

Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators

Monitoring and Evaluation Companion Series #1



**Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators:
Monitoring and Evaluation Companion Series, #1**

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Introduction

This publication, *Guidelines for Evaluators*, is the first in the companion series to the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*. The Handbook provides an overall context for results-based monitoring and evaluation and reviews tools and techniques for planning and managing monitoring and evaluation activities. The Handbook, however, is primarily directed to programme managers. This publication is specifically for those who actually conduct evaluations. It complements the Handbook by providing guidance on outcome evaluations as they relate to the evaluators.

Guidelines for Evaluators presents a conceptual review of outcome evaluation, identifies key differences between outcome and project evaluations, and provides a framework methodology for conducting outcome evaluations. It also includes a sample outline for an outcome evaluation report.

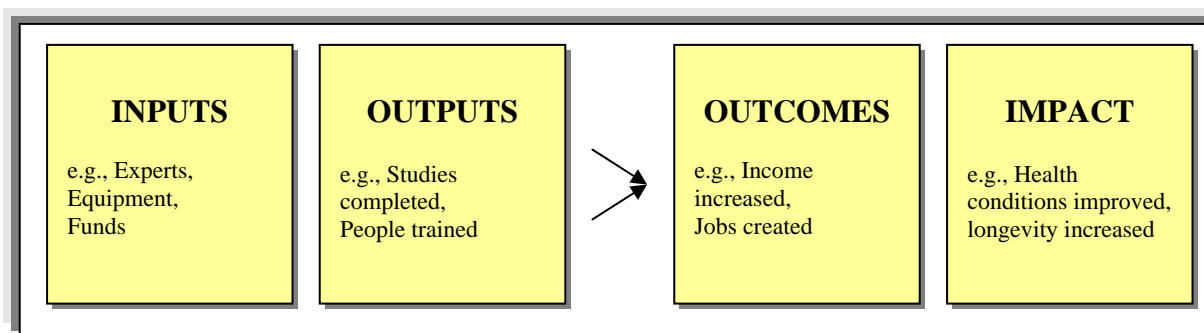
As a useful and concise resource for outcome evaluators, this publication should be consulted as early as possible in the evaluation process. It is recommended that UNDP country offices provide a copy of *Guidelines for Evaluators* to their outcome evaluators. The publication may be included, for example, as an annex to the evaluation terms of reference.

Part I

Rationale for Outcome Evaluation

Outcomes are developmental changes between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact, and are achieved in partnership with others. Partners are agents or actors with whom UNDP has, or intends to have, a substantive relationship in the pursuit of common outcomes. Partners may include stakeholders, if they are involved in working towards the outcome; beneficiaries of outcome actions; and donors involved in some way with UNDP on the outcome. Figure 1 illustrates how outputs and outcomes inter-relate during the process of achieving results.

Figure 1. The Results Chain

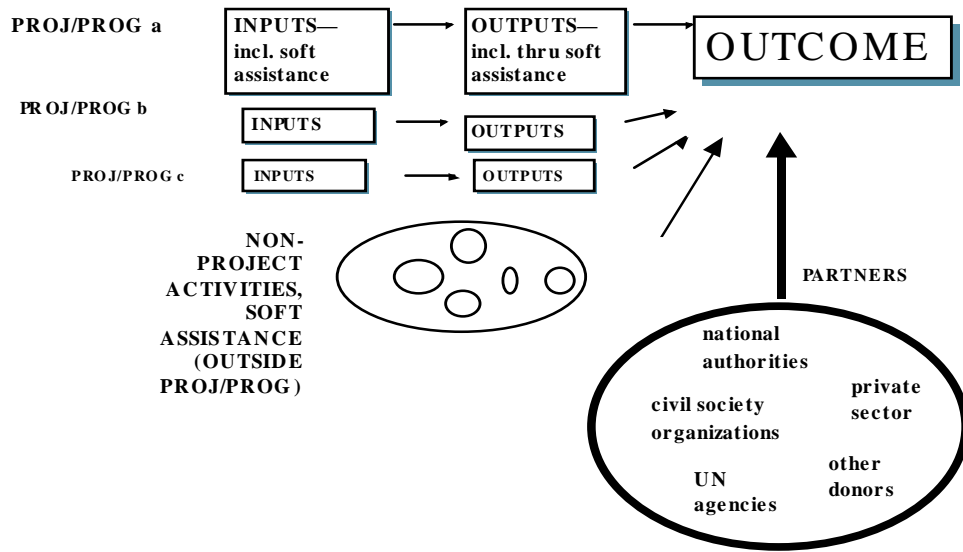


In the past, UNDP often evaluated its interventions at the level of inputs and outputs. Today, the focus of UNDP evaluations is on **outcomes**, because this level of results reveals more about how effective UNDP's actions are in achieving real development changes. A focus on outcomes also promises a shorter timeframe and more credible linkages between UNDP action and an eventual effect than does a focus on the level of overall improvement in people's lives, which represent much longer-term and diffuse impacts. (See Section C below on the differences between outcome evaluations and project evaluations.)

A. Concept and objectives

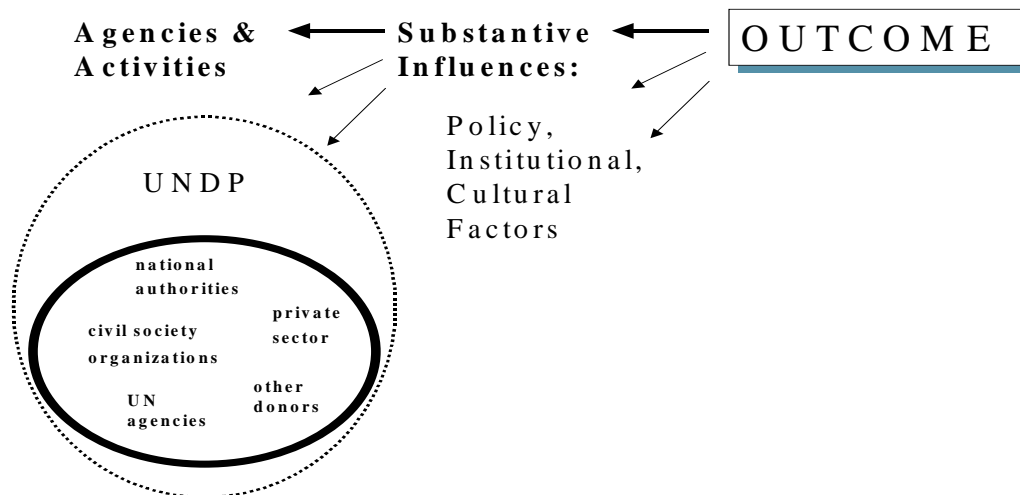
Outcome evaluations move away from the old approach of assessing project results against project objectives towards an assessment of how these results contribute, together with the assistance of partners, to a change in development conditions. Outcomes are influenced by the full range of UNDP activities — projects, programmes, non-project activities and "soft" assistance within and outside of projects. Outcomes are also influenced by the activities of other development actors. (See Chapter 1 in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for more information.) Figure 2 shows that many different kinds of activities influence the final outcome.

Figure 2. The Path to Outcomes



Outcome evaluations work backwards from the outcome. They take the outcome as their starting point and then assess a number of variables. Such assessment is done to varying degrees depending upon the precise purpose of the outcome evaluation. The variables include the following: (a) whether an outcome has been achieved or progress made towards it; (b) how, why and under what circumstances the outcome has changed; (c) UNDP’s contribution to the progress towards or achievement of the outcome; and (d) UNDP’s partnership strategy in pursuing the outcome. Outcome evaluations do not start by analyzing projects, as this approach is unlikely to yield useful or complete information about what is happening at the outcome level. Rather, as shown in Figure 3, outcome evaluations take the outcome as their point of departure.

Figure 3. The Path of Outcome Evaluation Analysis



The standard objectives of an outcome evaluation are to extract lessons learned, findings and recommendations. The degree of emphasis on these objectives may vary depending upon the purpose, timing, scope and duration of the evaluation. More specifically, the **four standard objectives of an outcome evaluation** and their timing during the Country Programme (CP) cycle are as follows:

- Assess progress towards the outcome (this will be most significantly explored during an outcome evaluation conducted later in the CP, although could be examined early on depending upon the nature of the outcome);
- Assess the factors affecting to the outcome (this could be addressed early, midterm or later in the CP);
- Assess key UNDP contributions (outputs), including those produced through "soft" assistance, to outcomes (this information is yielded at least midway through and later in the CP);
- Assess the partnership strategy (useful information can be culled at any point during the CP).

In other words, four major components — the outcome, substantive influences, UNDP's contribution and how UNDP works with other relevant actors — are examined in depth to varying degrees depending upon the nature of the exercise. Outcome evaluators may add other objectives such as those related to implementation issues. When more objectives are added to any given evaluation, however, more time and financial resources are required and less detailed products are to be expected. (See [🔗](#) Chapters 1 and 5 in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for more information on outcome evaluations.)

B. Guiding principles

Outcome evaluations are informed by three guiding principles: pre-eminence of outcome, flexible blueprints and awareness building. Evaluators, country office and programme staff should bear in mind these principles when they plan, prepare for, undertake and follow up on outcome evaluations.

1. Pre-eminence of outcome

An outcome evaluation aims to improve understanding of the outcome itself — its status and the factors that influence or contribute to its change. It does not look at the process of inputs, activities and other bureaucratic efforts but shifts attention to the substantive development results (outputs and outcomes) that they are aimed at affecting. It also provides real-time answers about the outcome rather than waiting until a project is completed and the outputs produced to ask questions. These answers may be part of a "questioning continuum."

Key differences distinguish outcome monitoring from outcome evaluation. Outcome monitoring involves periodic tracking of inputs, outputs and outcomes. Outcome evaluation involves making judgments about the **interrelationship** between inputs and outputs on the one hand and outcomes on the other. It is also important to note that although the review of contributions by UNDP and its partners is an integral component of such analysis, the precise degree of attribution and accountability among the various actors is not an overriding priority.

2. Flexible blueprints

There is no official blueprint for how to conduct an outcome evaluation. Each must be tailored to the nature of the individual outcome under review as well as the realities of time and data limitations. The role of an evaluator is to pass judgment based on his or her best professional opinion; it is not to collect large volumes of primary data or conduct methodologically perfect academic research. Inherent to the outcome evaluation approach is a rough but universal logic of analysis and reporting. Usually, an outcome evaluation begins with a review of change in the outcome itself, proceeds to an analysis of pertinent influencing factors, and then addresses the contribution of UNDP and its partners. It culminates in suggestions about how to improve the approach to results.

Outcome evaluations are designed to fill a number of different needs, ranging from early information about the appropriateness of UNDP's partnership strategy or impediments to the outcome, to mid-course adjustments, to lessons learned for the next Country Programme cycle. Table 1 describes how the purpose of an outcome evaluation will dictate its scope, timing and duration.

Timing	Purpose* and Scope	Duration
Early in the CP Cycle: Years 1-2	* To check early strategy for a particularly ambitious outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of outcome/outputs • Strategic positioning of UNDP • Partnership strategy and formulation 	Shorter-term
Middle of the CP Cycle: Years 2-3	*To prompt mid-course adjustments in output production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of outcome/outputs • Strategic positioning of UNDP • Partnership strategy and formulation • Production of outputs (possibly with partners) • Possibly status of outcome and factors affecting it 	Medium-term
End of the CP Cycle: Years 4-5	*To learn lessons for next CP formulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of outcome and factors affecting it • Relevance of outcome/outputs • Strategic positioning of UNDP • Production of outputs • Partnership strategy, formulation and performance 	Longer-term

3. Awareness building

The current focus on outcome evaluation reflects a new approach to assessment and review in UNDP. UNDP is internalizing results-based management and mainstreaming it throughout the processes and procedures of the organization. As with all large organizations, it will take time for UNDP and its partners to become familiar and comfortable with results-based evaluation. For some time, building awareness about this new approach will be an implicit goal in the conduct of outcome evaluation. Evaluators will play an important role in by sharing lessons learned while applying the methodology at a country level, and thereby helping UNDP refine the methodologies used in outcome evaluations.

C. Outcome versus project evaluation

Several important differences between project evaluations and outcome evaluations are evident in their **focus**, **scope** and **purpose**, as noted in Table 2. Outcome evaluations have a broad scope and focus on results to meet a number of overarching goals. Project evaluations have a very limited scope and focus on the processes and inputs of a specific project to better understand that project.

	Project evaluation	Outcome evaluation
Focus	Processes/inputs (if and how project objectives were achieved within a sector or geographic area)	Results (whether, why and how the outcome has been achieved, and the contribution of UNDP to a change in a given development situation)
Scope	Very specific, limited to project objectives, inputs, output and activities	Broad, encompassing outcomes and the extent to which programmes, projects, soft assistance, partners' interventions and synergies among partners contributed to its achievement

Purpose	Project based, to improve implementation, to re-direct future projects in the same area	To enhance development effectiveness, to assist decision making, to assist policy making, to re-direct future UNDP assistance, to systematize innovative approaches to SHD
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Differences between these two kinds of evaluations are also apparent in how **evaluation criteria** are applied, as noted in Table 3.

Criteria	Project evaluation	Outcome evaluation
Relevance	Is the project relevant to UNDP's mandate, to national priorities and to beneficiaries' needs?	The assessment of relevance in an outcome evaluation is more a question of strategic positioning and focus of UNDP on a few key outcomes. The definition of the outcome is a strategic exercise based on national priorities.
Effectiveness	Have the project objectives been achieved or are they expected to be achieved?	Is the outcome achieved or has progress been made towards it? Has UNDP made significant contributions in terms of strategic outputs?
Efficiency	To what extent do the project outputs derive from efficient use of resources?	It is more complex to measure efficiency for an outcome. One method is to estimate the resources (project, soft assistance) UNDP dedicates to the outcome. Another method is to estimate the extent of UNDP's contribution to the outcome versus that of its partners.
Degree of Change¹	What were the positive or negative, intended or unintended, changes brought about by the project intervention?	Similar in this case to a project evaluation, an outcome evaluation will look at the positive or negative, intended or unintended, changes brought about—to the extent that they are not captured in a review of the effectiveness of UNDP's contribution.
Sustainability	Will benefits/activities continue after the end of the project?	Will the positive change in the development situation endure/continue in future? It is a question of sustainability of the totality of the assistance provided and the capacity to maintain, manage and ensure development.

Outcome evaluations do not replace project evaluations, which still play a role although they are no longer mandatory. Many country offices will continue to undertake project evaluations because they yield useful information on project implementation arrangements, administrative structures and the achievement of immediate outputs. Project evaluations in the future will be more results oriented. Evaluators will be expected to identify project contributions towards the progress of the corresponding outcome. This shift in focus does not mean that projects or their implementation are forgotten. Rather, an enhanced monitoring regime will be relied upon to provide more "real time" information on administrative and implementation difficulties encountered at the project level.

The amount of time required is also different. Outcome evaluations have a wider scope and complexity so they demand greater time, human and financial resources to complete than project evaluations. Even a "lighter" exercise conducted early in the Country Programme is more demanding, while a "heavier" exercise takes much longer and requires the involvement of many people. From the perspective of the evaluators, the time required to complete an outcome evaluation will depend on the purpose, scope and timing of the evaluation, as well as upon the quality of the outcome formulation, the extent of UNDP contributions to the outcome and the length of time UNDP has been working in the outcome.

D. The importance of outcome monitoring for outcome evaluation

¹ The traditional Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criterion of "impact" has been changed here to "degree of change" in order to avoid confusion with the results-based management sense of "impact" meaning long-term and national-level development change.

Outcome evaluations rely on data generated through outcome monitoring as well as information from other external sources for validation and credibility purposes (e.g., the ROAR). Outcome evaluations reinforce outcome monitoring by serving as a source of lessons that can be applied through innovative refinements to the monitoring function (e.g., devising appropriate indicators for future projects). Table 4 compares outcome monitoring and outcome evaluation.

	Outcome monitoring	Outcome evaluation
Objective	To track changes from baseline conditions to desired outcome and to identify impediments.	To validate what results were achieved, how and why they were or were not achieved.
Focus	Focuses on the outputs of projects, programmes, partnerships and soft assistance activities and their contribution to outcome.	Compares planned with intended outcome achievement. Focus on the how and why outputs and strategies contributed to achievement of outcome. Focus on questions of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact.
Methodology	Tracks and assesses performance and progress towards outcome through comparison of indicators over time and discussions with partners.	Evaluates achievement of outcome, role of UNDP and partnership strategy by comparing indicators before and after the intervention. Relies on monitoring data on information from external sources.
Conduct	Continuous and systematic by UNDP programme managers, staff and key partners.	Time-bound, periodic, in-depth. External evaluators and partners.
Use	Alerts managers to problems in progress and delivery of outputs and provides options for corrective actions.	Provides managers with strategy and policy options; provides basis for learning and demonstrates accountability.

Outcome evaluation depends on good monitoring. In the past, monitoring focused on UNDP inputs and activities. In the future, monitoring information given to outcome evaluators will be focused more at the level of outputs and outcomes. Even in the absence of good baselines, indicators or results monitoring, outcome evaluators can make use of contextual information, project documents and the information provided by partners. This information can help approximate baselines and chart progress towards outcomes. (See [Chapter 6](#) in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for more on indicators.)

Part II

Outcome Evaluation Methodology

A. Categories of analysis

Outcome evaluations include four categories of analysis:

1. Status of the outcome
2. Factors affecting the outcome
3. UNDP contributions to the outcome
4. UNDP partnership strategy

These categories correspond to the four standard objectives of an outcome evaluation noted in Part 1 (i.e., assess progress towards the outcome, assess the factors affecting the outcome, assess key UNDP contributions to outcomes, assess the partnership strategy).

These four categories of analysis vary depending upon what it is that the Country Office and stakeholders hope to gain by the evaluation. In one case, for example, the purpose of the evaluation might be to **validate** that the outcome selected is relevant to the country's needs and the partnership strategy is appropriate. This would make categories two and four the primary categories of analysis, with category one playing a lighter role and category three almost no role. In another case, the purpose of the evaluation might be to catch impediments to output production early to prompt **mid-course adjustments**. Categories three and four would assume more importance. And in another example, the purpose might be to **learn lessons** about UNDP's contribution to a given outcome over the Country Programme cycle so as to design a better assistance strategy for the next Country Programme. Category three would assume greater importance and the other three categories would be examined in equal depth.

These guidelines take as the norm the situation in which UNDP (1) set out to affect an outcome described in the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) or elsewhere, (2) fashioned a strategy to do so with its outputs and in tandem with partners, and (3) succeeded in affecting the outcome. It should be noted, however, that there are exceptions to this norm. In some cases, UNDP may not intend to affect a certain outcome but will anyway. In other cases, UNDP may have intended to affect a certain outcome but will not succeed due to a variety of factors.

Step One: Ascertaining the status of the outcome

Outcome evaluations derive their "power" from using the outcome as the point of departure. The analysis net is cast wide to include everything done — within the project realm and beyond it — that can be perceived to have influenced the outcome in question.

The first step in an outcome evaluation is for the evaluators to ascertain the status of the outcome. Evaluators should take the following steps:

1. Begin with the **SRF** for a description of the intended outcome, the **baseline** for the outcome and the **indicators** and **benchmarks** used. Obtain information from the country office gathered through monitoring and reporting on the outcome. This will help inform evaluators of whether change has taken place.
2. Obtain **contextual information** beyond what UNDP has tracked. Before organizing an outcome evaluation, the country office will have undertaken preliminary data collection (contextual data as well as evaluations,

monitoring reports, etc.) and, depending upon the country office, possibly started to analyze the data. An outcome evaluation is not only designed to tap UNDP-specific information about the outcome but also to derive contextual information from other sources that detail trends in policy formulation, changes in human development indices over time and other changes.

3. Examine contextual information and baselines contained in **project documents**, the **CCF** (for older programmes) or the **Country Programme** (for newer programmes), **Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF)** and other sources. These documents speak to the outcome itself, as opposed to what UNDP is doing about it, and how it was envisaged at certain points in time preceding UNDP's interventions. The situation analysis section of both the Country Programme and the project document, for example, could each provide useful information and hyperlinks to other sources of information.
4. Employ a means to **validate information** about the status of the outcome that is culled from contextual sources such as the SRF or monitoring reports. To do this, evaluators may use interviews or questionnaires during the evaluation that seek key respondents' perceptions on a number of issues, including their perception of whether an outcome has changed. For example, an outcome evaluation addressing the outcome "improved efficiency, accountability and transparency in tax collection and budget execution at the state level" could seek the opinion of state administrators and tax authorities, citizens' groups and "average" citizens to ascertain if they think progress has been made towards this outcome within the relevant time period.
5. Probe the pre-selected outcome **indicators**, go beyond these to explore other possible outcome indicators, and determine whether the indicators have actually been continuously tracked. The one or two indicators provided for in the SRF are unlikely to yield sufficiently relevant evidence of change in the outcome. In time, it is expected that SRF outcome monitoring will lead to modification in the outcome indicators themselves. Alignment of SRF and other UNDP planning and management instruments must be seen as a two-way, iterative process.
6. Undertake a **constructive critique of the outcome formulation** itself (and the associated indicators). This is integral to the scope of outcome evaluation. Evaluators can and should make recommendations on how the outcome statement can be improved in terms of conceptual clarity, credibility of association with UNDP operations and prospects for gathering of evidence.

Box 1. Challenges in Ascertaining the Status of the Outcome



Evaluators will face a number of challenges, particularly in the short term, in ascertaining the status of the outcome. First, there may be a **lack of information on the outcome** (e.g., baseline data and/or information on the progress and status of the outcome that would normally have been gathered through outcome monitoring). There may be **weaknesses** in associated indicators, baselines and targets that do not satisfy the "SMART" criteria or that have not been subject to continuous monitoring. In these cases, evaluators should consult other sources of information such as project documents, the CCF/Country Programme and non-UNDP sources to gather proxy baseline and indicator information.

Second, at this early stage of implementing the SRF framework, outcome formulations may not be very "tight" or coherent. The outcome formulations may display weaknesses such as providing unclear statements about development change, poorly reflecting national development priorities or being unrealistic in terms of association with UNDP's range of activities. Such weakness may force evaluators to **deconstruct the outcome**. An outcome may have several dimensions that cannot be tallied in a single indicator or coherent value judgment. In such cases, it may

be worthwhile to deconstruct the outcome into its various parts or to focus more on the local or organizational level changes implicit in the outcome rather than the overall, aggregate and national-level changes. This deconstruction recognizes the existence of changes that are “real” and material aspects of development but that cannot necessarily be seen as making a dent in national aggregates. The concept of deconstructing outcomes may be particularly relevant for policy and institutional reform aspects of development (e.g., changes to provincial or municipal-level physical planning, regulations, resource allocation strategies or organization of public service delivery).

Another challenge derives from using a **project-based approach** to outcome evaluations. It may not be possible to take an outcome as the starting point of an evaluation when the linkage between projects/programmes and SRF outcomes is unclear. An alternative approach is possible whereby a project is identified first and then an outcome to which it may have plausibly contributed is identified. The outcome may not have been formally associated within the SRF with the project in question. In this case, an **outcome-oriented project evaluation** would be conducted. It would look at the outputs produced by UNDP’s project, the partnership strategy used by the project and the effects these have had on the outcome in question.

It is expected that over the course of the next several years, the internalization of RBM and use of the SRF as a strategic planning tool will lead to the formulation of UNDP’s assistance from an outcome perspective. The outcome will be mainstreamed into planning tools such as the CCF/Country Programme and project documents, making it much easier to take the outcome as a point of departure for outcome evaluations and eliminating the need to conduct outcome-oriented project evaluations.

Step Two: Examining the factors affecting the outcome

Analysis of factors that influence outcomes is the intellectual core of outcome evaluation. A thorough understanding of the factors that influence outcomes represents the rationale for any development intervention and UNDP involvement — bridging the gap between “what is needed” and “what can be done”. Examining the factors that influence an outcome tests the development hypothesis UNDP has formulated, as well as its underlying assumptions. This demands analytical maturity, substantive knowledge of development and affinity with reality of the national cultural, political and institutional environment. Factors influencing development are multiple, complex, interrelated and ever-changing.

Examining the factors influencing the outcome is the second step of analysis in outcome evaluation. Evaluators should take the following steps:

1. Use to the extent possible the **data collection** and **analysis** undertaken by the country office prior to an outcome evaluation, as noted in Step One. Evaluators might also need to “strike out on their own” in this particular category of analysis to gain a better understanding of how an outcome has been influenced. This could include speaking with experts in the field, consulting diverse data sources and speaking with partners.
2. Identify the **major contributing factors** that “drive” change. Do not identify or elaborate all conceivable factors. Contributing factors may be pro-active opportunities to be seized or negative constraints to be removed. Indicate the direction in which policy or institutional action will have the greatest developmental pay-off. Evaluators should limit their analysis to five or six contributing factors so they may focus on the key factors.
3. Examine **local sources of knowledge** about factors influencing the outcome. Synthesize existing documentation about national development as reflected in analysis undertaken by government, donors, NGOs, academia and “think tanks”. Evaluators should not seek to develop their own theories about the dynamics of national development, nor should they transplant “cookie-cutter” solutions from elsewhere. Neither should evaluators be constrained in voicing their own ideas or highlighting areas in which gaps

appear in the body of local knowledge.

4. Resolve the issue of UNDP having an **unintended effect** or not having the intended effect. For example, an evaluation looking at a decentralization outcome could find that the outcome did not progress because local government employees were so poorly paid that they had to concentrate on their own income generation rather than doing their public sector job. This kind of information would, for example, help evaluators reconcile their finding on the failure to achieve the **outcome** with their finding that UNDP's **outputs** were delivered as planned. In this case, they could explain that the outputs planned were not the most relevant in light of the critical contextual factors that influenced the outcome.

Box 2. Challenges in Examining the Factors Affecting the Outcome



A number of outside (exogenous) factors may influence the outcome, many of which have nothing to do with UNDP's interventions. Evaluators must rely on good baseline data, good monitoring data, good information from partners and their own discretion to determine what is relevant and what is not relevant.

In the absence of such data, evaluators may employ a combination of perception, quantification and documentation to ascertain whether or not change has taken place and to what extent it can credibly be attributed. This process is subjective and qualitative and depends on the quality of the individual evaluator and the number of sources consulted.

The **time** required to adequately address the issue of contributing factors is another issue. Country offices and evaluators should figure into their work plan adequate time to make a comprehensive survey of contributing factors. Do not spend too much time in this category of analysis, which might lead evaluators to be "bogged down" in minutiae.

Step Three: Assessing the contribution of UNDP

UNDP contributions to changing the outcome take the form of the outputs produced as part of the full range of project and non-project activities and efforts. For UNDP, the unit of account for influencing outcomes is the overall country office strategy — comprising the entire range of projects, programmes, policy advice and dialogue, brokerage and advocacy efforts.

Assessing the contribution of UNDP to outcomes is the third step of analysis in outcome evaluation. Evaluators should take the following steps:

1. Determine whether or not the **UNDP strategy and management** of overall country operations appears to be coherently focused on change at the outcome level. Time is required to bring UNDP's diverse programme planning, management, reporting and partnership instruments into alignment. This is to be expected, as is the need for a gradual build-up of staff and stakeholder understanding of the rationale and methodology of outcome evaluation. In the near future, evaluators may wish to ask questions such as: Is management focused on outcomes or limited to outputs? Do discussions with the government focus on outcomes? Can the staff articulate the outcome strategy?
2. Look at whether UNDP's in-house planning and management of different interventions has been **aligned to exploit synergies** in contributing to outcomes. This entails examining the projects, programmes and activities that fall outside of projects or programmes and considering whether or not they are coordinated in a way that links their outputs to the outcome in question. Evaluators should consider a number of questions: Are key partners consulted and coordinated? Are common activities taking place? Is information being shared between projects/programmes? Are outcomes forming the basis of planning for joint activities?

3. Determine whether or not **individual outputs are effective** in contributing to outcomes. This is perhaps the most important step in this category of analysis. The key criterion is the plausibility of the linkage between UNDP and the outcome. Are individual outputs effective in contributing to outcomes? Evaluators should focus their analysis on those outputs that have been, or show potential to be, truly strategic in making progress towards the outcome.

An important aspect of assessing the UNDP contribution is **drawing the link between UNDP outputs and outcomes**. Both the SRF and outcome evaluation depend on the credibility of the link drawn by evaluators between outputs and outcomes. This affects the SRF as an overall organizational results management framework and the outcome evaluation as an instrument of review. Credibility is strongest when outcome evaluations are perceived as revealing rather than contriving linkages between outputs and outcomes. The evaluator must spell out explicitly, to the extent possible, a “chain of causality” that reveals credible linkages between UNDP outputs and outcomes.

Although degrees of credibility will be apparent, scientific “proof” will rarely, if ever, be available. This is particularly true given the outside (exogenous) factors that may have influenced changes to the outcome. In assessing the contribution of UNDP outputs to outcomes, the methodological imperative is **plausibility of association**. This is established through the best professional judgment of the evaluators and backed by analysis of data and perceptions. The strength of the linkages between UNDP outputs and the outcome is directly influenced by the quality of the outcome formulation. The establishment of a plausible association is easier when an outcome has been tightly formulated or deconstructed into smaller parts.

In some cases, however, evaluators may find that it is easier to draw a clear and direct linkage between UNDP outputs and “**intermediary**” results that do not quite reach the level of development change as articulated in SRF outcomes. These may be valid results that significantly improve development at the local level but may not change the national development situation. The establishment of plausible association is less of a challenge at the “intermediary” results level between outputs and outcomes — and this may be where evaluators find the greatest number of cases in which UNDP can be clearly seen to have made a difference. UNDP efforts may lead to changes that are “real” and material aspects of development but which do not change national aggregates. The evidence is not merely anecdotal. However, it would be unreasonable to claim that UNDP outputs changed the picture of the nation. Evaluators should be prepared, if necessary, to make this kind of analysis in this category.²

Box 3. Challenges in Assessing the Contributions of UNDP



Outcome evaluators face a number of challenges in assessing the contributions of UNDP towards outcomes. Some of these will lessen with time as UNDP internalizes results-based management. In the short term, however, a number of situations may arise. For example, evaluators may be provided with an SRF outcome to review but subsequently find that UNDP’s contribution is more significant with respect to **another** SRF outcome than to the one that was pre-selected. The implication may be that the country office needs to review its SRF framework. Evaluators may need to liaise with country office management to resolve whether or not the choice of outcome should be changed or if the original outcome should be retained while contributions to “other” outcome(s) are noted. In short, evaluators and country offices should **retain a degree of flexibility** with respect to outcomes. For example, the evaluation could include implementation and management issues, insofar as they relate to the outcome. This might be relevant if implementation or management issues played a critical role in facilitating or preventing the production of key outputs towards the outcome.

For similar reasons, outcome evaluation is currently based on a **retrofitting** approach, at least for the RBM transitional period. This is due to the disconnect between “new” SRF outcomes and “old” UNDP statements about

² See the report produced from the pilot outcome evaluation in China (June 2001) for more on the treatment of intermediary results. Available on the website (<http://intra.undp.org/eo/index.htm>) for the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*.

results emanating from ongoing activities. In the future, the new SRF outcomes will form the starting point of the evaluation. In the meantime, however, the reality is that some project documents were approved before outcomes were developed.

The disconnect between the "new" and the "old" has four distinct dimensions:

Timing: SRF outcome has been conceived for future, not past, activity;
Scope: SRF outcome pertains to totality of strategy, not individual activities;
Substance: SRF outcome has material emphasis not previously expressed;
Ownership: SRF outcome has been formulated with little stakeholder participation.

These are not insurmountable obstacles. Piloting of outcome evaluation has demonstrated that it is possible to do the necessary retrofitting. A strategy or range of activities may have an influence on change that was not originally part of its objective. A logical link may exist that had not previously been expected or expressed.³

Step Four: Assessing partnerships for changing the outcome

Outcomes are influenced by a complex range of factors. Making change happen invariably requires the concerted action of several different institutions and managers. No single actor can be held accountable for change that occurs at the outcome level.

The purpose of the review of partnerships is **not** to assess activities or performance of partners per se. Rather, it is the design of partnership strategies, the formation of partnerships with UNDP and the implementation of those partnerships that are being assessed. (Review of outputs jointly produced by partners acting in concert does belong within the scope of outcome evaluation.)

The fourth step of analysis in outcome evaluation is assessing the partnership strategy that UNDP crafted and implemented. Evaluators should take the following steps:

1. Determine whether or not there is consensus among UNDP actors, stakeholders and partners that the **partnership strategy designed was the best one** to achieve the outcome. To do so, look at the degree of mutual support among partners based on affinity and common interest defined by joint monitoring missions, evaluations, the implementation of project-related activities and so on. Determine whether or not partners' activities in the same outcome are coordinated with those of UNDP or even point to a common outcome. And, determine whether or not partners have a common appreciation of problems and needs.
2. Look at **how the partnerships were formed and how they performed**. This entails an analysis of the

³ **Example of Retrofitting:** An outcome-oriented project evaluation is planned for a UNDP project lending assistance to a Special Select Committee on Constitutional Reform in Country X. The project aims to facilitate the involvement of civil society organizations in the work of the parliamentary committee tasked with undertaking constitutional reform. Because the project document pre-dates the first SRF for Country X, the project has not been explicitly linked to any outcome. In the course of planning for the outcome evaluation, however, the UNDP country office undertakes a process to align its ongoing projects with SRF outcomes. During the process, the parliamentary project is "pegged" to the outcome "improved accountability and credibility of parliament vis-à-vis its various constituents." It is this outcome that the evaluation team is asked to look at in conjunction with the project. The evaluation team tasked with undertaking the outcome-oriented project evaluation then confirms that the outputs produced by the parliamentary project did, in fact, have tangible impact on the outcome as evidenced by (1) surveys of parliamentarians who participated; (2) staggered opinion polls of the electorate on the accountability and credibility of parliament; (3) monitoring records that show a link between the project and the institution of a formal means whereby civil society organizations are involved in the legislative process; and (4) quantitative data showing an increasing number of draft laws having benefited from civil society organization involvement since the inception of the formal input mechanism.

roles of the respective partners (who is a leader, key player or player). It also require the evaluator to determine if partners who seek to influence an outcome synchronize their strategies, if communication tools exist among partners (group meetings, web pages, reading groups, participation in joint missions), and if the initiatives or actions of one partner hinder previous or current assistance or results of others. In addition, it entails an analysis of whether or not the partnership is a mechanism for ongoing dialogue and if arrangements for operational coordination among partners are conducive to results.

3. Look at how the partnership strategy affected the **achievement of or progress towards the outcome**. Determine whether or not the outputs were produced via partnerships, whether national capacities were built in partnership, and whether "soft" assistance and advocacy were done in partnership.
4. Undertake **joint evaluations**. Outcome evaluations lend themselves to joint evaluations because outcomes can only be achieved in partnership with others. Joint evaluations are most useful when outcomes are selected and interventions are planned in partnership with others. Then the evaluation can look at the status of the outcome, contributing factors, the contribution of each party to the outcome in question and the partnership strategy used.

Box 4. Challenges in Assessing Partnerships for Changing the Outcome



Outcome evaluations are likely to reveal a **lack of partnership strategy** in the short term. This is to be expected during the transitional phase and until such time as all of UNDP's planning actions and partnership discussions are undertaken from the point of view of outcomes.

Partners may need to be **sensitized to the new focus on outcomes** that UNDP has adopted. If they are not brought on board, partners might interpret an outcome evaluation as a critical analysis of themselves or their activities or strategies.

It is not possible for UNDP to work in complete concert with all partners towards a common outcome in every case. This is because different donors and national actors have **different agendas and different priorities** along the results chain. The priorities for UNDP are to recognize and capitalize on potential synergies where they appear and, at the very least, avoid redundancy of assistance or working in direct contradiction with other actors. Also, in the short term, **joint evaluations** are likely to be underutilized until outcomes are jointly formulated with partners.

Another issue relevant to partnerships is that of **ownership of the outcome**. For example, in those cases where an SRF outcome has been largely formulated by UNDP, in part based on "sample" statements provided from Headquarters, national partners are unlikely to feel ownership over the outcome or to feel they have a stake in it.

B. Data compilation and analysis

The role of data and its analysis is critical in approaching each of the four categories of analysis described above (status of the outcome, factors affecting to the outcome, UNDP contributions to the outcome, UNDP partnership strategy).

Evidence pertaining to the status of an outcome and the other categories of analysis should ideally be available from the continuous **monitoring efforts** of country offices and implementing agencies, based on tracking of the indicators specified in the SRF. The role of evaluators is not to do massive primary data collection. It is the country office's responsibility to collect and, if possible, undertake a light primary analysis of data related to the outcome to be evaluated and to provide the evaluation team with the data and the analysis. If the evaluation team conducts the primary data analysis itself, the team should select the best method to do so and decide what further information needs to be gathered and how. (See *Chapter 5* in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for

more information on the country office's role in planning and managing an outcome evaluation.)

Evaluators are expected to consult a number of sources. Key sources and their contents areas follows:

Country Programme sources

...mainly for intended outcomes, baselines and strategies

- Country Cooperation Framework/Country Programme Outline: This reveals the key outcomes to be achieved in a three- to five-year time period. It also provides background information and UNDP perspective on development in a given country. Please note that the older CCF information may not correspond with the SRF or its report, the Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR).
- Country Office SRF/ROAR: This provides some of the key outputs clustered under the outcome in question and could conceivably, depending upon the country office, reveal all of the projects/programmes/sub-programmes and soft assistance that contribute to the outcome. Also included is information on the strategic partners, partnership strategy, progress reported in previous years, the quality of outcome indicators, the need to work further in this area and baseline information.
- CCA and UNDAF: These sources include baseline information on the country development situation, partnerships and joint activities among UNDP and other UN agencies, and is pitched at the impact level.

End-project or end-programme sources

... for outcome progress, factors affecting the outcome, UNDP contributions and partnership strategy

- Monitoring and evaluation reports: These include evaluation reports on related subjects, Annual Project/Programme Reports (APRs), field visit reports and any other outcome and key programme/project documentation.
- Reports of related regional and sub-regional projects and programmes: These reports may reveal to the extent to which projects and programmes have complemented the contributions of UNDP and its partners in the progress towards or achievement of the outcome.
- Reports on progress of partners' interventions: Progress made by partners in the same outcome and how they have envisioned their partnership strategy with UNDP are topics covered in these reports.

End-user sources

...mainly for outcome progress and UNDP's contributions.

- Client satisfaction surveys and opinion polls: These sources may indicate whether the service provided is perceived as useful and has made a difference.
- Records of and quantitative information on complaints and suggestions made by intended beneficiaries.

Other sources

... mainly for outcome status and factors affecting the outcome

- Data from published sources on the outcome progress such as the government, private sector organizations, academia and national research institutes.
- Research papers on outcome-related topics from the government, NGOs, International Financial Institutions, academia, the UNDP National Human Development Report and so on.

- Media sources that provide contextual information on the outcome progress, including extraneous factors related to society, culture or the environment and how they might affect the outcome.

Evaluators conduct a "first cut" analysis of primary data sources culled by the country office. In addition, evaluators are expected to make a second analysis of the data to refine some of the preliminary findings. This is particularly helpful when evaluators have to deconstruct an outcome. To analyze the data in more detail, and to obtain additional data in a specific area, evaluators may use **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods. These methods are highly complementary although they may respond to different objectives and use different instruments and methodologies. A combination of both methods is often used by the UNDP country office and outcome evaluation team to gather and analyze the data and then to deepen the analysis of that data. (See Tables 5 and 6 for differences between the two approaches and their use in combination.)

Difference in....	Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
Objectives	To assess causality and reach conclusions that can be generalized	To understand processes, behaviors and conditions as perceived by the groups or individuals being studied
Use	To numerically measure "who", "what", "when", "how much", "how many", "how often"	To analyze how and why
Data collection instrument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardized interviews • Formal, pre-designed questionnaires • Surveys using closed-ended questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth, open-ended interviews • Direct observation • Written documents (e.g., open-ended written items of questionnaires, personal diaries, programme records)
Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probability sampling (a probability sampling selects its subjects randomly; that is, each member has an equal choice of being selected) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposive sampling (often used in political polling and selected subjectively, a purposive sampling attempts to be representative of the population and will usually try to ensure that a range from one extreme to the other is included)
Methodology for analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominantly statistical analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation (simultaneous use of perception, validation and documentation to analyze information)

In the evaluation of complex processes and situations — such as those presented by outcome evaluations — a mixture of **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods will be most suitable. This is because quantitative approaches are better suited to assess causality or reach general conclusions, while qualitative methods allow in-depth studies of selected issues, cases or events and provide the context of a particular reform or results observed in a quantitative analysis.

Qualitative methods may be used to inform the questions posed by the evaluators through interviews and surveys, as well as to analyze the social, economic and political context within which development changes take place.

Quantitative methods may be used to inform the qualitative data collection strategies by, for example, applying statistical analysis to control for socio-economic conditions of different study areas, thereby eliminating alternative explanations of the observed changes.⁵

⁴ "Impact Evaluation," World Bank, draft for discussion April 2001; UNFPA M&E methodologies.

⁵ "Impact Evaluation," World Bank, April 2001.

Outcome	Quantitative analysis	Qualitative analysis
Improvement of legislative capacity	Data on the number of laws passed by the parliament— when, on what subjects and whether they were government or private member sponsored	Analysis of how many of those laws were technically complex and/or addressed significant national priorities; how many were technically proficient (were well-written and constitutional); and how participatory and transparent the process was
Increased transparency in the public sector	Data on the number of corruption cases presented for adjudication and the number to reach a final decision	Analysis of how was the process was carried out and how citizens perceived it

C. Agenda setting

Outcome evaluation adds importance to the process of **evaluation mission** planning and preparation. The scope and complexity of outcomes requires a span of review that is both wider and deeper than traditional evaluations. The availability of appropriate documentation and the choice of institutions and people to meet are critical to evaluators' effectiveness and credibility in forming judgment about the outcome. With limited time, good preparations make a dramatic difference in what evaluators can achieve.

Advance liaison between the evaluators and the country office before the evaluation team arrives in-country may be necessary in order to compile all relevant documents and to arrange appointments with senior officials of government and other agencies. When preparing an advance schedule of appointments, be sure to "pitch" the programme at a level of data collection and analysis appropriate to the subject outcome. Otherwise, evaluators may be left with a lot of trivial detail and little perspective on the bigger picture of outcomes. The evaluation team leader should take part in any liaison concerning preparation of the mission programme.

For some time to come, it is likely that many of those involved with particular projects will associate the idea of evaluation with their own accountability. This perception is likely to persist despite their ability to form a conceptual understanding of outcome evaluation. In response, there may be a tendency to guide evaluators in the direction of success rather than risk misunderstandings. In this case, the choice of people to meet and documents to review would often have a **bias** away from failure, which would clearly undermine the credibility of the evaluation itself. Ultimately, the evaluation team leader bears responsibility for identifying the most fruitful sources of information and ensuring that the team makes their acquaintance. For this reason, the team leader must be involved in setting the mission agenda and must retain flexibility to make additional appointments as the evaluation mission unfolds.

D. Using indicators

Indicators are signposts for change. They help to measure progress towards outputs and outcomes. For outcome evaluators, the most useful indicators are **outcome indicators** and their corresponding baselines and end targets and **output indicators** and their annual targets and achievements. Outcome indicators are designed within the SRF, with one or two indicators per outcome. Output indicators help to measure and verify the production of outputs. In addition, **situational indicators**, as reported on in the ROAR by goal, provide broader contextual information over time. (See [Chapter 6](#) in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for more on indicators.)

Evaluators are not only expected to analyze outcome, output and situational indicators but also to look at complementary indicators found in other planning tools, including the following:

- CCF/Country Programme: They may include indicators for higher-level results or outcomes, although outcomes may be phrased differently in the CCF and the SRF;
- CCA/UNDAF: These reports provide useful background and situational indicators of the current country situation, information about the areas in which UN Agencies are working, expected results and partnerships;
- Project or programme support documents: They may include indicators designed to reflect whether or not the projects contributing to the achievement a given outcome have produced the expected outputs.

E. Offering recommendations and rating

The four categories of analysis described in Part II (status of the outcome, factors affecting the outcome, UNDP contributions to the outcome, and UNDP partnership strategy) lead the evaluation team to formulate **recommendations**. These recommendations include suggestions for improving UNDP's work in the given outcome and they articulate lessons learned that could help UNDP in designing activities in the same outcome in different regions. The improvements and recommendations offered by evaluators might also have implications for partners, which means that evaluators must carefully phrase their recommendations in a constructive and neutral manner. Generally, suggestions for improvement are offered in the conclusions, recommendations or lessons learned sections of the evaluation report.

In addition, evaluators are expected to use a common **rating system** that permits performance comparisons across results. The same rating system applies to the ROAR, to some country-level monitoring reports and to evaluations.

For outcome evaluations, evaluators should rate **outcomes** and **outputs** as follows:

Rating outcomes: The rating system assesses the degree to which progress towards achieving the outcome has been made, without attribution of success to any partner, as follows:

- Positive change (determined by evidence of movement from the baseline towards the end-SRF target measured by an outcome indicator)
- Negative change (reversal to a level below the baseline measured by an outcome indicator)
- Unchanged

Rating outputs: The rating system assesses the degree to which an output's targets have been met, serving as a proxy assessment of how successful an organizational unit has been in achieving its SRF outputs, as follows:

- No (not achieved)
- Partial (only if two thirds or more of a quantitative target is achieved)
- Yes (achieved)

The rating for **outcomes** is most often culled primarily from information gained in the first and second categories of analysis (status of outcome and factors affecting outcome). The rating for **outputs** is most often culled primarily from information gained in the third and fourth categories of analysis (contribution of UNDP to outcomes and partnership strategy).

If the nature of the outcome evaluation exercise lends itself to it, evaluators also will be asked to rate on a voluntary basis the factors of **sustainability**, **relevance** and **cost-effectiveness** along a similar three-point rating system.

Rating sustainability: The rating system assesses the degree to which progress towards achieving the outcome appears to the evaluator to be sustainable, as follows:

- Sustainable (determined by evidence of local ownership of outcome and systems/institutions in place to carry forward progress in the outcome or cement gains)
- Unsustainable (determined by lack of ownership of outcome and systems/institutions in place to carry

-
- forward progress or cement gains)
 - Too soon to tell or cannot be determined

Rating relevance: The rating system assesses the degree to which an outcome is relevant given a country's development situation and needs. Essentially, it tests the development hypothesis. The rating system is as follows:

- Yes (relevant)
- Somewhat (evidence is found that the outcome is somewhat relevant but perhaps not the best one for addressing the development situation per se)
- No (not relevant)

Rating cost-effectiveness: The rating system assesses the degree to which the progress towards—or the achievement of—the outcome is cost-effective, given the financial resources and time invested in the outcome and the degree of change actually achieved, as follows:

- Yes (cost-effective)
- Somewhat (evidence is found that the outcome is somewhat cost-effective but could have been more so; evaluators should provide qualitative analysis of how)
- No (not cost-effective)

F. Organizing the report

For reporting outcome evaluation conclusions and recommendations, the seeds of the report are to be found in the terms of reference (TOR) for the evaluation and in the documentation of key projects. The TOR for outcome evaluations includes the outcome to be studied and why it was selected, the scope of the mission, and the strategy for collecting and analyzing data. The resulting outcome evaluation report would also include these elements.

Ideally, the evaluators will have been involved in evaluation process from early on and will have seen and commented on the TOR during its inception. The evaluation team leader (at least) and the evaluation team (at most) should be in place early enough to comment on the TOR and provide input to it before it is finalized. The evaluation team is bound by the TOR to ensure that the selected issues are adequately addressed in the report. Enough flexibility should be retained for the team to add issues that it feels are particularly pertinent. At the earliest stage of the evaluation, the team leader often drafts a table of contents that is based on the TOR and the discussions with interested parties and partners.

The draft table of contents provides a convenient framework around which to organize information as the work proceeds. The table will help focus the fieldwork that is required to collect missing information, verify information and formulate conclusions and recommendations. (See *Annex A* in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for a sample outline of an outcome evaluation report.)

1. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation report is to present findings and conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations that follow the terms of reference (TOR) of the evaluation. The evaluation report should be clear; present well-documented and supported findings; and provide concrete, significant and implementable recommendations. UNDP should be able to share it readily with partners and it should help generate consensus around the findings and recommendations.

2. Preparation and submission

The evaluation team prepares the evaluation report wholly independently, and the evaluation team leader is

accountable for the final product. The first step in preparation is to draft a table of contents (or outline) that captures the main headings of analysis that the report will cover. The evaluation team should present its table of contents during the second week of the evaluation mission, depending upon its length and complexity. A draft of the report — or at least the preliminary findings — must be submitted to UNDP before the end of the mission. (See *Annex A* in the *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* for a sample outline of an outcome evaluation report.)

A **stakeholders' meeting** must be organized while the evaluation team is still in country. This provides an opportunity for stakeholders in a given outcome and to read and comment on the findings of the report without compromising the independence of the analysis. This is a critical step in the conduct of an outcome evaluation in general and in the report formulation in particular. It should be given adequate time and attention by both the evaluators and the UNDP country office. It is an important step in checking the "facts" of the evaluation team, in disseminating the evaluation's findings and in galvanizing support for its recommendations.

The final version of the report should reflect input from UNDP and stakeholders as appropriate. It should be ready two to three weeks after the end of the evaluation mission.

3. Format

A core outline for an evaluation should present **findings and conclusions** based on the categories of analysis in an outcome evaluation. The outline should include:

- Evidence of change in outcome
- Factors affecting outcome
- UNDP contributions to outcome
- UNDP partnership strategy for changing the outcome

In addition, the core outline should include the following categories:

- Rating of progress on outcomes and outputs
- Lessons learned and recommendations on how UNDP can improve its approach based on the findings/conclusions

Into the outline described above, evaluators may subsume the evaluative criteria as described in Table 3 (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, degree of change, sustainability) together with the usual deductive categories (findings, conclusion, recommendations). Table 7 shows how the criteria may be applied within the core outline of an outcome evaluation report.

Category of analysis	Pertinent evaluation criteria	Place in outline
1. Evidence of change in outcome	Degree of change	Findings/Conclusions
2. Review of factors influencing outcome	Relevance Effectiveness	Findings/Conclusions Lessons learned
3. UNDP contributions to outcome	Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency Degree of change Sustainability	Findings/Conclusions Lessons learned Recommendations
4. Partnerships for changing the outcome	Relevance Effectiveness	Findings/Conclusions Lessons learned

	Efficiency Degree of change	Recommendations
5. Rating	Effectiveness Degree of change Sustainability Relevance	Findings/Conclusions
6. Improving the approach	Relevance Effectiveness Sustainability	Lessons learned Recommendations

Evaluators need to agree with country offices on the core outline. In addition, they need to agree on supplementary aspects of work organization and report presentation including the methodological approach and use of executive summary and technical annexes.

* * *

For more information...

The Evaluation Office (EO) is available to answer any queries that evaluators may have on these guidelines or on results-based management and monitoring and evaluation for results. Evaluators will find detailed information on the new monitoring and evaluation framework in the UNDP *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*. This framework is expected to evolve and improve as practitioners gain experience with it.

Website

Evaluators are requested to refer to the EO website (<http://www.undp.org/eo/>) for up-to-date resources on monitoring and evaluation methodologies and to use the website to share concerns and lessons learned. The website contains frequently asked questions (FAQ), updates and developments pertaining to all monitoring and evaluation methodologies within UNDP, references to other resources, training packages, examples of reports and tools, sample TORs and more. It also will contain complementary information to the Handbook.

Recommended reading

Evaluators are encouraged to consult the following resources:

- *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results* (<http://www.undp.org/eo/>)
- UNDP Technical Note on Results-Based Management (<http://www.undp.org/eo/methodology/methodology.html>)
- The most recent UNDP Results-Oriented Annual Report (http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/rbms_rep/)

Annex: Sample Outline for an Outcome Evaluation Report

This is a sample outline for an outcome evaluation report. It does not follow a prescribed format but simply presents one way to organize the information. Project evaluations should employ a similar structure and emphasize results, although they may differ somewhat in terms of scope and substance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- What is the context and purpose of the outcome evaluation?
- What are the main findings and conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned?

INTRODUCTION

- Why was this outcome selected for evaluation? (refer back to the rationale for including this outcome in the evaluation plan at the beginning of the Country Programme)
- What is the purpose of the outcome evaluation? Is there any special reason why the evaluation is being done at this point in time? (is this an early, mid-term or late evaluation in the Country Programme)
- What products are expected from the evaluation? (should be stated in TOR)
- How will the evaluation results be used? (should be stated in TOR)
- What are the key issues addressed by the evaluation? (should be stated in the TOR)
- What was the methodology used for the evaluation? (should be stated in the TOR)
- What is the structure of the evaluation report? (how the content will be organized in the report)

THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

- When and why did UNDP begin working towards this outcome and for how long has it been doing so? What are the problems that the outcome is expected to address?
- Who are the key partners for the outcome? The main stakeholders? The expected beneficiaries?

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings and conclusions of the evaluation report should reflect the scope presented in the TOR. There should be some flexibility for the evaluation team to include new issues that arise during the course of the evaluation. The findings and conclusions in the report will take their lead from the nature of the exercise. If the purpose of the outcome evaluation was to learn about the partnership strategy, the findings and recommendations may address issues of partnership more than the other elements listed below. If the purpose was for mid-course adjustments to outputs produced by UNDP, the report findings and conclusions might give some more emphasis to issues related to UNDP's contribution to the outcome via outputs. The section on findings and conclusions should include the **ratings** assigned by the outcome evaluator to the outcome, outputs and, if relevant, to the sustainability and relevance of the outcome.

The following questions are typical of those that must be answered by the findings and conclusions section of an outcome evaluation. They reflect the four categories of analysis.

1. Status of the outcome

- Has the outcome been achieved or has progress been made towards its achievement?
- Was the outcome selected relevant given the country context and needs, and UNDP's niche? (Presumably, if the outcome is within the SRF it is relevant; however, the outcome evaluation should verify this assumption.)

2. Factors affecting the outcome

- What factors (political, sociological, economic, etc.) have affected the outcome, either positively or negatively?

- How have these factors limited or facilitated progress towards the outcome?

3. UNDP contributions to the outcome through outputs

- What were the key outputs produced by UNDP that contributed to the outcome (including outputs produced by “soft” and hard assistance)?
- Were the outputs produced by UNDP relevant to the outcome?
- What were the quantity, quality and timeliness of outputs? What factors impeded or facilitated the production of such outputs?
- How well did UNDP use its resources to produce target outputs?
- Were the monitoring and evaluation indicators appropriate to link outputs to outcome or is there a need to establish or improve these indicators?
- Did UNDP have an effect on the outcome directly through “soft” assistance (e.g., policy advice, dialogue, advocacy and brokerage) that may not have translated into clearly identifiable outputs or may have predated UNDP’s full-fledged involvement in the outcome? (For example, was policy advice delivered by UNDP advisors over the course of several years on the advisability of reforming the public service delivery system and on the various options available? Could this have laid the groundwork for reform that subsequently occurred?)

4. UNDP partnership strategy

- What was the partnership strategy used by UNDP in pursuing the outcome and was it effective?
- Were partners, stakeholders and/or beneficiaries of UNDP assistance involved in the design of UNDP interventions in the outcome area? If yes, what were the nature and extent of their participation? If no, why not?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Flowing from the discussion above, the section on recommendations should answer the following question:

- What corrective actions are recommended for the new, ongoing or future UNDP work in this outcome?

LESSONS LEARNED

- What are the main lessons that can be drawn from the outcome experience that may have generic application?
- What are the best and worst practices in designing, undertaking, monitoring and evaluating outputs, activities and partnerships around the outcome?

ANNEXES

Annexes are to include the following: TOR, itinerary and list of persons interviewed, summary of field visits, questionnaire used and summary of results, list of documents reviewed and any other relevant material.

Table 8. A Good Evaluation Report is...	A Weak Evaluation Report is...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impartial • credible • balanced • clear and easy to understand • information rich • action oriented and crisp • focused on evidence that supports conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repetitious • too long • unclear and unreadable • insufficiently action oriented • lacking hard data and relying on opinion • poorly structured and lacking focus on key findings • lacking comprehension of the local context • negative or vague in its findings

Source: Adapted from DAC review of principles for evaluation of development assistance, 1998