

PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

CHAPTER 1

Good planning, monitoring and evaluation enhance the contribution of UNDP by establishing clear links between past, present and future initiatives and development results. Monitoring and evaluation can help an organization extract relevant information from past and ongoing activities that can be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and future planning. Without effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, it would be impossible to judge if work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved.

This chapter describes the purposes of planning, monitoring and evaluation in the context of results-based management (RBM) and managing for development results (MfDR) and explains how these functions are important to an organization such as UNDP. It also provides key definitions and principles that are integral to planning, monitoring and evaluation. This chapter is intended for UNDP managers, staff, key partners and stakeholders who are involved in the design and implementation of development initiatives and decision making. The culture of results orientation and the principles of RBM and MfDR must be embraced by all in order for UNDP to effectively contribute to human development.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The opening paragraph of the UNDP 2008–2011 Strategic Plan states that all UNDP work—policy advice, technical support, advocacy, and contributions to strengthening coherence in global development—is aimed at one end result: “real improvements in people’s lives and in the choices and opportunities open to them.”⁶ Improvements in

6 UNDP, ‘UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008–2011: Accelerating Global Progress on Human Development’, Executive Board Document DP/2007/43, (pursuant DP/2007/32), reissued January 2008.

people's lives are a common goal shared by many governments and development partners across the countries in which UNDP works. This is also the reason many agencies now use the term 'managing for development results' or MfDR, as opposed to 'results-based management' or RBM in their policy documents, guidelines and statements. Traditionally, RBM approaches have focused more on internal results and performance of agencies than on changes in the development conditions of people. MfDR applies the same basic concepts of RBM—good planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning and feeding back into planning—but seeks to keep the focus on development assistance demonstrating real and meaningful results.

MfDR is also an effort to respond to the growing demands for public accountability to citizens in both the developed and developing world on how assistance is used, what results are achieved, and how appropriate these results are in bringing about desired changes in human development. This approach encourages development agencies to focus on building partnerships and collaboration and ensure greater coherence. Similarly, it promotes stronger focus on sustainability through measures that enhance national ownership and capacity development.

MfDR is RBM in action, but it is oriented more towards the external environment and results that are important to programme countries and less towards an agency's internal performance.

Achieving development results, as most realize, is often much more difficult than imagined. To achieve development results and changes in the quality of people's lives, governments, UNDP and other partners will often develop a number of different plans, strategies, programmes and projects. These typically include:

- A National Development Plan or Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Sector-based development plans
- A United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)
- A corporate strategic plan (such as the UNDP 2008-2011 Strategic Plan)
- Global, regional and country programme documents (CPDs) and country programme action plans (CPAPs)
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and evaluation plans
- Development and management work plans
- Office and unit specific plans
- Project documents and annual work plans

However, good intentions, large programmes and projects, and lots of financial resources are not enough to ensure that development results will be achieved. The quality of those plans, programmes and projects, and how well resources are used, are also critical factors for success.

To improve the chances of success, attention needs to be placed on some of the common areas of weakness in programmes and projects. Four main areas for focus are identified consistently:

1. **Planning and programme and project definition**—Projects and programmes have a greater chance of success when the objectives and scope of the programmes or projects are properly defined and clarified. This reduces the likelihood of experiencing major challenges in implementation.
2. **Stakeholder involvement**—High levels of engagement of users, clients and stakeholders in programmes and projects are critical to success.
3. **Communication**—Good communication results in strong stakeholder buy-in and mobilization. Additionally, communication improves clarity on expectations, roles and responsibilities, as well as information on progress and performance. This clarity helps to ensure optimum use of resources.
4. **Monitoring and evaluation**—Programmes and projects with strong monitoring and evaluation components tend to stay on track. Additionally, problems are often detected earlier, which reduces the likelihood of having major cost overruns or time delays later.

Good planning, combined with effective monitoring and evaluation, can play a major role in enhancing the effectiveness of development programmes and projects. Good planning helps us focus on the results that matter, while monitoring and evaluation help us learn from past successes and challenges and inform decision making so that current and future initiatives are better able to improve people's lives and expand their choices.

Box 1. Understanding inter-linkages and dependencies between planning, monitoring and evaluation

- Without proper planning and clear articulation of intended results, it is not clear what should be monitored and how; hence monitoring cannot be done well.
- Without effective planning (clear results frameworks), the basis for evaluation is weak; hence evaluation cannot be done well.
- Without careful monitoring, the necessary data is not collected; hence evaluation cannot be done well.
- Monitoring is necessary, but not sufficient, for evaluation.
- Monitoring facilitates evaluation, but evaluation uses additional new data collection and different frameworks for analysis.
- Monitoring and evaluation of a programme will often lead to changes in programme plans. This may mean further changing or modifying data collection for monitoring purposes.

Source: Adapted from UNEG, 'UNEG Training—What a UN Evaluator Needs to Know?', Module 1, 2008.

Planning can be defined as the process of setting goals, developing strategies, outlining the implementation arrangements and allocating resources to achieve those goals. It is important to note that planning involves looking at a number of different processes:

- Identifying the vision, goals or objectives to be achieved
- Formulating the strategies needed to achieve the vision and goals
- Determining and allocating the resources (financial and other) required to achieve the vision and goals
- Outlining implementation arrangements, which include the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the vision and goals

There is an expression that “failing to plan is planning to fail.” While it is not always true that those who fail to plan will eventually fail in their endeavours, there is strong evidence to suggest that having a plan leads to greater effectiveness and efficiency. Not having a plan—whether for an office, programme or project—is in some ways similar to attempting to build a house without a blueprint, that is, it is very difficult to know what the house will look like, how much it will cost, how long it will take to build, what resources will be required, and whether the finished product will satisfy the owner’s needs. In short, planning helps us define what an organization, programme or project aims to achieve and how it will go about it.

Monitoring can be defined as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives. Contrary to many definitions that treat monitoring as merely reviewing progress made in **implementing** actions or activities, the definition used in this Handbook focuses on reviewing progress against **achieving** goals. In other words, monitoring in this Handbook is not only concerned with asking “Are we taking the actions we said we would take?” but also “Are we making progress on achieving the results that we said we wanted to achieve?” The difference between these two approaches is extremely important. In the more limited approach, monitoring may focus on tracking projects and the use of the agency’s resources. In the broader approach, monitoring also involves tracking strategies and actions being taken by partners and non-partners, and figuring out what new strategies and actions need to be taken to ensure progress towards the most important results.

Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision making. Evaluations, like monitoring, can apply to many things, including an **activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector** or **organization**. The key distinction between the two is that evaluations are done independently to provide managers and staff with an objective assessment of whether or not they are on track. They are also more rigorous in their procedures, design and methodology, and generally involve more extensive analysis. However, the aims of both monitoring and evaluation are very similar: to provide information that can help inform decisions, improve performance and achieve planned results.

In assessing development effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation efforts aim to assess the following:

- Relevance of UNDP assistance and initiatives (strategies, policies, programmes and projects designed to combat poverty and support desirable changes) to national development goals within a given national, regional or global context

Box 2. The distinction between monitoring and evaluation and other oversight activities

Like monitoring and evaluation, **inspection, audit, review** and **research** functions are oversight activities, but they each have a distinct focus and role and should not be confused with monitoring and evaluation.

Inspection is a general examination of an organizational unit, issue or practice to ascertain the extent it adheres to normative standards, good practices or other criteria and to make recommendations for improvement or corrective action. It is often performed when there is a perceived risk of non-compliance.

Audit is an assessment of the adequacy of management controls to ensure the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes. Evaluation is more closely linked to MfDR and learning, while audit focuses on compliance.

Reviews, such as rapid assessments and peer reviews, are distinct from evaluation and more closely associated with monitoring. They are periodic or *ad hoc*, often light assessments of the performance of an initiative and do not apply the due process of evaluation or rigor in methodology. Reviews tend to emphasize operational issues. Unlike evaluations conducted by independent evaluators, reviews are often conducted by those internal to the subject or the commissioning organization.

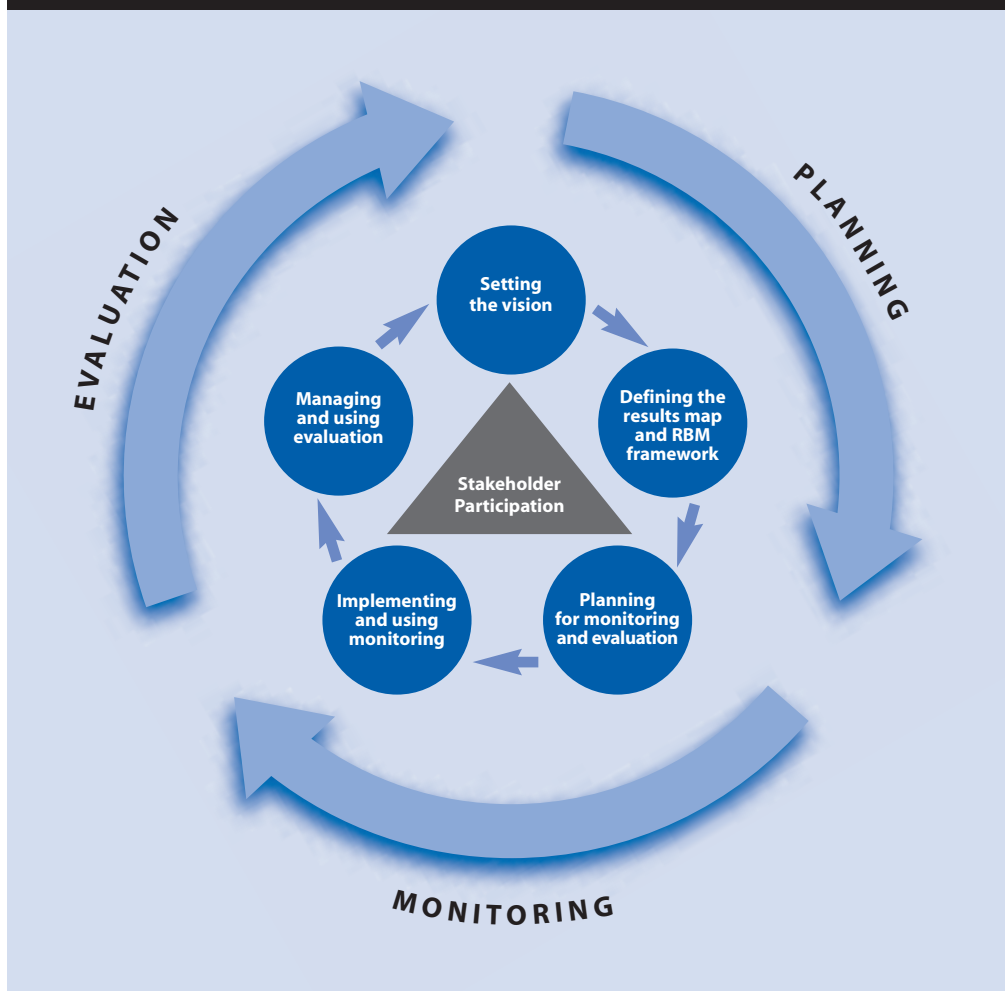
Research is a systematic examination completed to develop or contribute to knowledge of a particular topic. Research can often feed information into evaluations and other assessments but does not normally inform decision making on its own.

Source: UNEG, 'Norms for Evaluation in the UN System', 2005. Available at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/uneqnorms>.

- Effectiveness of development assistance initiatives, including partnership strategies
- Contribution and worth of this assistance to national development outcomes and priorities, including the material conditions of programme countries, and how this assistance visibly improves the prospects of people and their communities
- Key drivers or factors enabling successful, sustained and scaled-up development initiatives, alternative options and comparative advantages of UNDP
- Efficiency of development assistance, partnerships and coordination to limit transaction costs
- Risk factors and risk management strategies to ensure success and effective partnership
- Level of national ownership and measures to enhance national capacity for sustainability of results

While monitoring provides real-time information required by management, evaluation provides more in-depth assessment. The monitoring process can generate questions to be answered by evaluation. Also, evaluation draws heavily on data generated through monitoring during the programme and project cycle, including, for example, baseline data, information on the programme or project implementation process and measurements of results.

Figure 1. The RBM life-cycle approach



Note: Planning, monitoring and evaluation should not necessarily be approached in a sequential manner. The conduct of an evaluation does not always take place at the end of the cycle. Evaluations can take place at any point in time during the programming cycle. This figure aims to illustrate the inter-connected nature of planning, monitoring and evaluation to support MfDR. Planning for monitoring and evaluation must take place at the planning stage (see Chapter 3).

1.2 PUTTING PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOGETHER: RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT

Planning, monitoring and evaluation come together as RBM. RBM is defined as “a broad management strategy aimed at achieving improved performance and demonstrable results,”⁷ and has been adopted by many multilateral development organizations, bilateral development agencies and public administrations throughout the world (as noted earlier, some of these organizations now refer to RBM as MfDR to place the emphasis on development rather than organizational results).

7 UNEG, ‘The Role of Evaluation in Results-based Management’, 21 August 2007. Available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=87.

Good RBM is an ongoing process. This means that there is constant feedback, learning and improving. Existing plans are regularly modified based on the lessons learned through monitoring and evaluation, and future plans are developed based on these lessons.

Monitoring is also an ongoing process. The lessons from monitoring are discussed periodically and used to inform actions and decisions. Evaluations should be done for programmatic improvements while the programme is still ongoing and also inform the planning of new programmes. This ongoing process of **doing, learning and improving** is what is referred to as the RBM life-cycle approach, which is depicted in Figure 1.

RBM is concerned with learning, risk management and accountability. Learning not only helps improve results from existing programmes and projects, but also enhances the capacity of the organization and individuals to make better decisions in the future and improves the formulation of future programmes and projects. Since there are no perfect plans, it is essential that managers, staff and stakeholders learn from the successes and failures of each programme or project.

There are many risks and opportunities involved in pursuing development results. RBM systems and tools should help promote awareness of these risks and opportunities, and provide managers, staff, stakeholders and partners with the tools to mitigate risks or pursue opportunities.

RBM practices and systems are most effective when they are accompanied by clear accountability arrangements and appropriate incentives that promote desired behaviour. In other words, RBM should not be seen simply in terms of developing systems and tools to plan, monitor and evaluate results. It must also include effective measures for promoting a culture of results orientation and ensuring that persons are accountable for both the results achieved and their actions and behaviour.

The main objectives of good planning, monitoring and evaluation—that is, RBM—are to:

- Support substantive accountability to governments, beneficiaries, donors, other partners and stakeholders, and the UNDP Executive Board
- Prompt corrective action
- Ensure informed decision making



- Promote risk management
- Enhance organizational and individual learning

These objectives are linked together in a continuous process, as shown in Figure 2.

1.3 PRINCIPLES OF PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATING FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

This section addresses some of the principles that readers should have in mind throughout the entire process of planning, monitoring and evaluation.

OWNERSHIP

Ownership is fundamental in formulating and implementing programmes and projects to achieve development results. There are two major aspects of ownership to be considered:

- The depth, or level, of ownership of plans and processes
- The breadth of ownership

Depth of ownership: Many times, units or organizations go through the planning process to fulfil requirements of their governing or supervisory bodies, such as a Board of Directors or Headquarters. When this is the case, plans, programmes or projects tend to be neatly prepared for submission, but agencies and individuals return to business as usual once the requirements are met. When these plans are formulated to meet a requirement and are not used to guide ongoing management actions, organizations have greater risk of not achieving the objectives set out in the plans. Ownership is also critical for effectively carrying out planned monitoring and evaluation activities and linking the information generated from monitoring and evaluation to future programme improvements and learning.

In later sections, this Handbook will address techniques to promote ownership. The process is not about compliance and meeting requirements. In some ways it is similar to the difference between having **RBM systems** and having a **culture of results-orientation**—while it is important to have the systems, it is more important that people understand and appreciate why they are doing the things they are doing and adopt a results-oriented approach in their general behaviour and work.

Breadth of ownership: There are two questions to address with respect to breadth of ownership: Who does the development programme or project benefit or impact, and do a sufficient number of these agencies and persons feel ownership of the programme or project?

Programme countries are ultimately responsible for achieving development results, which is why all development plans, programmes and projects should be owned by national stakeholders. Ownership by programme countries does not mean that UNDP is not accountable for the results. UNDP accountability generally applies to the **contributions** UNDP makes to country results and the use of financial resources. (Details are outlined in the Accountability Framework and Standard Basic

Agreement.)⁸ The goals and objectives relating to the changes in development conditions that programmes and projects aim to achieve, however, should be owned by the national stakeholders and beneficiaries.

A key aim of managing for results is to ensure that ownership goes beyond a few select persons to include as many stakeholders as possible. For this reason, monitoring and evaluation activities and the findings, recommendations and lessons from ongoing and periodic monitoring and evaluation should be fully owned by those responsible for results and those who can make use of them.

ENGAGEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Throughout all stages of planning, monitoring, evaluating, learning and improving, it is vital to engage stakeholders, promote buy-in and commitment, and motivate action.

A strong results-management process aims to engage stakeholders in thinking as **openly and creatively** as possible about what they want to achieve and encourage them to organize themselves to achieve what they have agreed on, including putting in place a process to monitor and evaluate progress and use the information to improve performance.

FOCUS ON RESULTS

Planning, monitoring and evaluation processes should be geared towards **ensuring that results are achieved**—not towards ensuring that all activities and outputs get produced as planned.

It is not often clear what development partners such as UNDP are accountable for and what they should therefore focus on. It is sometimes suggested that since development agencies' initiatives are generally small, have limited impact and are not accountable for development changes or high-level results, they should focus on outputs.

This Handbook argues that what really matters are the development changes that occur in countries and lead to improvements in people's lives. This means that while individual agency outputs and activities are very important, they must always be seen as being in support of national development efforts. Agency outputs should, wherever possible, derive from national planning documents and be coordinated with and remain centred on supporting national objectives.

This argument is in line with the global approach to development being encouraged through international agreements such as the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. These agreements urge planners to think in terms of how they should work together to support national partners in achieving **national priorities**, rather than maintaining the traditional emphasis on agency initiatives or the requirements of their corporate Headquarters.

8 UNDP, 'Accountability Framework'. Available at: <http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results-management---accountability/?lang=en#top>

Since national outcomes (which require the collective efforts of two or more stakeholders) are most important, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes should focus more on the partnerships, joint programmes, joint monitoring and evaluation and collaborative efforts needed to achieve these higher level results, than on UNDP or agency outputs. This is the approach that is promoted throughout this Handbook.

FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Results management also means focusing on achieving **development effectiveness**. Meaningful and sustainable development results require more than just a generic plan of outcomes, outputs and activities. **How we do** development is often equally if not more important than **what we do** in development work. For this reason, many development agencies attempt to incorporate various themes into their planning, monitoring and evaluation processes to improve the overall effectiveness of their efforts. For example, planning, monitoring and evaluation must focus on sustainability. This conclusion was reached after years of experience with projects and programmes that had short-term impact but failed to alter the development conditions of countries or communities in any meaningful manner.

Similarly, there is now a focus on gender in planning, monitoring and evaluation. Many projects and programmes often failed to achieve their objectives because there was little or no analysis of, and attention to, the differences between the roles and needs of men and women in society. Inequalities, discriminatory practices and unjust power relations between groups in society are often at the heart of development problems.

The same applies to the concept of national or community ownership of development programmes. There is greater pride and satisfaction, greater willingness to protect and maintain assets, and greater involvement in social and community affairs when people have a vested interest in something—that is, when they feel ‘ownership’.

Applying these principles to planning, monitoring and evaluation in a concrete manner means that these processes should be designed in such a way that they do the following:

- **Ensure or promote national ownership**—Ensure that, as appropriate, processes are led or co-led by the government and/or other national or community partners and that all plans, programmes, projects, and monitoring and evaluation efforts are aimed primarily at supporting national efforts, rather than agency objectives. Important questions to ask in MfDR include: “Are the people for whom the plan, programme or project is being developed involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation process?”; “Do they feel that they are a part of the process?”; and “Do they feel ownership of the processes and the plan or programme?”
- **Promote national capacity development**—Ask throughout the processes: “Will this be sustainable?”; “Can national systems and processes be used or augmented?”; “What are the existing national capacity assets in this area?”; “Are we looking at the enabling environment, the organization or institution, as well as the individual capacities?”; and “Can we engage in monitoring and evaluation activities so that we help to strengthen national M&E systems in the process?”

- **Promote inclusiveness, gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment—** Ensure that men, women and traditionally marginalized groups are involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, ask questions such as: “Does this problem or result as we have stated it reflect the interests, rights and concerns of men, women and marginalized groups?”; “Have we analysed this from the point of view of men, women and marginalized groups in terms of their roles, rights, needs and concerns?”; and “Do we have sufficiently disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation?”

POPP⁹ should be consulted for more information about the UNDP approach to these principles and how they should be applied in the various stages of programme and project design and implementation. Additionally, there are many tools that can be used for capacity diagnostics and gender analysis. These can also be found in the additional resources sections of the POPP and other guides.

Throughout this Handbook, reference will be made to the principles, with examples of the types of questions that could be asked or addressed at the different stages of the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

Box 3. Planning, monitoring and evaluation in crisis settings

Crisis settings (both relating to conflicts and disasters) are ‘not normal’. This has ramifications on all aspects of programming including planning, monitoring and evaluation. In general, ‘normal’ planning, monitoring and evaluation methods and mechanisms presented in this Handbook are transferable to crisis settings, with several important caveats:

- Crisis situations are dynamic and UNDP programming should quickly respond to radical changes that often take place in such circumstances. Therefore, the situation should continually be analysed and monitored to ensure that programming remains relevant. Changes should be documented so that monitoring and evaluating of the relevance and appropriateness of development initiatives takes into consideration the fluid situations in which they were conceived and implemented. This will involve continuous situational and conflict analysis.
- At the same time, crisis situations are characteristically ones of raised (or potentially raised) tension between different parties. Thus crisis and conflict-sensitivity should be exercised in all aspects of programming—including planning, monitoring and evaluation—to ensure that both the substance and process of programming is conducted in a way to reduce, or at the least not heighten, tensions between different parties. Security of programme staff, beneficiaries, and M&E staff can be a constant concern, and risk analysis for all those involved should be constantly monitored and factored into M&E activities.
- It is important to keep a ‘big picture’ perspective: The connectivity of projects and programmes to the wider peace process is critical, particularly for conflict prevention and peace-building programming. Planning, monitoring and evaluation should always include this aspect to avoid a situation where a project is ‘successful’ in terms of meeting the desired results, but either doesn’t have an impact on the wider peace or negatively impacts it.

Additional guidance on how to apply methods and mechanism in crisis settings is presented throughout the Handbook, when relevant. The ‘Compendium #1: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Prevention and Recovery Settings’ provides further guidance.

9 UNDP, ‘Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures’, 2008. Available at: <http://content.undp.org/go/userguide>.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All UNDP programme units have important roles in planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results. Table 1 provides a brief overview of some of key deliverables in this area.

In addition to programme units, the following units have key responsibilities in supporting planning, monitoring and evaluation in UNDP:

- The **Operations Support Group** provides corporate guidance as well as quality support and assurance on issues related to planning and corporate monitoring.
- The **BDP** provides the policy framework for programming, including monitoring, and provides advice and support to UNDP units in this regard.
- The **Evaluation Office** conducts independent evaluations and provides standards, guidance on procedures and quality assurance for ‘decentralized’ evaluations, that is, evaluations conducted by UNDP programme units.
- Monitoring and evaluation advisers and specialists in **UNDP bureaux** provide relevant programme units with direct advisory support in monitoring and evaluation (for example, regional evaluation advisers supporting relevant country offices).
- **Regional bureaux** provide direct oversight regarding evaluations carried out by country offices. They monitor the quality and implementation of planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- **UNDP management** plays a key role in fostering an RBM culture. It leads the programme planning process and ensures that monitoring takes place and the

Table 1. Key deliverables of programme units in planning, monitoring and evaluation

Programme unit	Planning	Monitoring	Evaluation
Country offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ UNDAF, including M&E framework ■ CPD and CPAP, including M&E framework¹⁰ ■ Project documents and annual work plans, including M&E framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programme monitoring reports ■ Project monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evaluations as planned in the evaluation plan ■ Management responses to evaluations
Regional and policy bureaux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regional and global programme documents, including M&E framework ■ Project documents, including M&E framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Programme monitoring reports ■ Project monitoring reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Evaluations as planned in the evaluation plan ■ Management responses to evaluations

10 Drawing from the UNDAF M&E plan, programme units are required to submit an evaluation plan highlighting planned evaluations for the programming cycle, along with the country, regional and global programmes to the Executive Board.

resulting information is used to strengthen programme implementation. Management also ensures that decentralized evaluations are conducted and lessons learned from both decentralized and independent evaluations are taken into account in future planning.

- The **UNDP Executive Board** plays an overarching role in shaping and approving the broader programmatic framework of UNDP. It also reviews regular monitoring reports on the programme's performance, as provided by UNDP management, and evaluation reports on different aspects of UNDP programmes, as conducted by the Evaluation Office. Based on regular corporate reporting and evaluation findings and recommendations, it provides guidance and makes decisions on subsequent strategic programme planning.