



# **MOPAN 2015-16 Assessments**

## **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

Executive Summary

## Executive summary

This institutional assessment of UNDP covers the period from 2014 to mid-2016. Applying the MOPAN 3.0 methodology, the assessment considers organisational systems, practices and behaviours, as well as the results UNDP achieves. The assessment considers five performance areas: four relate to organisational effectiveness (strategic management, operational management, relationship management and performance management) and the fifth relates to development effectiveness (results). It assesses UNDP's performance against a framework of key indicators and associated micro-indicators that comprise the standards that characterise an effective multilateral organisation, and gives an overall view on its performance trajectory. MOPAN assessed UNDP in 2012.

### Context

#### UNDP

- It is the largest UN development organisation. It operates in approximately 170 countries and territories with the aim of eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities and exclusion.
- It is governed by an Executive Board made up of representatives from 36 countries who serve on a rotating basis and meet three times a year.
- It has the most comprehensive mandate among all UN agencies, including a unique mandate on democratic governance, peacebuilding and state-building.
- It is operating with a reduced volume of regular resources due to a fall in donor contributions exacerbated by a stronger US dollar. It has responded with efficiency savings and additional resource mobilisation efforts.
- It initiated a significant reform process in 2011 in order to enhance organisational effectiveness; improve internal governance; strengthen leadership, culture and behaviour; and ensure effective programme delivery.

#### Organisation at a glance

- Established 1965
- Expenditure: USD 5.057 billion (2015)
- Active in more than 170 countries and territories
- 7 450 staff (2016)
- Operates through:
  - New York Headquarters
  - 9 regional and liaison offices
  - About 170 country offices

### Overall performance

The overall conclusion of the 2016 MOPAN assessment is that while UNDP can strengthen and improve its performance in some areas, it largely meets the requirements of an effective multilateral organisation and is fit for purpose. On the whole UNDP's interventions are relevant to the needs and priorities of partner countries and beneficiaries, and its operating model and human/financial resources support relevance and agility. Its decentralised nature is a major strength. UNDP has done considerable work to ensure the organisational architecture is congruent with the vision and associated operating model, as demonstrated by recent organisational restructuring. The strengthened regional presence means that country offices have access to relevant support services and can be responsive to the needs of the government and staff. Planning and programming appear to be increasingly based on evidence and lessons learned, although there is further scope to improve this.

UNDP is delivering results and impact in its area of comparative advantage, in particular in terms of influencing policy and building capacity. However on the basis of available evidence overall results can best be described as mixed. Despite some improvements in monitoring and reporting, and a

strong corporate commitment to results-based management, reliable data on programme results and achievements are only partially available due to weaknesses in some project results frameworks, limited outcome and impact data, and the variable quality of decentralised evaluations.

While the structural change process has improved the overall cost effectiveness of UNDP, there is evidence that efficiency is, on the whole, low across many of UNDP's country and regional programmes. Survey respondents were particularly critical of the time delays caused by UNDP's burdensome procedures. The limited available evidence casts doubt on the likelihood that benefits from many interventions will be sustained.

Further organisational improvement is underway but its full impact is yet to be realised. Nevertheless, declining regular resources and rising costs pose a key challenge, constraining the ability of UNDP to ensure global development effectiveness and make forward-looking and strategic choices and investments. UNDP is already stretched thin across a wide sectoral mandate and a very large number of countries and territories.

### Key strengths and areas for improvement

#### Key strengths

- **Strategic plan and organisational architecture well aligned with its overarching long-term vision** and draws on its comparative advantage
- An organisational structure that **supports decentralised decision-making**
- **Top performer in the Aid Transparency Index** in 2014 and 2015
- **Commitment to the Busan Partnership principles** and the use of and alignment with country systems
- **Robust organisational systems** that are both cost and value-conscious and enable financial transparency and accountability
- A corporate **commitment to results-based management**
- A **strong independent evaluation unit** with a clear accountability system

#### Areas for improvement

- The challenge of implementing **ongoing organisational and operational reform**, and maintaining such a broad sectoral and geographical focus, in the context of reduced core funding
- **Strengthen procurement capacity** at the country office level
- Strengthen the **systematic analysis of partner (institutional) capacity and cross-cutting issues**, particularly gender, to inform programme design
- Better corporate guidance on the requirements for **developing theories of change and more consistent application** to programming
- Improve the **quality and use of decentralised evaluations, and lesson learning** more generally
- Improve the **efficiency and sustainability** of interventions