MONITORING FOR RESULTS

The previous chapter provided guidance on how to plan for monitoring and evaluation including developing an M&E framework and effectively addressing other planning needs, such as securing resources and capacities for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities. This chapter provides step-by-step guidance on how to implement planned monitoring activities. It also presents useful tools and tips for effective monitoring and use of monitoring evidence in decision making.
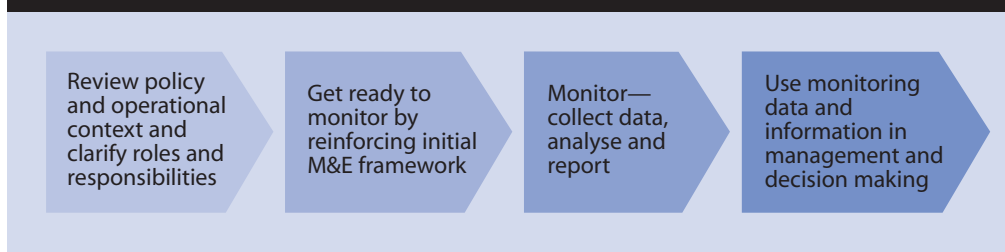
The chapter follows the general steps of implementation of monitoring:

1. Have a clear common understanding of the following:
   a. The **monitoring policies** applicable to the respective monitoring entity
   b. Relevant **roles and responsibilities** and how they are applied in monitoring for both outcomes and outputs, and management entities in projects and programmes
   c. Commonly used monitoring tools and approaches

2. Reinforce and elaborate the initial monitoring framework (described in Chapter 3) with detailed information needed to implement monitoring actions. This includes finalizing reference points for periodic monitoring such as indicators, baselines, risks, and annual targets, and locking them in monitoring information systems.

3. Implement monitoring actions: organize, plan and implement monitoring actions, using selected tools for collection and analysis of data and reporting.

4. Use monitoring data objectively for management action and decision making.

These steps are depicted in Figure 13.

There is no blueprint for monitoring that can be applied to all monitoring situations. The monitoring approach an organization uses in a given situation—for example, in a

Figure 13. General steps for implementing monitoring

Review policy and operational context and clarify roles and responsibilities → Get ready to monitor by reinforcing initial M&E framework → Monitor—collect data, analyse and report → Use monitoring data and information in management and decision making

country, regional or global programme, or in a development project—depends on many factors. They include corporate accountability requirements (both organizational and developmental), and the complexity, scope and context of the results being pursued. The substance of monitoring and approaches used by organizations such as UNDP, its subunits, programmes and projects depend to a great extent on corporate monitoring policies. This chapter presents these elements in the operational context of UNDP.

> **TIP** Monitoring is part of programme and project management not an addition to it. Monitoring should not be regarded as merely a management or reporting requirement. Rather, it should be regarded as an opportunity to:
>
> ■ Engage beneficiaries so that they feel ownership of results being achieved and are motivated to sustain them.
>
> ■ Demonstrate achievement of development results, how they benefit the intended people, and leverage support of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders to address any operational challenges faced.
>
> ■ Nurture an inclusive and purposeful monitoring culture to make implementation and management effective and interesting as well as to ease gathering of data and evidence objectively to back achievements and make decisions.

4.1 MONITORING POLICY OF UNDP, ITS OPERATIONAL CONTEXT AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

POLICY CONTEXT FOR MONITORING

Any organization that strives for results requires a robust, continuous and effective monitoring system. This requirement becomes even more relevant for UNDP, as the organization is aiming for results that: are nationally owned and form part of the multi-stakeholder framework, such as the UNDAF or national development plan; cover global, regional and country levels; are defined and achieved through the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders; and have to be accounted for. UNDP works towards a robust monitoring system through effective policies, tools, processes and systems so that it can meet the multiple monitoring challenges it faces.

The monitoring policy of UNDP is stated in the POPP and notes that all results—outcomes and outputs—to which UNDP is contributing must be monitored, regardless of budget and duration. Each programme supported by UNDP must be monitored to ensure that:

- The outcomes agreed in each programme (country, regional and global) and their constituent projects are being achieved. This is a collective responsibility among UNDP and its partners. However, UNDP is responsible for monitoring its contribution towards the outcome by ensuring that the outputs being generated with UNDP assistance are contributing towards the outcome.

- Each constituent project of the respective programme produces the envisaged outputs in an efficient manner as per the overall development plan and the corresponding annual workplan. This is a specific UNDP responsibility.

- Decisions of programmes and projects are based on facts and evidence.

- Lessons learned are systematically captured for knowledge and improving future programmes and projects.

The UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011 further emphasizes that outcomes must be nationally owned, hence the first line of accountability rests with national authorities. UNDP will contribute to those outcomes. Therefore, its chief accountability must be for its contributions to national development impact. The on-the-ground performance of UNDP should be assessed first at the country level, as part of a joint process with governments and other partners, and second at the corporate level by senior management and the Executive Board, based on monitoring and evaluation data. UNDP is directly accountable for the corporate services and global and regional programmes that support country programmes.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT FOR MONITORING

The key reference for monitoring is the M&E framework associated with each programme (see Chapter 3). Within this, the results frameworks (sometimes referred to as 'results and resources frameworks') of the corresponding planning documents—such as the UNDAF, Global Programme Document, Regional Programme Document, CPD and constituent project documents—further indicate what is to be monitored. The results frameworks state: the selected national, regional and global development results towards which UNDP contributes, including UN level outcomes as applicable (based on the UNDAF); outcomes more specifically addressed by UNDP support at the country level (in CPDs), regionally (in regional programme documents) and globally (in global programme documents); and outputs associated with each outcome. The results frameworks also give indicators, baseline and targets for each outcome and output as applicable.

While the prime objective of monitoring in UNDP is achievement of results, it is also necessary to monitor the appropriate use of resources at all levels. UNDP does this through monitoring at three levels: outputs and projects, outcomes and programme.
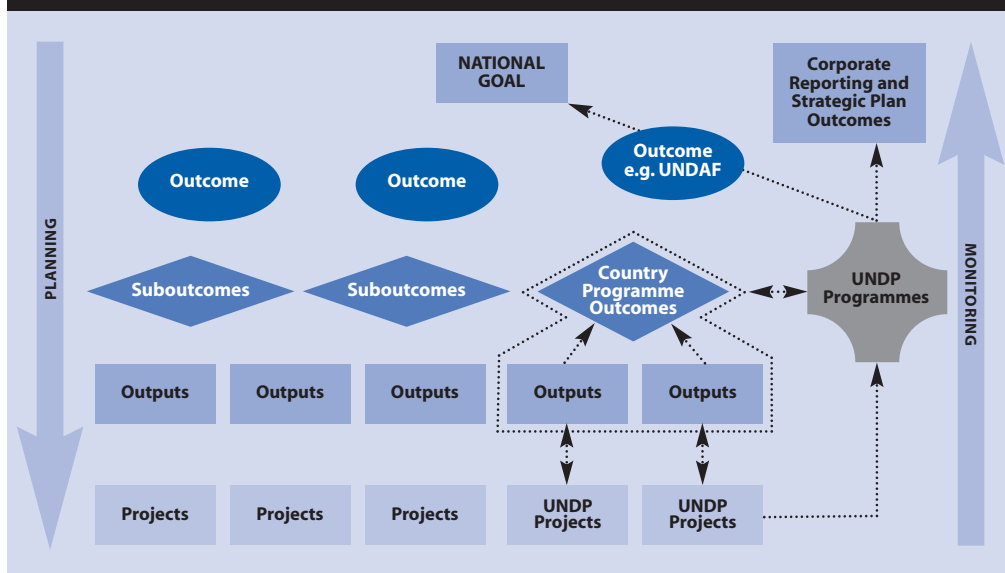
Figure 14. Outcome-output-project nexus

Figure 14 depicts the nexus among:

- The results continuum: outcomes and outputs

- The management arrangements and entities of projects and programmes

- The interrelationships at the three levels of projects, programmes and results (both outcomes and outputs)

From Figure 14, the following can be noted.

Project and output level

The project is the entity that uses inputs and resources and converts them to activities and outputs. It is also the entity from which monitoring actions begin. Outputs generated by projects are always connected directly to an outcome.[28] UNDP projects normally operate in complex development settings and it is important to be clear on each project's role, deliverables and outputs, and their connections to other projects to avoid mix ups.

There is a critical responsibility at each project level with regards to the generation of the planned output through a carefully planned set of relevant and effective activities, and proper use of resources allocated for those activities. Both these aspects must be monitored. The primary responsibility for monitoring at the project or output level lies

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28 In some cases, it is also possible that an output may be connected to more than one outcome. For example, a database on displaced communities generated by one project could serve not only an outcome on safety of the displaced, but also other outcomes relating, *inter alia*, to their education and nutrition and health standards, etc.

with the project manager. Primary monitoring tools used at the project level by UNDP are: the corporate project management system (Atlas); field visits, consultations and reviews with stakeholders; Annual (and quarterly) Project Reports; and the Annual Project Review Process.

Outcome level

The outcomes are achieved by the generation of outputs through projects (and other related activities such as soft advocacy). These projects and related activities could be supported by UNDP or others.

In UN and UNDP operating environments, there are normally more than one outcome hierarchies: UNDAF outcomes and UNDP country programme outcomes. In Figure 14, higher level outcomes, such as UNDAF or national outcomes, are depicted by oval shapes. The country programme outcomes are depicted by diamond shapes. They could also be conceived as suboutcomes that lie within a higher level national or UNDAF outcome as depicted.

NOTE There could be a number of suboutcomes associated with a broad national outcome or an UNDAF outcome. They serve the purpose of convenience of communication and presentation, particularly in complex results frameworks and multi-agency environments such as UN and UNDP cycles. Sub-outcomes may be referred to differently, for example, as 'intermediary outcomes'. Note also that in some cases they may not be needed. For example, an output generated by a national agency or a single donor (for example, World Bank) could be directly connected to a national-level outcome without necessarily a sub-outcome level. Sub outcomes or country programme outcomes encourage UNDP to remain focused on its mandate and comparative advantage while addressing a UNDAF or national outcome.

Monitoring at a given outcome level requires a clear understanding of all contributory outputs to the outcome from all partners and the connections of the sub-outcomes to other levels of outcomes. Each partner is responsible for its own contribution toward the outcome, but the responsibility for monitoring the overall outcome is shared among all partners. For practical purposes, one of the partners should be assigned the responsibility to coordinate among the partners. Given the primacy of national ownership for all development results, primary responsibility for monitoring at the outcome level should be with the government or a national institution. UNDP supports this monitoring function of national institutions and focuses on developing their capacities for monitoring. This focus can extend to developing national monitoring systems. However, such capacity development activities should be elaborated within overall capacity development approaches as stated in the UNDP approach for capacity development[29] (referred to in Chapter 3).

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29 UNDP, 'Supporting Capacity Development: The UNDP Approach', and UNDP, 'Practice Note on Capacity Development'.

Primary monitoring tools used at the outcome level by UNDP are: the corporate results management system (RBM Platform); field visits, consultations and reviews with stakeholders; findings from project and programme monitoring; Annual Reports; and the Annual Programme and UNDAF Review Process. For outcome monitoring, UNDP systems should be augmented by links to national systems and those of other development partners. UNDP should always seek to engage existing national processes in this regard.

UNDP programme level

Depicted by the cross shape in Figure 14, UNDP programmes support several projects and outcomes. Programme-level monitoring entails:

- Oversight of all constituent projects

- Monitoring for each outcome that is being supported by programme funds

- Accountability of the programme for UNDAF, contribution to national results, and achieving the corporate outcomes in the Strategic Plan

The primary responsibility with UNDP at the programme level rests with the programme manager. The monitoring tools used at the programme level by UNDP are generally the same as those used at the outcome level.

It is important to understand that while outputs and outcomes are intrinsic elements of the results chain, projects and programmes are, in effect, arrangements to manage the generation of the outputs towards achieving outcomes. UNDP monitoring covers all the above elements.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MONITORING

Monitoring of development results takes place at different levels—typically the national, programme, outcome and project output. There are specific individual and collective monitoring responsibilities at each level for partner organizations.

While some monitoring functions can be assigned to specific entities or functionaries, such as project managers at the project or output level, monitoring responsibilities at outcome and higher result levels are collective efforts. Successful monitoring and achievement of results depends on each partner being clear on their individual and shared roles and responsibilities. The respective roles and responsibilities associated at each point at which monitoring takes place and how they apply to UNDP programmes and projects are indicated in Table 18.

4.2 PREPARING TO MONITOR BY REINFORCING THE INITIAL M&E PLAN

Once there is clear understanding on the monitoring policy, operational context and roles and responsibilities, one can prepare to implement monitoring actions. The first activity in implementing monitoring activities is to ensure that the M&E framework is up to date. The M&E framework prepared at the end of the planning stage of a programme or project (described in Chapter 3), forms the basis for this purpose. It should be carefully reviewed and elaborated as necessary.

Table 18. Roles and responsibilities for monitoring		
Who: Actors and Accountability	**What: Roles and Responsibilities**	**How: Timing and Methodology**
National authorities Main responsibilities: ■ Lead and oversee national programmes to determine progress towards intended results ■ Identify and manage partnerships	**Monitoring for programme level results** ■ To ensure nationally owned results-based monitoring and evaluation ■ To provide clear basis for decision making and guide development initiatives ■ To use partner monitoring systems based on their comparative advantages ■ To link results with resources and ensure accountability in the use of resources ■ To ensure quality and the appropriate use of monitoring evidence and lessons learned ■ To resolve key bottlenecks to implementation in order to improve the chances of achieving results (outcomes)	1. At initial planning stages ■ Through active participation in development and approval of M&E frameworks for national programmes and UNDAF 2. Annual reviews (of progress towards results) by ■ Reviewing progress, issues, and trends in the achievement of results given in documents for the annual review ■ Making decisions on changes as needed ■ Approving future work including M&E tasks 3. Participating in joint monitoring (selectively as decided by prior agreement with partners)
Senior managers of UNDP programmes Main responsibilities: ■ Lead, implement and monitor the progress of country programmes, together with governments, UN organizations and other partners ■ Collaborate with national partners to determine the focus and intended results of UNDP assistance to the country ■ Identify and manage partnerships ■ Assess the overall performance of UNDP assistance to the country (progress towards and achievement of results) ■ Ensure the strategic and cost-effective use of UNDP resources	**Monitoring for programme level results** ■ To forge strong coalitions for results ■ To provide clear basis for decision making and guide development initiatives ■ To ensure active and results-based monitoring ■ To ensure quality and the appropriate use of monitoring evidence and lessons learned ■ To resolve key bottlenecks to implementation in order to improve the chances of achieving results (outcomes) ■ To link results with resources and ensure accountability in the use of resources ■ To adjust UNDP assistance in view of emerging changes as required ■ To position UNDP strategically within the framework of development cooperation with the country ■ To approve M&E framework for the programme (for UNDP CPAP M&E Plan) in line with UNDAF and national M&E plans as applicable ■ To use project and outcome level monitoring data and feed it into programme discussions	1. At initial planning stages ■ Through active participation in the development and approval of M&E framework 2. Participate in joint monitoring (see above) 3. Prior to annual reviews by ■ Determining strategic contribution being made by programme towards results through review of outcome group reviews and Annual Project Reports ■ Deciding on strategic changes needed in programme results and resources, if needed ■ Finalizing evidence-based contribution of programme as a whole to annual review 4. Participate in annual reviews

Table 18 (cont-d). Roles and responsibilities for monitoring		
Who: Actors and Accountability	**What: Roles and Responsibilities**	**How: Timing and Methodology**

UNDP portfolio managers
Main responsibilities:
■ Contribute to sectoral/outcome level coordination mechanisms
■ Manage UNDP portfolio of programmes and projects in a thematic area such as governance or poverty, in other words, UNDP contribution to outcomes
	At outcome level
	■ To analyse progress towards achievement of outcomes
	■ To assess the efficacy of partnership strategies and take related actions (e.g., better coordination with partners)
	■ To monitor the effectiveness of implementation strategies in tackling the constraints to the achievement of results (outcomes) and take related actions
	■ To ensure effective use of resources, deploying them to maximize the possibility of achieving results (outcomes)
	■ To discern and promote capacity development in monitoring and evaluation
	■ To use project-level monitoring data and feed it into outcome-level discussions
		1. At initial planning stages
		  ■ Through active participation in development and approval of M&E framework for respective outcomes
		2. Throughout programme cycle by carrying out monitoring activities and joint monitoring
		3. Prior to annual reviews by determining:
		  ■ Progress towards the achievement of outcomes
		  ■ Progress of the partnership strategies for achieving outcomes
		  ■ Rate and efficiency of resource use
		  ■ Issues that require decisions at the annual reviews
		  ■ Inputs to programme reviews and annual reviews
		4. Participate in annual reviews at the outcome level

Project managers and staff
Main responsibilities:
■ Manage UNDP-assisted projects to help produce outputs
■ Contribute to project management and project performance
	At project level, monitoring outputs
	■ To ground the project in the larger context
	■ To take steps towards achieving output targets
	■ To ensure effective collaboration with partners
	■ To interface with beneficiaries
	■ To ensure efficient use of resources
	■ To feed information of project data to higher level monitoring (outcome and programme-level monitoring)
		1. At initial planning stages
		  ■ Development of and agreement on M&E framework for project through an inclusive process
		2. Throughout programme cycle by carrying out monitoring activities connected with the project
		3. Prior to annual reviews by determining:
		  ■ Progress towards the achievement of outputs and contribution related outcomes
		  ■ Rate and efficiency of resource use
		  ■ Issues that require decisions at the annual reviews
		  ■ Inputs to programme reviews and annual reviews in the Annual Project Reports
		4. Ensure holding annual reviews of the project

There is no artificially fixed time for elaborating the M&E framework, except that it should be done prior to implementing programme initiatives and as close as possible to when actual implementation starts. For UNDP country, regional and global programmes, the detailed programme-level M&E framework should be prepared after the submission of the respective programme documents for Executive Board approval.

The period of six to nine months prior to the beginning of the programme implementation cycle is often opportune to do this. For country programmes, this period is when the CPAP and its constituent projects and their AWPs are prepared. Such timing helps forge better linkages and mutual reinforcement between programmes and projects, thereby not only increasing the overall coherence of the programmes, but also enabling monitoring to be focused on a coherent set of programmatic activities and targets.

As noted in Chapter 3, the M&E framework comprises three components: a narrative component, a results framework and a planning matrix for monitoring and evaluation. Any changes that might be needed to the narrative component are unlikely to be substantial, and updating of that component would be relatively straightforward. However, there might be a need to refine the results map and the planning matrix for monitoring and evaluation on the basis of new (and more accurate) information that emerges during the development of specific projects. Detailed information on the outcomes, outputs and related indicators, baselines, risks, and assumptions becomes clearer during the development stages of the CPAP and specific constituent projects, which take place subsequent to the initial overall programme planning stage. Data that emerges during detailed project development stages could significantly improve the initial descriptions of outputs, indicators, baselines, risks and assumptions, and thereby enhance the effectiveness and quality of monitoring. Moreover, the M&E framework is first prepared at the end of the planning process, which is focused on planning for results. Detailed information pertaining to implementation or monitoring (for example, type or scheduling of monitoring events, methods to be used, and so forth) could not have been easily accessible or accurately predicted at that time. Therefore, it should be carefully reviewed and incorporated at this stage.

Elaborating the M&E framework provides the opportunity for the M&E framework to be a more realistic and effective tool for monitoring. An example of the planning matrix is given in Table 14 based on the sample results table on the enhanced capacity of electoral management authority discussed in Chapter 2.

For UNDP, at the country level, the CPAP is the overall instrument for managing results. The M&E framework for the CPAP should be prepared and finalized along with the CPAP and ideally be seen as a constituent component to the latter. Similarly, for regional and global programmes, M&E frameworks should be prepared mirroring the respective programme approved by the Executive Board.

Updating the M&E framework is not a one-time event. Each time a significant change to the results framework is effected, for example when existing projects are completed or new projects are added to the CPAP, both the CPAP and the M&E framework should be revised and approved. Annual work planning is the most pertinent point for this continuous updating of the CPAP and M&E framework.

The finalization of the CPAP and the M&E framework is a critical point in initiating monitoring. The following four actions should take place in this phase:

- **At the individual project level, develop detailed M&E frameworks** for projects in accordance with the generation of project specific outputs. The project-level outputs should be the same as those in overall planning documents of programmes (CPDs, CPAPs, and regional and global programme documents) and their M&E frameworks. Furthermore, the project results matrices and the project M&E plans should be synchronized with the programmes and their M&E plans. Initial data needed for setting up monitoring should be gathered during the formulation stage of each project. The project results and monitoring information should then be entered into relevant national, corporate, project or programme management information systems (for UNDP, this is Atlas).

- As projects are implemented through AWPs, it is critical to **set annual targets for outputs and clearly reflect them in the AWPs** of projects for monitoring purposes at the end of the year. (See Section 4.3 for further details on AWPs.) Unlike outcomes, each partner responsible for an output has to generate the entire output that is contributing towards the outcome. Therefore, what matters most in project-level monitoring is to have clear means to indicate progress towards generating the entire output through annual targets.

- **Once agreed upon, lock annual output targets in AWPs** for performance monitoring in any existing national or corporate results management or outcome monitoring systems. For UNDP, the annual output targets in AWPs of projects would also serve as the reference points in the corporate results monitoring systems. They are therefore first entered in Atlas and then captured by the RBM Platform.

- **At the programme level, ensure that the elaborated programme-level M&E framework** and the constituent projects flow from outputs to outcomes (results logic) and from projects to country programme (management entities).

Once these activities have been completed, the monitoring actions can be systematically implemented.

4.3   MONITOR: COLLECTION OF DATA, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

SCOPE OF MONITORING

Monitoring aims to identify progress towards results, precipitate decisions that would increase the likelihood of achieving results, enhance accountability and learning. All monitoring efforts should, at a minimum, address the following:

- Progress towards outcomes—This entails periodically analysing the extent to which intended outcomes have actually been achieved or are being achieved.

- Factors contributing to or impeding achievement of the outcomes—This necessitates monitoring the country context and the economic, sociological, political and other developments simultaneously taking place and is closely linked to risk management.

- Individual partner contributions to the outcomes through outputs—These outputs may be generated by programmes, projects, policy advice, advocacy and other activities. Their monitoring and evaluation entails analysing whether or not

outputs are in the process of being delivered as planned and whether or not the outputs are contributing to the outcome.

- Partnership strategy—This requires the review of current partnership strategies and their functioning as well as formation of new partnerships as needed. This helps to ensure that partners who are concerned with an outcome have a common appreciation of problems and needs, and that they share a synchronized strategy.

- Lessons being learned and creation of knowledge products for wider sharing.

Partners may add additional elements where needed for management or analysis, while keeping a realistic scope in view of available capacities. Monitoring usually provides raw data that requires further analysis and synthesis prior to reporting for decision making. Using information gained through monitoring, programme managers must analyse and take action on the programme and project activities to ensure that the intended results—results that are in the agreed results and resources frameworks—are being achieved. Managers of programmes also monitor and document the contributions of soft development initiatives and strategic partnerships.

PRIORITIZING MONITORING

In practice, it is necessary to prioritize monitoring. Two factors can help assign monitoring priority: **criticality** of a UNDP contribution to the attainment of the overall result; and the severity of **risks** it faces. As the criticality and severity of risks change, the corresponding priority attached monitoring of an initiative also changes.

Criticality of a UNDP project or an initiative is considered high when: it is connected with a tight time-bound high national priority; there is critical reliance on relevant UNDP comparative strengths, expertise and competencies for the achievement of planned results; or it involves a critical UNDP coordination role entrusted by government and other partners.

Risks are initially identified in the results frameworks with their potential impacts. However, during programme and project implementation, additional risks may arise from a changing operational environment (such as a crisis) that may have to be factored in when prioritizing monitoring.

Based on the two criteria of criticality and risks, as indicated in Figure 15, it is possible to determine four broad categories to assign priority in monitoring. It is also possible to identify which of the two aspects should be followed more closely.

MONITORING IN CRISIS SETTINGS

Standard processes of planning, monitoring and evaluation that apply in 'normal' developmental contexts need to be modified in order to be sensitive to crisis situations. In crisis contexts, monitoring approaches and processes should include:

- Reference in the M&E framework to conflict-sensitive measures that need to be considered in implementing monitoring actions. These actions should flow from the situation analysis that applies to a given programme or project.

Figure 15. Prioritizing monitoring

High criticality to success

High need for monitoring focused on contribution to outcomes.

Very high need for monitoring.

Need to triangulate risks and contribution to outcomes.

Low risk ← → **High risk**

Least need for monitoring of contribution and/or triangulation with risks.

High need for monitoring focused on risks.

Low criticality to success

- Monitoring should continually feed back to the conflict analysis—and the big picture—in order to make sure understanding of the crisis is up to date. Monitoring should also inform any changes that may be required to results maps.

- Crisis situations are normally very fluid. Therefore, monitoring actions should be sensitive to changing circumstances. For example, monitoring schedules and data gathering methods may require frequent review and changes.

- Take additional measures to make monitoring processes inclusive of the most vulnerable groups. Interviews, field visits, documents consulted, and all information gathered should be triangulated as much as possible to prevent bias. Furthermore, officials should be consulted regularly to ensure their ownership of results as well as to maintain credibility and balance in monitoring.

- Monitoring can help address intragroup disparities—**particularly gender-related disparities**—that can result from development initiatives. This applies particularly to vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced people, minorities and indigenous groups. Particular attention should be paid to disaggregating monitoring data by sex, age, location and so forth in order to ensure programming initiatives meet the well being of marginalized people, especially women, youth and the elderly.

- Capacity development for monitoring should be pursued even in crisis situations. However, it is necessary to execute monitoring, even if desired capacity development efforts fall behind the planned targets.

- If direct monitoring of projects in crisis situations is difficult or impossible, capacity development of local partners and civil society organizations for monitoring should be given serious consideration. Where project staff cannot conduct regular field visits, monitoring should still be done using secondary information from credible informants. However, use of such methods should be clearly stated in reporting data, without necessarily disclosing informants' identities as that may place them at risk.

- Monitoring should also factor in security risks and build adequate safeguards and resources to manage such risks.

SELECTING THE MONITORING APPROACH AND TOOLS

There is a range of approaches and tools that may be applied to monitoring projects, programmes, outcomes and any other programmatic activity. Those who manage programmes and projects must determine the correct mix of monitoring tools and approaches for each project, programme or outcome, ensuring that the monitoring contains an appropriate balance between:

- Data and analysis—This entails obtaining and analysing documentation from projects that provides information on progress.

- Validation—This entails checking or verifying whether or not the reported progress is accurate.

- Participation—This entails obtaining feedback from partners and beneficiaries on progress and proposed actions.

Table 19 lists a variety of common monitoring tools and mechanisms, divided into three categories according to their predominant characteristic.

Table 19. Selecting the right mix of monitoring mechanisms		
Purpose		
Data and Analysis	Validation	Participation
■ M&E framework ■ AWPs ■ Progress and quarterly reports on achievement of outputs ■ Annual Project Report ■ Project delivery reports and combined delivery reports ■ Substantive or technical documents: MDG Reports, National Human Development Reports, Human Development Reports ■ Progress towards achieving outcomes and Standard Progress Reports on outcomes	■ Field visits ■ Spot-checks ■ Reviews and assessments by other partners ■ Client surveys ■ Evaluations ■ Reviews and studies	■ Sectoral and outcome groups and mechanisms ■ Steering committees and mechanisms ■ Stakeholder meetings ■ Focus group meetings ■ Annual review
← **Learning** takes place through all monitoring tools and mechanisms →		

It is not realistic to expect that any one monitoring tool or mechanism will satisfy all needs. Different stakeholders may use different tools or may use the same tools differently. For partners who are actively involved in managing for results, monitoring data and gathering information begins at the project level. The most common tools and events used for systematic monitoring, data gathering and reporting applicable to projects used by partners are AWPs, field visits and Annual Project Reports (APRs). Monitoring of outcomes typically requires a different mix of tools than those traditionally used at the project level. Instruments such as project visits or bilateral meetings may be insufficient because the scope of a given project is too narrow or the range of partners involved is too limited. Instead, more useful tools may include reviews by outcome groups, analyses and surveys. (Further information on such tools is available in Chapters 5 through 8.)

Annual work plans (AWPs)

AWPs detail the activities to be carried out by a programme or project—including who is responsible for what, time frames, planned inputs and funding sources—in order to generate outputs in relation to the outcome. AWPs also serve as good references for monitoring progress later in the year. Therefore AWPs and their accompanying monitoring tools are among the most important tools in monitoring, especially for programmes and projects that are normally multi-year and multi-partner efforts. In order to plan, manage and monitor a programme for a given period (typically a calendar year), most partners—including UNDP—use AWPs.[30] There are numerous formats and ways to prepare AWPs. Usually AWPs are produced at the beginning of the year as a planning tool, and their monitoring versions are prepared later in the year separately. One possible AWP format, which has the advantage of combining both annual planning and reporting elements, is given in Table 20. All information except the last two columns should be given at the beginning of the year. The last two columns should be completed at the end of the year.

The project manager who is responsible for delivering the outputs should prepare the AWP. Depending on the complexity and nature of the results being pursued, the AWP preparation could be a collective effort. The institution managing the project ensures the interface between the desired results and the expectations of the target beneficiaries, thus promoting a sense of ownership among all partners. Project management should also contribute to developing the required partnerships among the partners through the AWP preparation process.

AWPs have multiple uses in monitoring:

■ To understand the contributions and targets set and agreed by the partners for the year to achieve a planned result in a transparent way

■ To review ongoing progress against the plan and identify bottlenecks

■ To use as a basis for reporting at the end of the year (annual report) and planning future work

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30 Annual Work plans should not cover more than a 12-month period. However, usually at the start-up of the programme, these may cover less than one year.

Table 20. Example of an Annual Work Plan format with monitoring component

Outcome:

Expected Outputs	Planned Activities	Time-frame				Responsible Party	Budget				Monitoring Framework	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Funding source	Budget description	Amount	Expenditures	Progress towards outputs	
Output 1											*Status of progress to target contribution to country programme outcome*	
Targets:												
Output 2												
Targets:												
Output 3												
Targets:												
Total												

Notes:

1. The above is only illustrative. It may be adapted for practical use as appropriate.
2. The format is based on the UNDG AWP format and its related monitoring tool (currently used as two separate formats).
3. Outputs in column 1 should also give baselines, associated indicators and annual targets as applicable
4. All activities including monitoring and evaluation activities to be undertaken during the year towards the stated outputs must be included in the Activities column
5. Actual expenditures against activities completed should be given in the Expenditures column.
6. The last column should be completed using data on annual indicator targets to state progress towards achieving the outputs. Where relevant, comment on factors that facilitated or constrained achievement of results including: whether risks and assumptions as identified in the country programme M&E framework materialized or whether new risks emerged; and internal factors such as timing of inputs and activities, quality of products and services, coordination and other management issues.

Field visits

Field visits are essential for any field-based project. Field visits should be planned well in order to be of maximum use. The following considerations may help plan an effective field visit.

■ **What is the purpose of the visit in terms of monitoring?**—Field visits serve the purpose of validation. They validate the results reported by programmes and projects. They are of particular importance to large, key programmes and projects that are essential for outcomes. They involve an assessment of progress, results and problems and may also include visits to the project management or directorate.

■ **Timing**—A field visit may take place at any time of the year. If undertaken in the first half of the year, just after the annual review, it may be oriented towards the validation of results. If undertaken in the latter part of the year, the field visit should provide the latest information on progress towards annual and outcome review processes. The reports of field visits should be action-oriented and brief, submitted within a week of return to the office to the members of the respective Project Board, Programme Board and the Outcome Group for consideration and appropriated action if required.

■ **Who should participate and be involved?**—Visits are increasingly joint monitoring efforts of several partners working on a cluster of programmes and projects targeting an outcome or result. Joint visits also support ownership of the results. A team of staff from one or more partners may make visits to projects that are contributing to one particular outcome or in a specific geographical area addressing a specific development condition, for example displaced persons, post-natural disaster or a vulnerable community. Such joint efforts are often an efficient way to obtain a comprehensive overview of progress. In planning such visits, it is important to focus on what specific issues are to be addressed and to ensure that relevant national partners and beneficiaries would be available, involved and participate as required.

■ **Dialogue and consultations**—The emphasis should be on observing and ascertaining credible information on progress being made towards the attainment of results—outputs and outcomes—as well as their quality and sustainability. Those undertaking the field visit should discern other initiatives, for example soft assistance or gaps in strategy that may need to be addressed. Field visits should not be used for lengthy discussions on detailed implementation issues. Such issues, if raised during field visits, may be noted for discussion with relevant partners who can resolve them.

■ **Findings of field visits**—These should be forwarded to appropriate partners and stakeholders for effective action. A format for field visit reports is given in Annex 2.

Box 22. UNDP policy on field visits and good implementation practice

A representative from the UNDP country office must visit each programme and project contributing to results in the CPD and CPAP at least once a year. Field visits may be undertaken by the Programme Manager, Policy Adviser or a team from the country office (particularly when dealing with a complex outcome). The Resident Representative and other country office management staff are also encouraged to undertake field visits.

Annual Project Report (APR)

The APR is a self-assessment by the project management that serves as the basis for assessing the performance of programmes and projects in terms of their contributions to intended outcomes through outputs. The APR should provide an accurate update on project results, identify major constraints and propose future directions. As a self-assessment report by project management to the country office, it can be used to spur dialogue with partners.

Content, format and preparation of the APR

The basic APR should reflect the assessment of the AWP, discussed earlier. The APR is a report from the project to other stakeholders through the board or steering committee. APRs should be objective and may reflect views not agreed to by all stakeholders. The APR should be brief and contain the basic minimum elements required for the assessment of results, major problems and proposed actions. These elements include:

- An analysis of project performance over the reporting period, including outputs produced and, where possible, information on the status of the outcome

- Constraints in progress towards results, that is, issues, risks and reasons behind the constraints

- Lessons learned and indications of how these will be incorporated

- Clear recommendations for the future approach to addressing the main challenges

Beyond the minimum content, additional elements may be added as required by the project management or other partners. In the spirit of the principles of harmonization

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Box 23. Assurance role

UNDP has introduced the concept of programme and project assurance, which, *inter alia,* enhances the quality of monitoring. Managers of projects and programmes have the primary responsibility for ensuring that the monitoring data is accurate and of high quality. The assurance role is additional and is part of the responsibility of the programme and project board, as referred to in Box 20 in Chapter 3. It is normally delegated to a UNDP staff member who is not directly involved in the management of the project or programme. Typically, the programme assurance role is assigned to the M&E Focal Point in the office, and the project assurance role is assigned to a Programme Officer. The assurance function is operational during all stages of formulation, implementation and closure of projects and programmes. With regard to monitoring, the assurance role plays the following functions:

- Adherence to monitoring and reporting requirements and standards
- Ensure that project results elements are clear and captured in management information systems to facilitate monitoring and reporting
- Ensure that high-quality periodic progress reports are prepared and submitted
- Perform oversight activities, such as periodic monitoring visits and 'spot-checks'
- Ensure that decisions of the project and programme board and steering committee are followed and changes are managed in line with the required procedures

and simplification, the partners should agree on harmonized reporting formats (to the extent possible) to eliminate multiple reports and minimize work. From a monitoring perspective, it is critical for the APR to flow from the AWP and for it to serve the objectives of the overall M&E framework and hence the achievement of the planned results.

The project management is responsible for preparing and circulating the APR. The APR is prepared by project staff with specific attention to outputs and is considered by donors, other partners and stakeholders. Since project staff members are often experts in their fields, monitoring at the project level may also entail some expert assessment of the status of progress towards the achievement of the outcome.

The person responsible for project assurance (see Box 23 on page 115) should review and make observations on the validity, reliability and quality of monitoring data collected and compiled by the project.

Use of the APR

The APR is part of oversight and monitoring of projects and a key building block of the annual review. Normally, it also feeds into the annual reporting by donor partners on the results that they support. Once the APR has been prepared and distributed, the next step is to hold consultations, which may take place at the project board or steering committee, or through written observations from partners. Depending on its content and approach, the APR can be used for the following:

- Performance assessment—When using mechanisms such as outcome boards, groups or steering committees to review project performance, the APR may provide a basis for consensus-building and joint decision making on recommendations for future courses of action. Key elements of the APR are fed into higher levels of reviews, for example the UNDAF annual review, sectoral reviews and reviews of national development results and plans. The APR should be used as a basis for feedback on project performance.

- Learning—The APR should provide information on what went right or what went wrong, and the factors contributing to success or failure. This should feed into the annual review, learning and practitioners networks, repositories of knowledge and evaluations. It is recommended that the APR of the final year of the project include specific sections on lessons learned and planning for sustainability (exit strategy). APRs may address the main lessons learned in terms of best and worst practices, the likelihood of success, and recommendations for follow-up actions where necessary. APRs may also be used to share results and problems with beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders and to solicit their feedback.

- Decision making—The partners may use the APR for planning future actions and implementation strategies, tracking progress in achieving outputs, approaching 'soft assistance', and developing partnerships and alliances. The APR allows the project board, steering committee and partners to seek solutions to the major constraints to achievement of the planned results. As a result of this consultative process, necessary modifications could be made to the overall project design and to the corresponding overall results frameworks in the planning documents.

Joint monitoring

Monitoring of development results cannot be carried out in isolation or on an *ad hoc* basis. Whenever possible, monitoring should be carried out as joint or collaborative efforts among key stakeholders. Primary stakeholders—including multiple UN organizations working towards a given results as well as representatives of identified beneficiary groups and key national partners—should be involved to the extent possible. Such joint monitoring should also manifest in joint field visits. Ideally, joint monitoring should be organized and coordinated through the national outcome groups or sector-wide mechanisms. Joint monitoring should lead to joint analysis and precipitating decisions, for example to agree formally at annual reviews.

Where national institution-led joint monitoring is constrained, the UNCT could form interagency groups around each UNDAF outcome. These groups would use the results matrix and M&E framework as the basis for joint monitoring with relevant programme partners. Results of such monitoring should be used to report to the UNCT about progress and for joint analysis. These UNDAF outcome groups should augment any monitoring information that could be generated by UN organizations and partners separately.

In practical terms, joint monitoring would involve the following:

- Meeting regularly with partners to assess progress towards results already stated in the M&E framework and sharing information gathered by one or more partners

- Planning and conducting joint field monitoring missions to gauge achievements and constraints

- Identifying lessons or good practices, sharing them, promoting their use by partners and developing knowledge products

- Identifying capacity development needs among partners, particularly related to data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting

- Reporting regularly to the respective stakeholders and steering committee or board

- Bringing lessons and good practices to the attention of policy makers

- Contributing to common annual progress reports for consideration at outcome level reviews and annual reviews

TIP Start thinking about monitoring data and capacities needed for monitoring early in the programme planning process. It may be too late to think about them during implementation stages.

Obtaining reliable data and information for monitoring

Monitoring is part of a comprehensive programming continuum that starts with an in-depth analysis of the development situation. Normally, this analytical phase that precedes planning provides early insights into monitoring considerations. For example,

the availability and quality of data that is needed for analysis for developing a new programme or project would indicate the scope and possibilities for use of existing capacities and resources for monitoring. It would also indicate critical gaps that may need to be addressed in order to ensure effective monitoring in the future. Therefore, recognizing that there is an important opportunity during the analytical phase preceding planning can ensure effective monitoring later in the programme cycle.

Ideally, monitoring data should originate or be collected from national sources. However, this depends on the availability and quality of data from those sources. In an increasing number of countries, analytical data does come from national development information systems, which are also the repositories of important monitoring data and information. External partners should identify and build on what data and systems already exist in the country. Specific attention should be given to establish baselines, identify trends and data gaps, and highlight constraints in country statistical and monitoring systems. Many UNDP country offices have assisted in setting up data collection systems. Some examples are given in Box 24.

In addition, UNDG can provide support related to **DevInfo**[31], which is a database system for monitoring human development. It is a tool for organizing, storing and presenting

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Box 24. Good practices of data collection supported by UNDP

■ UNDP Pakistan has successfully supported a data collection system called the Participatory Information System under one of its institutional and capacity development projects in Balochistan Province. The system has two prominent features: the community collects household and services information through Community Information Committees, which are composed of community members; and the system provides the communities with a graphical look at their social and economic status, facilitates the planners and service providers in filling the service gaps, and makes the existing services better. The type of information collected facilitates monitoring progress towards the achievement of MDGs.

■ The first 'Atlas of Human Development in Brazil', launched in 1998, pioneered calculation of the human development index at the municipal level. For the first time, the human development index and its components were calculated for all the municipalities of a country. (Brazil had 4,491 municipalities at the time.) In 2003, a new edition of the Atlas (available only in Portuguese) was released, using data from the 2000 Demographic Census. This can be downloaded from http://www.pnud.org.br/atlas/ by clicking on the link "Clique aquipara instalar o Atlas de Desenvolvimento Humano no Brasilemse u computador." (Translation: "Click here to install the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil on your computer.")

The Atlas allows a multi-dimensional approach to human development measurement, since it provides a host of indicators on access to basic services, educational attainment, social vulnerability, and other themes. Special geo-referenced software was developed to allow for easy manipulation of the database, which in the current version comprises 200+ indicators for the 5,500+ Brazilian municipalities. The software has features to perform elaborate queries, create thematic maps, and generate fact sheets, and some simple statistical functions (such as creation of histograms, correlation plots and descriptive statistics). The software played a key role in the Atlas' success, allowing non-statistically trained people to make their own analyses.

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31 Please see http://www.devinfo.org for more details on DevInfo.

data in a uniform way to facilitate data sharing at the country level across government departments, UN organizations and development partners. In 2004, the UNDG endorsed the use of DevInfo to assist countries in monitoring achievement of the MDGs. At present, more than 100 countries use DevInfo as a platform to develop a national socio-economic database. More than 80 national statistics organizations and other agencies have officially launched and adapted the DevInfo database with their user-specified requirements. The software is available royalty-free and there is a DevInfo Support Group providing technical assistance to the countries and supporting national capacity development efforts.

Arrangements and formats for reporting results should be agreed upon in advance in order to meet the needs of partners. Where possible, a common monitoring format should be adopted by all partners in order to minimize the workload, especially for national partners, and to meet the commitments of simplification and harmonization agreed upon in international forums.

UN organizations have developed several harmonized reporting formats. They include:

■ A format for AWPs with a monitoring framework, which could be used to report at project level (discussed in Table 20)

■ Several UN organizations use the Standard Progress Report[32] format for progress and donor reporting, which shows how resources were used and the results that were achieved. This could be used at the outcome level. It is linked to the other standard formats used by UN organizations such as the AWP, CPAP, CPD and UNDAF results matrix.

The above form a good basis for adopting common reporting formats. They can also be adapted by partners to meet specific requirements.

4.4 USE OF MONITORING DATA FOR MANAGEMENT ACTION AND DECISION MAKING

Data and information on progress towards results are gathered, reviewed and used at the project, outcome, sectoral and programme levels. These entities are interconnected and reinforce each other. There is a two-way flow of information among them with the following common objectives:

■ Clarifying and analysing progress, issues, challenges and lessons

■ Precipitating actions and decisions including effecting changes in plans and resources as required

PROJECT LEVEL

Monitoring data normally aggregates from project level to higher level results. At the project level, the use of monitoring information can be summarized as follows.

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32 UNDG, 'Standard Progress Report'. Available at: http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=261.

The first monitoring action at the project level is to be clear of what is expected in terms of project-specific results and what is to be done with respect to monitoring actions. At the beginning, projects should: have a clear scope (that continues to be clear throughout the project); expected deliverables and how these contribute to the higher level results; ensure that cumulative annual targets are adequate to produce the envisaged outputs; and ensure that they lead to the delivery of planned outputs in the agreed time frame. This information is initially captured in the project results framework and its M&E framework. This process should be repeated at each annual project review to continuously validate that delivery of outputs is on schedule and remains relevant. If this is not the case, higher level boards or committees should be notified so that any implications on the overall planned results can be reviewed for modifications, new time frames and costs.

Monitoring data should be collected according to the AWP, and in the case of UNDP, by using Atlas-generated quarterly progress reports. The project should review the data to:

- Revalidate if the project and programme results logic remain valid in light of the operational experience and evidence.

- Discern what issues have emerged during implementation: Have the foreseen risks and assumptions materialized? Have other unforeseen challenges, opportunities and risks materialized? Are these being managed?

Progress towards generating outputs and their continued relevance to the outcome and issues should be synthesized and forwarded to the agency to which the project reports and to the respective outcome or sectoral monitoring mechanism. On the basis of that monitoring data, the project management and board or steering committee should re-confirm that the delivery of outputs is on schedule and that the project is contributing towards the desired outcomes. If not, they should determine what changes are needed. If revisions to plans are needed, then the project management should draft the revisions, including the results framework with new cost estimates, annual targets and so forth, to facilitate decision making at higher levels. Such information could be provided at agreed intervals such as quarterly, semi-annually, annually or on an as-needed basis.

OUTCOME LEVEL

Sectoral and outcome-level coordinating mechanisms play a critical role in results monitoring and developing capacities for monitoring. They forge partnerships around initiatives supported by partners to achieve common results, provide oversight in a collective spirit, make linkages to national systems and national development goals, and promote the development of monitoring capacities.

At the beginning of the programme or project implementation, the existence of such outcome-level monitoring and oversight mechanisms should be verified. If such mechanisms do not exist, then arrangements should be made to set up such groups through engagement with national partners. As interim measures, UN Theme Groups could be set up in accordance with UNDG (CCA and UNDAF) Guidelines. The outcome and sectoral monitoring mechanisms should take the following actions:

- Ensure that all those who are contributing to the outcome are included in the group. For UNDP, this should answer the question whether UNDP is engaged with the right partners to deliver outputs and to achieve outcomes.

- Agree on regular interactions and a plan of action to ensure that coordination and monitoring mechanisms remain efficient and effective.

- Review the components of the outcome (outputs and other activities) and ensure that outputs to be produced are sufficient to bring about the outcome and sustain the benefits.

- Ensure that the results plan for outcome indicators, targets, risks and assumptions are valid, adequate and managed.

- Promote development of national capacities in monitoring.

- Agree on a practical arrangement to coordinate the functioning of the outcome group. The outcome group should ideally be led by a national entity. However, UNDP may also offer such services.

The sectoral or outcome coordinating mechanism should continually assess the status of outputs and related initiatives by partners—all of which contribute to an intended outcome. It does so by examining information from all relevant projects, national reports, donor reports and other sources. It should review the findings of quarterly and annual reviews pertaining to the outcomes and identify lessons that are to be fed back into programming, and serve as a vehicle for ensuring documenting and disseminating lessons learned. It also serves as the focal team for outcome evaluations. Specifically it should:

- Review and assess connected projects and provide feedback to all relevant partners upon receipt of relevant reports, notably the APRs from each contributing project.

- Consider any changes needed in each constituent project and in overall approach in order to achieve the outcomes, consider the consequences of the necessary changes, and take appropriate action to ensure achievement of the outcomes.

It is important to keep in mind that the outcome and sector-level coordinating mechanisms are 'larger' than the United Nations and UNDP programme, as they focus on the achievement of the national outcomes. Hence, the United Nations and UNDP are one of many contributors towards the achievement of these outcomes. Ideally, the outcome and sector-level coordinating mechanisms should not be a UN or UNDP management arrangement but an existing national structure that is charged to coordinate the sector within the national context.

PROGRAMME LEVEL

Each partner (such as UNDP) that contributes to one or more outcome typically has its own arrangements to plan, implement and monitor the contributions it is making to results. For UNDP at the country level, this is the function of the CPAP and its monitoring and annual review. The M&E framework, which is the CPAP monitoring framework, forms the basis for this purpose.

The primary question to address at the programme level is: Does UNDP, as a partner, ensure that its programme is effectively contributing to the planned UNDP country programme, UNDAF and national results within the agreed partnership arrangements? The same principle applies for UNDP regional programmes, the global programme and the Strategic Plan. Furthermore, it should also ascertain whether or not country programmes, regional programmes and the global programme are contributing to the objectives and envisaged outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

The following steps are necessary to organize programme-level monitoring:

■ Obtain monitoring information for each UNDP funded project through the respective quarterly progress report (if used), APRs and other related activities, such as soft assistance relevant for a given outcome. This should answer the questions: What progress has UNDP made in delivering the agreed CPAP outputs in the reference period? What progress has UNDP as a whole made towards achieving the CPAP outcomes? What are the programme-level issues that require action? What are we learning as a programme?

■ Determine if outputs being generated with UNDP support remain valid and contribute to achieving corresponding outcomes.

■ Participate in dialogue with relevant stakeholders at the outcome, sector and national level.

■ Determine if other partners are contributing as planned and identify gaps to be addressed and opportunities for forging stronger partnerships.

■ Triangulate monitoring information to obtain a more objective assessment of the UNDP contribution to each outcome. Identify issues and changes that are necessary to further dialogue at the respective outcome monitoring mechanism. Analyse to what extent UNDP has integrated key concerns such as capacity development, gender equality, national ownership and South-South cooperation.

■ Summarize key relevant points for the programme as a whole for corporate reporting purposes and decision making at the annual programme review.

■ A separate annual review meeting on the UNDP country programme may not be necessary if issues pertaining to the UNDP programme and related decisions could be covered at the UNDAF annual review. It might be helpful to hold a one-day UN programme review at the annual review, where one half day focuses on the UNDAF and the other half day focuses on respective agency programmes.

■ Implement the necessary changes agreed at annual reviews.

The same analytical work should feed the corporate learning and reporting processes. For UNDP, this means that the managers of country, regional and global programmes should feed the findings of this analysis into the RBM Platform to report on progress against the Strategic Plan.

ANNUAL REVIEW WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The annual review with the participation of all key stakeholders is a key monitoring event at the national programme or UNDAF level. It is the culmination of monitoring

activities that started at the project level and cascaded upwards through the outcome and individual partner programme level during the year. The annual review facilitates a dialogue among senior managers to assess progress towards results (outputs and outcomes). It is also a forum that is used for building a stronger mutual understanding and consensus among partners on the issues directly relevant to achieving the planned results and for making key high-level decisions. Annual reviews are ideally held towards the end of the year, and the discussions are meant to guide and approve plans for the following year.

Annual reviews have to be well planned in order to extract the best results from them. The following should be considered in the preparation for the annual review:

- It is essential that the annual review is conducted based on objective monitoring data and analyses prepared by all connected projects (for example APRs) and finalized after consultations with relevant stakeholders. The following actions could be helpful:

  - Based on the APRs and project board or steering committee and outcome groups' or boards' findings and recommendations, each partner organization should present a synthesis of its own key points—including an assessment of its contribution to the outcomes and other issues that need to be discussed at the annual review. These syntheses should be succinct and made available to annual review participants prior to the meeting.

  - Given the time constraints at the annual review meeting, if deemed necessary, organize prior consultations among relevant partners to ensure deliberations at the annual review will be efficient, avoid potential conflicts, and lead to decisions and clear follow-up actions on the subsequent year's work programme.

- The annual review should be organized by the relevant national partner and carried out in an inclusive and practical manner. Depending on national capacities, and in consultation and with the leadership of the key national partners, another partner (for example UNDP) may organize or assist in the organization of the annual review. The participants should be at the decision-making level of each participating partner. Its success often depends on how well the partners have been involved in the lead up to the annual review and are informed on the issues to be discussed. Ideally, many of the issues to be addressed at the annual review should already have been discussed, for example, in regular monitoring events such as field visits or in prior discussions on the APRs at the project or outcome level. A focused approach is recommended for the annual review so that the key issues and outcomes are addressed. The following actions may help in this respect:

  - The agenda of the annual review should be prepared carefully, giving priority to those items that require collective review and decision making by the partners at the annual review meeting. Ensure sufficient time for dialogue and provide background information for each agenda item in advance.

  - Ensure that the annual review process will lead to decisions and agreements on: the current status of the achievement of the results being pursued; any changes to overall results frameworks; and an updated AWP for the forthcoming year.

Global and regional programmes (of UNDP)

At a minimum, an annual review of the global programme and of each regional programme must be held. These annual reviews are informed by a variety of information sources, including APRs of constituent projects.

Box 25. Typical UNDAF annual review process and lessons learned

At the country level:

The UNDP annual review process is linked to the UNDAF annual review, which is the once-a-year opportunity for all agencies and national partners to review the UNCT contribution to achievement of national goals based on the UNDAF Results Matrix. In consultation with national partners, the UNCT decides on the meeting's scope and modalities.

The UNDAF annual review should provide the UNCT and national partners with:

- A yearly update of overall progress *vis-à-vis* the UNDAF Results Matrix
- Validation of conclusions and recommendations that should feed into annual planning processes

UNDP contributes to the annual UNDAF review through the annual results reporting in CPAP. The annual report of CPAP is prepared from: analyses that originate from project APRs and the project boards; coordinated comments on each outcome by sectoral or outcome coordinating mechanisms (including national coordination mechanisms and UN Theme Groups) to reflect progress towards outcome at outcome levels; and project and outcome evaluations or any other relevant outcome and project reviews that have been carried out during the year, including those carried out by other partners.

Substantively, UNDP contribution to the UNDAF annual review—a synthesis of the CPAP annual report—includes: a brief assessment of the achievement of annual targets of all UNDP funded activities in the context of achieving UNDAF outcomes; operational issues of the CPAP implementation; and any modifications to the existing CPAP that would require agreement of non-UNDP partners.

Some general lessons learned from conducting UNDAF annual reviews, based on the experience of the Solomon Islands:

- **Use the government's National Development Plan as the organizing principle for the review**—Organize reporting and deliberations on the basis of the National Development Plan. This may require additional work on the part of the UN system and other partners, but the extra effort is highly justified by the resulting increased national ownership.
- **Be strategic**—Presentations on individual UN organization programmes would be uninteresting. Avoid long lists of outputs by individual partners. Such information could be presented as background documents and referred to in the meeting. Focus on the likely development changes in relation to development indicators.
- **Repetition makes things easier**—As each agency has its own reporting formats, timelines and terms, at first, it is difficult for many organizations to cooperate on annual planning and review exercises. Cooperation becomes easier when coordinated efforts are repeated.
- **Standard formats should be devised and discussed at the earliest possible date**—While it is tempting to focus more on the structure of the meeting and agenda, it is the finalization of the annual reports and AWPs that make up most of the work of the review exercise. Thus, the earlier this work is started, the better.
- **Reduce transaction costs**—Use video and Web-conferencing for consultations among UN partners.
- **The United Nations is stronger together than separate**—Taken as a whole, aggregated support of the UN system in a country could be on par with other major external partners. This enhances the UN system's position and also underpins the principle of Delivering as One.

Follow up to annual review

- Agendas and records of annual review meetings should be documented, circulated among all partners and agreed upon by them.

- Revise the AWP subsequent to, and in line with, the decisions of the annual reviews. It should be approved, preferably in writing, by all the partners involved, typically at the project board level. The M&E frameworks at programme (CPAP) and project levels and the accompanying AWP monitoring tool should be prepared thereafter in readiness for monitoring purposes in the subsequent year.

- For UNDP, when the annual review is completed and new work targets for the subsequent year are agreed upon, the following processes are triggered: updated AWPs for projects are finalized with the new annual targets and signed; results of the review year is updated in the RBM Platform for corporate annual reporting; and newly agreed targets are set using the RBM Platform for subsequent annual reviews.

- Coordinate any changes with the outcome or sector-level committee to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of any changes.

USE OF MONITORING DATA IN EVALUATIONS

Effective monitoring generates a solid data base for evaluations. Data, reports, analysis and decisions based on monitoring evidence should be retained with a view to making them easily accessible to evaluations.