

EVALUATION OF

THE THIRD REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE ARAB STATES (2006–2009)

REGIONAL COOPERATION



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Design: Suazion, Inc. (NY, suazion.com) **Production:** A.K. Office Supplies (NY)

FOREWORD

This report on the Evaluation of the Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF) for the Arab States 2006-2009 presents the findings of an independent evaluation carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Evaluation Office. The evaluation assesses UNDP performance, achievements and results, and its strategic positioning in the region. The aim of the evaluation is to provide accountability for the achievement of results and resources used, identify successful approaches and challenges, and learn lessons from implementation in a regional setting. The evaluation is intended to feed into the development of the new RCF for the Arab States.

The RCF was developed within the framework of the UNDP Second Multi-year Funding Framework 2004-2007 and its strategic goals and priority areas, taking into account perceived UNDP comparative advantages. The regional programme built upon the strategic approach of the UNDP global programme. It set out to do this in the context of the overall Arab commitment to 'development and modernization' as articulated by Arab Summit declarations and the global mandate of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The programme was developed to operationalize regional analysis, dialogue and partnership development into policy advice, capacity development and pilot programmes at the country level.

The programme framework was consolidated under three pillars and a cross-cutting theme. The MDG achievement pillar was designed to bring together strategic topics related to gender equality and women's empowerment, HIV/AIDS and water resources management that reflect priorities tied to human development in the region. The democratic governance pillar would focus on programmes and activities targeting rule of law, transparency and accountability, enhanced participation and institution building. The pillar on building a knowledge society was designed to address the critical regional knowledge deficit through programmes targeting education and

information and communications technologies for development. The cross-cutting theme addressed by the RCF was youth. The objective was to ensure the mainstreaming of young people as beneficiaries and catalysts for the socio-economic advances targeted by the RCF and the regional programmes. Given the youthful age structure, combined with high unemployment levels amongst young people, the inclusion of youth as a cross-cutting theme was seen as crucial.

The evaluation examined the UNDP regional programme and its contributions to regional development in terms of its relevance, outcomes, effectiveness and sustainability. It combined a meta-evaluation approach with an in-depth investigation of the programme. A comprehensive outcome evaluation that covered in detail all of the established programmes and projects under the RCF had been commissioned by the Regional Bureau for Arab States in 2008. The evaluation team had access to this evaluation early on, thus allowing for the current evaluation to build upon its findings. The evaluation team conducted detailed analyses of documentation related to the RCF and its constituent programmes and examined the variety of outputs of the programme. The team undertook visits to a sample of four countries in the region, with emphasis on the countries where the regional programmes are based. Interviews were conducted with staff at partner agencies, regional institutions, regional programme offices, UNDP country offices, the Sub-regional Resource Facility and the Regional Service Centre. The evaluation team conducted almost 100 interviews in New York and in the countries and carried out detailed reviews of the programme—triangulating evidence from information based on perception, validation and documentation.

The evaluation found that the thrust of the RCF has been mostly relevant to the needs and priorities of the Arab region. The programme has focused on critical issues where the regional approach has been beneficial in advancing the

achievement of MDGs. Several sensitive topics related to democratic governance, transparency, accountability, gender equality and HIV/AIDS that would have been hard to address through the UNDP country programmes have featured prominently in the regional programme. The Arab Human Development Report has been at the forefront of advocacy—generating knowledge and providing a regional platform for discussing priority topics, including the role of women and the education and knowledge gaps pervasive in the region. The evaluation concluded that the programmes under the RCF have been most effective in advocacy and promoting policy dialogue on such priority issues. They have also developed the capacities of government institutions, non-governmental and governmental organizations, and religious leaders. The partnerships created with the Arab governments, regional institutions, civil society and academia have been fruitful in engaging society at large in debating and testing new approaches to achieving the MDGs. The evaluation also concluded that more could be done to translate the good quality policy-level and capacity-development work into concrete programmes and projects at the country level. However, the RCF does not have the resources to do so at the country level. Consequently, closer cooperation with the UNDP country offices would be required to achieve such country-level results. This would require regular communications and cooperation between the UNDP regional and country teams from the programme design stage onwards.

The evaluation recommendations highlight a need for a sharper strategic thrust for the RCF with clearly defined outcomes aligned with the UNDP strategic plan. South-South cooperation modalities for transferring knowledge and experiences from country to country should continue as a basis for the RCF. There would be significant scope for increased use of sub-regional approaches that recognize country-specific priorities. The valuable knowledge generation, advocacy and capacity development work should be increasingly supplemented by specific programmes for concrete follow-up. Given the particular demographic situation in the region, youth should continue to be a cross-cutting issue in the RCF. Similarly, gender mainstreaming and

women's empowerment remain crucial issues for the regional programme.

A number of people contributed to this evaluation, particularly the evaluation team composed of Fuat Andic as Team Leader, Mouna Hashem as Team Specialist, Juha Uitto as not only a Team Member but also Task Manager, and Valeria Carou-Jones as Researcher. External reviewer Nadia Hijab and internal reviewer Michael Reynolds significantly improved the quality of the evaluation. We also thank Kutisha Ebron and Anish Pradhan who provided excellent administrative and technical support at the Evaluation Office.

The research and conduct of the evaluation were completed thanks to the excellent collaboration of the Regional Bureau for Arab States under the leadership of the Regional Director Amat Al Alim Alsoswa. Particular thanks go to Adel Abdellatif and his regional programme team in the Bureau in New York, and Mona Hammam, Director of the newly established Regional Service Centre in Cairo. Thanks are due to all programme managers and advisers in the Regional Bureau, the Bureau for Development Policy, the Sub-regional Resource Facility in Beirut, country offices and programme offices, who shared their insights with the evaluation team. We would especially like to thank the UNDP resident representatives and country directors who shared their valuable time with the evaluation team: James Rawley (Egypt), Seifeldin Abarro (Lebanon), Juliette Hage (Tunisia), Khaled Alloush (United Arab Emirates) and Selva Ramachandran (Yemen). The evaluation has greatly benefited from the interest and support of government representatives in the region, regional partners, representatives of civil society, religious leaders and academia.

I hope that the findings and recommendations of this evaluation will assist UNDP in further responding to the challenges of this highly dynamic region and provide broader lessons that may be of relevance to UNDP and its partners regionally and beyond.



Saraswathi Menon
Director, Evaluation Office

CONTENTS

Acronyms and abbreviations	v
Executive summary	vii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale and purpose of the evaluation	1
1.2 Scope and methodology of the evaluation	1
2. Regional context and the regional cooperation framework	5
2.1 Characteristics of the region	5
2.2 Regional cooperation framework	7
2.3 The regional programmes	9
2.4 Regional programme document, outcomes and indicators	11
2.5 Programme financial structure and resource mobilization	11
3. Findings	17
3.1 Programme outcomes	17
3.2 Relevance of the regional cooperation framework	21
3.3 Effectiveness	21
3.4 Sustainability	23
3.5 Challenges	23
4. Conclusions	25
4.1 Need for a results framework	25
4.2 Coordination with country programmes	25
4.3 Need for focus	25
4.4 Sub-regional focus	25
5. Recommendations	27
Annexes	
Annex I. Terms of reference	29
Annex II. People consulted	33
Annex III. Document consulted	37
Annex IV. Survey for evaluation of Arab States Regional Cooperation Framework	39
Annex V. Selected development indicators	43
Annex VI. Country studies	45
Figures and tables	
Figure 1. Structure of the RCF, 2006-2009	8
Figure 2. Programmatic structure of the RCF	11
Table 1. Relative development in the region	6
Table 2. Expected outcomes and outcome indicators	12
Table 3. RCF budget 2006-2008	13
Table 4. Projects by total budget RCF 2006-2008	13
Table 5. Donor contributions to RCF, 2006-2009	15

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHDR	Arab Human Development Report
AKR	Arab Knowledge Report
AKRP	Arab Knowledge Report Project
ATDP	Arab Trade and Development Programme
CAWTAR	Centre for Arab Women Training and Research
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HARPAS	HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States
HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTDAR	Information and Communications Technology for Development in the Arab Region
MBRF	Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum Foundation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCC	Net Contributor Country
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PLWH	People Living with HIV/AIDS
POGAR	Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
RBAS	Regional Bureau for Arab States
RCF	Regional Cooperation Framework
RPD	Regional Programme Document
SURF	Sub-regional Resource Facility
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
USD	United States Dollars
WGP-AS	Water Governance Programme for the Arab States
WRACTI	Women and Children's Rights through Access to Information
WTO	World Trade Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of the evaluation of the Third Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF) for the Arab States 2006–2009, which the Evaluation Office carried out between August 2008 and January 2009.

The evaluation was designed to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the third RCF in the Arab States and to evaluate contributions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the RCF to development results in the region. In assessing the relevance and development effectiveness of the RCF, the evaluation covered the following areas: performance of the RCF programme portfolio and the results achieved, including the achievement of the immediate objectives of the constituent programmes; strategic positioning and focus of the RCF and its relevance to the country and regional priorities; value addition of the regional programme in the context of the Arab States *vis-à-vis* global and country programmes; organizational strategy, modalities and mechanisms, including linkages to UNDP strategies and frameworks; synergic relationships between various components of the RCF; and sustainability of RCF interventions and ownership by regional and national stakeholders after the intervention is completed.

The evaluation findings and recommendations are intended to contribute to the formulation of the next regional programme and its alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008–2011.

This evaluation builds on outcome evaluations commissioned by the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) in 2008. Those outcome evaluations aimed to assess the contribution of six regional projects to the fulfilment of the three strategic pillars of the 2006–2009 regional programme. This evaluation attempted to take the outcome evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations to a higher level by emphasiz-

ing assessment of the RCF ‘added value’ in a regional context and determining the role of the programme in strategically positioning UNDP relative to regional development priorities and its strategy. The methodology included a comprehensive desk review and analysis of outcome and programme and project evaluations, monitoring reports, and other self-assessment reports. This was supplemented with visits to four countries in the region—Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates (UAE)—and consultations with key partners in the region as well as specialists at UNDP Headquarters. Country visits allowed the evaluation team to validate findings of the desk reviews, identify good practices and lessons for the future at the country and regional level, and obtain on-site knowledge of how the RCF links to country-level priorities and vertical integration.

MAIN FINDINGS

REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAMMES

The RCF is organized into three pillars: Millennium Development Goal (MDG) achievement, democratic governance, and building a knowledge society. This is supplemented with ‘youth’ as a cross-cutting issue. Several programmes fall under multiple pillars as well as the cross-cutting issue. The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), a regional flagship programme that provides analyses of development issues relevant to the region, contributes to each pillar and plays an important advocacy and awareness role.

Programmes contributing to the democratic governance and knowledge pillars—Governance in the Arab Region, Good Governance for Development, Parliamentary Strengthening and Prosecutors’ Programme—cover issues such as rule of law, human rights, e-government, administrative simplification, judiciary reform, participation in elections, and enhancement of

good governance through transparency and accountability. The Information and Communications Technology for Development Project in the Arab Region (ICTDAR) supports use of information and communications technology (ICT) for human development and falls under the pillars of democratic governance and knowledge building and the cross-cutting area of youth. The HIV/AIDS Regional Programme raises awareness of, and builds commitment and leadership towards fighting, HIV/AIDS and contributes to the MDG achievement pillar.

Three projects specifically support the knowledge pillar and cut across the youth issue: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, which promotes quality reform in educational policies for teaching mathematics and science using accurate data and analysis of factors that affect the learning process; Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities, which promotes a system of education evaluation for quality assurance of academic programmes in Arab universities and introduces institutional planning based on analysis of relevant statistical data; and the Arab Knowledge Report, which is a new initiative that builds upon the 2003 AHDR and contributes to 'building a knowledge society'.

The Centre for Arab Women Training and Research (CAWTAR), which became an independent institution in 2006, strives to enhance the capacity of Arab institutions to empower women to exercise their rights and achieve equality. Two new initiatives—the Arab Trade and Development Programme (ATDP), which started in 2007, and the Water Governance Programme for the Arab States (WGP-AS), which started in 2009—contribute to the MDG achievement and democratic governance pillars as well as youth. The ATDP aims to enhance the capacities of Arab countries to use economic governance as a tool for safeguarding and accelerating human development in the context of globalized trade. The goal of the WGP-AS is to improve the use and management of scarce water resources (on both the supply and demand sides), improve water supply and sanitation, and promote an integrated approach to water resources management.

PROGRAMME FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The total budget for the first three years of the RCF (2006–2008) amounted to USD 30,244,658. Core resources totalled USD 9,510,933 and other resources totalled USD 20,733,725. The largest allocation of funds was for the democratic governance pillar. The cost-sharing approach used by the regional programme generated interest among donors, including private foundations and businesses.

A large spectrum of donors contributed to regional programmes. Contributions have been received from bilateral donors, the European Union, participating countries in the region, foundations and the private sector. In addition, there has been parallel financing to a number of projects. The evaluation revealed a marked absence of Arab State donors, with the exception of Tunisia and Algeria, especially in view of the prevalence of wealthy net contributor countries (NCCs). Bilateral donors constitute the bulk among donors.

RELEVANCE OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

The RCF 2006–2009 has been generally relevant to the priorities and the needs of the Arab region. In most cases, the RCF has been positioned to address issues at the regional level that could not have been adequately addressed within the country programmes. The issues have included sensitive areas related to democratic governance, transparency, accountability, gender equality and HIV/AIDS. The RCF brought these issues to the forefront of the discussion in the region. The articulation of these issues was a major contribution of the framework, as was raising consciousness for seeking remedies. The AHDRs, in particular, generated knowledge and provided a regional platform for discussing priority topics, including the role of women and the education and knowledge gaps pervasive in the region.

The work of the regional programme on HIV/AIDS has been particularly relevant to the region, where the epidemic is not openly discussed. The programme has brought HIV/AIDS into the open through regional dialogue.

Education-related projects under the knowledge society pillar addressed the knowledge deficit in the region by assisting Arab universities in promoting a culture of evaluation, improving and reforming education, and focusing on educational policies for teaching mathematics and science.

Under the democratic governance pillar, programmes such as the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) addressed key issues pertaining to good governance and judicial reform through advocacy, policy dialogue and training. Similarly, ICT has been promoted as a way for democratization.

Trade and job creation are significant endeavours, irrespective of whether the country is an oil exporter or middle-income or low-income country. The recent work initiated by UNDP in this area responds to a priority need.

Cross-thematic strategic partnerships were established with the objective of capitalizing on the efforts and resources that UNDP and other organizations could bring to bear on regional development problems. The three programmatic pillars that support the RCF are mutually reinforcing and the accomplishments of one pillar have spill-over effects on the others. The synergy among the three pillars is clear and meaningful. By and large, the programmes that contribute to the realization of the pillars tackle the problems that are common to the member countries of the region.

Efforts to secure equality and social inclusion consisted of special emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment and participation of women. The special attention paid to youth-related issues as a cross-cutting theme in a region where the young population has a preponderance in the age pyramid was an added factor in the relevance of the RCF.

The RCF has succeeded in tackling some vital problems in the region. Nevertheless, it is clear that the RCF activities have concentrated sub-regionally and the agenda has tended to be driven

by the policy issues facing middle-income countries. In particular, the RCF has only had limited reach to NCCs and least developed countries (with the possible exception of Yemen). Because of its built-in flexibility, the RCF succeeded in addressing the diverse needs of the countries with different intensity in different countries. There is significant scope in all existing programmes to enhance sub-regional approaches based on characteristics of the country groupings.

EFFECTIVENESS

The programmes under the RCF have been most effective in advocacy and policy dialogue on common priority issues in the region. The programmes have also developed the capacities of government institutions, non-governmental and governmental organizations, and religious leaders by encouraging policy dialogue and building and disseminating knowledge on issues that are pertinent to the region. The programmes created partnerships with a host of Arab governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and academic and policy institutions.

The outcomes of the programmes have contributed, in different degrees, to the realization of the expected results of the three pillars. The greatest value added has been in advocacy interventions, through which policy makers and civil society actors have become familiar with some of the pressing issues of the region, such as governance, rule of law, corruption and participation in the political process. The success of the RCF in raising awareness and debate on sensitive issues has enhanced its effectiveness. In particular, the AHDRs have encouraged region-wide discussion on development issues.

Important initiatives in the area of gender include the publication of the 2005 AHDR 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World' and the 2007 study on the Regional Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme for Arab States, which will contribute to mainstreaming gender in the next RCF and country programmes.

A concrete outcome emanating from the second AHDR is the new Arab Knowledge Report Project (AKRP), which has led to a unique partnership with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF). This partnership has institutionalized the follow up to one of the key issues identified in the AHDRs—building a knowledge society. The AHDRs also seemed to have influenced policies of other development organizations, including some bilateral donors active in the region, and have found their way to university curricula in the region.

The projects in education added significant value to the youth dimension in the Arab region and contributed to the realization of the knowledge pillar of the RCF. The projects responded to a regional need for improvements in educational quality, achieving results in the areas of education reform and policies, evaluation culture and creation of knowledge products.

The programmes under the governance cluster have allocated a significant amount of resources to building and disseminating knowledge. The cluster's dual focus has been on rule of law and participation, with four distinct, interdependent areas: judicial reform, criminal justice policies and systems, anti-corruption measures, and enhancing the quality of legislation and regulations. Human rights, gender, youth and environment are mainstreamed into these four areas of work in coordination with the concerned United Nations organizations. The programme has provided a one-stop online window to a wide selection of parliamentary development resources and knowledge products, encouraging the use of ICT in accessing information to support parliamentary work in the region. It has conducted research on the representative function of the parliament and the role of the parliament in promoting decentralization and fighting corruption. The creation of websites on democratic governance—which also touch upon human rights, gender and human development—has contributed to knowledge production, accumulation and dissemination. The websites have also served as reference instruments for Arab countries and dialogue platforms.

The programme on ICT has targeted different sectors of society to provide knowledge for awareness raising and capacity development. At the same time, it has produced poverty reduction initiatives focusing on youth, medium and small enterprises, and people with disabilities. It introduced ICT as a tool for easy access to information and social services, for acquisition of skills, and to build awareness of human rights.

The HIV/AIDS Programme at the regional and country level has raised awareness of policy makers, religious leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the public on the disease and its carriers. It has successfully instituted a Regional Advocacy Programme that will pave the way for future actions to include mainstreaming HIV/AIDS strategies in national policies.

Since most of the activities on trade and development are new, it is premature to assess their effectiveness or results.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the RCF results depends upon two conditions: whether the results of many upstream projects—such as advocacy, policy advice and capacity development—can be converted into downstream projects; and whether a firm linkage can be achieved between the RCF and UNDP country programmes. The results of the regional programmes will be sustainable provided that advocacy and policy advice generated within the projects is internalized by the national governments and used for future policy decisions. Partnership with the country offices is essential for regional programme sustainability because the regional initiatives need to be followed up at the country level. The RCF does not have the resources or the reach at the country level to provide continued support to build upon regional efforts.

Each regional programme has internal dynamics that determine its sustainability. The degree of acceptance by the governments and the skills that have been developed in the public sector suggest good prospects for sustainability of the results

achieved under the democratic governance pillar. The sustainability of the activities enhancing women's rights will depend upon the extent to which CSOs are strengthened and governments adopt the policy advice. Under the poverty pillar, the results of the trade and development programme need to be institutionalized in national policies. However, it is too early to assess whether this is happening. Similarly, combating HIV/AIDS requires specific actions in particular countries and the sustainability of the results of the regional programme will depend upon the extent to which country offices, together with other United Nations organizations and the governments, can internalize results achieved so far and design national programmes. The knowledge society pillar is achieving sustainability partly through the institutionalization of the work initiated under the AHDR within the scope of the new AKRP, which responds to a need in the region and has attracted significant external funding. The results achieved under the education sector programme need to be sustained while UNDP is seeking an exit strategy from the area, which does not fall within its corporate comparative advantage.

CHALLENGES

The RCF had several shortcomings, most of which stemmed from how it was designed. The Regional Programme Document (RPD) did not define the expected outcomes or the corresponding indicators that would allow for measuring results in a meaningful manner. In some cases, indicators were defined in such a way as to be devoid of operational value. In others, the indicators were pedestrian and linked only to activities and outputs.

In addition, coordination between the RCF and the country programmes in the region was weak at best, and in many cases non-existent. There was an absence of concrete projects at the operational level with sustainable results that emanated from the advocacy efforts. To achieve this would require more operational linkages to country programmes, which would have to be forged early at the design stage.

Funding for the RCF from UNDP core resources was limited, which had implications on the scope and reach of the programme. While the overall thrust of the RCF was appropriate, several of the programmes were spread too thinly, as they were directed by resource mobilization opportunities. The resource mobilization efforts, with some exceptions, did not adequately tap regional sources, including governments.

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is the primary executing partner for RCF programmes. For some projects, this arrangement was not satisfactory due to lack of substantive backstopping and delays in administrative support.

CONCLUSIONS

The Arab States RCF 2006-2009 has addressed central development issues in the region. It has drawn attention to needs that are difficult to resolve because of their sensitivity and because of difficulties surrounding advocacy originating from individual UNDP country programmes. There are a number of broad areas that will need attention in the future.

NEED FOR A RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The weak results framework with inadequate definition of outcomes has hampered the focus of the RCF as well as the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its results. A fundamental lesson from the RCF is that a solidly designed programme is necessary in order to assess results and outcomes. This entails defining the outcomes at the outset and including clear baselines and indicators for their achievement. A logical model that explains how the activities and outputs are intended to lead to the outcomes would be very helpful.

COORDINATION WITH COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

The effectiveness and sustainability of the regional programme is largely dependent on its relevance and linkages to UNDP work at the country level. While the purpose of the RCF is

not to directly serve country offices, both are guided by UNDP priorities and its strategic plan. Activities at the regional level—especially knowledge creation and advocacy—often require follow-up at the country level in order to reach objectives and sustainability. Therefore, country office ownership of issues tackled by the regional programme will be beneficial. Generating ownership should start at the formulation stage and should continue throughout the programme. This will require close communication between the regional programme and country offices. It is important to select the country offices participating in regional activities based on their interest and commitment. In that regard, the new RCF provides an excellent opportunity to improve communications and coordination.

NEED FOR FOCUS

Resource limitations of the RCF underline the importance of having a highly focused programme. Unless there are significant external funding sources, it would be better to limit the number of activities in order to enhance the reach and depth of the programme. There are significant opportunities for fund-raising from national sources, donor organizations and the private sector at the country level for specific programmes and activities. However, it is important that any fund-raising efforts adhere to an overall strategy that guarantees the coherence of the programme.

SUB-REGIONAL FOCUS

The RCF agenda has been largely defined by middle-income countries, which have benefited the most from advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity development. Most of the least developed countries in the region have been left out. Similarly, RCF participation by NCCs has been very limited. Nevertheless, there would be significant scope for involving both groups, especially regarding knowledge and advocacy on priority issues pertaining to their development challenges. NCCs would also be in an advantageous position to continue with regional initiatives at the national level using their own resources.

This would provide an opportunity for UNDP to promote human development approaches in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The overall objectives of the RCF should be reviewed with a view to concentrating on fewer areas with clearly defined outcomes and strategic thrust. The RCF should be aligned with the directions and principles of the UNDP strategic plan, recognizing country-specific circumstances. Programmes should be brought in line with programmatic priorities of the RCF focus areas. A knowledge-based approach to South-South cooperation, where experiences are transferred or exchanged between countries in the region, should continue to be a main modality of the RCF.

Recommendation 2. The RCF should explore enhancing sub-regional approaches based on distinctions between the developmental levels of countries in the region and corresponding development policies. There are marked socio-economic differences among countries in the region (least developed countries, NCCs and middle-income countries), which render a one-size-fits-all approach difficult. Taking note of contextual differences in the region complies with the emphasis of the UNDP strategic plan on greater country specificity.

Recommendation 3. A better balance must be struck between knowledge generation and capacity development, as well as the transformation of policy advice into specific projects. Concrete efforts should be made as a follow-up to regional advocacy and policy dialogue initiatives. In many cases, such efforts would fall beyond the scope of the regional programme and would require follow-up at the country level by UNDP country programmes and national partners. Country office management should be involved at all stages of the planning and implementation of the RCF in order to ensure alignment with country programmes.

Recommendation 4. Gender mainstreaming and youth should remain cross-cutting issues. In particular, the development of productive sectors, employment and trade policies are central from a gender and youth perspective. Developing a dedicated project designed specifically to meet youth issues would be appropriate, since it would properly focus attention exclusively on youth and be more conducive to monitoring and evaluating successes in the area.

Recommendation 5. Poverty reduction and democratic governance should continue to be the focus of the programme. Environment and sustainable development, as a new component of the regional programme, is fully aligned with the strategic plan and the regional priorities. The programmatic activities developed under it should be closely aligned with the governance and poverty reduction focus areas of the RCF. Given the serious resource constraints of the regional programme, and the existence of a

dedicated bureau in UNDP, the RCF should refrain from addressing crisis prevention and recovery.

Recommendation 6. The AHDR should be separated from the regional programme and become independent. A separate fund should be set up with, *inter alia*, private-sector contributions from the region. The AHDR should remain under the purview of UNDP in order to maintain its neutrality and high quality, but removing it from the regional programme would secure continuity, ownership and sustainability.

Recommendation 7. Resource mobilization efforts should tap into the financial resources of the region, including NCCs as well as public and private sources. Individual programmes should be encouraged to mobilize additional resources and facilitate the application of these funds, providing guidance with regard to alignment with the regional programme focus and corporate resource mobilization strategies.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

As mandated by its Executive Board, the UNDP Evaluation Office undertook an independent, forward-looking evaluation to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the Third RCF for the Arab States, 2006-2009, and its contributions to development results in the region. This evaluation is based on the evidence from the completed individual programme outcome evaluations. It validates the progress of the RCF and complements the knowledge obtained from a previous evaluation with information from interviews, selected country visits, and follow-up surveys sent out to all countries not visited by the evaluation team in the region.

This evaluation builds on outcome evaluations commissioned by the RBAS in 2008. Those outcome evaluations aimed to assess the contribution of six regional projects to the fulfilment of the three strategic pillars of the 2006-2009 regional programme. The current evaluation attempts to take the outcome evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations to a higher level by emphasizing assessment of the RCF 'added value' in a regional context, as well as determining the role of the programme in strategically positioning UNDP relative to regional development priorities and UNDP strategy.¹ The RCF was approved by the Executive Board in September 2005. The evaluation findings and recommendations are intended to contribute to the formulation of the next regional programme and its alignment with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011.

1.2 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation was designed to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the Third RCF in the Arab States, as well as to evaluate contributions of UNDP through the RCF to development results in the region. In assessing the relevance and development effectiveness of the RCF, the evaluation covered the following areas: performance of the RCF programme portfolio and the results achieved, including the achievement of the immediate objectives of the constituent programmes; strategic positioning and focus of the RCF and its relevance to the country and regional priorities; value addition of the regional programme in the context of Arab States *vis-à-vis* global and country programmes; organizational strategy, modalities and mechanisms, including linkages to UNDP strategies and frameworks; synergic relationships between various components of the RCF; and sustainability of RCF interventions and ownership by regional and national stakeholders after the intervention is completed.

This report is based on an extensive review of documents related to the RCF and its programmes and projects, as well as interviews with a large number of stakeholders in UNDP Headquarters in New York, regional and country offices, programmes, partner organizations and elsewhere.² The evaluation also benefited from a recent comprehensive outcome evaluation of the RCF commissioned by the RBAS.³ The team also visited the capitals of four countries in the region: Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and UAE. The

1. The terms of reference are given in Annex 1.

2. See Annex 2.

3. UNDP, 'Outcome Evaluation of Regional Projects', Regional Bureau Arab States, August 2008.

choice of these countries stemmed from the fact that Cairo, Beirut and Tunis are the hosts of most of the projects under the RCF. Because UAE is an NCC, activities were examined there in hopes of shedding further light on RCF activities. The visits enabled the team not only to gather first-hand information about the projects, but also to investigate the relationship between RCF and country programmes in these countries. In addition to the programme and project personnel, the team interviewed UNDP country offices and regional staff in the countries visited, government offices, CSOs, partners and donors.

Based on the observations in the countries, the team prepared a short questionnaire and distributed it to countries not visited. The purpose was to obtain further information that would complement and supplement the information obtained by the country visits.⁴ Out of 14 country offices consulted, 4 country offices responded (anonymously) to the questionnaire. Given the low response rate, this report will not include a specific section on the survey results, but the answers received from the country offices are woven into the findings and conclusions of the report.

Since the RCF was recently subjected to an outcome evaluation, this current evaluation essentially validates the findings of that outcome evaluation. However, it goes several steps beyond it—in addition to scrutinizing the effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the projects, it also delves into several other aspects of the framework. It assesses the projects' contributions to the three pillars and strategic positions of the RCF *vis-à-vis* regional priorities and country programmes and the synergies between the pillars. Keeping in mind that the current evaluation has a mandate of being forward-looking, it aims to contribute to the design of the next RCF within the overall context of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011.⁵

The methodology followed is outlined in the terms of reference (Annex 1). Accordingly,

- The evaluation used a combination of meta-evaluation and direct assessment techniques. The meta-evaluation reviewed findings of the comprehensive outcome evaluation commissioned by RBAS in 2008 and other programme and project evaluations. This included comprehensive desk review and analysis of outcome and programme and project evaluations, monitoring reports, and other self-assessment reports. This was done in order to have a clear idea of the strategic position of the framework within the national and regional context.
- The meta-evaluation was supplemented with selective visits to countries where the RCF is active (Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and UAE) and consultations with the Sub-regional Resource Facility (SURF) in Beirut. The team visited four country offices in the region and held in-depth interviews with project management and staff, UNDP country office staff, SURF staff, government counterparts, project partners, civil society and beneficiaries. It also reviewed projects appropriate to each pillar. Although the earlier outcome evaluation had also completed this exercise, it was imperative that its findings be validated. The evaluation team consulted with specialists based at Headquarters and key partners in the region in order to obtain a broad range of views. A questionnaire was used to provide information on the programme.
- Triangulation of information and data sources constituted the primary assessment method. The concept of triangulation refers to empirical evidence gathered through three major sources of information: perception, validation and documentation. Validation of

4. See Annex 4 for the questionnaire.

5. UNDP, 'UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011'.

the information and findings was achieved through cross-referencing of sources.⁶

- The findings related to projects were the basis of the assessment of the three pillars and of the cross-cutting issue.

The methodology had one operational limitation: only four countries were visited—three middle-income countries and one NCC. No least developed country was visited.⁷ To overcome this limitation, a survey was sent to UNDP country offices in all the countries in the region that were not visited (14 in total). However, only four country offices responded. Nevertheless the limitation did not hamper the evaluation process.

There was also the conceptual limitation of establishing direct links between RCF objectives and the outcomes of certain programmes. This was especially acute where advocacy and policy advice could not be linked directly to the RCF due to difficulty in measuring changes in attitude and the direction of policy measures, since such changes were not only the function of project outcomes but also of a host of other social and political circumstances. The judgment of the contributions of the RCF to such changes was based on establishing logical linkages between the programme activities and the observed outcomes based on best available evidence.

6. These sources included, but were not limited to, managers of country offices, project personnel, NGOs, high level government officials and partners (see Annex 2).

7. The original design of the evaluation included Yemen, a country that had benefited from the RCF. However, due to unforeseen security circumstances, the visit could not take place. Telephone interviews with Yemen country office staff were carried out instead.

Chapter 2

REGIONAL CONTEXT AND THE REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE REGION

The grouping of the Arab states is based not only on geographic considerations and administrative expediency of UNDP and RBAS, but also on the view that the states have certain common characteristics.⁸ The homogeneity stems from the fact that most citizens of the countries consider themselves to be Arabs or akin to Arabs.⁹ Arabic is the national language. With minor exceptions, the predominant religion is Islam. Despite the similarities, the countries exhibit a broad range of traits, which make for a heterogeneity that may be more important than the similarities. The causes of this heterogeneity are many. Some Arab states are rich in mineral resources, while others are predominantly agricultural. Others have achieved a diversified economy with orientation towards exports. Some have reached per capita gross domestic product (GDP) levels that are equivalent to those in industrialized countries, while others remain critically poor. In some countries, a large portion of the population is rural, while in others urban dwellers dominate. All of these factors create great variance in the levels of development as measured by per capita income and the human development index (HDI) (see Table 1). These appreciable differences condition the mind set in the countries. Historical circumstances also impact these countries differently.¹⁰ In their entirety,

they create a host of conditions that affect the activities undertaken to accomplish the pillars on which RCF rests.

The Arab region has made substantial advances in human development terms during the last three decades. Despite the gains, overall progress faltered in the 1990s. The assessment of the progress towards the achievement of the MDGs concluded that countries with lower levels of human development had made the least advances.¹¹ This indicates that the region is characterized by wide economic and social disparities and inequalities. Perhaps only one-third of Arab countries may be able to meet the various 2015 target goals they set for themselves

Economic growth in the region has also been skewed by internal conflicts, political instability and rapid population growth, which have contributed to variations among and within the Arab countries. Despite continued institutional and trade policy reform, collaborative regional economic measures and trade policies to stimulate and promote region-wide growth remain underutilised, with intra-regional exports accounting for only approximately 8 percent of the total during the past several years.¹² Some of the most significant economic features of the region include overall unemployment rates between 15 percent and 26 percent. That rate is

8. UNDP has country offices in 17 countries and an additional office located in the occupied Palestinian territory.

9. The region is not fully homogenous ethnically. There are Kurds mostly in Iraq, Armenians in Lebanon and Syria, and Berber minorities in North Africa. The population of Somalia and Djibouti are not Arabs.

10. Many of these countries have had a colonial experience, imposed by the Ottoman Empire, France and Great Britain, that has left different legacies in many spheres, especially in public administration systems. Source: UNDP, 'Human Development Report, 2007-2008', New York, NY, 2007.

11. United Nations, 'The Millennium Development Goals in Arab Countries: Toward 2015'.

12. UNDP, 'Human Development Report, 2007-2008', New York, NY, 2007.

Table 1. Relative development in the region¹³

Country	HDI	GDP per capita (USD)
Algeria	0.733	7,062
Bahrain	0.876	21,482
Djibouti	0.516	2,178
Egypt	0.708	4,337
Iraq	n.a.	n.a.
Jordan	0.773	5,530
Kuwait	0.891	26,321
Lebanon	0.772	5,584
Libya	0.818	6,621
Morocco	0.645	4,555
Palestinian Territories	0.731	n.a.
Saudi Arabia	0.812	15,711
Somalia	n.a.	n.a.
Sudan	0.521	2,083
Syria	0.724	3,808
Tunisia	0.766	8,371
United Arab Emirates	0.868	25,514
Yemen	0.508	930

Notes: n.a. indicates not available. All data is from 2005, the latest available year.

significantly higher for women. As noted in Table 1, GDP per capita shows great divergence among countries. High population growth rates also resulted in a rapidly growing labour force, averaging approximately 4.5 percent per annum for the region. Young people represent more than 20 percent of the population of the region. Compounded by an educational system that is incompatible with labour market needs, youth unemployment is as high as 30 percent in some countries of the region.¹⁴

Issues of water quantity and quality, if not addressed, are likely to constrain development.

Concerted action remains a key requirement to ensure that the available water resources in the region are improved, developed and allocated in a sustainable fashion.

The region also has to cope with one of the world's greatest health and developmental challenges: stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS. Estimates indicate that prevalence rates are still among the lowest in the world, but there are signs that the situation is changing fast with countries such as Sudan and Djibouti facing rising epidemics. Changing demographics, increasing mobility, changing behaviours and

13. UNDP, 'Human Development Report, 2007-2008', New York, NY, 2007.

14. All figures are from the UNDP Human Development Report (various issues).

new social and personal practices are creating fertile ground for the spread of the disease with 92,000 new cases in 2004—one of the highest rates of increase in the world. The region has a distinct window of opportunity to act early to stem the further spread of the disease.

On the knowledge front, pervasive illiteracy and an inability to harness technology remain serious impediments to the advancement of Arab human development. There have been significant breakthroughs in the gender area. The number of appointed senior women executives has increased rapidly. Women's participation in legislative assemblies as both voters and candidates broadened and they made significant legal achievements in personal status and citizenship laws. However, they still carry a disproportionate burden of illiteracy, joblessness and lack of representation.

Overall, social, political and economic development is severely hampered by internal conflicts. Sporadic civil strife and an increasing incidence of terrorism all cause profound instability in the region. Arab leaders have taken the initiative and announced their commitment towards progressive change in the 'Declaration on the Process of Development and Modernization' that was issued by the 16th Arab Summit in Tunis in 2004. The Algiers Summit of 2005 reiterated that set of commitments and included detailed national updates on progress. Civil society voices were articulated through such fora as the Conference on Arab Reform, which produced the Alexandria Declaration in 2004, and several governments expanded the public sphere and targeted the inclusion of opposition forces in governance processes and structures.

A more systematic review of the state of freedoms in the Arab world reveals entrenched obstacles to democratization in the lack of independent judiciaries, transparent and accountable administrations, separation of the legislative from the executive, freedoms of association and expression, right to form political parties, and free and fair elections. Participation remains elusive to the majority of Arab populations, and without

fundamental reforms to the governance structures at all levels, it is improbable that the region will be able to transcend from its present state.

2.2 REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

The RCF is organized into three pillars: MDG achievement, democratic governance, and building a knowledge society. This is supplemented with youth as a cross-cutting issue (see Figure 1). The following description of the pillars is based on the RPD and thus reflects what was planned when the RCF was designed.

The **MDG achievement** pillar was designed to comprise strategic issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment, poverty reduction, HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability and water resources management that are tied to the quality of human development in the region as targeted in MDGs 1, 3, 6 and 7. The poverty reduction outcomes are now, according to the RPD, formalized with the inclusion of pro-poor policies based on the rights-based approach to development and a greater use of corporate policy and programming tools and modalities.

Four distinct areas constituted the focus. The Poverty Reduction Programme includes activities in pilot countries to achieve poverty reduction targets, where MDG costing and needs assessment exercises at the national level are linked to fiscal policies and macro-economic strategies of the requisite MDG monitoring systems and tools. Case studies investigating pro-poor policies and delivery systems support the establishment of poverty information systems, drawing poverty maps and profiles at both the national and regional levels to link with the impact on human development outcomes.

Promoting Gender Equality was a critical consideration for the design of the regional programme. The gender needs analysis through the AHDR was seen as an entry point to mainstreaming gender throughout the programme. The Regional Poverty Programme would emphasize the gender

Figure 1. Structure of the RCF, 2006-2009

Pillar 1	Pillar 2	Pillar 3
MDG Achievement	Democratic Governance	Building Knowledge Society
Programme Component		
1.1 AHDR prepared addressing regional priority issues	2.1 Justice and human rights	3.1 Acquisition, production and evaluation of knowledge
1.2 MDG regional implementation and monitoring	2.2 E-governance and access to information	3.2 ICT for development
1.3 Globalization benefiting the poor	2.3 Public administration reform and anti-corruption	
1.4 Gender mainstreaming	2.4 Policy support for democratic governance	
1.5 Creating an enabling human rights environment		
1.6 HIV/AIDS governance and development		
1.7 Effective water governance		
Cross-Cutting Issues		
Youth		

dimensions of poverty and use gender-disaggregated data to advocate for national gender sensitive policies.

Scaling up the response to HIV/AIDS took a pre-emptive approach to the potentially devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The regional programme was designed to work with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and its co-sponsors with core policy and financial support from the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy. It was designed to use the stakeholder networks established in the earlier RCF phase for participatory awareness-raising. Intended results included formation of funded national strategic plans and deeper involvement of existing as well as new stakeholders, such as the private sector.

Environmental Sustainability and Water Resources Management was designed to contribute to the achievement of other MDGs by integrating energy and environment priorities into other RBAS

regional programmes such as trade, poverty reduction strategies and development plans.

The **democratic governance** pillar targets the protection of human rights, improved social cohesion and more effective institutions that enhance the trust between governments and citizens. Regional priorities are targeted by focusing on the rule of law, transparency and accountability, and participation. Support to institution building is one of the features of this pillar. This includes collaboration with existing regional institutions, such as the Arab Parliamentary Union and the Federation of Arab Journalists, and extension of the collaboration to new ones, such as the UNDP-supported Arab Centre for the Rule of Law and Integrity and the proposed Regional Institute for Criminal Justice.

The **building a knowledge society** pillar was intended to focus on education issues, such as assessing the quality of university programmes to enhance responsiveness to the changing needs of

economic development, labour markets and the challenges of globalization. Integral to the pillar is ICT for development interventions through tangible outputs at the national level and civil society, and building on the advocacy and networking of the last RCF. Partnership initiatives focus on institutionalizing centres of excellence, fostering social inclusion and promoting integrated economic growth.

The RCF also recognized **youth** as a cross-cutting issue. Concern about youth as a vital constituency in the region has led to the proliferation of youth initiatives by all development actors. Notably, the League of Arab States launched mobilization efforts to endorse an Arab Youth Strategy. The objective was to ensure that this constituency is mainstreamed as a beneficiary of and catalyst for the targeted socio-economic advances. Activities include addressing youth as a focus group in post-conflict peace building, as a target group in HIV/AIDS awareness raising, as a constituency in MDG societal engagement and as an enabling force in societal modernization via accelerated ICT use.

2.3 THE REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

The framework is operationalized through a number of programmes and projects, most of which are managed from Cairo, Beirut, Dubai and Tunis. These programmes cut across the three pillars and are intended to contribute towards the realization of the outcomes of each pillar.

The third RCF strives to consolidate regional analysis, dialogue and partnerships, policy advice, capacity development and pilot programmes for the development of the countries in the region. The RCF is committed to development and modernization as articulated by the Arab Summit Declarations and in accordance with the mandate of the MDGs.

The AHDR is one of the flagship activities within the regional programme. It is essentially directed to the analysis of the issues surrounding the region. At the same time, it is also an advocacy instrument. It supports broad development policy dialogue in the region and strengthens the capacity of Arab institutions to provide policy makers with analysis of priority development challenges, using the human development concept, methodology and tools. Four reports have been published to date in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005. It cuts across all the pillars of the RCF and is managed from UNDP Headquarters.

Contributing to the democratic governance pillar, POGAR covers a variety of issues, such as rule of law, human rights, e-government administrative simplification, judiciary reform, participation in elections, and enhancement of good governance through transparency and accountability. Other projects contributing to the governance pillar include Good Governance for Development, Parliamentary Strengthening and the Prosecutors Programme. POGAR engages in publications, seminars and workshops and maintains a website for advocacy and training purposes. POGAR and the other governance projects also contribute to the two other pillars. Administered from Beirut, POGAR is active in seven countries.¹⁵

ICTDAR supports use of ICT for human development and falls under the pillars of democratic governance and knowledge building and the cross-cutting area of youth. It aims to help reduce human poverty by fostering a more capable information-enabled society. The programme applies a coordinated strategy that leverages education, knowledge exchanges and ICT applications, targeting poor people to accelerate poverty reduction through equitable growth and employment generation, as well as information creation, distribution and usage. It is active in 11 countries and territories¹⁶ and administered from Cairo.

15. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen.

16. Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Somalia, Bahrain, Sudan and UAE.

The HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS) raises awareness of, and builds commitment and leadership towards fighting, HIV/AIDS and contributes to the MDG achievement pillar. Due to the social sensitivity of the issue of HIV/AIDS and the reluctance of policy makers to discuss it nationally, the HARPAS strategy has focused on engaging representatives from the public and private sectors and civil society to confer at the regional level. It is based in Cairo and its activities extend to 17 countries in the region.¹⁷

One of the principal thrusts of HARPAS is advocacy. The strategy aims to implement a series of catalytic regional interventions that pave the way to country-level follow-up. Efforts have included awareness raising and capacity development for Arab parliamentarians, women's rights groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious leaders, CSOs, the private sector, the media and arts sector, people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) and youth.

Three projects specifically support the knowledge pillar and cut across the youth issue:

- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, which promotes quality reform in educational policies for teaching mathematics and science using accurate data and analysis of factors that affect the learning process. This project was initiated in response to the first AHDR, which urged the evaluation of education attainment as a cornerstone in educational improvement in an age of accelerating technological change and globalization.
- Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities, which promotes a system of education evaluation for quality assurance of academic programmes in Arab

universities and introduces institutional planning based on analysis of relevant statistical data. The project began in 2002 and continued during the third RCF.

- The Arab Knowledge Report, which is a new initiative that builds upon the 2003 AHDR, and contributes to 'building a knowledge society'. It is implemented jointly with the MBRF. The initiative builds upon the 2003 AHDR 'Building a Knowledge Society'. This initiative started in 2008.

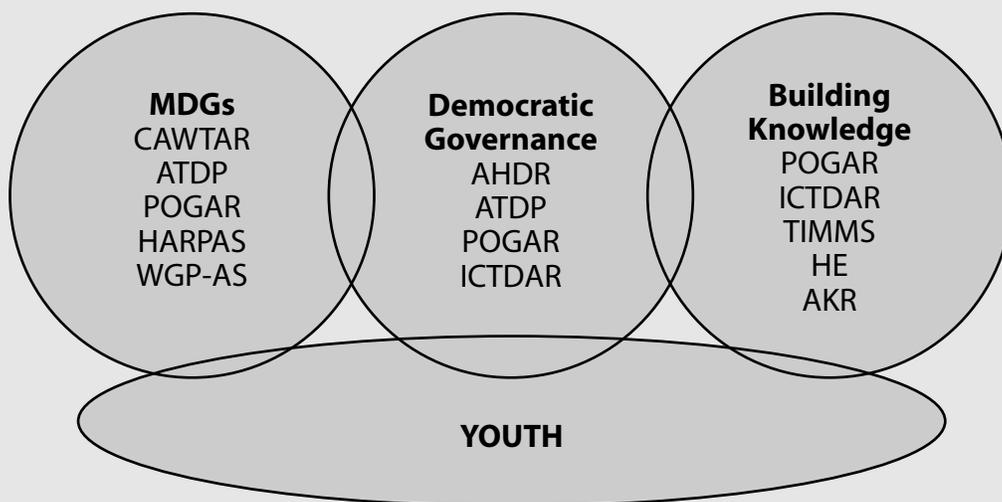
The CAWTAR, which became an independent institution in 2006, strives to enhance the capacity of Arab institutions to empower women to exercise their rights and achieve equality. Its main programmes include: research, training, networking and partnerships, media and communication, documentation and databases. It is administered from Tunis. Its Board of Trustees is presided by His Excellency Prince Talal Bin Abdel Aziz, and UNDP is a member of its Board.¹⁸

Two new initiatives—the ATDP, which started in 2007 and the WGP-AS, which started in 2009—contribute to the MDG achievement and democratic governance pillars, as well as youth. The ATDP aims to enhance the capacities of Arab countries to use economic governance as a tool for safeguarding and accelerating human development in the context of globalized trade through the following objectives: better understanding among policy makers and civil society of World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional trade agreements, processes and rules, as well as their policy implications; enhanced policy making in Arab countries based on informed public choice and stronger national capacities in trade research and policy analysis from a human development perspective; strengthened common perspectives and positions among Arab governments in regional and global trade and economic governance fora

17. Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

18. Other Board members include the League of Arab States, Government of Tunisia, World Bank, United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Population Fund and International Planned Parenthood Federation. For details see, 'Draft Report: Outcome Evaluation of Regional Project', 10 August 2008, pp. 61-66.

Figure 2. Programmatic structure of the RCF



Note: TIMMS indicates Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study; HE indicates Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities.

and institutions; and enhanced trade negotiation capabilities. It is currently active in five countries.¹⁹

The goal of WGP-AS is to improve the use and management of scarce water resources (on both the supply and demand sides) to improve water supply and sanitation, and promote an integrated approach to water resources management. The mode of operation of the programme will be through the provision of technical and policy support, capacity building and seed funding for activities. The programme started in 2009 with a preparatory assistance phase carried out before that.

Figure 2 summarizes how the programmes relate to the RCF and its three pillars.

2.4 REGIONAL PROGRAMME DOCUMENT, OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

The evaluation took the RPD and its outcomes and indicators as its starting point in assessing

the achievement of results and outcomes of the RCF (see Table 2). However, deficiencies in the programme design reflected in the RPD limited the feasibility of this approach. In a large number of cases, outcomes and indicators referred to outputs or were not expressed in a quantifiable manner containing precise targets. For example, “number of AHDR published” or “number of meetings held” were distinctly outputs rather than outcomes and were not precise enough to allow passing of any judgment.

2.5 PROGRAMME FINANCIAL STRUCTURE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The total budget for the first three years of the RCF (2006–2008) amounted to USD 30,244,658, with core resources totalling USD 9,510,933 and other resources totalling USD 20,733,725. The largest allocation of funds was for the democratic governance pillar (see Table 3).

19. Djibouti, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan and Egypt.

Table 2. Expected outcomes and outcome indicators

Pillars	Expected outcomes	Outcome indicators
MDG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy, policy dialogue and debate around AHDR priority themes generated in the region ■ Policies and programmes formulated, adopted and implemented at regional and country levels that aim at MDG achievement and poverty alleviation ■ Enhanced capacities of Arab countries to promote their development concerns in ongoing multilateral and regional trade negotiations ■ Pro-poor and pro-women growth policies adopted and enriched national/regional dialogue on gender related policy choices ■ Multi-stakeholder leadership capacity developed at individual, institutional and societal levels to generate human-rights based breakthrough responses for reversing the course of the epidemic of HIV/AIDS ■ Broad-based, multi-sectoral and multi-level response generated, integrating HIV/AIDS into national development plans and mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into key sectors and ministries ■ Water governance considerations incorporated into national sustainable development frameworks, and efficient and equitable water resources management and water supply and sanitation service delivery increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of AHDRs produced ■ Degree of work for MDG achievement and monitoring ■ Number of briefing notes on WTO and regional trade agreements; number of workshops organized; number of advisory and advocacy missions carried out; participation of civil society in trade policy making bodies; production and availability of training manuals in English and Arabic; number of regional consultative meetings initiated by Arab countries ■ Extent to which gender dimensions are mainstreamed in all ongoing as well as planned regional interventions ■ Number of laws and policies ■ Percentage of regional resources allocated to national strategic plan development efforts ■ Efficient and effective Arab Water Council able to deliver on its mandate as assessed by Founding Committee of Arab Water Council
Democratic governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Poor and disadvantaged groups empowered to seek remedies for injustices, and justice institutions enabled to be responsive to claims consistent with international human rights norms ■ Citizens' participation, especially of vulnerable groups, in policy dialogue increased through enhanced access to information ■ Public administration reform for efficient, effective, responsive, and pro-poor public services promoted; institution/legal/policy frameworks established to promote and enforce accountability, transparency and integrity in public service ■ Regional/national dialogue on responsive governance and democratization established in post-crisis and transitional countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of training courses conducted ■ Legal databases produced and published in Arabic ■ Number of Working Group meetings ■ Development of Code of Ethics for the media
Building a knowledge society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strengthen capacities in the region for the acquisition, production and evaluation of knowledge to enhance responsiveness to the changing needs for economic development, labour markets and globalization ■ E-strategies to facilitate increased access and foster use of ICT to achieve development goals formulated/implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Number of countries and universities that underwent quality assessment ■ E-government institute created
Youth	See above	

Table 3. RCF budget 2006-2008 (USD)

Source of funds	2006	2007	2008	Total
Core	3,252,311	1,851,623	4,406,999	9,510,933
Non-core	4,679,073	7,621,214	8,433,438	20,733,725
Total	7,931,384	9,472,837	12,840,437	30,244,658

Comprehensive financial figures for 2006 to 2008 for all projects under RCF are provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Projects by total budget RCF 2006-2008 (USD)

Projects/Programmes	Budget 2006	Budget 2007	Budget 2008
Arab Human Development Report (AHDR)	526,129	645,425	1,570,687
Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)	647,727	450,117	574,800
Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities (HE)	1,105,573	1,108,588	1,263,186
Information and Communications Technology for Development in the Arab Region (ICTDAR)	860,981	1,046,271	919,447
HIV/AIDS Regional Programme in the Arab States (HARPAS)	285,794	368,933	640,384
Arab Initiative on Trade, Human Development and Economic Governance (ATHDEG)	0	0	558,683
Regional Programme on Water Governance	11,707	214,722	52,186
Arab Knowledge Report (AKR)	0	0	1,116,575
Arab Development Portal (ADP)	0	0	72,673
Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR)	1,769,473	1,161,759	437,614
Good Governance for Development POGAR (GfD)	0	379,503	1,126,700
Participation - Parliamentary Strengthening POGAR	0	0	448,497
Prosecutors Total POGAR	1,364,934	3,147,622	3,294,983
Rule of Law POGAR	945,473	612,258	
Centre for Arab Women Training (CAWTAR)	392,747	288,649	16,549
E-Governance	0	0	2,302
Water Governance Programme for Arab States (WGP-AS)	0	0	13,794
HARPAS OPEC Fund for International Development	0	0	548,872
Enhancing Societal Engagement in MDG Achievement (ASAP)	0	0	0
Assessing Development Strategies for MDGs (RAMP)	4,130	39,473	91,813
Policy Analysis in Macroeconomic Policies for MDGs (Policy Analysis)	16,716	9,517	90,602
Total	7,931,384	9,472,837	12,840,347

Source: Regional Bureau for Arab States.

The cost-sharing approach used by the regional programme generated interest among donors, including private foundations and businesses. A large spectrum of donors contributed to a variety of regional programmes. Contributions have been received from bilateral donors, the European Union, participating countries in the region, foundations and the private sector. In addition, there has been parallel financing to a number of projects. There was a marked absence of Arab State donors, with the exception of Tunisia and Algeria, especially in view of the prevalence of wealthy NCCs. Bilateral donors constitute the bulk among donors. Table 5 summarizes the main donor contributions that were directly provided to the RCF. In addition, there has been parallel financing to a number of projects.

Four observations were made with respect to cost sharing. First, there was a marked absence of Arab state donors, with the exception of Tunisia and Algeria, especially in view of the prevalence of wealthy NCCs. Second, bilateral donors constituted the bulk among donors.²⁰ Third, contributions were not to the RCF but to the specific programmes. However, the regional programme succeeded in obtaining only 38.5 percent of the total external resources from Arab states and Arab funds. Fourth, several processes hindered resource mobilization. While project managers for ATDP, ICTDAR and HARPAS were able to mobilize resources from public and private donors successfully, RBAS at Headquarters

has discouraged these efforts because they consider it to be a central function, requiring accountability and legal Memorandums of Understanding with donors, and a duplication of resource mobilization efforts.

At the time of the evaluation, strategies and procedures for resource mobilization were under revision at Headquarters. The RBAS Resource Mobilization Office considers resource mobilization a joint effort with project managers that involves building partnerships with donors. Yet resource mobilization has been a source of frustration for project managers because of the lack of outcome and thus hindrance to projects. Project managers were unaware that resource mobilization was considered a joint effort, as they had been told not to concern themselves with resource mobilization. Consequently, they have had to turn down donors interested in contributing to their projects. In addition, Headquarters' approach to resource mobilization includes establishing partnerships, which can take two to three years. Obviously, this is not a pragmatic approach when these projects are confined to the RCF time-frame. Another factor deterring donors is the application process, which includes complicated and drawn out legal requirements that cause some donors to withdraw their offer. Consequently, projects have constrained resources not because of the lack of resources but because of prolonged processes that are counter-productive.

20. It is also interesting to note that the United States, which usually shies from cost-sharing and prefers to execute its own programmes, appears among the bilateral donors.

Table 5. Donor contributions to RCF, 2006-2009 (USD)

Donor	Amount (USD)	Project/Programme
Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF)	6,657,031	Arab Knowledge Report (AKR)
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFSED)	552,386	AHDR
Arab Gulf Fund (AGF)	300,000	AHDR
OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)	50,000	Arab Development Portal (ADP)
Belgium	1,358,762	Prosecutors
Denmark	677,015	Prosecutors
Netherlands	1,500,000	Prosecutors
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	4,159,054	Prosecutors
France	125,056	Prosecutors
United Nations Foundation (UNF)	500,000	Prosecutors
Tunisia	57,252	CAWTAR
AG Fund	300,000	CAWTAR
Ford Foundation	150,000	ICTDAR
Spain/Agencia Espanola de Cooperacion Internacional (AECI)	1,172,185	ICTDAR
Microsoft	50,000	ICTDAR
Cisco	557,485	ICTDAR
Algeria	73,735	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)	246,397	POGAR
United States	700,000	POGAR
Italy	1,400,000	POGAR
Japan	250,000	HARPAS
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	100,000	HARPAS
Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR)	20,000	HARPAS
World Health Organization (WHO)	20,000	HARPAS
OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)	3,500,000	HARPAS OFID
Finland	1,405,215	Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities (HE)
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)	1,208,824	Enhancement of Quality Assurance and Institutional Planning in Arab Universities (HE)
France	352,244	Good Governance for Development POGAR (GfD)
United States	695,000	Good Governance for Development POGAR (GfD)
United States	1,562,452	Rule of Law
Total	29,700,093	

Source: Regional Bureau for Arab States

FINDINGS

3.1 PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Three AHDRs were published during the second RCF and one during the third.²¹ The fifth AHDR is in the preparation stage. It will address the issue of human security in the region. All reports published generated active debate in the region highlighting important and sometimes controversial topics. An achievement of the AHDRs is that they are drafted by Arab scholars from the different parts of the region. Some universities have included the reports in their education programmes, such as the Université Mohamed V in Morocco. There is also evidence that the AHDR has influenced strategy development by other agencies working in the Arab region.

Work on the three pillars of POGAR—Strengthening the Rule of Law in the Arab States, Modernization of Public Prosecution Offices and the Good Governance for Development Initiative; Participation and the Strengthening of Arab Parliaments; and Knowledge Management—have put UNDP in a strong strategic position in the area of democratic governance. POGAR activities have also contributed to MDG achievement, building a knowledge society, gender and youth.

The Rule of Law Project carried out activities aimed at training new judges and prosecutors, an initiative presently being implemented in Iraq. Under this initiative, important work has been done in the area of legislation related to corruption crimes. The project collaborates with governments in assessing laws related to the prevention of corruption. Under the Modernization of Public Prosecution Offices, activities have

focused on working with regional and international networks of public prosecution offices to reform legislation on criminal procedures in each participating country, providing staff training at the senior level, helping countries conduct self analyses, and engaging civil society in the preparation of reform plans. The Participation and the Strengthening of Arab Parliaments Initiative focused on strengthening the role of civil society, parliaments and the media in promoting democratic governance; encouraging citizens' participation in public sector reform; and addressing gender issues and the political empowerment of women. Important work was carried out on best practices in parliaments and electoral processes and elections—two very sensitive issues for the region.

Under the knowledge creation area, POGAR has created and disseminated current, authoritative and accurate information on 22 Arab countries relevant to the issues of governance and human development. Numerous information tools were developed, updated and validated by professional researchers. Specifically, POGAR's websites have contributed to building knowledge on the various pillars of governance: civil society, elections, gender, legislature, constitution, judiciary, human rights, financial transparency and combating corruption. These websites have served as both references and dialogue platforms.

Youth issues were also addressed by the governance projects. In partnership with regional parliamentary organizations working on youth-sensitive issues, comparative research in youth-related legislation at both the regional and international level has been supported. The recently

21. The AHDRs included 'Creating Opportunities for Future Generations', 2002; 'Building a Knowledge Society', 2003; 'Freedom and Good Governance', 2004; and 'Empowerment of Arab Women', 2005.

completed publication, 'Arab Parliamentarians Guide on Empowering Youth', includes guidelines to legislators as well as a model law that Arab parliamentarians can refer to when drafting legislation aimed at promoting participation and addressing the challenges faced by Arab youth.

Amongst the activities carried out under the ICTDAR Programme, several achievements can be highlighted especially in the areas of poverty reduction, promoting gender equality, youth and knowledge creation. Four initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming and youth stand out as successes: AjialCom, Medium and Small Houses Reinforced by Access to Technology and Information, ICT in the Arab Region for the Blind, and Women and Children's Rights through Access to Information (WRACTI).

AjialCom targeted youth of both genders to improve employment opportunities through the acquisition of ICT skills. The activity began in Egypt, Morocco and Yemen and was replicated in Algeria, Djibouti, Sudan, Syria and Iraq. There are now more than 500 centres in 58 communities. Medium and Small Houses Reinforced by Access to Technology and Information targeted micro and young business owners, men and women, to encourage them to use ICT to accelerate growth, increase productivity and penetrate the market. Important partnerships with central and local government, NGOs and companies were achieved when establishing the specialized centres for training. ICT in the Arab Region for the Blind addressed needs of the visually impaired to assist them in opening opportunities and gaining employment by using ICT to obtain graduate degrees and access the job market. WRACTI contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment by using ICT to provide legal information for women. Hundreds of community and women centres in rural and urban areas have been established for women to access legal information, advice and training; domestic court payment systems have been computerized; and thousands of social workers have been trained to advise women on their rights. The initiative has fostered dialogue

on gender equality and has been adopted by some governments that translated its activities into national policies.

HARPAS has successfully established a regional platform promoting awareness, advocacy and policy dialogue regarding prevention of HIV/AIDS and protection of the rights of PLWH. The project's approach has been comprehensive in targeting the participation of a wide array of actors including the Arab League at the regional level; parliamentarians, legislatures, the media and the private sector at the country level; NGOs, CSOs, religious leaders and women's groups at the community level; and celebrities, youth and PLWH at the individual level. Key tools of HARPAS include raising awareness, advocacy, strengthening leadership capacity, generating knowledge, and fostering policy reform, new legislation, cooperation and partnerships. The project's outputs have made a significant impact in transferring information and skills to the participating countries as well as protecting the rights of PLWH. HARPAS has not only broken the silence surrounding HIV/AIDS in the region but also strategically positioned UNDP to address HIV/AIDS as an MDG and mobilize national initiatives. HARPAS has achieved important results in the areas of poverty reduction, scaling up the response to HIV/AIDS, gender, youth, governance and knowledge creation.

Through the Regional Arab Network against AIDS, HARPAS contributed to poverty reduction by establishing a network of CSOs that aim to protect the rights of PLWH and provide access to employment and micro-credit, health-care and training. The Business Coalition in the Arab Region, created under the project, worked towards mobilizing financial resources for preventive measures against the spread of HIV/AIDS in the labour force and instituting sustainable strategies towards investing in the livelihoods of PLWH and eliminating employment discrimination. HARPAS has also organized workshops to reach women's organizations to heighten their awareness with respect to

HIV/AIDS and build capacity to campaign against harmful sex practices and unsafe traditional practices. Furthermore, HARPAS has contributed to knowledge creation by disseminating information on HIV/AIDS by means of literature, film and guidebook kits. Youth have been targeted by the project by training young religious leaders and utilizing ICT tools.

HARPAS has also contributed to democratic governance by advocating for legislation to protect the rights of PLWH and to create a supportive environment for PLWH. This has been implemented by carrying out regional and sub-regional workshops to assemble Arab parliamentarians, magistrates, legal experts and human rights groups to discuss the legal implications of HIV/AIDS. These workshops provided epidemiological information about HIV/AIDS, raised the awareness of legislators, reviewed existing legislation relating to the protection of PLWH fundamental to human rights at the country level, and advocated the harmonization of national legislation with international instruments on human rights and the United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on HIV/AIDS 'Declaration of Commitment'. HARPAS has been successful in paving the way for future actions to mainstream HIV/AIDS strategies into national policies.

Although CAWTAR is no longer a UNDP regional project (in 2006 it became an independent centre), several achievements were highlighted. CAWTAR concentrated on gender equality and women's empowerment using training and capacity development, research and outreach activities, knowledge development and advocacy. It contributed to poverty reduction and governance through its work on policy research on poverty with a specific focus on women and adolescent girls, the establishment of gender-based statistics for effective water use, gender economic research, and research on informal sector development and women entrepreneurship. The flagship report of CAWTAR was its Arab Women Development Report, an activity that linked research, training, networking and

advocacy. A forthcoming report dealing with 'Arab Women and Decision Making' will shed light on women's participation in social and political decision-making.

Although the outcomes produced under the Higher Education Project were different than those expected, several important achievements were noted. Activities under the Higher Education project benefited 38 universities and staff in 17 Arab countries, increasing the knowledge and awareness of these universities and building their capacity for quality assurance, academic reviews and student testing for comparisons with international benchmarks. Training received in the methods and efficient performance of tasks required to conduct academic programme reviews concentrated on four fields of study: Computer Science, Business Administration, Education Science and Engineering. This training resulted in 190 certified faculty members in the area of Quality Assurance, Peer Reviews and Advanced Quality Assurance for Training of Trainers. This group constituted a critical mass in Arab universities that could conduct self-assessment exercises and programme reviews in their field. Furthermore, academic programmes in Computer Science, Business Administration, Education Science and Engineering were jointly reviewed in 38 Arab universities by independent reviewers from Europe and 101 Arab professors who were certified reviewers. On the basis of such reviews, some universities have modified their curricula and teaching methods. Another achievement of this project is the innovative testing administered to senior students by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, United States, in 14 participating universities. Results have increased universities' awareness of existing deficits and may lead to changes in programme design, teaching and testing methods, as well as teaching materials. This international test has not been administered in the Arab region. Reports and publications produced under the project have provided readers with new material not available in the Arabic scientific literature before.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study achievements has focused on institutional capacity building, developing knowledge about evaluation techniques for educational authorities and creating knowledge products such as national databases and testing materials in Arabic. Capacity development workshops were organized in Egypt, Djibouti, Jordan, Oman, Tunisia and Yemen and training was also organized in Germany, Latvia and Botswana to give Arab participants the opportunity to meet counterparts from other parts of the world for joint learning and experience exchange. Important partnerships were achieved between the project, the UNDP country office and participating ministries. As a result of the project, several countries implemented educational reforms, developed new policies, and set up teacher training programmes.

The new AKRP intends to engage institutions and citizens in global issues and concerns related to building knowledge societies for human development.²² The first report is being edited and will be launched in 2009, thus there are thus no concrete results yet.

ATDP is characterized by a multi-pronged approach. It assists those countries that are not yet WTO members²³ in acquiring negotiation capacity so that they can enter into the mainstream of globalization in an advantageous manner. It also proposes to assist the Greater Arab Free Trade Area in clarifying the rules of origin. In addition, it provides technical support to Jordan, Morocco and Yemen on issues related to trade and industrial policies and economic governance. ATDP is also in the process of finalizing a study on the textile sector, which is of great importance in providing jobs to women and youth in the region.²⁴ Given the early stages of ATDP, it is too early to assess its results.

The Government of Japan funded through the South-South Cooperation Unit the preparatory assistance phase of WGP-AS. The project document was finalized in February 2008 and six countries in the region endorsed the programme.²⁵ The strategy addresses both regional and national needs. National needs, in particular, are addressed through technical assistance to UNDP country offices in local management of water and sanitation. WGP-AS is intended to align with country programmes and work closely with country offices in the participating countries. At the regional level, there is a strong emphasis on South-South transfer of expertise and capacity development.

There was some synergy between regional projects, for example between HARPAS and POGAR, HARPAS and CAWTAR, and CAWTAR and ICTDAR. However, collaborations could have been more significant and effective with more efforts and intensive cooperation. Regional projects would benefit from increased synergy of human and financial resources. Resource utilization and project activities would be more efficient if projects worked together.

Two examples of collaboration between regional projects can be highlighted. ICTDAR and CAWTAR collaborated in Tunisia (led by the Ministry of Women, Children and Family) under the ICTDAR activity WRACTI. This activity provided women, children and social workers with knowledge and access to information about their rights through ICT. The Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations will provide supporting funds to CAWTAR to replicate this experience in other countries. Another example of collaboration was four sub-regional workshops on Development of Legislations Protecting and Promoting Rights of

22. UNDP, 'The Arab Knowledge Report (AKR): Background Document'.

23. The following countries and territories are not yet WTO members: Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and the Palestinian Territories.

24. The project captured the attention of one of the bilateral donors—the International Development Research Centre, which financed the textile study.

25. Including Djibouti, Jordan, Libya, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen.

PLWH organized by HARPAS in partnership with POGAR and the International Labour Organization and with the auspices of the Arab League.

3.2 RELEVANCE OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

The RCF 2006–2009 has generally been relevant to the priorities and the needs of the Arab region. The RCF has been positioned to address many issues at the regional level that could not have been adequately addressed within the country programmes. These issues have included sensitive areas related to democratic governance, transparency, accountability and social issues, such as gender equality and HIV/AIDS. The RCF brought these issues to the forefront, and their articulation was a major contribution of the framework, as was raising consciousness for seeking remedies. The AHDRs, in particular, generated knowledge and provided a regional platform for discussing priority topics, including the role of women and the education and knowledge gaps pervasive in the region.

The work of the regional programme on HIV/AIDS has been particularly relevant to the region, where the epidemic is not openly discussed. The programme has brought HIV/AIDS into the open through regional dialogue.

Education-related projects under the knowledge society pillar addressed the knowledge deficit in the region by providing assistance to Arab universities to promote a culture of evaluation, educational quality improvement and reform, focusing on educational policies for teaching mathematics and science.

Under the democratic governance pillar, programmes such as POGAR addressed key issues pertaining to good governance and judicial reform through advocacy, policy dialogue and training. Similarly, ICT has been promoted as a way for democratization.

The recent work initiated by UNDP in the area of trade and job creation responds to a priority need in all countries—whether oil exporters, middle-income or low-income.

Cross-thematic strategic partnerships were established to capitalize on the efforts and resources that UNDP and other organizations can bring to bear on regional development problems. The three programmatic pillars that support the RCF are mutually reinforcing and the accomplishments of one pillar have spill-over effects on the others. The synergy among the three pillars is clear and meaningful. The programmes that contribute to the realization of the pillars tackle problems that are common to countries in the region.

Efforts to secure equality and social inclusion consisted of special emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment and participation of women. Special attention was paid to youth-related issues as a cross-cutting theme. This is an added point in the relevance of the RCF, as youth have a preponderance in the age pyramid in the region.

The RCF has succeeded in tackling some vital problems in the region. Nevertheless, it is clear that RCF activities have concentrated sub-regionally and the agenda has tended to be driven by the policy issues facing middle-income countries. In particular, the RCF has only had limited reach to NCCs and to least developed countries (with the exception of Yemen). Because of its built-in flexibility, the RCF succeeded in addressing the diverse needs of the countries with different intensity in different countries. There is significant scope in all existing programmes to enhance sub-regional approaches based on characteristics of the country groupings.

3.3 EFFECTIVENESS

The RCF programmes have been most effective in advocacy and policy dialogue on common priority issues in the region. The programmes have also developed the capacities of government institutions, NGOs, and religious leaders with

which they worked by encouraging policy dialogue and building and disseminating knowledge on issues that are pertinent to the region. The programmes created partnerships with a host of Arab governments, CSOs, NGOs and academic and policy institutions.

The outcomes of the programmes have contributed, in different degrees, to the realization of the expected results of the three pillars. The greatest value added has been in advocacy interventions by which policy makers and civil society actors have become familiar with pressing issues in the region, such as governance, rule of law, corruption and participation in the political process. The success of the RCF in raising awareness and debate on sensitive issues has enhanced its effectiveness. In particular, the AHDRs have encouraged region-wide discussion on development issues.

Important initiatives in the area of gender included the publication of the 2005 AHDR 'Towards the Rise of Women in the Arab World' and the 2007 study on Regional Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme for Arab States, which will contribute to mainstreaming gender in the next RCF and country programmes.

A concrete outcome emanating from the second AHDR is the new AKRP, which has led to a unique partnership with the MBRF. This partnership has institutionalized the follow-up to one of the key issues identified in the AHDRs—building a knowledge society. The AHDRs also appear to have influenced policies of other development organizations, including some bilateral donors active in the region, and found their way to university curricula in the region.

The projects in education added significant value to the youth dimension in the Arab region and contributed to the realization of the knowledge pillar of the RCF. The projects responded to a regional need for improvement in education quality, achieving results in the areas of education reform and policies, evaluation culture and creation of knowledge products.

The programmes under the governance cluster have allocated a significant amount of resources to building and disseminating knowledge. Their focus has been on rule of law and participation, with four distinct, interdependent areas: judicial reform, criminal justice policies and systems, anti-corruption measures, and enhancing the quality of legislation and regulations. Human rights, gender, youth and environment are mainstreamed into these four areas of work in coordination with the concerned United Nations organizations. POGAR has provided an online window to parliamentary development resources and knowledge products, thereby encouraging the use of ICT in accessing information to support parliamentary work in the region. It has also conducted research on the representative function of the parliament and the role of the parliament in promoting decentralization and in fighting corruption. The creation of websites for democratic governance that also address issues of human rights, gender, and human development, has contributed to knowledge production, accumulation and dissemination. The websites serve as not only references but also dialogue platforms.

The programme on ICT has targeted different sectors of society to provide knowledge for awareness raising and capacity development. At the same time, it has produced initiatives aimed at poverty reduction focusing on youth, medium and small enterprises, and people with disabilities. It introduced ICT as a tool for easy access to information and social services, for acquisition of skills, and to raise awareness of human rights.

The HIV/AIDS programme at the regional and country level has contributed to raising awareness of policy makers, religious leaders, CSOs and the Arab public on the disease and its carriers. It has successfully instituted a regional advocacy programme that will pave the way for future actions to include mainstreaming HIV/AIDS strategies in national policies.

Since most of the activities on trade and development are still new, it is premature to assess their effectiveness or results.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the RCF results depends upon two conditions: whether the results of many upstream projects—such as advocacy, policy advice and capacity development—can be converted into downstream projects; and whether a firm linkage can be achieved between the RCF and the UNDP country programmes. The results of the regional programmes will be sustainable provided that advocacy and policy advice generated within the projects are internalized by the national governments and further policy decisions are built on them. Partnership with the country offices is essential for regional programme sustainability because follow-up at the country level to the regional initiatives is necessary. The RCF does not have the resources or the reach at the country level to provide continued support to build upon regional efforts.

Each regional programme has internal dynamics that determine its sustainability. The degree of acceptance by the governments and the skills that have been developed in the public sector suggest good prospects for sustainability for the results achieved under the democratic governance pillar. The sustainability of the activities enhancing women's rights will depend upon the extent to which CSOs are strengthened and governments adopt the policy advice.

Under the poverty pillar, the results of the trade and development programme need to be institutionalized in national policies. However, it is too early to assess whether this is happening. Similarly, combating HIV/AIDS requires specific actions in particular countries and the sustainability of results of the regional programme will depend upon the extent to which country offices, other United Nations organizations, and the governments can internalize results achieved so far and design national programmes.

There is evidence that the knowledge society pillar is achieving sustainability partly through the institutionalization of the work initiated

under the AHDR within the scope of the new AKRP, which responds to a need in the region and has attracted significant external funding. The results achieved under the education programme need to be sustained while UNDP is seeking an exit strategy from the area, which does not fall within its comparative advantage.

3.5 CHALLENGES

The RCF was faced with several shortcomings, most of which stemmed from how it was designed. The RPD did not define the expected outcomes or the corresponding indicators that would allow for measuring results in a meaningful manner. In some cases, indicators were defined in such a way as to be devoid of operational value. In others, the indicators were pedestrian and linked only to activities and outputs.

Coordination between the RCF and the country programmes in the region is weak or, in many cases, non-existent. There is a marked absence of concrete projects at the operational level with sustainable results that emanate from the advocacy efforts. To achieve this would require more operational linkages to country programmes, which would have to be forged early at the design stage.

Funding for the RCF from UNDP core resources has been limited. This has implications on the scope and reach of the programme. While the overall thrust of the RCF has been appropriate, several of the programmes have been spread too thinly, as they have been directed by resource mobilization opportunities. Resource mobilization efforts, with some exceptions, have not adequately tapped regional sources, including governments.

UNOPS is the primary executing partner for RCF programmes. For some projects, this arrangement has not been satisfactory due to lack of substantive backstopping and delays in administrative support.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS

The Arab States RCF 2006–2009 has addressed central development issues in the region. It has drawn attention to needs that are difficult to resolve because of their sensitivity and because of difficulties surrounding advocacy originating from individual UNDP country programmes. There are a number of broad areas that will need attention in the future.

4.1 NEED FOR A RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The weak results framework with inadequate definition of outcomes has hampered the focus of the RCF as well as the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its results. A fundamental lesson from the RCF is that a solidly designed programme is necessary in order to assess results and outcomes. This entails defining the outcomes at the outset and including clear baselines and indicators for their achievement. A logical model that explains how the activities and outputs are intended to lead to the outcomes would be very helpful.

4.2 COORDINATION WITH COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

The effectiveness and sustainability of the regional programme is largely dependent on its relevance and linkages to UNDP work at the country level. While the purpose of the RCF is not to directly serve country offices, both are guided by UNDP priorities and its strategic plan. Activities at the regional level—especially knowledge creation and advocacy—often require follow-up at the country level in order to reach objectives and sustainability. Therefore, country office ownership of issues tackled by the regional programme will be beneficial. Generating ownership should start at the formulation stage and should continue throughout the programme. This will require close communication between

the regional programme and country offices. It is important to select the country offices participating in regional activities based on their interest and commitment. In that regard, the new RCF provides an excellent opportunity to improve communications and coordination.

4.3 NEED FOR FOCUS

Resource limitations of the RCF underline the importance of having a highly focused programme. Unless there are significant external funding sources, it would be better to limit the number of activities in order to enhance the reach and depth of the programme. There are significant opportunities for fund-raising from national sources, donor organizations and the private sector at the country level for specific programmes and activities. However, it is important that any fund-raising efforts adhere to an overall strategy that guarantees the coherence of the programme.

4.4 SUB-REGIONAL FOCUS

The RCF agenda has been largely defined by middle-income countries, which have benefited the most from advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity development. Most of the least developed countries in the region have been left out. Similarly, RCF participation by NCCs has been very limited. Nevertheless, there would be significant scope for involving both least developed countries and NCCs, especially regarding knowledge and advocacy on priority issues pertaining to their development challenges. NCCs would also be in an advantageous position to continue with regional initiatives at the national level using their own resources. This would provide an opportunity for UNDP to promote human development approaches in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. The overall objectives of the RCF should be reviewed with a view to concentrating on fewer areas with clearly defined outcomes and strategic thrust. The RCF should be aligned with the directions and principles of the UNDP strategic plan, recognizing country-specific circumstances. Programmes should be brought in line with programmatic priorities of the RCF focus areas. A knowledge-based approach to South-South cooperation, where experiences are transferred or exchanged between countries in the region, should continue to be a main modality of the RCF.

Recommendation 2. The RCF should explore enhancing sub-regional approaches based on distinctions between the developmental levels of countries in the region and corresponding development policies. There are marked socio-economic differences among countries in the region (least developed countries, NCCs and middle-income countries), which render a one-size-fits-all approach difficult. Taking note of contextual differences in the region complies with the emphasis of the UNDP strategic plan on greater country specificity.

Recommendation 3. A better balance must be struck between knowledge generation and capacity development, as well as the transformation of policy advice into specific projects. Concrete efforts should be made as a follow-up to regional advocacy and policy dialogue initiatives. In many cases, such efforts would fall beyond the scope of the regional programme and would require follow-up at the country level by UNDP country programmes and national partners. Country office management should be involved at all stages of the planning and implementation of the RCF in order to ensure alignment with country programmes.

Recommendation 4. Gender mainstreaming and youth should remain cross-cutting issues. In particular, the development of productive sectors, employment and trade policies are central from a gender and youth perspective. Developing a dedicated project designed specifically to meet youth issues would be appropriate, since it would properly focus attention exclusively on youth and be more conducive to monitoring and evaluating successes in the area.

Recommendation 5. Poverty reduction and democratic governance should continue to be the focus of the programme. Environment and sustainable development, as a new component of the regional programme, is fully aligned with the strategic plan and the regional priorities. The programmatic activities developed under it should be closely aligned with the governance and poverty reduction focus areas of the RCF. Given the serious resource constraints of the regional programme, and the existence of a dedicated bureau in UNDP, the RCF should refrain from addressing crisis prevention and recovery.

Recommendation 6. The AHDR should be separated from the regional programme and become independent. A separate fund should be set up with, *inter alia*, private-sector contributions from the region. The AHDR should remain under the purview of UNDP in order to maintain its neutrality and high quality, but removing it from the regional programme would secure continuity, ownership and sustainability.

Recommendation 7. Resource mobilization efforts should tap into the financial resources of the region, including NCCs as well as public and private sources. Individual programmes should be encouraged to mobilize additional resources and facilitate the application procedures of these funds, providing guidance with regard to alignment with the regional programme focus and corporate resource mobilization strategies.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will cover the ongoing RCF 2006-2009. The evaluation will draw from the conclusions of outcome evaluations undertaken during the RCF period and secondary information sources pertaining to the regional programme. Individual outcome evaluations in three areas have been commissioned by RBAS and will be completed by early August 2008. The evaluation will assess the contributions of UNDP through the RCF to development results in the region. This is expected to strengthen the formulation of the next regional programme. In assessing strategic importance, relevance, and development effectiveness of the RCF, the evaluation will cover the following key areas:

- Performance of the RCF programme portfolio and development results achieved, including the achievement of the immediate objectives.
- Strategic positioning and focus of the RCF and its relevance to country and regional priorities, including relevance to the MDGs.
- Value addition of the regional programme in the context of Arab States *vis-à-vis* global and country programmes. Organizational strategy, modalities and mechanisms, including linkages to UNDP strategies and frameworks.
- Synergic relationships between various components of the RCF.
- Synergies and alignment of the RCF support with other initiatives and partnerships, as well as cross-cutting priorities.
- Effectiveness of institutional and management arrangements of RBAS, and its

relationships with the SURF in Beirut, the Bureau for Development Policy and other relevant UNDP units, for programming, managing, monitoring and evaluating the regional programme.

- Sustainability of RCF interventions and ownership by regional and national stakeholders after the intervention is completed.

The evaluation will feed into the formulation of the next regional programme and make recommendations to RBAS related to aligning the RCF with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will use a combination of meta-evaluation and direct assessment techniques. The meta-evaluation will review findings of the comprehensive outcome evaluation commissioned by RBAS in 2008 and other programme and project evaluations. This includes comprehensive desk review and analysis of outcome and programme and project evaluations, monitoring reports, and other self assessment reports.

The meta-evaluation will be supplemented with selective country project visits (visits to four to five countries) and consultations with the SURF in Beirut, country offices that will be visited, and a variety of RCF stakeholders in the region. In-depth interviews or focus group discussions with a variety of stakeholders will be organized. The evaluation team will consult with specialists based at Headquarters and key partners in the region in order to obtain a broad range of views. If necessary, a rapid questionnaire or informal snap survey may be used to provide quick information on the programme.

Triangulation of information and data sources will constitute the primary method for the assessment. The concept of triangulation refers to empirical evidence gathered through three major sources of information: perception, validation and documentation. Validation of the information and findings will be achieved through cross-referencing of sources.

WORK PLAN

A detailed evaluation methodology, approach and programme of work will be agreed upon between the Evaluation Office and the evaluation Team Leader before the start of the evaluation. The evaluation team will meet in New York in August 2008 for orientation, briefing and initial interviews with RBAS, Bureau for Development Policy and other relevant actors. An inception report will be prepared by the Team Leader outlining the evaluation framework and implementation arrangements.

DESK REVIEW

The evaluation team will review the RCF, its constituent projects and other related initiatives and key documents to extract information, identify key trends and issues, develop key questions and criteria for analysis, and compile relevant data during the preparatory phase of the evaluation. The team will also analyse all outcome and programme and project evaluations undertaken by UNDP during the RCF period before country visits, and undertake additional desk reviews based on interactions with RBAS, country offices, SURF, and other focal points for RCF activities during and after country visits.

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

The evaluation team will review and analyse data collected by the ongoing corporate and partnership surveys carried out by UNDP to ascertain the effectiveness of RCF work, particularly in relation to policy advice, knowledge management, networking, and integration into UNDP work, as well as to obtain the perception of key partners and clients on the outcomes and effectiveness of this approach.

VISITS TO SAMPLE OF COUNTRIES

A sample of four to five representative countries and partner institutions in each of these countries will be visited by the evaluation team to validate the findings coming out of the desk reviews, analysis of the outcome evaluations, and interviews at Headquarters and the SURF. Country visits will also be used to identify good practices and lessons for the future at both the country and corporate levels. The Evaluation Office will, in consultation with RBAS, select the sample countries. The criteria used for the selection of the sample countries include the size and composition of the programme and project portfolio, geographical locations of projects, and potential for lessons. The coverage of programmes in the outcome evaluation will also be taken into account.

The evaluation team members will each spend a total of three to five days per country and may be supported by a locally recruited consultant, if necessary. The main purpose of the field visits will be to obtain on-site knowledge of how RCF work links to country-level priorities and vertical integration; obtain the views of the government and national stakeholders and the United Nations country team; bring some level of specificity and context to the assessment; and come up with contextual findings and recommendations that can complement the desk-based analyses.

FINALIZATION OF REPORT

The last stage of the assessment will be devoted to report writing and further triangulation of country-specific data and findings with Headquarters sources. Since an outcome evaluation has already been completed, the main emphasis of the report will be on the three pillars and cross-cutting theme of the framework. The draft final report will be made available to the Evaluation Office by the second week of November 2008 at the latest and will also be submitted to RBAS for review. The evaluation Team Leader will travel to New York to present the final draft evaluation report. The Team Leader will finalize the report after the

Headquarters consultation and validation process and will make it available to the Evaluation Office by end of December 2008.

EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

An international team of two consultants selected by the Evaluation Office will be engaged to undertake the evaluation. National consultants may be engaged in the case-study countries as required. The team will also include a designated Task Manager from the Evaluation Office to work with the team at Headquarters and during country visits, and to provide overall guidance and quality assurance to the evaluation. A research assistant will be engaged to provide research support at the Evaluation Office.

The composition of the evaluation team will include expertise in the substantive thematic areas covered by the RCF, as well as evaluation approaches and methodologies. The Team Leader must have a demonstrated capacity in strategic thinking and policy advice and in the evaluation and management of complex programmes. The team members must have in-depth knowledge of and experience in the development situation in Arab States. In general, the team members must possess educational qualifications in the social sciences or related disciplines. The team should also be familiar with UNDP *modus operandi* and have extensive knowledge in organizational and institutional changes, and in management and modalities of impacting changes through advisory services and advocacy.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Evaluation Office will manage the evaluation process, provide backstopping support and ensure the coordination and liaison with concerned agencies. The Evaluation Office Task Manager will work as a member of the evaluation team providing overall guidance and quality assurance, as well as undertaking specific evaluative tasks as agreed with the Team Leader. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the production of the Evaluation Report and presentation to the Executive Board.

TIMELINE FOR THE EVALUATION OF RCF FOR ARAB STATES

The time-frame for the delivery of evaluation outputs is as follows:

Activity	Estimated date
Desk review and analysis of documentation	August 2008
Briefing mission to UNDP Headquarters in New York	August 2008
Main mission to sample of countries	September 2008 - October 2008
Submission of first draft report and Evaluation Office review	Mid November 2008
Review and comments by RBAS and other stakeholders	End November 2008
Submission of revised final report to Evaluation Office	December 2008
Presentation of the evaluation to Executive Board	June 2009

Annex II

PEOPLE CONSULTED

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES

UNDP REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ARAB STATES

- Mr. Adel Abdellatif, Chief, Regional Programme Division
- Ms. Dima Al-Khatib, Programme Adviser, Regional Programme Division
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Annex III

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Annex IV

SURVEY FOR EVALUATION OF ARAB STATES REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

1. How do you rate the effectiveness of the Regional Cooperation Framework in helping position UNDP strategically in your country?

Not effective at all	0	0%
	0	0%
	2	50%
	1	25%
	1	25%
	0	0%
Extremely effective	0	0%
Total	4	100%

2. Please rate the degree of effectiveness of RCF in promoting better interaction in the following areas:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not effective at all	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely effective	Not applicable
Between your office and other offices in the region	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	1 25%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Between your office and the policy makers in the government	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	2 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Between the government and civil society organizations	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 25%

3. The Arab Human Development Report is one of the important outputs of RCF. What is the perception of AHDR in your country?

Strongly negative	0	0%
	0	0%
	1	25%
Neutral—neither positive nor negative	0	0%
	3	75%
	0	0%
Strongly positive	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%
Total	4	100%

4. Please rate the degree of effectiveness of AHDRs in the areas noted below:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Strongly negative	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely positive	Not applicable
Providing input for the preparation of CPAP/CCA	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	1 25%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%
Influencing policies at the government level	0 0%	1 25%	1 25%	1 25%	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%

5. How do you rate the value added by RCF to the Country Programme?

Strongly negative	0	0%
	0	0%
	0	0%
	2	50%
	2	50%
	0	0%
Strongly positive	0	0%
Total	4	100%

6. How would you rate the change brought about by RCF and its programmes (POGAR, ICTDAR, HARPAS, and ATDP) in your country programme?

Strong negative change	0	0%
	0	0%
	0	0%
No change	1	25%
	3	75%
	0	0%
Strong positive change	0	0%
Total	4	100%

7. Given the circumstances in your country, please rate the sustainable effects of each of the project clusters:

Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Not sustainable at all	2	3	4	5	6	Extremely sustainable
POGAR	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	2 50%	0 0%
ICTDAR	0 0%	1 25%	1 25%	0 0%	2 50%	0 0%	0 0%
HARPAS	0 0%	1 25%	0 0%	0 0%	2 50%	1 25%	0 0%
ATDP	1 33%	0 0%	0 0%	1 33%	1 33%	0 0%	0 0%

8. Please note the project areas where RCF has brought about a change.

3 Responses

9. How has RCF affected capacity development in your country?

Not useful at all	0	0%
	0	0%
	0	0%
	3	75%
	1	25%
	0	0%
Extremely useful	0	0%
Total	4	100%

10. To what degree do projects within RCF create a sense of ownership in your country?

No sense of ownership	0	0%
	0	0%
	1	25%
	3	75%
	0	0%
	0	0%
Strong sense of ownership	0	0%
Total	4	100%

11. Please rate the monitoring of RCF in your country.

Very lax monitoring	0	0%
	1	25%
	0	0%
Neither lax nor strong	3	75%
	0	0%
	0	0%
Very strong monitoring	0	0%
Total	4	100%

12. Going forward, please select in which pillar areas do you think RCF should be more active in order to respond to the needs of your country?

MDGD	2	50%
Democratic governance	2	50%
Building a knowledge society	2	50%

13. What role do you see for the Regional Service Centre to be established in Cairo vis-a-vis the regional programme?

4 Responses emphasizing policy advice, capacity development, training for COs.

14. Please give us any other comments you may have pertaining to the RCF and its utility to and relationship with the country programme.

2 Responses emphasizing more coordination between RCF and COs.

Annex V

SELECTED DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

	HDI 2005	HDI 2001	Corruption Index 2007	Corruption Index 2001	Women in Parliament 1990 (%)	Women in Parliament 2007 (%)
Gulf countries						
UAE	0.868	0.816	5.7	5.2	0	22.5
Bahrain	0.876	0.839	5	6.1	0	2.5
Kuwait	0.891	0.82	4.3	5.3	0	3.1
Saudi Arabia	0.812	0.769	3.4	4.5	0	0
Middle income countries						
Jordan	0.773	0.753	4.7	4.5	0	5.5
Tunisia	0.776	0.74	4.2	4.6	4.3	22.8
Morocco	0.645	0.646	3.5	3.4	0	18
Algeria	0.733	0.704	3	2.6	2.4	7.2
Lebanon	0.772	0.752	3	3	0	4.7
Egypt	0.708	0.648	2.9	3.4	3.9	2
Syria	0.724	0.685	2.9	3.4	9.2	12
Libya	0.818	0.783	2.5	2.1	0	7.7
Iraq	n.a.	n.a.	1.5	2.2	n.a.	n.a.
Palestinian Territories	0.731	0.731	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Less developed countries						
Djibouti	0.516	0.462	2.9	n.a.	0	10.8
Yemen	0.508	0.47	2.5	2.4	4.1	0.3
Sudan	0.521	0.503	1.8	2.3	0	17.8
Somalia	n.a.	n.a.	1.4	2.1	4	8.2

Note: Ranking in each group is according to the corruption index (10.0 least corrupt; 0.0 most corrupt). For HDI see, UNDP Human Development Reports 2003 and 2008. For percentage of female representatives in parliament, see http://wikipedia.org/corruption_perceptions_index. For the corruption index, see www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi.

COUNTRY STUDIES

EGYPT

BACKGROUND

In order to evaluate the activities of RCF, the team visited Egypt from 3 October 2008 to 10 October 2008. The visit had three purposes: finalize the evaluation methodology by joint fieldwork; obtain detailed information and hold discussions with the personnel of the programmes of ICTDAR, ATDP, and HARPAS, all of which are headquartered in Cairo; and liaise with the management of the UNDP country office.

Egypt is a middle-income country in the Arab Region. Its per capita income is USD 4,337 and its HDI is 0.708. Based on the last Human Development Report of Egypt (2005), the prevalence of poverty is 34 percent. For the past 50 years, large sectors of the country's society, which basically comprises of informal economic sectors and those living below the poverty line in rural areas, have depended on the state welfare system for delivery of basic public goods and services. This system has become too costly and unsustainable. In addition, the system has created a sense of dependence. It has masked unemployment and allowed room for corruption. The government is now cognizant that a radical redefinition of the relationship between the citizens and the state is called for. It also recognizes that its future development is closely linked to strengthening the human capability of its citizens.

Large regional disparities along urban-rural lines, as well as pockets of urban poverty, oblige the government to make major development efforts, public investments and pursue pro-poor policies. Economic growth, as a major vehicle for development, is one of the main concerns of the government. Reforms implemented since 2004 have given a boost to economic growth, but they need to be sustained. The economy is beset by chronic

unemployment. More than 10 percent of the labour force is unemployed. That number reaches as high as 24 percent among women. Public investments are not enough to alleviate unemployment. It requires creating jobs and better education and training.

The fast increasing population in Egypt also creates major environmental dilemmas. Moreover, the country is faced with various forms desertification and an ever-growing gap between limited resources and escalating demand.

Egypt is in the process of political transition towards a more developed democratic system that came with the constitutional amendment that allowed for direct election among multiple candidates for the presidency. The government is also in the process of undertaking additional constitutional reforms that reinforce the separation of powers, strengthen the parliament, and secure human and social rights for all citizens.

In designing its 2007-2011 country programme, UNDP has taken into consideration these pressing problems and also adjusted its programming to the realization of MDGs. The Country Programme Action Plan lists the priority areas as follows:

Reinforcing state capacity—In this sphere, UNDP projects cooperate and collaborate with the government to reinvigorate the legitimacy of the welfare state through provisions of quality public goods and services that are better targeted for equality and efficiency, promoting economic growth, and reducing poverty for the achievement of MDGs. These efforts are expected to yield the following outcomes:

- Improved national capacity to design, apply and monitor pro-poor policies while addressing geographical disparities.

- National strategies to facilitate increased access to information and foster the use of ICT in order to achieve the development goals.
- Integrated programmes designed at national and local levels for conflict prevention and peace building.
- Formulation and implementation of decentralization policies and improving the capacity of institutions at the local level in participatory planning, resource management and service delivery.
- Incorporating sustainable management of environment and natural resources into poverty reduction strategies.
- Empowering the local governments and communities for better managed biodiversity and ecosystem.
- Supporting the government to empower women in their contribution to political, economic and social change and development.

Enabling links of democratic governance—In order to strengthen democratic institutions and practices and expand a culture of human rights through active citizenship, UNDP proposes the following:

- Continue to advocate the culture of human rights.
- Assist and strengthen national efforts for democratic reform, increase political participation by the public at large, and support government reform policies by strengthening the Assembly's oversight functions within the framework of WTO and other trade agreements.

The budget of the United Nations in Egypt is quite large. The figure for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period in question is less than USD 187 million. Approximately 180 million of this amount is expected to be mobilized through cost-sharing funds. The rest will come from TRAC funds. Due to a variety of reasons, practically all multilateral and bilateral donors collaborate with UNDP, as well as with other United Nations organizations.

THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN THE COUNTRY

A quick comparison between government priorities with UNDP intervention areas and RCF project activities reveals remarkable parallels. Yet, the UNDP country programme and RCF function are completely independent from one another. As one upper manager of the country programme put it, "We only provide services to RCF. RCF carries out its own projects as they see fit." Yet POGAR is active in Egypt by conducting studies and providing workshops that aim to strengthen the rule of law and participation of citizens in the political process, as well as assisting several NGOs that are active in human rights.

ICTDAR is also active in Egypt, working especially with marginalized populations and youth and developing ICT with the aim of enhancing knowledge. It has three major projects:

- AjialCom is a youth empowerment initiative. Its objective is to build capacity of youth by expanding their knowledge base through ICT to acquire better opportunities for employment. It also established information technology hubs in five governorates, which were equipped with computer equipment and peripherals and provided training in computers, internet use, web development and management skills.
- An initiative for the visually impaired was implemented with the NGO, Risala. The project provided four centres with a Braille and audio library and training in information technology to approximately 500 visually impaired people. The aim is to enable the visually impaired to gain employment and integrate into mainstream society.
- WRACTI is an initiative conducted with the National Council for Women. Its objective is to empower women by providing them with legal knowledge on family rights and entitlements to social services. Family Code Laws were prepared on CD-ROMS in simplified and understandable language. These CDs were disseminated to ministries, the media,

NGOs, community centres and religious leaders to inform them on women's rights. These CDs were also used to train 15,000 social workers around the country to better advise and guide women on their legal rights. The media also played an important role in raising awareness of women and children's legal rights and how to attain legal advice and social services and access the CDs. This initiative was adopted by the National Council for Women as a national programme.

ADTP, which aims to enhance the negotiation capabilities of the countries within the region, will soon be active in Egypt. The study of the sectors, one of which is the textile sector, does include Egypt. The study of the textile industry is of particular importance to Egypt, not only because it is an important sector, but also because it is likely to contribute to the abatement of unemployment among women.

HARPAS regional and sub-regional activities are conducted out of Cairo. The programme is implemented in a comprehensive approach encompassing a wide array of partners that have been trained in awareness raising, advocacy and capacity building: parliamentarians have been participating in ongoing workshops to discuss legislature to protect PLWH; religious leaders from different faiths have become dynamic partners in awareness raising, disseminating information on HIV/AIDS, and reaching out to PLWH and providing them with assistance; NGOs and CSOs have been participating in awareness raising on HIV/AIDS and providing PLWH with social services; the media has been disseminating information on HIV/AIDS and PLWH human rights; and PLWH have also been active in participating in workshops and giving testimonials. HARPAS has also assisted PLWH with access to micro-credit for small to medium-sized enterprises.

The WGP-AS recently completed its preparatory assistance phase and the project document was finalized in February 2008. A small project management office has been established in Cairo

and the project manager is in place. Once the new Regional Service Centre is established, WGP-AS will be co-located with it. The project has four main components: integrated water resources management; local management of water resources, water supply and sanitation implementation; capacity building and institutional strengthening; and production of the Water Report for the Arab Region. There are four cross-cutting dimensions: adaptation to climate change, transboundary water management, gender mainstreaming, and awareness raising. The WGP-AS is aligned with the UNDP Water Governance Strategy and contains a strong South-South cooperation element, with transfer of expertise within the region planned. Furthermore, the project is expected to provide technical assistance to the UNDP country offices, especially with regard to the second component on local water and sanitation management. At this stage, these are mostly plans and it remains to be seen how well the WGP-AS will be aligned with the country programme. Egypt has not yet endorsed the project, but the country programme contains a significant focus on water, including a series of Global Environment Facility funded projects. In general, there is a lack of a systematic way for the country office to deal with the regional programme.

The AHDR has contributed by creating a lively discussion in the country and raising consciousness of the problems of development, both within the region and in Egypt. It is almost impossible to create a direct link between the priorities of the government and UNDP intervention areas, but the fact that the AHDR is a valuable instrument for stimulating constructive discussions has been noted repeatedly. Some influential circles have criticized the AHDR for not being prescriptive enough. The planned issue of the AHDR, which will be published soon, aims to take this criticism into consideration and, in addition to diagnosing the problems that beset the region, will also advance policy suggestions. The extent of its influence on the next cycle of the UNDP programme remains to be seen.

FINDINGS

The RCF is relevant to Egypt and the UNDP country programme in Egypt. Nevertheless, this relevance has not yet been integrated into the programme.

The effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the RCF in Egypt cannot be separated from the RCF's overall effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The main report has elucidated these points sufficiently.

CONCLUSIONS

The RCF and the country programme overlap in a number of areas, but their independence from each other is disconcerting. There is a growing interest and conviction within the upper management of the UNDP Country Team that a closer relationship must be sought with the RCF and ways must be found to achieve coordination and complementarities.

LEBANON

BACKGROUND

To evaluate the activities of the RCF, the Team Leader visited Beirut, Lebanon, from 11 October 2008 through 16 October 2008. The purpose was to carry out research related to POGAR and AHDR activities and to liaise with the management of the UNDP country office. The Team Leader was briefed by Wassim Harb and Karima El-Koori, Managers of the Rule of Law and Participation Clusters of POGAR. Subsequently he met with the project staff, beneficiaries of the RCF and the country office management.

Lebanon is a middle-income country in the Arab Region. In 2005, its per capita income was USD 5,584 and the HDI was 0.772. Prior to the civil war, which began in 1975 and lasted almost 17 years, it was a relatively advanced country. The civil war left the country with a destroyed infrastructure and economy and shook the foundations of its institutions. The consequences interrupted economic growth, causing stagnation and recession. As a result, Lebanon entered the twenty-first century with a myriad of social, political

and economic problems. During the last decade, the major challenges were to establish political stability, redress the lost business confidence and put the country back on the path of sustainable economic growth and development.

The government adopted a Five-year Fiscal Adjustment Plan (1999-2003) to address the macroeconomic challenges, achieve stability and assure the recovery of investors' confidence. Nevertheless, the economic crisis took a severe toll. There has been an out-migration, particularly of the young generation, which created scarcity of capacity. The economic crisis also worsened the poverty conditions in the already depressed regions of the country, such as the Bekaa Valley in the north. Unemployment persists today, hovering at approximately 12 percent.

Faced with the fragility of the economic and social conditions, the government began to take drastic measures in 2002. It implemented important reforms and made adjustments to create a favourable environment for investment and economic growth. These included drafting of a privatization legislation and considerable reduction of the customs duties. A national strategy was also designed for administrative reform in order to streamline the public sector and to raise the competence of civil servants.

As of 2005, Lebanon's population was 4 million. The crude death rate and infant mortality have been falling and life expectancy is more than 70 years. Lebanon has always had a high literacy rate and the gender gap in education is not appreciable. The country has a respectable human rights record, a vibrant civil society sector, and active NGOs, such as professional associations, labour unions and other civil groups.

The Second Country Cooperation Framework for Lebanon was initiated in 2002. It was expected to end in 2006. However, the circumstances of the country forced UNDP to extend the programmes until 2009. The aim was to assist the government in the realization of national development objectives, since the government was involved in efforts to overcome the post-conflict situation and was finding it difficult to

design a programme with clear objectives for the United Nations interventions. The political and economic conditions of the country continue to be rather fluid.

The United Nations programme can be grouped under three pillars:

Institution building support to policy and decision making

The principal aim in this sphere is to advance the advisory governance programme to enhance capacities for strategic planning and decision making—strengthening the rule of law through legislative empowerment and increasing accountability and transparency. This is one of the three main pillars and includes the following:

- **Enhancing national strategic planning.** The aim is to provide advice and capacity building support to the Ministries of Finance, Economy and Trade, Social Affairs and Environment. In addition, the projects aim at strengthening the institutional foundations of the Ministries of Energy and Water and Public Works, as well as of the Council for Development and Reconstruction, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main thrust is to provide greater access to data and information for policy making, modernization of structures and enhancement of skills.
- **Support to the developmental and enabling environment, initiated to enhance the governance.** The programmes and projects in this sphere have three components: mainstreaming legislative reform and supporting the parliament; capacity building support for implementation of rule of law in the judicial and penal system; and enhancing capacities of CSOs and NGOs as actors for catalyzing wider engagement for good governance.

Empowerment at the local level

The main objective of this second pillar is to promote equality, with a special focus on poverty, reduction of inequalities between regions and groups, and access to employment. This objective is carried out on three fronts:

- **Promotion of integrated regional development as a means of poverty alleviation.** This essentially deals with socially and economically marginalized areas and poorest regions of the country.
- **Support to post-conflict reconstruction and development.** The projects in this area deal with the displacement of people in southern Lebanon. They also support small-scale income generation activities and replicable ICT initiatives.
- **Strengthening of municipalities and local governance structures.** The main objective is to enhance the capacities of municipalities and assist in creating strong local government.

Cross-cutting themes

This third pillar has four cross-cutting themes that require attention:

- **Promotion of a national development dialogue.** Interventions in this area support the articulation of national priorities in a clear strategy with dedicated development commitments.
- **Gender.** The objectives of the interventions are to ensure women's access to the benefits of development and strengthen their access to decision making, both at the local and national levels.
- **Youth.** Despite the high level of out-migration, the youth in Lebanon constitute one-fifth of the population. Youth and employment have multi-dimensional problems. ICT possibilities, creation of small and medium-sized enterprises, and support to entrepreneurial formation among youth are the main thrusts of the designed projects.
- **Environmental and natural resource management.** The thrust of the projects in this area is to mainstream environmentally sound strategies at the national level beyond sectoral interventions.

Not all of the country programme interventions may be completed, due to political instabilities in Lebanon. Nevertheless, most projects are expected to be completed by 2009. What is striking is that the thrust of many projects—such as rule of law, participation, women in development, and issues related to youth—is practically identical to the issues tackled by the RCF.

The country office is preparing a new country programme based on the following national priorities: developing institutional capacity to implement reforms and increase participation accountability; employment creation and reduction of regional inequalities; ensuring environmental sustainability; and improving national reconciliation. These priorities are strikingly similar to the national priorities that have shaped the interventions of the present cycle. The new cycle's budget is expected to be approximately USD 40 million, USD 6 million of which will be TRAC funds. The rest is expected to come from cost sharing and government contributions.

THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN THE COUNTRY

The similarity between the present and the planned country programme of UNDP and the activities of RCF is striking. Yet both function independently from each other. This is understandable to an extent. The UNDP country office has its hands full striving to complete its programme as successfully as possible and assisting a country that has all the ramifications of the post-conflict situation. Conversely, the similar activities of RCF are equally relevant to the national priorities.

Two programmes of POGAR, namely the Rule of Law and Participation, have contributed greatly to legal reforms in Lebanon, especially in the areas of strengthening the judiciary and the government's efforts against corruption.

ICTDAR is also active in Lebanon. The ICTDAR initiative on empowering women, WRACTI, was a challenging undertaking in

Lebanon due to the complexity in family law embedded in 19 religious sects. An advisory board of representatives from various faiths was created, which developed into a unique platform for dialogue. The project also included a pilot that established an automated tracking and monitoring system for alimony payments in one of the courts.

HARPAS activities in Lebanon are quite comprehensive. They include not only advocacy and capacity building, but also raising awareness and developing a network of partnerships, especially with NGOs and CSOs. HARPAS has also succeeded in bringing together religious leaders from different faiths to discuss, openly and without any prejudice, issues related to HIV/AIDS. It also has been successful in attracting legislators to participate in a number of workshops to discuss various legal means to protect PLWH. Moreover, HARPAS has enlisted the cooperation of the media through which information on HIV/AIDS is widely disseminated. A significant feature of HARPAS activities has been to keep the human rights concern in the forefront.

ATDP has not yet tackled any of the trade and development issues in Lebanon, but it is expected to do so.

The AHDR, as in Egypt, has contributed to discussions by raising consciousness of development issues within the regional context. As was expressed by an academic, AHDR is almost obligatory reading for many university students. A member of parliament also noted that it is a useful guide.

FINDINGS

The RCF is very relevant to Lebanon. Within the RCF, POGAR in particular is of great importance to the executive and legislative branches, since the country is undertaking several reforms in the public sector.

The effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the RCF in Lebanon cannot be separated from

the RCF's overall effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. But certain critical elements, such as political stability and reconciliation, which are very *sui generis* to Lebanon, will to some extent determine the degree of the effectiveness and sustainability of the regional programme.

CONCLUSIONS

The UNDP country programme and a number of RCF projects are equally relevant to developmental issues in Lebanon. Yet both the RCF and the country programme function independently from each other. It is understood that the RCF is not expected to interfere with the country programme, but a degree of coordination between the two is indispensable. The UNDP country office sees this need and has expressed the desire for closer coordination. Such coordination is likely to enhance the effectiveness of both programmes.

TUNISIA

BACKGROUND

Tunisia is a middle-income country with approximately 9.9 million inhabitants. Its average growth rate is 5 percent. Human development indices show that the poverty level was at 3.9 percent in 2005, a decrease from 6.7 percent in 1990, and is expected to decrease to 2.0 percent by 2015.²⁶ National aggregates indicate that Tunisia should achieve its MDGs by 2015, with the 'primary education for all' goal almost within reach. The one exception is maternal mortality, which has a projected 70 percent level of achievement.

Despite these achievements, several factors are limiting the country in becoming a competitive member in the international arena. Its demographic attributes—with the 15 to 59 age group representing 64 percent of the population in 2004 compared to 57 percent in 1994—intensify demands for employment in a country

that already has an unemployment rate of 14 percent.²⁷ There are also geographic disparities in basic infrastructure, social services, illiteracy rates and unemployment between regions in the centre west and south of the country. As of 2004, the illiteracy rate was 46.4 percent in rural areas compared to 22.6 percent in urban areas. There are also gender disparities in illiteracy rates. Illiteracy among women is 31 percent compared to 17 percent among men. A similar trend is seen in the unemployment rates, with 16.7 percent of women out of work compared to 12.9 percent of men. Furthermore, a World Bank study showed that increased efficiency and more transparency in the public institutions would lead to an improved growth rate of more than 1 percent annually. These constraints are hindering equitable growth and sustainable development in the country.

National programmes and strategies have been formulated to respond to these challenges and aim to achieve the following:

- Increasing the average growth rate to 6.1 percent during 2007-2011
- Accelerating job creation and promoting self-employment
- Strengthening roles and responsibilities of the regions in consolidating the participative process on a local level
- Preserving natural resources and promoting energy efficiency
- Bringing government and citizens closer together while improving quality of services
- Strengthening social cohesion with particular attention to vulnerable groups in addition to mainstreaming women's involvement in political and social life

UNDP supports Tunisia in providing assistance in priority domains that have been identified in

26. UNDP, 'Human Development Report', 2006.

27. Unemployment figure from 2004.

partnership with national and international expertise. The UNDP country programme (2007-2011) highlights four key areas: strengthening the equality and quality of services to reduce vulnerabilities; increasing integration and participation of adolescents and youth in the development process; promoting employment; and managing Tunisia's integration into the world economy.²⁸

The UNDP programme is contributing to three out of these four UNDAF impacts: disparities, equality and quality of life; employment; and globalization.

Disparities, equality and quality of life—These goals require policies and programmes for the prevention and reduction of vulnerabilities including: statistical capacity building in support of strategic planning and decision making in areas such as gender specific and geographical identification of poor and vulnerable groups; disaggregated monitoring and analysis for the MDGs based on gender equality and strengthening of analysis and monitoring capacity in relation to the different incidences of vulnerability; promotion of sustainable human development strategies, programmes and mechanisms on a national and regional level to mainstream environmental issues; incorporating the gender dimension to better identify vulnerable groups in rural areas; and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and awareness raising and training to combat discrimination against PLWH.

Employment—Labour market institutions are to be enhanced by: attaining disaggregated data and analysis for identifying and monitoring the unemployed and populations at risk of not reaching sustainable employment such as youth and women; and strengthening management capacities of employment issues by implementing different programmes at the local level and connecting them to the regional and national levels.

Globalization—Integrating Tunisia into the world economy by interventions that include

strengthening the capacity of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and enhancing quality assurance of the administration in particular.

Youth is a cross-cutting dimension in all programmes, making youth priority beneficiaries of programmes, especially those pertaining to employment and participation.

THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN THE COUNTRY

Implementation of the RCF in Tunisia is demonstrated in three projects: HARPAS, ICTDAR and POGAR. These projects are relevant to the UNDP country programme as they contribute to its priority domains. For example:

- HARPAS concurs with the UNDAF promotion of sustainable human development strategies. This includes prevention of HIV/AIDS, awareness raising and training to stop discrimination against PLWH. The RCF is most active in this project. The UNDP country office recently appointed a focal point to coordinate activities with HARPAS, which gives the programme more visibility and credibility. The focal point's responsibilities include linking the country office work plan with HARPAS so that there is no duplication in action plans and ensuring that the activities are complementary. HARPAS activities include awareness raising, advocacy and capacity development of NGOs, CSOs, religious leaders, parliamentarians and PLWH.
- ICTDAR and POGAR have collaborated with the country office in assisting the Prime Minister's E-Government Unit in establishing an e-government, which is a component of the National Development Action Plan. ICTDAR provided a strategy for implementing and designing a National Portal and White-book.
- The ICTDAR initiative Resp-Act, which includes promoting the concept of citizen-

28. 'Country Programme Action Plan Between the Tunisian Government and the UNDP 2007-2011'.

ship among the youth, is also in accord with the country office's cross-cutting theme of youth and the national strategies that aim to bring government and citizens together. Both share the same focus of establishing a citizen-centred government.

- Officials from governmental and judicial bodies have participated in POGAR regional meetings for anti-corruption and judicial training. These activities contribute to the domains of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and the quality assurance of the administration in particular.

FINDINGS

No in-depth assessments have been conducted to make any conclusive inferences in regard to the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the RCF in Tunisia. Nonetheless, the evaluation found that these projects have had some impact, particularly HARPAS. However, POGAR and ICTDAR activities have been intermittent, which has inhibited their impact. For example, they both assisted the Prime Minister in establishing an e-government at the national level in 2005, expecting the Prime Minister to extend the e-government on its own to the regional level. Yet, the Prime Minister's Office has not been able to do so. The country office assistance has also not stepped in to complete this task. As a result, e-government in Tunisia is at a standstill.

In regards to sustainability of the RCF, HARPAS activities show signs of sustainability at the national level, yet their support continues to be needed at the regional and local level. It is too early to assess the sustainability of the ICTDAR initiative, Resp-Act.

CONCLUSIONS

The RCF contribution to the country programme is limited because there are few ongoing activities. At the time of the evaluation, HARPAS was supporting national initiatives being implemented by their partners—religious leaders and the NGO, RAHMA—while ICTDAR had just begun the Resp-Act initiative. There were no substantial activities pertaining to POGAR.

Overall, the present RCF is limited in its activities and therefore its collaboration with the country programme. The fourth RCF could include assuming a bigger role in Tunisia as this would catalyse its ability to achieve national development priorities.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

BACKGROUND

United Arab Emirates (UAE) consist of seven emirates, of which Abu Dhabi and Dubai are the largest. The country ranks 39 in the Human Development Index, thus belonging to the same group as several Latin American and former Soviet block countries in Eastern and Central Europe. At USD 25,514 in 2005, the GDP per capita is higher than many other countries with similar levels of human development. Approximately 80 percent of the 4.5 million people in UAE are foreign nationals working mainly in construction and service industries. The adult literacy rate in UAE was 88.7 percent in the 1995-2005 period. The gender gap in literacy is small, with female and male literacy rates being 87.8 percent and 89.0 percent respectively. The overall trend in HDI has been constantly improving since 1975.

As an NCC, UAE does not receive core UNDP funds through normal distribution channels. The Government of UAE is the largest fund provider of the programme. During the 2002-2006 Country Cooperation Framework, the UNDP programme implemented USD 14 million in projects. The projected delivery under the current cycle of 2007-2011 is estimated to reach USD 15 million. The country programme is agreed upon and implemented by UNDP together with either the federal or emirate level national authorities. The current programme focuses on the following areas:

- **Gender, social and economic development**—A National UAE MDG Report was published in 2007. UNDP partnered with the General Women's Union in an outreach programme aimed to engage the public and private sectors in gender mainstreaming. The

project centres on capacity building of the main women's organizations. The National Gender Mainstreaming Initiative provides training to governmental and non-governmental entities in the incorporation of gender-sensitive dimensions into policies and plans. It works to reinforce awareness of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

- **Democratic governance**—This area is divided under two main targets: parliamentary development and public administration reform. In the area of parliamentary development, UNDP has since 2005 worked to strengthen the Federal National Council. The first partial Federal National Council elections were held in December 2006. The public administration reform work is supporting the UAE Ministry of Finance and Industry in an ambitious reform of public resources management at the federal level. The programme focuses on strategic budgeting processes, including performance-based budgeting and financial management. In another initiative, UNDP has supported the Government of Dubai in the development of an economic data set and modelling tools for staff training in economic analysis and forecasting. UNDP is also considering support to the establishment of a Dubai Statistics Centre.
- **Environment and energy**—UNDP assistance at both federal and emirate levels has focused on several projects: Date Palm Research and Development Project, jointly with the UAE University, which addresses the importance of the date palm for environmental protection and curbing desertification; a project to assist the Meteorological Section in establishing a Numerical Weather Prediction facility; and establishment of a hydro-meteorological database.
- **HIV/AIDS**—UNDP works together with the UAE Ministry of Health and the Red

Crescent to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, especially amongst students in government high schools and universities. UNDP is also part of the United Nations Theme Group on HIV/AIDS that provides capacity development to the National AIDS Programme. While UAE has a low-prevalence rate, such preventive work is important, especially given the large immigrant population and increasing tourism in the country.

THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME IN THE COUNTRY

Some of the components of the RCF have had activities in UAE, but the country has not been an active participant in the regional programme:

- POGAR was involved marginally in providing policy advice to the country office in designing activities in the framework of the Parliamentary Strengthening Project implemented at the national level.
- HARPAS developed the project document for the National HIV/AIDS Programme jointly with national authorities and country offices in UAE and Qatar. Workshops were organized in the country. The national programme benefited from the experiences gained from other countries through HARPAS.
- ICTDAR provided technical advice to the country office in 2006-2007, including developing the UNDP UAE website. There was no attempt to develop a project in UAE around ICTDAR.

AKRP is a major new initiative based on an innovative partnership with the MBRF. AKRP builds upon the work of the AHDRs, in particular the first report 'Creating Opportunities for Future Generations' in 2002 and second report 'Building a Knowledge Society' in 2003. These AHDRs concluded that promoting human development in the Arab world rests on liberating the capabilities of Arab people by advancing knowledge, freedom and women's empowerment. The AHDR working definition of a knowledge-

based society is “one where knowledge diffusion, production and application become the organizing principle in all aspects of human activity: culture, society, the economy, politics and private life.” Following from this, the objective of the AKR series is to engage institutions and citizens in the Arab countries in global issues and concerns related to building knowledge societies for human development, and to enhance the understanding around regional and national priorities, identifying current practices, challenges, policies, strategies and opportunities for investment in the future.²⁹

The project is still new and it is too early to judge its success. MBRF and UNDP signed a memorandum of understanding and cost-sharing agreement in November 2007 for cooperation on the AKRP. Under the agreement, MBRF provides USD 14 million over five years to produce five annual reports. The AKRP team has been established in Dubai with a project director, lead author, lead statistician and a core team responsible for drafting a chapter and advising the lead author. The project is executed through UNOPS, and according to project staff, it receives good support from them. Whether this structure is sustainable in the long term must be assessed once more experiences have been gathered.

The first report is currently under production. The report will take stock of what has happened since the production of the 2002 AHDR and will map the way forward. The focus of the report will be beyond education, to include knowledge in a broader sense, such as transfer of technology, cultural aspects, and literature. AKR will be a regional report covering all 22 Arab countries. The report will be launched during the first half of 2009.

FINDINGS

The RCF has not been significantly incorporated in UAE. Some of the projects, as mentioned

earlier, have provided some services to the country office in Abu Dhabi. However, with the possible exception of HARPAS, their substantive programmatic work in the country has been minimal.

The reasons for this have been both the type and the size of the regional programme and the various activities. The RCF is modest in scope and funding. The needs of the NCCs are different from those of other countries in the region. The regional programme has not been designed specifically to respond to the challenges faced by the NCCs. The AHDR was considered a major achievement in UAE, as it was elsewhere in the region. Most of the other regional projects have been too small and fragmented to make an impact in the country.

For instance, given the high level of private-sector presence in ICT in UAE, UNDP's role in the sector may not be significant. Projects such as ICTDAR are not seen as being competitive with the much larger private initiatives.

Similarly, in the area of water, UAE has already signed agreements on water management with private companies. The Gulf Cooperation Council area is most advanced in desalinization technologies. Consequently, there has been little interest in the country to participate in WGP-AS.³⁰

The AKRP has the potential to become a high-profile initiative using the same model as the AHDR (while not duplicating the effort). However, it is too early to tell if this will occur. One consequence of the AKRP being located in Dubai together with MBRF and executed through UNOPS is that the project has thus far been de-linked from the UNDP country office in Abu Dhabi. In fact, the country office management was unaware of the status of and plans for the project. In the future, these linkages should be strengthened. There is scope to involve the UAE country office, as well as other country offices, in the planned Arab Knowledge Forums.

29. UNDP, 'The Arab Knowledge Report (AKR): Background Document'.

30. It is worth noting that Qatar has agreed to participate in WGP-AS.

CONCLUSIONS

The Arab region is highly varied and there is significant scope to diversify the regional programme along sub-regional priorities and national needs. The NCCs in the Gulf region have specific characteristics and needs that cannot be dealt with in the same way as least developed countries and other countries in the Arab region. A recent evaluation³¹ concluded that UNDP needs to change the way it does business if it is to meet the expectations of the NCC partners in the Arab region. It further concluded that UNDP has not sufficiently exploited the potential for developing partnerships in the NCCs. The RCF could provide an important avenue for aligning UNDP global and regional strategies with those of the country offices and country programmes, such as regional dialogue in areas such as democratic governance, knowledge societies, HIV/AIDS and gender.

There are also opportunities in more technical areas, including water resources, where the NCCs possess specific knowledge and technologies that could be transferred to other countries in the region through the RCF. Achieving this will require strategic thinking on behalf of RBAS and the forthcoming Regional Service Centre in Cairo.

There are also opportunities to establish linkages between the AKRP and other regional projects. The subsequent AKRs will most likely focus on specific topics, which could be partly linked to areas of concern covered by other projects. For instance, in issues related to trade, unemployment and youth, there would be scope for linkages with projects such as ATDP and ICTDAR. There may also be possibilities of linking with the higher education projects through MBRF that are currently being phased out of the RCF.

31. UNDP, 'Evaluation of the Role of UNDP in the Net Contributor Countries of the Arab Region', UNDP Evaluation Office, New York, NY, 2008.