

Country Level Evaluations of the Delivering as One Programme Country Pilots

Framework Terms of Reference

31 August, 2009

Framework Terms of Reference for the Country-Level Evaluations of the Delivering as One United Nations Country Programme Pilots

1. Background

The Delivering as One United Nations (DAO) approach has been implemented in eight programme countries since 2007. These programme countries and the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) have launched the joint initiative by making a major effort to engage a wide variety of governments, institutional and individual development actors. The evaluability assessments conducted in 2007/08 suggested that country level-evaluations be conducted to assess the progress made against the strategic intent of DAO, record achievements, identify areas for improvement and remaining challenges and most importantly, distil lessons that could inform decision-making processes at the national and intergovernmental levels.

This framework Terms of Reference was developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) at the request of the member states participating in the Delivering as One pilot initiative to support the conduct of country-level evaluations in line with the resolutions of the General Assembly (GA) contained in the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system¹.

The TCPR, contained in General Assembly Resolutions 59/250 (2004) and 62/208 (2007), provides guidance to make the role and contribution of the UN system more coherent, effective and relevant at the country level. In the resolutions, the GA emphasizes that the planning and programming frameworks of the UN system, including the UNDAF, need to be fully aligned with national development planning cycles whenever possible and that they should use and strengthen national capacities and mechanisms. The ownership, leadership and full participation of national authorities in preparing and developing these planning and programming documents are vital to guaranteeing that they respond to the national development plans and strategies.

The resolutions emphasize that programme countries should have access to and benefit from the full range of mandates and resources of the UN development system. National governments should determine which resident and non-resident UN organizations could best respond to the specific needs and priorities of the individual country, including, in the case of non-resident agencies, through hosting arrangements with resident organizations and the use of advanced information and communication technology, including knowledge management².

The DAO approach was recommended by the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment on 9 November 2006. The Panel was mandated by the Secretary-General as part of the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit. The Panel recommended to the Secretary-General that the UN system should establish UN Country Teams with what they called the four Ones—*One Leader, One Programme, One Budgetary Framework*, and, where appropriate, *One Office*—in order to bring about real progress towards the MDGs and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals. UNCTs should also have an integrated capacity to provide a coherent approach to cross-cutting issues, including sustainable development, gender equality and human rights. To ensure that there is no potential for, or perception of, a conflict of interest, UNDP

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution 62/208 Decision 139: ‘encourages the Secretary-General to support “programme country pilot” countries to evaluate and exchange their experiences, with the support of the United Nations Evaluation Group; and emphasizes, in addition, the need for an independent evaluation of lessons learned from such efforts, for consideration by Member States, without prejudice to a future intergovernmental decision” pp18-19.

² UN General Assembly Resolutions 59/250 (2004) and 62/208 (2007).

should establish an institutional firewall between the management of its programmatic role and the management of the RC system³.

On 22 November 2006, the Secretary-General decided to move forward with some of the recommendations, focusing on the call to establish pilot country initiatives where the One UN approach would be tested. On 3 April 2007, the new Secretary-General presented the report of the High-level Panel to the General Assembly. In his comments, he noted that the exercise would test the principles advocated by the Panel in different countries. The governments of Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Vietnam volunteered to pilot the Delivering as One approach. The Secretary-General tasked the UNDG to move forward and support the eight pilot countries. Member States agreed that these concepts should be tested in the pilot countries on a voluntary basis and that the evaluation of lessons learned from these experiences would inform future intergovernmental consultations.

The DAO initiative is intended to make the role and contribution of the UN system at the country level more relevant, effective and efficient. The evaluations will assess how, and the extent to which, the intended and unintended results were achieved at country level.

The governments of the participating countries could, if they wish, make these country evaluations available to the United Nations General Assembly for information.

The United Nations General Assembly emphasized the need for an independent evaluation of lessons learned from DAO efforts, for consideration by Member States, without prejudice to a future intergovernmental decision. These country-level evaluations should be considered building blocks for the independent evaluation commissioned by the UN General Assembly. The independent evaluation would be able to integrate the evaluative evidence from the country-level evaluations, assess systemic efforts of the UN and provide recommendations for decision-making at intergovernmental level.

2. Purpose and Use

The country-level evaluations intend to inform decision makers on how to enhance the role and contribution of the United Nations development system in support of national policies and strategies for the achievement of national development results. They will assess the progress made against the strategic intent of DAO, record achievements, identify areas for improvement and remaining challenges and distil lessons to inform decision-making processes at the national and intergovernmental levels.

The country-level evaluations should be used by national governments in ascertaining the effectiveness of the DAO initiative in bringing to the country's benefit the whole potential of the UN development system. These evaluations should be used by the UN to enhance its approach and processes to reach national and internationally agreed development goals. Other member states can use the evaluations to learn from the pilot experiences and as an opportunity for South-South cooperation in evaluation.

3. Scope of the evaluations

Each pilot initiative needs to be considered first and foremost in its national context. The evaluations will focus therefore on the national government's development priorities, plans and strategies and on the UN response to address those priorities. When assessing that response the evaluations will analyze the implementation of the Delivering as One approach expressed in the four Ones, namely —*One Leader*,

³ Secretary General's High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment, Delivering as One United Nations, New York, November 2006.

One Programme, One Budgetary Framework, and, where appropriate, *One Office*—in order to assess its contribution and real progress, if any, towards the achievement of national development goals.

More specifically:

- One leader and the extent to which the position of Resident Coordinator enabled a more coherent UN approach to address national development challenges;
- One programme and the feasibility and progress made in establishing joint programming and a single programme instead of the sum of the individual UN agency specific programmes;
- One budgetary framework and the extent to which the administrative systems in place were able to achieve one financial management system;
- One office and the extent to which common support services and shared business units increased efficiency, and;
- One voice and the extent to which one communication strategy supported a more effective role and contribution of the UN system in each country⁴.

The evaluations will assess the operational initiatives initiated and conducted within the DAO process since its inception. This should entail, all programme activities falling under One Programme and other initiatives that not falling under One Programme affected the performance of DAO. The timeframe under evaluation should cover initiatives implemented since 2006. The emphasis of the evaluation is on the contribution of DAO to development results, however, when initiatives related to humanitarian assistance or emergency relief were considered part of the DAO approach these should be also covered.

4. Evaluation framework

The evaluations will assess in each country the **relevance** (the responsiveness to the needs and priorities of the countries), **effectiveness** (the implementation of better processes and production of development outputs, and when possible the assessment of development outcomes and impacts), **efficiency** (the reduction of transaction costs for the countries), and finally, the **sustainability** of the DAO initiatives (the probability of long term benefits of continuing the approach over time).

These evaluation criteria will guide the identification of the evaluation issues and questions, which will be context specific for each country evaluation, so as to make the evaluation a meaningful exercise for national stakeholders: the detailed list of issues and questions will be prepared during the Inception phase.

Nevertheless, there are commonalities across the DAO processes, which were identified through the evaluability assessments and form the basis of a common set of evaluation issues and questions for all country evaluations.

A generic **evaluation framework** is presented below, explaining how the scope, evaluation criteria and evaluation questions come together:

⁴ One voice was included as part of Delivering as One Approach by participating programme countries in 2008

	One Programme	One Leader	One Budget	One House	One Voice
Relevance	To what extent did the new Programme respond to national priorities?	Is the leadership of the UN RC the most suitable way to represent the depth and breadth of the UN system?	Is the One Budget proposal the most suitable way to enhance the financial administration of DAO?	Are the common support services and shared business units the most suitable way to enhance the administration of DAO?	Is one communication strategy the most suitable way to explain the UN activities and the DAO approach?
Effectiveness	<p>Has the DAO process led to improved effectiveness and impact of operational initiatives for development?</p> <p>Has there been any progress in mainstreaming the UN conventions and resolutions in the joint programming, including human rights, gender, HIV/AIDS, etc, and if so, to what extent?</p> <p>To what extent has the one programme generated positive synergies and value-added beyond the individual interventions to increase effectiveness?</p> <p>Has the DAO process led to improved relationships between the national government and the UN agencies?</p> <p>Has the DAO process progressed in the level of inclusiveness among UN agencies, on one hand, and national institutions, on the other and if so, how?</p>	<p>Is the UN RC leadership perceived as more effective than previous arrangements?</p> <p>To what extent has the UN RC, as One Leader, been able to exercise enhanced authority, responsibility and accountability?</p> <p>Is the firewall between UN RC and UNDP working?</p> <p>Which actions would be required from UN HQ to further enhance the authority and accountability of the One Leader?</p>	<p>To what extent has the one budget resulted in a more effective allocation and use of funds to the one programme components?</p> <p>Has the configuration of the One Budget/One Fund progressed and how?</p> <p>To what extent have donors provided un-earmarked and multi-year resources to the One Plan Fund in a timely manner?</p>	<p>To what extent did common support services and shared business units increase the effectiveness of DAO in terms of achieving programme objectives?</p> <p>What is the progress towards this objective?</p> <p>What are the main constraints, including in terms of resources?</p>	<p>To what extent did one communication strategy support a more effective role and contribution of the UN system in the country?</p> <p>Is the UN speaking with One Voice in a coherent way and is that one voice manifest in the one programme"?</p>

	One Programme	One Leader	One Budget	One House	One Voice
Efficiency	<p>Has the DAO process led to improved efficiency and impact of operational initiatives for development?</p> <p>To what extent has the one programme generated positive synergies and value-added beyond the individual interventions to increase efficiency?</p> <p>Has the DAO process led to reduced transaction costs for the national government and the UN?</p>	<p>To what extent has the one leader taken leadership and ensured efficiency gains from the harmonization of the programme, budget, office and voice?</p>	<p>To what extent has the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) been implemented?</p> <p>To what extent have the Cost Norms been harmonized among UN Agencies and with Government and donors and has this led to efficiency gains?</p>	<p>To what extent did common support services and shared business units increase the efficiency of DAO?</p> <p>Has there been any progress in the definition and calculation of transaction costs of the collaboration through DAO for both the Government and the UN?</p>	
Sustainability	<p>To what extent has the one programme been integrated into government systems to ensure ownership and sustainability of capacities developed/strengthened or results achieved?</p>		<p>To what extent has the UN RC ultimate authority on the allocation of resources from the OPF?</p>		

There will be issues that cannot be easily matched into an evaluation matrix, although they should be explored during the evaluation, for example to frame the context and background. Among others, the following questions could be canvassed in all countries to identify possible common elements favouring or not the DAO process:

- What were the national political drivers for the country to become a DAO pilot?
- What was the UNCT environment and experience of joint work at the time of launching the process?
- To what extent have the findings and recommendations from the evaluability assessment been accepted and implemented?
- What is the progress made towards mainstreaming the RBM approach in the joint programming?
- Is there an M&E system that supports effectively the planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the One Plan?
- Have there been missed opportunities for the DAO process so far and if so, which?

5. Institutional Arrangements for the evaluations

5.1. Evaluation Management Group

The overall guidance for each evaluation will be provided by an Evaluation Management Group (EMG) with the membership of the government and the UN. It will be chaired by the government of the country.

The members of the EMG will commission the evaluation, and therefore should not have conflict of interest. Government members should not be directly in charge of implementing the DAO approach and whenever possible should include the national state institution responsible for evaluation⁵. Alternatively, evaluators should be among its members. The UN members of an EMG should not be members of the UNCT, who are directly responsible for implementing the DAO approach in the country, but rather members of the United Nations Regional Directors Teams (RDT). There are five UN Regional Directors Teams, for Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and CIS, and Latin America and the Caribbean. They exercise an oversight role for the operational activities of the United Nations development system. The RDTs should be in a position to ensure the country-level evaluations are conducted in an impartial and objective manner. The respective RDT could suggest members to participate in each EMG.

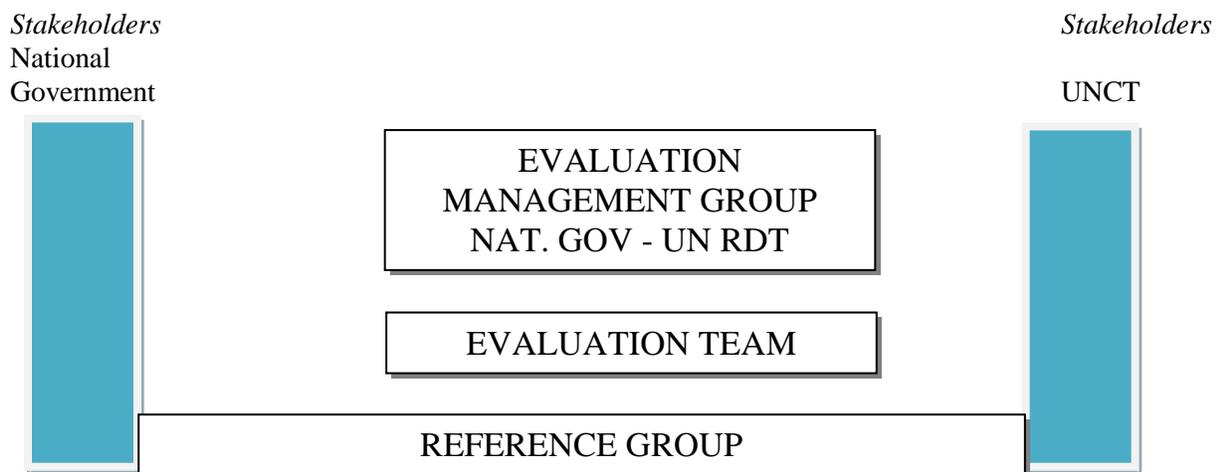
The EMG will oversee the conduct of the evaluation and will meet at key points during the evaluation process. This involves participating in the design of the evaluation, managing the evaluation process, including the identification and selection of the evaluation team and assuring the independence of the evaluations and that the final product complies with the highest standards in evaluation. Among others it

⁵ This model is based on UNEG experience in the first ever evaluation of the UN system conducted at the request of a member state that included a joint evaluation management group of the government of the Republic of South Africa and UNEG. The government members were the Presidency of the Government of South Africa, through its International Relations and Trade Policy Coordination Unit, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the National Treasury, through its International Development Cooperation Unit, the Office of the Public Service Commission (the national state institution responsible for public sector evaluations), the Department of Provincial and Local Government and Statistics South Africa.

will include the following activities: developing the country specific evaluation Terms of Reference (TOR), coordinating and managing the evaluation process, developing the TOR for the evaluation team members, identifying an evaluation team, identifying an external advisory panel to quality assure the results of the evaluation. Each EMG should establish a Secretariat to support them to manage the evaluation.

The EMG will submit the evaluation report to the Government and to the UNCT for them to prepare their management response.

Figure 1: The Institutional Arrangement



5.2. Evaluation Team

The evaluation team members should be seasoned development experts and evaluators with a solid understanding of the national context and a proven track record of conducting evaluations in a professional manner⁶. Substantive knowledge of the programmatic areas covered in the One Programme will be needed. The evaluation team members can be national or international. To the extent possible the composition of the evaluation teams should be gender balanced and tap on existing evaluation capacity by engaging members of the national and regional evaluation associations like AfREA (Africa), ReLAC (Latin America and the Caribbean), Ipen (Eastern Europe) etc.

The evaluations should be carried out by independent consultants. To avoid conflicts of interest and undue pressure, the members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be included in programming implementation in the near future⁷.

The evaluation team will be responsible for conducting the evaluations. This entails among other responsibilities designing the evaluation according to the specific terms of reference; gathering data from different sources of information; analyzing and systematizing the information; identifying patterns and causal linkages that explain current performance; drafting evaluation reports at different stages (inception, drafts, final); responding to comments and factual corrections from stakeholders and incorporating them,

⁶ Evaluators should adhere to the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the UN system (2007) www.unevaluation.org.

⁷ UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN system. (2005) p. 8

as appropriate, in subsequent versions; addressing comments by the external advisory panel; and making briefs and presentations ensuring the evaluation findings conclusions and recommendations are communicated in a coherent, clear and understandable manner once the report is completed.

5.3. *Quality assurance*

An external advisory panel will enhance the quality of all country evaluations, by reviewing all deliverables of the evaluation, including term of reference, inception reports, draft and final evaluation reports. This would help address the complex methodological challenges and credibility associated with evaluating actual results and assessing the specific and distinct contribution of the Delivering as One approach to the achievement of national development results. The external advisory panel should include individuals knowledgeable about development in the country and international evaluation.

The external advisory panel should review the inception reports together with the terms of reference and provide timely methodological feedback. When reviewing the draft evaluation report, the advisory panel should address among other things, whether the evaluations followed the terms of reference, the methodology was adequately described, there is a good use of evidence, the reports are well written and the messages are clear and, whether there is a logical flow between findings, conclusions and recommendations.

UNEG aims to strengthen the objectivity, effectiveness and visibility of the evaluation function across the UN system and to advocate the importance of evaluation for learning, decision making and accountability in support of quality assurance. UNEG will provide framework terms of reference, suggest names for the external advisory panel and assist the evaluations to reach international quality standards.

5.4. *Stakeholders/evaluands*

The stakeholders include “evaluands”, i.e. the parties whose contribution is being evaluated and who prepare the management response to the evaluation. The evaluands are those who are engaged in the implementation of the DAO approach. These include national implementing agencies, such as line ministries, sub-national and local government institutions, and from the UN side, the UNCT and DOCO.

The stakeholders/evaluands will be asked to provide support to the work of the evaluation team by making available information regarding the UN programmes, projects and activities in the country.

The UNCT will support the work of the evaluation team in liaising with key partners and other stakeholders, making all necessary information available to the team regarding UN programmes, projects and activities in the country. The UNCT will also be requested to provide additional logistical support to the evaluation team as required. The UNCT will contribute support in kind (for example, office space for the evaluation team) but the direct costs of the evaluations will be covered by the EMGs.

DOCO’s role is to help UN organizations deliver coherent, effective and efficient support to countries and in this capacity has provided support to DAO implementation. At the request of the participating RDTs DOCO could play a supporting role.

The stakeholders/evaluands will prepare a management response to the evaluation elucidating on the way in which the recommendations will be addressed.

5.5. Reference Group

Each EMG should identify a larger reference group. The reference group will be a consultative body and will serve as a sounding board for the EMG decisions on the evaluation. The EMG will keep the reference group informed throughout the evaluation. Key information and products regarding the conduct of the evaluation such as terms of reference, inception report and final report should be shared with the reference group for their comments and feedback. The reference group can consist of stakeholders and interested parties such as civil society organizations, private sector, media and academia, the international partners working in the country and donors.

6. Methodology

6.1. Evaluation methods

During the Inception phase, the team members will formulate in detail the methodology for the evaluation. All country evaluations will be informed by the key methodological principles below:

- The evaluations are formative and forward looking and will focus on the process aspects of the DAO initiative;
- The evaluations will adopt a highly consultative, iterative and transparent approach with stakeholders;
- Triangulation of information and data across groups of stakeholders and individuals will be the key method to validate evidence, throughout the whole evaluation process;
- The evaluations will strictly adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards.

The evaluations will use a wide range of methods and tools, fine-tuned to the national context and to the evaluation questions. They will preferably include some or all of the following, among others:

- Evaluation matrix relating evaluation issues and questions to evaluation criteria, indicators, sources of information and methods of data collection (inception phase);
- Mapping exercise of the main focus areas of the DAO work (inception phase)
- Desk review of reference documents (inception and data collection phase);
- Individual and group interviews with the members of the reference group including (but not limited to) representatives from Government, Donors, UN Agencies, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UN M&E Working Group, Programme Coordination Groups (PCGs), One Plan Fund Administrative Agent, etc (both during inception and data collection phase);
- Checklists or semi-structured interview protocols for each type of interview;
- Establishment of historical causality: a time-line and narrative about the milestone events in the DaO process at country and international level (inception and data collection phase);
- Field observation and interviews with stakeholders at community level, if appropriate and relevant (data collection phase);

- Thematic studies on specific areas of focus of the DAO process, as relevant and appropriate (data collection phase);
- Debriefing session with the reference group.

6.2. *Limitations of the evaluations*

The evaluability assessment clearly pointed out that the DAO process cannot be evaluated against a clear coherent set of benchmarks given its nature of country-specific process. Particular country-specific limitations might emerge and should be recorded in final evaluation reports. For instance, the absence of clear quantification and benchmarks for transaction costs in the UN system will also affect the possibility of assessing progress on this aspect.

7. Financial arrangements

To ensure the principle of national ownership over evaluations processes, all interested parties should make financial contributions to the extent possible for the conduct of the country-level evaluations. The EMGs should decide how the funds will be managed.

An estimated reference budget for the conduct of each country-level evaluation is approximately US\$200K. This would include the cost of an evaluation team, meetings of the EMG, advisory panel and reference group, and dissemination. Each evaluation would have to be budgeted based on the requirements of the composition of the evaluation team, field work and consultation processes.

8. Expected deliverables

The evaluation team is expected to produce the following deliverables: an inception report outlining the evaluation team's understanding of the issues under evaluation including an evaluation framework and a detailed work plan; a presentation with preliminary findings to be shared in a national stakeholder meeting; a first draft report for circulation and identification of factual corrections from stakeholders; a second draft report for circulation among the external advisory panel for quality assurance and a final evaluation report and presentation.

The basic table of content for the final evaluation reports should include minimally i) an executive summary, ii) introduction and rationale, iii) evaluation methodology, iv) country context, v) findings, vi) conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and vii) annexes.

9. Phases and timeframe

The necessary complex institutional set-up for the evaluations is likely to affect the speed of the process. The indicative time-schedule included below takes this complexity into some account.

The conduct of the country level evaluations should take approximately between six to eight months. If a country were to start the evaluation in November 2009, then it should be possible to finalize a report in July/August 2010. Conducting the evaluations will require the completion of at least the following phases:

- *Establishing the EMG, reference group and external review panel:* The institutional arrangements to conduct the country-level evaluations should be in place before starting the evaluation process. This phase may take approximately four weeks.

- *Finalize country specific TORs:* The framework Terms of Reference should be adapted to address national specific needs. Some of these needs were identified in the national evaluability studies. This phase may take approximately a couple of weeks.
- *Select independent evaluation team:* The selection of the evaluation team is a critical success factor in the evaluation process. The consultants need to have a proven track record of objective and impartial assessment with the capacity to provide constructive feedback to both, the national government and the UN. A short list should be circulated among members of the EMG and these should be rated and ranked according to mutually agreed criteria. This phase could take approximately eight weeks.
- *Inception report:* The first deliverable of the evaluation team is an inception report. The inception report lays out the evaluation team's understanding of the issues to be addressed in the evaluation, the information available and the methods for data collection. It spells out the evaluation framework and a detailed work plan. This could take approximately four weeks after the evaluation team was hired.
- *Data collection:* The evaluation team will collect data through various means, including desk review, semi-structured interviews, focus group, surveys or field visits. This phase usually takes eight to ten weeks.
- *Stakeholder meeting on preliminary findings:* After the data collection is finalized a stakeholder meeting should be organized to present and validate preliminary findings. Participants of the stakeholder meeting should include but not be limited to the people interviewed and all relevant stakeholders in the country. This systematization could be done in a couple of weeks.
- *Draft report:* One month after the stakeholder meeting the evaluation team should present a first draft report to the EMG. This usually takes four weeks.
- *Review of draft report:* The EMG sends the report for factual correction to the UNCT and to national government. After receiving eventual factual corrections it sends a second draft report to the external advisory board for quality assurance process. This phase usually takes four weeks.
- *Final report:* The evaluation team finishes the report after receiving factual corrections from government and UNCT and comments from the external advisory panel. This should take approximately a couple of weeks.
- *Publication of report:* After the report is received from the evaluation team, the EMG will send the report to print and make it available on public websites.