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Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the
United Nations Office for
Project Services**

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Evaluation

Annual report on evaluation, 2012

Summary

The annual report on evaluation, 2012, assesses the progress made by UNDP, and its associated funds and programmes, in fulfilling the evaluation functions outlined in the UNDP evaluation policy. The report presents key findings and lessons learned from evaluations conducted in 2012 and sets out the programmes of work for 2013 and 2014.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the report; (b) request UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Volunteers programme to address the issues raised; and (c) approve the revised programmes of work for 2013 and proposed programmes of work for 2014.



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Introduction

1. The revised evaluation policy of UNDP was approved in 2011. The policy established a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function, which also applies to the associated funds and programmes – the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV). The present annual report on evaluation assesses the progress made in 2012, by UNDP Evaluation Office and the evaluation units of UNCDF and UNV, towards fulfilling their role in the evaluation function. It presents an assessment of the evaluation capacity, provides lessons emerging from the evaluations conducted, and identifies the approved and proposed evaluation programmes for 2013 and 2014. The evaluations conducted in 2012 are publicly available through the Evaluation Resource Centre.

I. UNDP Evaluation Office resources

2. In 2012, the total expenditure by the UNDP Evaluation Office for evaluations and other corporate-related activities was \$7,712 million, of which \$7,222 million came from UNDP core funding and \$490,000 came from non-core sources. This delivery represents a 4.9 per cent increase from 2011. The sum of \$248,000, provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, was allocated to evaluations. Of the core funding received, 89.9 per cent was spent. ‘Force majeure’ delays in planned evaluations, including delays in the start-up of the assessment of development results for Afghanistan, contributed to this gap between expenditures and available core budget. Activities still to be completed were carried over to 2013, and the Evaluation Office budget was reprogrammed accordingly.

3. The Evaluation Office has 23 staff members (17 professional and six general service). Sixty-one per cent of all staff members, and 47 per cent of professional staff members, are women. In 2012, 78 per cent of team leaders and 47 per cent of team specialists hired to assist in carrying out evaluations were female. This represents a positive trend on the part of the Evaluation Office to reach gender parity in its consultant hiring (in 2011 41 per cent of consultant hires were female, up from 32 per cent in 2010).

II. UNDP Evaluation Office, 2012 deliverables

4. The Evaluation Office conducts independent evaluations of the institutional, global, regional and country programmes identified in the UNDP strategic plan and approved by the Executive Board. During 2012 the Evaluation Office carried out four thematic evaluations, seven programme evaluations, five assessments of development results, and the evaluation of the UNDP strategic plan 2008-2013¹.

III. Expanding the culture of evaluation in UNDP

5. The Evaluation Office indicated in the 2010 and 2011 annual reports on evaluation that it would develop an on-line evaluation training course for all UNDP staff. That has now been done, and the training programme is in use by UNDP personnel through the UNDP Learning Centre. The course covers the strategic, planning, technical and application aspects of the evaluation process and

¹ See the annexed list of evaluations completed in 2012

is particularly useful for programme managers, monitoring and evaluation specialists, and evaluation focal points in programme units. The course has been positively received by UNDP staff; however, course completion among the target learners, namely senior UNDP field managers, has been slow, and measures to accelerate it may be required. To date, 483 persons have registered for the course, including 78 from senior management, and 130 have completed it (24 from senior management).

6. In April 2012, the Evaluation Office established a roster of evaluation consultants that is available also to counterparts in the bureaus and country offices. During 2013 the office will continue to expand the roster and increase its use. There are now 73 evaluation experts on the roster. The office will work with the regional bureaus to identify additional regional and country-specific support for the conduct of evaluations, for instance by identifying evaluation institutions and experts to serve on regional evaluation panels.

7. The Evaluation Office manages the publicly accessible online Evaluation Resource Centre. The centre houses all UNDP evaluations as well as those conducted by UNCDF and UNV. As of 1 March 2012, its repository contained more than 2,400 evaluation-related documents posted by programme units, including terms of reference, evaluation reports, and management responses.

The United Nations Evaluation Group

8. Evaluation units in the 43 United Nations system agencies and entities have been working together in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) to establish common norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system, strengthen the evaluation capacity in the United Nations system, promote joint initiatives among the organizations, and facilitate support to Member States in building their evaluation capacity.

9. In 2012 for UNEG embarked upon a comprehensive assessment of its mandates and operational modalities in order to increase its value to members and respond better to expectations, including from Member States. Based on the results of this assessment, UNEG mandates and working methods are expected to be revised in 2013. The group also issued a publication on evaluation capacity in the United Nations system; produced practical tips for national evaluation capacity development; piloted evaluation guidelines for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); facilitated learning from peer reviews of evaluation offices; and continued its work on guidance materials for normative evaluations, impact evaluations, and the gender-equality and human-rights dimensions of evaluations.

10. The Evaluation Office was the elected chair of UNEG from 2007 to 2011². The office has continued its strong support to the group, contributing to the substantive activities of its task forces, and providing it with essential financial and human resources, including the executive coordinator and secretariat positions. In its role as UNEG executive coordinator, the Evaluation Office is the guardian of the UNEG annual work plan and budget. Through UNEG, the Evaluation Office has been an active member of the United Nations reform process, including participating in the debates on United Nations system-wide coherence in evaluation.

² The Chief of the Evaluation Office of UN Women chaired UNEG in 2011-2012. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the United Nations Office of Integral Oversight Services was elected as chair for 2012-2013.

National evaluation capacity

11. Support for national evaluation capacity in developing countries is a priority for the Evaluation Office, as it can help broaden support for evaluations and their use in partner countries; expand South-South cooperation; increase the global talent pool of evaluators; and help to generate practical, context-sensitive recommendations. In 2012, 44 per cent of the team leaders and 54 per cent of the team specialists contracted by the Evaluation Office to conduct assessments of development results or thematic evaluations were from developing countries.

12. The Evaluation Office has co-organized two biennial national evaluation capacity conferences, in Morocco and South Africa, and will co-host a third in 2013, in São Paulo, together with the Government of Brazil. The success of the previous conferences highlights the growing interest and capacity for evaluation among many United Nations Member States. The Evaluation Office has invited other United Nations evaluation partners in UNEG to jointly sponsor this and future national evaluation conferences.

Evaluation Office initiatives

13. The Evaluation Office introduced several initiatives designed to improve evaluation quality and rigour. Of particular note, evaluations commissioned by the Evaluation Office are gradually being led by its own staff. In the past, such leadership was contracted and external. Consultants will still be contracted for specific tasks, but will not bear responsibility for crafting evaluation conclusions and recommendations. A systematic effort is under way to enhance the quality of data production and analysis using modern techniques to strengthen the reliability and validity of qualitative derived findings. Other initiatives include the establishment of an international advisory panel for quality assurance, comprised of evaluation and other experts reflecting the wide area of expertise and the geographic diversity of UNDP. This will ensure that the work of the Evaluation Office is internationally and professionally referenced, thus furthering the credibility of evaluations and ensuring that key principles of independence, transparency, accountability and learning are reinforced. Greater engagement with professional evaluation and other platforms is now taking place, helping the Evaluation Office sharpen its methodologies, while raising the profile of UNDP. The office is now presenting its findings to the UNDP Organizational Performance Group and will include the management response to evaluations in its published reports. The Evaluation Office is engaged with senior management in enhancing the evaluability of UNDP programmes by strengthening the use of evidence-based baselines, indicators and results frameworks.

Peer review

14. A professional peer review on methodology and knowledge-sharing in the Evaluation Office took place in September and November 2012. The review was requested by the Evaluation Office and conducted in line with the UNEG framework for professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of United Nations organizations. The panel consisted of senior managers from the evaluation offices of the Department for International Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

15. The peer review panel found the Evaluation Office to be professional, possessing a high degree of independence and credibility. It noted good skills in the team and excellent engagement with management and the Executive Board. From this strong position, the panel set out several issues to be explored further with the Executive Board and senior management, so that the strategic and potentially transformative role of evaluation in UNDP can be enhanced. The panel suggested more attention should be paid to assessing the efficiency and impact of UNDP programmes. It recognized the methodological challenges to evaluating

impact in UNDP and recommended developing clearer ‘theories of change’ and identifying pathways to impact through contribution analysis. The panel noted that the usefulness of evaluations to the Executive Board and to UNDP management could be increased through greater methodological rigour and greater attention to strategic issues or areas with high learning needs. The lessons learnt from the peer review will be shared with UNEG, while the review itself has been shared with UNDP management and the Executive Board. The panel recommended significantly strengthening the link between decentralized evaluations and the central evaluation function, and adopting a formative approach so as to better understand why, in several areas of UNDP work, decentralized evaluation and monitoring remain below par. Strengthening decentralized evaluations will mean strengthening the evidence base of UNDP work, which should empower country offices and headquarters to improve country, regional and global strategies.

IV. Key conclusions and lessons from UNDP independent evaluations in 2012

16. The **evaluation of the UNDP strategic plan, 2008-2013**, focussed on how UNDP used the strategic plan to improve its performance. UNDP is a stronger organization than it was when the strategic plan was approved. It also faces a very different context than five years ago, including greater demand and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. In terms of development performance, UNDP made important development contributions across all its focus areas, but efficiency and sustainability remain challenging. Through various initiatives centred on the agenda for organizational change, UNDP has strengthened its strategic planning system, with the strategic plan at its core. The performance monitoring and reporting system has also been strengthened over time, but it is not optimal for a highly decentralized organization working on complex development issues where context is extremely important. This is an issue at the heart of its performance monitoring and reporting challenges. To create a more appropriate system, the country programme should be the unit of analysis when assessing UNDP performance.

17. UNDP effectively used its strategic plan to direct the organization towards the four broad focus areas but did not ensure implementation of all the approaches at the programming level as intended in the strategic plan document itself (for example, the human development-based approach to programming, and mainstreaming South-South cooperation). Although major efforts were made (such as in gender mainstreaming and capacity development), appropriate incentives and capacities to ensure country-level implementation were not introduced. UNDP did not adequately support country offices in addressing the trade-offs between the approaches and priorities identified in its strategic plan – for example, the trade-offs between national ownership and organizational priorities, or the trade-off between long-term capacity development needs and short-term results. Finally, the evaluation concluded that UNDP funding arrangements and reliance on non-core funding present challenges to effective programming and limit performance as assessed by the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability criteria.

18. The evaluation of **UNDP support to conflict-affected countries in the context of United Nations peace operations** concluded that UNDP plays a vital role in the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, with a capacity to operate ‘at scale’ across multiple programme areas before, during and after the outbreak of conflict. UNDP operational effectiveness and efficiency in conflict settings is uneven but improving, with clear evidence that the organization can now respond quickly and effectively to requests for assistance in the wake of armed conflict. UNDP is well positioned to serve as an integral partner in peace operations, providing coordination, programme management and technical expertise, especially during transitions to peacebuilding and post-conflict development. The

evaluation recommended that UNDP play a central role in the planning of United Nations integrated peace missions, especially during the transition to peacebuilding. To increase its effectiveness, UNDP needs to more consistently and comprehensively analyse the country context within which it operates, so as to better anticipate and prepare for the onset and recurrence of violent conflict. Programming for conflict-affected countries should articulate a clear exit strategy, and UNDP should continue to hone its human resources procedures to select, train and incentivize highly capable personnel to work in conflict-affected hardship posts, with special focus on hiring and retaining women.

19. The evaluation of the **UNDP contribution to poverty reduction** focused on the changes UNDP has brought to people's lives at the country level since 2000. It noted that UNDP has been an effective partner in supporting the development of pro-poor policies, especially through encouraging national discourse on multidimensional poverty and supporting the development of an enabling environment where national partners can develop appropriate policies. The evaluation points to the need for strengthening the process of learning about what is working, for whom, and in what contexts. Effective learning should be the basis for scaling up activities and ensuring that lessons from UNDP interventions feed into policy adaptation. In order to fulfil its institution-wide priority of poverty reduction, UNDP must ensure a consistent pro-poor bias in all its programmes. While it is important to support the development of a pro-poor enabling environment across all focus areas, the poor need to benefit disproportionately from UNDP interventions if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved,

20. The evaluation of the **UNDP contribution to South-South and triangular cooperation** found that UNDP has a strong comparative advantage in supporting and facilitating South-South and triangular cooperation, expressed in its neutrality and absence of political bias, its extended country presence and decentralized nature, and its demand-driven approach to development. UNDP support for South-South cooperation -related institutional work has led to positive results, reinforcing the potential of the organisation for further innovation. Results were more evident in the capacity development of country-level international cooperation organizations; support to research or advocacy on the strategic and policy dimensions of South-South cooperation; enhanced country partnership agreements; and support to thematic centres. The evaluation found that the UNDP financing commitment for South-South cooperation has not grown proportionally to the increasing demand. South-South cooperation is mainstreamed within UNDP programmes, but support will be needed until an even pattern of progress becomes apparent. The evaluation recommends that UNDP develop a comprehensive, institution-wide strategy for supporting South-South and triangular cooperation that capitalizes on its comparative advantage and centralizes the human development perspective in the global debate.

21. The evaluation of the UNDP contribution to **strengthening electoral systems and processes** found that that the UNDP framework for electoral assistance was well conceived and enabled an effective response. UNDP has made a significant contribution, and in some cases elections would not have happened without its assistance. Its development perspective, larger democratic governance programme portfolio, long-term relationships with host governments, and United Nations system status afford UNDP the standing expertise and moral authority to advise countries on these sensitive and highly political national processes. The building of cost-effective, context-appropriate and sustainable solutions is not consistently prioritized by UNDP, which has limited the effectiveness of its efforts to build national ownership of the electoral processes. A key evaluation recommendation was that UNDP should ensure a more consistent grounding of electoral assistance in the broader governance framework and should streamline the chain of electoral support processes.

22. The evaluation of UNDP **partnerships with global funds and philanthropic foundations** assessed UNDP partnerships with three global funds and three philanthropic foundations and confirmed that such partnerships add value and are strategically relevant. They facilitate UNDP engagement in global policy dialogue and innovative programming at the country level. The evaluation found that UNDP had demonstrated flexibility in adjusting its programmatic focus and operational modalities and had in some cases acted as a neutral facilitator for the United Nations system and a conduit for support to countries going through difficult transitions. Recent evaluations of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria provide solid evidence that UNDP work conducted in partnership with global funds has contributed to the achievement of development results. The evaluation recommended that UNDP develop a stronger central coordination of information and knowledge management functions and develop a partnership strategy for engaging with philanthropic organizations.

23. The evaluation of the **fourth UNDP Global Programme** concluded that UNDP is well positioned to play a greater role in informing global policy debates. The evaluation found that Global Programme results were mixed on the extent to which UNDP had built on its advantages and enhanced its contribution to country-level development results. While the coherence of the practice architecture has improved, its potential has yet to be fully realized. In many instances, advisory services have been used to substitute for country office capacities, undermining its potential. Knowledge production and sharing have yet to be institutionalized as key programming dimensions. Global Programme resources were essential in supporting gender-related activities. However, implementation of the gender equality strategy was not strong enough to address the development and institutional gender priorities of UNDP. There is considerable scope for maximizing the contribution of advisory services and prioritizing the role of supporting programme country Governments. Advisory services should not be offered as a substitute for basic country office capacities; instead, the Global Programme should address the need for more specialized policy and technical services in a small number of programme areas. UNDP should improve the efficiency of the global and regional programmes by establishing clear accountabilities between policy and regional bureaux, and by strengthening the regional service centres as vital links between headquarters and country offices.

24. During 2012 the Evaluation Office launched evaluations of each of the **five regional programmes: Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Latin America and the Caribbean**. The evaluations responded to the results and resources frameworks developed for each regional programme. They examined programme relevance and results achieved, including the quality of technical support services provided by the regional centres to country offices and other national or regional partners. Evidence from the evaluations suggests that all the regional programmes responded to the development challenges of the respective regions and drew upon the comparative strengths and neutrality of UNDP. Nevertheless, fragmentation and dispersion of programmes affected coherence. Linkages with country programmes were not uniformly strong, which was problematic since regional programmes depend on country offices to translate issues into actions. All five evaluations pinpointed weaknesses in monitoring, learning and knowledge management.

(a) In *Africa*, the regional programme focused closely on regional integration, helping to promote normative frameworks such as the human rights strategy and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The programme responded to issues not articulated in the regional programme document, including food security, which the programme addressed through complementary initiatives such as the Africa

Human Development Report 2012, Millennium Development Goals acceleration frameworks on food security, the promotion of agribusiness value chains through the African Facility for Inclusive Markets, and support to agriculture-based youth employment. While the regional programme produced high-quality knowledge products that have been shared globally, the potential of the regional programme and the regional service centres to function regional knowledge hubs has been only partially realized.

(b) The regional programme for the *Arab States* included work on anti-corruption, HIV/AIDS and advocacy (including through the Arab Human Development Reports). Its limited financial size and narrow geographical footprint led to resource mobilization difficulties and other contextual issues. The programme is largely managed from New York and would benefit from a stronger regional presence, better relationships with country offices, and strategic partnerships with key regional institutions.

(c) In *Asia and the Pacific*, the regional programme exploited its unique position as the regional knowledge hub, and its knowledge products are considered reliable and pertinent. Another area of success is its engagement of regional and national partners, the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme being a noteworthy example.

(d) At the midpoint of its cycle, the regional programme for *Europe and the CIS* was making progress in response to critical issues such as climate change, social inclusion, local governance, and partnership with emerging donor countries. The programme was generally delivered efficiently, with emphasis on the implementation of regional projects supplemented by high-level advisory services and knowledge products. Funding delays affected the timely implementation of some projects, and weaknesses in design were identified in certain programme areas. Recommendations include the need for a holistic development approach with subregional strategies; an appropriate resource mobilization strategy; more inclusive consultation processes when formulating the programme; intensification of cross-practices (including gender mainstreaming); and improved linkages between programme outcomes and indicators.

(e) In *Latin America and the Caribbean*, UNDP comparative advantages were in upstream work to facilitate regional and thematic networking, and cross-regional knowledge management. The need now is to focus on fewer, more realistic thematic priorities in tune with the development status and vulnerabilities of the countries in the region. To ensure continuity and sustainability of results, UNDP should focus on initiatives where it brings regional added value and expand its strategic partnerships with regional institutions.

25. Assessments of development results were conducted in *Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Timor-Leste, Niger and Croatia*. Four of those countries recently witnessed political and social instability, and the lessons learned from the four assessments provided insights into the relevance and performance of UNDP in crisis and post-conflict settings³. The assessments indicated that the UNDP response to national priorities was strategic and relevant in the transition from post-conflict scenarios to national context, and from peace-building to development. UNDP programmes have in many cases helped these nations establish useful institutional frameworks and capacities in the key areas of governance, electoral support, justice reform and decentralization. UNDP has

³ Croatia is much farther along the relief-to-development spectrum, since the war there ended in 1995.

demonstrated it can adapt to the recurrence of conflict by repositioning its support to align with immediate and emerging needs. In some cases, the country office was the sole development partner to have remained through periods of political crisis. In other countries, UNDP played a central role in supporting broader United Nations peacekeeping operations, building synergies in programming and contributing to peacebuilding results. A key element of the assessment of development results process was hosting stakeholder workshops, where UNDP demonstrated its commitment to transparency by engaging with the independent assessment of development results. While it is encouraging that most country offices responded positively to this requirement, some countries took a long time to provide comments or arrange for stakeholder workshops. This undermined the UNDP commitment to engaging effectively with its government partners, and could undermine its credibility.

26. UNDP contributions to poverty reduction were varied, and often eclipsed by the shift in focus in response to urgent issues such as elections support. The capacity to rapidly shift direction in response to crisis was appreciated by many development partners. The assessment of development results caution that UNDP needs to strike a better balance between technical support, and fund management and programme implementation support. The assessments underscored that the successful implementation of UNDP programmes and their subsequent outcomes varied according to the strength of national capacity and ownership. This series of assessments acknowledged that the UNDP approach to providing short-term technical and human resources was appropriate in the context of nascent institutions and challenges in human resources and absorption capacities.

27. Each of the assessments reviewed the gender aspects of the country programmes. Overall, the conclusion was that while programme design routinely takes gender dimensions into account, more knowledge-sharing is needed to pursue gender in a meaningful manner. While the 'gender marker' holds promise, UNDP must strengthen its commitment to promoting gender equality and women's access to development resources and justice. Inefficiencies resulting from the dispersion and fragmentation of programmes across numerous small-scale projects affected programmatic coherence and strategic relevance. This was compounded by internal UNDP procedures, frequently referred to as a source of delay and inefficiency.⁴

V. Decentralized evaluations

28. The UNDP policy and practice bureaus conduct assessments of their respective programmes and take responsibility for drafting management responses to the thematic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office. In 2012, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery completed four assessments: a programme portfolio review; an evaluation of reintegration programmes; an evaluation of the global risk identification programme; and an evaluation of the capacity for disaster reduction initiative. The Bureau for Development Policy completed two global UNDP-GEF project evaluations: 'Institutionalizing payments for ecosystems services' and the joint UNDP-UNEP project 'Improving Wastewater Management in Coastal Cities in ACP Countries. One evaluation was carried out by the Regional Bureau for Africa, four evaluations were carried out by the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, four by the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, and two by the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the

⁴ Reforms simplifying procurement procedures have recently been established.

Caribbean. The Regional Bureau for Arab States did not complete evaluations in 2012.⁵

Country office-commissioned evaluations

29. In the 2012 reporting period, country offices completed 245 evaluations: 28 outcome evaluations, 192 project evaluations, and 25 other types of evaluation⁶. Compared with the same period last year, there was a slight increase in the total number of evaluations conducted across the regions; a slight decline in evaluations in the Africa region; and a notable increase in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region (see table 1).

Table 1. Regional distribution of evaluations*

Evaluations conducted	All regions		Africa		Arab States		Asia and the Pacific		Europe and the CIS		Latin America and the Caribbean	
	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011
Year	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011
No. of countries	140	139	47	46	18	18	24	24	25	25	26	26
Total number of evaluations[†]	245*	226**	48	63	20	16	56	59	64	40	57	48
Outcome evaluation	28	63	5	31	5	3	7	14	5	10	6	5
Project evaluation	192	144	40	26	14	10	42	43	57	29	39	36
UNDAF and other programmatic evaluations	25	19	3	6	1	3	7	2	2	1	12	7
Evaluations with management response	234 (96%)	188 (83%)	45 (94%)	61 (97%)	16 (80%)	13 (81%)	54 (96%)	48 (81%)	63 (98%)	36 (90%)	56 (98%)	30 (63%)
Countries conducting at least one evaluation	89 (64%)	90 (65%)	20 (45%)	25 (54%)	9 (41%)	6 (33%)	17 (71%)	19 (79%)	21 (84%)	18 (72%)	22 (85%)	22 (85%)

* The evaluations presented are based on Evaluation Resources Centre data as of (January 31, 2013)

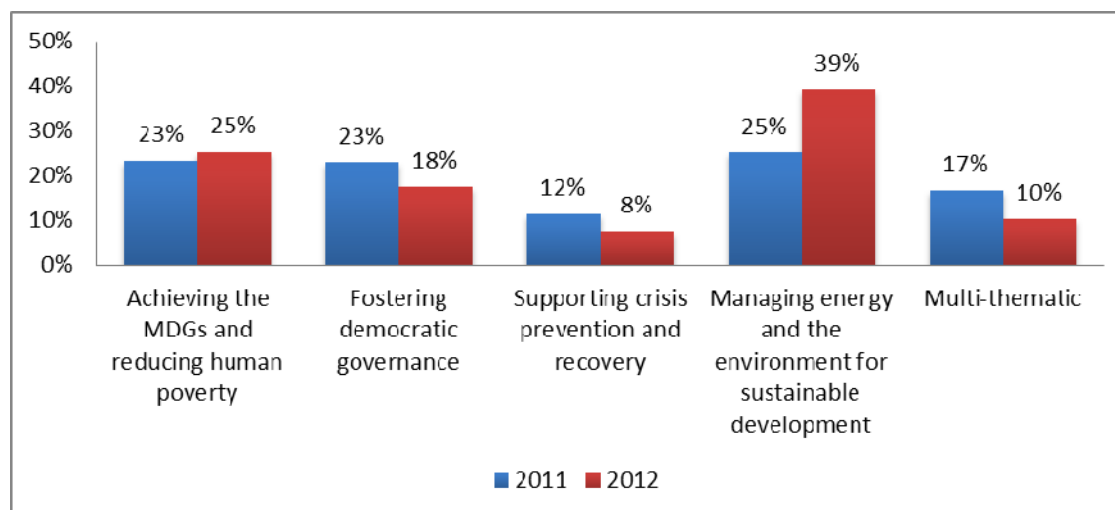
** The evaluations presented are based on Evaluation Resources Centre data as of (January 31, 2012)

[†] Total number of evaluations completed by UNDP country offices that are present in Evaluation Resources Centre, including GEF, the MDG acceleration fund, UNDAF and other joint evaluations. Evaluation reports covering multiple outcomes were counted separately for each outcome to be covered based on the evaluation plan.

30. The thematic distribution of the evaluations favours the environment and sustainable development practice area (39 per cent). The increase in the environment portfolio is partly due to the high number of GEF-funded projects implemented by UNDP over the last six years that are now concluding. Country offices are also making greater efforts to ensure that evaluations of GEF-funded projects are posted to the Evaluation Resources Centre, in line with the UNDP evaluation policy. The low number of evaluations focused on supporting crisis prevention and recovery runs contrary to the increasing focus of UNDP support in that area and suggests that more effort should be directed to assessing this work at the country level.

⁵ Evaluations are considered complete when made available in the Evaluation Resource Centre (<http://erc.undp.org>).

⁶ Includes UNDAF reviews carried out by the United Nations country team

Figure 1. Thematic distribution of evaluation (2011-2012)*

* 2011 and 2012 data are based on Evaluation Resources Centre data.

Country office and bureau evaluation capacities

31. Monitoring and evaluation capacity at the country office level has declined globally, with an overall loss of 8 positions. At the end of 2011, 29 per cent of country offices had dedicated personnel handling monitoring and evaluation functions. That number had declined to 23 per cent by the end of 2012. Of particular concern, the number of designated monitoring and evaluation staff in the Africa region declined significantly from a previously high percentage. Monitoring and evaluation staffing in the Arab States country offices also declined significantly, from an already weak position. Monitoring and evaluation staffing in the country offices of the Europe and the CIS region was on the rise, yet still lagged behind other regions. Monitoring and evaluation staffing in the Latin America and Caribbean region remained strong. Evaluation capacity at the regional level remained the same as reported last year⁷. A reduction in funding, and restructuring processes, were the primary reasons given for the decline in monitoring and evaluation staffing. This decline risks the progress made in the development of a coherent oversight function within UNDP, which is necessary for sound management, and affects the ability of UNDP to reflect critically on its work.

Table 2. Decentralized evaluation support capacity in 2012

	UNDP global		Africa		Arab States		Asia and the Pacific		Europe and the CIS		Latin America and the Caribbean	
	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011
Country offices (COs)	140	139	47	46	18	18	24	24	25	25	26	26
COs with M&E* units	23% (32)	29% (40)	23% (11)	46% (21)	6% (1)	28% (5)	17% (4)	17% (4)	12% (3)	0	35% (13)	42% (11)

⁷ At the time of completion of the present report this was in question, as the monitoring and evaluation advisor positions for the Africa Bureau and Arab States Bureau were open and may be discontinued.

No. of CO M&E specialists	51	54	13	22	7	9	11	11	5	0	15	12
No. of regional M&E specialists	12	12	3	3	1	1	3**	3**	4**	4**	1	1

* Monitoring and evaluation

**Staff time is not exclusively dedicated to monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation plan compliance and coverage

32. The revised UNDP evaluation policy stipulates that all evaluations included in evaluation plans are mandatory. Starting in 2011, evaluation compliance of a country programme has been measured at the end of the programme period and based on the completion of all planned evaluations during the period. There were 27 country programmes concluded in 2012, 16 of which (59 per cent) were fully compliant, while 2 (7 per cent) were not compliant. The remaining 9 (33 per cent) were partially compliant. The evaluation compliance rate has improved over 2011 (see table 3).

Table 3. Evaluation compliance

		RBA	RBAS	RBAP	RBEC	RBLAC	Compliance total
Number of compliant country programmes (completed 90-100% of planned evaluations)	2012	4	2	5	1	4	16 (59%)
	2011	6	1	4	4	5	20 (49%)
Number of partially compliant country programmes (completed 40%-89.99% of planned evaluations)	2012	4	1	3	1	0	9 (33%)
	2011	8	2	3	0	6	19 (46%)
Number of non-compliant country programmes (completed 0%-39.99% of planned evaluations)	2012	1	1	0	0	0	2 (7%)
	2011	0	2	0	0	0	2 (5%)

*Data based on Evaluation Resource Centre data as of 10 April 2013, for 2012, and the ARE 2012, for 2011.

The rating scale is synchronized with that used in the UNDP balanced score card.

33. All evaluations that are part of bureau and country office evaluation plans are expected to have a management response. In 2012, 96 per cent of all evaluations completed received a management response (slight increment from the results in 2011).

VI. Quality of decentralized evaluations

34. One hundred and forty-eight evaluation reports were analysed, a slight increase from 135 in 2011.⁸ The analysis shows that 32 per cent of assessed evaluations were rated 'satisfactory' or better, 43 per cent 'moderately satisfactory' and 25 per cent 'moderately unsatisfactory' or worse. Seventy-nine reports (53 per cent) were rated satisfactory or better in terms of report completeness. This was a positive shift from the 2011 findings. In 2011, a greater

⁸ A total of 155 decentralized evaluation reports were assessed for 2012. Seven of the reports were subsequently removed from the analysis as they were carried out by non-UNDP organizations.

proportion of reports (36 per cent) were found to be ‘moderately unsatisfactory’ or worse, and only 20 per cent of reports were rated ‘satisfactory’ or better⁹.

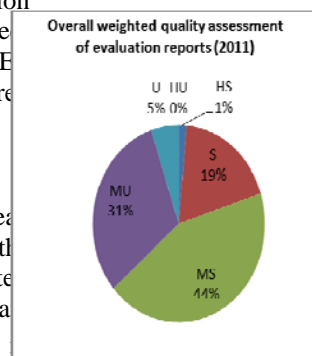
Figure 2. Quality assessment comparison 2011-2012

U = unsatisfactory; HU = highly unsatisfactory; HS = highly satisfactory; S = satisfactory; MS = moderately satisfactory; MU = moderately unsatisfactory.

35. During the review period, UNDP completed and evaluated 59 GEF-funded projects covering all regions and across the focal areas of biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, land degradation, chemicals and international waters. The Evaluation Office assessed these evaluations for quality. A high level of quality was demonstrated, with 83 per cent (49 of 59) judged to be in the range of ‘moderately satisfactory’ to ‘highly satisfactory’. This is consistent with findings over the last several years. The high quality of UNDP-GEF evaluations can be attributed to several factors: (a) all GEF-financed projects require an evaluation that includes performance ratings; (b) GEF and UNDP evaluation guidance and templates are updated periodically and required to be followed; (c) evaluation quality is considered in staff performance reviews for UNDP-GEF regional technical advisors; and (d) UNDP performance is routinely measured against other GEF implementing organizations.

Quality of evaluation reports, by region

36. Reports from Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean showed the most marked improvement over 2011 assessment ratings. In the former region, 37 per cent of all reports were rated ‘satisfactory’ or better compared with 7.5 per cent in 2011¹⁰. In Latin America and the Caribbean 48 per cent were marked ‘satisfactory’ or better, compared with 30 per cent in 2011. Although positive changes also appear in evaluations from the Arab States, with 26 per cent of reports rated ‘satisfactory’ or better in 2012, as opposed to none in 2011, the small sample size in both years (20 reports in 2012 and eight in 2011) means that a conclusive statement on improvement in overall evaluation quality cannot yet be made. Indeed, 40 per cent of all evaluation reports from the



⁹ The quality assessment approach was revised slightly in 2012, moving to an on-line instrument and involving a different and larger pool of quality assessors. There may be minor variations in the ratings assessment as a result.
¹⁰ However, it should be noted that the total number of reports assessed in Asia fell from 40 in 2011 to 27 in 2012.

Arab States were marked as ‘moderately unsatisfactory’ or worse in 2012, more than any other region, indicating significant evaluation quality issues.

Ratings	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States	Latin America and the Caribbean	Global	Total number of reports	Percentage of total
Highly satisfactory	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1.4%
Satisfactory	10	5	10	7	13	1	46	31.1%
Moderately satisfactory	17	7	11	17	11	0	63	42.6%
Moderately unsatisfactory	7	7	6	7	4	0	31	20.9%
Unsatisfactory	4	1	0	0	1	0	6	4.1%
Highly unsatisfactory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Totals	38	20	27	31	31	1	148	100%

37. Decentralized evaluations require additional monitoring on the part of UNDP units to achieve the standards set by the evaluation policy and detailed in the *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development*. While many commissioning units dedicate adequate resources for evaluations, not all do, and UNDP needs to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to conduct high-quality evaluations.

38. There remains considerable scope to improve decentralized evaluations, starting with the planning phase. While terms of reference often meet minimum requirements, in many cases there is a lack of clarity as to the purpose of the evaluation, beyond compliance with an evaluation plan. UNDP units should clearly articulate why an evaluation is being conducted and what specific questions the users of the evaluation need answered. Evaluation criteria should be clearly identified and benchmarks for measurement indicated. UNDP units should place greater emphasis on methodology, and ensure that evaluators conform their evaluation frameworks to the outline criteria and performance standards, and should clearly describe the evaluation approach and data collection methods. Evaluation teams need sufficient information and resources to assess efficiency, as this area of analysis that has tended to be weak. The mainstreaming of UNDP programming principles across the thematic areas – gender equality in particular – needs more attention so as to better situate programming within relevant political, sociocultural, and economic contexts. Conclusions should be comprehensive, balanced, and responsive to key evaluation questions, while providing additional insights into underlying issues

VII. United Nations Capital Development Fund

39. Total expenditure on evaluation in UNCDF amounted to \$790,221 in 2012. This supported an active evaluation function which oversaw the launch of three new evaluations in 2012 and the completion of a number of outstanding evaluations from 2011. UNCDF is committed to evaluation as a key element of its learning and accountability strategy, having conducted an average of seven evaluations per year across both its practice areas since 2008. Staffing in the

UNCDF Evaluation Unit increased, in February 2012, to three professional positions with the hiring of a new junior professional officer as Evaluation Officer.

A. Enhancing evaluation quality and reach

40. With the arrival of the new Executive Secretary in late 2012, evaluation remains an institution-wide priority for UNCDF, with an increase in resources planned for 2013 despite a challenging external funding environment. In addition to new investments in human resources, UNCDF will again require that wherever possible sufficient resources be set aside for learning, monitoring and evaluation during the formulation and design of new projects.

41. UNCDF increased the range of evaluation products that it used in 2012, commissioning two multi-country programme evaluations in the area of youth financial services (Youth Start) and gender equitable development in Africa. This complemented its ongoing commitment to project evaluations under the Special Project Implementation Review approach and periodic thematic assessments in accordance with the Evaluation Policy.

42. The Unit took a proactive approach to integrating a gender dimension into its evaluation processes in 2012, as recommended in United Nations Evaluation Group guidance on gender and human rights and in line with UNCDF strategy on gender equality and the empowerment of women (2012-2017). Gender-related expertise was included as one of the requirements in the selection of consultants, gender questions have been integrated into evaluation matrices, and report templates now require the use of gender-disaggregated data wherever possible.

43. Capacity development activities provided by the Evaluation Unit took the form of ad hoc evaluation advice to colleagues in the two UNCDF practice areas. In 2012 the unit also updated the evaluation management guide, which provides information on the various phases of evaluation management.

44. The UNCDF Evaluation Unit played an active role in UNEG in 2012, participating in three task forces. It also strengthened links with industry stakeholders in the sectors where it intervenes, working closely with the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, which was a member of the advisory panel for the portfolio review.

B. Lessons from UNCDF evaluations completed in 2012

45. A total of five thematic, programme and project evaluations were completed in 2012: four in the inclusive finance practice area and one in the local development finance practice area. Key findings from those evaluations are presented below:

Programme design and management

46. The work of UNCDF is generally praised for being highly relevant to the development strategies of partner governments and for supporting a sector development approach in the area of inclusive finance, or for being well integrated into national planning and budgeting systems in the area of local development finance.

47. In the inclusive finance practice area, the UNCDF portfolio was judged by the portfolio reviewers to be well aligned with its least developed countries mandate and its strategic objective to work in 'difficult' environments, while its country programmes and global thematic initiatives – in areas such as youth financial services or South-South cooperation in building microfinance institution capacity in savings mobilization – were judged to be highly relevant.

48. For the future, it was recommended that UNCDF better distinguish its programming to higher-risk least developed countries – where the organization

can capitalize on its advantage as ‘first mover’ – from more mature markets where the UNCDF approach could focus on specific markets such as savings, or youth. The UNCDF management systems for supervising, monitoring and reporting on investments were judged to be generally strong, but it was recommended that better information be provided to external stakeholders on implementation progress and lessons learned. The review recommended that UNCDF redesign the financing model for its country sector programmes to improve funding leverage and to facilitate better participation in the setting-up and governance of more viable investment fund structures.

Programme effectiveness and sustainability

49. At the aggregate level, the inclusive finance portfolio was judged by the portfolio reviewers to be performing well, with 1.8 million new depositors (a 38 per cent increase since baseline) and 528,600 new borrowers (a 21 per cent increase) confirmed as of June 2011 in the countries in which UNCDF operates. Its contribution was particularly praised where programmes targeted rural expansion, the development of new products directed at women, and new delivery mechanisms (such as electronic banking). In its work on supporting macro-level reform, and in countries where national inclusive finance strategies and legislation are already in place, the portfolio review recommended more direct targeting of a number of policy topics for support by UNCDF – building, for example, on recent work by the organization on client protection or financial education and literacy. It also recommended improving the integration of UNCDF country programme and global thematic approaches.

50. Regarding programme scaling up and replicability, evaluations have highlighted the need for clear knowledge management mechanisms to be in place to publicize and disseminate the results of work that is innovative or is being piloted in specific locations.

VIII. United Nations Volunteers

51. In 2012 the Evaluation Unit of the UNV programme comprised 2.5 staff, including one chief (P4, core-funded), one evaluation specialist (P3, non-core funded) and a part-time administrative assistant (50 per cent non-core funded). The unit had a centralized budget of \$273,853, while expenditure for decentralized evaluations amounted to \$85,000, covered by project funds. Five interns were engaged by the Unit during the period.

52. During the year the Evaluation Unit presented the UNV handbook *Assessing the Contribution of Volunteering to Development* at international forums in order to disseminate within the evaluation community its approach to measuring the contribution of volunteerism to development and peace and to better document volunteer work. Internally, the handbook served as support to European Union capacity development efforts, with presentations to staff at headquarters and during workshops for field units and volunteers, including the field induction workshops and a pilot capacity development workshop organized for the United Nations mission in Haiti.

53. In 2012 the unit managed or supported two strategic evaluations and eight decentralized evaluations of UNV initiatives in various countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liberia, Nepal and Uzbekistan. The evaluation of the partnership between UNV and the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo will provide UNV with useful lessons for the management of its strategic partnerships. The evaluation of the marking of the International Year of Volunteers (‘IYV+10’), which will be completed in 2013, seeks to provide an overall assessment of UNV performance as global focal point in marking the Year (2011) as requested by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/153.

Overall, the evaluation findings indicated that UNV was making a net impact through the timely deployment of highly skilled United Nations Volunteers to support United Nations entities and national governments in a variety of social and economic sectors. However, the evaluations also found that in order to ensure continuous stakeholder mobilization and full support to United Nations Volunteers in the field, UNV should more clearly articulate the concept, value and role of volunteerism.

54. Through the UNV Project Appraisal Committee process the Evaluation Unit supported UNV programmes in strengthening their results frameworks and evaluation strategies, thus contributing to the better integration of volunteerism into efforts to address global development challenges, including the Millennium Development Goals. As part of the gender action team, the Evaluation Unit, contributed advice and inputs to gender-related documents and to mainstreaming gender in programming. The monitoring of the management response to the joint evaluation of the collaboration between UNV and the United Nations Department of Field Support/UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations revealed that several of the recommendations were already being implemented on both sides, improving their operational effectiveness in working together on the ground.

55. The Evaluation Unit maintained its contribution to United Nations-wide and global monitoring and evaluation processes through the UNEG task forces on impact evaluation and on evaluation capacity development, and also by joining 'EvalPartners', a new international network created to support the evaluation capacity development of civil society organizations, including national and regional evaluation associations or networks. UNV sees this platform as an opportunity to reach out to professional evaluators and results-based management experts willing to volunteer within an evaluation capacity development scheme or programme that could be developed jointly with UNDP.

IX. Programme of work for the UNDP Evaluation Office, 2013-2014

56. The 2013 programme of work of the Evaluation Office was approved by the Executive Board in June 2012, and funded under the 2012-2013 biennial support budget (decision 2010/1). The 2013 programme of work includes three thematic evaluations. One will focus on gender mainstreaming, as a follow-up to the 2006 evaluation on that topic. Topics for the other two thematic evaluations are still to be finalized, pending further discussion with the Executive Board. Six assessments of development results will be carried out in 2013 and made available to the Board in 2014: Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon and Sierra Leone.

57. Starting in 2013, in compliance with Executive Board decision 2010/16, the Evaluation Office will facilitate an independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy, to be presented to the Executive Board in 2014. In 2013 the Evaluation Office will undertake a thorough review of the evaluation methodologies used in carrying out assessments of development results with a view to strengthening UNDP county-level evaluation and aligning the process to the new strategic plan. Also in 2013 the Evaluation Office will launch a series of evaluations aimed at gauging the impacts of UNDP support to Member States. First in the series is an assessment of the impact of UNDP support to protected areas management, being developed in partnership with the Evaluation Office of GEF. As an accompaniment to the new impact series, the Evaluation Office will prepare guidance on conducting impact evaluations.

58. The Evaluation Office will support the third international conference on national evaluation capacities, to be held in São Paulo, Brazil, in September 2013. The Evaluation Office will continue to carry out its other support functions for evaluation at UNDP, including managing the decentralized evaluations quality

assessment system, the roster of evaluation consultants, the Evaluation Resources Centre, and the evaluation space on 'TeamWorks', in addition to developing evaluation knowledge products. In 2013 and 2014, the Evaluation Office will continue to host and manage the secretariat of UNEG and contribute to its programme of work.

Proposed programme of work for 2014

59. The tentative programme of work for 2014 is based on an estimate of the Evaluation Office allocation of resources in the 2014-2015 biennial budget. It is important to note that the development of a new UNDP strategic plan in 2013 will affect the 2014 work plan. The Evaluation Office looks forward to consultations with the Executive Board and UNDP management on revisions to the proposed programme, taking into account the goals and expected outcomes of the next strategic plan as well as the results of the evaluation policy review. The current proposal includes completing the thematic and impact evaluations started in 2013; conducting six assessments of development results; coordinating with UNDP management to develop guidance for decentralized evaluations; and supporting revisions to the evaluation policy. The Evaluation Office will continue to support decentralized evaluation as well as to prepare and strengthen guidance.