Results based management in UNDAFs

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UNDG Working Group on Programming Policies – Task Team 1

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1. BACKGROUND

There is increasing focus on Results Based Management (RBM) and accountability for results of the UN system. The importance of development results at country level has been stressed by the General Assembly in the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) resolution 59/250, which recognizes the need to focus on development results, including the effective use of the results matrix of the UNDAF (paragraph 69). ECOSOC resolution 2006/14 also stressed the importance of the results matrix in the UNDAF. (paragraph 34).

The UN system has responded to these calls in a number of ways. In 2006, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has created a Working Group on Programming Policies (WGPP), with the objective of supporting United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) with more effective and proven programming policies, instruments, tools and processes. At the UNDG level, several studies have also been undertaken around UNDAF and results frameworks issues. These included:

- A *Review of the Role and Quality of the UNDAFs*, commissioned by UNDGO, and undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute (May 2006). [2006 ODI Review]
- A *Study on the Evaluability of the UN Development Assistance Framework* commissioned by UNDESA, in the framework of the preparations for the TCPR (December 2006).
- A CCA-UNDAF Survey conducted by UNDGO, with 56 UNCT responses (September 2006).

The above mentioned studies and survey showed that the Results Matrices (RM), key components of the UNDAF process which form the UN business plan at country level, are of mixed quality and do not live up to expectations. The review also showed that the problem of spelling out risks and assumptions is the most pressing to address, while others included indicators settings, specifying outputs and accountability. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (M&EF) also showed significant limitations. The major weaknesses identified were the following: outcomes too broad; outputs not linked to those

accountable; indicators not properly identified, often vague and very general[1]; difficulty to identify suitable practical indicators to show whether the outcomes have been achieved or not, and difficulty to evaluate these outcomes; lack of targets and timelines; poor identification of risks and assumptions; lack of commitment to disaggregating results and on cross cutting issues (i.e. gender, human rights based approach) , and monitoring and evaluation frameworks unrelated to the results matrix. In order to address some of these weaknesses, the ODI review recommended that training and support should be oriented towards the results matrix.

In June 2007, the Working Group on Programming Policies asked its Task Team 1 (TT 1) to address the issue of Results Based Management in UNDAFs. The TT1 developed a 2-pronged approach for working on RBM, which was endorsed by the WGPP. As high-quality UNDAF results chains are seen as a *sine qua non* of improved RBM at country level, the "first prong" or immediate task agreed by the team was to focus on some of the issues related to the RM in the UNDAF's. Based on the need identified for concrete examples as part of training and guidance packages the approach would be to develop a brief with key issues and provide guidance and support through examples. This is the focus of this paper.

In the "second prong", which the team members agreed would be a medium term approach, the TT 1 would look at more systemic aspects which affect RBM at country level, such as the use of RBM terminology across agencies, common approaches to the application of RBM principles, others. Work in that area would be informed by existing reviews and evaluations of agencies' RBM systems, and would be coordinated with ongoing efforts under the Chief Executive Board (CEB) umbrella.

2. PURPOSE

This note draws mainly on the 2006 ODI desk review as well as the review of various recent UNDAFs by members of the TT 1. It is meant as a platform to work towards a shared understanding, highlighting the key issues of concern from a policy angle. The paper also responds to the requests from UNDAF resource persons for real-life examples to help them facilitate the development of high quality UNDAF matrices. It should be seen as a 'living document' to be regularly updated through feedback, not only directly from field level staff, but also colleagues involved in the Quality Support and Assurance system, notably the regional Peer Support Groups and the UNDG Country Programming Support Group. Specifically, the paper has the following objectives:

- ♦ Develop a common understanding on key RBM issues in current UNDAF results matrices in order to help UNCTs to improve these matrices, both existing and future;

- ♦ Complement other RBM tools by providing actual UNDAF examples for use in training and guidance:

The target audience for this issues brief is primarily the following:

- ♦ UNCTs developing new UNDAF's;

- ♦ One UN pilots defining the results chains of their "One Programme";

- ♦ Colleagues involved in Quality Support and Assurance, notably Peer Support Groups and the UNDG Country Programming Support Group;

- ♦ Resource persons / trainers supporting the UNDAF / RM process to discuss the issues and examples.

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[1] This is not a matter of whether an indicator is qualitative or qualitative – there should be a balance – but whether the appropriate indicator has been chosen. A quantitative element does help in later monitoring and evaluation.

The brief uses the UNDG agreed RBM definitions and terminology only. In the spirit of Aid Effectiveness, the UNDG agreed to adapt the OECD/DAC harmonized terminology for RBM in June 2003 (UNDG Results-Based Management Terminology http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=224) where RBM is defined as a management strategy by which an organization ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and impacts). RBM rests on clearly defined accountability for results, and requires monitoring and self assessment of progress towards results, and reporting on performance.

The CCA/UNDAF guidelines include definitions for different levels of results, but their application in practice suffers from differences in interpretation due to insufficient practical guidance[2]. While it is understood that the application of agreed results terminology in the UNDAF will always depend on the specific development context and the individuals involved in developing a results matrix, clearer agreement at Headquarters and regional levels is deemed essential to facilitate the work of UN Country Teams and to improve the quality of RBM efforts at country level.
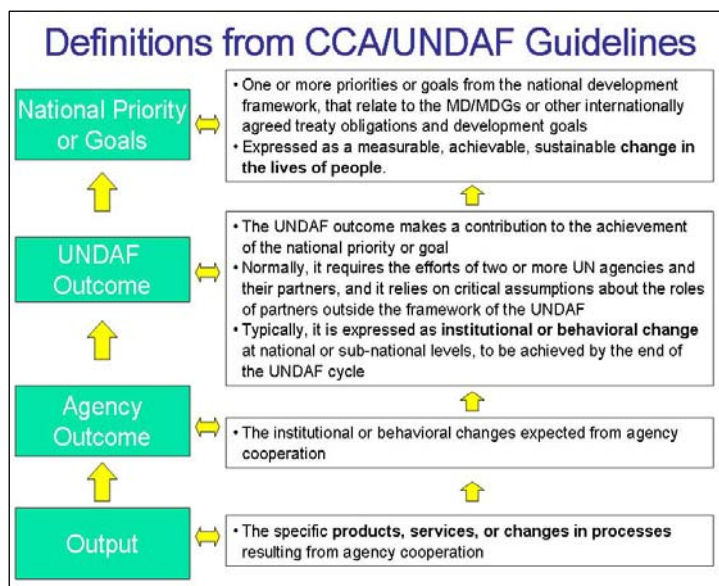
3. KEY RBM ISSUES IN UNDAFS

This section briefly discusses six key RBM issues of concern in UNDAFs identified by Task Team 1. This is not, obviously, an exhaustive list. The main issues are the following:

1. UNCT accountability at output level
2. Contribution to national priorities
3. Internal logic of the results chain
4. M & E Plans: Quality of indicators
5. Analysis of risks and assumptions
6. Addressing cross cutting issues

To illustrate the issues, examples from current UNDAFs are provided, with annotations on their strengths and weaknesses.

3.1 UNCT accountability at the output level

(a) Outputs tend to be underlined unfocused and pitched at a very high level, making it difficult to hold the UN accountable for their achievement. Some examples of outputs in various areas of UN support, including analytic and normative work, policy advice, service delivery, advocacy, and capacity development are given below. The criteria and the choice of the areas of cooperation are also important for the quality RMs.

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[2] Technical notes on RBM were drafted for UNSSC trainings in September 2006, pending formal endorsement. The TT 1 is expected to review these as part of its second prong medium term work.

> **Example 1. Output level accountability**
>
> *Agency Outcome:* "Government will have disaster risk reduction and emergency management systems and practices for efficient response…"
>
> > *Output 1* Emergency preparedness plans are operationalized at national and district level and yearly reviewed, by end of 2008
> >
> > *Output 2* Information management system in place to quantify disaster risks and losses and the relative impact on men and women by 2008
>
> Comment: While the Outcome is pitched at a relatively low level (i.e., the presence of "systems", rather than improved performance), the first output is reaching very high, even higher than the outcome. The *operationalization* of emergency preparedness plans cannot be an output of the UN's support, as it is beyond the UN's area of influence, depending on government commitment, availability of resources, institutional capacities etc. A more pertinent output would have been '*Emergency preparedness plans for operationalization at national and district level and yearly review mechanism in place by end of 2008'*. The second example of an output, however, gives a clear deliverable for the UN, with a timeline.

UNDAF's use "enhanced capacity in outputs. It is noted that "<u>enhanced capacity</u>" without unpacking its components is unlikely to be a realistic output of the UN's support. Accountability for enhanced capacity without further qualifications would be difficult to establish[3]. See examples 2, 3 below.

> **Example 2: Capacity development output of the UN's support**
>
> *Output :* Local governance structures (public, NGOs, private sector) have the organizational capacity to participate in the implementation of basic health services (mother and child health services, fight against: malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhea; nutrition, hygiene, water and sanitation).
>
> Comment: In the case above, the 'capacity' can hardly be a direct output of the UN's support – the ambition is set to high. Actual realization of the above result depends on various issues beyond the control of the UNCT, incl. legislation, institutional setup, budget allocations for sub-national entities etc. Also, the output serves as umbrella for both a wide range of actors and a vaguely delineated set of health services (including water and sanitation). Accountability for the UN is difficult to establish.

> **Example 3: UN accountability: Agency outcome & outputs**
>
> *Agency Outcome:* "Equitable access to essential health services increased by 2011"
>
> > *Output 1* Existence of an evidence base on the burden of non-communicable diseases and advocacy strategy by 2011
> >
> > *Output 2* Increased proportion of under-five children accessing preventive interventions at all levels (facility, outreach and community) by 2011
>
> Comment: The agency outcome seems to be set at a very ambitious level. The first output shows a clear deliverable for the UN, at a very reasonable level of ambition; accountability for the first output can be clearly assigned to a UN agency. The second output is less compelling, sounding more like an indicator at the outcome level.

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[3] [2]See <u>UNDG Position Paper on Capacity Development</u>, "capacity development" needs to be unpacked into agreed components such as, for example, human resources, public sector accountability, access to information, development knowledge and technology, inclusion, participation, equity and empowerment, material resources etc.

In addition, UNCTs often <u>list multiple agencies per output</u>, in some cases leading to 10 or more agencies responsible for delivering the same output. The development of the UNDAF results chain is thus not used to clarify the division of labor among UNCT members. UNCTs need to drill down the results chain until they reach the level where division of labor is evident and accountability of individual agencies can be established.

> **Example 4:** UNCT Division of labour/Multiple agencies per output
>
> *Output:* "An advisory support service for young entrepreneurs, especially young women, is established" (4 agencies)
>
> Comment: The result is listed as an "output" with four responsible UN agencies (and no assigned lead). As such, it looks like a missed opportunity to sharpen the division of labor among UNCT members. At the same time, from an HRBAP point of view, the output clearly identifies a target group for the intervention.

3.2 Contribution to national priorities

In the context of national ownership, the UNDAF results chain needs to be <u>derived from and linked to national strategies</u> (national development frameworks, national strategies, PRS, others), reflecting how the UN contributes to national priorities while identifying outputs that are a clear deliverable of the UN, to ensure accountability. Derived from the national priorities or other goals, the UNDAF and Agency Outcomes should show the logical chain leading from the UNCT's delivery of outputs to higher level national results. Example 5 below demonstrates this clear linkage.

> **Example 5.** National vs. UN results: Link to national priorities
>
> *National Priorities:* "The reduction in incidence of HIV infection to below epidemic threshold (MTP-III); Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG6); Combat the spread of HIV/AIDS by supporting multi-sectoral approaches (NDPII)"
>
> *UNDAF Outcome:* "By 2010, the HIV/AIDS response is strengthened through increased access to prevention, treatment, care and impact mitigation services, especially for vulnerable groups"
>
> *Agency Outcome:* "Reduced risk behaviour among vulnerable groups through interventions that address knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and practice relating to underlying causes"
>
> *Output:* "Young people participate in and have access to appropriate HIV /AIDS information and life skills programmes."
>
> Comment: There is a clear link from national priorities to outcomes and outputs. Each national priority is put in context of international or national agreements.

While the output is a clear "product delivered by UN cooperation", the achievement of higher levels of results increasingly requires the interventions of non-UN partners. The UNDAF should therefore not only show the link to national priorities in terms of "level" of results, but it also needs to reflect <u>how the UNCT's work contributes to national or sectoral planning processes</u>.

> <ins>Example 6:</ins>   Outcome or Output
>
> *Output:* "An improved coordination mechanism for all actors intervening in programmes in the education sector is in place and functional".
>
> <ins>Comment:</ins> This output is in line with the Paris Declaration, promoting the idea of aid effectiveness through better sector-wide coordination. It could be argued whether the output is a clear deliverable for which the UN can be held accountable, or whether the "pitch" of this result is too high. Depending on the specific context and the proposed programme intervention, some might consider this result as an outcome. Furthermore, it would be important to clarify the specifics of this expected result with the help of indicators.

3.3 Internal logic of the results chain

Some of the UNDAFs do not show a convincing chain of results. While in some cases, the <ins>results hierarchy simply doesn't flow</ins> in the right direction, that is, an outcome being at a lower pitch or at the same level as an output. Sometimes the UN stipulates an <ins>ambitious outcome while only delivering a few outputs</ins> in that area. The achievement of the UN's outputs should, however, lead to a situation where the achievement of the next levels of results can realistically be excepted (even though it is understood that the contributions of other partners gain in importance the higher up you move in the results chain).

> <ins>Example 7:</ins>   Logical chain of results
>
> *Agency Outcome:* "Improved capacity to coordinate, manage and monitor the HIV response".
>
> *Output:* "Increased number of public organizations mainstreaming HIV response in their policies, plans and strategies".
>
> <ins>Comment:</ins> The logical flow between the output and the outcome is not clear. The "if / then" logic does not work well in this results chain, i.e. *if* the output is achieved, it is not evident that *then* the there is increased possibility of the outcome achievement as well.

UNDAF Outcomes are often <ins>ambiguous in nature</ins> and cover very broad areas (e.g., "Improved basic social services"). As such, they end up as an umbrella for various unrelated interventions by different UNCT members, without the strategic focus expected from an UNDAF results chain.

> <ins>Example 8.</ins> UNDAF outcome at lower level than agency outcome
>
> *UNDAF Outcome:* "Deepen democratic governance through the establishment of new forms of social participation"
>
> *Agency Outcome:* "Indigenous women and children participate in mechanisms of political participation and in the design of public policies"
>
> <ins>Comment</ins>: The UNDAF outcome is a lower level of change compared to subsequent agency outcome.

> *Example 9. UNDAF Outcome is too broad.*
>
> *UNDAF Outcome:* By 2011, the livelihoods of poor, vulnerable and food insecure populations are enhanced through sustainable development
>
> *Agency Outcome 1:* "Improved and equitable access to land, markets and social and economic services, environmentally sustainable utilization of natural resources, with balanced population growth"
> *Agency Outcome 2:* "Increased and more diversified agricultural production, and sustainable utilization and management of agricultural biodiversity"
>   *Output 2.1:* "Enhanced capacity of government and rural communities to improve natural resource use and agricultural practices; increasing production, domestication, agro-processing, marketing skills and setting in place integrated farming systems in a gender-responsive manner"
> *Agency Outcome 3:* "Enhanced ownership and capacity for pro-poor planning and implementation, harmonized aid coordination, and disaster management"
> *Agency Outcome 4:* "Improved household food security"
> *Agency Outcome 5:* "Enabled environment for growth with equity"
>
> <u>Comment:</u> The broad UNDAF outcome leads to a very broad range of CP outcomes. They also include too many elements, and by consequence become undeliverable and difficult to measure.

An additional problem arises when different UNDAF Outcomes are so broad that they overlap with each other. The vague definition of UNDAF Outcomes partly stems from the fact that, at the planning stage, UNCTs do not have a complete indication of the total budget envelop for the forthcoming programme cycle. Furthermore, UNDAF results chains sometimes fail to **make the link to root causes** (i.e., the "problem tree") identified in preparatory analytic work. A better linkage between analytic work and strategic planning is therefore expected to improve the quality of results matrices. Linked to this concern, there is too little use of "**change language**" in many UNDAF Results Matrices.

3.4 Monitoring & Evaluation plans: Quality of Indicators

M&E plans are often developed as an "afterthought", and the establishment of clear indicators is not used to refine the definition of outputs. Indicators were found to be broad. Few monitoring and evaluation frameworks appeared unrelated to the results matrices.

> <u>Example 10:</u>   Indicators
>
> *UNDAF Outcome:* "Vulnerable groups in poor rural and urban areas take advantage of sustainable socio-economic opportunities"
>
>   *Agency Outcome* "Vulnerable groups have better access to business development resources and employment opportunities generated by public and private sectors"
>
>   *Output* "New businesses are created in poor rural and urban areas"
>
>   *Indicator* "The number of businesses created in poor rural and urban areas"
>
> <u>Comment:</u> The "number of businesses" is no indicator of the employment of or of start up of businesses by the poor or the vulnerable. Another indicator could be the number of poor/vulnerable persons who are newly employed or started businesses. An assumption made is that the new business and employment opportunities will go to the poor and vulnerable. A risk that could be identified is that the non-poor or non-vulnerable persons may make use of the new business and employment opportunities. Project design should address these in order to ensure that the desired results are achieved. Another suggested output indicator could be *"The number of businesses created in poor rural and urban areas that continued in business 5 years after establishment"*.

3.5 Risk analysis and assumptions

Risks and assumptions are probably the most important aspect of the results matriz. It has been found that there is poor identification of risks and assumptions. Also it has been pointed out that the relegation of "Risks and Assumptions" into the M&E Framework impacts the quality of the results matrices. There seems to be reluctance to 'come clean' with risks inherent in any programme, as this can reflect negative thinking. UNCTs need to be realistic and open about what can go wrong or not proceed as well as they would like. A SWOT analysis should be used. This would also put the needed emphasis on UNDAF as an instrument of i*mplementation* not only than just planning.

Box11. Some examples of risks and assumptions

<u>Governance</u>
Risk – Ex-combatants reinitiate hostilities in areas of programme implementation
Assumption - Planned Government/WB regulatory reforms governing the establishment of SMEs are implemented
Assumption - Government commitments/ targets for fiscal transfers to Local Public Administrations are maintained
<u>Basic services</u>
Assumption - Government is able to secure external funding for recurrent costs, particularly salaries & benefits
Assumption - Health & immunization centres are fully staffed, as per National Civil Service recovery plan
<u>Gender equality and women's rights</u>
Risk – Planned merger of the Dept of Women's Affairs and the Dept of the Interior leads to deterioration of government support for gender equality strategies and programmes
Assumption – Executive Branch is willing and able to exert pressure on army and police executives to ensure their engagement in issues of violence against women
Assumption – Complementary funding promised by NGO counterparts is forthcoming

Source-Refer to the Technical brief, Risks/Assumptions, draft for further examples and details at UNDG website

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3.6 Addressing cross-cutting issues

While the introduction of a <u>human rights based approach</u> (HRBA) has led to increased "human rights language" in UNDAFs, the outcomes in the results matrices often do not reflect an increased performance (sustainable institutional or behavioural change) of rights-holders and duty-bearers.

Optimally, a HRBA requires that human rights standards and principles be systematically applied in all phases of the programming processes including in the formulation of result chains. A HRBA is not just an add-on, therefore, singling out human rights issues in a separate UNDAF or Agency outcome would not be sufficient to integrate human rights systematically in RBM.

All UNDAF outcomes and Agency outcomes should reflect the institutional and behavioral changes required for right-holders to claim their rights and/or for duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations. Agency Outputs should close the capacity gaps which prevent rights holders and duty bearers from fulfilling or performing these roles. There are various examples of how this can effectively be done. See example 12 below.

A HRBA ensures a high quality analysis of development challenges by identifying patterns of discrimination and exclusion and the concrete claims of rights-holders and obligations of duty bearers which need to be fulfilled in order to address these development problems. Despite the fact that many UNCTs have undertaken a good rights-based analysis in their CCA, frequently, result chains do not build necessarily on these analyses.

UNDAF Outcome: By 2013, the health system at district levels provides high quality obstetric care to women

Agency outcome: Ministries of Health and Finance allocate and implement appropriate funds for obstetric care at district levels

Agency Output: Transparent, accountable and demand oriented financial mechanisms to budget reproductive health by Ministries of Health, Finance and provincial governments.

Comment: The UNDAF outcome reflects the increased performance of the State providing health services to women and therefore fulfilling their right to health. The agency outcome reflects the behavioral and institutional change operated in the State administration regarding their obligation to realize progressively the right to health by increased budget allocation. The Agency output shows the institutional and capacity developments required in terms of improving a "progressive" budget allocation in order for the State to meet its obligation to fulfill the right to health. Although "demand oriented mechanisms" can enhance social participation in the budget process, there is a risk that priority attention will be given to those women with a higher capacity to demand. To avoid this risk, the result chain should state more clearly the need to prioritize those groups of women mainly excluded from access to these services (rural, indigenous, minorities, single mothers, etc.)

The results chain in this example was based on the following analysis:

Some structural factors explaining the high incidence of maternal mortality among women at a district level include the little sensibility in government to gender issues and the lack of a service culture, which results into poor national budget allocation to maternal health. The State has an obligation to ensure access to quality health services and to monitor how these services are delivered. However the Ministry of health is mainly emergency driven and lacks of a long-term planning capacity well founded on disaggregated information, which limits its capacity to influence the debate on budget allocation at a national level. Traditionally, civil society is excluded from participating in the planning process.

(UNCT training on HRBA and RBM, Angola July 2007

Gender Equality is one of the 5 key principles of the UNDAF. Gender Equality is also "at the heart of the Human Rights based Approach to Programming" and human development. As the Guidelines stipulate, 'the UN should help ensure that priorities in the national development framework reflect the country's commitments to achieving gender equality within the internationally agreed development goals. "

Although the principle of gender mainstreaming is accepted across the UN, as a study commissioned by the UNDG Task Team on Gender Equality in CCA/UNDAF shows, despite good gender analysis in the CCA, such analysis rarely gets translated into strategic UNDAF results chains and consequently into holistic programming for gender equality.

Some of the more recent UNDAFs (many of which are yet to be finally signed approved) have started addressing this by having specific UNDAF and CP outcomes on gender equality. Box 13 below provides an example. However, where no specific gender outcomes are formulated, a number of UNDAF's attempt to capture gender equality by specifying outcome or outputs that say "increased capacity of both men and women to...." or say "vulnerable groups, particularly among women, have better access to.." These can be further complemented by the use of indicators that reflect narrowing of gender gaps.

CP Outcome: The institutionalization of the gender approach in laws, planning mechanisms, programming, and budget allocations is improved in support of women's rights, especially in relation to empowerment, and political, economic and social participation.

Country Program output: Enhanced capacity of the different actors to prevent and fight against all forms of violence against women and girls. (UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR). Reduce gender based violence (GBV) that includes trafficking, domestic violence and female feticide

Comment: While this includes specific outcomes and CP outputs to address national priorities on gender equality, clearly some of the CP outcomes and CP outputs are too high. Outputs are products services and skills/ capabilities for which the UNCT is fully accountable. The CP output on capacity of different actors reinforced suffers from several problems: capacity is more an institutional/behavioral change and should therefore not be an output. At best this could have referred to specific skill development. Secondly the output is not specific enough: what capacities are we referring to? Similarly while outcomes (CP outcome in particular) do represent collective accountability of the UNCT, government and civil society they should capture institutional and behavioral change and not changes in people's lives. In the case of reduced gender based violence the change is at level of people's lives and therefore too high: more at a goal level.

4. CONCLUSION

This brief identifies some key RBM issues in UNDAF's and provide examples from real life UNDAF's . Some of the reasons for the above issues, which may be useful to mention here in order to avoid them, include- (i) Broad outcomes are crafted to enable unanticipated demands to be accommodated; (ii) Sometimes agencies try to fit in their different mandates in *each* outcome statement (iii) Some statements /words are sensitive in country contexts such as 'reform', 'restructure' and hence less sensitive terminology (such as 'capacity development') is used and tends to make the outcome statements broad (iv) UNCT members want to reflect their contributions- sometimes as low as USD 5000 in the UNDAFs (v) Need to align with other reporting mechanisms such as agency MYFFs/Strategic Plans (vi) Agencies try to fit in already agreed projects with specific outcomes, thus leading to a large number of projects not addressing the "if-then" logic. Field staff have also pointed out that RBM in UNDAFs need to be consistent with the agency internal RBM systems and terminologies.

This note is envisaged to be shared with countries which are in the process of developing their UNDAFs. It is hoped that country teams and peer support and quality assurance groups would use these to enhance the quality of results matrices in future UNDAFs. The draft would continue to be enriched with inputs and feedback from the field. The task team has also received a suggestion to convert this into a power point presentation to be shown at the UNDAF retreats by facilitators. Further, the issues raised in the note are expected to be deliberated at the working group to identify areas for setting or revising programming policy guidelines as appropriate.

5. SOME REFERENCES

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