality of the exercise.

Funding remains an issue.

61. The challenge of funding evaluation is more pronounced at the level of the decentralised evaluation function. Paragraph 20 of the policy states that “the senior management of country offices, regional bureaux, practice and policy bureaux, and the associated funds and programmes will ensure adequate resources for evaluation.” This position was re-iterated by the UNDP Executive Board in 2009 in the following decision:<sup>40</sup>

“7. Notes the decline in country programme compliance with undertaking outcome evaluations, and requests UNDP to improve compliance through the establishment and appropriate resourcing of achievable country programme evaluation plans, including the resourcing of decentralized outcome evaluations from programme resource.”

62. However, the reviewers would question whether this policy statement is realistic, given the reality faced by senior managers. In practice, for projects, evaluation resources are allocated from the monitoring and evaluation lines of the project budget. There is no central funding available for outcome evaluations, and therefore sourcing and securing financial resources for monitoring and evaluation of outcomes or programmes poses additional challenges. There is not one project to which these costs can be directly charged. The most commonly observed financing mechanism therefore is to draw resources together from relevant projects. The new Handbook is correct to say that it is therefore critical to set aside adequate financial and human resources at the planning stage, but the reviewers would suggest that this key issue is not given enough prominence in the Handbook, as it is buried in the text. Whereas, it should be emphasised as a key aspect of planning the evaluation programme at the start of the programming cycle.

The purpose of decentralised evaluation is to enhance management decision making and learning, but we find little evidence of this.

63. The Web-based survey was not successful at providing robust evidence from the country and regional levels on the value of decentralised evaluations for management decision making and learning or the degree to which the policy has affected this behaviour, and why. However, conclusions of the 2008 evaluation of RBM in UNDP,<sup>41</sup> which are equally relevant to the decentralised evaluation system, would suggest that the objective, as envisaged in the policy, has not yet been achieved:

**Conclusion 2: UNDP has a weak culture of results.** Adopting results-based management was a logical continuation of the management reforms that occurred in the 1990s and a response to pressure to improve performance across the United Nations as a whole. Significant progress has been made on a number of fronts, sensitizing staff to results and creating the tools to enable a fast and efficient flow of information. Managing for results has proved harder to achieve. In particular the strong emphasis on resource mobilization and delivery; a culture that does not support risk-taking; systems that do not provide adequate information at the country programme level; a lack of clear lines of accountability; and a lack of a staff-incentive structure all work against building a strong culture of results.

**Conclusion 5: Managing for results requires leadership.** The importance of leadership to drive results-based management forward has been noted in several parts of the present report. A good example of effective leadership was the role of the previous Administrator in fighting declining resources. A strong personal commitment was supported by a single, simple and consistent message on resource mobilization that was communicated to both internal and external audiences; development of systems to track, measure and report

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<sup>40</sup> UNDP Executive Board Compendium of decisions adopted at its annual session 2009 (26 May to 3 June 2009) - DP/2009/27.

<sup>41</sup> UNDP (2007) Evaluation of Results-based Management in UNDP, December 2007

managers' success in mobilizing resources; and a clear perceived link between successful resource mobilization and advancement within the organization. The same drive and visible, consistent, senior-level support is needed for results-based management. Four relationships stand out as the most critical: at the Executive Board, to ensure the programme is held to account for development results; between the Administrator or Associate Administrator and the Bureau Directors; between Directors of Regional Bureaux and Resident Representatives or Country Directors; and between Resident Representatives or Country Directors and staff within country offices.

64. Review of the Management Response<sup>42</sup> to this evaluation shows that management did not explicitly commit to dealing with the above two issues in terms of consistent high-level leadership or a focus on changing the culture of UNDP, instead focusing on how changes in systems and further capacity development support to country offices would be delivered. While acknowledging the necessity to address the systems put in place and build capacity, the reviewers' position is that this is not enough if there is to be significant change at country level. The slow progress observed reflects the priority attached by UNDP's senior management.

### **4.3 Building external capacity for decentralised evaluation**

65. Work on building national capacity has only touched the surface. On the demand side, partner institutions' needs for systems and institutional capacity to commission and manage evaluations are only minimally served by UNDP programme support. On the more crucial supply side (the capacity, skills and competencies required for partner, country evaluation consultants to satisfy the quality requirements for independent evaluations at the decentralised level) most national consultants have neither the training nor the skills enhancement opportunities to aspire to standards required by the EO and UNDP. Compared with other institutions of comparable mandate (such as UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA), the UNDP's evaluation capacity building efforts and programmes are modest at best.

### **4.4 Quality of decentralised evaluation processes and evaluation products**

66. In response to concerns from the Executive Board, the Evaluation Office conducted a pilot quality assessment of 18 outcome evaluations that were completed in 2007. That assessment concluded that 34 percent of the reports were moderately to highly satisfactory, while 66 percent of the reports were less than satisfactory. Analysis of the ratings relative to each criterion assessed suggests that the evaluation reports were weakest in terms of evaluation design and methodology, followed by findings and conclusions. Results are strongest on report structure and clarity and evaluation purpose and context. The assessment revealed that, although poor evaluation design was a critical element in report quality, other external factors also influenced quality, including: the quality of the project design, reporting and monitoring; the clarity and comprehensiveness of the terms of reference; and the resources (time and budget) made available to the evaluation. Having checked the methodology adopted in that review, the reviewers believe that this was a credible assessment of outcome evaluation quality. It is important to acknowledge that UNDP has invested in improving outcome evaluation quality, both through the slowly growing level of capacity at the regional and country programme levels and through the 2007 POPP and the new Handbook, which is designed to specifically address poor quality. The planned e-learning course on evaluation based on the Handbook should further enhance outcome evaluation quality. But the reviewers would

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<sup>42</sup> UNDP (2007) Management response to the evaluation of results-based management in UNDP, November 2007.

question whether these investments have as yet significantly improved quality compared with the 2007 situation, since not enough time has elapsed.

67. In making this bleak judgment, it is important to acknowledge that the quality of decentralised evaluation is a challenge for all agencies. While the reviewers were unable to find recent reviews of the quality of decentralised evaluation in either the IFIs or UN agencies, evidence is available from a recent review<sup>43</sup> across some bilateral donor agencies, which noted that:

- After commissioning a review of its decentralised evaluations, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) decided to cease calling them evaluations and not subject them to the standards required for independent central evaluations.
- The Netherlands Foreign Ministry considered that too many decentralised evaluations were taking place. They see evaluation as a relatively expensive tool to be used where significant decisions are needed, and are concerned that a “habit of evaluation” is leading to overuse of this tool.
- Since 2000 the EC has made a clear distinction between the evaluation of individual projects (seen as a function integral to the planning cycle and so a core task of operational units of EuropeAid) and the evaluation of the results of regional and sectoral policies, programmes and programming performance, which are seen as crucial to the success of external policies as a whole and where, to secure objectivity, independent evaluation under the auspices of the central evaluation unit is considered necessary.

#### **4.5 Usefulness?**

68. Evidence from EvalNet<sup>44</sup> suggest that country programme staff find that project evaluations are useful often as part of design of successor projects. This was a view also expressed by respondents during field interviews who suggested that, while project evaluations are no longer mandatory, funders are keen to review recommendations of evaluation of the concluding project and ensure that they are addressed in the proposed new phase. Outcome evaluations are also of use, mainly as an input into preparing new Country Program Documents and subsequently detailing out Country Program Action Plans. However the reviewers found little evidence of either the regional or policy bureaux either using the findings, conclusions and recommendations of decentralised evaluation or supporting wider learning across the organisation of evidence from the decentralised evaluation system. This finding was similar to what was found in the 2007 Evaluation of RBM in UNDP.<sup>45</sup>

#### **4.6 How relevant does decentralised evaluation by UNDP remain at country level?**

69. Interviews with programme staff and ongoing discussions within the UNDG both clearly show a growing challenge at country level, which has implications for the relevance of the evaluation policy. This relates to how several agenda intersect at the level of the outcome, and the reality that prioritising and reconciling differences between these agenda remains unresolved.

70. On the one hand, in response to the needs of the Executive Board, there is growing demand for UNDP to be able to report on results and its effectiveness against its agreed corporate results

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<sup>43</sup> R. Manning (2009) “The Quality of DFID’s Evaluations and Evaluation Management Systems: How do they compare with other agencies?” Report prepared for DFID’s Independent Advisory Committee on Development Impact (IACDI), September 2009, Section 3.9. <http://iacdi.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/richard-manning-iacdi-quality-reviewsept09.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Evalnet discussions on use of evaluation findings, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> UNDP (2007) Evaluation of Results Based Management in UNDP. Section 3.2.3.

framework. This need has been a major driver of development of the RBM approach and reporting within UNDP and the focus of the EO's work programme, but has to be aligned with UN reform at country level, which is leading to a greater focus on joint working between the UN agencies and partners. One result has been the rapid increase in sharing of outcomes between several UN agencies and partners. On the other hand, the need for increased country ownership and leadership means that the UNDP programme also needs to be aligned with national outcomes and goals. This therefore raises significant challenges for decentralised evaluation at country level, including:

- The 2009 Handbook states that when formulating an outcome statement to be included in a UNDP programme document, managers and staff are encouraged to specify these outcomes at a level where UNDP and its partners (and non-partners) can have a reasonable degree of influence. This corresponds to what was commonly known as an agency or country programme outcome. But under the reform agreed in late 2009 by the UNDG as part of the UNDAF simplification agenda, which includes moving to only one level of outcome under UNDAF results frameworks, country programme outcomes will cease to be used. Instead UNDAF results frameworks will only include UNDAF outcomes. By implication outcome evaluation by individual UN agencies will become increasingly irrelevant and the need for joint evaluation of UNDAF outcomes by both government and the contributing UN agencies will increase. This decision makes good sense from the point of the UN and the government and does not conflict with the UNDP evaluation policy, which calls for more joint evaluation.
- However if country programme outcomes cease to be used in the UNDAF process, this raises significant issues with how the present UNDP decentralised evaluation approach is operationalised, as it presently focuses on evaluation at the country programme outcome level. It is beyond the remit of this review to lay out the alternative responses to this issue and their relative pros and cons, but it is clear that UNDP needs, as a matter of urgency, to consider how it will respond and then ensure that both the POPP and new Handbook are revised to reflect this response.
- Recent guidance issued by the UNDG in response to the TCPR 2007 request that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, report to national authorities on progress made against results as part of the agreement in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, will increasingly mean that decentralised evaluations will need to be designed to contribute to this report. This can only be a positive move, as it increases the opportunity for governments to effectively demand results information and therefore increase the usefulness of evaluation to partners at the country level. However it will also raise issues for the individual UN agencies and their central evaluation units, which would also want to use evidence from the decentralised evaluation system to evaluate against corporate level objectives to meet Governing Board level accountability. This is clearly an area in which the EO will need to work within UNEG on crafting a response.
- If outcomes are “shared” between several partners, this would imply that they be jointly evaluated, and the move towards joint evaluation is recognised in the policy. Evaluating contributions from multiple partners working towards a single outcome requires a strong programme logic showing how each will contribute towards the shared outcome and a clear “theory of change.” This implies that all the partners have operationalised a results-based management approach based on planning and managing for results at the outcome level.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> UNDP management should be given credit for assigning greater priority to strengthening the performance measurement system by simplifying and integrating results-based management tools and processes in the past two years. This initiative, known as the Enhanced Results-Based Management platform, was implemented in close consultation with the primary

However RBM approaches are still not harmonised across the UN agencies, let alone with external partners.

71. The reviewers conclude that the evaluation policy's approach to decentralised evaluations is broad and permissive enough to allow country programmes and UNDP to more widely adapt to this changing context at country level, while also meeting corporate-level needs. The challenge is not with the policy per se, but with the EO and senior management maintaining a strategic overview of the internal and external initiatives, which affect how staff at the country level respond to the evolving agenda.

#### **4.7 Summary of major findings and conclusions on decentralised evaluation in UNDP**

72. Major findings and conclusions on decentralised evaluation are as follows:

- Progress has been made in implementing the approach to decentralised evaluation envisaged in the policy. With hindsight it can be questioned whether this has been done with either enough urgency or the level of prioritisation, commitment and resourcing commensurate to the size of the challenge.
- The quality of decentralised evaluations remains poor. This is recognised by both the EO and senior management. A number of steps have been taken in 2008 and 2009 aimed at helping to address some of the problems.
- The purpose of decentralised evaluation is to enhance management decision making and learning, but we find little evidence of this being achieved as envisaged in the policy.
- The needs of country ownership, corporate performance reporting and wider UN reform at the country level all raise issues over both the purpose and use of decentralised evaluations at country level. While the policy recognises these issues, and therefore remains relevant, the challenge is with how country teams learn to manage these agenda.
- Following the introduction of the POPP in 2007, the recently launched "Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results" can be seen as the second step to both operationalise the policy at the programme level and integrate decentralised evaluation into the wider context. While, with hindsight, the Handbook should have been produced more quickly, its production should be commended. However experience shows that greater senior management commitment and focus will be required if the approach to decentralised evaluation is to be implemented as envisaged in the policy.

### **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

73. There are seven headline conclusions that frame the forward looking recommendations of this review. These are:

- I. That the evaluation policy was, and remains, relevant.

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users, i.e., country office and regional bureau managers responsible for managing and overseeing development programmes. The initiative seeks to simplify the planning, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting cycle for both country offices and headquarters units and to integrate all key corporate tools for and sources of information on development, United Nations coordination and management results into one online platform that can be customized to suit the specific needs of the user.

- II. On the whole, there is little need to revise the present policy document, as the correct principles are identified. The challenge lies in implementing, rather than changing, the policy.
- III. The one exception is the lack of specification on the changes in operational procedures for budget preparation and HR, which would be required to institutionalise the independence of the EO.
- IV. Independent evaluation is now established in UNDP and proving useful to the Executive Board and this is a solid achievement, although it is not sufficiently institutionalised in systems and procedures, The challenge now is to increase its use by senior management in programming and planning decision making. However addressing the systems to institutionalise independence, as flagged in the UNEG Norms and Standards, will not put in place all of the safeguards that would be considered desirable by many in the evaluation community; as shown by comparison with practice in the international financial institutions and the recommendations from the peer review of evaluation in UNDP carried out in 2006. The issue of country ownership, and its implication for evaluations such as the ADRs, also needs to be seriously addressed; as does what UNDP should do in building evaluation capacity at the country level.
- V. EO has invested in strengthening the quality of its evaluations, but there is a risk in the rapid increase in work volume for the EO related to the quality of the evaluations. This is not the reality at present, but the risk should be monitored.
- VI. However significantly increasing the quality of independent evaluations depends upon strengthening the basic evaluability of UNDP's interventions, which hindsight suggests requires that senior management significantly increase the urgency and level of commitment attached to implementation of the approach and commitments made in the new "Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results."
- VII. Decentralised evaluation, as envisaged in the evaluation policy, is not yet established in UNDP. We find little evidence of decentralised evaluations contributing significantly to management decision making and learning, as envisaged in the policy. Whether UNDP's senior leadership have given enough attention to ensuring development of the decentralised evaluation system and building a "culture of results" is questionable. Challenges remain in terms of increasing the coverage, quality and utility of these products. However a greater challenge will be to ensure that UNDP's approach to decentralised evaluation recognises and adapts to UN reform initiatives at country level, which imply both greater government ownership and leadership and that evaluation at outcome level will increasingly require joint evaluation by those UN agencies contributing to shared UNDAF outcomes.

74. While several of the recommendations made below are addressed to the EO, many are systemic in nature and will require action by the senior management of UNDP with active support from the Executive Board.

### **Recommendations to strengthen implementation of the evaluation policy and enhance the value of evaluation to the organisation**

#### **Recommendation 1: To Senior Management and the Executive Board**

75. The review has found evidence that the most significant challenge lies with the pace and commitment of senior management to drive through improvements in the decentralised evaluation system, as envisaged in the policy. Most of the problems and challenges have been diagnosed and

solutions and responses laid out in the new “Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results”:

**Recommendation:** UNDP senior management need to decide whether decentralised evaluation is a sufficiently high priority for which they are willing to commit the focus and resources needed to implement the approaches envisaged in the new “Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.” Management needs to do this by:

- acknowledging the magnitude of the challenge
- taking a clear lead in ensuring that the changes envisaged are implemented as quickly and effectively as possible
- ensuring that UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures are revised where necessary to ensure alignment between the Handbook and policies and procedures
- defining the means, capacities and timeline required to implement the changes needed to strengthen the decentralized evaluation system and ensure that resources are allocated and implementation is properly monitored and corrective action taken, if needed

This will require changes in systems and practices across the whole planning and project cycle, with “evaluation” built into all new initiatives as they are being developed, as well as in staff appraisal systems.

**Recommendation 2: To Senior Management and the EO**

76. Principles on national ownership, as outlined in the UNDP Strategic Plan, should be translated into evaluation. Recent initiatives from the undg, supporting reform of how the UN works at country level, will have significant effects upon the meaning and role of decentralised evaluation at country level from 2010 onwards. First, the move to the use of only one outcome under UNDAF results frameworks and the removal of the country programme outcome, under the UNDAF simplification agenda, will mean that outcome evaluation by individual UN agencies will become increasingly irrelevant and increase the need for joint evaluation of UNDAF outcomes by both government and the contributing UN agencies. Second, recent guidance issued by the undg in response to the TCPR 2007 request that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, will increasingly mean that decentralised evaluations will need to be designed to contribute to this report.

**Recommendation:** UNDP’s senior management will need to build on the opportunities to build national leadership and ownership in evaluation. Related to this, in response to the changes introduced by the undg on results reporting and the results frameworks used at country level, UNDP’s senior management will need to revise the new Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results, UNDP’s Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures and other tools and guidelines.

However these revisions will also need to recognize that there will be an ongoing need for the EO to be able to draw on this data for both the ADRs and corporate-level evaluations, which will still be needed to meet corporate-level accountability and learning objectives. Therefore the EO needs to reassess its methodological guidance in the light of these changes and also work within uneg to craft a common response on how to balance corporate and national level needs for evaluative evidence.

### **Recommendation 3: To the Executive Board**

77. While the EO may be structurally separated from the programme side of the house, its independence is still contingent upon the forbearance of the Administrator. This can be contrasted with the precedent and approach found in the IFAD evaluation policy. Therefore:

**Recommendation:** The Executive Board should amend the evaluation policy document to institutionalise the independence of the EO. This would include:

- Who controls the process of recruitment of the EO Director is an important aspect of independence. The present policy is that the Administrator appoints the Director of the Evaluation Office, in consultation with the Executive Board, and ensures that there is no conflict of interest in employment—including limiting the term of appointment to four years, renewable once, and barring re-entry into the organization. Institutionalisation of independence would be significantly strengthened if the role of the Executive Board in appointment of the Director were both strengthened and clearly laid out in the policy.
- In particular, as long as standard UNDP HR practice is followed, the power of the Quarry<sup>47</sup> to overrule decisions made by the Director should be removed.
- Clarifying the relationship of the EO Director to other senior managers within UNDP and determining on what basis the Director would participate in strategic planning processes within UNDP.
- Strengthening the possibilities for evaluation staff to move into the wider organisation by ensuring that staff continue to be core UNDP staff with the opportunity to rotate and be promoted in line with standard UNDP procedures.
- The process for setting the EO's budget which is currently only described in broad terms within the present policy and where the Administrator is responsible for provision of sufficient resources and the budget actually negotiated biannually with BOM. The guiding principle should be that the budget should be set to adequately fund the work programme agreed between the EO and the Executive Board. Good practice would be for the budget to be approved by the Executive Board as part of process of agreeing the EO's work plan.
- However the above recommendations need to also ensure that this independence is not abused, and this means that the EO must continue to use UNDP's basic HR and budgeting procedures in a totally transparent and predictable manner. Suggestions here would include: (i) ensuring that UNDP staff are members of the final round of interview panels in addition to EO and UNEG members and (ii) making it explicit that for all staff rights (including protection from abuse of authority/harassment, performance disputes etc.) remain subject to standard UNDP procedures.

### **Recommendation 4: To the EO and Senior Management**

78. The EO has successfully established an approach to producing corporate evaluations that are useful to the Executive Board. The next challenge is with ensuring that the principle of country ownership is implemented where appropriate in its programme of evaluation. This applies particularly for the ADRs.

**Recommendation:** The EO to consider the degree to which the present approach to development and implementation of ADRs truly builds country ownership. Issues that should particularly be

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<sup>47</sup> The Quarry is the committee that maintains oversight in the recruitment process.

considered are participation of government partners in deciding the scope and focus of the ADRs and consideration of the recommendations and the management response to the evaluation.

**Recommendation 5: To the EO and Senior Management**

79. This review finds some evidence of the EO, and UNDP more widely, contributing to building evaluation capacity at country level. The logic would be that UNEG is the best forum in which to clarify UNDP's role and possibly the role of the UN more widely.

**Recommendation:** The EO to work through UNEG to clarify (i) what UNDP's comparative advantage is in building capacity for evaluation at country level, and (ii) therefore what the EO and country programmes need to do to build upon this comparative advantage.

**Recommendation 6: To the Executive Board**

80. While the Executive Board is charged in the policy with ensuring the independence of the evaluation function, periodic reviews such as this one appear to be the only tool available for the Executive Board to assess the EO's independence. The reviewers also note that the further significant implementation of the approach envisaged in the evaluation policy depends upon successful implementation of the commitments made in the Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results.

**Recommendation:** The Executive Board should consider requesting a review to be presented to the Board in 2012 covering:

- The degree to which the roles and responsibilities laid out in the 2007 POPP and 2009 Handbook have been fully and effectively implemented.
- The degree to which adoption of approaches advocated in the Handbook has strengthened (i) RBM and (ii) decentralised evaluation at the country level.
- The degree to which independence of the EO has been institutionalised.
- The degree to which the policy has been implemented and made a positive contribution in UNDP's associated funds and programmes.
- Whether an effective approach to strengthening country ownership and capacity building, has been identified and is being implemented.

## Annex 1: Review Terms of Reference

### Background

UNDP's first evaluation policy was approved by the UNDP Executive Board during its annual session in 2006. Following the approval of the policy, the Executive Board has requested the Evaluation Office (EO) to commission a review of the implementation of the evaluation policy and the evaluation function in 2009. The policy aims to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function and seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organizational learning and managing for results and support accountability.

In UNDP there are two categories of evaluations: independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office and decentralised evaluations commissioned by programme units.

The EO is an independent evaluation unit headed by a Director who reports to the UNDP Executive Board through the UNDP Administrator. The Director has a two-fold responsibility: (i) to provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision making and improvement; and (ii) to enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function as well as its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of UN reform and national ownership.

The programme units (UNDP country offices, regional bureaux, policy and practice units—Bureau for Development Policy, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Partnership Bureau and Special Unit for South-South Cooperation) carry out certain types of decentralised evaluations as outlined in their respective evaluation plan, and ensure that these evaluations provide adequate information about the overall performance of UNDP support in a given context.

This review will assess the performance of the evaluation function since the approval of the evaluation policy and the extent to which the organisation has responded to the requirements of the policy.

### Purpose, Scope and Objectives

The evaluation policy requires a review of its implementation and the evaluation function to identify lessons and make improvements. This ToRs is for first such review scheduled for 2009, as stipulated in the policy. The findings and recommendations will be presented to the UNDP Executive Board and UNDP management during the annual session of the Executive Board in September 2009 to inform them about the status of the implementation; identify strengths and weaknesses, including good practices and systemic constraints; and areas that may require policy change or management decision to improve the evaluation function.

The review will cover the period from June 2006 to February 2009, UNDP and its Associated Funds and Programmes (thereafter referred to as the "organisation"), and all UNDP managed programmatic interventions, irrespective of funding source. The review will focus on both independent evaluations and decentralised evaluations including the oversight for these evaluations. The review will evaluate the progress made so far in implementing the evaluation policy. The organisation will benefit from forward-looking recommendations on measures and adaptations required.

### Review Questions

In alignment with the normative framework of the evaluation policy, the review will focus on the following elements of the evaluation policy, and in particular ask the following questions:

*Relevance of the policy:* Is the policy clearly understood by key constituents of the organisation? Has it effectively influenced the systems and practices of the organisation in improving the performance of UNDP? Does the policy meet professionally, recognized international standards for an evaluation policy for multilateral agencies similar to UNDP?

## Evaluation Function

*EO as the custodian of the evaluation function:* Did the EO fulfil its key functions as outlined in the evaluation policy? What are areas of strength and weakness?

*Capacity and resources:* Is the Evaluation Office equipped with required specialized and technical expertise to fulfil its mandate? Is the programme of work for the Evaluation Office adequately financed to allow the conduct of independent and quality evaluations in a timely manner? Are the EO budget and plan of evaluations linked so that it is clear that adequate resources are allocated?

## Independent Evaluations by the EO

*Independence:* Did the Executive Board and the Administrator safeguard the independence of the function and foster an enabling environment for evaluation? Is the EO located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence? Do the Executive Board and Administrator ensure that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independent fashion? Do they ensure that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development? Do evaluators hired by EO operate in an independent manner?

*Credibility:* Do EO's evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards? Do EO evaluations have meaningful and transparent consultation with stakeholders? Are EO evaluations conducted with ethical considerations as expressed in the policy?

*Utility:* Are EO evaluations designed and completed in a timely fashion to enhance utility? Are EO evaluations found to be useful for learning, accountability and improvements? Have management responses been prepared in a systematic manner to independent evaluations? Has there been follow up to independent evaluations in a timely and comprehensive manner?

Did the Executive Board use evaluation and reports on compliance with evaluation policy for accountability, and draw on the findings and recommendations of evaluation for oversight and approval of corporate policy, strategy and programmes?

Have the EO evaluations followed requirements for effective dissemination and use of evaluations, as required in the evaluation policy (e.g. translation of summaries into the three languages)?

*Partnership in evaluation:* Has the EO effectively engaged in partnership in evaluation by building a network of practitioners, promoting joint and country-led evaluations and engaging in the work of UN Evaluation Group? Has the EO been engaged in partnership to nurture a collaborative relationship with national evaluation institution and associations?

## Decentralised Evaluation

*Roles and Responsibilities:* Did managers of the programme units fulfil their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the policy, namely to (i) ensure the evaluability of the programmes; (ii) ensure effective monitoring, (iii); identify priority areas for evaluation; (iv) establish an appropriate institutional arrangement to manage evaluation; (v) ensure adequate resources for evaluation; (vi) safeguard the independence of the evaluation process and product; (vii) ensure the conduct of mandatory evaluations were in line with established quality standards; (viii) promote joint evaluation work with the UN system and other partners; (ix) prepare management responses to all evaluations; (x) draw on evaluation findings to improve the quality of programmes, guide strategic decision making on future programming and positioning, and share knowledge on development experience? What are limitations and challenges? Is there effective oversight for decentralised evaluations?

These roles and responsibilities are further elaborated in sub-questions as shown below:

*Compliance/Accountability:* Have requirements for evaluation compliance (e.g. conduct of outcome evaluations and mandatory project evaluations) been met by programme units? What are existing challenges in meeting compliance? Are there limitations with the current requirements for compliance? Have programme audits consistently looked at evaluation compliance issues?

*Capacity and resources:* Is there adequate institutional capacity to meet the evaluation policy requirements in the organisation as a whole, specifically at the country and regional level? Are evaluations adequately and realistically financed in the evaluation plans of the programme units? Are evaluations carried out in a cost-effective manner?

*Independence/Impartiality:* Are decentralised evaluations carried out in a transparent manner, free from bias and potential conflict of interest? Do programme units ensure that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without due pressure? Do evaluators hired by the programme units operate in an independent manner?

*Credibility:* Do decentralised evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards? Do decentralised evaluations have meaningful and transparent consultation with stakeholders? Are decentralised evaluations conducted with ethical considerations, as expressed in the policy?

*Utility:* Are decentralised evaluations used by the programme units for learning and improvements? Have management responses been prepared in a systematic manner to all evaluations? Has there been follow up to evaluations in a timely and comprehensive manner?

*Partnership in evaluation:* Have the programme units been engaged in partnership to nurture a collaborative relationship with national evaluation institution and associations?

The review will also identify factors inhibiting the effective implementation of the policy and make recommendations.

### **Approach and Methodology**

Although the review will not take the form of a full-fledged evaluation, it will be based on the UN Evaluation Group norms and standards for evaluation in the UN system. The following provides a suggested framework for approach and methodology. Independent reviewers will be requested to further elaborate the approach and methodology as outlined below:

- Desk Review (documents to be consulted are suggested in Annex 1)
- Individual and group interviews (in-person and phone—individuals to be consulted suggested in Annex 2)
- Survey
- One or two country offices and a regional centre will be covered in greater depth through case study and field visits (some of them could be substituted by phone interviews based on discussion between reviewers and EO). Evaluators will be requested to develop a set of selection criteria and make recommendations for the countries to be visited/studied.
- An advisory panel comprised of representatives of evaluation offices of other UN agencies, bilateral agencies, programming Government, and/or IFIs will be established. This panel will be responsible for assuring the quality of the process and products of the review by providing guidance on the process and approach/methodology applied.
- The review will involve two to three trips to New York for briefing and debriefing meetings with EO management and key stakeholders, interviews with stakeholders and a presentation to the Executive

Board during its September session. There will be teleconference meetings with the Evaluation Office as required.

### **Expected Products**

- Inception report (no more than eight pages), detailing the approach and methods to be applied, including the county offices and regional centres to be selected for field visits and case studies, and time frame for the exercise .
- Draft and final reports (no more than 30 pages) with annexes.
- Oral presentation to the Executive Board during the September session.

### **Team Composition and Qualifications**

A team of two independent reviewers (the Team Leader and the Team Specialist) will be engaged in this review. The Team Leader will be responsible for leading the review, ensuring that the review will meet required standards and fulfil its information needs. Detailed roles and responsibilities and division of work will be discussed and agreed upon during the briefing in New York.

The team will be supported by a time-bound participation of an officer from the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV) during a one week mission in New York as a special member of the team. The SADEV will in particular focus on the decentralised level based on its past experience in conducting an independent study of the UNDP decentralised evaluation system in 2007. There will be one research assistant, based in New York headquarters.

The Team Leader should have a demonstrated experience in leading evaluations or other evaluative exercises (such as peer reviews) to assess the implementation of an organisational policy in a government intuitions or a multilateral organisation such as UNDP. The Team Specialist should have sound knowledge of evaluation methods and their application in a complex evaluative exercise. Experience in working with UNDP or other UN agencies is a plus.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Team Members**

The Team Leader will be responsible for the following key tasks (52 days):

- Develop the review design and methodology for conducting the review, based on the actual availability of data and discussions with UNDP EO, in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards.
- Lead the stakeholder mapping expertise.
- Lead the scoping and main missions to HQ and field visits in close cooperation with the EO.
- Oversee the conduct of in-country work, as well as questionnaires and surveys (if relevant), as determined in the inception report
- Lead the drafting of the inception report.
- Lead and participate fully in the missions and presentation(s) to stakeholders and EB members.
- Draft the final report, with support from the Team Specialists.
- Lead the debriefing of EO, UNDP senior management and EB members, including the preparation of the presentation at the EB session in September.

The key tasks for which the Team Specialist will be responsible are as follows (37 days):

- Support the Team Leader in designing the overall approach and methodology for conducting the review.
- Organize and oversee the conduct of field visits and surveys or questionnaires as determined by the Team Leader.

- Draft key sections of the report, as designated by the Team Leader, based on the evidence gathered through secondary source material, and from the in-country work, interviews in HQ, etc.
- Provide intellectual and strategic input, and participate fully in the missions to collect, analyze and validate data.
- Specific duties within the scope of the evaluation as proposed by the Team Leader.

### **Implementation Arrangements**

The review will be an independent exercise under the responsibility of the Evaluation Office of UNDP, who will assign a staff member to serve as a focal point for this exercise. Unlike other evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office, staff members of the Evaluation Office will not participate in the exercise as a team member, in order to allow the team to assess the Evaluation Office's performance in an independent manner. Therefore the evaluation team will be requested to make an independent presentation of the review to the Executive Board at its September session. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the selection of the members of the advisory panel.

**Proposed time frame:** The review will require 45 working days for the Team Leader and 30 work days for the Team Specialist. Tentatively, three visits to New York are foreseen for the Team Leader: (i) briefing in early April, (ii) after field visits and desk review in June before finalizing the report and (iii) oral presentation to the EB for the September session if required. A detailed timeline will be discussed and agreed upon during the New York briefing in April and the participation of the Team Specialist in the subsequent missions to New York will be determined during the inception meeting.

## Annex 2: Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
ATLAS	UNDP's enterprise resource programme
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy
BOM	Bureau of Management
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCF	Country Cooperation Framework
CONGO-S	Coordinating Organisation of NGOs in Swaziland
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
DaO	Delivering as One United Nations
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EGC	Evaluation Coordination Group
ERC	Evaluation Resource Centre
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
IDAF	International Fund for Agricultural Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MfDR	Managing for Development Results
MYFF	Multi-year Funding Framework
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development- Development Assistance Committee
OSAGI	Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
OSG	Operations Support Group
POPP	Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS
RBLAC	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
RCA	Results Competency Assessment
ROAR	Results-oriented Annual Report
RSC	Regional Support Centre
SACI	South African Capacity Initiative
SADEV	Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation
SURF	Sub-regional Facility
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNDOCO	UN Development Operations Coordination Office
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
UNICEF	UN Children Emergency Fund
UNV	UN Volunteers

### Annex 3: Listing of Persons Contacted

Organisation/Unit	Name	Position
<b>HEADQUARTER-LEVEL STAKEHOLDERS</b>		
<i>UNDP Evaluation Office</i>	Mrs. Saraswathi Menon	Director
	Mr. Nurul Alam	Deputy Director
	Ms. Azusa Kubota	Evaluation Specialist
	Ms. Vijayalakshmi Vadivelu	Evaluation Specialist
	Mr. Michael Reynolds	Evaluation Adviser
	Mr. Juha Uitto	Evaluation Adviser
	Mr. Oscar Garcia	Evaluation Adviser
	Mr. Urs Nagel	Evaluation Adviser
	Mr. Fabrizio Felloni	Evaluation Specialist
	Ms. Sukai Prom-Jackson	Evaluation Adviser
<i>UNDP Operations Support Group (OSG)</i>	Ms. Judith Karl	Director
	Mr. Andrew Russell	Deputy Director
	Mr. Stephen Rodriguez	Programme Advisor
	Ms. Martine Therer	Programme Advisor
<i>UN Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO)</i>	Mr. Ashok Nigam	Associate Director
	Ms. Eiko Narita	Programme Specialist
<i>UNDP Executive Office</i>	Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye	Director and Chief of Staff
	Ms. Camilla Bruckner,	Deputy Chief of Staff Deputy Director of the Executive Office
<i>Brookings Global Economy and Development</i>	Mr. Kemal Dervis	Former UNDP Administrator
<i>OIOS - Office of Internal Oversight Services</i>	Mr. Yee Woo Guo (Eddie)	Head, Evaluation Unit
<i>UNDP BDP (Bureau for Development Policy)</i>	Mr. Olav Kjørven	Assistant Secretary-General and Director
<i>UNDP PB - Partnerships Bureau</i>	Mr. Romesh Muttukumar	Senior Advisor to ASG and Director
<i>UNDP RBA - Regional Bureau of Africa</i>	Mr. Tegegnetwork Gettu	Assistant Administrator and Regional Director
	Ms. Tega Shivute	Consultant – M&E Specialist
<i>UNDP RBAS - Regional Bureau of Arab States</i>	Mr. Amin Sharkawi	Senior Programme Adviser for NCC Countries and Yemen
<i>UNDP RBAP - Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific</i>	Mr. Ajay Chhibber	Assistant Secretary-General and Regional Director
	Ms. Razina Bilgrami	Programme Advisor / Deputy Chief South and West Asia Division

	Rosemary Kalapurakal	Programme Specialist
<i>UNDP RBEC- Regional Bureau on Europe &amp; the Commonwealth of Independent States</i>	Ms. Kori Udovicki	Assistant Administrator and Regional Director
	Ms. Yulia Oleinik	Evaluation Advisor
<i>UNDP RBLAC - UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	Mr. Niky Fabiancic	Deputy Regional Director
	Ms. Carla Khammar	Senior Programme Advisor
<i>UNCDF - UN Capital Development Fund</i>	Mr. David Morrison	Executive Secretary
	Ms. Chandi Kadirgamar	Evaluation Adviser
<i>UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women)</i>	Ms. Joanne Sandler	Deputy Executive Director for Programme
	Ms. Belen Sanz	Evaluation Advisor
<i>UNV - United Nations Volunteers</i>	Ms. Flavia Pansieri	Executive Coordinator
	Ms. Katrin von der Mosel	Head, Evaluation Unit
<i>UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund</i>	Mr. Finbar O'Brien, Director	UNICEF Evaluation Office
<i>Permanent Mission of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations</i>	Mr. Jean-Francis Regis Zinsou	Charge d'affaires
	Mr. Jakob Ström	Counsellor for Economics and Social Affairs
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	Ms. Madiha Ahmed	Project Manager DP3 and GOPP
	Mr. Mounir Boushra	Project Manager
	Ms. Hoda Dahroug	Deputy Project Director ICT projects
	Mr. Tarek Genena	Independent Consultant
	Mr. Seheir Habib	Independent Consultant
	Ms. Rania Hedeya	Programme Officer, UNDP
	Mr. Ahmed El Kholei	Independent consultant
	Mr. Mokhless Kotb	Ambassador, Secretary General of the National Council for Human Rights
	Ms. Noha Refaat	RBM Officer, UNDP
	Mr. Yasser El Serrafy	Project Manager
	Mr. Mounir Tabet	Country Director, UNDP
<i>VIETNAM</i>	Ms. Setsuko Yamazaki	Country Director, UNDP Vietnam
	Mr. Christophe Bahuët	Deputy Country Director, UNDP Vietnam
	Mr. Alwin Nijholt	Planning/RBM Advisor, Office of the Resident Coordinator, Vietnam
	Ms. Le Le Lan	M&E Programme Officer, UNDP Vietnam

<i>Africa Sub-Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (ASRO-ESA)</i>	Mr. Backson Sibanda,	Regional M&E Advisor
	Mr. Benjamin Ofosu Koranteng	Development Planning Advisor (HIV)
	Mr. Fudzai Pamacheche	Project Coordinator, Institutional Capacity Development for regional integration and trade policy
	Mr. Prosper Bani	Conflict Prevention and Recovery, Team Leader
	Ms. Elizabeth Fong,	Director
<b>SWAZILAND</b>	Mr. Musinga Timothy Bandora	UNDP Resident Coordinator
	Mr. Niel Boyer	Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP
	Ms. Sakinah Moris	Country Office Evaluation Focal Person
	Mr. Siaelo M. Dlamini	Principal Secretary, Ministry of Planning
	Ms. Namusa Tibane	Chief Economist, Ministry of Planning
	Ms. Lobcebo Dlamini	Women & Law in Southern Africa
	Mr. Jabulane Dlamini	Policy Analyst & Programme Manager, Coordinating Assembly of NGOs (CANGO) in Swaziland
	Ms. Nonhlanhla Dlamini	Coordinator, Gender Coordinating Unit, Deputy Ministers Office, Government of Swaziland
	Ms. Sakule Dlamini	Project Manager, EU/UNDP Gender Project, Gender Coordinating Unit in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office
<i>Papua New Guinea (by correspondence)</i>	Mr. Nynke Kuperus	UN Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist , United Nations Coordination Office
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## Annex 4: Methodology

### Methodology

The independent review of a policy that is being implemented, at its very early stages posed a methodological challenge. On the one hand, a formative evaluation approach was used to assess the form that the policy is taking—the evaluation architecture, how key instruments are deployed at each stage—and how these are affecting the behaviour of key actors in the implementation process. On the other hand, a summative evaluation method allowed an assessment of the incremental outcomes associated with the introduction of the evaluation policy. Here, criteria for assessment included (i) relevance, examining the extent to which the policy is responding to external and internal demands of various stakeholders, and whether or not it “did the right things” in meeting multiple demands; (ii) efficiency in the selection and implementation of actions to execute the policy measures; (iii) effectiveness—assessing the extent to which objectives outlined in the policy have been met, and are bringing about the desired changes in behaviour and performance of the targeted stakeholder and population.

### Evaluation Process

The independent review comprised four phases. An inception phase (April 10–May 10) enabled the review team to be established and to meet and exchange ideas with an independent Advisory panel and to refine the scope of the review. During this phase, the following were undertaken:

- Refine the ToRs.
- Establish the key questions to be addressed in the review.
- A scoping mission to engage the principal interlocutors of UNDP at the corporate level.
- Develop a methodology and key instruments for data collection.
- Plan field visits.
- Produce an inception report.
- Elicit comments and suggestions from independent advisory panel.

**Field visits to collect data for case studies (May 15–25).** This phase was extremely short, both in the planning and its execution. It involved planning visits to three regions—Asia (Vietnam); Africa (Africa sub-Regional Centre in Johannesburg and the Swaziland Country Office); and to the Egypt Country Office. The focus of these visits were to:

- assess the nature of processes being established at the regional centre regarding the new evaluation architecture and the role of the regional evaluation advisors;
- gain an understanding of the different ways in which the evaluation function is manifested at the country-level, by examining a very small country office (Swaziland)—where evidence from the ERC already suggested weak evaluation capacity and performance; in Egypt where evidence suggested relatively strong capacities and evaluation performance; and Vietnam, representing a new trend towards a One UN system.
- conduct key-person interviews, which entailed sessions with key country and regional office staff, evaluation specialists and focal persons, partner country government officials (notably in Swaziland), NGOs and evaluation consultants

**Validation, follow-up data consolidation.** Upon completing field visits, the team returned to New York to validate the emerging findings and follow up with key interviews. During this phase, the main functionaries of the evaluation function were engaged, in EO and the Executive Board. The team used this opportunity to observe an Executive Board meeting and to validate impressions gathered in the field with leadership of the Regional Bureaux. The most significant activity during this phase was the summary of “early impressions” into a progress report. This was shared only with the advisory panel, which offered useful suggestions in the shaping of the analyses and draft report. Simultaneously, primary data from the Internet-based survey were

analyzed and summarized; and secondary data from ERC and other sources were consolidated to provide basis of evidence for the analysis and synthesis of findings.

**Analyses and syntheses were conducted after the validation phase.** This entailed the triangulation of all the data sources to build the analyses inherent in the report.

#### Instruments Employed for the Review of UNDP Evaluation Policy

Instruments Used	Instrument 1	Instrument 2	Instrument 3	Instrument 4
	<b>ERC Database, Desk Reviews of Literature</b>	<b>Internet- Based Knowledge, Attitude &amp; Practices (KAP) Survey</b>	<b>Key Stakeholder Individual and Group) Interviews</b>	<b>Case studies based on country visits</b>
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provide evidence that can answer the key questions this review aims to ask</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- triangulate and validate data provided under the ERC where relevant;</li> <li>- answer questions which existing data cannot tell or cannot tell sufficiently</li> <li>- assess stakeholders' attitude about the policy</li> <li>- provide information on questions of knowledge about the evaluation policy in the entire UNDP system (and thus see how good the dissemination efforts are)</li> <li>- look for good or bad practices in implementing the policy at different levels and from different perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- gather evidence, check and validate information provided either by the literature or ERC database;</li> <li>- assess stakeholders' attitude about the policy</li> <li>- look for explanations on the status-quo, progresses achieved, challenges faced and suggestions for improvements</li> <li>- test the hypothesis on the connection between technical level of evaluation functionality and higher level of development effectiveness and result agenda, especially with EB members and senior management</li> <li>- look for good or bad practices in implementing the policy at different levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- gather country/region-specific data and field evidence</li> <li>- check and validate information provided either by the literature or ERC database for the countries/regions selected</li> <li>- look for explanations on why things have been the way they are, and suggestions for improvements;</li> <li>- test the hypothesis on the connection between technical level of evaluation functionality and higher level of development effectiveness and result agenda at country level</li> <li>- document progress, if any, and gather inputs to case studies for national capacity development and UNDP partnership arrangement in terms of evaluation</li> </ul>
Subjects of Review	<p><b>1. Implementation of Evaluation Function in UNDP and its associated funds and programmes</b> (including institutional arrangements, systems, mechanism, incentives at work in favour or disfavour of the implementation of the vision set by the</p>	<p><b>1. Perceptions on the compliance level with evaluation policy in key areas such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roles and responsibilities;</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. Implementation of evaluation function in UNDP and its associated funds and programmes</b> (including institutional arrangements, systems, mechanism, incentives at work in favour or disfavour of the implementation of the vision set by the</p>	<p><b>1. Implementation of evaluation function in studied country/regional office of UNDP</b> (including institutional arrangements, systems, mechanism, incentives at work in favour or disfavour of the implementation of the vision set by the</p>

<p>promulgation of the evaluation policy, as well as the implementation of the policy itself).</p> <p><b>2. Compliance with evaluation policy in specific areas such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory evaluations;</li> <li>- Certain aspects of credibility (e.g., report quality) and utility question (e.g., management response);</li> <li>- Certain aspects of the capacity and resource question, as well as the issue of national capacity development and partnership in evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Emerging Issues relating to the question of relevance and gaps of the evaluation policy</b></p>	<p>'- Capacities and resources;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Various aspects of utility question beyond the aspect of management response (such as informing the next cycle of programming, or project planning)</li> <li>- Independence of evaluations;</li> <li>- Credibility norms;</li> <li>- Issue of national capacity development and partnership in evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Emerging Issues relating to the question of relevance and gaps of the evaluation policy</b></p>	<p>promulgation of the evaluation policy as well as the implementation of the policy itself).</p> <p><b>2. - Compliance with evaluation policy in key areas such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roles and responsibilities;</li> <li>- Capacities and resources;</li> <li>- Credibility norms;</li> <li>- Various aspects of utility question beyond the aspect of management response (such as informing the next cycle of programming, or project planning)</li> <li>- Independence (or at least perceptions on independence of evaluations);</li> <li>- Issue of national capacity development and partnership in evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Emerging Issues relating to the question of relevance and gaps of the evaluation policy</b></p>	<p>promulgation of the evaluation policy as well as the implementation of the policy itself).</p> <p><b>2. - Compliance with evaluation policy in key areas in the countries visited such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Roles and responsibilities;</li> <li>- Capacities and resources;</li> <li>- Credibility norms;</li> <li>- Various aspects of utility question beyond the aspect of management response (such as informing the next cycle of programming, or project planning)</li> <li>- Independence (or at least perceptions on independence of evaluations);</li> <li>- Particular attention to the issue of national capacity development and partnership in evaluation.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Emerging Issues relating to the question of relevance and gaps of the evaluation policy (such as its implications in One UN pilot countries)</b></p>
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Requirements		<p>- <i>Target audience:</i> evaluation resource persons within the stakeholder list of UNDP evaluation policy, i.e., focal points in UNDP country offices, regional bureaux, policy and practice bureaux,</p> <p>- <i>Designing criteria:</i> comprehensive, capturing all three aspects of the internet survey exercise;</p> <p>- <i>Semi-closed questionnaires</i> to allow for personal opinions on challenges faced, suggestions for improvements, practices to share (both good and bad).</p> <p>- Within the short time-frame of the exercise, the survey should be designed to allow quick returns of responses. In this regard, high technological convenience for survey respondents and for the consolidation purpose would present an advantage. Hence, an Internet-based questionnaire is planned for the survey</p>	<p>- <i>Target audience:</i> evaluation resource persons within the stakeholder list of UNDP evaluation policy, i.e., focal points in UNDP country offices, regional bureaux, policy and practice bureaux,</p>	<p><b>Selection criteria:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 countries with pre-policy and post-policy ADR experience, to gain the country-level perspective from the exercise;</li> <li>- one country with recognised strong national ownership in evaluation, to learn about the partnership dimension in the evaluation policy implementation. ;</li> <li>- one country hosting regional bureau;</li> </ul> <p><b>Suggested Groups of Interviewees per country:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>UNDP:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Regional/Country Office Senior Management</li> <li>+ Regional/Country Office Evaluation Focal Point(s)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <i>Partner Country:</i> Evaluation Resource Person(s);</li> <li>- <i>Country evaluators:</i> A focus group of evaluation practitioners in country, including those who have working experience with UNDP evaluations</li> </ul>
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## Annex 5: Documents Consulted

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