

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation of UNDG contribution to implementation of the PD differs from evaluations by developing countries and development partners in the diversity of both organizations and country contexts, and that the evaluation was carried out under common terms of reference with other agencies. This is both a challenge and an opportunity to further understand how the PD is implemented and the factors that affect UNDG member contributions.

The evaluation framework is based on two intersecting parameters (see Figure 1):

- The contextual factors in development partner countries that may determine the specific structures and processes that influence the implementation of the PD. These are set in place by government, civil society organizations and other national stakeholders.
- The UN activities that follow up the UNDG commitment to the PD that may be important causal factors for the emergence of such structures and processes. The key goal of the evaluation is to establish the link between the implementation of the PD and

FIGURE 1. PARAMETERS FOR EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT PARTNER COUNTRIES	STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PARIS DECLARATION	UNDG CONTRIBUTION
		
Macroeconomic variables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic performance ■ Aid dependence ■ Public expenditure 	Structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Formal working groups, task forces, etc. ■ Informal and ad hoc groups 	Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Changes in policy ■ Changes in organization ■ Changes in task allocation
Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public sector performance ■ Transparency and accountability ■ Public participation 	Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analytical tasks ■ Information sharing ■ Joint decision making 	Capacities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knowledge ■ Creativity ■ Learning ■ Individual – systemic
Civil society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Traditions of organization ■ Voice and influence ■ Networks and links 	Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Interconnectedness ■ Frequency and density ■ Division of labour 	Incentive systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Results orientation ■ Career development ■ Vertical and horizontal links

the activities of the UN system. These activities should be explained in terms of commitment, capacities and incentive systems.

The main challenge with this framework is the dynamic nature of the operating environment for development assistance. In the 1990s, this was characterized by declining aid and uneven development across regions, especially in agriculture and the rural sector, and increased havoc due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. At the same time, there were paradigmatic shift towards poverty reduction strategies and an enhanced emphasis on sustainability, hence the introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategy (Papers), or PRS(Ps), and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. Recently, there have been major global policy responses to these challenges, including: the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Monterrey Consensus of 2002 and the 2003 Rome Declaration on Harmonization. These all preceded the PD, which in turn, was followed and reinforced by the United Nations Reform.¹¹ These efforts have been associated with enhanced ownership of development initiatives by recipient countries and closer donor partnerships and coordination. Thus, many of the seeds for implementation of the PD had already been planted prior to March 2005.

One element of the evaluation framework has been recognizing that the foregoing policy responses have occurred hand-in-hand with a shift in decision making from donor headquarters to partner countries. Thus it was crucial that the evaluation give attention not only to what has occurred at UN organization headquarters, but also between headquarters and in-country presences where the intersection affecting the implementation of the PD takes place.

The evaluation matrix in Figure 2 was used to analyze UNDG members' commitment, capacities and incentives for implementing the PD. This analysis addressed the five dimensions of the PD: ownership, alignment, harmonization, results-based management and mutual accountability. Interactive effects between the two sets of parameters noted above were considered only where clear evidence was available. This matrix underlies the assessment presented in this report.

The evaluation methodology was built largely around the case-study method (see section 2.1 Sampling) and included the following elements:

- Assessment of PD-related actions by the participating UNDG entities and their relevance before and after the signing of the PD.¹² In the absence of baseline data

FIGURE 2. EVALUATION MATRIX

	COMMITMENT	CAPACITIES	INCENTIVES
1. Ownership			
2. Alignment			
3. Harmonization			
4. Results-based management			
5. Mutual accountability			

11 This refers to the UN Reform process, a major element of which is 'UN Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel', 9 November 2006.

and the wide variance in progress made towards the PD principles prior to the signature of the Declaration, the analysis assessed change in behaviour since March 2005 as recalled by the stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation. The analysis recognized that some of the PD dimensions were already principles of engagement of UNDG members prior to the PD.¹³

- Conduct of six country case studies to determine the UNDG role in fostering the PD principles. Both the headquarters and country case studies assessed four cross-cutting issues: gender equality, HIV/AIDS, rural development and capacity development.
- Gathering of systematic feedback from the participating UNDG members through staff at headquarters and in country, and country visits from in-country partners and stakeholders. Country visits ranged from three to four days and included interviews with: the UNCT and its members (including more UNDG agencies than those participating in the assessment); representatives of government, civil society and non-governmental organizations; and bilateral and multilateral donors. Interviews were semi-structured and tailored to different audiences. They included systematic recognition of the four cross-cutting issues listed in the previous bullet. Consistency of interviews was further ensured by the evaluation team's make-up, under which two persons of the three-member team participated in all visits to UNDG members and countries (except for the visit to Gabon). This close

overlap also ensured consistency in the analysis of content obtained through interviews and from other information.

- Gathering of systematic feedback through an electronic survey of the resident coordinators (RCs) who chair the UNCTs. This feedback centred on the three dimensions that were identified as contributors to development partner behaviour: commitment, capacities and incentives.
- Review of documents from the participating UN organizations in order to both confirm, and expand on, the stakeholder interviews.

Validation of interview findings by supporting documentation was sought throughout. The country case studies were used to validate findings from headquarters reviews for the participating UNDG members whenever possible.

2.1 SAMPLING

Given the limitations in time and scope of the evaluation, the assessment has used the case-study method¹⁴ extensively in order to add realism and in-depth examples to other information, and to bring together findings from a number of cases. Against this background, sampling was critical in the following areas:

- **Selection of participating UN organizations within the UNDG.** This process relied on self-selection. The UNDG Chair approached all members of the group. Five organizations (UNDP, IFAD, UNAIDS, UNECA and UNIFEM) not only expressed interest in

12 Ideally, the assessment would also have reviewed the changes introduced in non-PD signatory countries for an appreciation of the PD induced changes in 'with and without' cases. This was not feasible under the limited scope of the assessment except for the survey of RCs that allowed a breakdown into PD signatory and non-signatory countries.

13 An alternative approach would have consisted of an assessment of the alignment of UNDG members' work with the PD when the PD was signed. The present assessment, however, focused on the changes since Paris while identifying the progress that UNDG members had made prior to Paris.

14 United States General Accountings Office, 'Case Study Evaluations', Programme Evaluation and Methodology Division, GAO/PEMD-91-10.9.1, November 1990.

participation but also offered financial and in-kind support for the assessment. The resulting group of participants limits the generalizability of the findings, though the country case studies provide robust insight into the UNCTs, which included many more UNDG members. The focus on participating UNDG members was especially helpful when addressing the cross-cutting issues identified in the terms of reference. A special situation arose with respect to UNDG members that do not have permanent resident representatives (RRs) in partner countries. The assessment needed to cover such situations to the extent possible in the context both of headquarters and in-country studies.

- **Selection of countries for field visits and case studies.** UNDP, on behalf of the participating UNDG agencies, sought proposals from all UN resident coordinators for volunteers to participate in the assessment. Five countries volunteered: Cameroon, Gabon, Lao PDR, Mauritania and Ukraine. Ethiopia was added for a broader representation of resident and non-resident organizations' contribution to PD. The final selection includes markedly different types of countries: three of the countries are aid dependent (Ethiopia, Lao PDR and Mauritania), and three of the countries are middle income countries (Cameroon, Gabon and Ukraine), with Gabon and Ukraine being new PD signatory states.
- **Selection of interviewees during the country visits was done by the Country Office.** The interviewees included government representatives, bilateral and multilateral development partners and civil society organizations. The short timeframe of the visits determined the nature and scope of the interviewees. The selection of interviewees

for the participating UNDG entities was organized by the respective evaluation offices.

- **Selection of cross-cutting subjects.** The four cross-cutting areas address the concerns of the participating UN organizations.
- **Selection of RCs for the survey.** The evaluation surveyed 119 RCs from both signatory and non-signatory countries; 41 responded for a response rate of more than 34 percent.¹⁵

2.2 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Consistent with the evaluation methodology for data collection (semi-structured interviews, document reviews and a survey) the following instruments were used:

- List of principal interlocutors met during the interviews (Annex 3)
- Documents reviewed (Annex 4)
- Guidance questionnaires used for the semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders (Annex 5)
- The survey of RCs, including questions and resulting answers (Annex 6)

The complementarities between these instruments, the documents reviewed and the information obtained through interviews both at the participants' headquarters and in the six countries should be emphasized.

2.3 EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

A Management Group was set up for the assessment, composed of representatives of the evaluation offices of the participating five UN entities. The group was responsible for

15 The response rate from signatory countries RCs was 36 percent; from non-signatory countries it was 33 percent.

planning and managing the evaluation to ensure its independence and quality. It was chaired by UNDP, which provided one of its staff members as the Evaluation Task Manager to act as the interlocutor between the evaluation team and the Management Group to ensure a smooth process.

At the level of the participating UN organizations, their evaluation office served as the convenor of the meetings and provider of documents.

At the level of the country case studies, the RC was in charge of coordinating the visits.

The evaluation team consisted of three members listed in front of the report.¹⁶ The team's cooperative effort was strengthened by a week-long workshop and interviews, together with the Evaluation Task Manager, at UNDP headquarters.

2.4 LIMITATIONS

The evaluation faced a number of challenges in analyzing the progress made toward the implementation of the PD including the following:

- **A short implementation period.** The limited time duration of the PD (approximately two and a half years) did not allow for results-based evaluation, as recognized under the terms of reference for the First Phase Evaluation. As noted in footnote 7, one way to overcome this shortcoming would have been the introduction of the comparator group concept into the present assessment methodology to facilitate a comparison of results in countries that did and did not sign on to the PD.¹⁷

- **The absence of a common baseline on the different commitments spelled out in the PD.** While indicators of progress were attached to the PD, these are more focused on financial parameters than the broader development effectiveness dimension that the PD seeks to address. Moreover, the 12 indicators were specified for a later date (2010). However, the main constraint regarding a clear baseline arises from the dynamic nature of the development environment: Varying steps had already been taken under the different dimensions of the PD by both participating agencies and partner countries at the time the Declaration was signed. Thus there are significant issues regarding attributing implementation actions to the PD versus actions taken on the basis of earlier commitments.

- **The samples contain biases of self-selection and volunteering.** Due to the fact that the participating UNDG agencies and countries covered by the assessment volunteered, findings on the progress made under the PD tended to be more favourable than if this had been a random sampling. This limitation was already recognized in the framework Terms of Reference for the First Phase Evaluation of the PD.¹⁸ This point indicates the need for the qualitative approach used under the case method.

- **The short timeframe and the resources available for the evaluation.** The focus therefore is on how the limited information can be used to make observations across the sample groups selected in order to help informed and circumscribed decision making.

16 The initial leader was Kim Foss who was responsible for the inception report and visiting one country for preparing of a pilot country report.

17 A limited but insightful result on differences between signatory and non-signatory countries with regard to progress in PD implementation emerged from survey giving the respective RC perceptions.

18 'Framework Terms of Reference for the First Phase Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration', 25 April 2007, p 8.

