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Evaluation

Evaluation Office of UNDP: medium-term evaluation plan (2014-2017)

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I. Introduction

1. This paper has been prepared in compliance with paragraph 9 of Executive Board decision 2013/15, in which the Board noted that the programme of work for 2014 was at an early stage of development and requested that the Evaluation Office provide a detailed work plan which would fully integrate the new UNDP strategic plan, 2014-2017 to the Executive Board at its first regular session 2014, and further requested that the 2014 work plan set out a comprehensive medium-term evaluation plan for UNDP.

2. The UNDP Evaluation Office welcomes this opportunity to present to the Board its programme of work for 2014-2017. . The 2014 - 2017 evaluation plan has been drafted at a pivotal time for UNDP, at the start of a new strategic plan and while the organisation is undergoing significant corporate restructuring. The independent Evaluation Office is cognisant of donor and beneficiary demands for greater clarification of the UNDP "value proposition" as a global provider of development support. Fully funded and effectively implemented, this evaluation plan can meet the Board's expectations. It constitutes the minimum set of evaluations and related activities that are necessary to assess the achievements of UNDP across each of its strategic outcomes during the next four years. Through the evaluations carried out under this plan, the Evaluation Office will focus especially on whether UNDP is achieving its overall vision, as set out in the new strategic plan, of helping countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion

3. This evaluation plan should be viewed as indicative rather than fixed, as it is being launched ahead of the independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy which the Board will consider at its second regular session of 2014. Recommendations from the review likely will lead to changes in the evaluation policy, which in turn are likely to necessitate revisions to this medium-term evaluation plan.

4. During the period 2014-2017, the Evaluation Office will continue to submit to the Executive Board an annual report on evaluation, providing salient information on results achieved by UNDP and the activities of the Evaluation Office, including implementation of this medium term evaluation plan. In 2014, the Evaluation Office will introduce a new format for its annual report which will enable a richer discussion of key evaluation findings and recommendations. Options to prepare joint reports with the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations will be explored and discussed with the Board.

5. The recently established Evaluation Advisory Panel will continue to provide advice and quality assurance to the Evaluation Office. This initiative goes hand in hand with other efforts aimed at strengthening evaluation methodology and processes to increase the credibility and utility of independent evaluations in UNDP.

II. Conduct of evaluations

6. Conducting independent evaluations is the primary function of the UNDP Evaluation Office. These evaluations support stronger accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board and to other stakeholders in the countries where the organization works. They also support learning to strengthen programming and to make UNDP a more relevant, effective and efficient organization. Annex 1 indicates the proposed set of independent evaluations to be carried out.

7. Following the 2012 peer review of the Evaluation Office methodology, the office has implemented an initiative to strengthen the capacity of UNDP to assess the impact of its work. This move, which was welcomed by the Executive Board in decision 2013/15, will change the focus of some

evaluations from examining the contribution to outcomes towards identifying, when possible and appropriate, the actual contribution of UNDP to effecting changes in people's lives. This will include introducing impact criteria into the existing series of independent evaluations and supporting greater use of impact approaches in decentralized evaluations. By 2017, impact should be firmly established in the UNDP evaluation culture at all levels.

8. **Programmatic evaluations.** Assessments of development results (ADRs), independent country-level evaluations, will continue to be conducted. The planned number of evaluations is indicated in the table below:

Year	No. of countries eligible for an ADR	No. of ADRs
2014	23	6
2015	49	10
2016	33	6
2017	23	6
Total	128	28

9. A total of 28 ADRs, covering all regions, will be conducted between 2014 and 2017. ADR production will spike in 2015 in correlation with the 40 country programmes scheduled for submission to the Executive Board in 2016. During this cycle, the Evaluation Office expects to focus extra attention on evaluating country programmes in Africa, to achieve parity in coverage across the four regions. To date, for example, approximately 40 per cent of countries in Africa have been covered by ADRs, compared to 60 per cent in Asia.

10. At the same time, the Evaluation Office is conducting a comprehensive revision of ADR methodology and ensuring alignment of the ADRs with the new strategic plan. It is expected that the ADRs starting in late 2014 will be revised drawing on the lessons learned from this exercise. These revisions may enable the Evaluation Office to increase the number of ADRs it carries out from 2015 onward. For a highly decentralized organization such as UNDP, evaluations that take the country level as the unit of analysis are essential for assessing performance. The Evaluation Office also recognizes that the ADRs will be carried out in the context of United Nations reform and is mindful of developments related to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and similar joint United Nations system evaluations at the country level.

11. The Evaluation Office will carry out other programmatic evaluations during this four year period, specifically: (a) evaluations of the five regional programmes; and (b) an evaluation of the global framework for policy support 2014-2017. These will all be undertaken in 2016 and presented to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2017. Given that this array of programme evaluations constitutes a very heavy workload for the Evaluation Office and for UNDP management and the Executive Board, work has already started on designing these evaluations so they can be conducted more efficiently. At the annual session of 2013, members of the Board expressed interest in combining the regional evaluations to reduce overlap and allow more comparative analysis across the programmes. It therefore is envisaged that one summary report will cover the global and all five regional programmes, drawing common lessons and identifying performance by region. Discussions have taken place with the regional bureaux and the Bureau for Development Policy to ensure coordination between the Evaluation Office's plan and the evaluation plans of these different units.

12. The Evaluation Office will use these programmatic evaluations (as well as thematic evaluations) in conducting the evaluation of the UNDP strategic plan 2014-2017, to be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session of

2017. Programmatic evaluations will incorporate assessment of the key engagement principles listed in the strategic plan and of other critical issues emphasized in the plan, such as partnerships.

13. **Thematic evaluations.** A series of thematic evaluations has been planned in alignment with the key outcomes of the UNDP strategic plan, 2014-2017. The evaluations will not provide detailed coverage of each outcome but will ensure that critical issues for each outcome are addressed. Annex 2 indicates the alignment of the thematic evaluations to the strategic plan.

14. The Evaluation Office plans to conduct 10 thematic evaluations during the period 2014-2017, as listed below and in paragraph 15 (with expected Executive Board submission dates):

(a) *Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to gender equality* (annual session 2015). Following the 2006 evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP, this evaluation will focus on the overall contribution of UNDP to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment;

(b) *Evaluation of the contribution of UNDP Human Development Reports (HDRs)* (first regular session 2015). The scope of the evaluation will cover global and regional HDRs; national HDRs may be evaluated in a second phase. In addition to accountability and learning objectives, the evaluation will focus attention on the public policy and pedagogical value of these flagship UNDP knowledge products;

(c) *Evaluation of the role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals* (annual session 2015). The evaluation will focus on the tools and initiatives provided by UNDP in support of government and civil society efforts to fulfil the Goals, including national reports, advocacy (Millennium Campaign), inclusion in national development strategies and poverty reduction strategies, costing exercises, the Millennium Development Goals acceleration framework, localizing the Goals, etc.;

(d) *Evaluation of UNDP support to disability-inclusive development* (second regular session 2016). The evaluation will address the issue on two levels: (i) how UNDP is mainstreaming the rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities across its programme support work in countries; and (ii) results from direct support programming, for instance to landmine victims. The Evaluation Office will consult with other United Nations agencies and programmes to consider carrying out this evaluation jointly;

(e) *Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation* (annual session 2017). This will be the third in a series of evaluations on this important theme;

(f) *Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to anti-corruption and public integrity strategies* (second regular session 2016). This is the first evaluation on this theme. It will focus across all UNDP anti-corruption work, including the UNDP Global Thematic Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness;

(g) *Evaluation of the UNDP response in the immediate aftermath of crisis* (first regular session 2017). This evaluation builds from a series of evaluations focused on crisis prevention and recovery in conflict and disaster contexts. It is scheduled towards the end of the planning cycle to allow time for the launch of the new UNDP Crisis Response Unit;

(h) One additional thematic evaluation will be selected to cover an institutional effectiveness theme related to section 5 of the strategic plan. The topic will be decided in 2014 after further discussion with UNDP management and the Executive Board, and then presented at the first regular session of 2017.

15. Two thematic evaluations that emphasize an impact approach will be developed:

(a) *The impact of UNDP support to protected areas management* (first regular session 2015). The evaluation is in progress, jointly managed by the evaluation offices of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF);

(b) *The impact of UNDP support to mine action* (June 2015). The evaluation, now under development, will focus on the social and economic impacts of UNDP support to efforts to reduce the threat and impact of mines and explosive remnants of war.

16. Other impact-oriented thematic evaluations will be developed as additional financial and human resources become available. It is also anticipated that the additional thematic evaluations proposed for later in the strategic plan cycle, covering governance and crisis prevention issues, are likely to focus greater attention on the impacts of UNDP support.

17. **Other evaluations.** With the GEF Evaluation Office, the Evaluation Office is jointly conducting the evaluation of the GEF/UNDP Small Grants Programme. In addition, the office is engaging in a wide range of other evaluations including the evaluation of the Poverty-Environment Initiative, with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the evaluation of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD), with UNEP and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.

III. Other Evaluation Office activities

18. **Partnership and knowledge management.** The UNDP Evaluation Office is the largest evaluation office in the United Nations system and is looked for leadership by other United Nations agencies and evaluation partners. Building on its established credibility, during the plan period the office expects to take an increasingly prominent place on the global evaluation stage, both contributing to and benefiting from the rapidly expanding global evaluation experience. The Evaluation Office will continue to engage with regional and international development evaluation networks and evaluation capacity development organizations.

19. **Support to decentralized evaluations.** The 2014 independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy will focus on the issue of decentralized evaluation and may propose changes to the organizational responsibilities for this work. Nonetheless, the Evaluation Office will continue to provide limited support to decentralized evaluation in 2014, consisting of: (a) a roster of consultants; (b) the Country Office Support Initiative, in collaboration with the Operation Support Group; (c) quality assessment of decentralized evaluations; (d) maintenance of the Evaluation Resource Centre; and (e) evaluation guidance including on impact evaluation. The latter will include piloting impact approaches with decentralized units of UNDP.

20. **Support to United Nations reform.** The Evaluation Office supports United Nations reform through the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), which brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations system. The Evaluation Office will continue to house the UNEG secretariat and provide financial assistance to specific UNEG activities.

21. National evaluation capacity. As per the UNDP evaluation policy, the Evaluation Office will continue to support the development of national evaluation capacities and focus on South-South exchanges among government units responsible for evaluation and government users of evaluation. It will build on the 2013 conferences on national evaluation capacity, where for the first time representatives of government evaluation units came together with those from the evaluation networks to develop an action-oriented set of follow-up activities. The Evaluation Office will continue to support these efforts, with additional conferences scheduled for 2015 and 2017. During the period 2014-2017, UNDP support will evolve as the network is gradually taken over by the participants themselves.

Annex 1. Submission of independent evaluations to the Executive Board, 2014-2017

(FRS= first regular session; AS=annual session; SRS=second regular session)

	2014			2015			2016			2017		
	FRS	AS	SRS	FRS	SRS	SRS	FRS	AS	SRS	FRS	AS	SRS
Corporate												
Annual report on evaluation		●			●			●			●	
Policy review			●									
Revised policy					●							
Programmatic												
ADRs		⑥			⑥			⑩			⑥	
Regional programme											⑤	
Global programme											●	
Strategic plan											●	
Thematic												
Gender equality					●							
Millennium Development Goals					●							
Human Development Reports				●								
Disability-inclusive development									●			
South-South											●	
Anti-corruption									●			
Immediate crisis aftermath										●		
Impact												
Protected areas				●								
Mine action					●							
Institutional												
To be determined											●	
Project												
Small Grants Programme			●									

Annex 2. Alignment of thematic evaluations to the UNDP strategic plan, 2014-2017

STRATEGIC PLAN OUTCOME	THEMATIC EVALUATION
Growth is inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals • Joint evaluation of GEF/UNDP Small Grants Programme • Evaluation of the impact of UNDP/GEF protected areas management
Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance (specific theme to be determined)
Countries have strengthened institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals
Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to gender equality
Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint evaluation of GEF/UNDP Small Grants Programme • Crisis prevention (specific theme to be determined)
Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the impact of UNDP support to mine action.
Development debates and actions at all levels prioritise poverty, inequality and exclusion, consistent with our engagement principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the contribution of UNDP Human Development Reports.
CROSS-CUTTING EVALUATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of UNDP support to disability-inclusive development • Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation 	
INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to be determined 	