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Occasional Paper

Challenges and opportunities for country programme evaluation use in UNDP

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publishes the Occasional Papers series on topics in the field of evaluation related to IEO work, including *inter alia*: Assessment of Development Results (ADRs); Thematic Evaluations; Global or Regional Programme Evaluations; Decentralized Evaluations; Impact Evaluations; Evaluations Commissioned by Programme Units; evaluation methods and guidance; or national evaluation capacities development. They are intended primarily for those concerned with these matters in international organizations, Government, civil society and the academic community.

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Abstract

Consensus has emerged among international development agencies that evaluation processes and results have to be practical, user-oriented and uniquely grounded in different institutional, cultural and socio-political conditions. However, adapting the evaluation process to non-generalizable situations for effective evaluation use remains a key challenge for the evaluation function in similarly complex organizational, partnership and programming systems as UNDP. Such institutions operate in a large array of contexts in which groups adopt variations of evaluation use across accountability, learning and process dimensions.

This paper aims to provide an overview and potential directions of evaluation use in UNDP and outlines enabling and constraining factors for use. Based on a study of the use of UNDP's independent country programme evaluations, it highlights key tensions, challenges and opportunities in harnessing evaluation effectively within a complex international organization. The paper provides an overview of the concepts and frameworks for understanding evaluation use, presents key findings from research about use, and finally highlights key issues for consideration for enhancing evaluation use in UNDP and other international development agencies.

1. Introduction

Evaluations comprise a process and product with the intention of influencing programmatic and more widely organizational performance. International organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with a large network of country offices (COs) have an opportunity to generate knowledge from cross-country experiences and relevant evaluative evidence.

Consensus has emerged among international development agencies that evaluation processes and results have to be practical, user-oriented and uniquely grounded in different institutional, cultural and socio-political conditions. Customizing the development evaluation process to non-linear, experimental and non-generalizable situations is one of the largest challenges facing current development practice.¹ The types of complex organizational, partnership and programming systems found in international agencies like UNDP may face additional challenges with effective evaluation use if the end products and evaluation processes are not carefully adapted to the multiple organizational units and stakeholders involved.

Within institutions like UNDP operating in a large array of complex contexts, there is a broad mixture of evaluation use types. Groups at various levels adopt variations of use across accountability, learning and process dimensions. This illustrates how balancing different stakeholder needs around evaluation use presents challenges for the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and for UNDP as a whole.

Given UNDP's rapidly evolving institutional context, the main aim of this paper is to provide an overview and potential directions of evaluation use in UNDP. The paper uses the findings of a meta-evaluation regarding the use of UNDP's independent country programme evaluations

(CPEs) to demonstrate key tensions, challenges and opportunities in harnessing evaluation effectively within a highly complex international organization. In addition, the paper outlines some of the underlying factors that have supported or hindered evaluation use within the broader institutional context. The paper builds on an initial meta-evaluation commissioned by IEO and completed in 2014 as part of a review of UNDP's independent CPEs. The study was conducted through guided interviews, a UNDP staff questionnaire, document review, and an analysis of online data related to evaluation report distribution and use.

Following an explanation of the methodology (Section 2), this paper explores background concepts about evaluation use in international development and more specifically the UNDP context (Section 3). It then presents key findings from research about use of UNDP CPEs based on various stakeholder perceptions and website data (Section 4). Finally, the paper highlights issues and opportunities for future consideration in enhancing evaluation use in UNDP and, more broadly, in international development agencies overall (Section 5).

¹ <http://www.cgdev.org/media/implications-complexity-development-owen-barder>, accessed 09-18-2013.

2. Methodology

This paper builds on a study commissioned by IEO as part of a review of the organization’s independent CPEs, or Assessments of Development Results (ADRs). Initial research for the study was conducted between October and December 2013. Sources of data and methods of collection included:

- *Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders:* Primary data was collected from 78 individuals using an iterative, purposive sampling of: (1) UNDP staff at headquarters (HQ), regional service centres and COs with direct, recent ADR experiences, and (2) UNDP personnel at the country level (e.g. resident representatives, deputy resident representatives, country directors, evaluation officers and programme officers) with first-hand knowledge of ADR processes. See Annex 2 for a list of questions.
- *Document review:* Secondary information included a content review of ADR reports, UNDP country-level programming documents, UNDP monitoring and reporting tools, corporate strategies, and UNDP Executive Board (EB) documents. Analysis was performed of evaluation report downloads, distribution and management response tracking.
- *An online and administered survey:* A detailed questionnaire was used initially for interviews, then adapted for online circulation to COs. Phone and Skype interviews were conducted to administer the questionnaire with the majority of CO contacts.

IEO has completed about 100 ADR reports between 2002 and 2015.² The meta-evaluation focused on a sample of 27 ADR reports

completed from 2009–2013 and excluded previous years due to: (1) a lack of easily-traced information and informants; (2) unavailability of administrative data on ADR downloads and management responses; and (3) changes in ADR procedures, design and dissemination processes.

Countries included in the ADR study	
Year of publication	ADR country
2013	Croatia, Kenya
2012	India, Angola, Liberia
2011	Brazil, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Egypt, Moldova, Nepal, Thailand, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Ghana
2010	Cambodia, China, Guyana, Indonesia, Turkey, Paraguay
2009	Chile, Barbados/Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Argentina, Ecuador, Uzbekistan

Research limitations included: (1) weak organizational memory on the ADR process and use due to staff turnover, especially at the country level, and (2) the difficulty of identifying and contacting certain evaluation users (Executive Board members, policy units in HQ, and national governments or partner agencies in ADR countries). To bridge these gaps, information was obtained instead from UNDP regional and country personnel on ADR engagement and use by national partners, and on the best ways to link ADRs to policy issues.³ Observations of changes to IEO practice are noted to recognize where previous findings may be less valid.⁴

² See a full list of ADRs here:

erc.undp.org/evaluation/search?evaluationTypes=ADR.

³ Additional data from a 2015 mini-survey of country-level government stakeholders was cross-referenced as appropriate with the meta-evaluation data to corroborate certain findings.

⁴ Note that ADR reports published after 2013 were included in some aspects of the updated data analysis provided in this paper (e.g. report downloads), but detailed findings on ADR use that are discussed in Sections 4 and 5 derive primarily from data about evaluations conducted up to 2013.

3. Theory and context for evaluation use

What is evaluation use, why does it matter to international agencies, and what has been done so far to enhance use within different agency contexts such as UNDP? This section addresses these questions by providing a brief overview of the main concepts for understanding evaluation use,⁵ followed by a short description of the current policy and organizational landscape for evaluation use in the international development context, and specifically within UNDP.

3.1. Conceptualizing evaluation use

The concept of evaluation use is multi-faceted and has been the subject of discussion and research over the past several decades among evaluation theorists and practitioners.⁶ At its simplest, evaluation use relates to ensuring that some form of change or influence emerges from the evaluation process. This may be direct or indirect, and evaluation use should be understood as an activity, process or event in which individuals participate, and not simply an outcome. According to Smith (1988):

[U]tilization is a function of design, and...the need exists to improve the design process. For some evaluations this means more quality involvement of the primary stakeholders throughout the entire evaluation. For others, it means closer adherence to rigorous methodological standards of practice so that credibility is assured. Both of these do not have to exist to the same extent in each evaluation, since data for specific decisions may not have to meet the same rigorous standards as that for creation of new knowledge.

The likelihood of evaluation use is heightened if there are procedures, systems, established practices, technologies and norms in an organization

that encourage and facilitate use, as well as incentive structures that reward it. Experts agree that use is partly determined by the programming and institutional environments in which evaluations take place, including whether an accepted strategy exists for making rational decisions based on evaluation information, or if the context is heavily influenced by political considerations or competing multi-stakeholder perspectives. So-called 'learning organizations' are thought to be more likely to embrace evaluation use, but other institutional enabling factors influence this process. The quality and type of methods applied in evaluations also influence use, depending on the receptiveness of stakeholders and users for qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approaches.

End-user engagement, involvement of main stakeholders, and their sense of 'ownership' in the evaluation process can greatly enhance likelihood of use. Interaction and communication between evaluators on the one hand and policymakers, practitioners or program recipients on the other hand is critical for use to occur. As Weiss (1998) states:

The best way we know to date of encouraging use of evaluation is through involving potential users in defining the study and helping to interpret results, and through reporting results to them regularly while the study is in progress....[S]uch strategies may be even more successful if the evaluator maintains contact with users for a long period after the study ends and if the evaluator listens to what program people have to say about the meaning of evaluation findings and learns from them and with them about how to apply to findings in concrete situations. This kind of 'sustained interactivity' transforms one-way reporting into mutual learning.

⁵ This paper draws on utilization-focused evaluation as a framework of analysis. This is an approach by Michael Quinn Patton (2012) arguing that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. UNDP does not

prescribe to this approach explicitly in its Evaluation Policy available at <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

⁶ See for example, Shulha and Cousins (1997), Kirkhart (2000), Weiss (1998), St. Roseman and Snyder (2011), Johnson et al. (2009), Patton (2000), and Smith (1988).

The role of the evaluator and the extent to which the evaluator is engaged in stakeholder dialogue and follow-up both during and after the evaluation process is another issue related to evaluation use. Evaluator competencies in terms of both design and implementation are a significant factor underlying usability of evaluation (Patton [2012]). According to evaluation theorists such as Patricia Rogers (2008), “complex interventions...present the greatest challenge for evaluation and for utilization of evaluation because the path to success is so variable and it cannot be articulated in advance”.⁷

Patton (2012) outlines several key evaluation purposes (summative, formative, accountability, monitoring, knowledge-generation and developmental) and their related uses. In Patton’s view, ‘usable’ reports are an important output of the evaluation process but do not automatically lead to effective use of evaluation information unless other factors, especially institutional issues, are identified and facilitated. Patton outlines a series of detailed steps for ‘utilization-focused evaluation’ based on the need to incorporate utilization considerations into all aspects of the evaluation process from planning to actual implementation. The potential implications of Patton’s analytical framework for evaluation use in international agencies such as UNDP are reviewed in the last section of this paper.

Mayne (2014), drawing on Patton’s ideas, proposes that evaluation use by international agencies usually has two main purposes: accountability and learning.⁸ In addition, he identifies multiple types of evaluation use that can arise from either accountability or learning directed evaluations. The following schema and definitions for examining evaluation use, which are based on

Mayne and Patton, were used as the framework of investigation in this study:

- *Instrumental use* is defined in this paper as accountability or compliance-oriented, focusing on using evaluation information to determine if development outcomes were achieved and/or by applying recommendations to directly improve programme design or delivery.
- *Learning use* is geared towards consideration of future strategies as in the case of strategic adaptation or change that involves innovation. This use dimension fosters critical reflection leading to new insights or strategic thinking. It overlaps with instrumental use in that learning around outcome achievement or other facets of performance can be a source of redirection or renewed positioning.
- *Process use* refers to the benefits that derive from ongoing stakeholder learning, capacity building, training, engagement, motivation and commitment to the evaluation function throughout the evaluation cycle and beyond.⁹

Mayne emphasizes that evaluations carried out mainly for accountability purposes, such as to account to external donors for use of funds or to help make funding decisions, mean those directly implicated in the evaluated programme, who are the focus of the evaluation research, are less likely to use the findings for improving design or delivery because “attention [is] focused more on defending the programme than learning what is working and what is not” (2014, p. 6). This points out the possible limitations of focusing exclusively on instrumental use to the detriment of other forms of evaluation application. According to Patton (2012), process use for evaluations is closely linked to organizational learning. Process use can help support the development of authentic learning organizations, and

⁷ Patricia Rogers, ‘Using programme theory to evaluate complicated and complex aspects of interventions’ in *Evaluation*, vol. 14, No. 1, 2008.

⁸ Mayne, John, “Issues in enhancing evaluation use”, in Marlène Läubli Loud and John Mayne (eds.), *Enhancing Evaluation Use: Insights from Internal Evaluation Units*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2014.

⁹ Patton (2012, p. 143) defines process use as “when those involved in the evaluation learn from the evaluation process itself or make the programme changes based on the evaluation process rather than just the evaluation’s findings. Process use...includes cognitive, attitudinal, and behaviour changes in individuals, and programme or organizational changes resulting, either directly or indirectly, from engagement in the evaluation process and learning to think evaluatively.”

also engender greater empowerment among multiple stakeholders so that they feel party to the evaluation process. This is of particular importance in the context of revised aid and development assistance modalities that are demanding attention to form more egalitarian relationships beyond the donor-recipient dyad. By encouraging engagement among evaluation users with different perspectives, process use can therefore reduce the risk of imposed evaluations with little buy-in among stakeholders.

3.2. UNDP context for evaluation use

International agencies and institutions have sought to create suitable standards and practices for evaluation use. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010) incorporate use as a key criterion for effective evaluation practice. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) has developed Norms and Standards for evaluation (2016) that refer to evaluation use stating that evaluation should include an explicit management response or action plan, systematic follow-up on how recommendations have been addressed, and user-friendly evaluation products for target audiences. The document spells out further details for how follow-up mechanisms need to be institutionalized, and stakeholders consulted on all aspects of an evaluation including follow-up.

Echoing the UNEG standards and norms for evaluation, the 2016 UNDP Evaluation Policy (DP/2016/23) places strong emphasis on the use of evaluation findings and lessons to improve organizational decision-making, accountability and institutional learning. The policy states:

Without compromising their independence, and in order to promote an evaluation culture based on knowledge-sharing, evaluation managers should include key users throughout each stage of the

evaluation process. Information on evaluation design and methodology should be shared with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, to build confidence in the eventual findings and to ensure an understanding of their circumstances in decision-making.

The UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results (2009—addendum 2011) has a specific chapter on evaluation use that highlights the importance of evaluations as key inputs for both learning and accountability, with a special emphasis on managing for results. There is information about identification of target audiences for evaluation and for effective dissemination of evaluation information. The role of the management response is also codified in the UNDP approach. UNDP has also emerged from an organizational change process in 2014 and is developing new approaches related to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process and ‘Delivering as One’ initiative of the United Nations (UN) system. This has further reinforced both the importance of national evaluation capacity and the need to harmonize evaluation use strategies with national priorities and systems.¹⁰ However, key stakeholders and IEO acknowledge that not all institutional arrangements—including incentives, knowledge base and human resources—are as yet aligned for full integration of evaluation use at multiple levels.

UNDP accountability context

Recent multi-stakeholder aid and development consultations at the international level and within agencies such as UNDP have focused on improving management and accountability of development resources so that there is greater transparency about resource use. Strengthening mutual accountability for allocation and use of global development resources is embodied in the final statement of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2011) in Busan, South

¹⁰ The IEO Mid-Term Evaluation Plan for 2014 states that future ADRs “will be carried out in the context of UN reform...mindful of the developments with UNDAF and similar joint UN system evaluations at the country level.”

Korea as well the follow-up activities of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, of which UNDP is a lead organization.¹¹

The 2008 UNDP Accountability Framework (DP/2008/16) is fully in line with the global aid effectiveness agenda and provides a definition based on OECD DAC guidelines:

Accountability is the obligation to (i) demonstrate that work has been conducted in accordance with agreed rules and standards and (ii) report fairly and accurately on performance results *vis-à-vis* mandated roles and/or plans...[T]he cornerstone of programmatic accountability is premised on the principles of mutual accountability...[which] involves the accountability of donors for providing aid in ways that support country development strategies and recipient governments for using aid and other resources effectively.

For UNDP, the main accountability drivers are the member countries of the Executive Board. Net contributing countries seek concrete evidence regarding effective use of their funds to assist programme countries. UNDP programme countries see that UNDP accounts for its investments in their country's development and demonstrates strong contribution to national priorities. The 2014–2017 UNDP Strategic Plan, through its increased focus on results-based management and on accountability for results and performance of the organization, is meant to further reinforce development accountability at multiple levels. On the other hand, where accountability is viewed as mainly a compliance-based concept, it risks undermining or contradicting other equally important roles or uses for ADRs, which include continuous learning, reflection, constructive critique, and insights into lessons or innovations.

UNDP learning context

¹¹ See Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation: Final Statement, 1 December 2011, paragraph 11d and paragraphs 18 and 19 where use of 'mutual assessment reviews' of aid and development processes are proposed. See also 'Guide to the Monitoring Framework of the Global Partnership' (preliminary version), 1 March 2013.

Over the last several years, UNDP has taken significant steps to increase its corporate ability to learn, change and adapt both programmatically and organizationally.¹² UNDP introduced an an-

UNDP accountability requirements

UNDP through its global, regional and country programmes is fully accountable to the Executive Board and to its programme countries, project beneficiaries and donors. Accountability requirements include: (1) verifiable performance monitoring and reporting results, indicators and targets in its Strategic Plan, triennial comprehensive policy review, and development and institutional results frameworks; (2) organizational policies and standards to ensure compliance; (3) shared values and a common organizational culture of accountability and transparency; and (4) accompanying functions, roles and responsibilities for managers and personnel. The 2016 UNDP Evaluation Policy mentions the accountability-related use of evaluation to "help stakeholders to hold UNDP accountable for contributing to development results at different levels".

nual business planning process, new approaches to resource mobilization and management, and an updated approach to CO presence. Further reforms during the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan period have increased focus on the use of evidence in managing for results, including through the introduction of a systematic quality assurance tool at the project and programme levels.

The UNDP Accountability Framework (2008) incorporates many learning dimensions because programmes and projects need to be continuously adjusted and adapted to their particular implementation contexts. It states:

Learning and change management is a key aspect of our development work in that managers are ex-

¹² See DP/2011/35, 'Institutional budget estimates for 2012–2013: Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions'.

pected to review results of independent and/or internal management reviews and make specific efforts to apply lessons learned and manage change in the office. At the organizational level, it refers to a systematic approach to knowledge management and applying lessons learned from the programmatic evaluation of global, regional and country programmes as well as audits.

‘Learning’ for UNDP involves both organizational and programmatic elements, and they are frequently intertwined in practice as is illustrated by the findings of this study.¹³ However, many factors present challenges to effective programmatic and organizational learning for development agencies such as UNDP.¹⁴ First, complex development initiatives that are non-linear, open-ended and multi-faceted, such as those supported by UNDP for governance and institution building, are inherently difficult to extract clear or generalizable lessons from and/or to identify relevant innovations that may be applicable elsewhere. Second, simple ‘lessons’ or good practices may not in fact be possible to identify easily in complex adaptive systems as applied to development thinking in the global context. Third, there is often resistance among some stakeholders to analysing or understanding so-called development ‘failures’ or unsuccessful initiatives, so that ideas for future use can be extracted and applied.

In UNDP (as for many other agencies), stakeholders admit it is sometimes difficult to adapt new learning approaches across many layers or units of such a complex organization. Achieving consensus about what constitutes benchmarks for assessing the degree to which new ideas have emerged is not straightforward. More importance may therefore be accorded to decentralized, experimental and local knowledge that remains at only one site or organizational location (e.g. sub-organizational learning including at the country program level).

In the broader context, UNDP has responded to requests from donors to adopt a results-based management approach and ensure greater accountability for the use of funds to achieve lasting development results. In addition, there are continuous changes in the UN system as a whole related to ‘Delivering as One’, which involves harmonization of programmatic planning, management and evaluation functions for higher utility and cost-effectiveness.¹⁵ The evolving international aid context is characterised increasingly by demand-driven, southern-led and learning-oriented approaches. These issues all require that UNDP integrate evaluation use as a key aspect of putting programmatic and strategic learning into practice.

¹³ According to OECD-DAC (Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002), lessons learned can be found mainly at the programmatic level, and they are defined as “generalizations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programs, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact.”

¹⁴ These factors are adapted from articles found in Jerker Carlsson and Lennart Wohlgemuth (eds). See also Marlène Läubli Loud and John Mayne (eds.), *Enhancing Evaluation Use: Insights from Internal Evaluation Units*, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2014, and OECD, ‘Evaluating Development Activities: 12 Lessons from OECD DAC’, 2013.

¹⁵ See, for example, Michael Reynolds, Nurul Alam and Michael Craft, ‘The evolution of independent country programme evaluation in UNDP’, IEO Occasional Paper Series, 2016, <http://bit.ly/1Sx0ZFW>.

4. Use of UNDP country programme evaluations

As described in Section 2, information was collected about the different uses for ADRs via a typology of instrumental learning process use based on Mayne (2014) and Patton (2012). ADRs are described in relation to this typology, followed by key findings about use derived from the HQ interviews, documentary analysis and a survey conducted with UNDP COs.

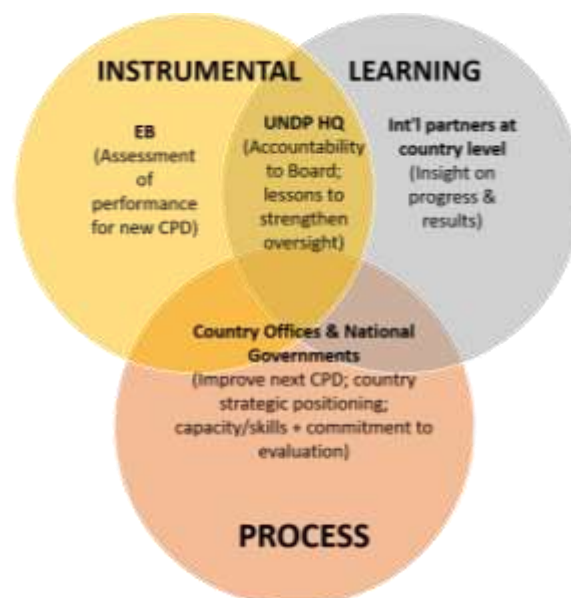
4.1. Assessments of Development Results

ADRs are an integral part of UNDP's independent evaluation function as outlined in the UNDP Evaluation Policy. As independent CPEs, they are part of a corporate evaluation system in which information about results, successes, trends, accomplishments and challenges is used to shape ongoing and future country-level work as reflected in such key corporate programming tools as Country Programme Documents (CPDs) and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). ADRs assess UNDP's overall performance and contribution to development over a multi-year programme period to draw lessons for strategies for the future programming cycles.

The primary purposes of ADRs are to: (1) support the development of the next UNDP CPD and (2) strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and the Executive Board.¹⁶ Secondary purposes are to promote corporate learning, strengthen national ownership of UNDP programme and national evaluation capacity, strengthen UNDP evaluation culture, and serve as building blocks for other UNDP independent evaluations. The main intended users of ADRs are the Executive Board members, UNDP COs, national government counterparts, and other

national stakeholders and partners such as UN and bilateral partners. At HQ in New York, the users are UNDP senior managers, the Regional Bureaus (RBx), and other UNDP bureaus and units related to performance management, policy, reporting and resource mobilization. In this respect, ADRs support a network of potential users with overlapping interests and information needs (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Main intended ADR users by type of evaluation use



ADRs are normally conducted over a period of approximately eight months, although the exact time-frame can vary considerably depending on the context and a number of other factors. The ADR process consists of several phases, including desk review, consultant recruitment,¹⁷ data collection in country, synthesis and drafting, and finally a multi-stakeholder workshop to discuss and validate the report. Upon finalization, a management response is prepared by the CO

ADRs have been conducted under IEO leadership with outside consultants engaged as team members.

¹⁶ Note that these purposes were revised in 2015 following a review of ADRs and consultations with UNDP management that sought to reorient them towards COs as the primary users.

¹⁷ In the past, most ADRs were conducted by external leaders and teams under IEO management. Since 2013,

within 60 days of completing the final report. The ADR process has been standardized but can be adapted to country programme circumstances.¹⁸

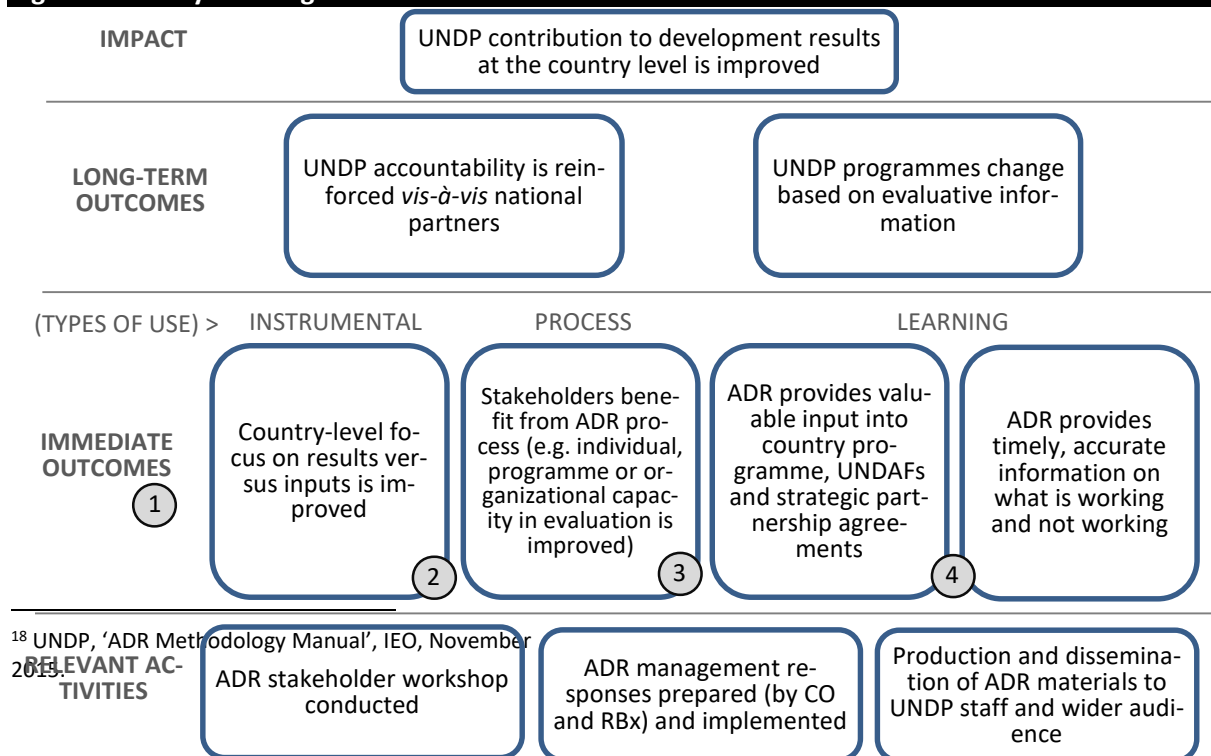
While IEO leads ADRs and is accountable for their quality and independence, COs are considered to be the main partners in the ADR process. Support is also solicited from RBx, partner governments (especially the lead counterpart agency), and other key stakeholders at the country level. A number of key assumptions underlie the ADR process, as outlined in Figure 2. This is represented in a theory of ADR use that maps the tentative causal pathways of a 'standard' exercise.

ADR reports go through several iterations and quality checks that can form the basis for a large amount of dialogue between IEO, RBx, COs and national programme partners (mainly government counterparts). IEO puts considerable effort into ensuring sufficient quality, readability, consistency and clarity in ADR reports. Even before an ADR report is officially published and then presented to the Executive Board of UNDP as background to official approval of a CPD, it can be accessed and viewed by COs and partners to support ongoing discussions about and formulation of the programme.

Following the completion of the ADR report, the management response process ensures that recommendations are being implemented and tracked. COs use a standard ADR management response template to indicate what actions will be taken to follow up on the ADR process and the report itself within a specified time-frame. In 2009, an internal guidance note on roles and responsibilities for management responses was prepared by UNDP management in consultation with IEO. The CO is the responsible unit and the RBx have an oversight role to ensure that management responses are prepared and updated regularly.

Information about the management response process and the level of compliance with follow-up actions is reported in the Annual Report of the Administrator to the Executive Board. The management response database on the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) indicates that as of November 2015 approximately one third of ADRs with data on key actions in the management response (18 of 56 ADRs) had completed half or fewer of these actions. RBx play a role in ensuring follow-up of these key actions. ADRs with half or fewer actions completed were concentrated in both the Latin American and Caribbean as well as Arab States regions.

Figure 2. Theory of change for ADR use



¹⁸ UNDP, 'ADR Methodology Manual', IEO, November 2015.

Assumptions underlying the theory of change for ADR use

1. Overall

- Key government partners and UNDP staff are receptive to ensuring that the evaluation information is used and applied to future programming

2. Instrumental

- ADR viewed as valuable/useful input to accountability discussion within UNDP and among partners
- Key partners concerned with accountability (i.e. Executive Board and government) actively engage in discussion, clarification and follow-up of ADR, and they agree with the basic premise that independent evaluation can contribute to performance management

3. Process

- Stakeholders have a minimum threshold of involvement and understanding regarding the ADR process, as well as buy-in to the importance of the evaluation function overall
- ADR approach and methodology can provide added value to the country level evaluation function and help build CO/national capacity and skills in independent evaluation
- The process is inclusive of relevant development actors who can provide input in planning for use

4. Learning

- ADR can lead to constructive learning and change within the national programming process
- ADR can capture development lessons, innovations and learning to improve programmes
- ADR valued by stakeholders as a source of learning for programmes
- There is an intrinsic value to UNDP and its partners in understanding the trends, patterns and issues related to country programme successes or challenges
- No other information-gathering exercises at country level provide the type of information as the ADR

4.2. Key findings about ADR use

Instrumental use

The *instrumental use* of ADRs within UNDP is high. Different types of UNDP users depend on evaluation information to assist in programme reporting, performance assessment, planning and improvement. Instrumental use is valued because ADRs provide independent information about progress towards development results. ADR reports are also actively used as key inputs for official corporate accountability reports to the Executive Board on UNDP's performance and results. There is pressure to tie ADRs even more closely to the corporate reporting and accountability system, with commensurate tensions and challenges.

Instrumental use of ADRs is closely related to issues of programme and corporate accountabil-

ity, from the perspective of both HQ offices/bureaus and the country programmes themselves. Overlap exists between instrumental and learning use, but for the purposes of the meta-evaluation an attempt was made to separate out the different types of use to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each. For example, there is a consistent focus on accountability use by the Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI) and the Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA), and more on a mixture of instrumental and learning use by RBx and COs. The Operations Support Group (OSG)¹⁹ is focused exclusively on instrumental and accountability use due to the need to ensure UNDP performance against the Strategic Plan.

Within UNDP HQ, managers and personnel from OSG and BERA perceive ADRs primarily in terms of instrumental use linked to accountability based on their main concern in demonstrating the effectiveness of UNDP's work to donor countries as well as to the countries within which

¹⁹ With UNDP's restructuring in 2014, OSG was disbanded and many of its functions were shifted from the Executive Office into the newly formed Development Impact Group

within the Bureau for Policy and Programming Support. This paper uses OSG.

UNDP works. BERA managers rely on ADRs as sources of evidence about what works and what does not work in UNDP's development approach for purposes of confirming UNDP's effectiveness and conducting donor advocacy for additional resources. Mainly, ADRs have been used in recent years by OSG as sources of evidence for reporting on UNDP's overall progress towards its corporate goals and objectives. Use of ADRs for this purpose is likely to grow over time with added pressure within UNDP corporately to enhance the overall reporting and performance management system under the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan.

OAI uses ADRs from an instrumental perspective in gauging performance, including as background information for carrying out country risk assessments to determine if audits are required. From OAI's perspective, audit and evaluation are not mutually exclusive: audits look at governance, process and systems while evaluations focus on effectiveness and efficiency, so OAI can learn from ADRs how these aspects are integrated. According to OAI, good complementarity exists between audit at the country level and ADRs, because the former looks mainly at operational issues (e.g. risk management and governance) while the latter are more results-based. OAI colleagues found, however, that the evaluations usually focus on a higher level and do not provide as much concrete information as audits. They question whether the recommendations in ADRs are sometimes specific enough to enable UNDP management to understand and address systemic issues.²⁰

Reports prepared by HQ units to the Executive Board have relied on ADRs as sources of evidence since at least 2010. For example, the 2013 review of the Strategic Plan incorporated use of ADRs as part of its longitudinal results analysis by developing a standardized ranking system for ADRs and extracting information on UNDP performance and strategic positioning from a subset

of 54 ADRs.²¹ This process was done internally by OSG but had some parallels to the more rigorous meta-synthesis approach used internally by IEO as part of its own independent evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan (see the next section). Another example of mainly instrumental use is that of the background paper of the Human Development Report Office, which used a number of ADRs to provide evidence on the role of National HDRs in terms of demonstrating the effectiveness of UNDP country support for these documents.²²

Demands for greater accountability and evidence on development results have expanded from the Executive Board and key donors but so has OSG's concern that ADRs serve more utility in terms of accountability. OSG senior managers state unequivocally that they value independent evaluations as sources of evidence about UNDP results, but they cite numerous difficulties with systematizing the information from ADRs to get beyond what they consider to be anecdotal information. OSG in the last three years has organized and maintains an extensive database of information on country-level outcomes and outputs, including indicator data generated from local sources. OSG considers the database highly useful and objective because it uses mainly country-generated information. OSG's concern is that this is not integrated with the performance data found in most ADRs, so that the specific 'metrics' or measurements mandated by the EB and the new Strategic Plan be clearly validated via ADRs (or vice versa).

In OSG's view, the small number of ADRs per year means that the information cannot be aggregated in meaningful ways for broader performance reporting purposes to further enhance their instrumental use. Overall, the contention is that ADRs have to be structured methodologically in such a way that they are aligned with the broader results and performance architecture in UNDP, making it easier to use ADRs for validation

²⁰ Among the top audit issues identified are weak project management and programming support, and poor formulation of targets and results at the CO level. Similar performance issues are raised in ADRs, which may validate how the instrumental use of ADRs is another way to address key systemic issues at the programming level.

²¹ UNDP, 'Cumulative review and annual report of the Administrator on the strategic plan: performance and results for 2008-2012', DP/2013/11, May 2013.

²² Pagliani, Paola, 'Influence of regional, national and sub-national HDRs', UNDP Human Development Report Office, Research Paper 2010/19, July 2010.

of other forms of data as well as direct sources of evidence on specific results. ADRs should thus in OSG's opinion be more completely aligned with use of the CPD indicators in the OSG database, to ensure validation of these as key tools for corporate accountability reporting. On the other hand, it must be noted that assessing UNDP's specific contribution to developmental change at a corporate level from performance information about the country's own outcomes could be quite difficult. These tensions and issues regarding mainly the accountability uses of ADRs are explored further in the final section of this paper.

Both RBx and COs view ADRs as important to their work from an accountability perspective because ADRs provide additional information aside from routine self-reporting, such as Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs), about how well the country programmes are functioning and how successful they are in meeting their development outcomes as agreed with partner countries. ADRs have been conducted long enough that they are considered a routine part of the UNDP performance assessment and management system. While challenges arise quite frequently with the planning, timing or implementation of ADRs (see the section on process use), this does not appear to undermine the general perception at the country level in particular that the instrumental use of ADRs fulfils an important institutional requirement for UNDP. Another instrumental use of ADRs was where one RB used them as key data sources for its own performance review and assessment of its work in 2008 to 2012. ADRs were considered important sources of analysis, examples and case studies of development successes from the region.

COs are major stakeholders for instrumental use related to programme improvement and CPD formulation. From their perspective, ADRs help provide a retrospective in-depth view of programme accomplishments and areas for im-

provement. ADRs are used mainly for CPD formulation, strategic discussions with partners, and to showcase UNDP's value added. The survey conducted with COs revealed that the most highly rated use for ADR reports for COs was country programme design, adjustment and improvement specifically for CPD formulation.²³ In five countries, the ADR was also rated as having made an important use contribution to the UN-DAF planning and analytical process because it provided more analysis of past trends and performance than usually available. The next highest rated form of ADR use was identification of overall country programme accomplishments and reflection on strategic directions and positioning (discussed in the section on learning use), followed by progress reporting to partners and stakeholders on the programme. Where an ADR was already completed, there was a strong understanding of what ADRs are for and how they 'fit' within the corporate performance management architecture.

According to the survey data obtained, COs commonly use their own ADR reports four times or more when formulating their country plans as well as past ADR reports, where available, to a limited extent as a type of benchmark from which to view progress. But COs are less likely to refer to ADRs of other countries for the content or comparative information, except to see examples of what other ADRs look like. The concept of pulling comparative lessons or analysis on development performance issues from the ADR reports of other countries is not fully embraced because ADRs are viewed as country-specific.

Overall, internalization of instrumental use of ADR reports by COs was seen as a challenge. RBx stakeholders found that the follow-up process to ensure that ADR information is fully integrated into programme management is not clear. The management response process, while seen as a good step, was considered to be ambiguous about where the main responsibility for the management response and follow-up lies in terms of instrumental use. Around a third of COs

²³ Where completed, ADR reports are considered required EB documentation related to approval of new CPDs. Starting around 2005, new CPDs were required to cite lessons

derived from previous evaluations including ADRs. ADRs were cited as background information in 27 of 28 sampled CPDs approved between 2010 and 2013.

that provided feedback on ADR use were concerned that they did not receive specific advice from IEO or RBx around the strategic use of the management response and how to transform it into effective tools for better programme management, rather than simply a rote requirement to complete the evaluation process.

Learning use

At the programme level within UNDP, there is moderate to strong learning use of ADRs to support critical thinking regarding global strategic directions, priorities and positioning in UNDP's work. At a broader level, little evidence exists of widespread organizational learning or transformation from ADRs. Users express concerns about how to capture, compile, curate and structure the sharing of ADR information in a coordinated fashion that goes beyond passive dissemination of reports. While global dissemination data indicate relatively high levels of electronic access and distribution, particularly country programmes with high geopolitical interest, there is limited application of ADR information by global development and research audiences.

The meta-evaluation explored learning use for two main stakeholder groups: (1) UNDP staff at HQ and within COs, and (2) external stakeholders (e.g. UNDP donor countries and the broader global development research audience).

UNDP staff

In corporate HQ, there is strong support for ADRs from some senior staff members in the organization (e.g. senior managers in RBx, as well as resident representatives and deputy resident representatives at the country level) who see ADRs as opportunities for strategic or policy dialogue both within and outside UNDP linked to more learning use. Many examples were provided of concrete ADR report use that enhanced critical dialogue and understanding about country programmes.²⁴ Where countries were facing major

programming challenges due to changing political contexts, ADRs were seen by some in RBx as having added to the dialogue around transition to new programming approaches, thereby providing both instrumental and learning uses.

Senior UNDP personnel expressed disappointment that ADRs had become more routine, bureaucratic or standardized over time, rather than providing new insights about programmes or policies more connected to learning use. RBx personnel noted that ADRs have changed focus from a more strategic and analytical purpose to an increased accountability use. RBx personnel were supportive of the need for ADRs to capture both past performance and future possibilities or options to be most useful at the programming level, but from their perspective the value added of ADRs relates to their broader, independent perspective and ability to synthesize many streams of information into a unique perspective on country programmes.

As one senior RBx manager in UNDP HQ noted, ADRs provide the opportunity for considering the mandate and role or value of the UN system and UNDP specifically especially in helping to bring to the foreground sensitive or controversial issues, such as human rights and democratic governance. This view was corroborated by other RBx and CO managers, who pointed out the tension in the minds of some UNDP personnel at both the regional and country levels regarding whether ADRs should focus mainly on accountability issues versus a more holistic, critical, challenging and broader analytical approach that looks at UNDP's overall positioning, mandate and niche, as well as the policy implications of UNDP's work at the country level.

BERA regularly scans the content of ADR reports to provide learning and overview information related to UNDP accomplishments and performance for both UNDP funders and broader audiences. BERA sees ADRs as relevant because they provide information that helps in positioning UNDP with regards to its various constituencies

²⁴ ADRs in Uzbekistan, Benin, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Botswana, Liberia, Angola, Ukraine, Argentina, Cambodia,

Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Chile and Brazil were specifically named.

and donors. BERA finds it useful to point to independent validations of UNDP's work using a consistent, holistic and comprehensive approach at the country level. However, BERA is critical of the ADR reports for its purposes because BERA sees these reports as presenting similar information from country to country, which results in the loss of the insight and depth related to specific contexts. Similar to comments made by OSG, BERA also questions the rigor and dependability of some of the qualitative evidence used in ADR reports and would like to see much more precise and focused recommendations to support accountability and advocacy/public relations uses of ADRs.

Another important learning use for ADRs in UNDP HQ is as background sources for thematic evaluations conducted by IEO and for the evaluation of the Strategic Plan. IEO thematic evaluations provide cross-cutting analysis of major topics in UNDP's work. As the methodology, quality and consistency of ADRs have improved, IEO has used them as a source of information for background, analytical and validation purposes. Out of 19 thematic evaluations completed by IEO between 2010 and 2015, 15 relied on some form of analysis or synthesis of the ADR reports. The majority used ADR reports as general sources of 'background learning' for preparing for the country visits or other specific data collection. Twelve thematic evaluations used ADRs to help construct country case studies, extract specific examples of related work, and/or enable comparative analysis between countries.

One example is that the Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan for 2008–2013 used a combined quantitative and qualitative meta-synthesis of ADRs to validate self-reporting from COs and other information on results and indicators found in the corporate results-based management (RBM) system. ADR reports were used as sources of evidence and trends on various evaluation criteria. Information systematically synthesized from ADRs confirmed and illustrated some challenges and problems in several areas of Strategic Plan implementation and management as compared with relying solely on other types of data collected by UNDP at the country

level. This type of meta-synthesis based on qualitative comparative analysis methodology is more standardized and demanding than that used in broader, meta-analysis approaches. However, IEO identified several challenges with using ADRs as sources of data, mainly the variations in rigour and depth with which ADRs treat different aspects of the country programmes.

The majority of survey respondents from COs said that the most important purpose of ADRs is to provide inputs for learning and adjustment related to the country programme. CO personnel generally welcome ADRs as opportunities to reflect critically and constructively on UNDP's work in the country, step back and consider options, look at new perspectives on what they are doing and how they are doing it, and reflect how best to 'reposition' their programmes (particularly in fragile states and countries undergoing transitions).

Some COs mentioned the importance of ADRs as increasing understanding among partners about UNDP's value added, especially in middle-income countries, as tools that can help in mobilizing support from funders, and as ways to document more comprehensively UNDP's contribution over longer time periods (e.g. four to five

Most useful ADR aspects according to COs

- Encourage a shift in programme focus and identify new directions
- Reinforce the need for new/improved upstream initiatives
- Provide a benchmark and reflection tool within a rapidly changing programme
- Highlight the institutional approaches needed for long-term sustainability
- Identify concrete changes in terms of mainstreaming and placing greater priority on strategic initiatives
- Reinforce change from a project-based focus to programme/development outcomes focus
- Support advocacy and strategic networking with national partners
- Change the evaluation culture within COs
- Increase alignment with UNDAF and help push for greater harmonization within UN Country Teams
- Analyse UNDP's technical support role and any limitations

years) in a way that goes beyond routine annual reporting to HQ. Specifically, ADR reports were said to be useful to provide insights on the role of UNDP in countries in transition, affected by conflict, with middle-income status, or under situations of repressive governments with little latitude for creative programming.

ADR reports are easily accessed by COs, mostly as electronic copies (97 percent). The ERC website is, however, little known to other staff not involved directly in evaluation work. Over 90 percent of COs considered the ADR reports to be very or somewhat 'user-friendly' in terms of language, organization and presentation of the ideas. The recommendations section of the report is by far the section most frequently referred to by users. Very or somewhat satisfactory ratings were given by the majority of CO respondents to the language used, format, formulation of findings, and credibility of evidence. For example, the length of the reports was viewed as a partial impediment to 'casual' use, as it was pointed out that COs receive and process a large number of documents, which are not usually looked at due to lack of time.²⁵ About half of COs noted ADRs were too descriptive to provide new insights about the programme.

External stakeholders

Feedback from UNDP staff underlined the need for strong engagement with national partners for joint learning, but staff also acknowledged

that this depends on country capacities and size of the UNDP programme. ADR stakeholder workshops held to discuss country programme findings, trends and implications are generally rated as a very useful exercise to discuss critical performance and learning issues and ensure that the evaluation has some constructive utility at the country level.²⁶

In terms of global learning audiences, ADRs are considered as sources for development partners to either extract lessons or analyse programme performance and effectiveness from the donor perspective. ADRs have strong potential as credible sources of learning and performance information and do meet quality criteria for these types of meta-evaluations or strategic reviews. For example, some recent studies have been conducted by donors to assess UNDP's effectiveness and performance using ADRs as source materials. This includes the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN),²⁷ Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),²⁸ and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).²⁹ Both AUSAid and the Department for International Development (DFID) have completed recent multilateral reviews covering UNDP with some references to ADRs and/or country level evaluation reports in general, although ADRs are not cited specifically as background sources.³⁰ Consequently, some isolated cases show that ADRs

²⁵ Note that since 2016, IEO has committed to shortening ADRs to approximately 50 pages to make the final product more usable by readers.

²⁶ Feedback from a 2015 mini-survey following two IEO stakeholder workshops indicated that for national partners, the most important area of ADR use was oriented towards providing strategic direction for national development cooperation.

²⁷ Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, 'Assessment of Organisational Effectiveness and Reporting on Organisational Results: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)', vol. 1, December 2012, available at: http://www.mopanonline.org/upload/documents/MOPAN_2012_UNDP_Final_Vol_1_Issued_December_2012_1_1.pdf.

²⁸ CIDA reviewers concluded that the ADR reports were credible and useful inputs for this type of broader performance assessment and ADRs provided sufficient evidence to indicate that good value-for-money was achieved for CIDA's investment of funds. CIDA,

'Development Effectiveness Review of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2005-2011: Synthesis Report', April 2012.

²⁹ A NORAD seminar on UN support to conflict-affected countries integrated some information from evaluation findings including ADRs. <http://www.norad.no/en/about-norad/news/lessons-from-un-support-to-conflict-affected-countries>.

³⁰ Australian Government/Australian AID, 'Australian Multilateral Assessment March 2012: United Nations Development Programme' available at <http://aid.dfat.gov.au/partner/Documents/ama-full-report.pdf>; UK AID/Department for International Development. 'Multilateral Aid Review: Ensuring maximum value for money for UK aid through multilateral organisations', March 2011, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multilateral-aid-review>.

have a broader utility in supporting donor-specific assessments.

For learning use by global and/or virtual audiences, ADRs are cited modestly, primarily as sources of background information in academic literature on development issues. Taking into account a marginal error rate in the accuracy of citations, Google Scholar provides approximately 150 citations for ADRs since 2010 in scholarly literature, and to a lesser degree, documentation of other international development agencies.³¹

IEO is committed to the principles of communications and knowledge sharing for all its evaluation products, in support of the UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating and the Evaluation Policy, which both emphasize the need for sharing and distribution of evaluative information in a variety of formats. IEO's approach to ensuring access to ADR reports on a broader level is via distribution of hard copies or online access. The office produces professional reports that are made available in a "consistent and transparent way" (IEO Peer Review, 2013). ADR downloads have increased steadily over time. Based on data from UNDP ERC, the number of downloads in 2014 more than tripled compared with 2010.³²

As of November 2015, about 87,000 downloads of ADR reports had been performed since 2010, over half of which were located in the U.S. where UNDP is headquartered. Therefore, download traffic was concentrated in a relatively small user base.³³ Overall, a higher volume of downloads occurred in donor countries (e.g. the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and Australia) and by populous middle-income countries (e.g. China, India, Russia and Brazil). The most widely downloaded reports were of high geopolitical interest.³⁴ In spite of the favourable statistics in

terms of online access, UNDP's knowledge sharing platforms represent largely passive information sharing for ADRs.³⁵

Users express concerns about how to share ADR information beyond passive dissemination of reports. This may in part be a result of a change in the focus and intent of ADRs over time, as noted by RBx personnel, from a more strategic and analytical purpose to an increased accountability use. RBx expressed support for both types of ADRs, but several managers were particularly concerned that the learning orientation of ADRs not be lost, as this is useful for understanding UNDP's positioning within a particular context. RBx personnel were supportive of the need for ADRs to capture both past performance and future possibilities or options to be most useful at the programming level, but from their perspective the value added of ADRs relates to their broader, independent perspective and the ability to synthesize many streams of information into a unique perspective on country programmes.

³¹ Google Scholar citations last accessed 20 November 2015.

³² Based on data from the ERC website administered by IEO, erc.undp.org (accessed September 2015).

³³ Based on an analysis of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, 67 percent of traffic comprised users who downloaded 10 or more ADRs.

³⁴ Including in descending order Tunisia (2012), China (2010), Afghanistan (2009), and Egypt (2012).

³⁵ The online UNDP Teamworks platform, now merged into a new platform, included an evaluation space with specific discussion threads and resources. Twenty-one completed ADR reports were posted to this space and viewed collectively ~350 times between March 2010 and August 2011, but only three comments or recommendations were noted.

Figure 3. Downloads of ADR reports by month, 2010–2015

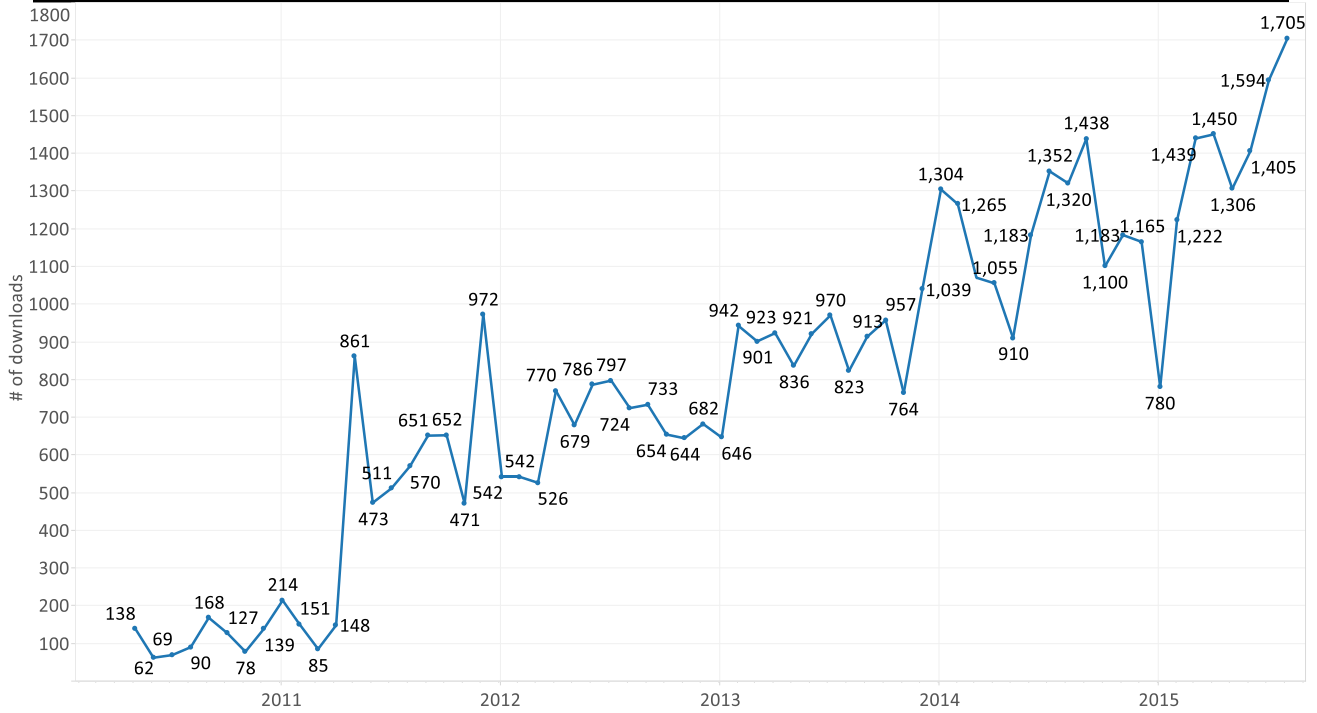
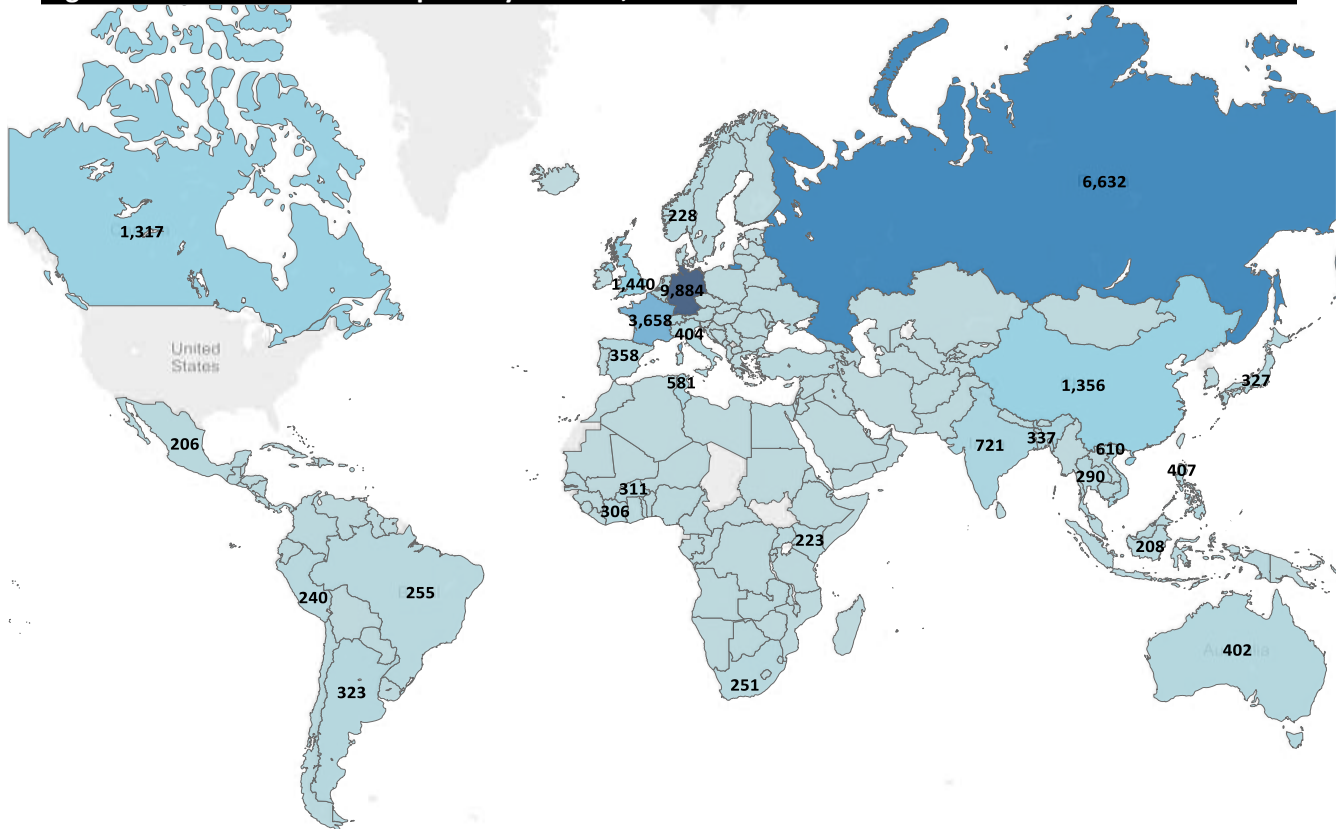


Figure 4. Downloads of ADR reports by location, 2010–2015³⁶



³⁶ Geocoded data are based on UNDP ERC (accessed September 2015) and exclude downloads from the U.S. due to a large distortion effect. Labels of downloads are filtered for countries with over 200 downloaded reports, but due to space restrictions do not picture Belgium (216), the Netherlands (238), Switzerland (414) and Cambodia (206).

Process use

ADR process use is limited and heavily contingent on external factors such as evaluation culture. Process use from ADRs, which includes partner engagement, joint cooperation and evaluation capacity building as ends in themselves, is varied and inconsistent, although IEO has made attempts via ADRs to build national evaluation capacity. According to stakeholders, these types of process use also influence the level and type of both instrumental and learning use. Surveyed COs identified areas where the management of ADR processes may be impinging the potential for greater process use. As a result, crucial opportunities are missed for fostering evaluation capacity and building evaluation culture.

The mechanisms used to engage with COs and partners during the ADR cycle affect the quality of the end product and forms of evaluation use. Successful process use was highly dependent on the pre-existing evaluation culture, capacity and skills within both COs and the country context more generally. These variables are not completely within IEO's control and therefore the approach for enhancing process use at the country level cannot be uniformly standardized. Nonetheless, country-level users do not generally resist reports that contain critical information if the underlying process is perceived as fair, professional, interactive and open, and so long as it benefits the users through having their evaluation expertise enhanced. Interestingly, sometimes ADRs considered 'controversial' by country stakeholders lead to constructive dialogue about UNDP's role and enhance knowledge about and commitment to the evaluation function at the country level.

To foster process use, both RBx and COs observed that more constructive dialogue between IEO and COs was seen as critical during planning

of ADRs and throughout the entire cycle of implementation. COs are more likely to discount the value of the ADR process and final product when their analytical insights and contextual knowledge are not given due consideration.³⁷ Indeed, the most important factor impinging ADR use according to COs was the lack of relevance of the ADR report to the complex reality of the programme and its environment. Senior managers, including resident and deputy representatives, were particularly critical of ADRs lacking the requisite understanding of the programme context. The majority of COs said they were more involved in medium to later stages of ADR implementation rather than at the very beginning (e.g. logistical support during missions). Therefore, approaches to fostering process use through evaluation capacity building at the 'front end' appear lacking in many ADRs.

Timing of ADRs is a crucial issue from the CO perspective in process use. Delays in ADRs implementation, including misalignment with the CO planning cycle, were considered as the second biggest factor impinging use of any kind and also inhibited CO engagement and capacity development. It was noted that most ADRs should be completed six to 12 months before the CPD process commences, although in some cases information can still be used if the CPD process has started when an ADR is underway. However, an estimated 35 percent were received too late, including at least six reports received 'at the last minute' as CPDs were being prepared. When the ADR reports are completed too late in this process, the usability of the report is considered compromised. COs also expressed concerns that the ADR process was often driven by outside schedules and demands. Additionally, ADR coverage of longer time-frames (e.g. two programme cycles) may also decrease usefulness for immediate work.³⁸

³⁷ One survey respondent claimed that the CO role was often relegated to logistical support and identification of stakeholders without a true critical dialogue with evaluators on the findings and issues raised.

³⁸ On the other hand, longer-term ADRs may provide a valuable overview of programme evolution.

ADR process use as a means of building capacity and commitment to evaluation is strongly affected by negative perceptions by COs of the accuracy and appropriateness of ADR findings, as well as by some ADR recommendations not being specific or detailed enough. COs were almost equally divided on the quality of reports in terms of length, clarity and usability. They also identified challenges with the review and input process to the final report, which was deemed to be too lengthy, and they thought that it was difficult to get dissenting or alternate views across to the ADR team when asking for final adjustments to the report. About half of COs expressed strong concerns about the quality of the research process and their lack of faith in the credibility and skills of the external team members. Several examples were offered of the ADR consultants being in conflict of interest with, or of not having enough in-depth knowledge of, UNDP, as well as lacking the professionalism or the methodological rigor required to navigate situations in which UNDP's role in the country has to be carefully nurtured. All these points highlight the need for involvement of COs as full partners in every part of the ADR cycle so that process use is enhanced, thereby also fostering stronger instrumental and learning use.

A small number of ADRs have experimented with the use of national reference groups to assist throughout the ADR process and to increase process use. The practice is not sufficiently widespread to extract any trends or lessons about this mechanism's role. Anecdotally, one national reference group played a role in assisting the ADR and also advising CPD design, which enabled excellent continuity and opportunities for strategic follow-through. An iterative process was also used for some ADRs to adapt to countries that were undergoing rapid change (e.g. Arab Spring

countries). While final reports were ultimately 'outdated' by changing events, the process of critical engagement itself was deemed to be more helpful than the reports themselves. These are excellent examples of process use that reinforce the 'virtuous circle' between evaluation process and ultimate use.

IEO's efforts to foster process use rely mainly on procedures to educate and sensitize ADR stakeholders about the importance and value of programme evaluation principles and norms (e.g. evaluation independence). IEO has experimented with an 'alternative' approach to more jointly plan and implement ADRs with local institutions (either government or research think tanks).³⁹ The approach yields benefits for evaluation capacity building in support of process use, but requires more time and effort to do up-front consultation, planning and partnership building with the counterparts beyond the regular ADR process. For at least two of these ADRs, national partners were highly motivated in the process and referenced the reports as the basis of extended strategic discussions with UNDP.

Interestingly, well over half of CO respondents mentioned that the ADR process itself had helped build their own culture, capacity and skills in evaluation, which reinforces the importance of considering process use as a key aspect of ADRs. Conversely, stakeholders noted that it is difficult to introduce process use in a constructive way where the evaluation culture itself is weak, which presents a 'catch-22' for IEO and other stakeholders. Overall, the engagement of government and local partners was said to be one of the more challenging aspects of the process use of ADRs, which depended on country partners' capacities and ability to become involved.

³⁹ This approach is used to a limited extent in Mongolia, China, India, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Egypt.

5. Ways forward to enhance evaluation use

This final section provides conclusions and suggestions around evaluation use in two areas, drawing on the information collected about ADRs. First is a summary of issues specific to UNDP itself that appear to influence evaluation use and what might be done to address them. Second, several generic strategies are presented following Patton's utilization-focused evaluation approach that could be applied by international development agencies.

How to improve ADR use according to COs

- Stronger knowledge/skills of evaluation teams
- Standardize advance and clearly communicated documentation requirements
- More CO input into design of ADRs, upfront planning and selection of the evaluation teams
- Standardize timing to have ADRs completed one year before end of programme cycle
- Conduct ADRs to end every programme cycle
- Better integration of management response process with ongoing programme management
- Enhance CO strategic engagement/partnership
- Synthesize findings from ADRs for improved programme design at regional/HQ levels
- ADRs integrate aspects of peer review process for country programmes (e.g. personnel from similar UNDP programmes as ADR team members)
- Built-in mechanism for COs to voice concerns about the ADR process
- Segmented ADR communications strategy to reach different audiences around use
- Better linkages between ADR process and the decentralized evaluations at country level

5.1. UNDP and evaluation use

The study confirmed that ADRs are recognized as an integral part of the UNDP evaluation landscape. They serve a complex mixture of accountability, learning and process purposes that are important to different stakeholders. However, the array of uses produces tensions due to the complexity of the organization. For RBx and COs in particular, ADR use in general has been

reinforced by its integration with the country programme planning cycle, by the increased focus on results in the new Strategic Plan, by increased rigor in the evaluation function, and by a gradual positive shift in the evaluation culture of UNDP. For senior managers in UNDP mainly concerned with instrumental use, ADRs cannot always fulfil their reporting and compliance expectations due to their design as broader programme evaluations. These tensions are not easily reconciled, and it is likely impossible for any single evaluation process, tool or product to meet all needs and desired uses.

Partly as a consequence of these systemic tensions, the linkages between ADR use and programmatic change or adjustment are indirect and diffuse. There are many challenges in planning for use and in implementing use strategies when the demands and expectations are so diverse and multi-faceted. Given the complexity of the situation, IEO has taken a pragmatic approach which relies on targeted consultation and input from key users at HQ combined with a largely passive distribution and follow-up strategy. However, expectations from many stakeholders are that some additional proactive dialogue may be needed around use and follow-up so that the many perspectives around ADR use are taken into consideration.

As independent analytical evaluations of a broad range of programmatic issues, ADRs are more likely to fulfil learning uses related to critical, analytical discussion about what works or not. It might, however, be possible to strengthen the intersections between instrumental and learning uses of ADRs to some extent, while at the same time putting greater emphasis on process use. Understanding ADR use has to go beyond focusing on the reports themselves as 'products' and continue to emphasize the enabling factors and institutional landscape around use.

At the time of this paper, IEO did not have an explicit framework of ADR use based on evaluation theory and practice, including a clear mapping of user groups and a typology of different uses for this product. IEO would benefit from an in-depth study to establish a practical framework for use that tracks qualitative and quantitative indicators on how well ADRs are meeting their primary and secondary purposes. The following approaches and strategies to enhance organizational change around evaluation use can be relevant considerations in developing such a framework.

Perspectives on ‘evaluation independence’

While UNDP managers generally understand the concept of evaluation independence, it may be questioned when critical evaluation findings are perceived to jeopardize UNDP’s reputation and funding base. A related critique finds a risk that independent evaluators will unfairly judge UNDP’s performance against standards that go outside the Strategic Plan. IEO needs to continue to educate, defend and reinforce evaluation independence while enhancing end-user participation in the ADR process. Independence and user-friendliness should not be seen as contradictory modes.

Sustained engagement is needed between IEO and UNDP management to discuss these concerns and perspectives on evaluation independence and find ways of adapting to evaluation use while not jeopardizing principles of evaluation independence.⁴⁰ A related area to explore is how to address the tension that may arise between whether COs can interact productively with the ADR process as full partners in process use without it being an ‘undue influence’. To more closely align ADRs with utilization-focused aims for eval-

uation, IEO can identify how to balance independence with, for example, greater user participation in selection of teams,⁴¹ customization of evaluation questions and criteria, choice of methods, or joint data validation and analysis. While greater involvement of COs in certain aspects of the process present clear trade-offs in terms of independence, these approaches provide room for experimentation as IEO explores various ADR ‘models’.

‘Systems change’ around evaluation use

The different viewpoints on how to balance accountability versus learning approaches for ADRs illustrate the way in which institutional dynamics can influence evaluation use, as well as the need for a nuanced negotiation of use as part of the ADR process. ADRs could be subdivided or segmented in some way, into two separate categories or types of performance analysis rather than being consolidated within one process or instrument: one element being the ‘hard’ data required to match up with the outcomes and outputs being tracked in the corporate system, and the other more reflective, analytical and strategic in terms of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the country programmes. Whether any one type of evaluation can cover both aspects is of course still open to debate and gives rise to many of the tensions currently surrounding ADRs.

In terms of possible systemic change, more importance could be given to process use by sensitizing UNDP stakeholders at different levels of the organization about the important role of ADRs as sources of reflective, critical, strategic and analytical feedback. IEO could, for example, convene regular meetings of evaluation officers or focal points from various bureaus to inform

members, and also the dearth of consultation with COs so that their opinions about the quality of team members could be considered.

⁴⁰ IEO has recently taken concrete steps to implement, for example, a standard ‘charter’ outlining key principles and expected roles of actors in its evaluation work, which may help formalize how independence is enshrined in practice.

⁴¹ About half of COs expressed concerns about their lack of faith in the credibility and skills of the external team

them of developments in the ADR process, obtain feedback and advice on applicability of evaluation criteria and various methods, provide synthesis and dialogue around insights gained from recent ADRs, and increase regular feedback loops about what is working and not working in the ADR process and use.⁴²

Provision could be made for involving a selected number of internal experts as part of ADR evaluation teams in the future (e.g. UNDP policy specialists, resident representatives or deputy resident representatives, central bureau performance review advisors, and/or evaluation specialists).⁴³ ADRs should have an active, engaged advisory or reference group, and/or can recruit national government counterparts and other local specialists to also become part of ADR evaluation teams with due consideration to conflict of interest. Coaching, learning and capacity building around evaluation practices can be built into ADRs at the country level for the benefit of both national counterparts and COs, to strengthen process use from ADRs.

Furthermore, specific or detailed questions about ADR use could be built into the annual products and services survey conducted by UNDP. ADRs can further enhance their usefulness through a wider variety of alternative evaluation methods and techniques as well as more responsive and iterative approaches to working with stakeholders and programme partners. ADRs could be 'built into' multi-year country programme evaluation plans in some way, perhaps as joint evaluation initiatives of IEO and COs, so that they are fully 'owned' by COs. Further strategies could be explored to increase coordination and involvement of policy advisors from other central bureaux as more active partners in planning and follow-up from ADRs so that the policy implications of ADRs are addressed more systematically.

Quality of the management response process

⁴² This opportunity is all the more relevant given the added emphasis of the revised 2016 Evaluation Policy on enhancing UNDP's decentralized evaluation systems. In this vein,

The existing management response system for ADRs meets international norms. However, there is inadequate continuous monitoring of the management response process, with one third of ADRs having been found (at the time of completing the original meta-evaluation) completing 50 percent or fewer of key actions from the management response. The management response is frequently viewed defensively by COs and to a lesser extent RBx. The management response is often a missed opportunity for offices and programmes to have in-depth discussion of the follow-up issues from ADRs, which could help facilitate new visions, partnerships or strategic directions. Ideally, this should also be part of the stakeholder workshop for each ADR. While IEO has made efforts since 2013 to include management responses within ADRs to demonstrate a linkage between report recommendations and UNDP actions, this has had no bearing on how the overall system is followed up.

The meta-evaluation indicated that the majority of COs did not view the management response process as well-integrated with wider management discussions of the strategic implications of ADRs' conclusions and recommendations. The management response is seen as a rigid, compliance-focused, or formulaic process that does not serve a larger strategic purpose. It is seldom referred back to once the template is complete. UNDP could explore how to restructure the management response as a process of dialogue and engagement, including that the follow-up for actions be more explicitly embedded in some unit's mandate. A rigorous study of the overall management response quality, implementation and process of change would provide the evaluation function clearer indications for where it may better target reform measures. The process should ultimately further integrate and reinforce evaluation use.

IEO began inviting HQ units including regional bureaux to introduce the ADR cycle and discuss ideas for reform.

⁴³ This practice was used in a 2016 ADR with a UNDP monitoring and evaluation staff member from another CO.

End user engagement in the evaluation cycle

UNDP can assert a more comprehensive commitment to making the ADR process as engaging, productive and enriching as possible for all the stakeholders and end users involved, while still maintaining the independence and rigor necessary for credible evaluations. This probably involves putting more time and resources into the up-front planning and design phases for ADRs, so that there is sufficient time to look thoroughly at use considerations. Ample evidence exists that some facets of use-focused design for ADRs are already in place. However, strategic, cost and time factors are involved as well as institutional and contextual forces at work which influence full implementation. For example, IEO operates from HQ and therefore there are practical limits on how much any evaluation manager can engage in dialogue around use at the ADR planning stage within countries. Dialogue about and with intended users also has to encompass the central bureaus and their diverse needs.

ADRs are still viewed and treated primarily by partners as internal UNDP evaluation instruments. National partners do not appear to be primary users of ADRs. The fact that it was not possible to easily identify and involve these country level users for past ADRs in the study itself is an indication of how disconnected they may be from the process. Personnel in partner government ministries change frequently, they are understandably preoccupied with a myriad of national priorities within high-demand settings, and their interaction with ADRs may be formulaic, short-term, perfunctory or superficial, especially where the UNDP programme is not very large. COs stated that the level of engagement of national partners in ADRs is dependent on a number of factors, including skills, motivation, capacities, and size or scope of the engagement with UNDP.

The engagement of government partners and potential users in the ADR process and ultimately in ADR use depends on whether they see any benefits in it. As noted in the previous section on process use, IEO has experimented with various methods to involve national partners, and there are many positive examples of active participation in productive follow-up discussions on ADRs.⁴⁴ This remains an important area for consideration around enhancing ADR use, particularly given the considerable time investment when increasing participation through evaluation reference groups. IEO's continued use of these modalities could be monitored based on stakeholders' perceived value of such processes. The categorization of primary and secondary ADR users and uses for each group needs to be revisited and clarified further, so that there is more detailed understanding of how to tailor different products or uses to different types of users.

Evaluation managers as 'evaluation facilitators'

As an independent, arms-length unit, IEO is widely acknowledged as being professional and adaptive. Evaluation managers are often considered capable of easing tension between a CO and the external evaluation team if there are large differences in opinion or interpretation. IEO officers display skills related to negotiating complex processes within multi-faceted and sensitive settings, and the office has changed its approach so that IEO officers now function as ADR team leaders to ensure greater consistency. UNDP stakeholders welcome this move and expect that it will contribute towards greater professionalism, quality, dialogue and cooperation around all aspects of IEO planning, implementation and follow-up.

To enhance evaluation use, Patton (2012) lists many desirable interpersonal characteristics for

⁴⁴ A recent example is the Uruguay ADR, following which the national evaluation agency contacted UNDP to support designing a public policy evaluation strategy within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

evaluators, including the ability to be ‘active-reactive-interactive-adaptive’ throughout the process.⁴⁵ Several other evaluation experts mention the importance of ‘facilitating use’ (Shulha and Cousins [1997], Kirkhart [2000], Weiss [1998], Smith [1988], and Patton [2012]). Weiss emphasizes the importance of longer-term interaction between evaluators and programmers to realize the strategic potential of evaluation recommendations. Additional training, sensitization and practice opportunities in these skill sets could be needed, possibly also drawing in expertise from a range of other sources and colleagues in evaluation. In addition to the standard evaluator competencies and skills promoted by UNEG, these other competencies will help to enhance use.

Targeting information to different users

There is a segmentation of use at the CO level, ranging from an analytical-strategic perspective of senior managers concerned about how best to position UNDP within countries, to a more project management perspective, such as feedback on programme weaknesses. These contrasting viewpoints underline how one report product is unlikely to meet the multiplicity of needs of the many ADR audiences. Breaking down and distributing ADRs into sub-packages of information—such as summary brochures, one-pagers, or presentations—can target these multiple user groups. In a few cases, COs reported only the executive summary of ADRs being translated into a local language, which precluded different types of use. COs also noted that the reports are usually full of development terminology and concepts that make them less accessible to local partners.

⁴⁵ Patton (2012) also lists cross-cultural competencies, respect for intended users, high skills in group facilitation processes to arrive at clear consensus and actions around crucial aspects of the evaluation, enhanced skills in communications and in fostering trust and transparency, and high comfort levels with reflexivity and enquiry into self-knowledge.

An IEO peer review (2013) recommended how better standardization, organization and synthesis of information from evaluations could be beneficial to a variety of audiences and needs. IEO has responded to these ideas by developing an updated knowledge sharing and communications strategy, but its approach to dissemination has been largely passive. ADRs are circulated passively through the ERC and knowledge sharing platforms. Download data affirms the relevance of using a variety of access portals for report distribution to maximize the possibility that learning use will be as widespread as possible.⁴⁶

5.2. Global strategies for evaluation use

Building from the basic typology of three main types of evaluation use which served as the guide for this specific study within one international organization, this final section suggests broader strategies that international agencies can apply when seeking to improve evaluation use. To date, even though evaluation use is enshrined in UNEG and OECD-DAC evaluation principles that international agencies attempt to address, there may be scope to take a more comprehensive approach among international agencies at a global level. The following areas for agencies to consider in enhancing use are based on Patton’s (2012) 17 stages in utilization-focused evaluation.

Organizational readiness for use

As part of evaluation policy review and ongoing evaluation planning, organizations could develop an overall strategy for assessing readiness for evaluation use at various levels both within and outside their structures. Evaluation units could make identification of specific end users an explicit part of the development of evaluation

⁴⁶ Respondents of the ADR user mini-survey conducted in 2015 emphasized a need for greater dissemination to increase the ADR utility for national governments, including through consultations and some ongoing mechanisms such as workshops.

terms of reference, and they could provide some specific guidance or tools to evaluation team leaders (whether internal or external) to ensure that appropriate procedures are put in place to incorporate end use considerations during evaluation design and planning. This could include specific use readiness tools and questions to ask during the evaluation planning process that are incorporated into evaluation guidelines.

Requirements related to experience, skills or aptitudes for evaluation use could be incorporated into the screening and selection of external evaluators. Evaluation use skills could also be assessed and then built among internal evaluation unit managers and staff. For example, evaluation workplans or inception reports could require a specific section that outlines the strategies to assure different types of evaluation use (implementation, learning and process). Considerations of process use could be made an explicit part of the evaluation planning process both for centralized and decentralized evaluations. Questions and strategies related to process use for a variety of stakeholders could be built into evaluation methodological guides, and planning for process use might be an incentive to encourage the full engagement of intended users. For example, evaluation unit multi-year plans might include a specific section related to how to enhance process use of any evaluations conducted.

Use focus and simulation

Given that credibility of data, findings and conclusions can be major issues in some development evaluations, more time could be allocated in the evaluation planning process to work with different end users to discuss and weigh various options and methods for data collection. End users at different levels would then be better informed about how methods were selected during evaluation planning and would know better what to expect from the final product. Interim discussions could be held with country programme stakeholders in the field as well as those in HQ concerning the quality and type of data emerging from an evaluation. If feasible, some

new types of data collection might be added midstream in some evaluations to respond to user concerns.

End users at different levels will have to be better informed and engaged in helping select the most effective methods based on various use considerations. Some form of ‘use simulation exercises’ (highly recommended by Patton) could be integrated into evaluation planning processes so that intended users both within or outside central evaluation units have a chance to ‘walk through’ what will eventually happen to the planned evaluation information.

Central evaluation units could also provide more explicit guidance and opportunities for revising generic evaluation criteria and questions through input by various stakeholders. Evaluation questions could be further adapted based on local priorities and preferences to make evaluation use more likely, while meeting required accountability dimensions. Evaluation units could also discuss and clarify as part of a participatory process what specific intervention logic is being used as the basis for the evaluation so that end users are comfortable and knowledgeable about this conceptual underpinning.

Data collection and analysis/interpretation

Interim or in-process discussions could be held with decentralized stakeholders and in agency HQ concerning the quality and type of data emerging as data collection takes place, and discuss how the preliminary data may or may not fulfill original expectations for the type of information required. If feasible, some new types of data might be added midstream in the evaluation process to respond to user concerns. Central evaluation units could consider inviting representatives of various user groups to become more involved in providing commentary or input related to interpretation of data prior to preparation of the final analysis and report by the evaluation team.

Evaluation reporting and follow-up facilitation

Patton (2012) proposes a number of use-oriented activities that could continue after an evaluation report is actually prepared. These include follow-up presentations to different audiences, facilitated discussions between evaluators and stakeholders to further 'unpack' official recommendations and decide how to address them, and online discussions, workshops, strategy sessions and so on. IEO has used this approach effectively through the end-of-process stakeholder workshop modality. This is one approach to 'curating' information from evaluations so that there is active dialogue, interchange and joint discussion about their content and implications. This process might last months or even years after the evaluation report is released.

Central evaluation offices could consider proactively expanding the number and type of briefings and/or workshops and/or other forms of dialogue on findings and recommendations with different user groups, both internal and external to their agency.

These units could consider becoming more involved in facilitating or providing advice on the management response process in the longer term, and/or in preparing, presenting and following up on different types of documents for dissemination. They could also provide 'evaluation use advocacy' presentations or workshops about single or multiple evaluations based on synthesis of key information that is likely to be of interest to different user groups.

Meta-evaluation

Central evaluation units could consider routinely conducting a meta-evaluation of evaluation use every three to five years, such as the one described in this paper, as part of regular reviews of evaluation policy and/or routine evaluation planning. Meta-evaluations and their findings can be used to constructively build process use in creating more dialogue around the strengths and weaknesses of evaluation use, identifying capacity challenges, and documenting 'good practices' in evaluation use.

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Annex 2. Interview guide for key stakeholders

The following interview guide was used in the original study on which this paper is based. It provides a list of questions that were adapted for different categories of informants and types of interviews and focus groups.

Key to categories of informants

EB = Executive Board, OSG = Operations Support Group, NCs = National counterparts at country level, COs = UNDP country offices, RBx = Regional bureaus, PBx = Central/policy bureaus at headquarters, UNCT = Members/representatives of UN country teams, OPG = Organizational Performance Group, EO = Evaluation office, RSCs = Regional service centres, OAs = Other agencies or organizations/units outside UNDP

I. Introduction

Basic information to be provided by the interviewer on purpose of the study, information on confidentiality, and how the information collected will be analyzed and used as part of the ADR review process.

II. Background/basic knowledge of ADRs

- What do you know about UNDP ADRs, their background, purpose and role within the organization? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, RBx, PBx, UNCT, OPG, OAs)
- Probe for general background knowledge of ADRs as part of the evaluation function of UNDP, ideas/knowledge about who are the intended users of ADRs, what purposes ADRs serve (i.e. accountability, learning, other purposes)
- NOTE: May need to provide a quick definition of how the terms 'accountability' and 'learning' are being used in this study as a means of analyzing ADR use

III. Access to ADRs

- If you have been involved in any aspect of the ADR process over the past five years (at the country level or broader level), how did you obtain a copy of a draft/final ADR report for review/use? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, RBx, PBx, UNCT, OPG, OAs)
- Probe for means of distribution or how you gained access to an ADR, preference or ease of electronic versus print access, knowledge of where to look for the ADR online, clarity of information about how to access an ADR report

IV. Frequency of ADR use

- How often in the past year/two years/three years/five years have you read, reviewed, referred to or extracted information from an ADR? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, RBx, PBx, UNCT, OPG, OAs, RSCs, EO re: use in thematic-programme evaluations?)
- Probe for number and types of ADR reports looked at, how many times ADR information used or referenced in your work

V. Timelines and quality of ADR process, format, content, and dissemination/follow-up process

- For any ADRs in which you were an informant/participant and/or stakeholder and/or partner and/or audience/user, please describe briefly how you or your organization/unit/office were involved in the process of 1. planning, 2. implementation and/or 3. follow-up? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, UNCTs, RBx, RSCs, PBx, OPG)

- Probe for quality of ADR process overall, stakeholder or user engagement/ownership in up-front ADR planning and/or in planning for ADR use, consultation about ADR timelines, perceptions of ADR design, methodology and data collection process, type of consultation with stakeholders over findings/recommendations/actions, opportunities for feedback and input on final report, opportunities to participate in follow-up discussions around use of ADR findings and recommendations, perceptions of the quality of the ADR follow-up process, including the management response process
- Which section(s) of the ADR report did you read most frequently when/if you read or reviewed the final report? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, UNCTs, RBx, RSCs, PBx, OPG, OAs)
- Probe for reviewed executive summary only and/or other sections of the report, ease of finding required information in the report, quality of data or information presented in terms of accuracy/clarity/rigour/verifiability, relevance to needs/programming context
- Was the document or e-version organized in a user-friendly way? Was the required information easy to read and/or understand? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, UNCTs, RBx, RSCs, PBx, OPG, OAs)
- Probe for organization of the information and formatting of the document, type of language (language style, what language the report was available in)

VI. Type of ADR end use and examples of use application of ADRs (different sub-sections to be used for different groups of participants)

- Based on your past experience and previous access to ADRs, do you or your office/unit/entity use ADRs mainly for 1. accountability, 2. learning or a 3. combination of both purposes or some other purpose? NOTE: May need to review definition of how the terms 'accountability' and 'learning' are being used in this study as a means of analyzing ADR use (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, UNCTs, RBx, RSCs, PBx, OPG, OAs)
- A. Accountability: Please describe briefly how you used ADR findings, recommendations and/or reports in conjunction with the CPD review/approval process at the EB level and/or review of UNDP progress and contributions from the perspective of partner countries (EB/NCs)
- Probe for whether and in what way an ADR was referred to as part of CPD review and/or approval process, use of ADRs in results tracking or as evidence of development effectiveness
- B. Accountability: Please describe briefly how you used ADR findings, recommendations and/or reports for review of UNDP contribution, activities or progress in-country (NCs, plus any comments from COs/RBx/UNCT)
- Probe for whether ADR was referred to as part of the CPD and/or UNDAF review and design process at the country level, whether information was used by partner governments to recommend changes in UNDP strategy or process at the country level
- C. Accountability: Please describe briefly how you used ADR information/data as input for annual reports on the UNDP strategic plan and progress towards key results (OSG)
- Probe for quality/scope of data found in ADRs, how ADR data extracted or organized for use in annual reports on the Strategic Plan, perceptions of accuracy and reliability of information found in ADRs, use of qualitative versus quantitative data
- D. Learning (use in conjunction with B.): Please describe briefly how you used ADR findings, recommendations and/or reports as a basis for planning, design and/or adjustment of the CPD and/or UNDAF at the country level (NCs, COs, UNCT, RBx, OAs)

- Probe for ADRs as sources of key information on lessons, trends, successes, replicable initiatives, improvements needed, new directions or innovations; ADRs as sources of information for developing new plans or strategies; ADRs as sources of information for possible indicators or benchmarks for future progress
- E. Learning: Were ADRs able to identify or highlight successes, challenges, trends, themes, lessons, innovations or issues/problems facing projects, programmes or initiatives? If so, how was the information used? (NCs, COs, UNCT, RBx, RSCs, OAs)
- Probe for adjustments or new design of initiatives based on ADR information, examples of program changes/insights gained from the management response process, ideas about quality/thoroughness of the management response process
- F. Learning: Was any information obtained from ADRs used to identify broader lessons, policy, strategic and/or advocacy issues that were applicable at a regional, programmatic or organizational level within UNDP? (PBx, RBx, RSCs, OSG, OPG)
- Probe for examples of where ADRs informed policy discussions or decisions, whether ADR information contributed to knowledge management and-or communities or practice and/or knowledge networks either inside or beyond UNDP, examples of innovations or practices with wider applicability or interest obtained from ADRs, examples of program changes/insights gained from the management response process
- G. Learning: How was information obtained from ADRs to feed into thematic and/or programmatic evaluations for UNDP (EO)
- Probe for strategies and approaches used to extract ADR information for use in other evaluations, any examples of use or adaptation of ADR information, challenges with planning for ADR use, examples of guidelines or policies around ADR use
- H. Learning: How have you used any information or data from ADRs to support your own research, studies and/or policy/planning discussions (OAs)
- Probe for number/type of citations or referrals to ADRs, type of information sought and used
- I. Process: How has capacity for evaluation been built/expanded or changed due the ADR process? (NCs, COs, RBx, OPG, EO) NOTE: Overlaps with Section V
- Probe for engagement in planning/scoping for evaluation, involvement in discussions around ADR methodology or approach, discussions related to ADR use planning

VII. Barriers/challenges to ADR use

- Based on your previous use of or access to ADRs, what do you think are the main challenges or barriers to ADR use by UNDP and its partners? (EB, OSG, NCs, COs, UNCTs, RBx, RSCs, PBx, OPG, EO)
- Probe for past challenges identified with ADR planning or follow-up, how overcome, how these challenges could be addressed in future ADR use

VIII. Any other observations/suggestions about ADRs use



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