**EVALUATION OF**

# UNDP CONTRIBUTION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL TO DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE RESULTS

## COOPERATION

**United Nations Development Programme**

**UNDP**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# FOREWORD

Regional cooperation is becoming ever more important as countries work together on challenges that cannot be addressed by each alone and on regional public goods, including security, trade, environment and development. New forms of cooperation are taking place with the emergence of new regional and subregional groupings, some of which cut across traditional geographical and political categories.

UNDP's engagement with regional bodies and at the regional level has a long tradition dating almost from its establishment. The organization itself is structured along regional lines with five headquarters-based regional bureaux overseeing and supporting country offices in their geographical area and directly managing multiyear regional programmes. In the past decade UNDP has established a presence in all five regions through regional service centres that support country and regional programmes.

The entirety of UNDP work at the regional level has not been evaluated. At a time when countries are seeking quicker and more tangible results and exploring new modalities of development cooperation, this significant investment needs to be both justified and tapped fully for development. Assessing the regional dimension of UNDP work and contribution is thus timely.

This evaluation, conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office, looks at the regional work of UNDP and assesses its contributions to the achievement of the objectives set out in the UNDP strategic plan (2008-2013). The scope of the evaluation includes UNDP regional programmes and the relevant institutional arrangements, especially the work of the regional service centres. The evaluation examines UNDP contribution to development efforts in two broad areas: interventions that facilitate and strengthen cross-border initiatives on a range of

common issues such as natural resources management, climate change, trade and migration; and 'multi-country' interventions that provide direct and often simultaneous assistance, usually on common issues, to a number of programme countries within a region or subregion. The evaluation also examines UNDP contribution at the regional level to corporate results, specifically how UNDP used its regional programme and regional presence to strengthen its own capacity, particularly at the country level, to contribute to development results.

The evaluation concluded that UNDP regional programmes have made significant and long-standing development contributions by promoting cooperation among countries in building regional and national institutions as well as addressing cross-border and common challenges. The regional service centres have, in particular, provided a useful space to anchor regional activities and provide technical support to country offices.

But it also concludes that in all regions, the contribution to results has been affected by fragmentation of regional programmes, insufficient linkages with national programmes, and timeframes that have not taken into account the need for long-term capacity development. While consultation on regional programming with partner countries and organizations does take place, the absence of a systematic framework for gauging demand and identifying opportunities constrains innovation and relevance. UNDP has not been able to adapt its own programming strategies to effectively enable countries to share development solutions across regions.

Most importantly, UNDP has yet to develop an explicit, holistic and strategic business model that addresses critical capacity in country offices, the provision of supplementary technical support

to country offices, management of the regional programme, support to United Nations coordination at the regional level, and the grounding of corporate positioning in regional knowledge. As a result, the core recommendation of the evaluation is that the organization should develop a strategic corporate business model that covers global, regional and country levels.

The evaluation also recommends that UNDP should retain the system of regional service centres under the purview of the regional bureaux. Recommendations also cover the need to establish regionality criteria to help UNDP assess when a regional approach is appropriate; to strengthen consultation to ensure relevance to regional needs; to encourage cross-regional collaboration and use of regional knowledge corporately; and

to maximize the use of regular resources allocated for regional programmes for interventions that contribute directly to development results rather than for internal corporate results.

I hope that this evaluation will be useful for UNDP to strengthen its regional programming and institutional arrangements so as to contribute to both development and corporate results. I hope that it will help UNDP effectively support cooperation among countries in pursuit of their own human development goals.

Saraswathi Menon
Director, Evaluation Office

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**Boxes, Figures and Tables**

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| BCPR | Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery |
| BDP | Bureau for Development Policy |
| BOM | Bureau of Management |
| CARICOM | Caribbean Community and Common Market |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| EU | European Union |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| MYFF | Multi-Year Funding Framework |
| NEPAD | New Economic Partnership for African Development |
| PDR | People's Democratic Republic |
| RBA | Regional Bureau for Africa |
| RBAS | Regional Bureau for Arab States |
| RBAP | Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific |
| RBEC | Regional Bureau for Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States |
| RBLAC | Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| RCF | Regional Cooperation Framework |
| RDT | Regional Directors' Team |
| SURF | Sub-Regional Resource Facility |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |
| UNDG | United Nations Development Group |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The present evaluation of the work and contribution of the United Nations Development Programme at the regional level covers both UNDP regional programmes and the relevant UNDP institutional arrangements, especially the work of the regional service centres. The evaluation was part of the 2009-2010 programme of work of the UNDP Evaluation Office approved by the UNDP Executive Board and was conducted from February to October 2010. The report provides an historical context, with a focus on the period from 2000 to mid-2010.

In an ever-more interconnected and interdependent world, countries face challenges and opportunities many of which transcend national borders and are shared by others. New regional and subregional groupings have emerged and devised collective solutions to challenges. In addition to covering areas such as climate change, economic development, and trade and investment, regional entities are also engaged in a wide range of complex issues, such as peace, security and governance.

Since its inception, UNDP has responded to this changing environment and provided technical cooperation at the regional level. It has engaged in a variety of ways, including establishing long-lasting partnerships with regional organizations. UNDP has made contributions ranging from support to the secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to initiating the path-breaking Arab Human Development Reports.

UNDP is structured along regional lines with five regional bureaux managing multi-year regional programmes to contribute to development results. UNDP has also established a regional presence, most recently through regional service centres, to support corporate goals for providing technical advice to its 138 country offices, promoting knowledge management and facilitating coordination with other United Nations organizations at the regional level.

Assessing the regional dimension of the UNDP work and contribution is thus timely. The present evaluation, conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office, looks at UNDP regional work and assesses its contributions to development and corporate results. It provides findings, conclusions and recommendations for consideration by senior management and the Executive Board of UNDP.

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which UNDP regional programming and presence contributed to the achievement of the UNDP strategic objectives set out in the strategic plan 2008-2013. The scope of the evaluation includes UNDP regional programmes and the relevant institutional arrangements, especially the work of the regional service centres. More specifically, the evaluation covered UNDP efforts to directly contribute to both development and corporate results.

With respect to development results, UNDP sought to directly support national and regional development efforts in two broad areas: first, interventions that facilitate and strengthen cross-border initiatives on a range of issues relating, for instance, to natural resources management, climate change, trade or migration, interventions that often enable the development of regional initiatives or 'regional public goods' in a number of areas; secondly, interventions that provide direct and often simultaneous assistance, usually on common issues, to a number of programme countries within a region or subregion. These interventions, termed here as 'multi-country', contribute to national development results but are designed to be more effective than individual country efforts by adding a networking component to the intervention.

With respect to corporate results, UNDP sought to strengthen its own capacity to support regional and national development partners through a stronger regional presence. This was intended to indirectly contribute to development results by providing technical support to country offices, promoting practice architecture and knowledge management, supporting United Nations coordination and partnerships, and strengthening corporate strategic positioning.

A major challenge in conducting the evaluation concerned tracing causalities and establishing plausible contributions of UNDP at the regional level to the achievement of development results since results frameworks were weak. The poor quality of data on regional programmes available within the UNDP corporate enterprise resource planning system (Atlas) hampered the work of the evaluation. Measuring the efficiency of UNDP regional efforts has also proved to be a challenge. The inputs associated with the set-up and operations of the regional service centres could not be comprehensively collated over time. This information is not centrally available nor is it easily captured. Atlas was designed to track operational and financial activities at the country and global levels but not at the regional level. The information on human resources is inaccurately reflected in UNDP reports. This is in part due to staff in regional service centres being funded from a variety of sources such as the regional programme, global programme and other resources.

The evaluation methodology was designed to overcome the above challenges to the extent possible. The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative data but given the above-mentioned limitations the nature of the evaluation is predominantly qualitative. Data was collected using a combination of methods and from a variety of sources, allowing triangulation and validation of the evidence. Methods included: (a) structured and semi-structured interviews, including over 100 at headquarters; (b) structured survey, distributed to all country offices, with a response rate of 89 percent; (c) review of previous independent evaluations; and (d) document review.

The assessment of UNDP performance was made according to the following evaluation criteria: (a) relevance, which concerns the extent to which UNDP programming is consistent with national and regional priorities and development needs, is aligned to the UNDP mandate, and addresses the corporate needs of country offices and headquarters; (b) effectiveness, which concerns the extent to which UNDP contributes to development or corporate results; (c) sustainability, which refers to the likelihood of the benefits of regional cooperation to be continued over time; and (d) efficiency, which examines how inputs are converted into results.

## UNITED NATIONS AND UNDP RESPONSE TO REGIONAL COOPERATION

Successive resolutions of the General Assembly since 1946 reflect the recognition by Members of the United Nations of the importance of the regional dimension for economic and social development. The Economic and Social Council established the first two United Nations regional commissions as early as 1947. Over time, three additional regional commissions were established and as they evolved, their work expanded.

UNDP was established by the General Assembly in 1965 with the consolidation of the Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and began operations on 1 January 1966. The Consensus Resolution of 1970 created regional bureaux at headquarters to manage regional programmes and projects. In 1970 the UNDP Governing Council established the multi-year resource framework for UNDP programming with the use of indicative planning figures which were based on entitlement to a fixed allocation, explicitly providing for support to groups of countries on a subregional, regional, interregional and global basis in addition to individual countries. In 1971 the Governing Council determined a ratio of approximately 5:1 between country and intercountry resource targets.

Many United Nations development agencies have a regional presence. Currently, some 30 United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies work at the regional level. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has seven subregional offices. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) expanded the functions of existing country technical services teams in 2007, in order to establish regional and subregional offices, and to strengthen existing area offices. In all agencies except UNDP, the regional director is located in the region. Although the 2005 General Assembly resolution on the triennial comprehensive policy review requires United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to align regional technical support structures and regional coverage, this has not been achieved.

The Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/46 mandated the regional commissions to hold regular inter-agency meetings in order to improve coordination among United Nations organizations. Since 1999, regional commissions have convened meetings of the regional coordination mechanism to cover regional policy and programming issues. The regional directors teams, chaired by UNDP regional directors, were created in 2005 to support United Nations country teams through quality assurance of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), performance assessment of resident coordinators, and dispute resolution.

**REGIONAL PROGRAMMING**

In line with the increasing focus placed by the United Nations on regional approaches to development, UNDP was implementing programmes to promote regional cooperation as early as the 1960s. The Consensus Resolution of 1970 underlined that subregional, regional, interregional and global projects would be initiated at the request of at least two governments. These projects were identified through consultative mechanisms ensuring alignment with national priorities and ownership of these regional interventions.

The emphasis of the early UNDP regional programmes was regional integration. There were initiatives to promote the economic integration of the countries in Central America. Support was also provided to the ASEAN Secretariat since the early days of its existence and to the Secretariat of the Mekong River Commission. South-South cooperation has been a priority for UNDP since the early 1970s and has been pursued in all its programmes.

UNDP has fostered regional dialogue and learning on governance in electoral reform, anti-corruption, accountability and transparency, human rights for development and enhancing the role of the media. Examples include the PARAGON project in Asia and the Pacific, the Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network project in the Arab States and support to establishing the Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region.

Regional programmes have supported countries and regions to prevent and recover from armed conflicts and natural disasters. In the Pacific region, UNDP addressed security issues through capacity-building of law enforcement agencies. In Africa, the regional programme assisted the establishment of national commissions and training of border security for enhanced border control in the countries of the Economic Community of West African States.

UNDP regional programmes have targeted critical development challenges regarding the sustainable management of natural resources, with a special focus on water management. In the Arab States, the programme funded inter-governmental dialogue and subsequent technical work that have led to drafting the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework. The dialogue made future negotiations feasible and opened up opportunities for external funding of regional and subregional development projects in the Basin.

An example of UNDP contributions to regional public goods is the production of regional Human

Development Reports since 1994. These reports measure human progress and trigger action for change, through region-specific human development approaches to addressing deprivation and promoting well-being. To date, close to 40 regional human development reports have been issued.

Most of the UNDP regional projects are in fact subregional in nature. In Latin America and the Caribbean, regional programme resources are allocated to its subregions based on the Executive Board-approved percentage shares (approximately 40 percent to the Caribbean and the remaining to the Latin America subregion). UNDP has a specific partnership model in the Caribbean, implementing its core regional programme through two regional organizations, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community.

The regional programmes of UNDP since 2000 have been designed around UNDP focus areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy and crisis prevention and recovery. Recent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office of the regional programmes pointed out that the regional programmes were spread too thinly and should enhance their focus.

Since their origin, the multi-year intercountry programmes for each region were approved by the Governing Council and managed by regional bureaux, originally four, currently five. In 1997 UNDP replaced the intercountry programme with the regional cooperation framework (RCF), which in turn was replaced by the regional programme that continues to be approved by the Executive Board.

UNDP engagement at the regional level was managed until the 1990s by the headquarters' regional bureaux and the resident representatives, who served as principal project resident representatives, located in the region, to be responsible for project implementation, including coordination with other country offices and national and regional partners.

In the mid-1990s the indicative planning figure system of resource allocation was replaced with a three-tier target for resource assignments from the core resources (TRAC 1, 2 and 3) for country programmes combining the previous entitlement approach with performance criteria. However, for the regional and global programmes the entitlement approach was maintained. Current programming arrangements of UNDP approved by the Executive Board allocate 9 percent of the total of regular resources for country, regional and global programmes to regional programmes. Of the 9 percent, 90 percent is distributed among the five regional bureaux in proportion to the TRAC 1 allocation that the countries in a region receive. The remaining 10 percent is equally divided among the regional programmes of the Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States.

Total regional programming resources do not represent a significant share of UNDP programme expenditures globally, with regional programme expenditures accounting for 2.3 percent and 2.2 percent of total UNDP programming expenditures in 2008 and 2009, respectively. In terms of expenditure of regular resources, however, regional programme expenditures accounted for 6.3 percent and 5.9 percent in 2008 and 2009, respectively. Resource mobilization in UNDP regional programmes has not kept pace with UNDP as a whole.

The first and second multi-year funding framework (2000-2003 and 2004-2007, respectively) and the strategic plan (2008-2013) have continued to emphasize the importance of regional programmes. However, the cycles of the five regional programmes were not harmonized with each other or the corporate planning cycle. The current regional programmes are being extended or adjusted to end with the current strategic plan.

### REGIONAL PRESENCE

Two UNDP regional bureaux decided to decentralize substantive support and operational decision-making by establishing a regional presence. In Asia and the Pacific, sub-regional resource facilities (SURFs) were established first in Islamabad in 1996 and then in Bangkok and

were funded from the regional programme. Their purpose was to add value to the work of UNDP country offices by providing technical advice and by networking with experts in the region.

In Europe and the CIS a centre was established in Bratislava in the mid-1990s to address issues related to the establishment of a new bureau and country offices. UNDP had expanded its programme to the transition countries in the region and the Bratislava centre managed the programme in countries that had no resident offices. In addition, the centre managed all regional programmes.

By virtue of being located at the subregional level, the SURFs were expected to be in a better position to network with regional institutions and centres of excellence to identify and mobilize technical expertise with specific knowledge of the region. The structure was not meant to be another layer between the country office and UNDP headquarters.

The SURF system was established from the UNDP core administrative budget, regional bureau resources and extra budgetary resources. Drawing from the initial experience of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, corporate encouragement was given to other bureaux to develop strategies to establish SURFs, and their approaches differed.

In the initial phase, there was an intention to establish 17 SURFs to provide referrals and technical backstopping on a broad range of human development (multi-thematic) issues for sub-regional clients. Not all of them were established or continued. By July 2000, when the independent evaluation of the SURF system was conducted, there were nine SURFs operating in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Islamabad, Beijing, Suva, Beirut, Bratislava, Harare and Port of Spain.

In the early 2000s, UNDP introduced practice architecture to strengthen knowledge-sharing

to make UNDP a more effective development partner. The practice areas were to be coordinated and guided by central policy bureaux: the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) for poverty, environment and energy, democratic governance, and HIV/AIDS; and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) for crisis prevention and recovery. These bureaux were also made responsible for corporate knowledge management. The SURFs were a critical part of the practice and knowledge architecture. From 2001, technical expertise in the SURFs was funded from the Global Cooperation Framework managed by BDP and the SURFs no longer solely reported to the regional bureaux. BDP-funded policy specialists based in SURFs had dual reporting lines to the respective regional bureau and BDP. Tensions arose from mixed funding mechanisms and multiple lines of accountability.

The establishment of the SURFs coincided with the reduction of the capacity of country offices owing to budgetary constraints. In the early 2000s, all UNDP country offices faced a 15 percent cut in operational costs. As a result, requests to the SURFs ranged from policy advice at one end to support to country office operations at the other.

From the mid-2000s, UNDP developed regional service centres in each region, which built on the experience of the SURFs while adding new functions and management arrangements. These service centres combined technical support to country offices and networking and knowledge management within the practice architecture with a role in the management of the regional programmes. This transformation has been a work in progress and played out differently in the five regions as a result of existing variations in the SURF structure and management and in regional programming.

In Asia and the Pacific, the two well-established SURFs in Bangkok and Kathmandu (which had replaced the Islamabad office) were transformed to two regional service centres in Bangkok and Colombo. Their responsibilities were divided by practice and thematic areas, but this was

found to hamper cross-practice work and cross-fertilization within the region and detracted from cost-effective delivery of services. The Colombo regional service centre was eventually closed in June 2010 and all its units relocated to Bangkok. There is also a dedicated subregional centre for the Pacific in Fiji. Currently, the regional service centre in Asia is the only one that is located in the same city as the United Nations regional commission for the region (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).

The evolution of the Bratislava regional centre was marked by the merger of the SURF with the management of the regional programme, both of which had been co-located in Bratislava. The regional programme is implemented directly from the centre except for a few subregional projects implemented from the regional bureau in headquarters.

In Africa, building on the existing SURFs regional service centres in Johannesburg and Dakar were established in 2007. In Latin America, the Panama SURF was transformed to a regional service centre in Panama and a sub-centre in Port of Spain in 2008. Most United Nations agencies working in the region have an office in Panama although the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is located in Santiago, Chile. In the Arab States, a regional service centre was set up in Cairo following the closure of the SURF in Beirut in 2008. Since the Cairo regional service centre is relatively new, its staffing is not complete.

The regional service centres continued to work closely with headquarters-based policy and management bureaux. BDP supported the practice architecture in the regional service centres and Global Environment Facility (GEF) advisers were also integrated into regional service centres. BCPR has deployed crisis prevention and recovery teams of technical experts to the regional service centres. The Special Unit on South-South Cooperation has posted two advisers in Bangkok and Johannesburg.

The current strategic plan called for UNDP "to bring corporate and regional policy and advisory support closer to where they are needed on the ground, and to make those services more responsive to country programme needs" (see DP/2007/43Rev.1). In 2008, the Administrator sent an internal communication attaching a paper entitled 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres', which brought together existing experience and provided a framework for further reform. The document addressed the scope, standard functions, core structure, accountabilities and funding of regional service centres which were to support United Nations coordination results, development results, and management results.

The Administrator underlined that UNDP would remain a two-tier organization. The paper on functional alignment placed the regional service centre firmly within the regional bureau. The specific configuration of each centre would be determined by regional requirements and corporate agreements between the respective regional bureau and the relevant headquarters bureau. The application of the functional alignment document had different implications in different regions. The regional programmes of Asia and the Pacific and Europe and the CIS are solely managed by regional service centres. The regional programmes for Africa, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean are partly managed from headquarters.

The position of the head of regional service centres was upgraded to deputy regional director in 2008, thereby creating an additional deputy director position in each bureau. The regional service centre staff members now in principle report to the head of the regional service centre. Practice leaders, however, still remain subject to matrix management with dual reporting to BDP and the head of the regional service centre.

Staffing of regional service centres has grown considerably in the past three years. An analysis conducted in 2010 of regional service centre staffing between 2007 and 2009 states that there were 541 professional staff with fixed-term contracts in regional service centres at the end of 2009. No standard service tracker has been

implemented for all regional service centres. Although some have developed their own service trackers, they differ in functionality and the type of data that is captured.

The funding of the regional service centres has been tackled in different ways over this period. The funds for staffing have come from the UNDP administrative budget and global programme, regional programme and extra-budgetary resources. Different regions have had different combinations of funding. Cost recovery was introduced for the delivery of advisory services, including universal rates for mission costs. The functional alignment document called for a business model that recovered full cost for advisory services, but a market mechanism was not introduced.

## FINDINGS

### CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

**UNDP has addressed critical cross-border concerns and issues that are common to several countries.** UNDP has successfully advocated and supported regional or subregional solutions to common development challenges. Issues such as human trafficking and environmental challenges often span more than one country. In Central Asia, for instance, climate change has compounded problems of environmental degradation and has led to serious deterioration of ecosystems. In response, UNDP has played a central role in supporting the implementation of a Regional Environmental Action Plan that sought to foster a regional policy dialogue on the environment-poverty nexus and promote effective governance of transboundary natural resources.

**The UNDP regional approach has enabled countries to dialogue and cooperate in new areas.** Recent evaluations demonstrate that UNDP has been proactive in raising, at the regional level, development issues, such as corruption, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and human rights, which would have been difficult, for a range of country-specific reasons, to address in

the context of individual country programmes. A case in point is the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States (HARPAS), which raised awareness regarding the role of women in development and highlighted policies and strategies to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

**Through its long-term engagement at the country level, UNDP is able to contribute a unique perspective that makes it a desirable partner at the regional level.** The strong UNDP country presence and close collaboration with governments is an important enabling factor for designing and implementing regional activities. UNDP has been present for decades and has established close working relationships with governments, civil society and development partners. UNDP has continued to play a pivotal role in coordinating the work of the United Nations system at the country level and has been in a key position to raise the wide range of development issues that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The role played by the Regional Human Development Reports in addressing regional development challenges from a people-centred perspective was recognized and praised in most regions.

**By focusing on subregions within regional programmes, UNDP has enhanced its relevance.** One strategy to enhance the relevance of regionally based approaches has been to focus on specific subregions with shared concerns, e.g., the small island developing states of the Caribbean and the Pacific. In Europe and the CIS, smaller hubs are also emerging, such as the office established in Almaty with a focus on coordinating the water initiative in Central Asia. The existence of multi-country offices in the Caribbean and Pacific subregions—Barbados, Fiji and Samoa—with responsibilities for both country and regional programmes also added another approach.

**The UNDP current arrangements for regional programming are not conducive to responding to cross-regional cooperation.** Regional programmes have not adequately engaged with

new groupings of countries dealing with global issues from innovative South-South perspectives such as IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) or BRIC (Brazil, Russian Federation, India and China). South-South cooperation between different regions could potentially provide a useful transfer of lessons learned and increase effectiveness of support to the achievement of development results. While some initiatives supported the development of South-South knowledge exchanges, less attention was given to policy dialogue on, and follow-up to, major intergovernmental conferences with an emphasis on mainstreaming South-South cooperation.

**The relevance of UNDP regional programmes is constrained by inadequate consultation at the country level and ownership by country offices.** Early regional programmes appear to have been the result of extensive consultations with countries within given regions but later the issue of national ownership was given less priority. Following recommendations of the evaluations of previous RCFs, consultation with regional programme countries has improved in the formulation of regional programmes. Relevance is hampered by limited coordination and synergies between regional programmes and country programmes and a lack of understanding of both national governments and country offices of how to access or complement regional programmes.

**Criteria for when to use regional programming as the appropriate modality to address development issues have not been developed corporately.** While RBAP has introduced 'regionality criteria', other bureaux do not use a consistent set of criteria to determine what constitutes a regional approach *vis-à-vis* a nationally based approach. Certain issues, such as human rights, have been treated mainly by country offices on a national level but could have benefited from a regional approach. Conversely, some issues treated by regional programmes did not necessarily require a regional solution or approach. Intended results at the regional and national levels are constantly mixed and intertwined.

**There are many instances where UNDP regional programmes and projects have made significant contributions to regional and subregional cooperation on common issues.** UNDP has advocated for and actively supported regional, subregional or intercountry cooperation initiatives, many of which have yielded demonstrable results. UNDP has, for example, worked with the African Union in supporting the development of its strategic plan. An example of a UNDP contribution to the achievement of shared results includes the drafting of the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework in the Arab Region, which was supported through the financing of technical studies and the facilitation of the subsequent intergovernmental dialogue.

**The Regional Human Development Reports have contributed to an increased awareness of development issues with a people-centred perspective in the different regions.** For example, the evaluation of the Arab States RCF (2006-2007) found that the Arab Human Development Report played an important advocacy and awareness role in the region. Subregional HDRs also addressed two critical development challenges, namely, citizens' security in Central America and youth and employment in Mercosur (Common Market of the South). There is still room for improvement in how UNDP utilizes the conceptual framework developed by regional HDRs to strengthen the contributions of the regional programmes.

**Although UNDP has effectively used a regional approach to address common issues that countries face, the comparative advantage of addressing national issues through regional initiatives is often not obvious**. Many regional programmes and projects address issues that are of common concern to some or most programme countries within a given region. As a consequence, many development results defined at the regional level are very similar to those defined at the national level. There are numerous examples of how regional programmes and the support of regionally based policy advisers have contributed to the achievement of development results at

the national level. In many cases, however, it is not clear whether such support through regional delivery modalities and funding has an advantage compared with country-specific approaches, or is simply an additional mechanism through which support can be provided to the programme country.

**National ownership is critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of multi-country initiatives and has been weak in UNDP regional programmes.** UNDP efforts to assuring government ownership of regional projects vary significantly. While in some instances a lot of time and energy is put into consultation processes, in other cases the consultation is limited. For example, although natural disaster preparedness has been identified as a key issue in Europe and the CIS, the regional project carried out in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan failed to incorporate or to build upon existing disaster risk reduction efforts at the country level.

**UNDP regional work and presence has had a limited impact on strengthening South-South cooperation.** There are a few good examples of South-South cooperation within regional programmes. The regional programme on water governance in the Arab States contains a strong South-South cooperation element on transfer of expertise and capacity development. While there are initiatives with a proven track record of sustained support, contributions have mainly consisted in workshops, exchanges and networks created.

## CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE RESULTS

**In a situation where not all country offices can be strengthened, provision of technical support services from regional service centres has proved to be a relevant and appropriate option.** The regional support arrangement has several obvious advantages including geographical proximity to country offices, lower transport costs when compared to headquarters, same time zone and language. In the case of the longer-established Bratislava and Bangkok regional

service centres, the stream of benefits is significant. The regional advisers spend considerable time assisting country offices, either in quality assuring project documents, identifying regional experts, or supporting resource mobilization. The overall satisfaction of country offices with the technical support provided by the regional service centres is quite high. UNDP work was particularly recognized in the area of environment and sustainable development, which may be attributed to the prevalence of GEF-funded expertise at the regional level.

**While demand for services is increasing, there is limited capacity to respond to this need, even from regional service centres that are fully staffed.** Structural weaknesses arise from staff doing what they are not suited for, uneven distribution of work between advisers, high staff turnover, and consequently uneven quality of support. As an alternative, regional service centres have established rosters of regional consultants to respond to demands from countries, which have facilitated the exchange of technical expertise. In some cases the consultants have experience in working with UNDP and can bring the human development perspective, but that was more the exception than the rule. Good quality support services are in high demand, particularly from country offices with limited capacity. With an unmet demand and limited resources the situation is unsustainable.

**The establishment of regional service centres has contributed to an improvement in cross-practice collaboration although there are institutional constraints that limit cooperation across practice areas.** UNDP evaluations, at the country, regional and global levels, have continually highlighted the challenges faced in overcoming sector-specific biases. In order to overcome a tendency to work in practice silos, the regional service centres put in place measures that included the co-location of practice or thematic units, the development of joint workplans, the establishment of shared knowledge management units and joint missions to country offices. However, in many cases, poor

cross-practice collaboration can be attributed to weak institutional arrangements and incentives, and implementation mechanisms that do not facilitate interaction and coordination.

**Knowledge management has improved as a result of the regional work and presence of UNDP, but it does not take full advantage of interregional or corporate knowledge-sharing potential.** Regional service centres have become more proactive in their approach to collecting, codifying and sharing knowledge by testing the 'market' among various stakeholders. Despite efforts to generate, codify and disseminate knowledge, many country offices looked to the regional service centres to provide more information about what comprised best practice in other country offices, other regions, and other United Nations organizations. Knowledge management has increased within the regions but not in all cases among regions and with headquarters.

**Collaboration among members of the United Nations system takes place mainly at the regional project level, but not sufficiently at the UNDAF level.** A review of randomly selected UNDAFs across all five regions reveals that cross-border or multi-country issues are very rarely addressed. The UNDAF for Egypt, for example, addresses a cross-border issue only once, when relating to transboundary dialogue and regional cooperation on management of shared resources. Similarly, the UNDAF for the United Republic of Tanzania has only one citation of regional needs, with an objective to enhance national capacity to participate in regional trade negotiations.

**UNDP regional presence contributes to some extent to United Nations coordination at the level of the regional directors teams.** One of the explicit functions of the regional service centres is to support the regional directors teams. Having a deputy regional director heading the regional service centre at the same grade level with regional directors of other United Nations agencies facilitates sustained dialogue. United Nations working groups have been put in place in

the regions to address regional challenges such as social protection for the poor, disaster preparedness, violence against women, nutrition and food security or poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. The regional service centres provide support to the UNDAF process and the appraisal of resident coordinators. However, they have limited capacity to support the regional directors teams.

**Coordination is affected by the fact that the regional service centres are not always co-located with other United Nations agencies' regional service centres.** UNDP has not put in place mechanisms to address this situation, which is often beyond its control. Regional directors of other United Nations agencies were of the opinion that the presence of UNDP regional directors in New York limited the functioning of the regional directors teams which they chair. In the case of Asia and the Pacific this also contributed to the difficulties in resolving the overlaps and competition in the division of work between the regional directors teams and the regional coordination mechanism. In other regions coordination was reported to be more fluid and the support and collaboration received from UNDP deputy regional directors was recognized.

**UNDP has built partnerships in all regions.** A key component of the ASEAN-UNDP partnership has been assisting new member countries in their development and regional integration efforts with a goal of reducing the disparities between Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Viet Nam and the other ASEAN member countries. The partnership with the African Union in addressing transboundary problems requiring joint action has yielded positive results, such as increased ratification of human rights instruments by African States, the establishment of an observatory for women's rights and support to several governance programmes. The Regional Bureau for Arab States regional programme created partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, and academic and policy institutions.

**The potential for mobilizing resources at the regional level has not been fully tapped in some regions.** Overall, the ratio of UNDP regular to other resources is 1:6, whereas for the regional programmes in 2009 it ranged from 1:1 to 1:3. Resource mobilization has become even more imperative when regular resources are being used for staffing of regional service centres. There is significant scope for resource mobilization for regional cooperation. Funding of regional activities can be an interesting alternative for donors to stay engaged in a region. Despite the potential for a good match, such relationships have not systematically materialized in all regions.

**The UNDP growing regional presence and knowledge of development in the regions has not been leveraged to shape corporate positioning.** The regional service centres do not consistently prioritize the codification of lessons learned and knowledge from the regions for corporate policy use. In the absence of filtering the knowledge to headquarters, a need has risen for alternative arrangements for headquarters policy and strategy formulation. This limits the contribution that the regional service centres can make to interregional knowledge management and to corporate positioning.

## EFFICIENCY

**Effective management of the regional programmes is constrained by the lack of clarity over regional programming and inadequate information on resources and results.** The programming guidelines of UNDP, while very detailed for country programmes, are quite general when it comes to regional programmes. The current guidelines highlight differences with country programming and do not address the specificity of regional programming, including the consultation process, regionality criteria, management arrangements and review process. Results-oriented annual reports were introduced for regional programmes only relatively recently and are also divided among the various implementing units. Financial information concerning regional programmes is not easily obtainable from Atlas or other corporate sources.

**Some UNDP regional programmes have proved to be efficient conduits for delivering regional public goods and ensuring collaboration on cross-border and shared issues; however, lack of funding and coordination and poor implementation have lowered overall efficiency.** In a number of instances, the regional programme modality appears to have resulted in the efficient delivery of activities, particularly where economies of scale could be achieved within a subregion. Initiatives in both the Pacific and Central Asian subregions were able to provide technical backstopping services to widely dispersed project sites more efficiently than a country-specific approach would have permitted. The efficiency of regional programmes is often hampered by long delays in releasing funds to beneficiaries, spreading the portfolio thinly, and monitoring poorly.

**The regional service centres are at different developmental stages, with varying capacities and levels of efficiency.** There are challenges in measuring the cost-effectiveness of the regional service centres because there were no clear baselines or benchmarks established for regional level outputs. Operationally, shared services with regional service centres and UNDP country offices in several locations like Bangkok and Bratislava worked well and are now being tested in Dakar. The efficiency of the regional service centres is affected by combining the responsibilities of project management and advisory support as the skills required differ.

**Cost recovery for advisory services has not been efficiently implemented.** The functional alignment document states that a cost-recovery mechanism should be introduced for the services provided by the regional service centres but a market mechanism has not been uniformly introduced. The Bratislava regional service centre has demonstrated leadership in cost-recovery strategies. Even with proper tracking of demand, the allocation of the services may not be the most efficient and appropriate. A move towards cost recovery will need to establish a safety network for country offices with limited budgets.

**UNDP has not streamlined organization-wide functions and resources to adjust to the creation of regional service centres.** With some minor reallocations, UNDP has largely undertaken the process of establishing regional service centres without dismantling or reducing existing structures at headquarters, even though staffing in some units may have decreased. Consequently, there is some duplication of functions between the headquarters, regional service centres, and country offices. Additionally, country offices simultaneously request and solicit support from several units at headquarters. There is evidence that the division of labour between the regional bureaux and the policy units at headquarters that provide support to country offices has not been streamlined to avoid redundancy.

**There have been gaps in corporate guidance, including the functional alignment document, resulting in an inability to establish a core common set of principles for regional presence and corporate tools while allowing for adaptation to different regional contexts.** There have been different approaches to implementing institutional arrangements in the regions and among corporate bureaux with some notable successes. The delineation of oversight and support functions between the regional service centres and headquarters regional bureaux has not been the same in all regions. In the absence of clear guidance and cooperation, regional service centres have invested, and there is a danger that they will continue to invest, in the development of tools, such as the service trackers used by three of the regional service centres.

## CONCLUSIONS

**Conclusion 1: Despite modest resources, UNDP regional programmes have made significant and long-standing contributions to development results, promoting cooperation among countries in building regional and national institutions as well as addressing cross-border and common challenges.**

Regional programmes provide support to development on a wide range of issues across entire regions with resources that represented less than 7 percent of total UNDP regular resources in 2008-2009. UNDP has developed long-standing relations with key regional institutions, for example with ASEAN, the Caribbean Community, the League of Arab States and NEPAD. The provision of nearly 40 regional Human Development Reports is an area where they have significantly changed the development debate in key areas. Where countries have shared common problems, UNDP regional programmes have brought them together to learn from each other, often developing networks along the way. In such cases, the results from the regional approach are therefore greater than the sum of the results from separate national interventions.

**Conclusion 2: In all regions, the contribution to results has been affected by fragmentation of regional programmes, insufficient linkages with national programmes and time-frames that have not taken into account the need for long-term capacity development.**

Although there are many cases of success, interventions within regional programmes are often thinly spread, poorly coordinated, and occasionally duplicative. Planning cycles for the regional programmes are inevitably different from many country programmes, often making integration difficult. There are cases where regional programmes finance single-country interventions with no significance for other countries. Some multi-country projects have failed to provide adequate additionality to a group of national interventions in terms of networking and knowledge sharing. Results matrixes and monitoring were generally weak, often reflecting a lack of focus.

**Conclusion 3: While consultation on regional programming with partner countries and organizations does take place, the absence of a systematic framework for gauging demand and identifying opportunities constrains innovation and relevance.**

The level of consultation has been *ad hoc* and has varied in intensity and scope over time and also between regions. Regional programming tends to be supply driven, not always adapting UNDP corporate priorities to specific regional realities and challenges. Moreover, while there are good examples of broad consultative processes that include country offices, governments and intergovernmental organizations, consultation with civil society at the regional level has been more challenging. Poor consultation mechanisms reduce the relevance of what UNDP does and have led to missed opportunities for regional interventions, especially in innovative areas where only such broad consultation will reveal new needs and challenges.

**Conclusion 4: UNDP has not been able to adapt its own programming and partnership strategies to further facilitate identification of development solutions across regions.**

Today, countries are coming together across regions, but UNDP has continued to focus on supporting cooperation among countries in the geographical framework of UNDP regions. Knowledge at the regional level does not have a sufficient impact at the global level nor does it adequately transfer between UNDP-defined regions. Beyond knowledge management, opportunities have been missed for interregional programmatic interventions, addressing both common challenges and cross-border issues between neighbouring countries that happen to fall within different UNDP regions.

**Conclusion 5: The regional service centres provide a useful space to anchor regional activities and provide technical support to country offices.**

The centres are appropriately located within the regional bureaux and have often played an important role in supporting UNDP practice architecture and facilitating more holistic cross-practice approaches. There are also many advantages in supplying technical support to country offices from regional service centres

compared to headquarters, including proximity, language and time zone. Having the regional service centre led by a deputy regional director has increased the visibility of the organization, increased the potential for stronger relationships with United Nations partners and regional institutions, and provided better opportunities for strengthening UNDP positioning within a region. However, the investment in the establishment of the regional service centres has been high and has not been accompanied by a significant cost reduction at headquarters. UNDP has not streamlined organization-wide functions and resources to adjust to the creation of the regional service centres. At the same time, UNDP has been unable to draw sufficiently on regional knowledge and experiences for corporate positioning. There needs to be greater clarity and consistency with respect to management tools.

**Conclusion 6: UNDP has yet to develop an explicit, holistic and strategic business model that addresses critical capacity in country offices, the provision of supplementary technical support to country offices, management of the regional programme, support to United Nations coordination at the regional level, and rooting corporate positioning in regional knowledge.**

The UNDP approach to contributing to development and corporate results at the regional level needs to be set within the broader context of an organization-wide business model. The multiple sources of funding, including the use of programme resources from the global and regional programmes for internal capacity, and the continued duplication of functions at different organizational levels (regional bureaux, regional service centres, BDP, BCPR) reveal the lack of a transparent and sustainable corporate business model. Only through re-examining the UNDP fundamental principles and overall strategy in a rapidly changing global environment can UNDP identify the most appropriate role of regional level actions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: UNDP should establish 'regionality' criteria for regional programming in consultation with governments, building on existing good practice, to determine when a regional approach is appropriate.**

Regionality criteria would flow from an assessment of what works and what does not, when using a regional or subregional approach; the identification of when such an approach adds value; and an analysis of why and how countries cooperate. Discussion concerning the development of these criteria should be broad and involve partner governments in programme and donor countries. A clear understanding of when the regional approach should or should not be used could be key to UNDP positioning in resource-constrained situations.

**Recommendation 2: UNDP should establish a cost-effective framework for broader and deeper partnership that will facilitate systematic consultation to ensure UNDP continued relevance at the regional and interregional levels.**

The broad partnerships to be covered by the framework would include relevant regional organizations, national governments, civil society and the United Nations system, especially the regional commissions. The framework and subsequent consultations would ensure that UNDP is appropriately positioned in the regional space to add development value and able to identify opportunities for further regional and interregional cooperation.

**Recommendation 3: UNDP should foster a corporate culture that encourages interregional lesson learning and programmatic collaboration and that ensures the use of regionally grounded knowledge across the organization.**

UNDP-defined regions should not become silos with regard to programmes and knowledge sharing. Countries sharing common problems and cross-border issues are not always in the same region and in such cases UNDP needs to facilitate interregional cooperation. Interregional knowledge sharing needs to be promoted through the use of appropriate corporate incentives that would strengthen UNDP global knowledge management efforts. Incentives also need to be developed to promote the use of regional knowledge and experiences in UNDP corporate strategic planning, advocacy work and policy advice.

**Recommendation 4: To increase effectiveness and develop capacity, UNDP should base the management of regional programmes and projects in an appropriate location in the region or subregion.**

The five regional programmes should be managed by the regional service centre where they can benefit from regional dynamics and leverage regional capacity. Regional projects should be located close to the beneficiaries, where they will be able to better respond to changing contexts and better utilize regional capacities. Where possible, this should be with regional institutions with the host country resident representative serving as principal project representative. In cases where projects are located with the regional service centre, they should have dedicated project management capacity.

**Recommendation 5: UNDP should maximize the use of regular resources allocated for regional programmes for interventions that contribute directly to development results and minimize their use for internal corporate results.**

Regular resources should be used for adding direct development value by allocation to regional projects or to policy advice that makes a clear and demonstrable contribution to development results. The use of regular resources to finance support to the project management function of country offices should be minimized. Technical support to country offices to carry out these day-to-day functions should be financed from the management budget, possibly through

further decentralization of support capacity from headquarters to regional service centres and, where appropriate, from regional service centres to country offices.

**Recommendation 6: UNDP should retain the system of regional service centres under the purview of the regional bureaux.**

While the staffing composition and portfolio of activities and services may vary according to regional context and demands, efforts are required to standardize management tools and approaches, including those related to monitoring the contribution, relevance and efficiency of the regional service centre arrangement. The centres need to strengthen their networking and ensure that they benefit from, and contribute to, global knowledge. The regional service centres should be headed by at least a deputy regional director. The residual practice of having dual reporting lines, including for practice leaders, in regional service centres should cease. All staff should have a single reporting line within the regional service centre, while at the same time be accountable for linking and contributing to global knowledge.

**Recommendation 7: UNDP should develop a strategic corporate business model that covers global, regional and country levels; provides a sustainable and transparent allocation of funds and human resources; ensures that functions and services are not duplicated; and facilitates the location of capacity in the most appropriate place.**

UNDP should recognize that in order to strengthen the results from its regional work and presence, it cannot look only at regional programming and institutional arrangements. The business model needs to be holistic, treating the programming and institutional structures within the organization as a whole, and at all levels. It should recognize the interlinkages between country, regional and global programming and results. It should prioritize establishing critical country office capacity which should be identified and put in place. In developing the model for supplementary technical support to country offices, UNDP can draw on approaches that have worked including that of GEF which finances dedicated technical expertise in the region that also contributes to corporate initiatives. The model should enhance cross-practice and cross-regional approaches to human development and United Nations partnerships at the country and regional levels. The UNDP business model must also protect, and expand to the extent possible, the funding for regional programmes so that they can maintain and augment their contribution to development results and step up to emerging challenges.

# CHAPTER 1

# RATIONALE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This is the report of an evaluation of the work and contribution at the regional level of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It covers both UNDP regional programmes and the relevant UNDP institutional arrangements, especially the work of the regional service centres. The evaluation was part of the UNDP Evaluation Office's 2009-2010 programme of work approved by the UNDP Executive Board and was conducted from February 2010 to October 2010. The report provides a historical context with a focus on the period 2000 to mid-2010.

## 1.1 RATIONALE

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, more and more people are discovering common interests and shared aspirations for security and economic prosperity. Countries face varying challenges and opportunities, many of which transcend national borders and are shared by others. In the spirit of multilateralism, people and governments have come together to foster cooperation so that they can benefit from experiences and strengths in other countries.

Regional cooperation has immense potential. It can link country and regional priorities; provide effective solutions for cross-border and common challenges; promote shared visions, converging interests and public goods; facilitate dialogue; and establish mutual assurance, norms and order for regional sustainability and prosperity.

Notable progress has been made in regional cooperation: It has become more common and profound. New regional and subregional groupings have emerged and have devised regional solutions to challenges through collective means and actions. In addition to covering areas such as climate change, economic development, and trade and investment, regional entities are also engaged in a wide range of complex issues such as peace, security and governance. The leaders of the African Union have initiated the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) based on a common vision for African development. Its peer review and monitoring mechanism encourages African countries to address complex and often sensitive issues such as political, economic, and corporate governance and standards.

Since its inception, UNDP has responded to this changing environment and has provided technical cooperation at the regional level. It has engaged in a variety of ways including establishing long-lasting partnerships with regional organizations. UNDP has made contributions ranging from long-standing support to the Secretariat of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to initiating the groundbreaking Arab human development reports.

UNDP is structured along regional lines with five regional bureaux managing multi-year regional programmes to contribute to development results. UNDP has also established a regional presence—most recently through regional service centres—to support corporate goals, provide technical advice to its 138 country offices, promote knowledge management, and facilitate coordination with other United Nations organizations at the regional level.

Assessing the regional dimension of UNDP work and contribution is thus timely and necessary. This evaluation, conducted by the UNDP Evaluation Office, looks at the regional work of UNDP and assesses its contributions to development and corporate results. It provides

findings, conclusions and recommendations for consideration by senior management and the Executive Board of UNDP.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which UNDP regional programming and presence contributed to the achievement of UNDP strategic objectives set out in the UNDP strategic plan (2008-2013). The scope of the evaluation includes UNDP regional programmes and the relevant institutional arrangements, especially the work of the regional service centres. More specifically, the evaluation covered UNDP efforts to directly contribute to both development and corporate results.

With respect to development results, UNDP aimed to directly support national and regional development efforts in two broad areas. First, interventions that facilitate and strengthen cross-border initiatives on a range of common issues such as natural resources management, climate change, trade and migration. These interventions often enable the development of regional initiatives or 'regional public goods' in a number of areas, ranging from environment, to trade, to human rights and gender. Second, interventions that provide direct and often simultaneous assistance, usually on common issues, to a number of programme countries within a region or subregion. These interventions, termed here as 'multi-country', contribute to national development results but are designed to be more effective than individual country efforts through the addition of a networking and/or knowledge management component to the intervention.

With respect to corporate results, UNDP aimed to strengthen its own capacity to support regional and national development partners through a stronger regional presence. This was intended to indirectly contribute to development results through providing technical support to country offices, promoting practice architecture and knowledge management, supporting United Nations coordination and partnerships, and strengthening corporate strategic positioning.

The evaluation reviewed Governing Council/ Executive Board and UNDP internal policy and strategy documents, including the functional alignment document[1], which set parameters for working at the regional level. The evaluation took note of these and they were subsumed within the scope outlined above.

The period considered by the evaluation spans from 2000 to mid-2010. This time-frame corresponds to the introduction of the first multi-year funding framework (MYFF) of UNDP (2000-2003), the second MYFF (2004-2007), and the strategic plan (2008-2013). While reviewing the entire period between 2000 and 2010, the main thrust of the evaluation was on the current functioning of UNDP regional work and presence.

## 1.3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation had to consider the fact that UNDP regional work and presence are linked with almost every aspect of the organization. They are also affected by different approaches adopted in each region and the complexity of institutional arrangements across UNDP.

A major challenge concerned tracing causalities and establishing plausible contributions of UNDP work and presence at the regional level to the achievement of development results, since these linkages were not spelled out and the results frameworks were weakly specified at various levels. Sometimes the monitoring systems were inadequate. It was difficult to make judgements for UNDP as a whole because much of the data on staffing, budgets, and use of staff time was not easily available from any central databases and had to be compiled in consultation

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[1]  UNDP, 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres', attachment to internal communication from UNDP Administrator, February 2008.

with each regional bureau and, therefore, was not always comparable. The poor quality of data on regional programmes available within the UNDP corporate enterprise resource planning system (Atlas) also hampered the work of the evaluation.

Measuring the efficiency of UNDP regional efforts has also proved to be a challenge. Accurate estimates of allocated resources (regular and other) and management arrangements for regional programmes were difficult to gauge. The inputs (funds, human resources, time, etc.) associated with the set-up and operations of the regional service centres could not be comprehensively collated over time. Information on revenue expenditure and human resource management of the regional service centres and the regional and global programmes was scattered along different reporting lines. This information was not centrally available nor was it easily captured. The Atlas system was designed to track operational and financial activities at the country and global level but has not been fully configured to capture the complexity of initiatives undertaken at the regional level.

The information on human resources, currently the largest input to the regional service centre and regional programme, was inaccurately reflected in UNDP reports. This was in part due to staff in regional service centres being funded from a variety of sources, such as the regional programme, global programme and other resources. An internal review conducted in 2010 faced similar difficulties.[2] Rigorous monitoring and reporting mechanisms were lacking. Consequently, since the costs of regional programming and staffing were not properly disaggregated, it was not possible to present a review of the full picture.

The evaluation conducted more than 100 interviews with UNDP staff in headquarters, regional service centres, and country offices as well as representatives from government and other United Nations organizations. It proved more difficult to secure interviews with some regional organizations. UNDP senior management and staff were very forthcoming with information and time in responding to interviews and surveys and in providing comments and factual corrections to previous draft versions of the evaluation report.

The evaluation methodology was designed to overcome the above challenges to the extent possible. The evaluation used both qualitative and quantitative data but given the above-mentioned limitations the nature of the evaluation is predominantly qualitative. The evaluation was quality assured by an external advisory panel.

Data was collected from a variety of sources using a combination of methods, allowing triangulation and validation of the evidence. Methods included:

- **Structured and semi-structured interviews:** The evaluation team interviewed staff at all levels of the organization. The evaluation was scoped based on interviews at headquarters and two regional service centres. Subsequently the team visited all regional service centres and conducted interviews with the regional service centre directors and staff covering all the main functions of each centre, including practice areas and management support. Interviews were also conducted with UNDP senior management and staff in headquarters and a sample of country offices as well as government representatives, representatives of other United Nations organizations, staff from the regional commissions and representatives from regional institutions.

- **Survey:** A structured survey was distributed to all country offices and the response rate was very high (89 percent, with 122 country offices responding to the survey).[3] Country

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[2]  Analysis of regional service centre staffing 2007-2009, communication from Operations Support Group, October 2010.

[3]  Latin America and the Caribbean had 100 percent response rate, closely followed by Europe and the CIS with 96 percent. Asia and the Pacific and Africa had similar response rates (88 percent and 87 percent respectively) and Arab States had the lowest response rate with 72 percent.

office management was asked to discuss the questionnaire with programme managers who had collaborated with regional service centres and responses were mostly prepared collectively. The survey was very useful in triangulating the findings from the interviews and document review. The survey provided valuable insights into country offices' needs and views on the UNDP regional programme and support from the regional service centres. The questions related to satisfaction with and past/future contributions of the regional service centres to country needs generated the highest number of comments and examples showing this to be a topic of high interest.

- **Review of previous independent evaluations:** A meta-analysis of earlier evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office of the regional and global cooperation frameworks/ programmes was carried out. Although some evaluations were conducted some years ago, information was collected on the follow up to those evaluations as well as the implementation of their management responses.

- **Document review:** Documents reviewed included a sample of evaluations of regional projects and project documents, results oriented annual reports for regional bureaux and regional service centres, regional service centre documents such as the service trackers, and documents from headquarters (including policies, guidelines, and programming and operational reports, as well as facts concerning, staffing, budgets, etc.)

The assessment of how UNDP performed was made according to the following evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance** in this evaluation concerns the extent to which UNDP programming is consistent with national and regional priorities and development needs; the extent to which the interventions were aligned to the UNDP mandate to foster human development; and the extent to which UNDP

addresses the corporate needs of country offices and headquarters.

- **Effectiveness** in this evaluation concerns the extent to which UNDP contributes to its goals—be they development or corporate results—and the extent to which UNDP regional programmes and presence can be expected to contribute to the achievement of development results at national, regional and subregional levels.

- **Sustainability** refers to the likelihood of the benefits of regional cooperation continuing over time.

- **Efficiency** measures how resources or inputs are converted into results for the benefit of countries. This relates to a vast range of programming and institutional arrangements put in place by UNDP at the corporate and regional level for the achievement of development results.

Factors that have influenced UNDP performance were identified. Following broad consultation during the preparatory phase for this evaluation, a number of factors were proposed to be examined. Particular attention was paid to the UNDP institutional arrangements as a key factor contributing to the achievement of the above cited results.

The report is structured in five chapters. Following this chapter, chapter two describes the evolution of the United Nations and UNDP response to regional cooperation. Chapter three presents the main findings concerning the UNDP direct contribution to development results, largely through its regional programmes but also through regional advisory services to programme country partners. Chapter four presents the main findings concerning the contribution of regional presence and programmes to UNDP corporate results as well as an assessment of efficiency of the programming and institutional arrangements for UNDP regional work. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

# UNITED NATIONS AND UNDP RESPONSE TO REGIONAL COOPERATION

This chapter describes the legislative mandates for United Nations and UNDP engagement at the regional level and the varieties of organizational arrangements that have been established by UNDP and other United Nations organizations. The chapter also describes the evolution of UNDP arrangements for managing the regional programme and establishing service centres in each geographical region.

## 2.1 LEGISLATIVE MANDATE AND ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Successive resolutions of the General Assembly, the first of which dates back to 1946, reflect the early recognition by members of the United Nations of the importance of the regional dimension for economic and social development. The General Assembly resolution 44/211 in 1989 recognized the importance of regional, interregional and global cooperation for solving common problems.[4] In 1995, the General Assembly resolution 50/120 underlined the importance of promoting the national ownership of regional programmes.

The Economic and Social Council established the first two United Nations regional commissions as early as 1947. This was in order to "give effective aid to countries devastated by war."[5] Over time, three additional regional

commissions were established. As they evolved, their work expanded and each commission made specific contributions to regional cooperation. The Economic Commission for Europe, founded in 1947, served as a bridge between Eastern and Western Europe providing a forum where an exchange of ideas could take place during the cold war. The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, established the same year, was a platform for sharing successful development experience. The Economic Commission for Latin America, established in 1948, led the commissions in analytical work on development strategies and models. The Economic Commission for Africa, established in 1958, was an advocate for regional and subregional cooperation to promote self-reliant development in Africa as was reflected in the Lagos Plan of Action. The Economic Commission for Western Asia was established in 1973, recognizing the importance of regional cooperation to address development challenges that the countries of the region faced.[6]

The regional commissions[7] share key objectives aimed at fostering economic cooperation at the subregional and regional levels, promoting regional implementation of internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and contributing to addressing economic, social and environmental

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[4]    United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: Comprehensive Triennial Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System', A/RES/44/211, New York, December 1989.

[5]    United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the Economic and Social Council: Economic Commission for Europe', 36 (IV) document E/402, New York, March 1947; and 'Resolution Adopted by the Economic and Social Council: Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East', 37 (IV) document E/405, New York, March 1947.

[6]    Jolly, Richard, Emmerij, Louis, and Weiss, Thomas G., 'The Power of United Nations Ideas: Lessons From the First 60 Years', United Nations Intellectual History Project, New York, May 2005.

[7]    The names of these commissions are now United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe,  Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

issues among their member countries. In the area of climate change, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific promoted the development of pro-poor sustainable agricultural systems to respond to the challenges of food insecurity, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean supported national and regional capacity-building for the assessment of the impact of climate change with the involvement of several centres of excellence in the region. In the area of energy, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia promoted the formulation of policies to improve sustainable use and to foster the role of a regional network with a focus on the electricity and gas network. The Economic Commission for Africa supported the use of geographic information systems in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic through training, capacity-building and knowledge management activities.

UNDP was established by the General Assembly in 1965[8] with the consolidation of the Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance and began operations on 1 January 1966. The UNDP Governing Council approved a consensus that was submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly[9] and adopted in 1970. This resolution created regional bureaux at headquarters to manage regional programmes and projects. The resolution stated:

> "At the headquarters level, regional bureaux should be established to provide a direct link between the Administrator

and the UNDP Resident Representative in all matters concerning field activities. In order to streamline channels of communication and expedite the decision-making process the heads of these bureaux should have direct access to the Administrator. To achieve the required degree of effectiveness of management of the bureaux, they should be headed by persons with the high qualifications and rank commensurate with their important responsibilities."[10]

In the same decision, the Governing Council established the multi-year resource framework for UNDP programming, explicitly providing support to groups of countries on a subregional, regional, interregional and global basis in addition to individual countries. This decision established the use of indicative planning figures, which were based on entitlement to a fixed allocation based on a multi-year programme framework. In 1971, the Governing Council determined a ratio of approximately 5:1 between country and intercountry resource targets within the technical assistance programme.[11]

Since 1977[12], the General Assembly has given impetus to decentralization. This has meant decentralizing operational and programme activities to the regional commissions and giving them the means to exercise leadership within the system at the regional level.[13] Some United Nations development organizations have a strong presence in the regions. Many United Nations specialized organizations have been decentralized

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8   United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: Consolidation of the Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance in a United Nations Development Programme', A/RES/2029/XX, New York, November 1965.

9   Annex in the report of the 12th session of the UNDP Governing Council June 1970, and annexed to General Assembly Resolution A/RES/2688(XXV) on the Capacity of the United Nations Development System.

10  Ibid., para 57.

11  UNDP, 'Resources and Programme Costs for 1971', UNDP Governing Council 11th Session, Decision 71/9, New York, January 1971.

12  United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System', A/RES/32/197, New York, December 1977.

13  Ghazarbekian, Sahak, 'Decentralization of Organizations Within the UN System', Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, JIU/REP/93/2, 1993.

very early. The World Health Organization initiated decentralization in 1953.[14] The World Health Organization regional directors are appointed by the Board in agreement with the regional committee comprised by the ministers of health in each region. Currently, approximately 30 United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies work at the regional level.

With regard to the funds and programmes, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has seven regional offices covering the following subregions: the Americas and the Caribbean (Panama City), Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Geneva), East Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok), Eastern and Southern Africa (Nairobi), Middle East and North Africa (Amman), South Asia (Kathmandu), and West and Central Africa (Dakar). From the outset, the regional offices have been expected to serve three core functions: oversight and quality assurance of country programmes, including supervision of country representatives; technical and operations support to country offices as they design and implement programmes; and management of region-wide programmes that address cross-border and multi-country issues. In addition, they now support coordination and management of ongoing efforts around United Nations coherence at the regional level.

In the World Food Programme, decentralization was initiated in 1998 with two regional bureaux moved to Cairo and Managua as pilots. In 2001, four additional regional bureaux were moved to Bangkok, Dakar, Kampala and Yaoundé. Currently, the World Food Programme has six regional bureaux headed by regional directors in Johannesburg, Dakar, Cairo, Bangkok, Khartoum

and Panama. The United Nations Population Fund expanded the functions of existing country technical services teams in 2007 in order to establish regional and subregional offices and to strengthen existing area offices. Currently, there are five regional offices for: Africa (Johannesburg), Arab States (Cairo), Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok), Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama City), and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (New York). In addition, there are six subregional offices.

## 2.2 COORDINATION

In a 1989 resolution on the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system[15], the General Assembly stressed that coordination of development activities in the United Nations system should minimize the burden on recipient governments, maximize their complementarities and avoid duplication in order to increase their positive contribution. In 1997, as part of his reform agenda, the Secretary-General established the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), which gathers the United Nations organizations that play a role in development, in order to guide coordination, harmonization and alignment of United Nations development activities at the country level through the resident coordinator system. The UNDG is chaired by the administrator of UNDP.

At the regional level, the United Nations Economic and Social Council mandated the United Nations regional commissions hold regular inter-agency meetings in order to improve coordination among United Nations organizations.[16] Since 1999, regional commissions have convened meetings of the regional coordination

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[14] "Decentralization is considered in WHO [World Health Organization] to be an integral part of the organization's value system, a necessary condition for its world-wide effectiveness and a prized principle of public health administration. Decentralization enables WHO's Member States to identify themselves more closely with the organization, to adapt collectively-agreed policies and strategies to specific local conditions, and to feed back to WHO information from the ground that strengthens its constitutional functions." Ibid., p. 3.

[15] United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly', Resolution A/RES/44/211, New York, 22 December 1989.

[16] United Nations, 'Resolutions and Decisions of the Economic and Social Council: Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields', E/1998/46, New York, July 1998.

mechanism that cover regional policy and programming issues.[17] The experience and evolution of the regional coordination mechanisms varied among the regions.

With regard to UNDG coordination mechanisms at the regional level, regional directors' teams (RDTs)[18] were created in 2005 to provide coherent technical support to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams by assuring the quality of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), assessing the performance of resident coordinators, and providing advice and support on dispute resolution. Active RDT membership varies in different regions. The RDTs are chaired by UNDP regional directors who are based in New York.

In 2005, the General Assembly resolution on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review required United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to align regional technical support structures and regional coverage.[19] However, this has not been achieved. At present, there are some countries that fall in between different regions as defined by United Nations organizations.[20] The International Labour Organization covers most countries in Africa under one African region, while in UNDP the same countries are divided between the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS). The UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States covers 20 countries, while the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia covers only 13 of those countries and the rest fall within the Economic Commission for Africa. Arrangements were reached for the division of labour and complementarities between the respective RDTs and regional coordination mechanisms. However, such variations continue to create challenges in ensuring harmonization and coherence among United Nations organizations.

The 2005 General Assembly resolution on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review also called for the United Nations development system to give greater and more systematic consideration to the regional dimensions of development cooperation and to promote measures for more intensive inter-agency collaboration at the regional level, facilitating intercountry exchanges of experience and promoting both intraregional and interregional cooperation. The General Assembly in the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review more explicitly requested the United Nations development system strengthen collaboration with regional intergovernmental organizations and regional development banks. It requested the resident and non-resident organizations of the United Nations development system and the regional commissions strengthen cooperation and coordination at the regional level and at headquarters. This was to be achieved through closer cooperation within the resident coordinator system and in close consultation with governments of the countries concerned.[21]

## 2.3 FOCUS OF UNDP REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

In line with the increasing focus placed by the United Nations on regional approaches to development, UNDP was implementing programmes to promote regional cooperation as early as the 1960s. The emphasis of the early UNDP regional programmes was regional

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[17] United Nations Regional Commissions, 'System-wide Coherence at the Regional Level', New York, 1 April 2010; available online at <www.un.org/regionalcommissions/sysrcm.pdf>.

[18] Now called 'regional UNDG teams'.

[19] United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review', A/RES/59/250, p. 7, para 36, New York, 2005.

[20] For example, Somalia is covered by the Regional Bureau for Arab States, while it falls under the Eastern and Southern Africa region for UNICEF.

[21] United Nations, 'Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly: The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review', A/RES/62/208, New York, 2008.

integration. For example, there were initiatives to promote the economic integration of the countries in Central America. Support was also provided to the ASEAN Secretariat since the early days of its existence and to the Secretariat of the Mekong River Commission. South-South cooperation has been a priority for UNDP since the early 1970s and has been pursued in all its programmes, including regional programmes.

UNDP regional programmes are aimed at addressing critical regional issues through cross-border initiatives and activities aimed at addressing common problems among a number of countries. Poverty and growing inequalities have been identified as the paramount development challenges in most regional programmes. These challenges were addressed through upstream policy work including development of policy positions linked to human development, MDG advocacy, macroeconomic policies and trade policies. The Asia Pacific Regional Initiative on Trade, Economic Governance and Human Development and Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative strengthened national capacities to mainstream and analyse trade policy in national strategies for trade competitiveness and to encourage the incorporation of human development concerns in trade agreements in poor countries. In Cambodia, the trade issue has generated great interest because the topic is relevant to the country needs and the timing has been right. In Mongolia, the project has developed understanding of trade issues and led to the establishment of a trade negotiating unit in the country.[22]

In addressing poverty, there have also been some downstream activities working directly with communities, such as the provision of income-generating activities and microcredit schemes. As demonstrated in the Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, the regional programme provided institutional capacity development to microfinance institutions and to key regional and national civil society organizations. It has developed pro-poor public-private partnerships and piloted the rural banking initiative, Banking the Unbanked, where social equity was provided by UNDP through its Financial Literacy Education Training intervention and capital by ANZ Bank. This successful innovative pilot project was replicated in other countries, including Solomon Islands and Tonga.

UNDP has fostered regional dialogue and learning on governance in electoral reform, anti-corruption, accountability and transparency, human rights for development, and enhancing the role of the media. Examples include the Regional Governance Programme for Asia and the Pacific, the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network project in the Arab States, and support to establishing the Regional Centre for Public Administration Reform in Europe and the CIS.[23]

Regional programmes have supported a wide range of issues to help countries and regions prevent and recover from armed conflicts and natural disasters. In the Pacific, the UNDP regional programme responded to the need to address 'traditional' security issues, such as money laundering, through building capacity of police, customs, immigration, and border agencies to tackle organized crime and terrorism. In Africa, through the 'Declaration on the Moratorium of Import, Export, and Manufacture of Light Weapons' the regional programme helped establish national commissions and train border security for enhanced border control in the countries of the Economic Community of West African States. In Asia and the Pacific, UNDP coordinated the Mekong Ministerial Initiative against trafficking in the Greater Mekong subregion[24], based on a memorandum

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[22]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific 2002-2006', p. 13, New York, 2007.

[23]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Europe and the CIS 2006-2010', New York, 2010.

[24]  Referred to as COMMIT—Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

of understanding signed by the governments of China, Viet Nam, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, catalyzing anti-trafficking policies and activities both at subregional and national levels.

UNDP regional programmes have targeted critical development challenges regarding the sustainable management of natural resources, with a special focus on water management. In the Arab States, the programme funded intergovernmental dialogue and subsequent technical work that have led to drafting the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework. The dialogue made future negotiations feasible and opened up opportunities for external funding of regional and subregional development projects in the Basin. In North-East Asia, the Atmospheric Pollution Reduction project achieved consensus on transboundary pollution controls administered by a joint monitoring centre in China. The Environmental Toxicology project established an information network that monitors and shares regional practices in toxic-waste management across Mekong River Basin countries.

An example of UNDP contribution to regional public goods is the production of regional human development reports since 1994. The first one was issued for the Pacific region with the aim to encourage the debate over human development issues. The regional human development reports feed into and draw upon the data and analysis of the global human development report. As instruments for measuring human progress and triggering action for change, regional reports seek to promote regional partnerships for change and promote region-specific human development approaches to addressing issues such as human rights, poverty, education, economic reform, HIV/AIDS, deprivation and the impact of globalization, and to promoting wellbeing. Almost 40 regional human development reports have been issued. UNDP regional programmes continue to finance the production of these reports.

In the Arab States and Europe and the CIS, UNDP focused on a multi-country approach to address common issues in e-governance. The project Regional Cooperation for e-Leadership Capacities in the Western Balkans to Strengthen Good Governance and European Integration targeted awareness raising and capacity-building among national policy makers and e-governance practitioners about e-transparency, e-accountability, e-participation, and e-inclusion instruments to promote democratic governance practices.

Most of the UNDP regional projects are in fact subregional in nature. In Latin America and the Caribbean region, regional programme resources are allocated to its subregions based on the Executive Board approved percentage shares (approximately 40 percent to the Caribbean subregion and the remaining to the Latin America subregion). UNDP has a specific partnership model in the Caribbean, implementing its core regional programme through two regional organizations—the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)—and their respective agencies. The earlier evaluation of the programme found that this model "provides a logical partner for a regional programme and supports initiatives that are identified as critical to subregional development but are outside of the scope of country programmes. In addition, this model was recognized as a cost-effective way of providing highly effective upstream support to a large number of members, including those affected by regional policies but not eligible for country funding."[25]

The regional programmes of UNDP since 2000 have been designed around the UNDP corporate thematic areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy, and crisis prevention and recovery. However, the cycles of the regional programmes were not harmonized with each other or the corporate planning cycle (the first MYFF 2000-2003, the second MYFF

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[25]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean 2002-2006', New York, 2007.

2004-2007 and the strategic plan). The current regional programmes are being extended or adjusted to end with the current strategic plan.

In order to promote United Nations values, most regional programmes had identified gender equality, HIV/AIDS, and information and communication technology as important cross-cutting issues. While the contribution to poverty reduction has been an overarching goal of regional programmes, there were variations in their programme focus in order to respond to regional contexts and priorities. Most recent independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office of the regional programmes pointed out that the regional programmes were spread too thinly and should enhance their focus.

The Regional Cooperation Framework II (RCF II) (2006-2009) for the Arab States deepened the focus of the previous programme on equality, social inclusion and knowledge sharing with particular attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and water resources management. Youth continues to be a key cross-cutting theme. A new regional programme that responds to the recommendations of the evaluation was approved by the Executive Board in September 2009 for the period 2010-2013 and seeks to align more closely to the strategic plan. The RCF II for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2007) was originally designed around three themes: democratic governance for human development, sustainable development, and globalization and economic governance. While the main thrust of the programme remained, new programmatic activities related to HIV/AIDS and responses to the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2005 were added to the programme. Following the independent evaluation[26], the current programme (2008-2013) concentrates on fewer areas based on the regionality criteria developed by the regional bureau. It aims to place a greater emphasis on closer collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

other United Nations organizations and regional partners, and to work with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, ASEAN and the Pacific Island Forum on regional integration and collaboration.

The RCF II for Latin America and the Caribbean (2002-2007) focused on three thematic areas: poverty, inequality reduction, and achievement of MDGs with particular emphasis on strengthening statistical systems; the creation and consolidation of knowledge networks; and technical advisory services for the inclusion of international commitments into development plans and strategies. The programme also had a focus on energy and climate change through programmes in energy provision for the poor, climate change, biodiversity, and water and sanitation. Human development at the local level was identified as one of the key cross-cutting themes. Following the evaluation of the RCF II, the current programme (2008-2013) for Latin America and the Caribbean shifted its focus to fewer areas of intervention—concentrating on progress towards achieving the MDGs. Attention was paid to fostering inclusive participation, youth leadership, and enhancing conflict and disaster-risk reduction capabilities with particular attention to small islands.

The regional programme for Europe and the CIS (2006-2010) continued to focus on some of the areas developed under the RCF II, including poverty reduction and economic development through private-sector development and support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; pro-poor macroeconomic policies and structural reforms; democratic governance, particularly local governance and decentralization; justice and human rights; public administration reform and anti-corruption initiatives; and sustainable energy and environmental practices. A bridging programme has been approved for Europe and the CIS by the Executive Board for the period 2011-2013.

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[26] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific 2002-2006', New York, 2007.

In line with lessons learned from past programming and the evaluation, the current regional programme in Africa (2008-2013) limited its focus to four clearly defined programme areas to respond to Africa's development challenges from a regional perspective. These areas include: poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs; consolidating democratic and participatory governance; conflict prevention, peace building and recovery; and energy, environment and sustainable development.

## 2.4 MANAGEMENT OF UNDP REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

The consensus resolution of 1970[27] underlined that subregional, regional, interregional and global projects would be initiated at the request of at least two governments. UNDP regional projects were identified through consultative mechanisms ensuring alignment with national priorities and ownership of these regional interventions. In Asia, a mechanism called Meetings of Aid Coordinators was established to ensure systematic consultation on regional programme matters among government representatives of all countries in the region. A resident representative was assigned as a principal project resident representative, located in the region, to be responsible for project implementation, including coordination with other country offices and national and regional partners.

The multi-year intercountry programmes for each region were approved by the Governing Council and managed by the respective regional bureau. By the early 1990s, interregional and regional projects were implemented through the regional bureaux and specialized or thematic units of UNDP. Interregional programmes were applied to a grouping of countries from two or more regions and channelled advisory and other services to developing countries in key sectors in all regions. The main focus of regional programmes was to strengthen the capacity of national institutions. In 1997, UNDP replaced the intercountry programme with the RCF, which in turn was replaced by the regional programme that continues to be approved by the UNDP Executive Board.[28] Around the same time the allocation of resources that was based on indicative planning figures was replaced with a three-tier target for resource assignments from the core (TRAC) scheme for country programmes combining the previous entitlement approach with performance criteria. However, for the regional and global programme the entitlement approach was maintained and a fixed allocation of 9 percent was retained.[29]

The first MYFF[30] (2000-2003) stated that a regional perspective was important for UNDP and the approach would be channelled through knowledge networking and regional cooperation. The second MYFF (2004-2008) continued to emphasize the importance of regional programmes. The strategic plan (2008-2013) reaffirmed the regional dimension by systematically addressing it across all practice areas. The aims of regional programming are: to serve as a bridge between country and global initiatives; and to facilitate cooperation among countries sharing similar geographic, social and economic conditions.

Current programming arrangements of UNDP approved by the Executive Board highlight the continued importance of regional programming and allocate 9 percent of regular resources for country, regional and global programmes to regional programmes.[31] Of this 9 percent,

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[27] Annex in the report of the 12th session of the UNDP Governing Council June 1970, and annexed to General Assembly Resolution A/RES/2688(XXV) on the Capacity of the United Nations Development System.

[28] The UNDP Governing Board was renamed as the Executive Board in 1994.

[29] UNDP Executive Board, Decision 95/23, New York, 1995.

[30] The MYFF was the corporate strategic planning document at that time.

[31] UNDP, 'Mid-term Review of the Programming Arrangements 2008-2011', DP/2010/5.

90 percent is distributed among the five regional bureaux in proportion to the TRAC I allocation that the countries in the region receive. The remaining 10 percent is divided equally among the Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Europe and CIS regional programmes.[32]

## 2.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF UNDP REGIONAL CENTRES

### 2.5.1 SUB-REGIONAL RESOURCE FACILITIES

UNDP engagement at the regional level was managed until the 1990s by the headquarters' regional bureaux and the resident representatives who served as principal project resident representatives. Initiatives by two different regional bureaux marked a shift in this approach.

In Asia and the Pacific, sub-regional resource facilities (SURFs) were established in 1996, first in Islamabad and then Bangkok. They were funded from the regional programme and managed by the respective UNDP resident representative in the SURF locations with a SURF management board consisting of other resident representatives from the region. The purpose of these SURFs was exclusively to add value to the work of UNDP country offices by providing them with technical advice and by serving as nodes for networking with experts in the region. The Islamabad SURF focused on governance issues and the Bangkok SURF focused on poverty. At the same time the UNDP regional advisory team on environment was located in Kuala Lumpur and funded primarily from Global Environment Facility (GEF) resources.

In Europe and the CIS, a regional support centre was established in Bratislava in 1997 to address issues related to the establishment of a new bureau and country offices as a response to transition in the region. UNDP had expanded its programme to the transition countries in the region and the regional support centre managed the programme in countries that had no resident offices. In addition the centre managed all regional programmes.

Building on these experiences, in 1997 the UNDP senior management group (the Executive Committee) decided: "Since UNDP headquarters cannot provide effective technical backstopping or routine operations support to 132 country offices, UNDP should decentralize substantive support and operational decision making to clusters at the regional or subregional level in order to reap efficiency gains and attune its services to local conditions."[33] The purposes identified for the SURFs were expert referral for country offices, identification of best practices across regions and globally, technical backstopping for the country offices, and networking between UNDP staff and with UNDP development partners.[34]

Previously, the Bureau for Development Policy was the provider of technical backstopping. The Executive Committee agreed: "UNDP's Policy Bureau should relinquish its obligation to provide technical backstopping to all country offices. Instead [it] should concentrate on providing policy leadership and guidance on core substantive issues and overall development policy."[35] By virtue of being located at the subregional level, the SURFs were expected to be in a better position to network with regional institutions and centres of excellence to identify and mobilize technical expertise with specific knowledge of the region. This linkage with regional networks and institutions and the support to country level operations was the main objective of the SURFs. The SURF structure was not meant to be another layer between the country office and UNDP headquarters.

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[32] Communication from BOM, October 2010.

[33] UNDP Executive Committee Decision of 27 February 1997.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

The SURF system was established from UNDP core administrative budget, regional bureau resources and extra budgetary resources. Drawing from the initial experience of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) and the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS (RBEC), corporate encouragement was given to other bureaux to develop strategies and operational modalities to establish and manage SURFs. Their approaches differed to account for the variations in the institutional, technological and logistical infrastructures in their regions. Because of the substantial resources needed to establish SURFs, some regional bureaux adopted a phased approach.[36]

In the initial phase, there was an intention to establish 17 SURFs to provide referrals and technical backstopping on a broad range of human development (multi-thematic) issues for subregional clients. Not all of them were established or continued. By July 2000, when the independent evaluation of the SURF system was conducted[37], there were nine SURFs operating in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Islamabad, Beijing, Suva, Beirut, Bratislava, Harare and Port of Spain. The evolution of SURFs in each region is described below. The SURF system also included a global hub in BDP in New York, which provided coordination, networking and other support services to the SURF system.

In Europe and the CIS, a new SURF was attached to the regional support centre in Bratislava in 1999 to provide technical support to country offices, based on corporate experience, and underwent a period of rapid growth. In Asia and the Pacific, in addition to Islamabad and Bangkok, the North and Eastern Asia SURF began its operation in 1999 in Beijing to cover four countries—China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea—but did not continue. The Pacific SURF

was also established in 1999 in Suva and served three UNDP multi-country offices in the Pacific and by extension 15 programme countries.

The first SURFs in Africa were established in Addis Ababa and Harare in 1998. As the seat of the African Union, as well as the regional commission (the Economic Commission for Africa), Addis Ababa was a strategic location for the first SURF. In 2002, the Southern Africa SURF in Pretoria was developed out of initiatives of the eight UNDP country offices in the subregion to facilitate networking and knowledge sharing among these countries. The Southern Africa SURF placed considerable emphasis on working closely with Southern Africa Development Community programmes and supporting UNDP-funded regional projects. In 2004, the SURF in Johannesburg was formed through the amalgamation of the SURFs in Harare and Pretoria. Around the same time, the SURF in Dakar was established to cover West and Central Africa, following the closing of the SURF in Addis Ababa.

A Caribbean SURF was established in March 1999 in Port of Spain, originally serving four country offices covering 19 countries and territories in the Anglophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Oversight functions were provided by the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean's (RBLAC) Caribbean Oversight and Support Centre. The location of the SURF was determined by factors related to logistical and communication access to the programme countries. However, an early client survey found that the Port of Spain SURF was not covering all of the countries in the Latin America region due mainly to differences in language usage and geographical dispersion of programme countries. Therefore, an additional SURF was needed to cater to the rest of the region. In 2002, the Panama SURF was established to cover the Latin America subregion.

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36   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Review of the SURF System: Way Forward for Knowledge Management in UNDP', New York, 2000.

37   Ibid.

In the Arab States, the SURF was established in 1998 in Beirut to serve the entire region of 19 UNDP country offices. Initially, the SURF developed specialized expertise in governance, human development and programme management. The SURF was strategically located as it was co-located with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. However, the Beirut SURF experienced a number of challenges that limited its potential, specifically volatile security situations and vacancies.

In the early 2000s, UNDP introduced practice architecture as an essential element of a larger reform effort to strengthen its internal culture of systematic knowledge sharing on a global basis and to make UNDP a more effective development partner. This was intended to support a reorientation towards policy advisory services and capacity development and to address the organization's past ineffectiveness at synthesizing its knowledge and experience and applying it to support developing countries. At the headquarters level, the practice areas were to be coordinated and guided by central policy bureaux: BDP for poverty, environment and energy, democratic governance, and HIV/AIDS; and Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) for crisis prevention and recovery. These bureaux were also made responsible for corporate knowledge management. Communities of practice were established within each practice area. BDP, in particular, was to facilitate vertical policy alignment, with the second and third Global Cooperation Framework expected to "leverage the practice architecture at all levels of programming (global, regional and country) to strengthen UNDP support to countries in these practice areas."[38]

The SURFs were a critical part of the practice and knowledge architecture. With the approval of the second Global Cooperation Framework (2001-2003, extended to 2004), technical expertise in the SURFs would be funded from the Global Cooperation Frameworks.

By 2001, the SURFs no longer solely reported to the regional bureaux. BDP signed separate and different agreements with each regional bureau detailing the nature of the technical expertise that they provided and the management arrangements for the staff and SURF as a whole. The decision-making SURF boards included some or all resident representatives in the region as well as representatives of the respective regional bureau and BDP. BDP-funded policy specialists based in SURFs had dual reporting lines to the respective regional bureau and BDP. Tensions arose from mixed funding mechanisms and multiple lines of accountability.[39]

The establishment of the SURFs coincided with the reduction of the capacity of country offices due to budgetary constraints. In the early 2000s, all UNDP country offices faced a 15 percent cut in operational costs. This had important repercussions on the capacity of country offices, and as a result, the nature of demand from the SURFs varied from support to country office operations to policy advice that was on programmatic issues within the practice areas. In a survey undertaken in 2000, country offices highlighted the need for expert referral and expressed a wish for greater expertise in the SURFs in programme and project formulation, monitoring and evaluation, and subject matter specialization in thematic areas of UNDP.

## 2.5.2 REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRES

From the mid-2000s, UNDP developed regional service centres in each region that built on the experience of the SURFs while adding new functions and management arrangements. These service centres combined technical support to country offices and networking and knowledge management within the practice architecture with a role in the management of the regional programmes. This transformation has been a work in progress and played out differently in

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[38] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Global Cooperation Framework of UNDP', p. 72, New York, 2008.

[39] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Second Global Cooperation Framework of UNDP', New York, 2004.

the five regions as a result of existing variations in the SURF structure and management and in regional programming.

In Asia and the Pacific, the two well-established SURFs in Bangkok and Kathmandu (which replaced the earlier Islamabad office) were transformed to two regional service centres in Bangkok and Colombo. Their responsibilities were divided by practice and thematic areas. Bangkok was responsible for governance, environment and energy, crisis prevention and recovery, and management. Colombo was responsible for poverty and MDGs (including trade), HIV/AIDS, gender and knowledge services. The regional human development report unit was also based in Colombo. However, splitting along practice and thematic areas across two locations within Asia hampered cross-practice work and cross-fertilization within the broader Asia-based team and detracted from cost-effective delivery of services.[40] There was a dedicated subregional centre for the Pacific in Fiji where three units were located: MDG and poverty, democratic governance, and crisis prevention and recovery. The Pacific countries also had full access to the services and resources of the Bangkok and Colombo regional service centres.

In 2009, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific commissioned an external review of the functioning of the regional service centres, which made recommendations on consolidation of practice areas and the efficiency of having two service centres.[41] As a result, a process of reversing the division of practice areas between Bangkok and Colombo started and all units, except for the Regional Human Development Unit (to remain in Colombo in association with the Sri Lanka country office), were co-located to Bangkok. The Colombo regional service centre was eventually closed in June 2010 and all its units relocated to Bangkok. Currently, the regional service centre

in Asia is the only one that is located in the same city as the United Nations regional commission for the region (the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).

The evolution of the Bratislava regional centre was marked by the merger of the SURF with the management of the regional programme, both of which had been co-located in Bratislava. This merger resulted in the establishment of a single Advisory Board that includes the Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS; representatives of BDP, Bureau of Management (BOM) and BCPR; and four resident representatives. Most of the Bratislava regional centre units are funded from non-core resources. The regional programme is implemented directly from the regional service centre except for a few subregional projects implemented from the regional bureau in headquarters.

In Africa, building on the existing SURFs, regional service centres in Johannesburg and Dakar were established in 2007. Both regional service centres cover all practice areas. Initially, the regional programme was centrally managed by the regional bureau in headquarters with the exception of selected projects that were managed by country office or the regional service centres.

In Latin America, the Panama SURF was transformed to a regional service centre in Panama and a sub-centre in Port of Spain in 2008. The 2007 strategy for regionalization for the region recommended the Caribbean SURF be maintained and its autonomy preserved, but it should work in close coordination with the regional service centre in Panama. Most United Nations organizations have an office in Panama, although the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is located in Santiago, Chile. While the oversight function remains with the regional bureau in New York, the day-to-day

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40   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Global Cooperation Framework of UNDP', New York, 2008.

41   Hope, Nicholas, 'A Review of UNDP's Regional Centres in Asia and the Pacific: A Report Prepared for the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific', New York, 2009.

implementation of the regional programme for Latin America and the Caribbean has been delegated to the regional service centre. The regional service centre executes most of the regional projects, except for some that are executed by an associated implementing partner, such as CARICOM, the Central America Integration System, or by specific country offices, such as the regional project on political prospective scenarios executed by the UNDP country office in Bolivia.

In the Arab States, a regional service centre was set up in Cairo following the closure of the SURF in Beirut in 2008. Since the Cairo regional service centre is relatively new, its staffing is not complete. The regional service centre in Cairo hosts one staff from BCPR and the GEF adviser for the region operates from the Bratislava regional service centre.

The regional service centres continued to work closely with headquarters-based policy and management bureaux. BDP supported the practice architecture in the regional service centres. The GEF advisers were also integrated into regional service centres. BCPR has deployed certain headquarters (New York and Geneva[42]) capacities to the regions. In regional service centres, BCPR has crisis prevention and recovery teams comprised of technical experts. There are regional disaster reduction experts located in Bangkok, Cairo, Delhi, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Panama. Since there is no regional service centre in Delhi, BCPR staff are located in the UNDP country office and cover the South Asia subregion. The region-based staff coordinate regional level activities with BCPR headquarters and provide technical support to the country offices. While a small number of BCPR staff became closer to the countries by being in the regions, a large part of BCPR technical support continues to come from New York or Geneva.

To improve collaboration with other UNDP units, the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation has posted two advisers in the UNDP regional centres in Bangkok and Johannesburg to identify appropriate partners for regional initiatives.

### 2.5.3 FUNCTIONAL ALIGNMENT DOCUMENT

The strategic plan (2008-2013) called for UNDP "to bring corporate and regional policy and advisory support closer to where they are needed on the ground, and to make those services more responsive to country programme needs."[43] In 2008, the Administrator sent an internal communication attaching a paper on functional alignment of and implementation arrangements for regional service centres, which brought together existing experience and provided a framework for further reform of the institutional arrangements.[44]

In efforts to clarify the concept of the regional service centres and a number of implementation arrangements, the functional alignment document addressed the scope of regional service centre operations; the standard functions of regional service centres; the core structure, accountabilities and funding; and the reporting (Box 1).

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[42]  BCPR is currently undergoing a review of its institutional arrangements.

[43]  UNDP, 'Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development', UNDP Strategic Plan (2008-2011, extended to 2013), DP/2007/43.

[44]  UNDP, 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres', attachment to internal communication from UNDP Administrator, February 2008.

The Administrator emphasized that UNDP would remain a two-tier organization. The functional alignment document placed the regional service centre firmly within the regional bureau. The specific configuration of each centre would be determined by regional requirements and corporate agreements between the respective regional bureau and relevant headquarters' bureau. The application of the functional alignment document had different implications in different regions.

The functional alignment document stated that while management of support services could be delegated to the regional service centres, responsibility for the regional bureaux oversight and quality control functions would remain with the regional directors and their teams in headquarters. The position of the head of regional service centres was upgraded to deputy regional director in 2008, thereby creating an additional deputy director position in each bureau. The regional service centre staff members now report to the head of the regional service centre, in principle. Practice leaders, however, still remain subject to matrix management with dual reporting to BDP and the head of the regional service centre.

The regional service centre was intended to support United Nations coordination results, development results, and management results (see Box 1). Support to coordination was to be provided through support to the RDT. But the bulk of work of the regional service centre was to be in the area of development results through the provision of advisory services and management of the regional programme.

In principle, the functional alignment document promotes the flexible approach of UNDP with regard to the implementation and functional development of regional programmes. It states: "with respect to regional programme implementation, the functions of the regional service centres would be determined by the needs of each region."[45] The regional programmes of Asia and the Pacific and Europe and the CIS are solely managed by regional service centres. The regional programmes for Africa, Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean are partly managed from headquarters.

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45   Ibid.

## 2.6 RESOURCES FOR REGIONAL PROGRAMMES AND REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRES

### 2.6.1 REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

Total regional programming resources do not represent a significant share of UNDP programme expenditures globally, with regional programme expenditures accounting for 2.3 percent and 2.2 percent of total UNDP programming expenditures in 2008 and 2009 respectively. In terms of expenditure of regular resources, however, regional programme expenditures accounted for 6.3 percent and 5.9 percent in 2008 and 2009 respectively (Table 1). Resource mobilization in UNDP regional programmes has not kept pace with UNDP as a whole.

**Table 1. Regional Programme Expenditure by Regular and Other Resources, 2005-2009[46]**

| REGION | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Expenditure (US$, thousands) | % | Expenditure (US$, thousands) | % | Expenditure (US$, thousands) | % | Expenditure (US$, thousands) | % | Expenditure (US$, thousands) | % |
| **Regional Bureau Africa** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 14,669 | 64.16 | 13,387 | 55.56 | 18,762 | 56.31 | 11,371 | 49.61 | 10,288 | 56.09 |
| Other Resources | 8,193 | 35.84 | 10,707 | 44.44 | 14,559 | 43.69 | 11,551 | 50.39 | 8,054 | 43.91 |
| **Total** | 22,862 | 100.00 | 24,094 | 100.00 | 33,321 | 100.00 | 22,922 | 100.00 | 18,342 | 100.00 |
| **Regional Bureau Asia and the Pacific** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 20,906 | 92.82 | 14,288 | 61.66 | 14,510 | 64.91 | 13,481 | 60.26 | 12,496 | 58.52 |
| Other Resources | 1,618 | 7.18 | 8,883 | 38.34 | 7,844 | 35.09 | 8,889 | 39.74 | 8,857 | 41.48 |
| **Total** | 22,524 | 100.00 | 23,171 | 100.00 | 22,354 | 100.00 | 22,370 | 100.00 | 21,353 | 100.00 |
| **Regional Bureau Arab States** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 7,590 | 65.01 | 3,541 | 40.59 | 2,981 | 28.93 | 4,655 | 33.83 | 3,955 | 40.46 |
| Other Resources | 4,086 | 34.99 | 5,182 | 59.41 | 7,322 | 71.07 | 9,105 | 66.17 | 5,819 | 59.54 |
| **Total** | 11,676 | 100.00 | 8,723 | 100.00 | 10,303 | 100.00 | 13,760 | 100.00 | 9,774 | 100.00 |
| **Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 6,868 | 42.91 | 4,335 | 22.47 | 6,158 | 30.77 | 5,757 | 40.29 | 4,538 | 32.84 |
| Other Resources | 9,137 | 57.09 | 14,955 | 77.53 | 13,856 | 69.23 | 9,638 | 59.71 | 9,602 | 67.16 |
| **Total** | 16,005 | 100.00 | 19,290 | 100.00 | 20,014 | 100.00 | 15,395 | 100.00 | 14,140 | 100.00 |

(cont'd) ▶

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[46] Communication from BOM, October 2010.

| REGION | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Expendi-ture (US$, thousands) | % | Expendi-ture (US$, thousands) | % | Expendi-ture (US$, thousands) | % | Expendi-ture (US$, thousands) | % | Expendi-ture (US$, thousands) | % |
| **Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 2,785 | 32.88 | 2,773 | 27.82 | 2,868 | 24.25 | 3,646 | 26.80 | 6,525 | 46.15 |
| Other Resources | 5,684 | 67.12 | 7,194 | 72.18 | 8,960 | 75.75 | 15,522 | 73.20 | 18,447 | 53.85 |
| **Total** | 8,469 | 100.00 | 9,967 | 100.00 | 11,828 | 100.00 | 19,168 | 100.00 | 24,972 | 100.00 |
| **TOTAL REGIONAL PROGRAMMES** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 52,818 | 64.78 | 38,324 | 44.96 | 45,279 | 46.29 | 38,910 | 41.56 | 37,802 | 42.68 |
| Other Resources | 28,718 | 35.22 | 46,921 | 55.04 | 52,541 | 53.71 | 54,705 | 58.44 | 50,779 | 57.32 |
| **Total** | 81,536 | 100.00 | 85,245 | 100.00 | 97,820 | 100.00 | 93,615 | 100.00 | 88,581 | 100.00 |
| **TOTAL UNDP** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | 518,300 | 14.20 | 552,900 | 13.18 | 560,400 | 15.32 | 617,400 | 14.91 | 635,400 | 15.47 |
| Other Resources | 3,125,000 | 85.80 | 3,638,000 | 86.82 | 3,093,000 | 84.68 | 3,522,938 | 85.09 | 3,472,428 | 84.53 |
| **Total** | 3,643,300 | 100.00 | 4,190,900 | 100.00 | 3,653,400 | 100.00 | 4,107,828 | 100.00 | 4,140,338 | 100.00 |
| **ALL REGIONAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UNDP EXPENDITURES** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular Resources | | 10.2% | | 6.9% | | 8.1% | | 6.3% | | 5.9% |
| Other Resources | | 0.9% | | 1.3% | | 1.7% | | 1.6% | | 1.5% |
| **Total** | | 2.2% | | 2.0% | | 2.7% | | 2.3% | | 2.2% |

The variety of regional approaches to management of the regional programmes can be illustrated through examination of the relative expenditure through headquarters, regional centres and country offices. Figure 1 shows the trends in management responsibility, clearly indicating a move towards more regional centre management of the programmes, although in the case of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS programmes this has been the situation from the start.

**Figure 1.** Relative Regional Programme Expenditure in Each Regional Bureau by Headquarters, Regional Centre and Country Offices, 2004-2010[47]



**Regional Bureau for Africa**
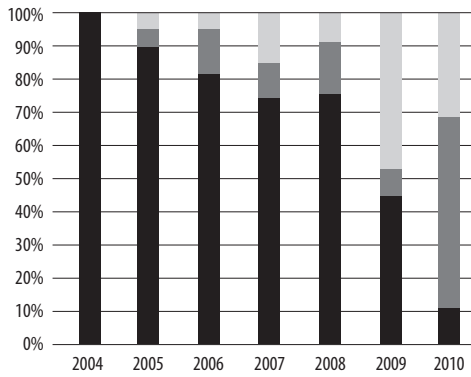
**Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific**
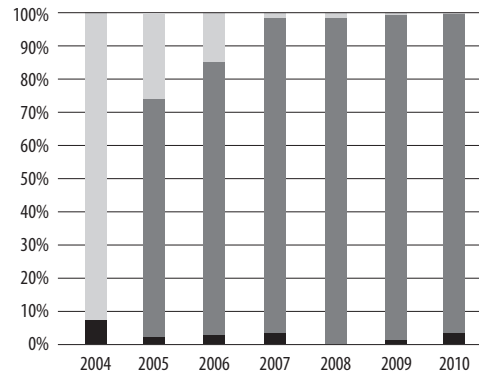
**Regional Bureau for Arab States**
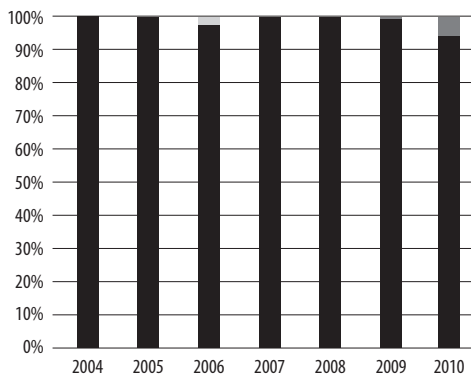
**Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS**

**Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean**

Legend:
- Country office
- Regional service centre
- Headquarters

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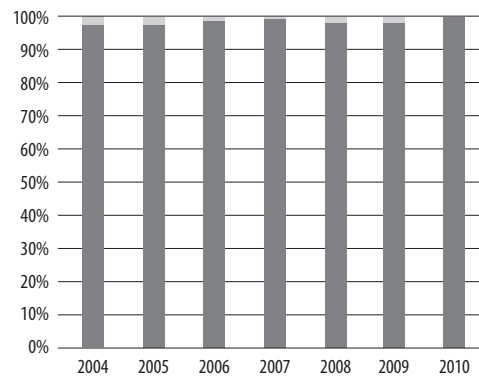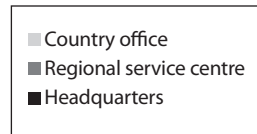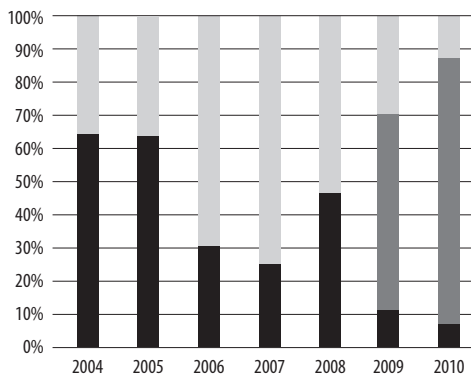
47    Data from the UNDP enterprise resource management system (Atlas), October 2010.

## 2.6.2 REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRES

The funding of SURFs and later the regional service centres has been tackled in different ways. The funds for staffing have come from the UNDP administrative budget and global programme, regional programme and extra budgetary resources. Different regions have had different combinations of funding, for instance Bratislava has been able to draw on extra budgetary resources. Cost recovery was introduced for the delivery of advisory services including universal rates for mission costs. The functional alignment document called for a business model that recovered full cost for advisory services from the client. However despite attempts, a market mechanism was never fully introduced.

In line with the corporate practice architecture, the practice management structure at the regional service centre level is composed of a dedicated practice leader for each practice/thematic area (funded through the global programme), a knowledge management team leader (funded through the global programme), and a number of technical policy and programme advisers and specialists (funded through the regional programme and other sources). The practice leader coordinates the regional and community of practice with the global practice, regardless of funding source, to promote consistency and coherence within the practice. To address inefficiencies in the previous matrix management and reporting system, with the exception of the practice leaders who continue to report to the regional bureau as well as BDP (as the manager of global programme resources), all staff located in the regional service centres now report to the regional bureau.

Staffing of regional service centres has grown considerably in the past three years. An analysis conducted in 2010[48] of regional service centre staffing between 2007 and 2009 states that there were 541 professionals with fixed-term contracts in regional service centres at the end of 2009 (Table 2).

| REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRE | STAFF* | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bangkok** | RSC staff functions | 87 | 89 | 96 |
| | Co-located functions** | 9 | 11 | 16 |
| | **Total** | 96 | 100 | 112 |
| **Colombo** | RSC staff functions | 29 | 30 | 16 |
| | Co-located functions | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | **Total** | 31 | 31 | 16 |
| **Pacific** | RSC staff functions | 18 | 22 | 18 |
| | Co-located functions | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | **Total** | 20 | 24 | 20 |
| **Bratislava** | RSC staff functions | 92 | 100 | 107 |
| | Co-located functions | 12 | 16 | 16 |
| | **Total** | 104 | 116 | 123 |
| **Cairo** | RSC staff functions | 5 | 16 | 26 |
| | Co-located functions | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | **Total** | 5 | 16 | 29 |

**Table 2.** UNDP Regional Service Centre Staffing, 2007-2009

RSC indicates regional service centre.

(cont'd) ▶

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[48]   Analysis of regional service centre staffing 2007-2009, communication from Operations Support Group, October 2010.

| REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRE | STAFF* | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Panama** | RSC staff functions | 0 | 56 | 63 |
| | Co-located functions | 0 | 4 | 9 |
| | **Total** | 0 | 60 | 72 |
| **Dakar** | RSC staff functions | 22 | 25 | 75 |
| | Co-located functions | 0 | 6 | 12 |
| | **Total** | 22 | 31 | 87 |
| **Johannesburg** | RSC staff functions | 40 | 40 | 73 |
| | Co-located functions | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| | **Total** | 45 | 46 | 82 |
| **TOTAL** | | **323** | **424** | **541** |

\* Only fixed-term staff

\*\* Includes staff of the United Nations Capital Development Fund, United Nations Office for Project Services contract holders, UNDP audit, Department of Safety and Security, etc.

*Source:* Analysis of regional service centre staffing 2007-2009, communication from Operations Support Group, October 2010.

It was difficult to establish exactly how many staff members provide advisory services to country offices and how many are responsible for the implementation of regional programmes. In many cases, they work in teams that are responsible for both. The analysis of regional service centre staffing indicates that less than one third of the staff in the regional service centre in Bratislava identified implementation of the regional programme as their primary function. Interviews conducted in Bangkok and Panama identified that 80 percent of staff member time was spent on technical support to country offices. The comprehensive inclusion of service contract holders and United Nations volunteers would increase the number even further. Since parts of the advisory services provided by the regional service centres are funded through the regional programmes, distinguishing between the contribution made by the regional programmes and the regional service centres is only partially possible.

Although much progress has been made to improve the system of tracking staff time allocation, no standard service tracker has been implemented for all regional service centres, resulting in duplication of efforts and difficulties in measuring both the performance and the usage of existing staff. The Bratislava and Bangkok regional service centres have led the effort. So far both have independently developed their own elaborate web-based service trackers, while other service locations have different systems ranging from a manual Excel tool to a web-based tracking tool. For example, since 2009, the regional service centre in the Latin America and Caribbean region has been working with web-based Service Request Tracker. Not only do these tools differ in functionality, they also differ in the type of data that is captured from centre to centre.

According to the information recorded in the Asia Pacific regional centre service tracker between 2007 and August 2010, out of 4,444 activities provided by its staff, 1,016 activities (approximately 23 percent of the total) were in the area of policy advice, while 1,194 activities were dedicated to programming and technical backstopping. Other activity types included advocacy, analysis, expert referrals, facilitation and knowledge management. In Bratislava, out of 4,072 activities captured between 2007 and August 2010, approximately 9 percent of the total activities were in the area of policy advice.

At the time of this evaluation, UNDP was moving towards a common approach to tracking services. The new service provision management system is intended to develop a single system, which will provide enhanced reporting capability on advisory service provision and collection of consistent data across the different service providers.

# CHAPTER 3

# FINDINGS ON CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

The relevance and effectiveness of UNDP support to development results, as well as the sustainability of those results, are at the core of the evaluation. This section makes an assessment of UNDP regional programming according to these three criteria.

**UNDP has addressed critical cross-border concerns and issues that are common to several countries.** Many critical development issues are shared by neighbouring countries and can be best addressed through collaborative efforts. Based on its presence across regions, UNDP has successfully advocated and supported regional or subregional solutions to common development challenges.

A case in point is the issue of human trafficking involving the illegal trade of human beings, primarily women and children, for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labour between countries and across regions. In the Greater Mekong subregion, UNDP has been a key player in a United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, involving China, Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, which contributed to the development of anti-trafficking policies and activities both at subregional and national levels.[49]

Similarly, environmental challenges often span more than one country and can relate to shared water or other natural resources, or issues of pollution or desertification. In Central Asia, for instance, climate change has compounded problems of environmental degradation and has led to serious deterioration of ecosystems, adding another dimension to the persistence of poverty. In response, UNDP has played a central role in supporting the implementation of a Regional Environmental Action Plan that aimed to foster a regional policy dialogue on the environment-poverty nexus and promote effective governance of transboundary natural resources. In North-East Asia, the UNDP Tumen River Area Development Programme, involving China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, has supported the development of a multilateral forum to identify and implement regional initiatives that encourage economic growth and address transboundary issues in the areas of environment, transport, tourism and investment.

There are also numerous examples of successful UNDP involvement in subregional initiatives relating to the management of common water resources, including the Danube River, Black Sea, the Senegal River Basin, the Lake Chad Basin, the Niger River Basin and the Gulf of Guinea Ecosystems. These initiatives, which are relevant to the sectoral strategies of the participating countries, were successful in promoting regional cooperation, the harmonization of existing legal frameworks and the adoption of new common frameworks to address transboundary issues. However in many cases, the capacity of regional institutions to carry out the agreements has remained weak.

**UNDP's regional approach has enabled countries to dialogue and cooperate in new areas.** Recent evaluations demonstrate that UNDP has been proactive at the regional level in raising development issues such as corruption, gender equality, HIV/AIDS and human rights,

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49   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2006)', p. 27, New York, 2007.

which would have been difficult, for a range of country-specific reasons, to address in the context of individual country programmes.[50] A case in point is the HIV/AIDS Regional Programme for the Arab States initiative in the Arab region[51], which aimed to raise awareness regarding the role of women in development; advocate their political, economic and social empowerment; and highlight policies and strategies to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS that included campaigning against harmful sex practices and unsafe traditional practices. The Pacific Plan supported by UNDP explores the development of regional mechanisms to strengthen national anti-corruption bodies. Activities such as the Pacific Regional Audit Initiative have been critical in examining options for supporting national auditors through regional technical assistance mechanisms.[52]

**Through its long-term engagement at the country level, UNDP is able to contribute a unique perspective that makes it a desirable partner at the regional level.** The strong country presence of UNDP and its close collaboration with governments is an important enabling factor for designing and implementing regional activities. In most programme countries, UNDP has been present for decades and has established close working relationships with governments, civil society and development partners. Moreover, UNDP has continued to play a pivotal role in coordinating the work of the United Nations system at the country level and, as such, has been in a key position to raise the wide range of development issues that are enshrined in the United Nations Charter. In many cases, UNDP has placed the principles of human development at the centre of its dialogue with governments and other counterparts, and has been appreciated for its inclusive partnership style. UNDP's

long-established strengths in advocacy, awareness raising, knowledge sharing and technical cooperation are also advantageous when it comes to tackling regional and subregional challenges. The role played by the regional human development reports in addressing regional development challenges from a people-centred perspective was recognized and praised in most regions. The reports on citizens' security in Central America, and the series of Arab human development reports on security, knowledge society, governance and the empowerment of women, were particularly notable in advocating human development concerns. A strong country presence is seen by UNDP staff members and representatives of other organizations operating in the regions to be a comparative advantage in addressing regional or subregional issues compared to other development actors. Both the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Environment Programme emphasized the advantages of the UNDP country presence for joint collaboration on regional issues. Country offices on the ground facilitate relationships with governments and can provide a good understanding of the local context, including advice on which approaches would be most relevant under local conditions. This allows UNDP to play a role in facilitating cross-border collaboration between governments, key stakeholders, and other relevant actors in developing societies. An example is a new UNDP/GEF project in the South Caucasus to reduce the transboundary degradation in the Kura-Aras Basin. The close collaboration between the UNDP country offices and the governments in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia was a key element for the success of the project.

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[50] UNDP, Evaluation Office 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006-2009)', New York, 2009; and UNDP, Evaluation Office 'Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2006)',  New York, 2007.

[51] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2002-2005)', New York, 2005; and UNDP Evaluation Office 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (2006- 2009)', pp. 18-29, New York, 2009.

[52] UNDP, 'Pacific Centre Annual Report 2008', Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, p. 15, Suva, Fiji, 2008.

**By focusing on subregions within regional programmes, UNDP has enhanced its relevance.** Most UNDP regions are large and extremely diverse from a geographical, historical, political, cultural and ethnic point of view. One of the intrinsic challenges of UNDP initiatives based on any given regional footprint has been to identify commonalities between diverse countries. One strategy to enhance the relevance of regionally-based approaches has been to focus on specific subregions with shared concerns, for example the small island developing states of the Caribbean and the Pacific. Given the fact that these countries already cooperate through existing organizations, such as CARICOM and the Pacific Forum, and that UNDP regular resource allocation (TRAC) to these countries is very small, the contribution of the regional programme is critical and relevant, as in the case of support for the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice[53] and the Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme that successfully developed pro-poor public-private partnerships and piloted a rural banking initiative on a subregional basis.[54] Similarly, UNDP has also supported other subregional cooperation initiatives, such as ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

A number of subregional initiatives have sought to bring neighbouring countries together to address shared development challenges related to human trafficking, the environment, governance and trade. UNDP efforts in programme design and implementation reflect a growing awareness of the importance of the subregional dimension. The Africa Regional Programme Document (2008-2011) states that the programme will be guided by the maximization of the benefits through regional and subregional interventions. The regional programme document for Europe and the CIS (2006-2010) emphasizes a subregional approach, focusing on development challenges and opportunities specific to a smaller

grouping of countries. It highlights the diversity of the region as an impetus for developing projects with emphasis on targeting varying subregional-level needs from the Balkans, to the Caucasus, to European Union (EU) countries with recent accession. A subregional focus led to adequately tailored solutions for addressing similar development challenges and concerns, more discernable mutual gains and spill-over effects, a greater sense of ownership, and easier coordination between a smaller number of actors.

Smaller hubs are also emerging, such as the office established in Almaty with a focus on coordinating the water initiative in Central Asia. The multidisciplinary approach, which is very valued in UNDP, however, might be weakened by focus on a single issue. The subregional centres in Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean and Suva in the Pacific Islands presented challenges to coordination with thematic clusters located in the regional service centres in Panama and Bangkok. The existence of multi-country offices in these subregions, Barbados, Fiji and Samoa, with responsibilities for both country and regional programmes also added to the complexity of arrangements.

**The current arrangements of UNDP for regional programming are not conducive to responding to cross-regional cooperation.** Regional programmes have not adequately engaged with new blocks of countries dealing with global issues from innovative South-South perspectives, such as India, Brazil and South Africa or Brazil, Russia, India and China. South-South cooperation between different regions could potentially provide a useful transfer of lessons learned and increase effectiveness of support for development results. Individual efforts from regional service centres, regional programmes and individual countries appear to drive the agenda on South-South cooperation and, in the

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[53] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean (2002-2006)', New York, 2007.

[54] UNDP, Evaluation Office 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2006)', New York, 2007.

absence of an explicit corporate strategy, these appear to respond to specific contextual circumstances. There appears to be a lack of a common understanding of the concept of South-South learning and cooperation. While some initiatives supported the development of South-South knowledge exchanges, less attention was given to policy dialogue on, and follow up to, major intergovernmental conferences with an emphasis on mainstreaming South-South cooperation or fostering public-private partnerships.

**The relevance of UNDP regional programmes is constrained by inadequate consultation at the country level and ownership by country offices.** Early regional programmes appear to have been the result of extensive consultations with countries within given regions and reflected clearly articulated common concerns. Later, the issue of national ownership was given less priority in the formulation of regional cooperation frameworks, raising questions as to the relevance of specified initiatives or approaches to participating countries. UNDP country offices suggested that, while recognizing the relevance of the issues addressed, the consultation process was often, by default, reduced to meeting the formal requirement of securing at least three signatory countries for a regional project. Moreover, the initiatives were sometimes designed without proper consultation with the countries benefiting from the regional projects. Following recommendations of the evaluations of previous RCFs, consultation with regional programme countries has improved in the formulation of regional programmes, strengthening country-level ownership. Nevertheless the role UNDP regional activities play is below potential because of inadequate coordination between the regional and national levels, uneven coverage and targeting of regional programmes, lack of

ownership from country offices, and inability to create partnerships with emerging regional powers and institutions. Several factors undermine UNDP capability to be a stronger and more relevant partner at the regional level. Country offices often do not participate actively in the formulation of regional programmes. Relevance is hampered by limited coordination and synergies between regional programmes and country programmes, with UNDP efforts to assure government ownership for regional projects varying significantly, and a lack of understanding of both national governments and country offices of how to access or complement regional programmes.[55]

**Criteria for when to use regional programming as the appropriate modality to address development issues have not been developed corporately.** UNDP has not optimized its approach to designing regional programming for maximum relevance. There is lack of clarity in deciding when a programme should be regional, multi-country, or country level. While some regional bureaux, such as the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, have introduced 'regionality criteria', other bureaux do not use a consistent set of criteria to determine what constitutes a regional approach *vis-à-vis* a nationally based approach. This lack of a common understanding of what is meant by 'regional' is reflected in the attempts of the recent evaluations of RCFs to capture the basis on which different regional approaches have been justified. The evaluation of the Asia and Pacific RCF (2002-2006) looks at the regionality criteria of projects, but more in terms of activity than in terms of results. The evaluation of the Arab States RCF (2002-2005) only explicitly refers to results at the regional level once.[56]

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55    UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean (2002-2006)', New York, 2007; UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2006-2009)', New York, 2009; and UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa (2002-2006)', New York, 2007.

56    UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States (2002-2005)', p. 4, New York, 2005.

There are certain issues such as human rights that have been treated mainly by country offices on a national level but that could have benefited from a regional approach. Conversely, some issues treated by regional programmes and projects did not necessarily require a regional solution or approach. For example, the evaluation of the Asia and Pacific RCF (2002-2006) concluded that, "although the [South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme] had succeeded in promoting a common vision and strategy in the region, it could be questioned whether the programme fully met the regionality criteria set up for regional programmes or whether the project could have been implemented through the country programmes with policy advice from UNDP."[57] It might have been more relevant to address such challenges at a national level. Moreover, the results framework for the regional programmes and RCFs do not systematically distinguish between results achieved at the regional level (in the sense of shared results and public goods) and results achieved at the national level. The concept of regional or subregional public goods is rarely mentioned as a conceptual framework to assess the achievement of development results. Intended results at the regional and national level are constantly mixed and intertwined.

**There are many instances where UNDP regional programmes and projects have made significant contributions to regional or subregional cooperation on common issues.** In all regions, UNDP has advocated for and actively supported regional, subregional or intercountry cooperation initiatives, many of which have yielded demonstrable results. For example, UNDP has worked with the African Union, one of its largest regional partners, in supporting the development of the African Union strategic plan (2004-2007) and successfully advocating

for the ratification of human rights instruments by African states. UNDP support to NEPAD contributed to the advancement of the African Peer Review Mechanism process by, *inter alia*, facilitating the establishment of a computerized database of African expertise with approximately 4,000 names.[58]

UNDP regional programmes and projects have consistently supported programme countries in addressing common environmental issues. An example of UNDP contribution to the achievement of shared results includes the drafting of the Nile River Basin cooperative framework in the Arab region, which was supported through the financing of technical studies and the facilitation of the subsequent intergovernmental dialogue. Another example is the operationalization of an information network that monitors and shares regional practices in toxic waste management in the Mekong River Basin countries, which was developed with UNDP support.

Other examples of the achievement of intercountry or subregional results through UNDP regional programmes and projects include the conflict and peace-building work of the regional service centre on Small Arms Control of the Economic Community of West African States.[59] Also, regional cooperation activities of the regional service centre for Public Administration Reform in the Europe and CIS region can be attributed to support provided by the regional programme.[60] Moreover, the establishment and activities of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network aimed at mobilizing and crystallizing political will and commitment to implement the United Nations Convention Against Corruption have, in part, resulted from activities of the UNDP Programme on Governance in the Arab Region.[61]

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[57] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2006)', p. 12, New York, 2007.

[58] De Silva, Leelananda, and Harris, Mou Charles, 'Report on the Evaluation of UNDP Support to the NEPAD Secretariat', RAF/02/022, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, 20 June 2005, p. 29.

[59] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa (2002-2006)', New York, 2007.

[60] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Europe and CIS (2006-2010)', New York, 2009.

[61] Available online at: <www.undp-pogar.org/about/success.aspx>.

**The regional human development reports have contributed to an increased awareness on development issues with a people centred perspective in the different regions.** For example, the evaluation of the Arab States RCF (2006-2007) found that the Arab human development reports played an important advocacy and awareness role in the region. The evaluation of the RCF for Latin America and the Caribbean (2002-2006) found with regard to the human development reports that the RCF contributed to a better understanding of the changing needs of the region in a democratic context. More recently, the regional human development reports for Latin America addressed the causes for persistent intergenerational transmission of inequalities.[62] Subregional human development reports also addressed two critical development challenges, namely, citizens' security in Central America and youth and employment in Mercosur. Both involved broad consultative processes between and within countries. In Asia and the Pacific, the human development report on corruption did provide a conceptual framework for concerted collaboration that reinforced the agreements around the United Nations Convention Against Corruption signed by 19 Asia-Pacific countries, 10 of which have ratified or acceded to it.

Translating the findings and policy recommendations from human development reports into action remains a challenge as identified by the evaluation of national human development reports.[63] The situation is no different at the regional level. There is still room for improvement in how UNDP utilizes the conceptual framework developed by regional human development reports to convert critical development challenges into substantive contributions of the regional programmes.

**Although UNDP has effectively used a regional approach to address common issues that countries face, the comparative advantage of addressing national issues through regional initiatives is often not obvious.** Many regional programmes and projects address issues that are of common concern to some or most programme countries within a given region. These issues often do not relate to subregional or intercountry challenges, but constitute similar issues faced by different countries, such as income generation, local elections, public services delivery and irrigation systems management. As a consequence, many development results defined at the regional level are very similar to those defined at the national level. The following example illustrates contributions to development results at the country level: In the Latin America and Caribbean region, the support of household surveys through the RCF was effective.

There are numerous examples of how regional programmes and projects, as well as the support of regionally based policy advisers (funded through the regional programmes or global programme), have contributed to the achievement of development results at the national level. However in many cases, it is not clear whether such support through regional delivery modalities and funding has a comparative advantage *vis-à-vis* country-specific approaches, or if it is simply an additional mechanism through which support can be provided to the programme country. There is little evidence that the chosen regional modality to deliver country-level support is more effective than support that is delivered directly through the country office. Moreover, questions must be raised about the extent to which some nationally oriented activities delivered through regional initiatives, including in particular the services of regional policy advisers, support the thrust of country programmes and

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62 'Informe Regional de Desarrollo Humano para América Latina 2010: Actuar Sobre el Futuro, Romper la Transmisión Intergeneracional de la Desigualdad', Informe de Desarrollo Humano para el Mercosur 2009. Innovar para construir, jóvenes y desarrollo humano.

63 UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of National Human Development Report System', New York, 2006.

contribute to sustainable capacity development, rather than constitute *ad hoc*, and at times even opportunistic, inputs. This question becomes all the more pertinent when lessons learned through country-level implementation of regional initiatives are not analysed or aggregated at a 'higher' subregional or regional level, let alone effectively disseminated regionally and globally—in other words, when opportunities for regional value added are not fully exploited.

**National ownership is critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of multi-country initiatives and has been weak in UNDP regional programmes.** UNDP efforts to assure government ownership of regional projects vary significantly. While in some instances a lot of time and energy is put into consultation processes (e.g., on HIV/AIDS in Asia), in other cases the consultation is limited. The evaluation of the second RCF for Africa found that the RCF was seen as a product emanating from UNDP headquarters and neither the national governments, nor the country offices, understood how to access regional programmes or resources in order to participate or conduct complementary activities.[64] Attempts were made in the formulation of the third RCF for Africa to consult regional institutions, in particular the African Union and the regional commission.

Coordination with UNDP work at the country level appears key for ensuring sustainability of regional programme and project results. The sustainability of regional programme and project results appear dependent on their relevance to, and coordination with, UNDP work at the country level. This requires close communication between the regional programmes and projects

and the country offices.[65] It has been repeatedly argued that, for regional programme sustainability, regional initiatives need to be followed up at the country level.[66] The survey found that UNDP country offices do not believe that the regional programmes address specific country needs. Some upstream projects at the regional level are stand-alone activities that are not converted into downstream initiatives at the country level. This can be attributed to limited government and country office ownership of regional initiatives and poor communication. There is potential for country offices to take advantage of the advocacy gains created at the regional level and translate them into local gains by ensuring continuance via national projects. It was found that this link is not always easily made since country office staff has limited knowledge of regional programmes while others lack the resources to initiate follow-up of regional programmes relevant to their needs.

There is evidence that in some cases regional programmes have run in parallel with national-level supported initiatives. For example, although natural disaster preparedness has been identified as a key issue in the Europe and CIS region, the regional project carried out in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan failed to incorporate or build upon existing disaster risk reduction efforts at the country level. Based on the desk review conducted by the team, the reasons for this were poor coordination, planning, and lack of communication between the regional programmes and the country offices.

The review of the RCFs in Asia Pacific, Arab States and Africa find that the lack of ownership by country offices and national governments

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[64] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa (2002-2006)', New York, 2007.

[65] UNDP, 'Mid-term Evaluation of the Second RCF for Europe and CIS 2002-2005 and the Development of the Support Function of the Bratislava Regional Centre', Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, p. 17, Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 2004.

[66] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Africa (2002-2006)', p. 17, New York, 2007; UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (2006-2009)', p. IX, New York, 2009; and UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Latin America and the Caribbean (2002-2006)', p. 35, New York, 2007.

limit the sustainability of the advocacy and policy advice generated within the regional projects. It weakens the impact of programming resources and is a missed opportunity to further national policy decisions and initiatives built on regional gains.

**UNDP regional work and presence has had limited impact on strengthening South-South cooperation.** There are a few good examples of South-South cooperation within regional programmes. The Support to Asia Pacific Programme on Reinventing Government proved successful in identifying potential areas of South-South and North-South cooperation and actions at the local, national and international levels.[67] The regional programme on water governance in the Arab States contains a strong South-South cooperation element on transfer of expertise and capacity development.[68]

While there are initiatives with a proven track record of sustained support, contributions have mainly consisted of workshops, exchanges and networks created. Country to country exchanges have at times been brokered by the regional service centres, but the survey showed that there is still room for improvement. The bulk of responsibility still lies with country offices taking the initiative to link their country programmes and partners. Moreover most of the time, cooperation has taken place within the regions, such as the East-East cooperation in the Europe and CIS region, and not between different regions. In 2009, a strategic partnership with China was agreed for trilateral cooperation to support developing countries, particularly in Africa. Another partnership was forged with the Republic of Korea for establishing the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre for Global Development Partnerships. The centre intends to undertake policy analysis and research on global partnerships in international development. These initiatives, although promising, are too recent to show results.

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[67]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific (2002-2006)', p. 21, New York, 2007.

[68]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for Arab States (2006-2009)', p. 47, New York, 2009.

## CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS ON CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE RESULTS AND ON EFFICIENCY

## 4.1 CORPORATE RESULTS

This section examines the four areas where UNDP contributes to corporate results through its regional presence and programming: technical support to country offices, practice architecture and knowledge management, support to United Nations coordination and partnerships, and strengthening corporate strategic positioning. In each area, UNDP performance is assessed according to the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, and the factors affecting that performance are identified.

**In a situation where all country offices cannot be strengthened, provision of technical support services from regional service centres has been a relevant and appropriate option.** The main benefits for the country offices of a regional service centre are the availability of good quality policy advice and technical support that costs less than market prices and is available on short notice.[69] There is capacity in the regional service centres for programme formulation and quality assurance, based on both familiarity with UNDP and detailed knowledge of thematic areas. There are opportunities for promotion of common approaches to address shared problems.

The regional support arrangement has several obvious advantages including geographical proximity to country offices, lower transport costs when compared to headquarters, same time-zone operational hours, and language familiarity—all factors that allow for a more rapid response and a quicker dissemination of solutions to country offices. The expanded capacity and the

more comprehensive range of services offered by the regional service centres are appreciated by country offices.

Results from the country office survey showed perceived improvement in services provided by regional service centres when compared with SURFs, both in timeliness and quality, in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and the CIS. In Latin America and the Caribbean the improvement was observed only in quality of service, not timeliness. The Arab States was the only region where country offices reported a deterioration of services both in timeliness and quality. This can likely be explained by the lag in the establishment of the regional service centre in Cairo. In the case of the longer established Bratislava and Bangkok regional service centres, the stream of benefits has reached significant levels and is growing at reasonable rates.

Data from the service trackers of the regional service centres revealed the regional advisers spent considerable time assisting country offices, either in quality assuring project documents, identifying regional experts, or supporting resource mobilization. However due to lack of harmonized service trackers across the regions and lack of disaggregation, it was difficult to determine the precise allocation of staff time to the different functions of the regional service centre.

The overall satisfaction of country offices with the technical support provided by the regional service centres was quite high. More than 90 percent of responding country offices reported that the regional service centres had contributed to the achievement of development results. Their work was particularly recognized in the

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[69] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2006-2010', New York, 2009.

area of environment and sustainable development.[70] This may be attributed to the prevalence of GEF-funded expertise at the regional level. In the democratic governance area, 78 percent reported regional service centre contribution while 75 percent indicated regional service centre contribution to poverty reduction and MDGs. In regards to management and administrative support from the regional service centres[71], the country office survey indicated procurement was the most valued service, while less than 25 percent reported benefiting from human resources, legal and financial support.

Almost two thirds of country office survey respondents agreed that the quality of the services provided by the regional service centres has improved compared to the services previously provided by the SURFs. Only 9 percent thought the quality of the service had deteriorated. More than half of the respondents in the country office survey stated that the quality of the services provided by the regional service centres had improved compared to the services previously provided by headquarters. There was regional variation in the survey results.

There are important differences between regions in the perception of the support provided by regional service centres to country offices and their relationship with regional programmes. This reflects the distinctive approach adopted by each regional bureau. The results of the country office survey disaggregated by region are presented in Annex 4.

**While demand for services is increasing, there is limited capacity to respond to this need, even from regional service centres that are fully staffed.** Regional service centres are hampered by limited time and resources, and staff are split

between programming and advisory services. Field-level interviews found that regional service centres are often overwhelmed by demands from country offices requesting technical support and backstopping for the country programme. Demands related to the latter appear to take an increasing proportion of the time of the regional service centre staff, who are often overwhelmed by administrative procedures. Staff often take on work they are not suited for, and there is an uneven distribution of work between advisers and high staff turnover. Consequently, the quality of the support delivered is uneven. As an alternative, regional service centres have established rosters of regional consultants to respond to demands from countries that have facilitated the exchange of technical expertise. In some cases, the consultants have experience working with UNDP and can bring the human development perspective, but that was more the exception than the rule.

Good quality support services are in high demand, particularly from country offices with limited capacity. With an unmet demand and limited resources, the situation is unsustainable. Regional service centres have tried to prioritize offices to support. Such efforts have been difficult as the centres were designed and are assessed on the basis of responsiveness to demand. In the long run, direct strengthening of country office capacity in critical areas is unavoidable. A step in this direction is the deployment of economists to country offices in the African region as part of the regional programme.

**The establishment of regional service centres has contributed to an improvement in cross-practice collaboration, although there are institutional constraints that limit cooperation across practice areas.** During the past decade,

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[70] Through the country office survey, country offices reported that they received support from the regional service centres in the following areas: environment and sustainable development (92.3 percent), democratic governance (78 percent), poverty reduction and MDGs (75 percent), crisis prevention and recovery (72.8 percent), capacity development (71.1 percent), gender (67.9 percent), HIV/AIDS (63.8 percent) and knowledge management (55.6 percent).

[71] UNDP, 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres', attachment to internal communication from UNDP Administrator, February 2008.

UNDP has placed considerable emphasis on the adoption of more holistic and integrated approaches in support of human development. UNDP evaluations at the country, regional and global levels have regularly highlighted the challenges faced in overcoming sector-specific biases. In order to overcome a tendency to work in practice silos corresponding to UNDP practice areas, the regional service centres put in place arrangements that fostered cross-practice collaboration. This was done in coordination with BCPR and BDP, which provided resources to the regional service centres in support of the practice architecture and corporate knowledge management. Measures included the co-location in the regional service centres of practice or thematic units, the development of joint work plans, the establishment of shared knowledge management units, and an increasing number of jointly conducted missions in response to the growing demand from country offices for a more integrated approach.

The global programme contributed to the improvement of the cross-practice collaboration through the relocation of practice leaders from headquarters to each regional service centre. A group of seven practice leaders was redeployed to each centre in four UNDP practice areas— poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs, democratic governance, environment and sustainable development, and HIV/AIDS— and the three cross-cutting themes of gender equality, capacity development and knowledge management. This technical capacity was critical to provide technical support to country offices in each region.

All regional service centres can point to examples of initiatives that are based on principles of cross-practice collaboration. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the work on MDG strategies in several countries has entailed close collaboration between programme units responsible for issues related to poverty, democratic governance,

capacity development and communications. In the Arab States, the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region constitutes a good example of effective cross-practice collaboration particularly in the intersection between democratic governance, knowledge management, gender and capacity development. In the Asia and Pacific region, the Regional Environmental Governance Programme is a prime example of how environment, governance and human rights concerns can be integrated in one programme. In the Europe and CIS region, the regional service centre provided support to Armenia on gender mainstreaming practices in the area of disaster risk reduction. In fact, the country office survey shows some recognition of regional service centres contributing to multi-disciplinary approaches to deal with national development challenges. Across all regions, the regional human development reports can be considered good examples of inter-practice work.

However not all initiatives have succeeded in integrating different development dimensions. For instance, in the case of the Natural Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction project in the Europe and CIS region, cross-practice collaboration occurred more by chance than by design.[72] Similarly, a regional programme in West Africa on development strategies and public finance, which encourages initiatives undertaken by countries in western Africa to strengthen links between poverty reduction strategies and national budgets, could have benefited from a multi-disciplinary approach that included the governance implications for developing an analytical framework on budgetary programming, macro-economic guidelines and funding strategies. Moreover, in many cases, poor cross-practice collaboration can be attributed to weak institutional arrangements, the absence of sufficient incentives, and implementation mechanisms that do not facilitate interaction, coordination and operationalization of joint support.

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[72]   UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States, 2006-2010', New York, 2009.

**Knowledge management has improved as a result of UNDP regional work and presence, but it does not take full advantage of inter-regional and corporate knowledge sharing potential.** The regional service centres are intended to consolidate and anchor the practice architecture in the regions to support country office work and to contribute to corporate UNDP knowledge management efforts. The crisis prevention and recovery practice, which is anchored at headquarters is an exception. There is evidence that the regional service centres have become more proactive in their approach to collecting, codifying and sharing knowledge by testing the 'market' among various stakeholders as to the relevance and urgency of issues to be addressed. They select issues and, at times, contract services to carry out studies and produce reports for the benefit of country offices. Quality assurance is tested through peer reviews; capacity-building workshops and seminars on the final product are held; and learning networks are maintained and monitored.

Knowledge management has increased within the regions but not in all cases between the region and headquarters. Regional service centres have established knowledge management units that produce knowledge products including, for instance, the compilation of bi-weekly regional intelligence briefs, quarterly development e-bulletins focusing on UNDP practice and sub-practice areas, the preparation of the Compendia of Good Practices on Poverty Reduction and HIV/AIDS, the establishment of knowledge portals, such as the Logos portal for Latin America or groups workspace for Europe and the CIS, and the organization of knowledge fairs on public security and local governance. Many of these products are in the language spoken in the regions and have received encouraging reactions from country office colleagues.

The regional service centres play a key role in the communities of practice at the regional level.

For example in the Europe and CIS region, 21 communities of practice and networks were active at the end of 2009. They covered practice areas, cross-practice areas and project networks. In 2009, seven communities of practice were supported with tools to facilitate cross-practice, project related groups and sub-groups.[73] In Latin America and the Caribbean, communities of practice have improved knowledge sharing and, in some cases, South-South cooperation, mainly within the region. For instance, a regional network on equality certification was established by government-led institutes for women with civil society organizations and technical experts from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Mexico to transfer the experience to El Salvador, Panama, Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. The communities of practice, although conceptualized as instruments for sharing knowledge globally have functioned more effectively at the regional level due to language constraints.

UNDP's 2009-2011 Knowledge Strategy combines communities of practice and the service delivery model with new mechanisms for social networking, user-generated discussions and collaboration, with the intent to provide linkages between headquarters, regions and country teams. The knowledge strategy is embodied in Teamworks, a web-based, globally integrated platform, currently under development. The results of this approach are yet to be seen.

Despite the considerable efforts clearly being expended on generating, codifying and disseminating knowledge, many country offices looked to the regional service centres to provide more information about what comprised best practices in other country offices, regions, and United Nations organizations—especially where such information was not readily available through the headquarters-based knowledge networks or communities of practice. The current corporate strategy for knowledge management still does

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[73]   UNDP, 'Knowledge Management 2009 Report', Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Bratislava Regional Service Centre, Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 2010.

not take full advantage of the privileged position the regional arrangements play in facilitating knowledge creation, codification and dissemination. There is a sense that the workload prevents the practice leaders and their teams, based in the regional service centres, from spending more time systematizing the knowledge from country experiences and making it available through the global knowledge networks. Additionally, it is found that the sharing of knowledge works better within the region than across regions. It is worth noting that because of these challenges, BCPR has opted to manage the crisis prevention and recovery practice from headquarters in order for its technical staff to provide cross-regional support fostering the sharing of best practices across regions.

**Collaboration among members of the United Nations system mainly takes place at the regional project level, but not sufficiently at the UNDAF level.** Examples of inter-agency collaboration have led to more coherent United Nations support to regional cooperation, including the network of women parliamentarians in Latin America and the Caribbean and the UNICEF Seal of Approval, which awards municipalities that have significantly improved the standards of living for children and adolescents.

In general, UNDAFs focus on national development challenges and rarely identify regional or subregional needs and responses. A review of randomly selected UNDAFs[74] across all five regions revealed that cross-border or multi-country issues were rarely addressed. For example, the UNDAF for Egypt addressed a cross-border issue only once when relating to transboundary dialogue and regional cooperation on management of shared resources. Similarly, the UNDAF for Tanzania had only one citation of regional needs, with an objective to enhance national capacity to participate in regional trade negotiations.

**The regional presence of UNDP contributes to some extent to United Nations coordination at the level of the RDTs.** One of the explicit functions of the regional service centres is to support the RDT. Having a deputy regional director heading the regional service centre at the same grade level with regional directors of other United Nations organizations facilitates sustained dialogue. United Nations working groups have been put in place in the regions to address regional challenges, such as social protection for the poor, disaster preparedness, violence against women, nutrition and food security, and poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. Additionally, the regional service centres supported the functioning of the United Nations RDT and promoted operational initiatives to harmonize practices while saving costs. In Africa, a single meeting of the several subregional configurations was organized in 2009 in an attempt to establish a single RDT for Africa. Similarly in the other regions, the regional service centres provide support to the UNDAF process and the appraisal of resident coordinators. The regional service centres are seen as having limited capacity to support the RDTs.[75]

**Coordination is affected by the fact that the regional service centres are not always co-located with other United Nations organizations' regional service centres.** UNDP has not put in place mechanisms to address this situation, which is often beyond its control. Regional directors of other United Nations organizations were of the opinion that the presence of UNDP regional directors in New York limited the functioning of the RDT that they chair. In the case of Asia and the Pacific, this also contributed to difficulties in resolving the overlaps and competition in the division of work between the RDT and the regional coordination mechanism. In other regions, coordination was reported to be more fluid and the support and collaboration received from UNDP deputy regional directors was recognized.

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[74]  UNDAFs for Brazil (2007-2011), Egypt (2007-2011), Viet Nam (2006-2010), United Republic of Tanzania (2007-2010), and Ukraine (2006-2010).

[75]  UNDP, 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres', attachment to internal communication from UNDP Administrator, February 2008.

United Nations organizations that have their regional directors in the region noted that with the relocation of the regional director to the region, programme coordination and support that had been at headquarters was brought together with technical support that was already in the region. This decentralization had been supported by the creation of a policy and programme division in headquarters to assist integration. However the lack of decentralization of human resources and finance and administration remains a problem. Frequent visits to headquarters by regional directors who were based in the region helped address corporate decision-making and communications.

**UNDP has built partnerships in all regions.** The ASEAN-UNDP Partnership Facility has provided technical advisory support to analysis, dialogue and advocacy to accelerate regional trade and investment liberalization. A key component has been to assist new member countries in their development and regional integration efforts with a goal to reduce the disparities between Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and the other ASEAN member countries. The partnership with the African Union to address transboundary problems requiring joint action has yielded positive results, such as increased ratification of human rights instruments by African states, the establishment of an observatory for women's rights and support to several governance programmes. Similarly, the support to NEPAD made valuable contributions to the advancement of African Peer

Review Mechanism process. UNDP has developed good partnerships with the European Union to facilitate cooperation across European Union borders. As part of these initiatives, new European Union member states share their knowledge and expertise on transition and development and lessons learned with European Union accession countries. UNDP provides guidance, seed money and raises additional funds from governments, the European Union and the private sector. The Regional Bureau for Arab States regional programme created partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, and academic and policy institutions.

**The potential for mobilizing resources at the regional level has not been fully tapped in some regions.** Except for the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, the regional programmes registered only marginal resource mobilization in recent years (Table 3). Overall, the ratio of UNDP regular resources to other resources is approximately 1:6, whereas the best performing regional programme, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, is 1:4.3.[76] Resource mobilization has become even more imperative when regular resources are being used for staffing of regional service centres.

There is significant scope for resource mobilization for regional cooperation. Donors and regional institutions are increasingly seeking

| Table 3. Ratio Between Regular and Other Resources[77] | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **REGIONAL BUREAUX** | **2005** | **2006** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** |
| Regional Bureau for Africa | 1 : 0.6 | 1 : 0.8 | 1 : 0.8 | 1 : 1.0 | 1 : 0.8 |
| Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific | 1 : 0.1 | 1 : 0.6 | 1 : 0.5 | 1 : 0.7 | 1 : 0.7 |
| Regional Bureau for Arab States | 1 : 0.5 | 1 : 1.5 | 1 : 2.5 | 1 : 2.0 | 1 : 1.5 |
| Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS | 1 : 1.3 | 1 : 3.4 | 1 : 2.3 | 1 : 1.7 | 1 : 2.1 |
| Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean | 1 : 2.0 | 1 : 2.6 | 1 : 3.1 | 1 : 4.3 | 1 : 2.8 |
| Total Regional Programmes | 1 : 0.5 | 1 : 1.2 | 1 : 1.2 | 1 : 1.4 | 1 : 1.3 |
| UNDP | 1 : 6.0 | 1 : 6.6 | 1 : 5.5 | 1 : 5.7 | 1 : 5.5 |

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[76]  Data from 2008.

[77]  Calculated from data in Table 1.

to operate in the regional space. The evidence suggests that traditional donors are seeking new ways of supporting countries, especially where they are graduating to middle income status. Funding of regional activities can be an interesting alternative for donors to stay engaged in a region. Despite the potential for a good match, such relationships have not systematically materialized in all regions.

The Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS has developed a specific partnership and resource mobilization strategy for the regional programme (2010-2013) with a clear understanding of regional stakeholders with current and potential partners and targets. Although it is too early to assess the results, this initiative is seen as good practice. Similarly, the regional service centre in Bangkok has established partnerships with the Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development, Japan, foundations, the private sector and other partners, some of which involve financial contributions to regional programmes. The Bangkok regional service centre has raised 80 percent of their targeted $3.5 million in resources. Overall, the imperative of generating additional financing has been recognized with the recently approved regional programme containing resource mobilization targets for each project.

Given the current decline in donor funding to multilateral organizations, resource mobilization efforts at the regional level are often perceived negatively by country offices. The survey revealed that a large proportion of senior management in country offices felt that the regional programme was competing for donor funding. A step to address this concern was taken by the Bratislava regional service centre through an innovative approach to sharing the delivery of some regional programmes with country offices when appropriate.

**UNDP's growing regional presence and knowledge of development in the regions has not been leveraged to shape corporate positioning.** Most of the work of the regional service centres is dedicated to country office support. In absolute numbers, more personnel are dedicated to country office advisory service support and less are dedicated to regional programme management and activities. The data collected and classified by UNDP in 2010 for the Bratislava, Panama and Bangkok regional service centres demonstrated a significant division of staffing by primary function with approximately one third dedicated to the implementation of regional programmes. The regional service centres do not consistently prioritize the codification of lessons and knowledge from the regions for corporate policy use.

In the absence of filtering the knowledge to headquarters, a need has risen for alternative arrangements for headquarters policy and strategy formulation. This therefore limits the contribution that the regional service centre can make to interregional knowledge management and to corporate positioning, even though the head of the regional service centre is a deputy director in the regional bureau and part of the senior management team. This has led to duplication of functions. Efforts are being made to establish policy units in regional bureaux in headquarters to compensate for the inadequate flow of strategic advice and regional knowledge from the regional service centres and headquarters' policy bureaux.

## 4.2 EFFICIENCY

This section examines performance related to efficiency and management, as this issue cuts across UNDP contribution to both development and corporate results.

**Effective management of the regional programmes is constrained by the lack of clarity over regional programming and inadequate information on resources and results.** This issue was introduced in chapter one as a challenge in terms of conducting this evaluation, but it is also a finding that represents a challenge to effective design and management of UNDP regional work. Defining the scope of regional

programming is difficult, as it is financed from a variety of funding sources and managed by a number of different institutions. Financial information concerning regional programmes is not easy to obtain for those programmes where implementation responsibility is divided among different UNDP units. Equally, results oriented annual reports were introduced for regional programmes relatively recently and are also divided among the various implementing units.

The overall concept of the regional programmes remains unclear. The understanding of what a regional programme is (role, scope, function) varies considerably among UNDP staff.[78] The programming guidelines of UNDP, while very detailed for country programmes, are quite general when it comes to regional programmes. The current guidelines highlight differences with country programming and do not address the specificity of regional programming including the consultation process, regionality criteria, management arrangements and review process.[79]

**Some UNDP regional programmes have been efficient conduits for delivering regional public goods, and ensuring collaboration on cross-border and shared issues; however, lack of funding and coordination and poor implementation have lowered overall efficiency.** In a number of instances, the regional programme modality appears to have resulted in the efficient delivery of activities, particularly where economies of scale could be achieved within a subregion. For example, initiatives in both the Pacific and Central Asian subregions were able to provide technical backstopping services to widely dispersed project sites more efficiently than a country-specific approach would have permitted.[80]

The efficiency of regional programmes was often hampered by long delays in obtaining fund disbursement authorizations and release of funds to beneficiaries. This has resulted in delays in implementation. The cumbersome and lengthy applications, as well as complicated procurement procedures have deterred some external stakeholders from engaging with UNDP because of the effort required to access relatively small amounts of funds.

The efficiency of programmes was also hampered by spreading the portfolio of interventions too thinly and by poor monitoring systems that allowed for duplication of efforts. The duplication was also interpreted as a lack of coordination between regional programme initiatives and UNDP country offices. In some cases, the regional programme was managed in parallel with relatively few or no inter-linkages with the country programmes. Regional programme managers on occasion dealt directly with governments, civil society and private sector contacts, without keeping UNDP country offices informed or involved.

**The regional service centres are at different developmental stages, with varying capacities and levels of efficiency.** Not all regional service centres are fully operational yet, and there are indications that in some centres, the burden on staff to sustain day-to-day operations is significant. The ongoing processes of shifting headquarters' functions to regional service centres are likely to have increased overall costs, particularly for the newer centres like Panama, Dakar, Cairo and Johannesburg. Overall, there were challenges in measuring the cost-effectiveness of the regional service centres because there were no clear baselines and

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78  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2006-2010', New York, 2009

79  UNDP, Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures, available online at: <http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results/ppm-overview/global-and-regional>.

80  UNDP, 'Evaluation of Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific Region', Outcome Evaluation of Poverty Cluster, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, New York, 2006.

benchmarks established for regional level outputs. Moreover, there has not been one guiding model in establishing structures and operations, and variations among the regional service centres have significant implications for programmatic mandates and costs.

Operationally, shared services with regional service centres and UNDP country offices in several locations, like Bangkok and Bratislava, worked well. The Dakar regional service centre is now testing the approach with a merger between its own operations and those of the UNDP Senegal country office. There is no compelling argument for duplicating administrative services in countries where there is a strong capacity in either the regional service centre or the UNDP country office. Moreover, the regional service centre should be able to assist smaller country offices with many back-office services, thereby gaining economies of scale and avoiding duplication.

There is potentially a contradiction between the project management and professional support functions of the regional service centre. Several stakeholders mentioned the potential of competition between the regional service centres and country offices in situations where the centres engage in project implementation and management. Moreover, as shown by the evaluation of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS regional programme[81], the skills required to manage projects and to provide advisory support are different and the efficiency of the regional service centre is affected by combining the responsibilities of project management and advisory support as the skills required differ.

**Cost recovery for advisory services has not been efficiently implemented.** The functional alignment document states that a cost-recovery mechanism should be introduced for the services provided by the regional service centres, but the

regional bureaux have not uniformly introduced a market mechanism yet. At present, the application of a market mechanism is in an inception phase. For example, the regional service centres only recuperate funding by charging a universal travel fee designed to prevent discrimination against those offices further away from regional service centres. The Bratislava regional service centre has demonstrated leadership in cost-recovery strategies. It is currently moving towards not only charging travel costs but also establishing cost recovery on ongoing projects (although not on project design and development work), with a fee of US$ 450 per day.

Even with proper tracking of demand, the allocation of the services may not be the most efficient and appropriate. A move towards cost recovery will need to establish a safety network for country offices with limited budgets. An internal market mechanism is likely to improve overall efficiency of delivery and sustainability of services. There is, however, strong resistance to the adoption of additional cost recovery measures. Interviews and consultations suggest that the introduction of additional fees would not be popular with many country offices.

**UNDP has not streamlined organization-wide functions and resources to adjust to the creation of regional service centres.** With some minor re-allocations, UNDP has largely undertaken the process of establishing regional service centres without dismantling or reducing existing structures at headquarters, even though staffing in some units may have decreased. Consequently there is some duplication of functions between the headquarters, regional service centres and country offices.

Additionally country offices simultaneously request and solicit support from several units at headquarters. There is evidence that the division of labour between the regional bureaux

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[81] UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States', New York, 2009.

and the policy units at headquarters that provide support to country offices has not been streamlined to avoid redundancy. Coordination at headquarters between BDP and the regional bureaux and within practice areas at headquarters is not optimal as long as there are no clear expectations of each unit's responsibility. There has been an overall lack of clarity about where functions should be located.

**There have been gaps in corporate guidance, including the functional alignment document, resulting in an inability to establish a core common set of principles for regional presence and corporate tools while allowing for adaptation to different regional contexts.** There have been different approaches to implementing institutional arrangements in the regions and among corporate bureaux with some notable successes. The delineation of oversight and support functions between the regional service centres and headquarters' regional bureaux has not been the same in all regions. There have been cases of functions from regional bureaux, such as the Bureau for Africa, being decentralized to the regional service centres in 2004 and then recentralized. These variations emerged from interviews with stakeholders across UNDP.

In the absence of clear guidance and cooperation, regional service centres have invested in the development of tools and systems that result in multiple programming and administrative cost structures, and there is a danger they will continue to do so. A case in point is the service trackers used by three of the regional service centres.

The level of integration of the current management arrangement represents a significant improvement over previous matrix management and reporting systems.[82] Practice leaders in regional service centres are expected to report to the director of the regional service centre on all matters related to country office and regional programme support. They also report to the directors of the respective relevant units of BDP, BCPR and BOM on practice alignment and corporate standards. These separate reporting lines and different approaches in the regions work against an integrated and cost-efficient reform in the organization as a whole.

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[82]  UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Second Global Cooperation Framework', New York, 2004; and UNDP Evaluation Office, 'Evaluation of the Third Global Cooperation Framework', New York, 2008.

# CHAPTER 5
# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations provided in this chapter are based on the findings described in chapters three and four. The conclusions should be seen as being mutually reinforcing, conveying an overall sense of UNDP strengths and challenges in contributing to development and corporate results at the regional level. The recommendations highlight only the most critical areas in which UNDP could bolster its contribution, bearing in mind its mandate and comparative strengths.

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

**Conclusion 1: Despite modest resources, UNDP regional programmes have made significant and long-standing contributions to development results, promoting cooperation among countries in building regional and national institutions as well as addressing cross-border and common challenges.**

Regional programmes provide support to development on a wide range of issues across entire regions with resources that represented less than 7 percent of total UNDP regular resources in 2008-2009. UNDP has developed long-standing relations with key regional institutions, for example with ASEAN, the Caribbean Community, the League of Arab States and NEPAD. The provision of nearly 40 regional human development reports is an area where they have significantly changed the development debate in key areas. Where countries have shared common problems, UNDP regional programmes have brought them together to learn from each other, often developing networks along the way. In such cases, the results from the regional approach are therefore greater than the sum of the results from separate national interventions.

**Conclusion 2: In all regions, the contribution to results has been affected by fragmentation of regional programmes, insufficient linkages with national programmes and time-frames that have not taken into account the need for long-term capacity development.**

Although there are many cases of success, interventions within regional programmes are often thinly spread, poorly coordinated, and occasionally duplicative. Planning cycles for the regional programmes are inevitably different from many country programmes, often making integration difficult. There are cases where regional programmes finance single-country interventions with no significance for other countries. Some multi-country projects have failed to provide adequate additionality to a group of national interventions in terms of networking and knowledge sharing. Results matrices and monitoring were generally weak, often reflecting a lack of focus.

**Conclusion 3: While consultation on regional programming with partner countries and organizations does take place, the absence of a systematic framework for gauging demand and identifying opportunities constrains innovation and relevance.**

The level of consultation has been *ad hoc* and has varied in intensity and scope over time and between regions. Regional programming tends to be supply driven, not always adapting UNDP corporate priorities to specific regional realities and challenges. Moreover, while there are good examples of broad consultative processes that include country offices, governments and intergovernmental organizations, consultation with civil society at the regional level has been more challenging. Poor consultation mechanisms reduce the relevance of what UNDP does and

have led to missed opportunities for regional interventions, especially in innovative areas where only such broad consultation will reveal new needs and challenges.

**Conclusion 4: UNDP has not been able to adapt its own programming and partnership strategies to further facilitate identification of development solutions across regions.**

Today, countries are coming together across regions, but UNDP has continued to focus on supporting cooperation among countries in the geographical framework of UNDP regions. Knowledge at the regional level does not have a sufficient impact at the global level nor does it adequately transfer between UNDP-defined regions. Beyond knowledge management, opportunities have been missed for interregional programmatic interventions, addressing both common challenges and cross-border issues between neighbouring countries that happen to fall within different UNDP regions.

**Conclusion 5: The regional service centres provide a useful space to anchor regional activities and provide technical support to country offices.**

The centres are appropriately located within the regional bureaux and have often played an important role in supporting UNDP practice architecture and facilitating more holistic cross-practice approaches. There are also many advantages in supplying technical support to country offices from regional service centres compared to headquarters, including proximity, language and time zone. Having the regional service centre led by a deputy regional director has increased the visibility of the organization, increased the potential for stronger relationships with United Nations partners and regional institutions, and provided better opportunities for strengthening UNDP positioning within a region. However, the investment in the establishment of the regional service centres has been high and has not been accompanied by

a significant cost reduction at headquarters. UNDP has not streamlined organization-wide functions and resources to adjust to the creation of the regional service centres. At the same time, UNDP has been unable to draw sufficiently on regional knowledge and experiences for corporate positioning. There needs to be greater clarity and consistency with respect to management tools.

**Conclusion 6: UNDP has yet to develop an explicit, holistic and strategic business model that addresses critical capacity in country offices, the provision of supplementary technical support to country offices, management of the regional programme, support to United Nations coordination at the regional level, and rooting corporate positioning in regional knowledge.**

The UNDP approach to contributing to development and corporate results at the regional level needs to be set within the broader context of an organization-wide business model. The multiple sources of funding, including the use of programme resources from the global and regional programmes for internal capacity, and the continued duplication of functions at different organizational levels (regional bureaux, regional service centres, BDP, BCPR) reveal the lack of a transparent and sustainable corporate business model. Only through re-examining the UNDP fundamental principles and overall strategy in a rapidly changing global environment can UNDP identify the most appropriate role of regional level actions.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: UNDP should establish 'regionality' criteria for regional programming in consultation with governments, building on existing good practice, to determine when a regional approach is appropriate.**

Regionality criteria would flow from an assessment of what works and what does not, when using a regional or subregional approach;

the identification of when such an approach adds value; and an analysis of why and how countries cooperate. Discussion concerning the development of these criteria should be broad and involve partner governments in programme and donor countries. A clear understanding of when the regional approach should or should not be used could be key to UNDP positioning in resource-constrained situations.

**Recommendation 2: UNDP should establish a cost-effective framework for broader and deeper partnership that will facilitate systematic consultation to ensure UNDP continued relevance at the regional and interregional levels.**

The broad partnerships to be covered by the framework would include relevant regional organizations, national government, civil society and the United Nations system, especially the regional commissions. The framework and subsequent consultations would ensure that UNDP is appropriately positioned in the regional space to add development value and identify opportunities for further regional and interregional cooperation.

**Recommendation 3: UNDP should foster a corporate culture that encourages interregional lesson learning and programmatic collaboration, and ensures the use of regionally grounded knowledge across the organization.**

UNDP-defined regions should not become silos with regard to programmes and knowledge sharing. Countries sharing common problems and cross-border issues are not always in the same region and in such cases UNDP needs to facilitate interregional cooperation. Interregional knowledge sharing needs to be promoted through the use of appropriate corporate incentives that would strengthen UNDP global knowledge management efforts. Incentives also need to be developed to promote the use of regional knowledge and experiences in UNDP corporate strategic planning, advocacy work and policy advice.

**Recommendation 4: To increase effectiveness and develop capacity, UNDP should base the management of regional programmes and projects in an appropriate location in the region or subregion.**

The five regional programmes should be managed by the regional service centre where they can benefit from regional dynamics and leverage regional capacity. Regional projects should be located close to the beneficiaries, where they will be able to better respond to changing contexts and better utilize regional capacities. Where possible, this should be with regional institutions with the host country resident representative serving as principal project representative. In cases where projects are located with the regional service centre, they should have dedicated project management capacity.

**Recommendation 5: UNDP should maximize the use of regular resources allocated for regional programmes for interventions that contribute directly to development results and minimize their use for internal corporate results.**

Regular resources should be used for adding direct development value by allocation to regional projects or to policy advice that makes a clear and demonstrable contribution to development results. The use of regular resources to finance support to the project management function of country offices should be minimized. Technical support to country offices to carry out these day-to-day functions should be financed from the management budget, possibly through further decentralization of support capacity from headquarters to regional service centres and, where appropriate, from regional service centres to country offices.

**Recommendation 6: UNDP should retain the system of regional service centres under the purview of the regional bureaux.**

While the staffing composition and portfolio of activities and services may vary according to regional context and demands, efforts are required to standardize management tools and approaches, including those related to monitoring the contribution, relevance and efficiency of the regional service centre arrangement. The centres need to strengthen their networking and ensure that they benefit from, and contribute to, global knowledge. The regional service centres should be headed by at least a deputy regional director. The residual practice of having dual reporting lines, including for practice leaders, in regional service centres should cease. All staff should have a single reporting line within the regional service centre, while at the same time be accountable for linking and contributing to global knowledge.

**Recommendation 7: UNDP should develop a strategic corporate business model that covers global, regional and country levels; provides a sustainable and transparent allocation of funds and human resources; ensures that functions and services are not duplicated; and facilitates the location of capacity in the most appropriate place.**

UNDP should recognize that in order to strengthen the results from its regional work and presence, it cannot look only at regional programming and institutional arrangements. The business model needs to be holistic, treating the programming and institutional structures within the organization as a whole, and at all levels. It should recognize the interlinkages between country, regional and global programming and results. It should prioritize establishing critical country office capacity that should be identified and put in place. In developing the model for supplementary technical support to country offices, UNDP can draw on approaches that have worked including that of GEF, which finances dedicated technical expertise in the region that also contributes to corporate initiatives. The model should enhance cross-practice and cross-regional approaches to human development and United Nations partnerships at the country and regional levels. The UNDP business model must also protect, and expand to the extent possible, the funding for regional programmes so that they can maintain and augment their contribution to development results and step up to emerging challenges.

# Annex 1

# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts thematic evaluations to capture evaluative evidence of UNDP's overall contribution to development results at national, regional and global levels, in particular its contribution to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals. Conducted within the overall framework of UNDP Evaluation Policy, the thematic evaluations assess the strategic and cross-cutting themes in the UNDP programme.

An evaluation of UNDP regionalization process was approved by the UNDP Executive Board (DP/2008/49) as part of the Evaluation Office programme of work. The evaluation will be conducted in the first semester of 2010 and will draw lessons and provide a set of forward-looking proposals to inform management and Executive Board decisions—designed to strengthen the contribution of UNDP's approach to regionalization in the efficient achievement of development results at the national, regional and global levels.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

Regionalization in UNDP has been a strategic decision. As stated in its last strategic plan, UNDP is committed to "the refinement of its internal institutional arrangements to bring corporate and regional policy and advisory support closer to where they are needed on the ground, and to make those services more responsive to country programme needs. That will entail understanding the different contexts in which UNDP works, and tailoring its

services (advocacy, policy and advisory, and technical support) to the specific needs of programme countries."[83]

In line with the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system[84], UNDP aimed to intensify its cooperation and adopt more collaborative approaches to support country-level development initiatives at the request of recipient countries, in particular through closer collaboration within the resident coordinator system and by improving mechanisms for access to the technical capacities of the United Nations system at the regional and subregional levels.

The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review Resolution asked the United Nations development system to give greater and more systematic consideration to the regional and subregional dimensions of development cooperation and to promote measures for more intensive inter-agency collaboration at the regional and subregional levels, facilitating intercountry exchanges of experience and promoting both intraregional and interregional cooperation, as appropriate.

**Institutional developments:** In recent years, UNDP has strengthened its regional presence. Regional service centres were established to combine policy, programme and administrative support to country offices with the management of regional programmes and global knowledge management. They also provide support to the regional directors' teams (RDTs) of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

Prior to 2008, institutional efforts for regionalization were largely through the regional bureaux in New York and the subregional resource facilities

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[83]  UNDP, 'Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development', UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011, DP/2007/43.

[84]  United Nations Resolution adopted by General Assembly A/RES/59/250, 2005.

(SURFs). The establishment of SURFs was a result of 2001 change process, introduced in 1997, which was intended to decentralize much of headquarters' services and operations. Each centre was established responding to specific regional needs. A standardized approach to regionalization was thus difficult to identify.

In February 2008, the Administrator released the policy paper 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres'[85], which has served as the basis for formalizing the current institutional efforts for regionalization in UNDP. Regional service centres were established in Bangkok, Bratislava, Cairo, Dakar, Johannesburg and Panama. Other regionally based units, including the Trinidad and Tobago SURF, the Pacific Subregional Centre and the Colombo Regional Centre defined their configuration in consultation with Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) and the respective regional bureau. Regional programmes were also an important part of the institutional architecture. Regional programmes are managed from headquarters in some cases and from regional service centres in others but are implemented through regional and country offices.

The 2008 policy paper confirmed the primary objective of the regional service centres to support country offices in assisting programme countries to achieve development results through:

- *Advisory services:* The regional service centres consolidate and anchor the practice architecture in the regions to support country office work. Practice is understood as encompassing the entirety of UNDP experience, knowledge and expertise in a programmatic or management area and includes UNDP staff members and experts working at the country, regional and global levels. The practice consists of dedicated advisory services for the four strategic plan focus areas, namely poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and sustainable development, as well as for the cross-cutting themes of gender equality and women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and capacity development. The level, substantive focus and orientation of each of these core posts are determined in agreement with each regional bureau and formalized via long term agreements.

- *Implementation of regional programmes:* With respect to regional programme implementation, the functions of the regional service centres are determined by the needs of each region, with overall accountability resting with the regional director.

- *Country operations:* The regional service centres can provide direct services to design, manage and implement country programmes where there is no country-based representation.

- *Support to management results:* This is based on demand and needs in order to meet corporate standards agreed upon with the Bureau of Management (BOM), and formalized via long term agreements with each regional bureau.

The policy clarified that while management of any of the above-mentioned support services could be delegated to the regional service centres, responsibility for regional bureau oversight and quality control functions would remain with the regional director and his/her team in New York. Responsibility for the management of the regionalization process was vested with the Operations Group within UNDP, but the main parties to the agreement were BDP, the regional bureaux, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and BOM.

**UNDP support to the attainment of regional and global goals of member countries, through funding under the global cooperation framework and the regional cooperation frameworks (RCFs):** UNDP is concentrated for action at

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85    UNDP, 'Functional Alignment of and Implementation Arrangements for Regional Service Centres',
      Bureau for Development Policy, 2008.

country level, where its greatest comparative strength is believed to lie, and global and regional programmes account for less than 5 percent of resources. The first cooperation frameworks began in 1997 and the current frameworks (the third) generally cover the period 2007-2010. The frameworks are designed to deliver on UNDP strategic pillars and cross-cutting issues as prioritized in the UNDP strategic plan (2008-2011, extended to 2013) with particular reference to the needs and priorities of each region. They are thus intended to particularly address:

- Transboundary issues at a regional or subregional level

- South-South cooperation and support to the development of regional organizations

- Mutual learning on common issues (regional and subregional knowledge management)

- Issues that are more difficult to address at the level of individual country programmes because of their sensitivity

The second round of regional frameworks have been evaluated by the UNDP Evaluation Office and a number of strengths and weaknesses were identified.

In short, UNDP has established an institutional framework and regional structure designed to support the attainment of development results at national level as well as addressing countries' transboundary objectives and improving UNDP efficiency.

## 3. RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

Elements of UNDP strategy to regionalization have been evaluated, such as the five regional cooperation frameworks and the global cooperation framework, and reviews have been commissioned by senior management in the organization. However, the overall performance of the UNDP approach to regionalization as a major strategic decision is yet to be independently evaluated. The proposed evaluation seeks

to provide a systematic, independent analysis of UNDP cumulative experience in regionalization and its contribution to development results and UNDP efficiency. The Evaluation Office will thus conduct a thematic evaluation on the UNDP approach to regionalization beginning February 2010 for presentation to the UNDP Executive Board in September 2010. Conclusions and recommendations will be shared with the senior management of UNDP and main stakeholders in June 2010 for their feedback prior to finalization. The evaluation will draw lessons and provide a set of forward-looking proposals to inform management and Executive Board decisions—designed to strengthen the contribution of the UNDP approach to regionalization in the efficient achievement of development results at the national, regional and global levels. The evaluation will:

- Assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of UNDP regionalization efforts in contributing to the achievement of development results as specified in the multi-year funding framework (MYFF) and the strategic plan

- Evaluate how support to poverty reduction, environment and sustainable development, and conflict prevention and recovery, and the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, HIV/AIDS and capacity development benefited from the UNDP approach to regionalization

- Evaluate how relevant, effective and efficient the UNDP contribution to the achievement of regional public goods has been, as defined in strategic documents and agreements

- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of UNDP internal institutional and working arrangements for regionalization in achieving development results

## 4. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION AND ISSUES IN UNDP REGIONALIZATION

The period considered by the evaluation will span from 2000 to 2010, but as this is designed as a forward looking formative evaluation and there have been significant changes in the approach

and instruments of regionalization over the period, the main concentration will be lessons from the second cycle of regional programme frameworks and the changes in performance from the transition to regional service centres. This time-frame also overlaps with the introduction of the first MYFF (2000-2003), the second MYFF (2004-2007) and the strategic plan (2008-2011, extended to 2013). These frameworks were designed to better define the organizational strategies and intended results and enhance the consistency and focus of UNDP.

The evaluation will have an inception phase designed to establish a baseline of what is already known and to identify and focus the key issues in which the evaluation should concentrate. Issues will be prioritized in order to deliver meaningful analysis, findings and recommendations in the time-frame and resources available. The evaluation may also give somewhat more concentrated attention to those regions with the greatest potential for benefits.

The evaluation will undertake analyses of:

- The extent to which UNDP regionalization has contributed to the achievement of strategic objectives as stated in the strategic plan, the MYFFs and relevant programming frameworks. Focus will be on the contributions of UNDP in strengthening national and regional capacities in achieving development results.

- The appropriateness of the regional institutional arrangements, including regional programmes, regional service centres and SURFs, to provide advisory services and knowledge management for the achievement of results, in particular in: poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and sustainable development, and crisis prevention and recovery, and the cross-cutting issues of gender equality and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

- The efficiency of the regional institutional set up for managing for development results, including its support to country operations,

to the implementation of regional programmes and to the functioning of the United Nations RDTs.

- Initial consideration has identified the following main areas for further study and definition, which will be refined and focused during the inception phase.

Development results issues will include:

- **Regional development results:** How can UNDP better support regional development impact through its global and regional programmes? The evaluations conducted of the RCFs to date contain a series of common findings that cut across regions and these will be deepened, looking at how to address the problems and build on the strengths. Common weaknesses identified to date include: fragmented programmes inadequate to achieve critical mass; a lack of adequate time-frame for capacity-building, especially for the least developed countries; inadequate links to national UNDP programmes; some inadequacies in technical competences, particularly in macroeconomics and trade; and inadequate ownership of the regional programmes by both countries and UNDP at country level. A particular strength was the capacity of regional and subregional programmes to advocate on issues that would not be possible to address in many countries directly at the national level, but HIV/AIDS was found to be an overcrowded field with marginal UNDP value added. There was a general a reassertion of UNDP comparative strength in matters of governance.

- **Getting the best from the United Nations system—United Nations development coherence at regional and subregional levels:** Just as UNDP has taken the lead at country level, how effective is it and how can it assist greater system coherence and access to United Nations resources at regional and subregional levels? This may extend from coordination of support to South-South cooperation and regional organizations, to identification of common issues among

countries and sources of United Nations system support. How effectively has UNDP interacted with regional organizations and the United Nations regional commissions and other United Nations organizations, regional programmes and capacities?

- **Regional programme support for national results:** As countries become more developed and their economies more globalized, maximizing on the benefits of global and regional public goods becomes more and more important. For the poorest countries, cross-boundary issues of migration, security, water, etc. are often critical. Some capacity development and learning may also be more efficiently carried out subregionally. It appears that the synergy between regional programmes and national results including in UNDP country programmes may be weak. Is this the case and why?

- **Support to national results from the global and regional UNDP institutional structure:** How effective has UNDP regional structure been in supporting the efficient and effective action of UNDP at country level?

- **Getting the balance right for development results in UNDP resource allocation— national, regional and global:** Is the balance right at present? Will it need to change in future? Decisions on resource allocation, including regionalization do have political implications and managing limited resources within organizations tends to create power struggles. The evaluation will necessarily deal with UNDP Executive Board and internal politics and decisions about resource allocations.

- **Appropriateness and efficiency in internal institutional structure for UNDP—the balance between functions fulfilled at headquarters, in the regions and at national level and the integration between them:** The current structure with the regional service centres was fully initiated in 2008 and will be completely in place for all centres in 2010. It is thus premature to draw any conclusions on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the

new arrangements. The evaluation will thus concentrate on:

- Perceived issues

- Areas where improvements or deterioration in performance appear to have occurred

- New opportunities provided by the institutional arrangements

UNDP established regional institutional arrangements, such as regional service centres and SURFs, but it also has regional and technical service institutional arrangements at headquarters with the same purpose, namely to provide support and advice to operations at national level. There are also technical and administrative resources at country level: Is the balance and integration arrangements between the functions performed at each level optimal? Divergences in models between regions and the experience of previous models, as well as looking at other agencies' experience may provide useful lessons and issues may include:

- **Customized response:** To what extent do regional structures enable the organization to provide a more customized response, especially at the national level based on regional and global knowledge? Has the approach been sufficiently customized to the needs of different regions and countries? What functions are best performed regionally in different regions and for different categories of countries (size of country and UNDP programme, level of development, etc.)?

- **Contribution of regionalization in strengthening UNDP as a 'knowledge organization':** With focal points at the country level, practice leaders at the regional service centres, and practice directors at the global level, UNDP has an institutional structure that can facilitate a connected organization. However, there are complexities in managing information consolidation, analysis and flows. How effective are the matrix structure and knowledge platforms and distribution of human resources at different levels in building and accessing knowledge?

- **Functions for the regional level:** Is the present balance of functions performed between headquarters the regions and country level about right?

  – Balance in oversight and support roles: Regional structures can play a dual role with oversight on one hand and support to the country level and regional programmes on the other. Is there a conflict in roles and if so how should this be addressed?

  – Is the regional level playing its optimal role in capacity-building and knowledge management?

  – Are the different regions getting the balance between regional programme support and national programme support right?

  – Is it always most efficient for country offices to perform all administrative and financial functions or is there a role for regional or subregional offices in performing such functions, especially for countries with small programmes?

- **Effective internal institutional arrangements:** What can be learned from UNDP experience and the experience of others in such areas as:

  – Arrangements for prioritizing and compensation for services to country offices and national programmes

  – A matrix command and reporting structure and networked organization

  – Flexible use of regional expertise for support to national and regional programmes through such arrangements as call down (retainer) contracts and contracts with regional and national governmental, non-governmental and private sector institutions

## 5. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

During the inception phase, the evaluation team will formulate in detail the methodology for the evaluation. The evaluation will be guided by the principles enshrined in the UNDP Evaluation Policy[86], including UNDP's overarching concern to foster human development, strengthen national ownership, facilitate United Nations system coordination and global partnership, and manage for development results. The evaluations will adhere to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards.

### 5.1 DATA COLLECTION

In terms of data collection, the evaluation will use a multiple method approach that could include desk reviews, workshops, group and individual interviews (at both headquarters and the country office), project/field visits and surveys. The appropriate set of methods would vary depending on country context and the precise nature would be determined during the scoping mission and detailed in an inception report.

### 5.2 VALIDATION

The evaluation team will use a variety of methods to ensure that the data is valid, including triangulation. Precise methods of validation will be detailed in the inception report.

### 5.3 STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

A strong participatory approach, involving a broad range of stakeholders will be laid out. The identification of the stakeholders, including government representatives of ministries/agencies, regional organizations, private sector representatives, United Nations organizations, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries will take place. To facilitate this approach, the evaluation includes a process of stakeholder

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[86] Available online at: <www.undp.org/eo/documents/Evaluation-Policy.pdf>.

mapping that would include both direct partners of UNDP as well as stakeholders who do not work directly with UNDP.

## 6. EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation will employ standard criteria of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, with findings tested through a process of triangulation. Following the inception phase, the issues and approach will be finalized and an evaluation matrix with issues and indicators incorporated as part of the final terms of reference. At this inception stage, it is envisaged that the evaluation will be carried out by a small team of four persons with a balance of institutional, subject matter and regional expertise (at this stage flexibility will be maintained to utilize additional resource persons for specific inputs). The team will employ a balance of the following instruments:

**Preliminary inception phase**

- Preliminary consultations within UNDP at global, regional and national levels to determine major perceived issues; this will be achieved through direct discussions, including a brief visit to two regional service centres and letters to countries, followed up with selected phone calls

- Establishment of a baseline of existing information, including on the results of previous evaluations, management reviews, management reports and from central databases on financial and human resources (this will proceed in parallel with the point above)

**Compilation of the evaluation data and information base**

- Stakeholder consultations and evidence gathering including:

  - Structured interviews and focus group discussions with each of the UNDP regional centres, selected country offices and headquarters through visits

  - Questionnaires and telephone interviews to donors, national governments, all UNDP country offices and bureaux, and

other United Nations organizations, possibly supplemented by some visits in parallel with other missions

  - Regional and headquarters workshops to discuss preliminary findings, possibly in conjunction with other meeting

- Comparisons with other agencies structures, practices and experiences as documented in evaluation studies and through direct consultation

**Analysis and report finalization**

- Analysis based on all the above information, including existing UNDP evaluations and management studies

- Feedback on the draft final report with fact checking and comments from senior management and the main internal stakeholders

| Timetable | Completion in 2010 by: |
|---|---|
| Inception phase | March 15 |
| Recruitment of full evaluation team | March 15 |
| Compilation of the evaluation data and information base | May 17 |
| Analysis and draft report or at minimum presentation of findings and recommendations | June 14 |
| Final report | July 19 |
| Presentation to UNDP Executive Board | September |

## 7. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

### 7.1 UNDP EVALUATION OFFICE

The UNDP Evaluation Office Task Manager will manage the evaluation and ensure coordination and liaison with UNDP headquarters and regional bureaux, other concerned units and the country office management where appropriate. The Evaluation Office will also contract a research assistant to facilitate the initial desk review. The Evaluation Office will meet all costs directly related to the conduct of the evaluation. These will include costs related to participation

of the team leader, international consultants, as well as the preliminary research and the issuance of the final evaluation report. The Evaluation Office will also cover costs of any stakeholder consultations as part of the evaluation.

## 7.2 THE EVALUATION TEAM

The team will be constituted of three to four members:

- Consultant team leader, with overall responsibility for providing guidance and leadership, and in coordinating the draft and final report

- Consultant team specialists, who will provide the expertise in the core subject areas of the evaluation, and be responsible for drafting key parts of the report

- The evaluation office task manager

The team leader must have a demonstrated capacity in strategic thinking and policy advice and in the evaluation of complex programmes in the field. All team members should have in-depth knowledge of development issues in Indonesia. While the team leader has the overall responsibility for putting the report together, each team member is responsible for providing detailed inputs regarding topics/thematic areas of the country programme. The division of labour is spelled out in the inception report.

The evaluation team will be supported by a research assistant based in the Evaluation Office in New York. The task manager of the Evaluation Office will support the team in designing the evaluation, participate in the scoping mission, and provide ongoing feedback for quality assurance during the preparation of the inception report and the final report. Depending on the needs, the Evaluation Office Task Manager might participate in the main mission too.

The evaluation team will orient its work by United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards for evaluation and will adhere to the ethical code of conduct.[87]

## 8. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The expected outputs from the evaluation team are:

- An inception report (maximum 20 pages)

- A comprehensive final report (maximum 50 pages plus annexes)

- A two-page evaluation brief

- A presentation for the stakeholder consultations including informal and formal presentation to the UNDP Executive Board

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[87]  United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Norms for Evaluation in the UN System' and 'Standards for Evaluation in the UN System', April 2005.

ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

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Annex 3

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UNDP Brazil

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Quijano, David, Programme Finance Associate,
UNDP Colombia

Ramguttee, Lovita, Assistant Resident
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UNDP Honduras

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UNDP Ukraine

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UNDP Colombia

Scheuer, Jo, Country Director,
UNDP Cambodia

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Reduction Cluster, UNDP Cambodia

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UNDP Egypt

Vrbensky, Rastislav, Country Director,
UNDP Tajikistan

Wiesen, Cailtin, Country Director,
UNDP India

Yengayenge, Carine, Deputy Country Director,
UNDP Senegal

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UNDP Cambodia

## GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

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League of Arab States (LAS)

Awad, Mohsen, Secretary General, Arab
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Hlavickova, Zuzana, Deputy Director,
Development Cooperation Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic

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Thomas, Koshy, Deputy Undersecretary,
Ministry of Finance, Malaysia

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Tkhilava, Nino, Head of Environmental Policy
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Ministry of Environment Protection and
Natural Resources, Georgia

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Latin America and the Caribbean, Office
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Horibe, Nobuko, Regional Director Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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Libert, Bo, Regional Adviser on Environment, Environment, Housing and Land Management Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

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Morsi, May, Representative in Egypt, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

Morrison, David, Executive Secretary United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

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Nunez, Cesar Antonio, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Oshidari, Kenro, Regional Director Asia and the Pacific, World Food Programme (WFP)

Rao Singh, Anupama, Regional Director EAPRO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Rivera Avni, Carla, Executive Director, Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG)

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Sinelina, Irina, Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Suazo, Marcela, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Villa Quintana, Carmen Rosa, Regional Representative, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

# RESULTS BY REGION OF THE PERCEPTION SURVEY OF COUNTRY OFFICES

## REGIONAL PROGRAMME

**Did the regional programme contribute to the achievement of development results at country level in the following areas?**
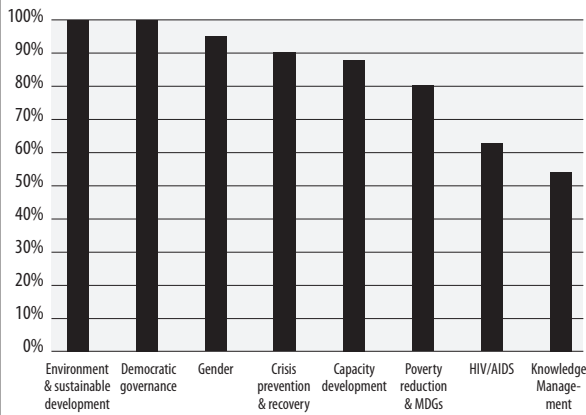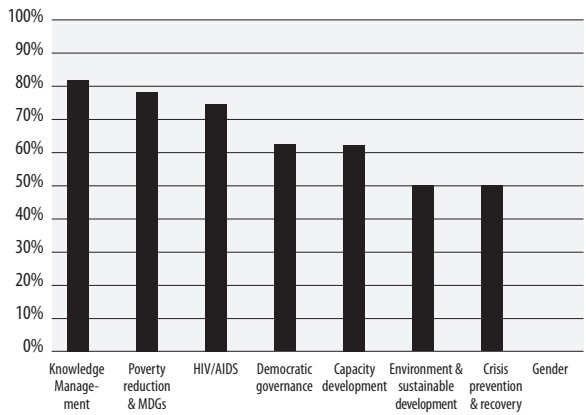
### EUROPE AND THE CIS



### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

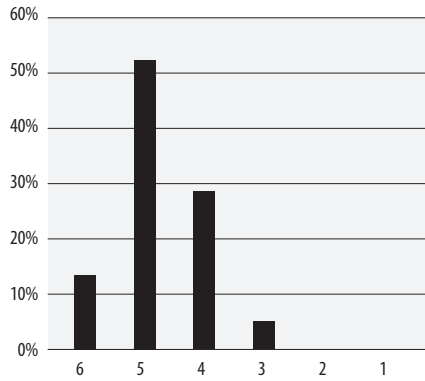

### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
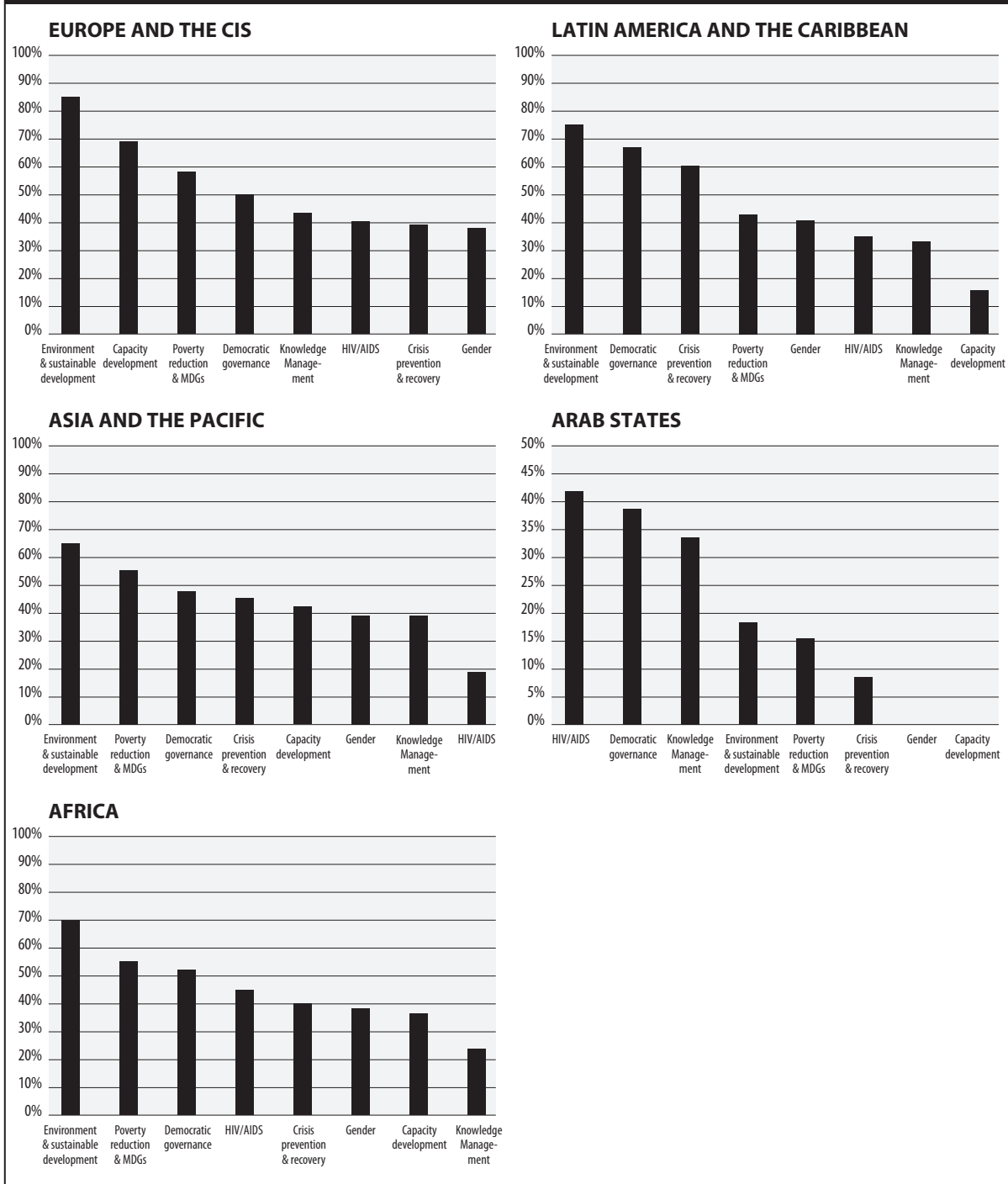


### ARAB STATES



### AFRICA

# REGIONAL SERVICE CENTRES

**In which areas has the regional service centre contributed to the achievement of development results at the country level?**

### EUROPE AND THE CIS



Bar chart (descending): Environment & sustainable development 100%, Poverty reduction & MDGs 90%, Democratic governance 72%, Capacity development 71%, Gender 67%, Crisis prevention & recovery 62%, HIV/AIDS 58%, Knowledge Management 50%.

### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



Bar chart (descending): Environment & sustainable development 91%, Crisis prevention & recovery 72%, Democratic governance 67%, Gender 60%, Capacity development 51%, Poverty reduction & MDGs 52%, Knowledge Management 42%, HIV/AIDS 42%.

### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



Bar chart (descending): Environment & sustainable development 100%, Democratic governance 100%, Gender 95%, Crisis prevention & recovery 90%, Capacity development 88%, Poverty reduction & MDGs 80%, HIV/AIDS 63%, Knowledge Management 54%.

### ARAB STATES



Bar chart (descending): Knowledge Management 81%, Poverty reduction & MDGs 78%, HIV/AIDS 74%, Democratic governance 62%, Capacity development 62%, Environment & sustainable development 50%, Crisis prevention & recovery 50%, Gender 0%.

### AFRICA



Bar chart (descending): Environment & sustainable development 93%, Democratic governance 82%, Gender 79%, Capacity development 79%, Poverty reduction & MDGs 77%, Crisis prevention & recovery 73%, HIV/AIDS 73%, Knowledge Management 57%.

**What is the country offices' overall satisfaction with support received from the regional service centre?**

(6 being the highest and 1 being the lowest satisfaction level)

### EUROPE AND THE CIS



### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
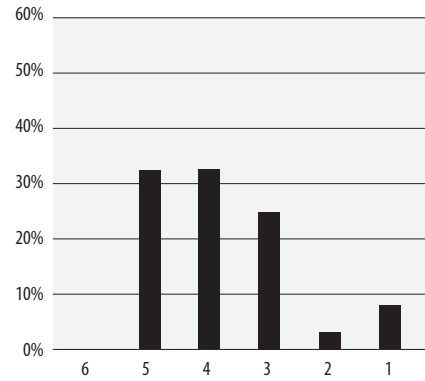


### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
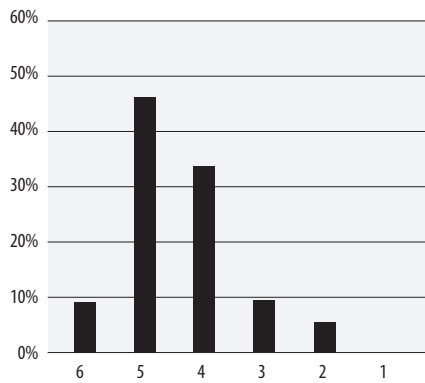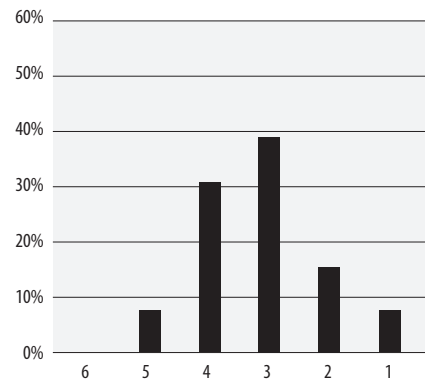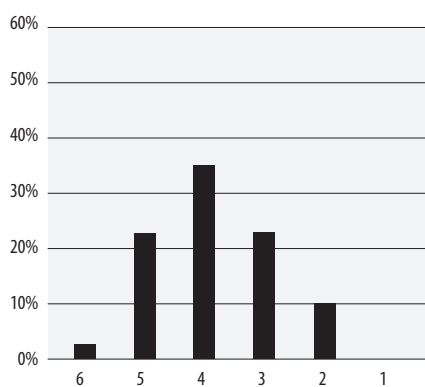


### ARAB STATES



### AFRICA

## How did the services provided by the regional service centre compare with the services previously provided by the SURF?
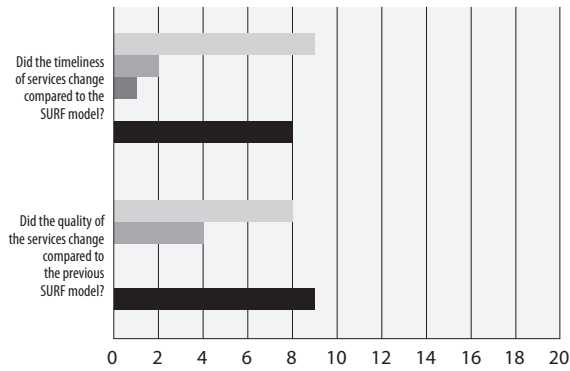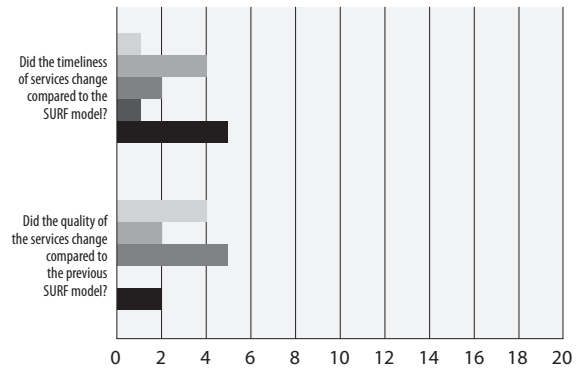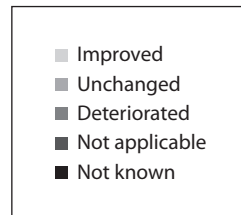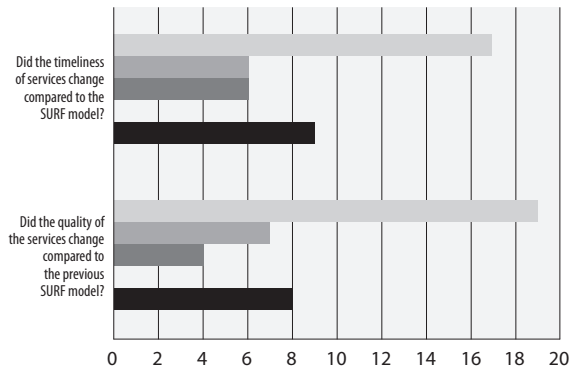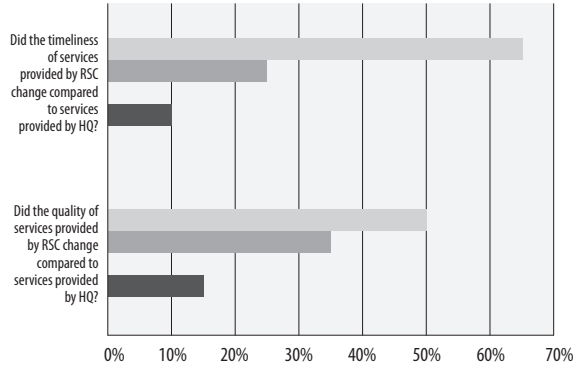
### EUROPE AND THE CIS



### LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



### ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



### ARAB STATES



### AFRICA



**Legend:**
- Improved
- Unchanged
- Deteriorated
- Not applicable
- Not known

**How did the services provided by the regional service centre compare with the services previously provided by headquarters?**

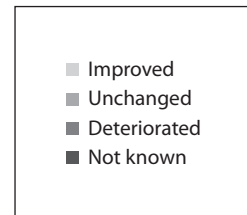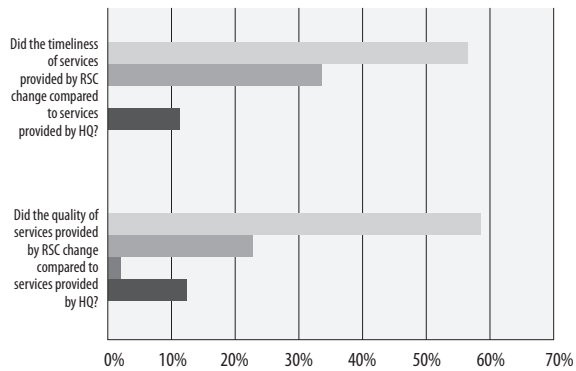## EUROPE AND THE CIS



## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



## ASIA AND THE PACIFIC



## ARAB STATES



## AFRICA



Legend:
- Improved
- Unchanged
- Deteriorated
- Not known
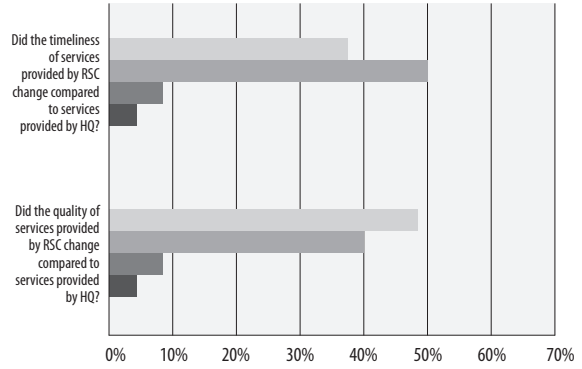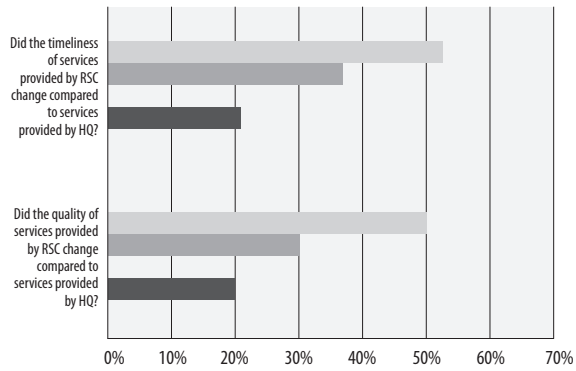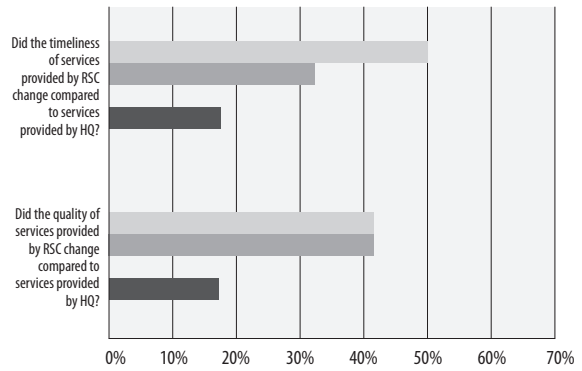
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