



EVALUATION OFFICE
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DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

REVIEW OF EVALUATIVE EVIDENCE

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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
EVALUATION OFFICE

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FOREWORD

When the member states of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration at an historic summit in New York last year, they committed themselves to achieving a range of challenging goals, the most ambitious of which is halving by 2015 the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

If the world is to have any chance of meeting those targets, increased flows of Official Development Assistance will be critical. But it is not just a question of aid: the United Nations Development Programme, its partners, and other development agencies must do everything we can to ensure that we maximize the effectiveness of the support we provide.

This report, the second of its kind, is aimed at helping us achieve that goal. It represents an in-depth analysis of UNDP programmes and projects, encompassing a range of innovative programme-based indicators that provide key information on issues ranging from relevance to the sustainability of our work across a network of more than 130 country offices. This year the report pays particular attention to issues of effective upstream assistance (or policy and institutional support to developing country governments) and national ownership – two of the most critical dimensions by which to measure our own strengths and weaknesses.

Inevitably, capturing the full range of factors that drive development is a very difficult task: in effect we are being asked to measure a process of change – for that is what development is – based on a series of snapshots in time. Within those constraints, I think this report represents an important step forward in setting out both the value-added in UNDP's work and where more still needs to be done. As such, it is an important milestone on the road to improving UNDP's own performance and development effectiveness, and it is also a milestone on that broader journey to the goal that lies at the heart of the United Nations' mission: a better world for all.



Mark Malloch Brown
Administrator

PREFACE

The role and value of ODA is much debated. Aid agencies in particular are under pressure from their executive boards to demonstrate their effectiveness and show impact on the ground in the lives of people in developing countries. Equally, there are an increasing number of concerns for which international assistance is being sought – from assisting refugees and meeting rehabilitation needs of countries in crisis or post conflict situations to the ravages of Aids and the rollback of social gains achieved over the past decades in Sub-Saharan and Southern Africa. Arguably there has been a certain ‘crowding out’ of development assistance as a consequence of more immediate humanitarian needs. It is not therefore surprising that both the levels of ODAs and its development effectiveness are under intense review by the development community at large and aid agencies in particular, as highlighted by the preparatory discussions for the Global Conference on Financing for Development being held in Mexico in March 2002.

This is the second DER produced by UNDP’s Evaluation Office. While an attempt has been made to learn from others, it is also clear that the thinking and methodology on assessing development effectiveness remains in a state of evolution. Keeping in mind some of the inherent methodological limitations, the report attempts to frame some of the key questions that need to be addressed in any serious debate on development effectiveness and presents UNDP specific data drawing upon the assessments of independent evaluators to make informed judgements on UNDP’s performance.

As the development community focuses on issues of relevance and impact, what is clear is that taxpayers and their representatives are no longer willing to support ODA without a more robust demonstration of its value. Equally on the development partner side, there is a growing concern that ODA flows are being driven by factors and interests that reduce not enhance their efficacy and effectiveness. They also point out to some of the contradictory aspects of the current strong interest in improving the quality and impact of aid when ODA itself is stagnant or declining ODA despite an upsurge of new challenges, especially after the 11 September tragedy.

Yet the promise is also there. The historic agreement reached at the UN last year on the Millennium declaration, provides for a common global vision and a renewed emphasis on strong partnerships for a more effective development effort. Equally it sets the stage for ‘shared accountability’ involving development agencies and partner countries on meeting key social and economic development targets.

We are hopeful that this DER will contribute to the overall debate on development effectiveness and provide some credible evidence on UNDP’s performance. As such the DER complements the ROAR which focuses on internal assessments and progress in meeting organizational goals. The DER draws upon the findings of independent evaluators. The DER goes more into the basic question of so what? If progress has been achieved, what does that mean and attempts to respond to the concern about the ultimate value of UNDP’s interventions? Difficult but necessary questions!

Several acknowledgements are in order: Douglas Keh, the EO task manager, for his leadership and effective management of the methodologically complex and challenging task of producing this year's DER; Rosern Rwampororo and Diego Sanchez who not only did some of the detailed research work but also provided overall assistance in the preparation of the DER; and Anish Pradhan, the EO technology manager, for his close supervision of the DER production effort. I would like to especially thank the readers who made detailed comments on the DER.

I should also acknowledge the contributions made by Larry Cooley, President of MSI (Management System International) and Larry Heilman who did some of the ground work for DER. Finally, I would like to thank Nancy Berg for her editorial contribution and Julia Ptasznik for the design and format of the DER against seemingly impossible time lines.



Khalid Malik
Director
Evaluation Office

The importance of development cooperation cannot be overemphasized. Historically, it has exerted a large influence on development agendas and arguably also on the policies pursued by developing countries. And it continues to do so. While there is much critical attention on the potential success and failure of development aid, there is still remarkably little attention paid to empirical evidence – to assessing what works and why, or to learning from countries that have been successful in making demonstrated progress in their economies and societies. Despite more than fifty years of experience, both promise and concern about development cooperation remain, as does concern about technical cooperation as a transfer mechanism and a catalyst for development.

The very purpose of development cooperation has been questioned, and different roles for aid are being highlighted. Development cooperation is increasingly seen as being about imparting knowledge and creating what has been referred to as “social and organizational capital.” Donors have recognized that development has to be owned by national authorities and institutions. Development models, however well meaning, cannot be imposed from the outside. In this context, the role of the United Nations – and of the United Nations Development Programme in particular, as the primary development and operational agency of the United Nations – becomes even more important given its established presence in the programme countries and the trust-based relationships that have developed over a long period of time.

Since the early 1990s, as brought out in the recent UNDP evaluation of non-core resources, development aid has seen a shift away from “aid-as-entitlement” concepts toward an emphasis on results and performance.¹ This shift has produced increasing pressure on aid agencies to improve organizational effectiveness and demonstrate clear development results. Recent years have also witnessed a growing convergence around global development goals, a legacy in large part of recent U.N. conferences and, not least, the historic agreement reached at the U.N. Millennium Summit in 2001. Underlying this emerging consensus is the interest by citizens in donor and developing countries alike in knowing better and more concretely whether development interventions supported by aid agencies are indeed improving the lives of recipients.

These trends signal changes in development practice. Interestingly enough, these reforms are taking place in an environment of stagnant aid flows. One stated reason for this decline is linked to the inability of the development community to demonstrate effectively the value and purpose of aid. This and related concerns with development effectiveness have led to a growing reform agenda. The key elements of this agenda are:

1. **The emergence of common development goals and frameworks** (IDTs or MDTs).

The rise of a global, widely shared social and economic agenda can be viewed as presenting an historical opportunity to drive development assistance in a more

¹ UNDP (2001), *Evaluation of UNDP Non-core Resources*, Evaluation Office, UNDP, New York.

effective direction. Rapid globalization and the spread of information technology, and of the Internet in particular, highlight not only the potential (and pitfalls) of stronger development cooperation but also its urgency, lest countries on the margin become more marginalized as the knowledge and technology markets get more specialized. But while a shared agenda serves as an important platform for change and development, common goals also require closer partnerships and robust development coalitions, with common approaches and a sense of shared accountability.

2. **Introduction of Results-Based Management (RBM).** Not only are aid agencies under pressure from their governing boards to demonstrate results, but there is growing interest in comparing performance between aid agencies. As a process this feeds into the attainment of common goals. While most of the development community has adopted the international development targets as their basic organizational goals, this adoption gives rise to the related need to understand better the contribution of individual aid agencies to the attainment of these common goals. There is also the need to ensure that RBM is not seen as an external process but ingrained in the partner country system.
3. A third aspect of the agenda refers to the widening **acceptance that relevant development knowledge is located mostly in the developing countries.** The corollary to this assertion is that traditional knowledge transfer mechanisms (such as the expert-counterpart model, which still drives much of current technical cooperation) are not helping much and need to be adjusted for development cooperation to become more effective. Some have argued that the tremendous growth in knowledge-intensive areas and the rise of knowledge networks (the new network age) have in turn equally significant implications for future forms of technical cooperation.

As this agenda picks up momentum, both the opportunities and the challenges of improved development effectiveness need to be better understood, especially since the process of reform brings out some further dilemmas for the development community:

1. **The dilemma arises of balancing performance with need.** For instance, in some aid agencies, development results and performance are seen increasingly as decisive factors in allocating resources. Relative comparisons of aid agencies are in part driven by this interest. Yet this might introduce a distortion because difficult development problems or regions may not receive the resources and attention they require. The challenge may well be to have the development community channel cooperation and attention toward addressing the most critical concerns and, within those parameters, to reinforce organizational efforts to improve development performance.
2. **A second issue refers to the “micro-macro” dilemma.** Projects and, based on performance data, organizations might be deemed successful but overall country or sector performance may not be as robust. These are difficult but necessary questions that have to be raised in any debate on development effectiveness. It is necessary to look not only at organizational performance, but also to ensure that individual agency performance is rooted in a specific development context, and that real progress is made in developmental terms.
3. **Finally, the dilemma exists of balancing partnerships with accountability.** The current focus on global goals and on development outcomes highlights the crucial importance of partnerships in attaining development change. No single agency or development actor can exclusively ensure that development conditions are met for change to occur. In the end, effective development is about effective partnering. But despite some progress in this area, few global or country mechanisms remain with genuine partnerships, in which aid partner countries feel strong ownership of their development policies and programmes. And, despite goodwill and interest in common efforts, the focus remains very much on how well an individual agency is doing.

To meet these challenges, development actors are being driven to define clear and measurable goals, monitor them, and report on performance. This raises questions of attribution and tests the

limits of measurement. The focus on results and common goals is contributing to a sea change in development thinking and practice. Yet organizational effectiveness with its focus on “managing for results” represents but one side of the equation. Improved organizational effectiveness must go hand in hand with improved development results and ultimately greater impact on the lives of people.

It is in this context that the 2001 *Development Effectiveness Report* or DER takes on the difficult task of assessing UNDP’s development performance and in setting a more systematic framework for identifying and learning lessons. This report is the second of its kind; the first was issued in the autumn of 2000. The aim of both last year’s DER and this year’s report is to present an assessment, based on the latest evaluative evidence, of the extent to which UNDP has brought about desired development changes with a focus on outcomes. *Outcomes*, in this regard, should be distinguished from *outputs*, a distinction akin to the difference between a constructed edifice and the building blocks that form its foundation.²

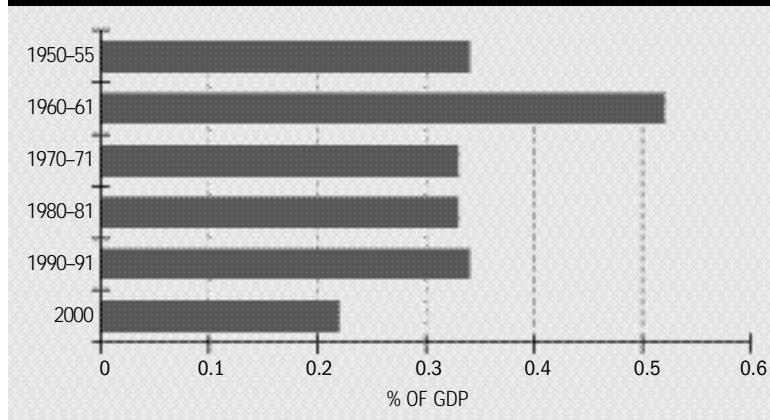
In looking at project data it must be stated at the outset that development effectiveness cannot be measured exclusively in terms of the achievement of project objectives; one must also focus on the impact of assistance on people’s lives. To what extent are projects and programmes contributing to a reduction in poverty? Are they increasing the range of choices that people have before them? Is UNDP assistance having an influence on how governments design and implement policies in Sustainable Human Development (SHD)? These are some of the questions addressed in this year’s report. Although there are still constraints in answering them fully, this year’s report represents one more step in the intended direction.

This year’s report updates the information in the first report while focusing on two key dimensions of UNDP support: national ownership and upstream policy advice. The focus on national ownership was identified in consultation with the Executive Board. Not surprisingly, because of its more ambitious scope, this year’s report also brings out more clearly the data-related limitations that UNDP faces in assessing its effectiveness.

THE CONTEXT: AID LEVELS

It is necessary to describe the context in which this year’s report should be seen and to spotlight the continuing reduction in the level of resources allocated for Official Development Assistance (ODA). During the 1970s and 1980s, ODA from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) began to shrink as a percentage of GDP. Throughout the past decade, it has continued to fall (Figure 1.1). In 2000, the level of ODA from the OECD amounted to 0.22 percent of GDP; only five countries have consistently achieved the shared goal of allocating 0.7 percent (Figure 1.2) of GDP to international development assistance.

FIGURE 1.1. NET OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN DAC COUNTRIES (% OF GDP), 1955–2000



Sources: H.Fuhrer (1996), *The Story of Official Development Assistance*, OECD; and *Statistical Annex of the 2000 OECD Development Cooperation Report*.

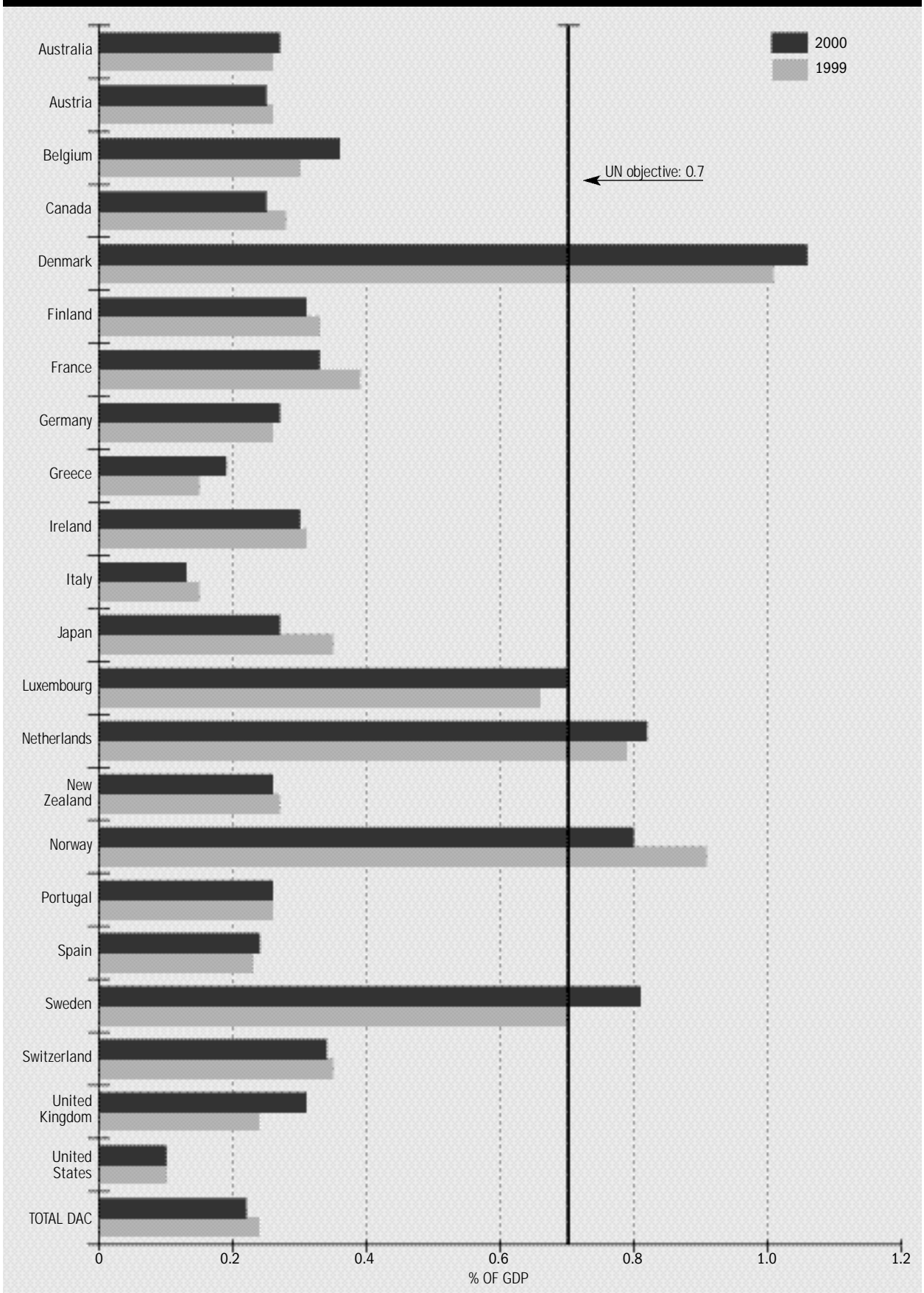
These trends have been particularly significant for multilateral aid providers (Figure 1.3). In 1999, the share of ODA channeled through multilateral institutions fell to its lowest level in a decade, constituting about one-fourth of the ODA total. For UNDP, this trend has translated into a sharp reduction in its core resources; UNDP core expenditure declined in resource terms from \$1.1 billion in 1990 to \$538 million ten years later. Meanwhile, overall non-core expenditures reached a total of \$1.6 billion in 2000, accounting for 75 percent of UNDP expenditures for that year.³

As indicated earlier, the development aid environment has been characterized by a sharp shift away

² See the Glossary at the end of the report for definitions of terms used in this paper.

³ *Evaluation of UNDP Non-core Resources*, *ibid*.

FIGURE 1.2. ODA IN OECD COUNTRIES (% OF GDP), 2000



Source: OECD (2001), *Net Official Development Assistance Flows in 2000*

from aid-as-entitlement concepts toward an emphasis on results and performance. This shift is affecting both the core and the non-core segments of UNDP funding, and is putting pressure on the organization to emphasize effectiveness and results (Figure 1.4).

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

When attempting to measure development effectiveness, one should not lose sight of the issue of organizational effectiveness, which is in some respects its converse. Whereas measuring development effectiveness is an exercise in tracking progress toward development goals, organizational effectiveness requires measuring progress toward the time-bound objectives that an organization sets for itself. The distinction leaves considerable room for overlap, but it is a distinction that needs to be maintained.

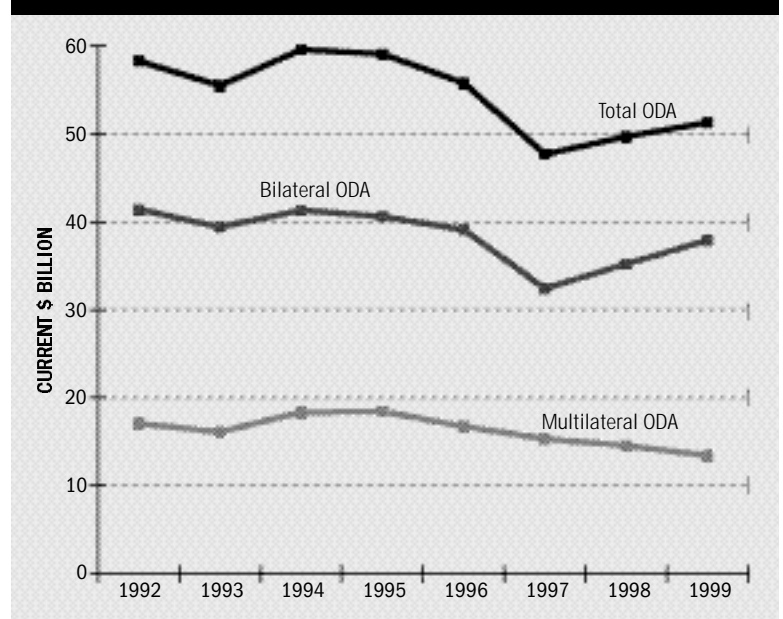
Recent institutional reforms, including the introduction of Results-Based Management, are meant to enhance the ability of UNDP to perform on both fronts. The underlying objective has been to adapt the institution to the changing global environment described above, and to improve its performance and ability to plan and produce outputs and contribute to outcomes.

One of the most important steps in that process has been the introduction of the SRF/MYFF process and the preparation of the Result-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR). The ROAR is a systematic analysis of the results achieved by UNDP each year. It identifies the goals and subgoals of the organization in the context of the overarching priority of reducing poverty.⁴ The ROAR describes the outputs produced and the outcomes achieved as reported by UNDP country offices. It is organized around the six goals that the Member States have identified as priorities for UNDP for the current programming cycle. Priority goals are to:

- Create an enabling environment for sustainable human development;

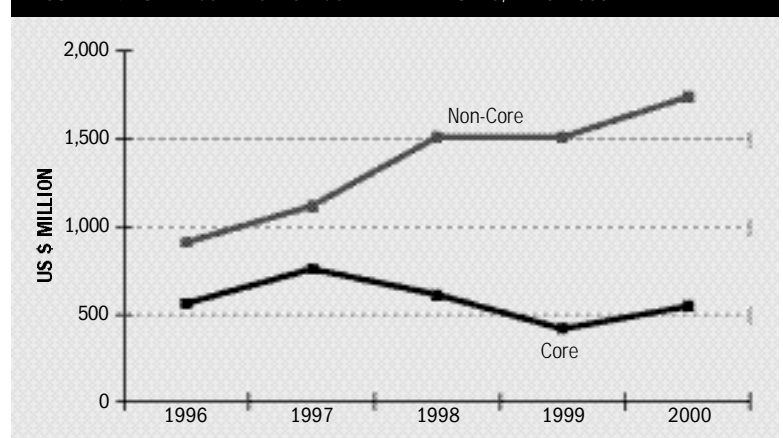
- Eliminate extreme poverty and reduce substantially overall poverty;
- Protect and regenerate the global environment and natural resources asset base for sustainable development;
- Achieve gender equality and advance the status of women, especially through their empowerment;
- Prevent or reduce the incidence of complex emergencies; of natural, environmental, technological, and other human-induced disasters; and accelerate the process of sustainable recovery;
- Provide effective UNDP support to the United Nations Agenda for Development.

FIGURE 1.3. TOTAL NET OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, 1992-1999



Source: Statistical Annex of the 2000 OECD Development Cooperation Report

FIGURE 1.4. UNDP CORE VS. NON-CORE EXPENDITURES, 1996-2000



Source: The Comptroller's Office, Bureau of Management, UNDP

⁴ UNDP (2000) *Result-oriented Annual Report, 1999*, New York.

The DER constitutes a complementary effort to that of the ROAR in several ways:

- The DER sheds light on the impact of UNDP assistance on the development process. What activities are most effective in enhancing people's lives? What activities are less so? What are the factors that determine the relative level of effectiveness of different measures?
- Although the ROAR is based primarily on information provided by each country office, the DER uses multiple sources of data with a broader longitudinal scope, the most important being evaluations provided by independent evaluators, who assess the success of UNDP's projects and programmes.
- Both the ROAR and the DER present a picture of UNDP performance. However, the ROAR measures UNDP performance according to the goals that the organization has set for itself; the process of gauging progress in the ROAR exercise is led by UNDP programme managers. In contrast, the DER exercise is led by independent evaluators whose ratings and evaluation reports serve as the key input for the DER's analysis.

OVERVIEW OF THE 2001 DER

This report is organized into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II clarifies further what is meant by the term development effectiveness, a concept that has grown in significance due not

least to the reduction in resources being allocated for overseas development assistance.

Chapter III assesses UNDP development effectiveness as reflected in independent project evaluations that have been undertaken in recent years; in this regard, it provides an update of the trend analysis from last year's report. Approximately 1,500 project evaluations – conducted between 1987 and 2000 – were used for the analysis. Chapter III groups projects into three clusters, according to the year in which they were evaluated: 1987-1991, 1992-1998, and 1999-2000. The analysis in Chapter III concentrates on three project dimensions: relevance, performance, and effectiveness.⁵

Chapter IV focuses on recent UNDP efforts to instill a sense of ownership of assistance with beneficiaries and realign its assistance portfolio, with greater emphasis on upstream policy advice (especially drawing upon the experience of direct interventions and pilot work supported by UNDP). National ownership and upstream assistance are today recognized as important catalysts for effectiveness. Chapter IV, therefore, relies on a range of strategic, thematic, and project evaluations to reach conclusions on how UNDP is faring in promoting both approaches. A total of 160 recent (1999-2000) project evaluations and ten strategic and thematic evaluations formed the empirical basis for Chapter IV.

Finally, Chapter V offers some conclusions of relevance to the development community in general and to UNDP in particular.

⁵ The Annex to the report provides a more detailed analysis of the project evaluations.

EMERGING VIEWS OF DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

For UNDP, in keeping with its focus on human development, the term *development effectiveness* signifies performance in bringing about a range of social, economic, and political changes. Development effectiveness is sometimes interpreted as an assessment of the impact of aid on economic growth; however, for present purposes, this conception of the term fails to capture the full range of effects, consequences, and outcomes that organizations such as UNDP aspire to bring about. This report uses the following definition of development effectiveness to assess UNDP performance:

Development effectiveness reflects the extent to which an institution or intervention has brought about targeted change in a country or the life of the individual beneficiary. Development effectiveness is influenced by various factors, beginning with the quality of project design and ending with the relevance and sustainability of desired results.

In order to assess the effectiveness of a given intervention or organization, two questions need to be answered in tandem. Have the immediate goals of assistance been achieved? And have those goals enhanced the development process? That a given forestry project in Thailand has fulfilled its objectives may be reason for satisfaction, but what if overall forest cover in the same region has fallen dramatically at the same time? Success at the micro-level does not portend success at the macro-level. It is from this broader holistic perspective that the concept of development effectiveness should be seen.

INTELLECTUAL UNDERCURRENTS AND THE NEW PARADIGM

The emphasis on development effectiveness reflects an emerging consensus on the role of aid. During the 1950s and 1960s, development economists believed that the lack of capital and the existence of supply bottlenecks were the two main causes of poverty. This view of development came under a cloud of doubt beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Neoclassical economists argued that public policy in developing countries, because of the overshoot of market disincentives, had led to inefficient economic structures, rampant rent-seeking, unsustainable public deficits, and, not least, debilitating rates of inflation.

Neoclassical norms, however, shared two major flaws with earlier approaches. First, they were based on a false dichotomy between states and markets, failing altogether to

recognize synergies between the two. Second, they viewed underdevelopment as a technocratic issue – as a technical problem that could be solved with enlightened policy tools: better planning, more efficient resource allocation, improved macro-economic management, and so forth.⁶ The societal context was ignored.

In recent years, a new development paradigm has emerged. Today's development paradigm reflects greater recognition of the need to question one-size-fits-all development policies – a process of questioning that has had a tremendous influence on the development effectiveness debate. Its core ideas are at the heart of the notion of development effectiveness presented above:

- The central aim of development should be to broaden an individual's choices and opportunities. This requires the fulfilment of basic human needs in education and health, and attainment of acceptable standards of living. It should also include respect of fundamental civil and political liberties as well as freedom from personal, political, and economic insecurity.
- Promoting participation is critical to the achievement of sustainable human development – development agencies need to do more to involve people in the planning of economic, political, cultural, and social processes that affect their lives. The input of every social group should be taken into account when designing national and regional strategies for development.
- An effective policy strategy should combine a vibrant market and an effective state; concentration on either of the two alone should be avoided. While states should generally leave direct production of commodities to the market, their intervention in other areas is very important.⁷ States have to create the enabling environment for the private sector, ensure that health and education are widely available, and spearhead the drive to eliminate poverty.

The consensus about development impact, for donors and partner countries alike, has led to a profound rethinking of the instruments and goals of cooperation assistance. Development agencies are transforming the ways they operate to be more cost-

effective and results-oriented. Many are expanding or reorienting their priority agenda to adapt to emerging needs: the World Bank's involvement in matters such as postconflict assistance and HIV-AIDS prevention are examples in this regard.

GLOBAL TRENDS AND THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVENESS

The UNDP Administrator's Business Plans reflect the exigencies brought about by the above changes. Accordingly, an effort has been launched to make UNDP development services more competitive and more specialized. Such services are intended to support trends toward national ownership, strategic partnerships, and a greater emphasis on upstream activities such as capacity development, institution building, policy dialogue, and advocacy.

The factors that have propelled UNDP efforts to seek more cost-effective delivery of services are similar to those driving many development organizations. The following factors, synthesized from the Administrator's Business Plans and other sources, are seen to be driving UNDP's search for more cost-effective service delivery:

Growing Competition in the aid "industry."

In the midst of a decline, in real terms, of ODA, there has been a proliferation of institutional vehicles – international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), bilateral aid partners – through which assistance can be shaped, allocated and/or implemented. The challenge for organizations such as UNDP is to ensure that respective strengths and comparative advantage are effectively demonstrated.

Increasing conflict and crisis in a growing number of countries. Responsiveness and speed of delivery are becoming top performance measures for aid support in areas of conflict and postcrisis and in countries under special development circumstances.

Governance and democratic reforms. In many countries, governance reforms (decentralization, local governance, judicial reform, legislation reform, and so on) are at the top of the development agenda. Good governance implies a balance among government, civil society, and the private sector in achieving development goals.

⁶ Stiglitz, J. (1998), "Towards a New Paradigm for Development: Strategies, Policies and Processes."

⁷ Stiglitz, J. (1998), "More Instruments and Broader Goals: Moving Toward the Post-Washington Consensus," The WIDER Annual Lecture (Helsinki, Finland).

U.N. system coordination. By adopting the U.N. Millennium Declaration, governments have committed themselves to achieving a particular set of development goals by the year 2015. Perhaps the most ambitious among the goals enshrined in the Millennium Declaration is that of reducing by half the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day. The pursuit of this goal will require effective U.N. system coordination, with overarching aims being sustained growth and greater equity, which give a people a sense of realizing their full potential.

POLICY CHANGES AND UNDP

The emergence of a critical mass of past successes and failures and the shift in the concept of development described above have also spurred essential policy changes. The current policy framework for UNDP assistance brings together the following strands of development thought. UNDP should:

- Refine its contribution to capacity building. Interventions are increasingly seen as learning devices, no longer merely as ends in and of themselves. Aid projects should expand the stock of knowledge that individuals possess and their understanding of their role and function in society. They should also help modify institutional, sociopolitical, and economic environments so that they provide optimum conditions, rules, and incentives to maximize individual and collective performance.
- Intensify its focus on achieving greater upstream impact. Development agencies are beginning to understand that supporting good policies and disseminating knowledge and information about what works and what does not work can be more effective than traditional aid delivery. Beneficiaries beyond the immediate project target populations will benefit from such projects. Policy advice and dialogue, advocacy, and other forms of “soft assistance” should become more prominent goals of international aid.
- Intensify its efforts to promote a genuine sense of ownership with host governments and project beneficiaries. Aid projects in the past have traditionally been donor-led and externally designed and imposed. Too rarely has the importance of the aspirations and experiences of target groups and beneficiaries been sufficiently recognized.

The vision in the Administrator's Business Plans calls for UNDP to be a policy-driven, results-oriented, and dynamic organization.⁸ This vision redefines UNDP as a “trusted and leading partner of programme countries in overcoming their development challenges through swift, high quality support in proven areas.” The objective of Results-Based Management is to “provide a coherent framework for strategic planning and management based on learning and accountability in a decentralized environment.”⁹ RBM puts pressure on UNDP to achieve results – furthermore, it promulgates the view that results must be measurable. In addition, key factors such as partnership and coordination strategies that can have an impact on outcomes and results may have a direct bearing on how projects are managed.

UNDP goals and objectives are clearly influenced by those of the United Nations as a whole. The following goals were agreed upon by Member States during the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, which took place in September 2000. Member States agreed to:

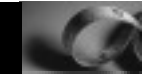
- Halve the proportion of people living with less than one dollar per day by 2015;
- Halve the proportion of people who do not have access to safe drinking water by 2015;
- Narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005;
- Ensure that all children complete a full course of primary education by 2015; and
- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

LIMITATIONS IN ASSESSING DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS WITHIN UNDP

The challenges in gauging development effectiveness are many and complex. Measuring development effectiveness requires a complete and spatially disaggregated set of indicators of development. It also requires drawing causal relations between finely demarcated interventions and relatively intangible development processes:

⁸ UNDP, *The Way Forward: The Administrator's Business Plans, 2000-2003*, p.9.

⁹ UNDP (December 2000), *Results Framework, Draft Technical Note, Revision 5*, p.1.



- Project evaluations are focused on the quality of design and implementation and on the achievement of outputs and immediate objectives; as such, the evaluations remain a limited snapshot of development effectiveness. At the same time, the evaluations do provide information on the impact of given projects on target groups, which can be considered a useful approximation of development effectiveness. Impact refers to the overall effects that a project has on the community where it is undertaken. The impact evaluation tries to capture the social, economic, environmental, and other developmental changes that take place as a consequence of the project or programme.
 - The most common source of quantitative data on project design, implementation, and so forth is the Project Evaluation Information Sheet (PEIS), which is a standard attachment to all project evaluations. The PEIS is an extensive questionnaire that introduces a useful objective and quantitative measure to project evaluations. The limitations of the PEIS have become evident in recent years, not least due to the growing impression that the questionnaire format tends to be subject to differing interpretations.
 - UNDP is now beginning to build adequate tools to assess the performance and success of upstream assistance. It has just elaborated detailed guidelines of how to monitor and evaluate these types of soft interventions. UNDP has also established quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess the achievement of output and outcomes of what some refer to as upstream assistance in the ROAR.
-

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AT PROJECT LEVEL

Projects continue to be the primary vehicles for the design and execution of UNDP-supported activities. Thus any overview of the development effectiveness of UNDP must necessarily include a detailed analysis of how UNDP has fared in designing and delivering its project-based assistance. While the data required for a comprehensive assessment of UNDP development effectiveness at project level are still limited, the following analysis represents an enhancement of the effort undertaken in last year's DER. In this regard, this chapter – as well as the report as a whole – should be seen as a work in progress, with conclusions and findings seen in this light. Project-level data are an essential but, ultimately, insufficient basis for determining the development effectiveness of an organization.

CRITERIA FOR MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

UNDP has followed a relatively decentralized system of project evaluation. Country offices have the lead role in determining which projects at country level are to be evaluated; however, all projects with budgets of more than \$1 million must be evaluated. The UNDP Evaluation Office plays a significant role in strategic and thematic evaluations, while also serving as the main conduit through which project evaluations are shared throughout the organization. The office oversees the overall monitoring and evaluation system of UNDP, with attention focused on evaluation compliance of the UNDP field network. The Evaluation Office also supports the organization in drawing lessons learned from evaluative work that is carried out.

Prior to the start of each programming cycle, country offices identify which projects will be evaluated. This information is conveyed and centralized at UNDP headquarters by the Evaluation Office, which reports directly to the UNDP Administrator. Project evaluations focus typically on three dimensions:¹⁰

1. **Relevance:** the degree to which the objectives of a project remain valid and pertinent either as originally planned or as subsequently modified owing to changing circumstances within the immediate context and external environment or that project.
2. **Performance:** the progress made by the programme or project relative to its objectives. In the past, assessment of performance tended to focus on the transformation of inputs into outputs, with limited reference to immediate and long-term development results. Under the new monitoring and evaluation framework, which has been developed in the last ten years, more importance is given to results. Two key criteria

¹⁰ UNDP (1997), *Results-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation. A Handbook for Programme Managers*, OESP Handbook Series, UNDP. The new Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines were in the process of being revised when this report went to press.

for performance analyzed in this chapter are efficiency – the optimal transformation of inputs into outputs; and effectiveness – the extent to which a programme or project brings about desired outcomes. Another key factor in performance is project design, which is also analyzed.

3. **Success:** the extent to which a project has brought about change to target groups and communities. Success, the dimension that is perhaps closest in essence to the concept of development effectiveness, is based on three criteria:
 - *Impact* – the overall effect of an intervention. Impact goes beyond the achievement of outputs and immediate objectives and tries to capture the social, economic, environmental, and other developmental changes that have taken place as a consequence of the project or programme.
 - *Sustainability* – the durability of positive project results after the termination of the project.
 - *Contribution to capacity building* or institution building – the extent to which a project enables target groups to be self-reliant and makes it possible for government institutions, the private sector, and civil service organizations to use positive experience with the project in addressing broader development issues.

PROJECT RELEVANCE

The meaning of terms such as relevance is far from self-evident. Even under the best of circumstances, such terms can be interpreted in ways that reflect as much about the evaluator as the project being evaluated.

Host government and target beneficiary priorities – two key criteria for relevance – have constituted a key determinant of UNDP project orientation for decades; relevance is thus measured as the extent to which beneficiary needs have been acted upon during the project design phase. Another key criterion against which relevance is measured is the extent to which the project or programme reflects the corporate goals of UNDP.

The PEIS has in the past allowed for an aggregate portrayal of project relevance, though the limits of the PEIS must be acknowledged. According to the PEIS, the number of UNDP projects deemed relevant has increased. A full 80 percent of projects evaluated between 1992 and 1998 and 87 percent of those evaluated between 1999 and 2000 were considered relevant (Figure 3.1) to the mission of the institution and to the interests of target groups and direct beneficiaries.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that the percentage of projects deemed only partially

FIGURE 3.1. PROJECT RELEVANCE
(PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)

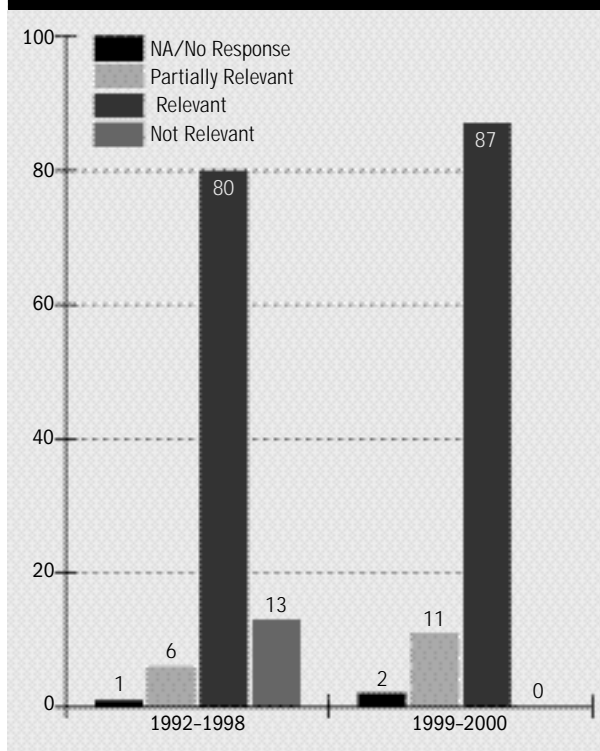
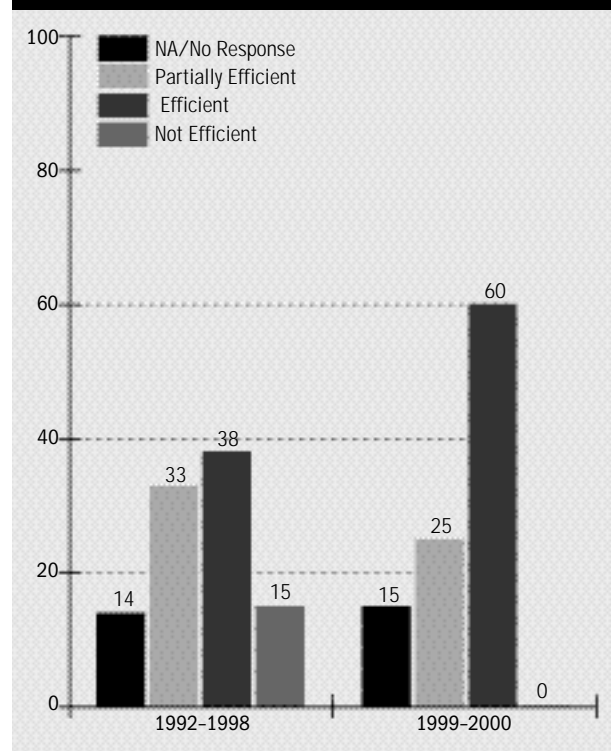


FIGURE 3.2. PROJECT EFFICIENCY
(PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)



relevant has increased as a proportion of projects evaluated, from 6 percent to 11 percent.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE: EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND PROJECT DESIGN

The analysis of UNDP projects evaluated in 1999 and 2000 yields positive results in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. A full 60 percent of the projects evaluated most recently were judged efficient.

Under the new results-centered orientation of UNDP, improvement in the effectiveness of the projects is even more important. Effectiveness measures the extent to which a project or programme has achieved its objectives and results, independent of the costs that were required for it. A comparison between the projects evaluated in 1999 and 2000 and the ones evaluated between 1992 and 1998 reveals an increase in the percentage of effective projects, which currently constitute 60 percent of the total (Figure 3.3). It is also significant that the 1992-1998 cluster had a very high proportion (35 percent) of nonresponses to this particular question.

Another key factor that determines project

performance is project design. In this regard, it is significant that the quality of design of UNDP projects has improved in the last thirteen years (Figure 3.4). The factors that have contributed to this extended process of improvement include simple trial and error in development assistance projects; decentralizing project design to the field level, where country offices with a far more intimate understanding of needs can liaise directly with project beneficiaries; and a greater appreciation of the fundamental importance of stakeholder involvement in project development and implementation.

The fact that only one-fourth of the projects evaluated in the last period had “very good design” – and that 12 percent were poorly designed – is nonetheless a concern, even though the former statistics reflects improvements over prior phases.

PROJECT SUCCESS

The success of a project should be ascertained by its contribution to sustainable human development in the region or country in which it is implemented. This is a difficult task, especially in the case of small projects that have limited objectives and small beneficiary populations. For the purposes of this report, the

FIGURE 3.3. PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)

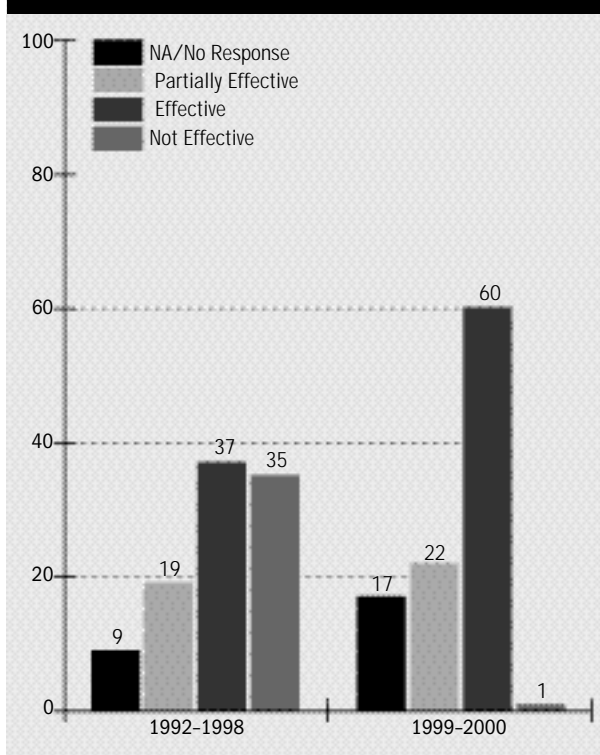


FIGURE 3.4. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS EVALUATED)

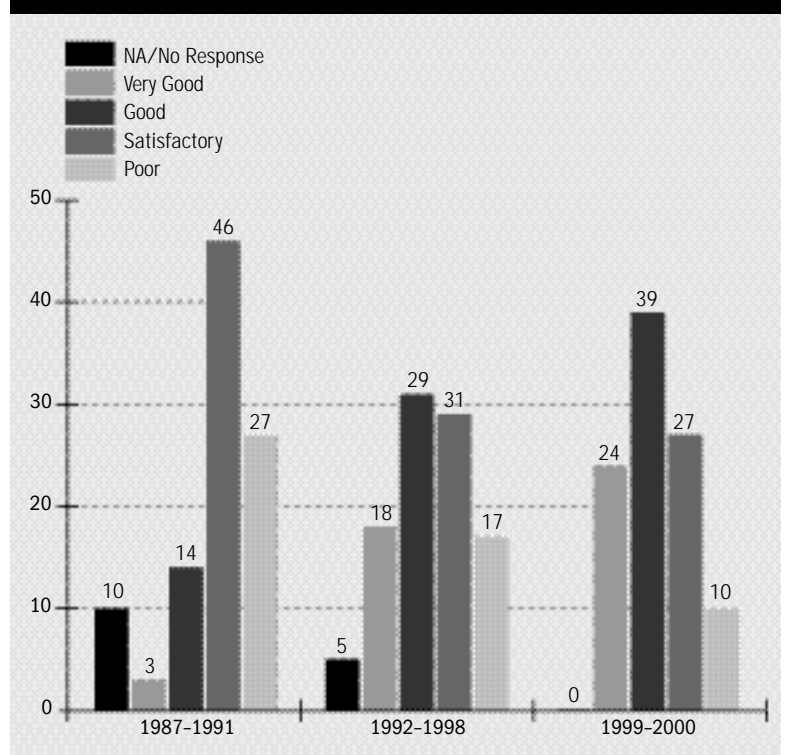
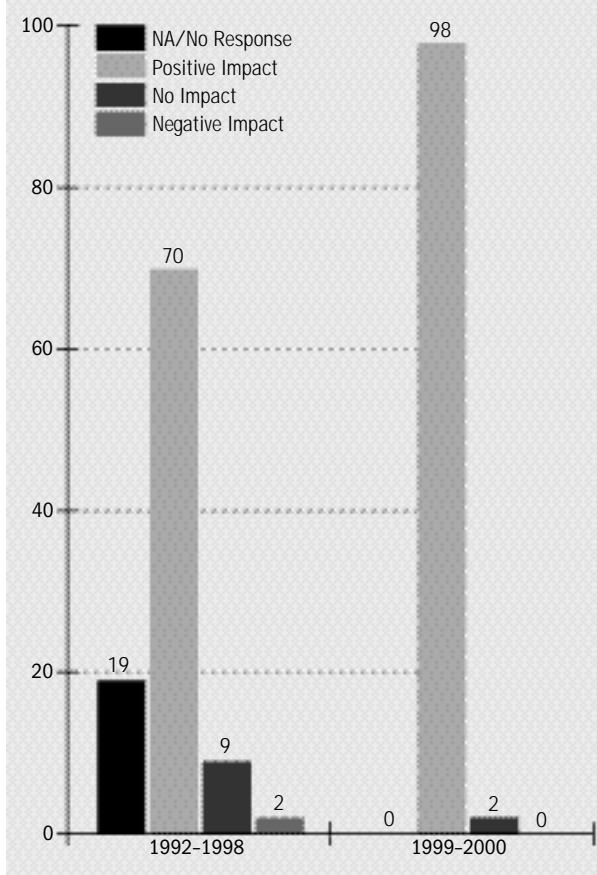


FIGURE 3.5. IMPACT ON TARGET GROUPS
 (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)


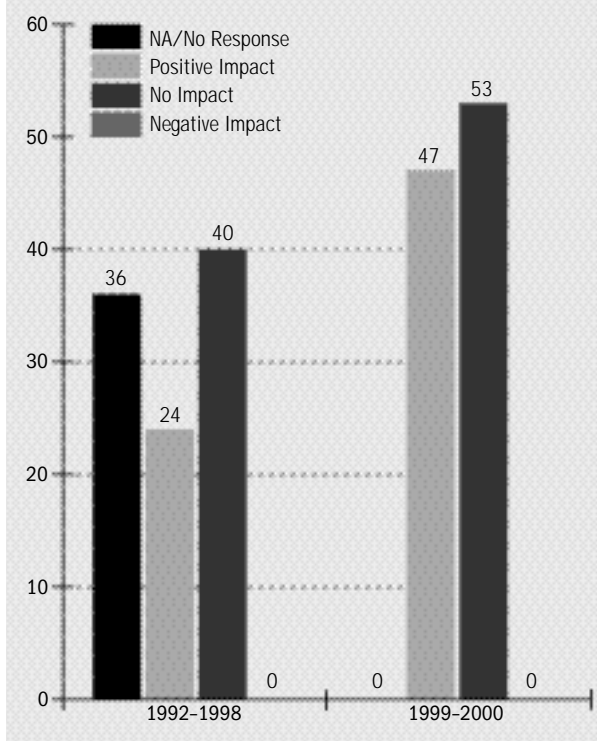
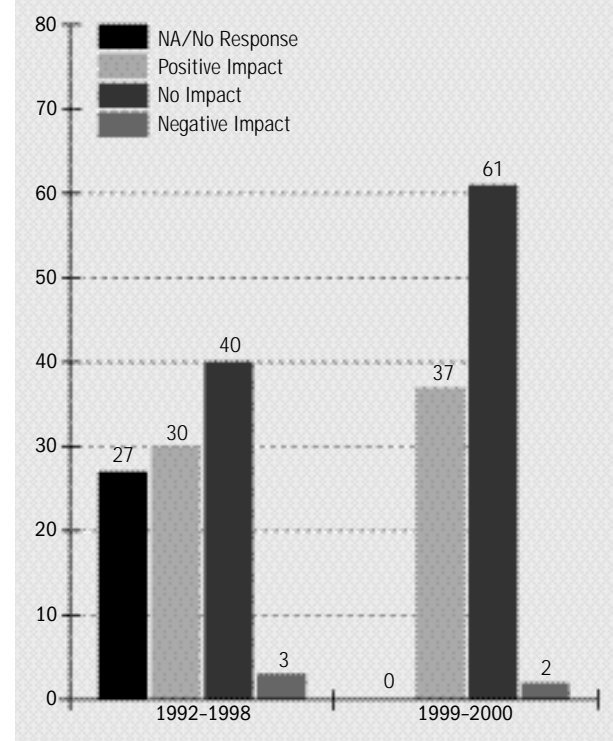
measure of project success is limited to an assessment of the effects of projects on target groups, the environment, and gender; the sustainability of the projects; and their contribution to institution building.

PROJECT IMPACT

As Figure 3.5 illustrates, almost all projects evaluated in the last two years had a positive impact on target groups.

The percentage of projects with a positive impact on the environment increased substantially in 1999-2000 to 47 percent (Figure 3.6). This proportion is significant given the range of sectors covered by UNDP projects; it suggests that environmental concerns may have indeed gone “mainstream.” This supports the analysis of the 2000 ROAR although, once again, the high percentage of nonresponses cannot be overlooked.

The percentage of those projects with a positive impact on gender has increased from 30 percent to 37 percent during the same time period (Figure 3.7). At the same time, this progress is somewhat overshadowed by the increase in percentage of projects with no gender impact (from 40 percent to 61 percent). Again, this finding is consistent with

 FIGURE 3.6. IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT
 (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)

 FIGURE 3.7. IMPACT ON GENDER
 (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)


that in the 2000 ROAR.

Thus the evaluations appear to raise concerns about gender impact. The PEIS questionnaire, answers to which form the basis for the findings in Figure 3.7, is vague on what it means when asking the evaluators about the “gender impact” of a given project. Nonetheless, one would assume that the change processes in question involve gender mainstreaming, targeting particular needs of women in development, and contributing to governance processes that allow women a greater say and role in decision-making at community level. In any case, it does not appear that the evaluators have found much reason for encouragement. The percentage of projects that do not have a positive impact on gender is still high. Given the fact that achieving gender equality and advancing the status of women is one of the six strategic areas of interest for UNDP, this finding is a concern.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

A full 86 percent of the projects evaluated in 1999 and 2000 achieved at least full or partial sustainability. It should be recalled that most of the 160 evaluations conducted in 1999 and 2000 covered projects that had begun, and in many cases terminated, by 1999 and 2000. Independent evaluators were in relative agreement on the likelihood of at least partial sustainability of project outputs. The percentage of projects that evaluators found to be fully sustainable rose from only 12 percent in the period 1987-1991 to no less than 65 percent in 1999-2000 (Figure 3.8).

CONTRIBUTION TO INSTITUTION BUILDING

Progress is needed in this area. Some 25 percent of the projects recently evaluated made only a weak contribution to institution building (Figure 3.9). Successful capacity building or institution building is challenging not least because it requires a high degree of external sensitivity to and understanding of the difficulties faced by the host institution. In few other cases are the deficiencies of one-size-fits-all policy prescriptions more self-evident.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions seem warranted based on the trend analysis presented above.

- The methodologies and analytical infrastructure for evaluation and programme monitoring should

FIGURE 3.8. PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)

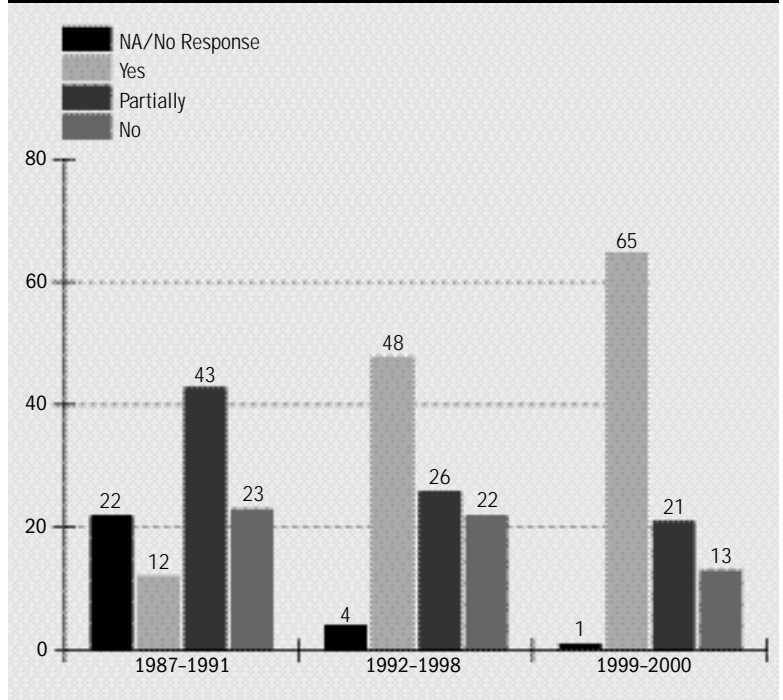
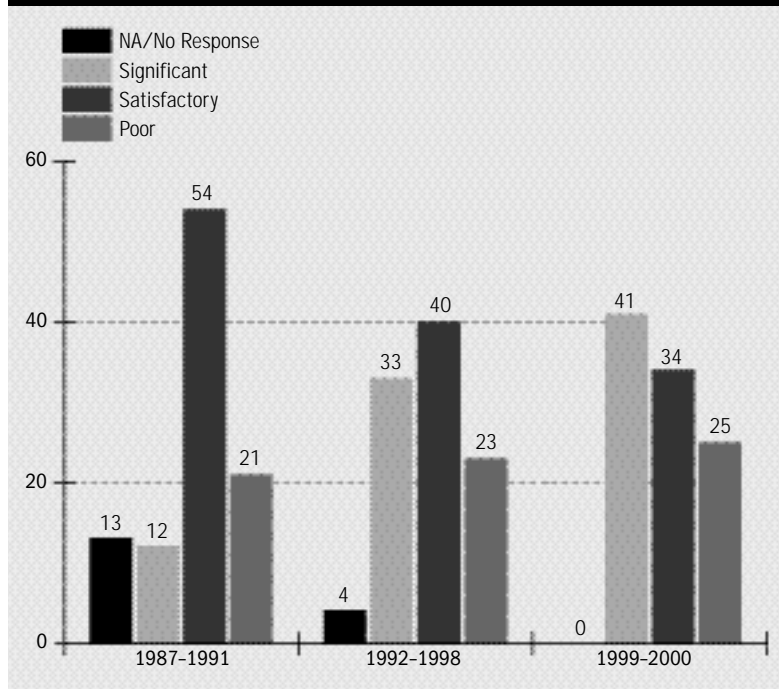


FIGURE 3.9. TREND IN INSTITUTION BUILDING (PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS BY EVALUATION YEAR)



be revamped so that they are more focused on outcomes and developmental change rather than exclusively on project-level performance.

- The relevance and performance of UNDP projects have steadily improved in the last fifteen years. Organizational innovations such as RBM and NEX, which UNDP introduced in the first half of the 1990s, have likely had an influence on project performance, although no causal relationships can be established with certainty.
 - Project success, in terms of impact and sustainability, gives reason for encouragement. However, project results in the areas of gender and institution building have been weak.
-

NEW PRIORITIES: NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND UPSTREAM ASSISTANCE

UNDP has in recent years increased its focus on national ownership and upstream assistance to enhance development effectiveness. The two approaches are closely related and, in many cases, interdependent. This chapter uses recent project evaluations as well as strategic and thematic evaluations to examine the extent to which UNDP activities have evolved to reflect these priorities; it also provides an empirical basis to ascertain how and whether embrace of these priorities has influenced UNDP's development effectiveness.

The assessment presented in this chapter is based on 160 project and programme evaluations carried out during 1999 and 2000, and on ten crosscutting strategic or thematic studies carried out during those years.¹¹ Since none of these evaluations or studies is devoted exclusively or specifically to the subject of national ownership or upstream assistance, the chapter's findings and conclusions are based mainly on a content analysis of those aspects of the evaluations relevant to these issues.

DEFINITIONS

National ownership reflects the degree to which the host country is genuinely committed to a development initiative, strategy, programme, or policy framework. Some of the most prominent attributes of national ownership are the demonstrated level of government support (by means of public policy, senior-level political directives and statements, and allocation of government resources); the breadth and depth of public participation; and the involvement of local institutions in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

By **upstream assistance**, the present analysis groups together areas of assistance such as policy advice, advocacy, coordination, and capacity building. In this regard, upstream assistance signifies a point in time or planning at which a given level of assistance is provided. The targets of upstream assistance are distinct from **other** downstream initiatives. Upstream assistance focuses more on policy development and institution building and correspondingly less on specific on-the-ground infrastructure development or service delivery.

Upstream assistance by UNDP generally takes the form of policy advice; engagement of governments and other key stakeholders in dialogue on development objectives, methods, priorities, sustainability, and scope; and developing the capacity of key institutions to perform these functions and to provide substantive contributions to the

¹¹ See References for the list of documents included in this analysis of national ownership and upstream assistance.

policy-making process. There can, and should be, an exploratory or pilot phase when innovative policies are introduced. A central UNDP programme of upstream assistance should be fully owned by partner countries in order to be successful; it is in this regard that the two themes of this chapter intersect.

National ownership and upstream assistance share a close and often interdependent relationship. For example, a recent report suggests that in some cases UNDP has been unsuccessful in upstream efforts when policy change has been constrained by limited institutional capacity and a low level of national ownership.¹² Another assessment confirms that efforts to provide legislative assistance – a prominent form of upstream intervention – depend for their success on the existence of broad-based political support.¹³

One of the more instructive examples of the convergence between national ownership and upstream assistance is the Poverty Strategies Initiative. In many countries where the right policy conditions appeared to be present, PSI funds have directly supported the development of national poverty reduction strategies. Upstream assistance has taken the form of technical advice in selecting appropriate poverty indicators and targets, as well as facilitating the articulation of policy priorities. Institutional mechanisms for implementing these strategies have similarly been formulated. Since national ownership is a key premise of the PSI programme, beneficiary countries have emphasized involvement of a variety of local actors in public debate and consultation at all stages of planning and formulation, from upstream policy actions to downstream project interventions.¹⁴

WHAT THE EVALUATORS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT NATIONAL OWNERSHIP

UNDP's interpretation of what ownership means and requires has progressively broadened in recent years. The initial concentration on national execution

of projects has been replaced by a more comprehensive understanding of ownership. On the basis of past experience, there is now greater appreciation that national ownership entails an integration of projects into a given national priority agenda; the participation of all stakeholders (national, regional, and local governments, and civil society) in the design and implementation of projects and programmes; and the commitment of target groups and beneficiaries.

The concept of national ownership is complex, not least because it is determined by myriad variables such as the degree of local participation, decentralization of government decision-making, political will, and the responsiveness to public aspirations. Despite the complexity of factors, empirical evidence has shown a strong correlation between high levels of government support and the achievement of project objectives. Not surprisingly, an analysis of available data also indicates that the quality and availability of government support have an impact on the sustainability of overall achievements after project completion.¹⁵

Several evaluations consider misleading or at the very least shortsighted the tendency of some UNDP activities to equate national ownership with the official statements of national leaders.¹⁶ Among key findings is that this particular criterion for measuring national ownership can actually be a disincentive to local ownership if it takes the form of retaining decision-making at the center, when it might be more appropriately delegated to regional or local levels. Some evaluations have concluded that, given a truly participatory form of decentralization, local ownership can generate significant political pressure on national governments to elevate concerns and issues to the broader national forum, and as such can be a positive stimulus for national ownership.¹⁷

A central element of ownership is the extent of government involvement in directly supporting the programme, implementing the programme, or taking responsibility for outputs. Lack of government participation and support has historically been among the most common reasons for project failure. As the figure below demonstrates, when projects are

¹² *Choices for the Poor: Lessons from National Poverty Strategies* (2001), Alejandro Grinspun, ed., UNDP, p.14.

¹³ Bureau for Development Policy, *UNDP Legislative Assistance Retrospective* (March 2001), Draft 4, p.58.

¹⁴ *Choices for the Poor*, *ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁵ UNDP CEDAB Database.

¹⁶ *Choices for the Poor*, *ibid.*, pp.15,16,19.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.143; and *UNDP Poverty Report 2000, Overcoming Human Poverty*, p.66.

backed up by the government they tend to achieve their immediate objectives.

The DER 2000 argued that ownership of programmes or projects by national governments is a prerequisite for success. Figure 4.1 generally supports this argument; however, it cannot be overlooked that 5 percent of projects that suffered from weak national ownership went on to achieve objectives in a manner that was at the very least “satisfactory.” One explanation for this result is that while arguably the most crucial factor influencing project performance, national ownership is not the only factor; strong involvement of country offices as well as other actors – including locally based representatives of the donor community – can contribute significantly to performance.

The need to understand elements that drive ownership has been confirmed by the Evaluation of Direct Execution published by the UNDP Evaluation Office in June 2001. The evaluation found that most DEX projects have performed satisfactorily and have contributed to national ownership. Ownership was therefore found not to stem from administrative control of projects by national governments but from the commitment and participation of national counterparts.¹⁸

The 1999 and 2000 evaluations indicate that UNDP has become increasingly sophisticated in its approach to promoting national ownership. The evaluators highlight various ways in which projects appear to be nurturing a stronger and sustained sense of national and local ownership of critical development policies and programmes.¹⁹ These include vigorous UNDP promotion of dialogue with national authorities, the newfound prominence of National Human Development Reports, and consensus building by organizing events that bring key stakeholders together on development issues.

The evaluative evidence suggests that global conventions, targets, and best practices have been used to deepen local ownership of reforms initiated by ambivalent national governments.²⁰ A case in point is the approach taken in many countries to

BOX 4.1. FOSTERING NATIONAL OWNERSHIP THROUGH PEOPLE-CENTERED BUDGETS

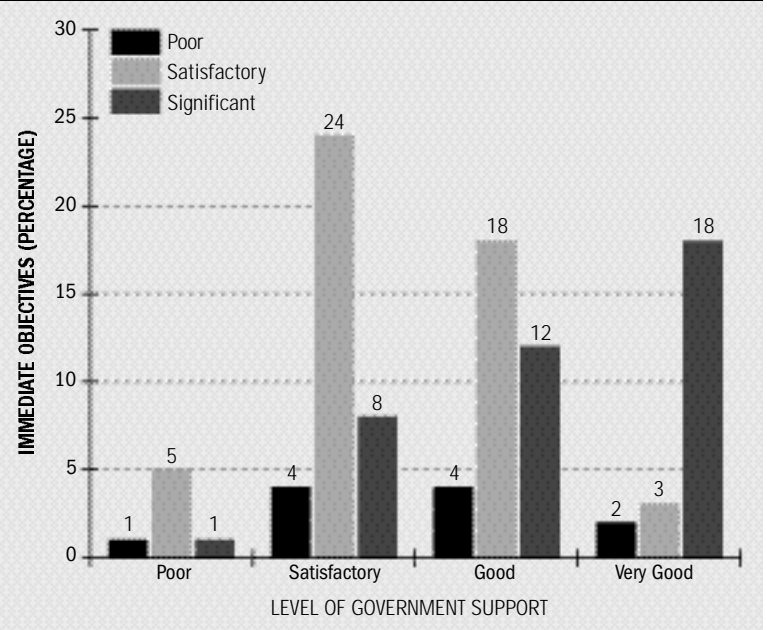
In recent years people-centered budget initiatives have been developed in countries throughout the world. These initiatives are aimed at promoting participation, accountability, and transparency within the public sector to make macroeconomic policies more responsive to the needs of disenfranchised groups.

The design and implementation of these budgets represent opportunities for promoting the participation of the poor. Budgets are the central instrument that governments use to allocate public resources and to define a vision of their development priorities. Linking the commitment of national and local government leaders with solid grassroots project ownership can strengthen the overall effectiveness of a given project.

Several people-centered budget initiatives have been successful not only in raising public awareness of the choices that governments make, but also in effecting changes in economic policy. For example:

- India: a mass-based organization called Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sanghathan (Movement for the Empowerment of Peasants and Workers) has held public hearings since 1994 to discuss the public budget of the state of Rajasthan. Detailed public sector accounts are read to villagers, who can testify to discrepancies between the accounts and their own experience. These hearings have exposed corruption, informed people as to how public revenues have been spent, and enhanced both the frequency and force of villagers’ demands for services.
- Brazil: In Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, a participatory budgeting process has been in place since 1989. This has transformed the old “clientelistic” budgeting process into a new, more accountable, bottom-up process, and led to better management within the local government.

FIGURE 4.1. ACHIEVEMENT OF IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, 1999-2000



¹⁸ UNDP Evaluation Office (2001), *Evaluation of Direct Execution*, New York.
¹⁹ *Participatory monitoring and evaluation* (final draft), UNDP, pp. 11, 12; UNDP Poverty Report (1998), *Overcoming Human Poverty*, Box 2.1, p.23; *Evaluation of Direct Execution*, Draft of 15 March 2001, pp.iii,23,27; and *Development Effectiveness Review* (2000), UNDP, pp.17-19.
²⁰ *UNDP Role in Decentralization and Local Governance* (2000). A Joint UNDP-Government of Germany Evaluation, pp.48-49.

BOX 4.2. CONSTRAINTS TO OWNERSHIP:
LESSONS LEARNED IN VIETNAM

A recent evaluation undertaken in Vietnam discovered that while both donors and the government had widely praised the merits of national ownership, "many technical cooperation projects are in practice donor-led, and are apparently accepted by the Vietnamese side without enthusiasm for the project objectives." The reasons cited for this acceptance of low-priority projects were the following:

On the donors' side:

"Although there is a commitment to national ownership in principle, the organization and incentive system in donor agencies tend to measure performance by success in 'delivering' projects and disbursing budgeted funds." "Donors sometimes feel they know best."

On the recipients' side:

"When the projects are grant-funded, they are seen as 'free' and therefore not requiring careful appraisal." The Vietnamese side may wish to keep the donor happy." Accepting TC projects may be seen as providing access to capital funding, for example."

"In the absence of a defined strategy for TC, there are no clear priorities that can be used to reject low-priority projects."

Conclusions:

"Genuine dialogue requires understanding and patience on both sides, with both sides listening. It is unlikely to be successful if it is merely seen as a mechanism for achieving the objectives of one side, nor if donors attempt to manage the process excessively."

"The success of the aid programme over the longer term will require that policies, institutions, and spending programme reinforce each other, and that therefore aid programmes should be formulated in a broad context encompassing policy reform and institutional development."

"Although donors have a necessary and legitimate interest in participating in the formulation of the development framework, priorities must be set nationally and leadership in the partnership should be provided by the Vietnamese authorities."

Source: *Review of Technical Cooperation in Viet Nam (1994-2000)*, October 2000.

poverty reduction and the use of the Human Development Index (HDI). By 1998, of the 130 countries that participated in the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, seventy-eight countries (or 60 percent of the total) either had stand-alone poverty reduction plans or had incorporated a specific poverty-reduction component within their national planning framework. A further forty countries had plans under development at that time.²¹ In terms of ownership, UNDP evaluators found that the Poverty Strategies Initiatives had been effective at the local level, not only as a vehicle for enhancing local capacities for poverty analysis and planning, but also as a means of encouraging the commitment of local actors to bringing about desired project outcomes.²² Their conclusions were based on evaluations of eighteen countries visited by an evaluation team

in early 2000.²³

A strategy adopted by UNDP in the early 1990s to deepen national ownership involves replacing traditional project-based approaches with a more comprehensive, integrated, country-led "programme approach."²⁴ One of the aims behind the programme approach is to enhance ownership at different levels of society: local governments, NGOs, universities, Community Service Organizations (CSOs), and private-sector organizations.²⁵ The defining aim of the programme approach is to replace the prevalence of individual projects with a more coherent programme in which projects are deliberately and consistently linked. Ensuing economies of scale are, according to the theory, likely to result not only in cost savings but also in greater programme impact.

The programme approach was implemented on a large scale in ten countries between 1992 and 1996, and at least forty additional countries have adopted it recently – primarily in Africa and the Arab States.²⁶ A crosscutting evaluation of experience in twelve countries found evidence that adoption of the programme approach was associated with an increase in ownership; however, the nearly simultaneous expansion of the NEX modality was noted, and gives rise to questions as to which approach has the more direct influence on national ownership.²⁷ Countries in which national ownership is now deemed to be strong include Ghana, India (especially at the central government level), Madagascar, Turkey, Malawi, and the Sudan (at the local and regional levels, spreading to some CSOs).²⁸

One assumption that underlies the programme approach is that national policy frameworks are sufficiently robust to provide a foundation for UNDP support; without this foundation, the value-added of UNDP assistance must necessarily come into question. Unfortunately, some evaluations found that this important prerequisite was sometimes not fulfilled and that, in such cases, UNDP country offices were themselves forced to piece together the

²³ The countries were Angola, Bulgaria, Guatemala, India, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, the Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Palestine, São Tomé e Príncipe, Tajikistan, Uganda, Uruguay, and Zambia. *Choices for the Poor*, *ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁴ See "The Programme Approach: Ownership, Partnership, and Coordination," UNDP Evaluation Office, October 1998.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁶ *UNDP Poverty Report 1998*, *ibid.*, p. viii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

²¹ *UNDP Poverty Report 1998*, *ibid.*, p. 22.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

required frameworks from a variety of sources.²⁹ Accordingly, the same studies concluded that there is a need in many countries for upstream assistance to help governments design such national frameworks. In their recommendations, the evaluators suggest that UNDP assist governments to produce national programme frameworks only when there is a genuine political commitment to those frameworks (evidenced most convincingly by the commitment of government resources).³⁰ There was also concern expressed by the evaluators that UNDP be particularly judicious in selecting which national programmes or national frameworks it supports, particularly in cases of political instability or questionable popular consensus.³¹

The evaluations consider the effectiveness of UNDP support for decentralization as another strategy used by UNDP to foster national ownership of development progress. In a strategic evaluation of UNDP's decentralization experience in five countries, evaluators found that successful decentralization was invariably spearheaded by overtly demonstrated political will and commitment.³² At the same time, several UNDP studies demonstrate that the rhetoric of decentralization often fails to be matched by a corresponding political commitment at the national level to relinquish decision-making influence.³³

Genuine participatory decentralization remains a distant goal in many developing countries, despite efforts made during the last fifty years; according to the evaluations, this is because of two major obstacles. First, there is a continuing reluctance at the higher levels of governance to relinquish authority to lower levels. Second, weaker elements of the population still remain unable to make their voices heard in the face of elite domination of traditional power structures.³⁴

It is in this light that the evaluations give some scope for encouragement as regards the value-added of UNDP assistance in such contexts. An evaluation carried out between September 1999 and January 2000 in Guatemala, Mali, the Philippines, Thailand, and Uganda found that leaders in these countries preferred to deal with UNDP, because UNDP was perceived as being more genuinely committed to the national ownership objective.³⁵ In one evaluation, the evaluators expressly avoided the use of the term

“interventions” in the context of UNDP support activities, since this ran counter to the desired role of UNDP as partner: “If a country is in charge of its programmes, then why would UNDP or any other donor ‘intervene?’”³⁶

The results of some evaluations are counterintuitive with regard to national ownership. Where one might expect that the use of direct execution would not foster national ownership, the results of one recent evaluation indicate that the majority of DEX projects and programmes have strengthened national ownership, particularly as evidenced by commitment and participation of national counterparts. This same evaluation examined the links between local and national ownership, noting that national ownership was fostered more often and perhaps more significantly by strategies and consultations targeted at subnational levels of government, as well as in civil society and the private sector.³⁷ In assessing the issue of effectiveness, the analysis concludes that NEX would be less effective in cases where national government is weak or nonexistent.³⁸

Does national ownership lead to development effectiveness? On this point, the evidence is sketchy but consistent, supported by compelling logic and an emerging global consensus. Last year's DER used quantitative data to conclude that: “. . . greater national ownership of projects can be seen to have a highly significant impact on the success of interventions supported by UNDP,” as judged by projects' record of achievement against their own stated objectives.³⁹ Recent studies by the World Bank and several bilateral donors have reached similar conclusions.⁴⁰

In a review of UNDP activities in Mali, Mauritania, and São Tomé e Príncipe, independent evaluators concluded that national ownership was “. . . a necessary condition for achieving success in reforming policies in favour of poverty reduction. Without such ownership, it [was] unlikely that national authorities would sustain their commitment to implementing the strategies and programmes developed.”⁴¹ While more rigorous evaluative evidence

²⁹ Ibid., p.viii.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

³¹ Ibid., p.xiii.

³² *UNDP Role in Decentralization*, ibid., p.viii.

³³ *Choices for the Poor*, ibid., p.128.

³⁴ Ibid., p.3.

³⁵ *UNDP Role in Decentralization*, ibid., pp. v, vi.

³⁶ Ibid., p.15.

³⁷ *Evaluation of Direct Execution*, p.iii.

³⁸ *Development Effectiveness Review*, 2000, ibid., p.17.

³⁹ Ibid., p.13.

⁴⁰ *Ownership and Conditionality* (Summer 2000), OED Working Paper Series No.8, The World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, pp.vii,9,23.

⁴¹ *Choices for the Poor*, ibid., p.220.

on *whether* national ownership promotes development effectiveness would be useful, principal attention is now turning to the more operational issues of *how* best to reinforce and mobilize that ownership.⁴²

WHAT THE EVALUATORS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT UPSTREAM ASSISTANCE

Several factors have underpinned the growing UNDP emphasis on upstream assistance. First, UNDP is adapting to the changing needs of developing countries, many of which have recently undergone pivotal transitions in political regime or economic ideology. Nowhere is the need for policy assistance more self-evident. Second, UNDP is acting in response to the fact that upstream assistance has unequalled potential for magnifying a given dollar's impact on poverty reduction and human development. Upstream assistance contributes to the quality of policy environments, and this can and should appeal to other donors, many of which are better geared to supporting downstream activities. Because of its international presence and extensive interaction with host governments, UNDP is well placed to draw lessons learned in one policy environment and assist in adapting them to others. UNDP can make the most out of the support that donors are ready to provide by influencing in a positive way the policy frameworks in which host governments and others donors interact.

The 2000 ROAR describes mixed results for UNDP efforts to focus on upstream assistance. It states the following:

On the one hand there is growing evidence of more strategic priority-setting by country offices; an accelerating shift upstream towards policy formulation and monitoring, taking into account the changing tools of development cooperation; an expanding response to more direct and urgent priorities for poverty reduction; and more evident progress toward building cross-cutting linkages. On the other hand, although downstream interventions are diminishing as strategic priorities, the existing portfolio illustrates a lack of

*focus or direction, not least in its still limited linkage with pro-poor policy change.*⁴³

Similarly, recent evaluative evidence confirms that although a shift in UNDP assistance to greater emphasis on upstream assistance is taking place, there is room for improvement – particularly in strengthening the linkages between UNDP's upstream (policy) work and its downstream (project) interventions.⁴⁴

To the extent that empirical evidence is available on programme support interventions, there appears to be a correlation between programme support and the overall achievements of projects, the achievements of specific outputs and immediate objectives, capacity building, and reaching intended beneficiaries.⁴⁵

The evaluations and strategic studies carried out in 1999 and 2000 cite numerous examples of successful upstream assistance. Consider the evaluation of UNDP's decentralization initiatives, in which UNDP received high marks for its contribution to seven higher-level goals, including national programme conceptualization, achieving sustainable human development objectives, developing capacities of programme countries, supporting people's participation, fostering social cohesion, promoting gender and equity issues, and building national ownership of programmes.⁴⁶ Nearly all of these are examples of upstream assistance.

The evaluations indicate that upstream assistance need not always be country-specific. The Health and Development Programme offers an excellent example of institution building and capacity building at the global level, harnessing the momentum of major international initiatives, sharing information and knowledge, and linking governments to the resources of international institutions.⁴⁷

The developmental impact of upstream interventions is often difficult to attribute, a reality that is caused not least by the fact that many of UNDP's recent upstream interventions have not yet been adequately evaluated. For instance, in conflict and postconflict situations, UNDP has often advocated a specific form of upstream assistance – the creation of Public Service Reform Commissions at the apex of government. To date, the bottom line effects of this form of upstream assistance remain untested, no systematic assessment of beneficiary perceptions

⁴² Development Effectiveness Review, 2000, *ibid.*, p.17; and *The Programme Approach*, *ibid.*, pp.27-29.

⁴³ UNDP (2000), *Results-Oriented Annual Report 1999*, p.16.

⁴⁴ Development Effectiveness Review, 2000, *ibid.*, p.14.

⁴⁵ CEDAB Data.

⁴⁶ *UNDP Role in Decentralization & Local Governance*, *ibid.*, p.16.

⁴⁷ Paul Basch, Jordan Kassalow, and Gurinder Shahi (March 3, 2000), *Global Programmes – Health and Development*, External Evaluation, UNDP, p.5.

The need to promote sustainable development and to preserve the environment has become particularly evident in the last decade, due not least to the awareness-raising impact of the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. That event led to agreement on watershed documents such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework on Climate Change.

The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) provides partial funding for projects that pursue the goals stated in the two Conventions. The GEF constitutes a good example of the value of partnerships among international development agencies when facing global challenges. UNDP/GEF projects are now shifting in emphasis from institution building toward the promotion of individual and systemic capacities; this shift has allowed UNDP/GEF projects to link upstream and downstream assistance more successfully. The projects are increasingly able to target macro issues (policy design, changes in institutional and legal framework, and so on), while simultaneously supporting local pilot initiatives that use innovative approaches, generate visible impacts, and offer demonstrative case studies for replication. For example:

- The technical and administrative experience gained during the implementation of the Chile Reduction of Greenhouse Gases Project has helped the participants in the project and the Chilean government to prepare a broader proposal for a project aimed at removing barriers to the adoption of renewable energy technologies;
- In Uganda the Photovoltaic Project for Rural Electrification has increased public awareness of the advantages of solar energy; and
- In China the experience and knowledge gained during the implementation of the Methane Recovery and Utilization from mixed Municipal Refuse Project will be very useful in assisting other parts of China and other developing countries to launch similar projects.

Source: Guidebook UNDP-GF and UNDP-GEF (2000) Project Implementation Review. Performance Report 2000.

has been conducted, and the relationship between proposed public administration reforms and concurrent efforts to foster political entente has yet to be adequately assessed.⁴⁸

POLICY ADVICE, ADVOCACY, AND DIALOGUE

The evaluative evidence suggests that UNDP is playing an increasingly prominent role as a source of upstream policy advice. The health sector is illustrative,

and recommendations have been made to concentrate health sector interventions upstream, with a special emphasis on health-related concerns.⁴⁹

Frequently, UNDP's upstream assistance focuses on creating dialogue and amplifying the voices of the poor in policy discussions. The evaluative evidence indicates that this has been done effectively in several countries through a variety of means. Upstream assistance has generated and supported structured and participatory methods that involve stakeholders in ongoing debate about development priorities, opportunities, and concerns.⁵⁰

UNDP upstream interventions focus on good governance and on efforts to support reforms that promote greater popular participation. In other cases, national dialogues are directly linked to specific substantive goals, most notably poverty eradication. For example, support by UNDP and the World Bank in Bulgaria, Latvia, and Tajikistan is associated with the successful introduction of poverty as a central theme in policy dialogue, monitoring, and action plans.⁵¹ While the evaluations comment positively on the links in some of these activities between concerns of good governance and the goals of poverty eradication, they also acknowledge that more needs to be done to strengthen these links.⁵²

In many instances, UNDP has functioned as a trusted advisor of governments and civil society. In this capacity, UNDP has been able to exert strategic leverage to effect policy changes. Leverage of this kind has limitations and cannot be overutilized; indeed, with limited financial resources available, UNDP has had to make some critical choices to facilitate and support pro-poor policy reform processes.⁵³ The Poverty Strategies Initiative was initiated in 1996 as a \$20 million programme intended to assist countries in the formulation of poverty reduction plans and to fulfill the commitments they made at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. UNDP evaluators claim that the PSI has improved countries' policy analysis and implementation, specifically in the context of poverty reduction.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ *Governance Foundations for Post-Conflict Situations, UNDP's Experience*, Draft for discussion (January 2000), by the Management Development and Governance Division, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP, Executive Summary, p.4.

⁴⁹ *Basch, et al.*, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵⁰ *UNDP Poverty Report*, 2000, *ibid.*, pp. 54-57, 64-69.

⁵¹ *UNDP Role in Decentralization & Local Governance*, *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵² *UNDP Poverty Report*, 1998, *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵³ *Choices for the Poor*, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 5.

The use of UNDP funds for this type of upstream assistance was praised by independent evaluators, as was the ability of UNDP to serve as an honest broker in debates on politically sensitive issues.⁵⁵ The evaluators observe, however, that effective antipoverty programmes require that upstream assistance be combined with grass-roots service

delivery. They emphasize the need for simultaneous and convergent attention to economic policy, institutional change, and micro-level interventions.

UNDP's role in promoting national dialogue has most often focused on establishing open and accessible processes that level the playing field and allow a wider range of voices to be heard. However, a number of recent evaluations conclude that UNDP is also well situated to serve as an impartial advocate for many important development issues. Poverty is a case in point, as evidenced by the growing use of the annual Human Development Reports and the 100+ national human development reports as advocacy documents.⁵⁶ A similar argument is made by some evaluators regarding UNDP's potential role in sensitive issues such as good governance, human rights, and gender equity.

The 1999 and 2000 evaluations include several that focus on special considerations associated with policy reform in postconflict situations. In conflict and postconflict situations, the restoration of appropriate regulatory and legal frameworks is a prerequisite for economic recovery and political stability.⁵⁷ In these settings, the evaluators conclude that numerous policy reforms need to be addressed at the outset, and with urgency. Reforms in existing legal frameworks are particularly critical, because these frameworks create the enabling environment through which a government can act on a wider range of reform issues.⁵⁸

Civil society in postconflict situations is often characterized by a quest for justice by victims, and by families and friends of victims. Recent evaluations have consistently noted the particularities of post-conflict situations, and the difficulty in making policy choices that are often inherently contradictory:

- Because the needs of justice can and should be addressed, the establishment of a foundation for reconciliation should be a priority. Justice, reconciliation, and stability, at least in the immediate aftermath of a conflict, are often conflicting goals.
- Evaluators have praised the use of Truth Commissions, describing them as "... an important form of social catharsis, without necessarily reneging on human rights, justice, or amnesty."⁵⁹

BOX 4.4. UPSTREAM ASSISTANCE: THE RIO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Brazil ranks 74th in human development in the world with a Human Development Index of .747 in 2000. The HDI reflects progress on three indicators: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment, and standard of living.

Brazil has been innovative in its application of upstream assistance and its effect on policy change. The city of Rio de Janeiro, in particular, has been tracking progress on elements that make up the HDI from 1980 through 1999 in 161 neighborhoods of the metropolis. The mayor of the city with the seventh largest government budget brought together fifty of his top managers to discuss how the measures could be used as part of the new instrument for managing the city's budget allocations. As a result, a law that allocates US\$6 billion from the central budget to the poorest areas of the country has been passed.

In 1998, life expectancy at birth in Brazil was 67, combined enrolment ratio was 84, and GDP per capita was US\$6,625 (PPP). While Brazil is among the medium human development countries, not all neighborhoods in the metropolis of cities like Rio can boast of similar achievements in human development. The exercise of mapping the HDI to the smallest unit possible to produce a report on the "Human Atlas" goes a long way to demonstrate how upstream assistance can influence policy choice and change for purposes of meeting sustainable human development needs. The report, which shows the trend in neighborhood HDI from 1980 to 1999 for Rio, was launched in June.

Source: *Human Development Report 2000*, and UNDP/Brazil Reports (The HDR Media Impact, The Industry Association of Rio de Janeiro State).

BOX 4.5. UPSTREAM EFFECTS IN CAMBODIA: CARERE

In 1991, UNDP and UNHCHR launched what would subsequently become a successful decade-long programme in repatriation and reintegration in Cambodia, referred to by its acronym, CARERE (Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration Programme). In 2000, the Royal Government of Cambodia assumed leadership of a decentralization process (SEILA) initiated through the programme.

In March 2001, the UNDP Emergency Response Division carried out an assessment of the programme, with a focus on how the programme influenced government policy and programming. That report states the following:

"Throughout the life of CARERE, there have been continuing debates within UNDP on the balance between the 'downstream' focus of integrated area-based development schemes on investments to reduce poverty (health, education, roads, water supply, agricultural investments) and 'upstream' policy reforms. Unfortunately, the debates too often get framed as either/or, while both are necessary to have a significant impact on poverty reduction."

The contribution of CARERE is clear in these areas: CARERE/SEILA mechanisms have been assumed and adopted by the Cambodian Government and are now in place in significant portions of the country. The lessons of CARERE have been integrated into the Commune Administration Law. The policy of deconcentration and decentralization of government functions and resources has been nurtured and supported by CARERE/SEILA. The models, processes, and procedures have been part of an active experiment on the ground, which led to significant reforms.

Source: "Peace-building from the Ground-up: A Case Study of UNDP's CARERE Programme in Cambodia, 1991-2000," UNDP Emergency Response Division.

⁵⁵ *The Programme Approach*, *ibid.*, p. 41; and *Choices for the Poor*, *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ *UNDP Poverty Report 1998*, *ibid.*, p. .

⁵⁷ *Governance Foundations for Post-Conflict Situations*, Executive Summary, *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 72.

- Legislative concerns were also considered. To date, evaluators noted that UNDP has concentrated on the strengthening of administrative and management systems associated with the efficient operations of legislatures, but has inadequately addressed the core functions of the role, structure, and functions of a parliament.⁶⁰

Recent evaluation of UNDP experience in Lesotho, Uganda, Zambia, Maldives, India, and Nepal demonstrates that PSI activities often had a much greater impact than their relatively limited funding levels would imply. They introduced new themes into public discourse, like vulnerability in Maldives and decentralized governance in Uganda. They strengthened indigenous capacity for poverty analysis and the development of policy for its reduction. They also reinforced ongoing national policy initiatives, increasing the leverage of certain key ministries and enabling countries to engage more strategically in negotiations with international donors and lenders.⁶¹ And in India and Nepal, PSI programmes had discernable impacts both at the level of government thinking and policy and at the level of the civil society.⁶²

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity building, an activity with which UNDP has considerable operational experience, typically takes the form of UNDP advice and support to strengthen planning, management, human resource development, and budgeting in government ministries and departments. Additional capacity-building interventions include policy and strategic integration across government ministries and departments, support for staff capacity-training programmes, and even the provision by UNDP of emergency staff (such as doctors, nurses, and teachers) in times of crisis.

A common objective of UNDP assistance is to strengthen national capacity to develop, implement, and sustain effective development programmes. As noted in the publication *Choices for the Poor*: "... success in policy reform depends, in great measure, on building the long-term capacity of key local actors to analyze problems correctly and design the effective solutions. Capacity development does not involve every instance in which some local actor simply uses information and analyses funded by a particular donor in formulating policy. A bolder capacity

development agenda would require strengthening the ability of local actors to *identify* a problem in need of action, *commission* work as required, *interpret* its results, and finally use them for policy purposes. More generally, it is important to distinguish between funding a one-time poverty assessment and undertaking a more systemic effort to build long-term technical capacities for poverty monitoring."⁶³

Many challenges underscore the difficulty in achieving effectiveness in capacity building. In the transition economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, studies reveal weak capacity for the formulation of poverty reduction strategies. What generally passes for a strategy document is often no more than a wish list, lacking realistic, quantifiable goals or a selection of development priorities.⁶⁴

The 1999 and 2000 evaluations include several examples indicating where UNDP capacity-building efforts have not achieved the desired level of impact because of the lack of a long-run or strategic orientation. For example, in the case of UNDP's interventions to strengthen the judiciary in extreme conflict situations, evaluators observed that the approach was sometimes piecemeal, with inadequate attention paid to restoring the legal social capital through appropriate training.⁶⁵ One major evaluation undertaken in 2000 pointed to weaknesses as well (Box 4.6).

In the case of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the evaluative evidence suggests that the main challenge in achieving effective capacity building is the comprehensive and likely long-term nature of the crisis. These findings support the view expressed in UNDP's Corporate Strategy on HIV/AIDS that the disastrous impact of the epidemic on the capacity of governments to deliver basic social services creates an urgent need for comprehensive upstream assistance to assess and mitigate the damage to governments' capacity to meet even their most basic policy needs.⁶⁶ The available evaluative evidence offers little evidence of a long-run strategy for meeting this challenge.

One aspect of capacity building that has received particular attention from UNDP in recent years concerns the ability of countries to monitor the implementation and determine the effectiveness of the policies they adopt. The provision of assistance to develop effective evaluation capacity is, in this

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁶¹ *Choices for the Poor*, ibid., p. 246.

⁶² Ibid., p. 262.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Governance Foundations for Post-Conflict Situations*, Executive Summary, ibid., p. 2.

⁶⁶ *UNDP's Thematic Trust Fund HIV/AIDS* (March 2001), pp. 2, 4; and *UNDP's Corporate Strategy on HIV/AIDS* (2 April 2001), pp. 1-3, 5-6.

context, an upstream intervention featuring feedback of findings into the decision-making process of the government.⁶⁷ The 2000 publication, *Evaluation of Capacity Development in Asia*, extends this argument by using case examples – including a review of India’s experience over the fifty-year period from 1950 to 1999 – to emphasize the importance of political will and the links between evaluation capacity, good governance, and responsiveness to the electorate. The authors conclude that although the demand for transparent, independent evaluation remains small in many countries, progress has been made, and an opportunity currently exists to concentrate resources upstream to encourage the growth and sustainability of performance management techniques and managing-for-results principles.⁶⁸

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in this chapter allows for the following conclusions:

- UNDP has made considerable progress in implementing its stated policies to emphasize national ownership and upstream assistance. The

limited body of evaluative evidence gives reason to conclude cautiously that UNDP efforts in these areas are moving in the right direction.

- At the same time, relatively little evaluative information exists with which to assess or compare the relative strengths or weaknesses of the various strategies used by UNDP to promote national ownership or upstream action. What analysis does exist is not sufficiently disaggregated to reflect differences in country context and sector, or to guide decisions about strategy alternatives. Future steps might usefully include a crosscutting evaluation on the topic.
- Upstream assistance often needs to be linked to downstream activity, such as grassroots service delivery, to be fully effective; few country programmes are succeeding in deliberately and actively making this linkage.
- There has been limited rigor applied to differentiating alternative strategies for fostering national ownership or undertaking upstream interventions.
- UNDP is often most effective in fostering national ownership through its work at the global and subnational levels. Globally, the development and use of global norms and frameworks such as the Human Development Index, the Poverty Strategies Initiative, HDP, and GCF serve as examples of global norms and standards used effectively to foster national ownership. At subnational levels, evaluators point to the role of decentralization and broad-based consultative mechanisms in promoting national ownership from the bottom up.
- National execution is not a proxy for national ownership. The evidence suggests that there are circumstances in which, ironically, direct execution is more effective than national execution in achieving both national ownership and development effectiveness.
- There is a direct link between good governance, on the one hand, and both national ownership and upstream assistance, on the other. The most prominent links cited in the evaluations are those related to managing for results, decentralization, transparency, accountability, and public participation. Insufficient attention appears to be given to these linkages in many country programmes.
- The country programme approach has considerable potential for deepening both national ownership and upstream intervention. This potential has yet to be fully realized in many countries.

BOX 4.6. WEAKNESSES IN UNDP CAPACITY BUILDING AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE

Capacity building is a central element of UNDP upstream efforts. A recent evaluation examined UNDP efforts in assisting governments in decentralization and strengthening local governance. Areas of focus included performance in raising awareness and understanding of decentralized governance. The report, prepared in 2000, found that chief constraints to effective UNDP performance in this regard were the following:

1. Insufficient corporate backstopping: Despite the noted corporate-level strength of UNDP in the area of decentralized governance, UNDP staff members in all of the countries included in the evaluation reported that they received little support from headquarters in the field of decentralization.
2. Low visibility and profile: UNDP maintained a low profile in the programme countries visited. The team was informed that this low profile was often intended so that the government and other stakeholders might take the ownership of the supported projects more seriously.
3. Weak strategic management capacities: In most countries visited, UNDP had not entered the areas of governance and decentralization in a strategically managed way. UNDP activities in the governance sector did not seem to have any long-term vision.
4. Inadequate information management capacities: The evaluation team found a general weakness in the use and management of information and knowledge resources at the country office level.
5. Problematic use of concepts and terminology: One of the comparative strengths of UNDP is its policy on and support for governance and decentralization. However, the evaluation team found that this strength applied only to UNDP development of definitions and concepts of governance and decentralization at a higher or general level, and that there were weaknesses in applying the concept in some national contexts.

Source: *UNDP Role in Decentralization and Local Governance*, UNDP Evaluation Office, February 2000.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 26, 36.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by the U.N. Member States at the historic Millennium Summit in the fall of 2000, enshrines as one of its most ambitious goals the reduction of global poverty by 50 percent by 2015. This commitment to poverty reduction and the emergence of a widely shared global development agenda present a large opportunity to redirect development assistance toward purposes that are more effective and relevant to the achievement of global goals.

The commitment to this shared agenda can and should serve as a driving force to harmonize and strengthen actions by stakeholders. And while it reinforces the essential need to sharpen the relative value-added of individual aid organizations, it calls particularly for a renewed global commitment to development and to ensuring that development efforts achieve their intended purpose. The goal of reducing global poverty underscores the need to align and design development programs from a global perspective, while at the same time adapting international goals to country circumstances and priorities. A global, common perspective demands greater harmonization of actions by development agencies.

A results orientation lies at the heart of development effectiveness. The introduction of Results-Based Management as an organization-wide framework, complemented by required institutional reforms, is beginning to have a demonstrable effect on the way UNDP does business. This is reflected in the performance gains in UNDP programmes evaluated during the 1999-2000 period, which showed marked improvement compared with those evaluated during the 1992-1998 period. While this year's DER has identified programming areas still in need of strengthening – gender mainstreaming and institution building, in particular – its overall positive assessment is consistent with the picture portrayed in this year's *2000 Results-Oriented Annual Report*. In this regard, a process of triangulation has provided a basis to conclude that UNDP is moving in the right direction.

Ownership, in development, matters. There is a subtle paradox here in the notion of providing external help to strengthen local development efforts and help people to help themselves. The data and analyses presented in the foregoing chapters highlight the importance of shared goals and aims surrounding a given programme. Programmes that reflect a sense of ownership by target beneficiaries and stakeholders have clearly performed better than programmes that do not reflect this ownership.

For UNDP, the implications of this basic finding point to the heightened importance of attending to the building blocks of ownership, right from the inception of the Country Cooperation Framework and other programme development processes. These building blocks include building consensus and mobilizing support of beneficiaries, broadening participation across interest groups, and developing institutional capacity at different levels, especially at the level of assessing performance and development impact. This lesson applies equally to the development community at large.

The phenomenon of the macro-micro dilemma emerges from the need for linking development interventions to a broader policy framework. For UNDP, the lessons from evaluative evidence suggest the need to link upstream policy-oriented work with downstream application, and vice-versa. While the focus should be on leveraging UNDP's comparative advantage for maximum developmental impact, the entry points for such interventions should be judiciously chosen either at the upstream policy level or the downstream pilot level, depending on country circumstance and requirement.

One difficulty encountered during the preparation of both this year's DER as well as last year's has been the paucity of empirical data on developmental change brought about by UNDP assistance. Until recently, evaluative data – and evaluation methodology – focused overwhelmingly on the conversion of project inputs into outputs. The above chapters have made it abundantly self-evident that ongoing efforts to revamp evaluative practices need to be accelerated, and more attention needs to be focused on the importance of capturing real change in the life of the beneficiary.

As development efforts shift their focus to the higher plane – that is from outputs to outcomes and from programme level to country level – the evaluation process and methodology must also shift gears to that level. While there is an effort under way along these lines, it is clear that, for both methodology and the use and integration of lessons learned, evaluation should become an integral part of any strategy to improve UNDP as an organization and to heighten its development impact. At the heart of the matter is the issue of development effectiveness; looking to the past as a compass for the future is an essential means of maximizing the effectiveness and impact of development assistance.

TREND ANALYSIS 2001

The data for the analysis in Chapter III were drawn primarily from the quantitative assessments of the Portfolio of Evaluations stored in the central evaluation database (CEDAB). The data cut across a number of themes and issues that help to reveal UNDP's performance in meeting its objectives and monitoring its work.

The Portfolio of Evaluations in the CEDAB database is grouped into two major categories of evaluation reports: by the year of evaluation or by the year in which the projects in question were approved. The database, managed by the UNDP Evaluation Office, contains information that describes how UNDP projects have fared along various dimensions over time. This information comprises data gathered from surveys completed by external experts, who undertake the evaluations and enter the data into a Project Evaluation Information Sheet (PEIS). The PEIS contains more than fifty questions that evaluators must answer on project relevance, achievement of outputs, and so forth. It should be noted that many of the PEIS questionnaires processed between 1987 and 2000 were not entirely filled in by the evaluators, resulting in missing information in the CEDAB database.

Last year's analysis (the *Development Effectiveness Report* published in 2000) was based mainly on the approval year portfolio (reflecting 1987-1991 and 1992-1998 clusters), because it brought together a number of projects designed in a similar organizational culture. While this year's analysis is an update of last year's report, it draws upon projects grouped by evaluation year. This does not represent a fundamental shift in methodology, but was necessary because the evaluation year portfolio provides a bigger pool of projects for a more robust analysis for the 1999-2000 cluster. Further analysis of the projects in the evaluation portfolio for the 1999-2000 period reveals that all projects in the cluster 1999-2000 were approved in or after 1992.

The Portfolio of Evaluations contains 1,522 reports received and processed by the Evaluation Office for projects *evaluated* from 1987 to 2000, and 1,067 reports from projects *approved* from 1987 to 2000. Tables AI-1 and AI-2 present the distribution of evaluation reports by year of evaluation and year of approval, respectively.

TABLE A-1. DISTRIBUTION OF EVALUATION REPORTS BY YEAR OF EVALUATION (NUMBER OF REPORTS)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Reports Received	87	134	148	207	166	158	97	87	98	73	47	67	85	68	1522

TABLE A-2. DISTRIBUTION OF EVALUATION REPORTS BY YEAR OF APPROVAL (NUMBER OF REPORTS)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Reports Received	194	179	135	113	79	130	63	34	30	33	52	19	5	1	1067

TABLE AI-3A. DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF EVALUATION AND BY YEAR OF EVALUATION (NUMBER OF REPORTS)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Midterm	33	47	50	106	51	55	27	30	59	29	15	11	33	22	568
Terminal	49	83	92	96	104	95	68	54	34	33	30	36	34	38	846
Ex-Post	5	4	6	5	11	8	2	3	5	11	2	20	18	8	108
Total	87	134	148	207	166	158	97	87	98	73	47	67	85	68	1522

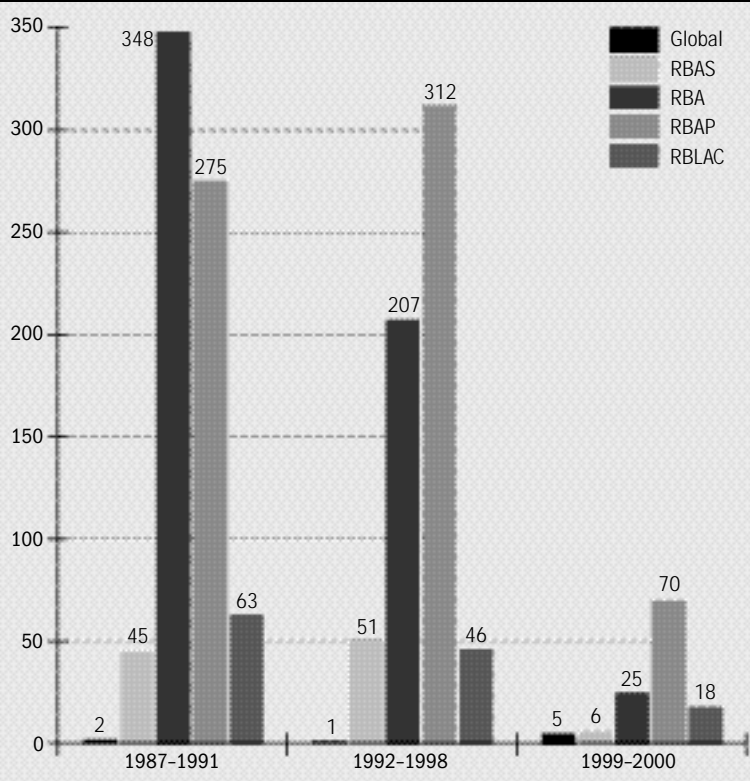
TABLE AI-3B. DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE OF EVALUATION AND BY YEAR OF APPROVAL (NUMBER OF REPORTS)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Midterm	81	65	49	34	31	66	29	14	11	13	28	10	2	0	433
Terminal	109	102	79	59	39	55	26	15	16	17	22	9	3	0	548
Ex-Post	4	12	7	11	8	6	5	2	3	3	2	0	0	0	63
Total	194	179	135	104	78	127	60	31	30	33	52	19	5	0	1042

TABLE AI-4. DISTRIBUTION BY REGION AND BY YEAR OF EVALUATION (NUMBER OF REPORTS)

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
GLO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
INT	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
PAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RAB	5	9	5	18	8	10	5	0	9	17	8	2	2	4	102
RAF	38	64	72	110	64	64	28	33	36	26	5	15	17	8	580
RAS	38	49	44	64	80	70	57	50	45	29	27	34	37	33	657
REM	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RER	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	15	14	39
RLA	2	10	23	14	14	12	6	3	6	2	7	10	12	6	127
Total	86	133	144	207	166	158	97	86	96	74	47	66	83	66	1509

FIGURE AI-1. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EVALUATED PROJECTS BY YEAR OF EVALUATION (NUMBER OF PROJECTS)

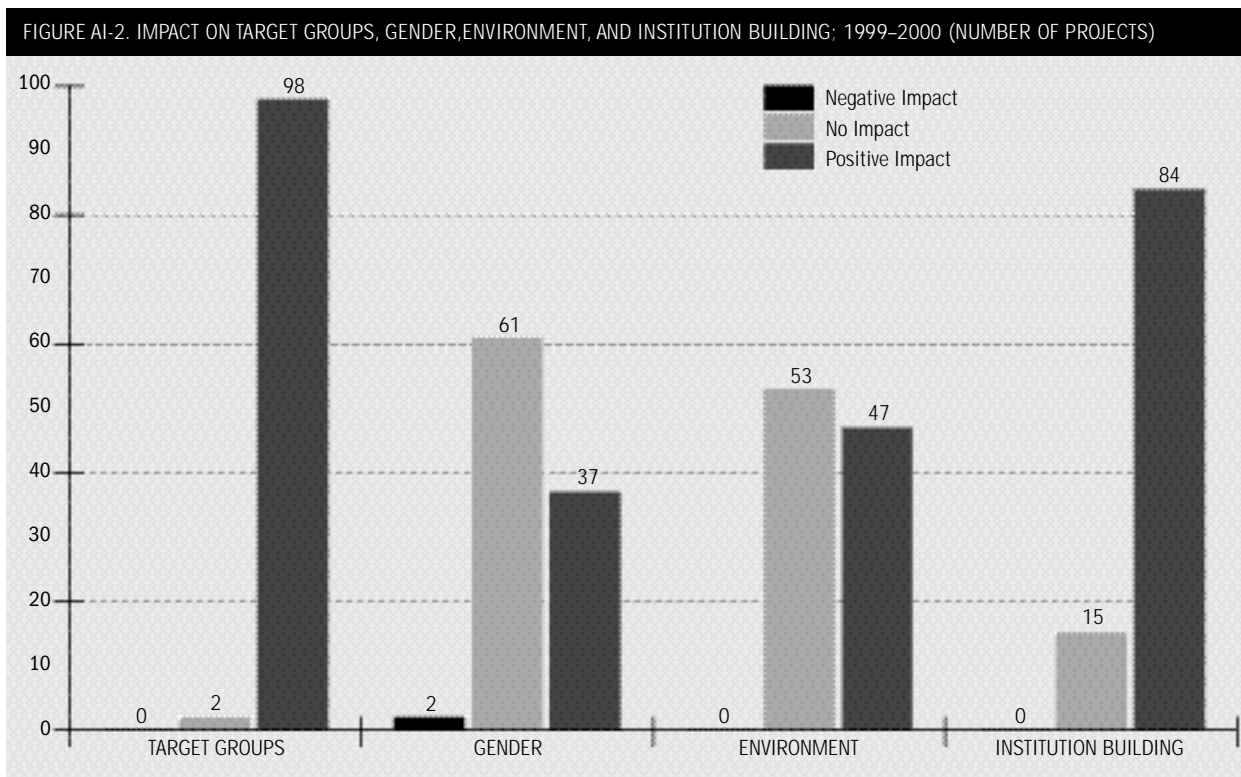


Distribution by year of evaluation, year of approval, and type of evaluation

Tables AI-3A and AI-3B present the types of evaluations by evaluation year and by approval year, respectively. Terminal and midterm evaluations form the majority of evaluations in both portfolios. Focusing on the change in the type of projects evaluated between 1999 and 2000, midterm and ex-post evaluations declined by 33 percent and 56 percent, respectively, but terminal evaluations increased slightly. The decline in midterm evaluations in particular raises some concern, because the last trend analysis highlighted the importance of increasing midterm evaluations. These evaluations are important because they can contribute to improvement of projects by drawing on and applying lessons learned while the projects are still in progress.

Distribution by region

Table AI-4 and Figure AI-1 present the distribution of evaluations by region over time. The largest number of evaluations took place in the Asia Pacific and



Africa regions, followed by Latin America and the Arab States.

Looking at the clusters of years used in this analysis, Africa leads in the number of projects evaluated for the 1987-1991 period, and Asia Pacific takes the lead thereafter.

Distribution by area of focus

The distribution of Primary Areas of Focus for 1999 and 2000 in Table AI-5 below indicates a declining trend in the number of projects being evaluated in two main focus areas: poverty and environment. Gender lags behind the other areas, as reflected in the last trend analysis and also in the table. This raises concern since poverty, the environment, and gender continue to be three of the six priority areas for UNDP.

FOCUS AREAS	1999	2000
Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Livelihoods	37	31
Promoting Gender Considerations	0	1
Promoting Environmental and Natural Resources Sustainability	33	14
Promoting Sound Governance	52	42
Other	1	2

Note: It is important to note that the total number of projects by area of focus per year do not tally with the totals in Table A-1 because of double counting: the same projects were allocated to different focus areas.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS⁶⁹

Capacity building: The extent to which a programme or project contributes to capacity development. In other words, the extent to which the project enables target groups to be self-reliant and makes it possible for government institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations to use positive experience with the programme or project to address broader development issues. Capacity building empowers people to realize their potential and assures ownership and sustainability of the process and ensuing development. It has four related components:

- Individual learning;
- The quality of the organization;
- The strength of the relations of the organization; and
- An enabling environment.

Capacity development: The process by which individuals, organizations, institutions, and societies develop their abilities individually and collectively to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives.

Development effectiveness: Development effectiveness reflects the extent to which an institution or intervention has brought about targeted change in a country or the life of the individual beneficiary. Development effectiveness is influenced by various factors, beginning with the quality of project design and ending with the relevance and sustainability of desired results.

Direct beneficiaries: Usually institutions or individuals that are the direct recipients of technical cooperation aimed at strengthening their capacity to undertake development tasks directed at specific target groups. In micro-level interventions the direct beneficiaries and the target groups are the same.

Effectiveness: The extent to which a project or programme has achieved its objectives or produced the desired outcome, independent of the costs that were needed for it. Assessing the effectiveness of a project or programme requires a clear definition of the immediate objectives of the intervention and of the indicators that are going to be used to measure them.

Efficiency: The extent to which financial costs have been minimized when projected outputs are produced. It requires an optimum combination of human, material, and natural resources during management of the process.

⁶⁹ Definitions come from *UNDP Results Framework. Technical Note (draft)*, December 1, 2000; Evaluation Office (2001), *Outcome Evaluation: how to plan and conduct one (draft)*; UNDP (1997) *A Handbook for Programme Managers. Results-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation*, ESP Handbook series; and SECIPI (1998), *Metodologia de la evaluacion de la Cooperacion Espagnola*, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Madrid (Espagna).

Evaluation: A time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance, and success of ongoing and completed programmes and projects of an organization, and to package the findings in an appropriate format.

Feedback: As a process, it consists of relevant information from monitoring and evaluation activities, the dissemination of that information to target users, and, most important, the use of the information as a basis for decision-making and the promotion of learning in an organization. Feedback as a product refers to information that is generated through monitoring and evaluation and transmitted to parties for whom it is relevant and useful. It may include findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned from experience.

Finding: Factual statement about the programme or project based on empirical evidence gathered through monitoring and evaluation activities.

Impact: The overall effect of an intervention. Impact goes beyond the achievement of outputs and immediate objectives and tries to capture the social, economic, environmental, and other developmental changes that have taken place as a consequence of the project or programme. As such, the concept of impact is the closest in essence to development effectiveness. Impact evaluations are concerned with both intended and unintended results and should also take into consideration how external factors have affected these results. When assessing the impact of a project, UNDP's evaluations concentrate on four dimensions:

- Impact on target groups: how have the standards of living of the intended key beneficiaries changed as a result of the project? Have they increased or decreased?
- Impact on gender: how has the project modified social relations between men and women? Has the project increased the capacities and opportunities of the latter group?
- Impact on the environment: are natural resources more efficiently used in the community as a result of the project? Has the implementation of the project harmed the environment in any way?
- Impact on the institutions: is the institutional structure of the target community stronger as a result of the project? Are property rights better defined? Have traditional institutions suffered?

Indicators: Observable signals of status or change that are intended to provide a credible means of verifying results (either quantitatively or qualitatively) in terms of outputs, immediate objectives, and also impact. Indicators should be defined in agreement with all stakeholders and need to be valid, practical, clear, and measurable.

Inputs: Human, financial, material, and natural resources that are used when undertaking different activities of a project or programme. It is important to quantify them correctly in order to determine the efficiency of the project.

Lesson learned: Learning from experience that is applicable to a generic situation rather than to a specific circumstance.

Monitoring: A continuing function that aims primarily to provide programme or project management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing programme or project with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of programme or project objectives.

National ownership: National ownership reflects the degree to which there is genuine host country commitment to a development initiative, strategy, programme, or policy framework. Some of the most prominent attributes of national ownership are the demonstrated level of government support (by means of public policy, senior level political directives and statements, and allocation of government resources); the breadth and depth of public participation; and the involvement of local institutions in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Objective: Purpose or goal representing the desired result that a programme or project seeks to achieve. A development objective is a long-term goal that a programme or project aims to achieve in synergy with other development interventions. An immediate objective is the short-term purpose of a programme or project.

Organisational effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which an organization has fulfilled the aims and objectives it has set for itself, as reflected in project and programme activity.

Outcomes: Current or intended changes in development conditions that UNDP interventions support. They describe a change in a development situation between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact. Its achievement requires the collective efforts of several partners and favorable contextual circumstances. Example: income increased, jobs created.

Outputs: Specific products and services that emerge from processing inputs through the various activities of the project. Outputs refer to the completion (rather than the conduct) of activities and are the type of results over which managers have a high degree of influence. Example: people trained, studies completed.

Overall achievement: Aggregate assessment of the level of success of the project. It is used in terminal and ex-post evaluations to offer an overview of the project, taking into consideration all its dimensions: effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Performance: The extent to which a programme or project is implemented in an effective, efficient, and timely manner.

Programme: A time-bound intervention that differs from a project in that it usually cuts across sectors, themes, or geographic areas, involves more institutions than a project; and may be supported by different funding resources.

Project: A time-bound intervention that consists of planned, related activities aimed at achieving defined objectives. Figure AII-1 reflects the main elements of the project cycle and its connection with development effectiveness.

Recommendation: Proposal for action to be taken in a specific circumstance, including the parties responsible for that action.

Relevance: The degree to which the objectives of a programme or project remain valid and pertinent as originally planned, or as subsequently modified owing to changing circumstances within the immediate context and external environment of that programme or project.

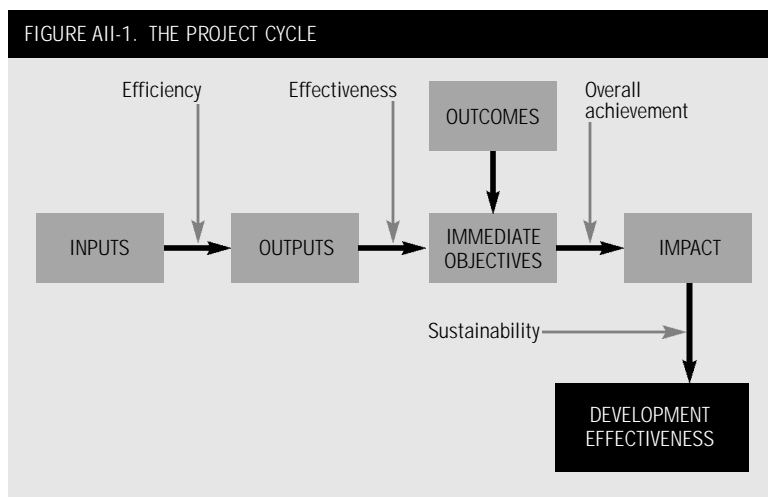
Results: A broad term used to refer to the effects of a programme or project. The terms “outputs,” “outcomes,” and “impact” describe more precisely the different types of results.

Stakeholders: Groups that have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a programme or project. Stakeholders include target groups, direct beneficiaries, those responsible for ensuring that the results are produced as planned, and those who are accountable for the resources provided to that programme or project.

Strategic evaluation: An evaluation of a particular issue where timing is especially important owing to the urgency of the issue, because it poses high risks to, and has generated widely conflicting views from, stakeholders. The evaluation aims to advance a deeper understanding of the issue, reduce the range of uncertainties associated with the different options for addressing it, and help reach an acceptable working agreement among the parties concerned.

Success: A favourable programme or project result that is assessed in terms of effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and contribution to capacity development.

Sustainability: The durability of programme or project results (in terms of outcomes and impact) after the termination of planned activities. Sustainability depends on five factors: government commitment, socioeconomic environment, management efficiency and effectiveness, suitability of the technology used for the country or region, and self-financing capacity of the project. It is important to distinguish between two types of sustainability:



- Static sustainability refers to the continuous flow of the same benefits that were set in motion by the completed programme or project to the same target groups; and
- Dynamic sustainability refers to the successful maintenance of the results of a programme or project when changes in the social and economic conditions take place.

Target groups: The main stakeholders of a programme or project who are expected to gain from the results of that programme or project. In other words, sectors of the population that a programme or project aims to reach in order to address their needs based on gender considerations, socioeconomic characteristics, or other factors.

Upstream assistance: Upstream assistance is assistance that aims at achieving effects at the earlier stages of policy and programme development. Related activities include institution building, advocacy, and policy/programme coordination. Upstream assistance by UNDP generally takes the form of policy advice; engagement of governments and other key stakeholders in dialogue on development objectives, methods, priorities, sustainability, and scope; and developing the capacity of key institutions to perform these functions and to provide substantive contributions to the policy-making process.

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