UNDP

EVALUATION OF UNDP'S SECOND REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR
ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
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EVALUATION TEAM	
Team Leader	Steen Folke
International Consultant	Pao Li Lim
Team Member and EO Task Manager	Juha Uitto
Research Assistant	Elizabeth K. Lang

Foreword

The report of the Evaluation of the Second Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF) for Asia and the Pacific 2002-2006 presents the findings of the evaluation of the RCF carried out by the Evaluation Office. The evaluation assesses UNDP's performance, achievements and results, the scope and range of strategic partnerships formed, and its strategic positioning in the region. It is one of three evaluations carried out this year, prior to the submission of new RCFs for the Executive Board's approval. The aim of the evaluation is to provide accountability for the achievement of results and resources used, as well as to help identify successful approaches and challenges, and to learn lessons from implementation in a regional setting. The evaluation is intended to feed into the development of the third Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific.

Initially intended to finish in 2006, the RCF was extended to the end of 2007 as a result of the corporate decision to harmonize UNDP regional and global programme cycles with the next UNDP-wide strategic plan 2008-2111. The second RCF for Asia and the Pacific was developed in response to the Millennium Declaration and within UNDP's corporate mandate for poverty reduction. The RCF takes a regional public-goods perspective that seeks to minimize negative transboundary externalities or secure positive spillovers allowing the countries in the region to work cooperatively on cross-border concerns. The programme also promotes regional advocacy.

The RCF was originally designed around three themes: democratic governance for human development; sustainable development; and globalization and economic governance. While the main thrust of the programme remained, the relative weights given to these topics changed during implementation. Other programmatic activities were added related to HIV/AIDS and the programme also responded to the Indian Ocean tsunami that occurred in December 2005. The programme contained a cluster of projects centred around subregional cooperation, as well. In addition, three crosscutting issues were included: gender and development; information and communications technology for development; and crisis prevention and development.

The evaluation examined UNDP's regional programme and its contributions to regional development in terms of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It combined a meta-evaluation approach with an in-depth investigation of the programme. Three outcome evaluations had been commissioned in 2006 in the areas of poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS, which were made available to the present evaluation team. The evaluation team made visits to the UNDP regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo and the Pacific Centre in Fiji. In addition, visits were undertaken to a sample of six countries in the region where interviews were conducted with partner agencies, regional institutions and UNDP country office staff. Altogether, the evaluation team conducted some 200 interviews in New York and in the countries, and carried out detailed reviews of the programme. It found that the overall thrust of the RCF was highly relevant and the programme has provided a people-centred perspective for dealing with the challenges of the region in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The regional governance initiatives have raised awareness on issues of gender mainstreaming, civic engagement, accountability and transparency, and how those issues promote good governance. In addition, the unique position of the regional programme allows operation in areas that are sensitive at the country level, such as justice and human rights. Overall, the RCF has created strategic opportunities for future interventions by UNDP and other organizations to deal with regional development challenges and trends to work towards achieving the MDGs in the Asia and Pacific region.

While the programme has been effective in producing an impressive number of knowledge products – and these have been on the average of high quality – the evaluation found that the dissemination, capacity development, advocacy and policy advice activities have not been given enough attention. This is largely because of insufficient human and financial resources allocated for the programme.
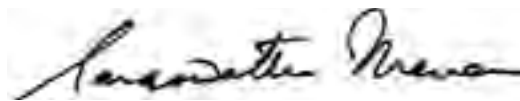
The effectiveness of the RCF has been somewhat hampered by the spread of the limited resources over too many areas and topics. Moreover, the links between the RCF and the UNDP country programmes have been too inadequate. Ideally, much of the capacity development and advocacy work should be undertaken at the country level. The gender dimension has remained a weakness in the programme despite UNDP's commitment and efforts to mainstream gender across practice areas.

The recommendations emanating from the evaluation highlight the need for a clearer strategic focus for the regional cooperation framework based on the human development concept and focused on the interlinkages between governance and poverty reduction and achievement of MDGs. The programme should concentrate on fewer objectives, themes, projects, service lines and intended outcomes. There must also be a better balance in the programme between the basic production of knowledge products and capacity development, advocacy and policy advice. This will lead to better utilization of the many qualified outputs and hence greater effectiveness.

A number of people contributed to this evaluation, particularly the evaluation team composed of Steen Folke as team leader, Pao Li Lim and Juha Uitto, who also served as the Evaluation Office task manager. Elizabeth K. Lang supported the team as research assistant. We would also like to thank Kutisha Ebron and Anish Pradhan who provided excellent administrative and technical support at the Evaluation Office.

The preparation of the evaluation was also thanks to the excellent collaboration of the Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific led by the Regional Director and Assistant Administrator, Hafiz Pasha. Particular thanks go to Selva Ramachandran and his regional team in the Bureau in New York; Elizabeth Fong and Marcia Kran, Regional Manager and Deputy Regional Manager, at the Regional Centre in Bangkok; Minh Pham, Regional Manager of the Regional Centre in Colombo; Garry Wiseman, Sub-regional Manager at the Pacific Centre in Suva; and all programme managers and advisors in the Regional Bureau, the Bureau for Development Policy and UNDP country offices who shared their insights with the evaluation team. We would especially like to thank the UNDP resident representatives and country directors in the countries visited for their support: Marcia de Castro (Indonesia), Richard Dictus (Fiji), Douglas Gardner (Cambodia), Frederick Lyons (Sri Lanka), Pratibha Mehta (Mongolia), Joana Merlin-Scholtes (Thailand), Nileema Noble (Philippines) and Sonam Yangchen Rana (Lao PDR). The evaluation has greatly benefited from the interest and support of government representatives in the region, regional partners, representatives of civil society and academia, and executing agencies.

I hope that the findings and recommendations of this evaluation will assist in improving the effectiveness of UNDP's regional level assistance in Asia and the Pacific in the coming period, and contribute to the achievement of its development goals.

Saraswathi Menon
Director, Evaluation Office

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APDIP	Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme
APGEN	Asia Pacific Gender Equality Network
APGMP	Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme
APRI	Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative on Human Development
APTI	Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative on Trade, Economic Governance and Human Development
APTII	Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative
ARGP	Asia Regional Governance Programme
ASEAN	Association of South- East Asian Nations
ASEC	ASEAN Secretariat
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CLMV	Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam
CO	Country Office
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EO	Evaluation Office
GCF	Global Cooperation Framework
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOLD	Governance for Livelihoods and Development
GOVPAC	Governance in the Pacific
HDR	Human Development Report
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IAI	Initiative for ASEAN Integration
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LDC	Least Developed Country
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPRP	Macroeconomic Policies and Poverty Reduction Programme
MYFF	Multi Year Funding Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NZAID	New Zealand International Aid and Development Agency
PARAGON	Participatory Action Research to Advance Governance Options and Networks
PeacePac	Peace-building & Crisis Recovery Project for the Pacific Region

PIC	Pacific Island Country
PPR	Principal Project Representative
PRAJA	Poverty Reduction and Access to Justice for All
PRHP	Pacific Regional STI/HIV/AIDS and Development Programme
PSLP	Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RCB	Regional Centre in Bangkok
RCC	Regional Centre in Colombo
RCF	Regional Cooperation Framework
RCF II	Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific
REACH	Regional Empowerment & Action to Contain HIV/AIDS Beyond Borders
REG	Regional Environmental Governance Programme
REP-PoR	Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction
RHDR	Regional Human Development Report
RIPP	Regional Initiative on Strengthening Policy Dialogue on Indigenous, Highland & Tribal Peoples' Rights & Development
RRRT	Regional Rights Resources Team
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAPAP	South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme
SEAHIV	South East Asia HIV
SRRP	Silk Road Area Development Programme
SURF	Sub-regional Resource Facility
TRADP	Tumen River Area Development Programme
TUGI	The Urban Governance Initiative
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNIAP	UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
UNRTF	UN Regional Task Force on Mobility and HIV Vulnerability Reduction
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

The second Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF II) for the period 2002-2006 was developed in response to the Millennium Declaration. Its development goals underpin the overarching goals of the RCF. A basic element of the RCF is a regional public goods perspective, allowing countries in the region to work cooperatively on cross-border concerns. The programme also promotes regional advocacy.

Initially, the RCF was designed to cover three main thematic areas: 1) Democratic Governance for Human Development, 2) Sustainable Development, and 3) Globalization and Economic Governance. While the main thrust of the programme has remained the same, during the implementation of the RCF, the primary clusters and the emphasis given to each shifted markedly. By the time of this evaluation, there were four primary clusters: 1) Poverty, 2) Governance, 3) HIV/AIDS, and 4)Sub-regional cooperation.

This evaluation was designed to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes, covering its scope and range, policy advisory services, knowledge sharing and networking, and capacity development activities. The evaluation builds on and supplements the three outcome evaluations commissioned in 2006—on the poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS clusters of projects—and attempts to take their findings, conclusions and recommendations to a higher level.

By and large, the programme has succeeded in addressing vital problems of the region. This occurred during a period when many areas in Asia and the Pacific Islands were going through dramatic changes—both in the economic and political spheres. The programme has been flexible enough to address changing needs of various sub-regions and partners in the region.

At the core of RCF II are activities aimed at fostering sustainable human development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The programme has produced a vast range of knowledge products in these and associated areas. Most of the knowledge products have been relevant, but their dissemination has not been given the required attention. The knowledge products have been used for training, capacity development and advocacy, which are much needed but have been insufficient due to the limited resources of the programme.

There has been a lack of clarity in the structuring of the RCF. This militates against giving the programme a clear strategic thrust.

Overall, it is likely that the RCF II has contributed to poverty reduction, human development and achievement of MDGs, but mainly indirectly. The main thrust of the programme has been upstream, aimed at producing and disseminating knowledge, creating awareness, building capacity and influencing policies. It is difficult to quantify the effectiveness, outcome, and impact of such efforts. There are many actors and factors at play, and the link between advocacy based on UNDP knowledge products, changes in policies and/or practices, and reduced poverty or enhanced human development is at best indirect and difficult to identify.

The programme has been effective in producing an impressive number of knowledge products, generally of reasonably good quality. Quality might have been better if the quantities produced under certain projects had been more limited. The flagship products have been the Regional Human Development Reports (RHDRs) and the MDG reports. These have been very useful and helped raise the profile of the RCF. The programme has also organized a large number of training sessions, workshops, seminars and conferences and used these to disseminate ideas, findings and policy advice.

Nevertheless, the dissemination, capacity building, advocacy and policy advice activities have not been given enough attention. The financial and human resources of the programme have not been sufficient for this. Moreover, the link between the RCF and the UNDP country offices (COs) has been too weak. Ideally, the majority of the capacity

building and advocacy work should be carried out by the COs that have good relations with governments and other development actors, but this rarely happens. Thus, opportunities for increased effectiveness and impact get lost.

The RCF has successfully dealt with a range of sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights and HIV/AIDS. There is no doubt that a regional programme has a comparative advantage in tackling such issues, although ultimately they have to be addressed at the national level.

The programme has also focused on a number of cross-border problems and promoted regional advocacy. However, a number of projects—and activities under these—do not measure up to the regionality criteria and might as well have been implemented at the national level.

The gender dimension has remained a weakness in the RCF II, despite attempts to strengthen it, e.g. through the development of a gender strategy and setting up a gender steering committee. Mainstreaming gender in all parts of a future programme remains a huge challenge.

The effectiveness of RCF II has been hampered by spreading the limited resources over too many themes, practice areas, projects and service lines. The aim of the programme was to concentrate on 20 to 25 projects; it ended up with 30. Perhaps more seriously, under many projects, a wide range of disjointed activities were carried out with a lack of internal coherence and prioritization. In fact, the programme has lacked a clear strategic focus, and the attempt to become more demand driven and responsive has resulted in the implementation of a vast range of different activities without any clear direction—other than some affinity to the RCF II themes. As a result, the programme has not sufficiently positioned the UNDP as a strategic development actor building on its comparative advantages.

Against a projected RCF II budget of USD 130 million for the five-year period 2002-2006, the budget that materialized was less than USD 90 million—a shortfall of more than 30 percent. The shortfall in resources has affected the 'sustainable development' theme in particular. The RCF II

projects have also been affected by budget cuts following the establishment of the regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo and the sub-regional centre in Suva. The implementation of this has adversely affected a number of projects. In many cases, the budget cuts came at short notice, which generated negative reactions among partners and staff members. Nevertheless, the evaluation team believes that establishing the regional centres was the right decision. The centres have infused the programme with new dynamics and provided an appropriate infrastructure for future regional programmes. The technical support and backstopping that they offer to the UNDP COs is greatly appreciated, and the centres—with their division of labour—are better placed to provide a decentralized, efficient implementation structure.

The programme has produced a vast number of knowledge products and other outputs with limited human and financial resources. Overall, the staff has been dedicated and hard working. However, the resources have been spread too thin, and this has reduced effectiveness.

A significant weakness of the programme is the lack of an adequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This weakness is not just a problem for the RCF but a general weakness in UNDP's work. The results-based management framework, which was introduced under RCF II, is not in itself sufficient. The lack of a systematic monitoring framework with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to assess the progress of both the programme and individual projects. This results in evaluations that are based on inadequate quantifiable evidence. An improved M&E framework could greatly enhance the programme's effectiveness and efficiency.

The wide range of activities under the many projects and service lines has worked against sustainable outcomes and benefits. There have been too few resources, particularly human resources, to follow up on the many initiatives. Moreover, the focus on production of knowledge products has, to some extent, also undermined sustainability, because the dissemination and capacity development parts of the programme that are vital to sustain the benefits have not received enough attention.

The weak linkage between the regional programme and UNDP COs has also limited sustainability. Ideally, the COs could play an important role in following up, providing policy advice and building capacity, based on the regional knowledge products. But this has happened only to a limited extent.

Finally, it is a problem that some of the projects under RCF II have been only two to three years duration. Although this may be sufficient in some cases, in others, there is a need to work with a longer time frame. This will also contribute to making the outcomes and benefits more sustainable.

The evaluation team has been asked to make recommendations for future regional programming in the Asia-Pacific region. The three outcome evaluations—on the poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS clusters of projects—include a large number of detailed recommendations. What follows here is a limited number of recommendations more general nature.

1. *There is a need to concentrate on fewer objectives, themes, projects, service lines and intended outcomes.*

2. *A new programme should have a clearer strategic thrust, informed by UNDP's human development concept and focused on the link between governance and poverty reduction and achievement of MDGs.*

3. *Concentration and a clearer strategic focus must entail a reduction of themes and practice areas.*

4. *If macro-economic and trade issues are kept in the programme, this requires strengthening of the relevant competences.*

5. *The programme must strike the right balance between supply (strategic focus) and demand (the region's changing needs).*

6. *There must be a better balance in the programme between the basic production of knowledge products and more capacity development, advocacy and policy advice.*

7. *The regional programme should be better linked to the country programmes.*

8. *The programme should concentrate on projects that measure up to the regionality criteria.*

9. *The gender dimension must be mainstreamed in the programme.*

10. *It is necessary to strengthen M&E.*

11. *The regional programme and the regional centres should improve cooperation with other UN agencies based on a clear division of labour.*

12. *There is scope for closer collaboration with regional institutions, but it must be selective, focused, and based on a clear division of labour.*

Chapter 1

Background

At the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2004, the Associate Administrator indicated that UNDP would undertake forward looking evaluations prior to the drafting and submission of new Regional Cooperation Frameworks (RCFs) to assess the effectiveness of the overall approach of the RCF in each of the regional programmes.[1] The Evaluation Office (EO) was mandated to conduct an independent evaluation of the second RCF in Asia and the Pacific and report to the Executive Board on development results achieved by the RCF. It was felt that such an evaluation was necessary to ascertain whether the RCF focus and modalities were the optimal way to use scarce resources. This evaluation was carried out within this context. Annex 1 contains the Terms of Reference of the evaluation.

1.1 SECOND REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The second Asia-Pacific RCF (RCF II) for the period 2002-2006[2] was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in July 2001. The RCF was developed in response to the Millennium Declaration, the development goals of which underpin the over-arching goals of the RCF. The RCF objectives are also parallel to those of the second Global Cooperation Framework (GCF) within the corporate mandate for poverty reduction. A basic element of the RCF is a regional public-goods perspective that seeks to minimize negative transboundary externalities or secure positive spillovers allowing the countries in the region to work cooperatively on cross-border concerns. The programme also promotes regional advocacy.

The RCF II was designed building upon an extensive round of regional, sub-regional and national consultations; the midterm review of the first RCF

in October 1999; as well as more than 40 programme evaluations and best practices synthesized from 10 major programmes. Initially, the RCF was designed to cover three main thematic areas:

- Democratic Governance for Human Development—Enhancing the political, economic and social frameworks for poverty reduction and sustainable human development.

- Sustainable Development—Addressing regional policy dialogue on the environment-poverty nexus and effective governance of transboundary natural resources.

- Globalization and Economic Governance—Intended to ensure a more equitable system of globalization through the prioritization of pro-poor policies and sustainable human development.

In addition to the three main themes, three cross-cutting issues were included in the RCF: gender and development; information and communications technology (ICT) for development; and crisis prevention and development.

While the main thrust of the programme has remained the same, the primary clusters and the weight given to each has shifted markedly during the implementation of the RCF . By the time of this evaluation, there were four clusters:
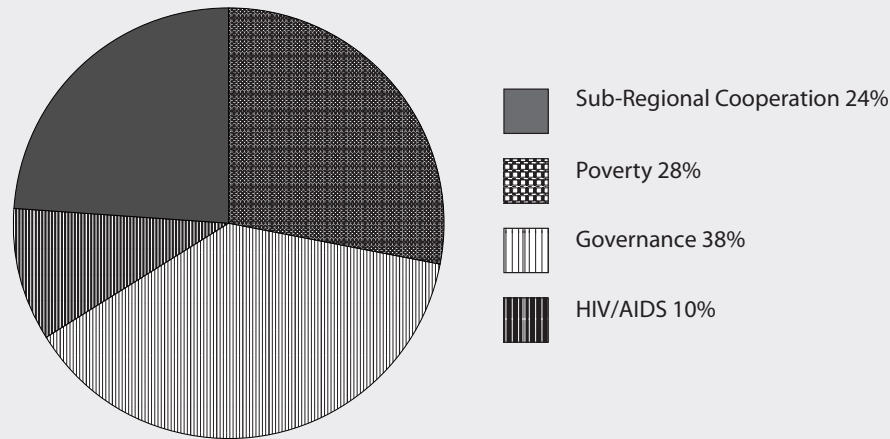
- Poverty

- Governance

- HIV/AIDS

- Sub-Regional Cooperation

The number of projects between the thematic areas varies significantly, with more than one-third of the projects devoted to governance (Figure 1).

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1. UNDP and UNFPA, 'Statement by Associate Administrator to the Executive Board, 17 June 2004, Item 5: Country Programmes and Related Matters', Executive Board of the UNDP and the UNFPA, Geneva, Switzerland, 14-25 June 2004.

2. The RCF was subsequently extended by one year to include 2007.

Figure 1. Share of projects amongst the thematic areas of RCF

Sub-Regional Cooperation 24%

Poverty 28%

Governance 38%

HIV/AIDS 10%

The activities related to sustainable development were reduced and those that remained were reallocated under the poverty or governance clusters. The evaluation uses the new clustering as its organizational principle, while assessing the strategic positioning and validity of the new emphasis.

1.2 IMPLEMENTATION

The RCF is implemented under the overall supervision of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP). However, the management responsibilities have been decentralized and the management arrangements have changed dramatically during the second RCF. Initially, the primary management responsibility for day-to-day supervision and monitoring of programmes rested with the Principal Project Representatives (PPRs). There was a mix of management modalities with UNDP COs in the region, regional and intergovernmental organizations, and national entities hosting programmes. Many of the regional projects were executed by United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) until April 2006, which resulted in lack of substantive involvement and dialogue with the partners. There were also Sub-regional Resource Facilities (SURFs) in Kathmandu, Nepal, and Bangkok, Thailand, that were involved in the implementation of the RCF.

In a major institutional change in 2005, two new regional centres were created in Bangkok (RCB) and Colombo, Sri Lanka (RCC), with a sub-centre located in Suva, Fiji (Pacific Centre). The majority of the projects and programmes under RCF were consolidated under the new centres, which caused a certain amount of disruption during the move. The two regional centres' mandates are based on thematic rather than sub-regional lines. RCB is concerned with governance, while poverty and HIV/AIDS fall under the jurisdiction of RCC. The Pacific Centre mandate is across the board in the sub-region.

The RCF is intended as part of a broader regional cooperation agenda pursued by the countries in Asia and Pacific, as well as other parts of the UN system. Therefore, partnerships are central to the strategy. The RCF emphasizes consultative activities with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and sub-regional intergovernmental groupings, as well as a close relationship with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Important players in the implementation of the RCF include also a range of non-governmental, academic and policy institutions in the region.

1.3 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The financial resources required for the RCF II five-year period (2002-2006) were estimated at the time of approval at USD 130 million, with UNDP providing core resources for USD 71 million. Consequently, the mobilization target of non-core funds to meet the RCF goals was USD 59 million. The allocation between the main thematic areas was as follows: 1) Democratic Governance for Human Development—core USD 26 million, non-core

USD 8 million; 2) Sustainable Development—core USD 20 million, non-core USD 44 million; and 3) Globalization and Economic Governance—core USD 26 million, non-core USD 7 million.

The reality, as documented during the evaluation turned out to be quite different. The total budget of the RCF II 2002-2006 that materialized was USD 89.7 million, out of which USD 57.3 million was UNDP core and USD 32.4 million non-core resources. There was a significant shortfall, especially in non-core funds, as compared to what was planned at the outset. Furthermore, the establishment of the regional centres during the period was financed from the RCF, causing a sudden reduction in funds that was felt by all the projects in early 2006. Overall, the largest drop in financing was in the area of Sustainable Development, which in the end only received a total of USD 13.5 million as compared with the planned USD 64 million. This was largely based on the assumption that additional funds for environmental work would be available in the region from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).[3] The distribution of the funding between the present thematic clusters is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Share of funding between RCF thematic areas

RCs & Surf 10%

Poverty 25%

Governance 35%

HIV/AIDS 15%

Sub-Regional Cooperation 15%

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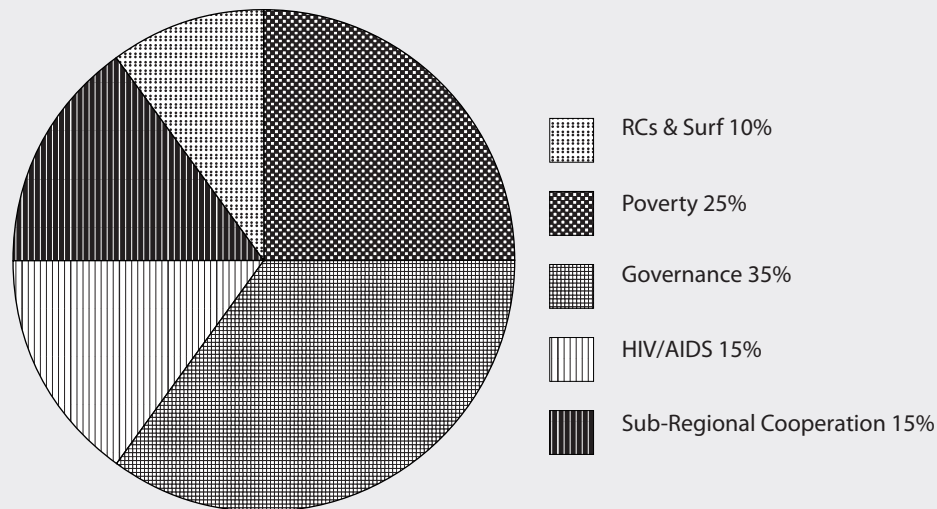
3. The GEF-funded projects have been excluded from this evaluation, as they do not form a part of RCF II nor do they receive funding from it. The Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Project, however, did receive initial funding from RCF II. In addition to significant funding from GEF, the project attracted cost-sharing from IUCN, the Government of the Netherlands and the participating basin countries. Since then, however, the project has been discontinued.

Chapter 2
Context: The Asia-Pacific Region

2.1 PROFILE OF THE REGION

The Asia-Pacific region is vast and diverse. It is inhabited by more than half of the world's population. China and India alone have a combined population of 2.5 billion. Conversely, the Pacific Islands sub-region is geographically widespread but inhabited by approximately 6 million people. The natural environment also embodies huge contrasts. Asia has the world's highest mountains in the Himalayas, it has deserts such as Thar and Gobi, and it also has locations with the world's highest rainfall (in North-East India). Most of the rural populations live in areas favourably endowed by nature in terms of temperature, rainfall and possibilities forh irrigation, thus they have the potential for high-productivity agriculture. But sizable populations inhabit less fertile semi-arid and mountainous regions.

In terms of level of development there is also great variety. China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Fiji (plus a few smaller Pacific Island states) are classified as middle income countries, and the Republic of Korea has graduated into the developed part of the world. But the region has 14 least developed countries (LDCs) including Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Cambodia. Countries such as India, Pakistan and Vietnam are classified as 'other low income countries'. Moreover, the disparities within countries, notably between rural and urban regions, are huge and growing. The last 25 years has been a period of rapid urbanization. This has resulted in growing income inequalities as well as congestion, slums and environmental problems in towns and cities.

Among the bigger countries in the region, the human development index in 2006[4] ranked Republic of Korea as 26, Malaysia as 61, Thailand as 74 and China as 80. At the other end of the rankings, India was 126, closely followed by Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. All these countries, however, are well ahead of the majority of African countries. Virtually all countries in the Asia-Pacific region in fact are classified as 'medium' in terms of human development.

In recent decades, Asia-Pacific has been the world's fastest growing region in economic terms. In the years 1990-2003, gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 7.6 percent annually in East Asia and the Pacific and by 5.4 percent in South Asia (compared with 2.8 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa and 2.7 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean). The corresponding per capita annual growth rates were 5.4 percent and 3.2 percent respectively.[5] For more than a decade, China has had GDP growth rates around 10 percent annually, and in recent years, India has also achieved GDP growth around 7 to 8 percent. East Asia, primarily China, now supplies approximately half of the global manufactured exports of goods such as textiles, clothing, and office and telecommunications equipment. India has become a leading manufacturer and exporter of software and other information technology-related goods and services. International labour migration is extensive. A case in point is the Philippines, where approximately 8 to 10 million overseas workers send home revenues worth approximately USD 20 billion a year. These developments have resulted in huge transformations in the urban regions of countries such as China and India and the evolution of a middle class, but also growing regional and urban-rural disparities.

Politically, the Asia-Pacific region is diverse. China, DPR Korea, Vietnam and Lao PDR are ruled by an all-powerful party. Conversely, India has been

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4. UNDP, 'Human Development Report 2006 – Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis,' Palgrave Macmillan, New York, USA, 2006.

5. UNDP, 'Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2006 – Trade on Human Terms: Transforming Trade for Human Development in Asia and the Pacific,' Macmillan India Ltd., Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2006, p 29.

a parliamentary democracy since Independence in 1947. A number of other countries have moved in a democratic direction, but democratic institutions are generally weak and there have been many setbacks. Pakistan and Myanmar have been under military rule for a number of years. Recently, there have been military coups in Thailand and Fiji. In contrast, Nepal after a prolonged insurgency has moved from autocratic rule towards a new democratic set-up. Corruption remains high in most Asian countries. For several years, Bangladesh has topped the global list of corrupt countries according to Transparency International.

In Asia-Pacific, more than 8 million people are infected with the HIV virus. Relatively speaking, this is much less than in Africa (with a much smaller population and more than 25 million infected), but in several Asian countries, such as India and Thailand, the virus has spread rapidly in recent years. In the Pacific Islands countries, the incidence of HIV is low except in Papua New Guinea, but many high-risk occupations combined with repressive social attitudes increase the risk of a future epidemic.

The Pacific Islands region in many ways stands out as a separate entity, very different from Asia. The geographic isolation and small size of Pacific Island countries result in high transportation cost economies that are increasingly called on to compete in the global market. Likewise, the size of the economies results in problems of scale, making regional cooperation and integration a viable alternative option.

2.2 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

"Asia leads the decline in global poverty," according to the Millennium Development Goals Report 2006.[6] In the period 1990-2002, the number of people in Asia living in extreme poverty—on less than USD 1 a day—was reduced by almost a quarter billion people. The decline in extreme poverty was particularly fast in East Asia, from 33 percent of the population in 1990 to 14 percent in 2002, and in South-East Asia and Oceania, from 20 percent to 7 percent. In South Asia, the reduction took place at a slower pace, from 39 percent to 31 percent.

The regional MDG report focusing on the LDCs assessed the progress made by each country towards the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. Bangladesh and Nepal were characterized as 'underachievers', while Lao PDR and Cambodia were assessed to be 'on track'.[7] The sub-regional MDG report for the Pacific Islands found that "the incidence of poverty is increasing in a number of countries."[8] However, extreme poverty is not widespread in the Pacific Islands.

The MDG goal of universal primary education is in sight throughout Asia-Pacific.[9] By 2003-2004 net enrolment in primary school was approximately 90 percent or more in the major regions. But the quality of education is often wanting, and there are still more girls than boys out of school, especially in South Asia. Child mortality (under-five) has been substantially reduced from 1990 to 2004 in all sub-regions. In South Asia, it has declined from 126 to 90 (per 1,000 live births), 78 to 43 in South-East Asia, and 48 to 31 in East Asia. But there is still a long way to go in order to achieve the target of two-thirds reduction by 2015.

The efforts to promote gender equality and empower women have produced some results in the political sphere. The share of women in parliaments has increased between 1990 and 2006, from 6 percent to 13 percent in South Asia, and from 10 percent to 16 percent in South-East Asia, and there have been several female heads of state in the region. But in East Asia, the share has fallen from 20 percent to 19 percent. Gender equality remains a distant dream.

All in all, the Asia-Pacific region has witnessed tremendous change during the past 15 years. In comparison with Africa, the progress has been remarkable. Many of the Asian-Pacific countries are on track to achieve a number of the MDGs. But other countries are lagging behind, and disparities are huge and increasing.

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6. United Nations, 'The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006,' New York, USA, 2006, p 4.

7. UNDP, 'Voices of the Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific—Achieving the Millennium Development Goals Through a Global Partnership', 2005, pp 8-9.

8. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 'Pacific Islands Regional Millennium Development Goals Report 2004', p 13

9. This and the following paragraph are based on The Millennium Development Goals Report 2006.

Chapter 3
Approach and Methodology

3.1 OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was designed to assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the RCF II in Asia and the Pacific, covering its scope and range, policy advisory services, knowledge sharing and networking, and capacity development activities. The findings are intended to provide inputs to the design of the next RCF for the region.

The evaluation was carried out in parallel with similar evaluations of the RCF programmes in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.[10] In order to ensure a degree of comparability, the aim was to use similar methods, relying to a great extent on meta-evaluation methodology. A generic guideline for meta-evaluation was outlined in a separate document.[11] This guideline, however, highlighted the gap between what ideally should be done and what would be practically possible, given the UNDP programmes' lack of a systematic M&E framework with clearly defined baselines and indicators. Nevertheless, a number of outcome evaluations were carried out, and the idea was that the overall RCF evaluations should build on these, using meta-evaluation methodology.[12]

The evaluation of the RCF II in Asia and the Pacific builds on previous outcome evaluations[13] and uses meta-evaluation methodology. This has been possible because the three outcome evaluations—on the poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS clusters of projects—are of reasonably good quality and cover a fair part of the programme. Combined, the outcome evaluations, which focus on projects that have been completed, cover about half of the projects under the RCF (14 out of 30 projects). However, there has been no outcome evaluation dealing with the area 'fostering sub-regional cooperation', although a comprehensive evaluation of the Tumen River Area Development Programme was commissioned by the Regional Bureau in parallel with the RCF evaluation.

The specific objectives were as follows (see also the Terms of Reference in Annex 1):

1. Assess the strategic position of the RCF within the region and in UNDP's overall programme.

2. Assess the achievement of the intended organizational goals and development results, highlighting key results of outputs and outcomes, lessons learned and good practices, both as they relate to UNDP's specified programme goals and in relation to broader national strategies in the region.

3. Assess the performance of the RCF and specify the development results achieved in the area of policy advice, capacity development and knowledge management within the main thematic areas that the regional programme has focused on.

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10. Project Service International, 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework Africa 2002-2006 Evaluation Report', revised draft, 12 February 2007; and Gamarra EA, 'Evaluation of Second Regional Cooperation Framework Latin America and the Caribbean', first draft, January 2007. The evaluation of the RCF in Arab States was presented to the Executive Board in 2005, see Pillay R et al., 'Evaluation of UNDP's Regional Cooperation Framework for the Arab States', 2005.

11. Pillay R, 'Generic UNDP Guidelines for Meta-Evaluation', 2005.

12. However, in the last instance no outcome evaluations were carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Africa apparently the quality and scope of the outcome evaluations were such that meta-evaluation methodology could not be used. In the case of the evaluation of the Arab states' RCF, five so-called 'outcome evaluations' were carried out, but "most of the individual programme evaluations undertaken did not contain information pertaining to outcomes or impact" (op. cit., p. 11).

13. Soni-Bhagat S and R Pillay, 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region: Poverty Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', Abacus International Management L.L.C., June 2006; Peacock-Taylor C and C Mathiasen, 'Second Regional Cooperation Framework 2002—2006 for Asia and the Pacific: Governance Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', PEM Consult, August 2006; Molesworth K and K Wyss, 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region: HIV/AIDS Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', Swiss Tropical Institute, January 2007.

4. Based on the actual results, ascertain how the RCF has contributed to strategically positioning UNDP to establish its comparative advantage or niche as a major upstream global policy advisor for poverty reduction and sustainable human development and as a knowledge-based organization in the region.

5. Identify innovative approaches used within the RCF programmed portfolio, their related outcomes and lessons learned within UNDP and in programme countries, and assess the scope and range of strategic partnerships formed.

As part of the methodology, an evaluation framework was developed, reproduced in Annex 4. The questions raised are grouped under the usual evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Impact could have been added to this list, but due to time and resource limitations, it has not been possible to conduct genuine impact evaluations. In practice, the evaluation framework was developed in close consultation with the other RCF evaluations, especially that in Latin America and the Caribbean, in order to facilitate comparisons.

3.2 THE APPROACH: METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE

Based on the Terms of Reference—and after initial consultations with UNDP in New York—an 'inception report' was produced that outlines the approach the evaluation team has taken in practice.[14] The present evaluation thus builds on and supplements the three outcome evaluations and attempts to take their findings, conclusions and recommendations to a higher level. This entails an added emphasis on assessing the value added of such a regional programme in an Asian context—vis-à-vis UNDP's global and country programmes—as well as an emphasis on determining the role of the programme in strategically positioning the UNDP within regional development priorities and UNDP corporate policy directions.

The evaluation team has attempted to validate findings from the outcome evaluations through triangulation (mainly interviews with UNDP staff and partners in countries visited). More time, however, has been spent on collecting evaluative evidence concerning all the projects that were not covered by outcome evaluations. There have been three main sources for this: project documents, progress reports, reviews, etc.; knowledge products produced by the projects; and interviews with staff in UNDP headquarters, regional centres and COs as well as with partner governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), regional institutions and other development actors.

The evaluation was carried out over a period of four months, December 2006-March 2007. The team had its first meetings and interviews in New York on 18-21 December 2006 and presented its preliminary findings at the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific on 9 March 2007. The final draft report was submitted on 4 April 2007.

The selection of countries to be visited was based on the following five criteria: suitable mix of projects; diversity (geography, level of development); priority to countries not visited by outcome evaluations (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia and the Philippines had not been visited); including the three regional/sub-regional centres; and including important regional institutions, including UNESCAP (Bangkok), ADB (Manila), Association of South- East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat (Jakarta), Mekong River Commission (Vientiane) and Pacific Islands Forum (Suva). The final decision regarding the countries was taken after consultation with RBAP.

Apart from UNDP headquarters, the evaluation team visited the two regional centres in Asia-Pacific, in Bangkok and Colombo. Besides interviewing UNDP staff and collecting documentary evidence, a number of other actors were also interviewed in these places. Team members also visited Ulan Bator/Mongolia, Phnom Penh/Cambodia, Vientiane/Lao PDR, Manila/Philippines, Jakarta/Indonesia and Suva/Fiji. The main interaction there was with the UNDP COs—and the Sub-regional UNDP Centre/Pacific Centre in Suva—and with partners, regional institutions and other development actors. A couple of

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14. Folke S, Lim PL, and J Uitto, 'Evaluation of UNDP's Second Regional Cooperation Framework for Asia and the Pacific, 2002—2006: Inception Report', 7 January 2007.

interviews were conducted in Malaysia. A total of 28 days was spent travelling, 20 days in January in nine countries of Asia-Pacific, and two four-day visits in New York. Approximately 200 persons were interviewed; they are listed in Annex 2.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

It was initially challenging for the evaluation team to arrive at an authoritative list of the projects under the RCF II, but it was finally agreed to cover the 30 projects listed in the tables in Chapter 4 and in Annex 6. Moreover, establishment of the regional centres led to the loss of some staff (for example, the transfer from SURF-Kathmandu to the regional centre in Colombo). A mid-term review of the RCF, which should have taken place in 2004, was never carried out, ostensibly because the reorganization was so administratively demanding that there were no resources for this.

The general absence of systematic monitoring systems with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to assess outcomes. This was a problem for all the outcome evaluations and even more so for assessing those projects that were not covered by these evaluations. It is a clear limitation that only half of the projects were covered by the three outcome evaluations. The evaluation of the other half has not been able to reach the same depth, given the limited time frame and resources, as well as the fact that these projects were still under implementation during the evaluation.

In addition to this, there is the usual problem of being able to attribute outcomes to the RCF. This problem is particularly severe in relation to projects that focus on the creation of knowledge products and advocacy and policy advice based on these products. The extent to which they create an impact in terms of changed attitudes, policies or practices is very difficult to measure. Many other factors contribute to such changes, and it is usually impossible to establish a direct causal link between project activities and observed changes. Hence, the evaluation team wishes to stress that the assessment of outcomes is limited by a degree of subjective judgment regarding the individual projects' plausible contributions to development results.

In one country, Fiji, the team leader did encounter a certain amount of 'evaluation fatigue'. This country had been visited by all three outcome evaluation teams, and it is understandable that somebody would feel that this should have been enough. Nevertheless, all contributed to making a week's intensive programme informative and worthwhile.

Chapter 4
Evaluation Findings

This chapter presents the evaluation findings. It is structured around the usual evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The section on effectiveness contains a detailed presentation and assessment of all 30 projects and programmes that have been implemented under the RCF II.

4.1 RELEVANCE

Poverty remains the paramount development challenge facing most countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The projects under the RCF attempt to address this challenge through analysis, development of policy positions and other upstream activities linked to human development, the MDGs, macroeconomic policies and trade policies. However, there were some downstream activities, such as the provision of micro credit through the Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (PSLP).

The overall thrusts of the RCF are highly relevant and have provided a people-centred perspective to deal with the current MDG challenges of the region. However, with the exception of its global work on human development, in the area of macroeconomic and trade policies UNDP faces a credibility issue, as there are several large multilateral organizations including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, WTO, ADB, UNCTAD and UNESCAP that are already active in these areas. These organizations have greater specialized intellectual and analytical capacity, and in some cases, their policy advice is linked to flows of loans and grants. Moreover, they have traditional ties with the key institutions of government that are generally responsible for economic and trade policy.

Over the years, UNDP has accumulated influence in the area of democratic governance, especially in new and politically sensitive areas such as corruption, human rights and capacity building of parliaments. While governance is a matured UNDP practice, it continues to be very relevant in the Asia-Pacific region. With its comparative advantage, UNDP can continue to play an important role in fostering best practices at all levels, especially with the increasing importance of governance to achieving the MDGs. The regional governance initiatives have facilitated the way for future interventions through raising awareness on issues of gender mainstreaming, civic engagement, accountability and transparency and how these issues promote good governance. In addition, the RCF is especially relevant as its unique position allows the programme to operate in areas like justice and human rights that are sensitive at country level.

The RCF projects in the HIV/AIDS cluster have been relevant in the Asia-Pacific context where there are more than 8 million people infected with the HIV virus. The RCF projects have contributed to setting the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the wider context of societal and human development processes, and to some extent, focused on cross-border factors in the spread of the epidemic that have been neglected by many other agencies.

While the RCF projects under the sub-regional cooperation cluster vary from issues on trade and economic cooperation over combating human trafficking to peace-building and disaster mitigation, they are all relevant in meeting the regionality criteria of the RCF. Furthermore, in view of the numerous conflicts in the region as well as the recurring natural disasters, the RCF is especially pertinent in addressing the current challenges of the sub-regions as they address the cross-cutting theme of crisis prevention.

Although there has been significant progress in the area of gender and development, gender inequalities continue to characterize the socioeconomic and cultural environment in the Asia-Pacific region. Recognizing that mainstreaming gender is essential to achieve the MDGs and human development, inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting theme in the RCF II is very relevant.

Despite UNDP's commitment to mainstreaming gender across all practices, the effective inclusion of gender has yet to be institutionalized.[15]

Generally, the RCF II has been relevant and has created strategic opportunities for future interventions by UNDP and other organizations to deal with regional development challenges and trends to work towards achieving the MDGs in Asia and the Pacific.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

This section provides a detailed assessment of all 30 projects and programmes under RCF II. They have been clustered into four thematic areas: poverty, governance, HIV/AIDS, and sub-regional cooperation.

4.2.1 POVERTY

4.2.1.1 Introduction

In the initial RCF II, poverty did not appear as a separate thematic area. Rather, various issues pertaining to poverty were embedded in all of the three themes: Democratic Governance for Human Development, Sustainable Development, and Globalization and Economic Governance. Similarly, poverty was integrated into the cross-cutting issues, including gender and development and crisis prevention and development. In the subsequent iterations of the programme, the poverty theme has emerged as one of the main pillars of the programme. Table 1 summarizes the projects classified under the poverty theme:

	Table 1. Asia-Pacific RCF II poverty programmes and projects		
	Programme/Project	**Region**	**Status**
1	Pro-poor Macro Policies for Poverty Reduction (MPRP) (RAS/02/060)	Asia & Pacific	Completed 2006
2	South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP) (RAS/96/600)*	South Asia	Completed 2002
3	Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Reports Initiative (APRI) (RAS/01/061)	Asia & Pacific	Ongoing
4	Asia-Pacific Regional Initiative on Trade, Economic Governance and Human Development (APTI) and the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative (APTII) (RAS/01/060)	Asia & Pacific	Ongoing
5	Millennium Development Goals Initiative in Asia and the Pacific (MDGI) (RAS/04/060)	Asia & Pacific	Ongoing
6	Supporting the Achievement of MDGs in Asia and Pacific (Phase II) (RAS/04/061)*	Asia & Pacific	Ongoing
7	Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction (REP-PoR) (RAS/04/031)*	Asia & Pacific	Ongoing
8	Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (PSLP) (RAS/02/360)	Pacific	Completed 2005

*These projects were not covered by the Poverty Cluster Outcome Evaluation.

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15. UNDP, 'Gender Strategy for Asia and the Pacific', 2005.

4.2.1.2 Macroeconomic Policies and Poverty Reduction Programme (MPRP)

MPRP's objectives are to build capacity for regional policy analysis and advocacy on the linkages between growth, employment and poverty reduction. The programme has a three-pronged approach: substantial policy-oriented research, capacity building and training, and advocacy and advisory efforts. More than 30 studies and knowledge products have been generated, including 16 country case studies that seek to identify practical policy options to foster pro-poor economic policies and growth. Apart from the country cases, the programme has undertaken a large number of thematic and other studies.[16]

The country studies in Bangladesh and Bhutan have been well received, and in Bangladesh they have proved to be a useful advocacy tool, influencing policy makers with regard to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.[17] In Cambodia and Lao PDR, regional reports were of less value to the country programme due to difficulty in engaging the government, although their findings were useful for clarifying UNDP's policy position.

In the field of capacity development, seven workshops were organized on topics related to macroeconomics, techniques of poverty reduction, the South Asia Free Trade Agreement, and MDGs. MPRP supported a formal partnership with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and provided technical and financial support.

In sum, while MPRP has produced a number of well-received studies and contributed to some national capacity development for policy analysis, it has been unable to facilitate strategic leverage of its expertise and resources to establish UNDP as a credible partner at the policy table.

The programme has been spread too thin between too many activities and it has suffered from weak dissemination, lack of advocacy and follow-up.

4.2.1.3 South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme (SAPAP)

The objectives of SAPAP were to help the disenfranchised overcome their poverty through social mobilization at the grassroots level. Influenced by the human development concept,[18] the project responded to SAARC Summit recommendations and covered six of the seven SAARC countries.[19] The project provided a rather long-term intervention, as activities in Bangladesh and Nepal had been started in 1994 and other countries joined during the second half of the decade. The thrust of the project was at the country level, where it aimed to motivate a large number of rural communities to mobilize resources with the support of SAPAP and its local partner organizations. The project resources were used to promote group formation, train village specialists and managers, provide seed capital for revolving funds and microcredit, share the cost of infrastructure construction, and to assist in policy formulation and M&E. More than 350,000 households in the six countries participated in the project.

While there are reports regarding the specific achievements of SAPAP in the various project locations, impact at the national policy level, however, is harder to document. SAPAP was sponsored by SAARC, to ensure government support at the highest levels. This support turned out to be varied amongst the participating countries, ranging from central government support in Nepal and Maldives, to state level support in India and Pakistan, to lukewarm support in Sri Lanka and a falling-off of support in Bangladesh. This range is also reflected in the success SAPAP had in upscaling the initiatives. Although the project succeeded in promoting a common vision and strategy in the region, the question remains whether it fully met the regionality criteria set up for regional programmes or whether the project could have been implemented through the country programmes with policy advice from UNDP.

16. Leitner K and A Klap, 'Evaluation Mission Report: RAS/01/061 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report Initiative, RAS/02/060 Macro-economic Policy of Poverty Reduction for Asia and Pacific, and RAS/04/060 The Millennium Development Goals Initiative in Asia and Pacific', UNOPS, Bangkok, Thailand, May 2006.

17 Soni-Bhagat S and R Pillay. 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region: Poverty Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', Abacus International Management LLC, May/June 2006.

18 'South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme—A Case Study: Scaling up Poverty Reduction', Regional Bureau for Asia & the Pacific, UNDP, Nepal, 2004.

19. The six countries were Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Bhutan did not participate.

4.2.1.4 Asia Pacific Regional Initiative on Human Development (APRI)

Advocating and institutionalizing human development values and goals into national and regional strategies is a key aim of the regional programme. The central pillar is the production of the Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Reports. Thus far, three reports have been published.[20] In addition, the project supported the Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre to produce five Human Development Reports (HDRs) for South Asia, thus contributing to capacity development. The focus of the 2006 RHDR on trade reflects the shift in emphasis in RBAP and especially RCC, to economic governance. The 2006 RHDR is a quality product that has been well received for its exploration of the role of trade in poverty reduction and human development. Despite this, it is not clear that the report recommendations provide an alternative view to what the other major actors in the field, notably the World Bank and ADB, propose.

UNDP's capacity, especially at RCC, has been a clear constraint in the implementation of APRI. Apart from producing the research and analysis, the staff has developed a number of toolkits. The programme has also undertaken substantial human development training and capacity development workshops for COs and counterparts. Yet, the project has not been able to fully incorporate its outcomes in the region so as to ensure a catalytic effect amongst policy-makers, media and academic institutions.[21]

4.2.1.5 Asia Pacific Regional Initiative on Trade, Economic Governance and Human Development (APTI) & Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Initiative (APTII)[22]

APTI was launched in 2002 to provide a credible voice to link trade issues to human development by undertaking policy research focused on human development considerations in trade agreements. In 2005, the second phase was started, geared towards supporting the MDGs by integrating pro-poor trade policies into development strategies, analyzing new themes and their emerging implications, and translating knowledge products into national policy and programme use. Multiple country case studies were undertaken under APTI around specific topics related to the Doha Development Agenda. Currently, the emphasis is on LDCs. For instance, the evaluation found that in Cambodia the trade issue has generated a lot of interest because the topic is relevant to the country needs and the timing has been right. In Mongolia, the project has developed understanding of trade issues and led to the establishment of a trade negotiating unit in the country.

The programme thrust has been to strengthen country capacities to mainstream and analyze trade policy in national strategies for trade competitiveness and to encourage the incorporation of human development concerns in trade agreements in poor countries. While the programme has raised awareness of the links between trade and human development and promoted regional dialogue on the issues, UNDP is not yet recognized as a major player in this field. If it is to pursue the focus further, it is important to build its internal capacity and enhance collaboration between the programme, COs, academic institutions, and relevant networks in the field.

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20 HIV/AIDS and Development in South Asia, 2002; Promoting ICT for Human Development in Asia: Realizing the Millennium Development Goals, 2005; and Trade on Human Terms: Transforming Trade for Human Development in the Asia and the Pacific, 2006. Five other sub-regional HDRs supported by the RCF were: Human Development in South Asia 2002: Agriculture and Rural Development; Human Development in South Asia 2003: The Employment Challenge; Human Development in South Asia 2004: The Health Challenge; Human Development in South Asia 2005: Human Security in South Asia; and Human Development in South Asia 2006: Poverty.

21. Leitner K and A Klap, 'Evaluation Mission Report: RAS/01/061 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report Initiative, RAS/02/060 Macro-economic Policy of Poverty Reduction for Asia and Pacific, and RAS/04/060 The Millennium Development Goals Initiative in Asia and Pacific', UNOPS, Bangkok, Thailand, May 2006.

22. APTI and APTII are two phases of the same project.

4.2.1.6 Millennium Development Goals Initiative (MDGI) in Asia and the Pacific—Supporting the achievement of MDGs in Asia and the Pacific

The MDGI programme is built around three interlinked approaches: supporting implementation of the country action plan in monitoring, reporting, advocacy and campaigning on MDGs; policy research and strategic support to the regional initiative on MDGs with UNESCAP; and building statistical capacity for the promotion and generation of reliable data to monitor the progress of MDGs.

The project has been successful in producing two regional and one sub-regional MDG report within a short time span. This has helped establish a regional baseline for MDGs.[23] The first report, titled 'Voices of the Least Developed Countries of Asia and the Pacific: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals through a Global Partnership' drew attention to the plight of the 14 LDCs in the region and focused particularly on MDG 8—developing a global partnership for development. The second report, 'A Future Within Reach: Reshaping Institutions in a Region of Disparities to Meet the Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific', was produced in partnership with ADB. Although the MDG reports were well received, weak advocacy efforts led to a limited impact on policy.

The Asia-Pacific Regional MDG reports have been criticized by the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) for inadequate and inaccurate data, weaknesses attributable both to UNDP and UNESCAP. The sub-regional MDG report focused on the relatively neglected Pacific Islands. It was produced by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in partnership with UNDP, a fact that contributed to the national ownership and policy impact of the report. A sub-regional MDG report is planned for 2007. It will be combined with the RHDR, which has been delayed. At the country level, eight MDG reports have been thus far completed and three are underway.

4.2.1.7 Support to MDG based development strategies

The key objective of the regional project is to build the capacity of countries—especially LDCs—to formulate and implement MDGs based national development plans. The project consists of four main components: developing an analytical tool (Integrated Approach) for guiding MDG based national plans; training of master trainers and knowledge sharing workshops; rolling out and adapting the Integrated Approach at country level; and policy advisory support and technical backstopping for COs and UN country teams. The timeframe of the project is 2006-2007. The project was formulated in response to requests from the regional governments for UNDP to provide technical and financial support to formulate MDG-based national plans. The focus on supporting the UN country teams, not just UNDP COs, can be seen as a positive feature in light of the ongoing UN reform process.

The key activities and achievements reported by the RCC[24] include the development of a Generalized Macroeconomic Framework to model MDG investments and their linkages with the rest of the economy. This model has been reviewed and revised. At least two countries[25] have requested the rollout of the framework as a macroeconomic planning tool. In Mongolia, the CO felt they had clearly benefited from the support from the project. The project has also started negotiations—and in some cases actual rollout—of the integrated package of services in support of MDG based planning in several other countries. A workshop was organized in Suva in October 2006 with the aim of identifying Pacific countries for rollout in 2007. The MDG Support[26] team has also embarked on resource mobilization. It is still too early to provide an evaluation of the success of the project.

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23. Leitner K and A Klap, 'Evaluation Mission Report: RAS/01/061 Asia-Pacific Regional Human Development Report Initiative, RAS/02/060 Macro-economic Policy of Poverty Reduction for Asia and Pacific, and RAS/04/060 The Millennium Development Goals Initiative in Asia and Pacific', UNOPS, Bangkok, Thailand, May 2006.

24. UNDP, 'Mid-Year Progress Report, January-June 2006', UNDP Regional Centre, Colombo.

25. Bhutan and Mongolia.

26. Now renamed MDG Initiative (MDGI).

4.2.1.8 Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction (REP-PoR)

REP-PoR, started in mid-2005, promotes an understanding of the relationship between poverty, energy and gender. The project has undertaken more than 30 country studies on issues related to constraints on universal energy access. The studies have identified potential interventions both at the national and sub-regional levels. REP-PoR is focused on enabling countries to formulate short, medium- and long-term solutions to energy security concerns.

As with other projects under RCF II, the national policy impacts are hard to attribute and vary considerably from country to country. In some countries, the linkage to policy making has been well established, like in Bangladesh where the country study fed directly into the preparation of the national energy programme. In the Philippines, the CO coordinated the country case with the government's Department of Energy and also used the expertise available in the GEF renewable energy project.

In addition to the country studies, the project has undertaken policy studies on important topics, such as the impact of rising oil prices on the poor and the implications of this for the achievement of the MDGs, cross-border energy trade and the impact on the poor, and regional mapping of options to promote private investments in alternative energy sources for the poor.

REP-PoR must be commended for its systematic inclusion of a gender component, which includes one of its knowledge products.[27] An excellent example in the Philippines was REP-PoR working with a regional NGO[28] to target female ambulant food vendors, who used 30 percent of their capital on energy. Introducing improved stoves, the project successfully demonstrated an approach that led to 50 to 60 percent energy savings, as well as health improvements amongst the women. While energy is closely linked to poverty and environment, and is clearly a priority issue in the region, the REP-PoR approach has been largely based on country cases.

It would be important to further emphasise the regional aspect through networking, identifying and sharing of experiences and good practices.

4.2.1.9 Pacific Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (PSLP)

The PSLP was designed in a different manner from the rest of the poverty projects, with an explicit downstream focus on complementing UNDP's work at the national level. Its main objective was to create an enabling environment and build capacity for sustainable livelihoods, including financial literacy and enterprise development. Launched in 2002 and completed in 2005, the programme aimed to transfer its key activities to the 'Achieving the MDGs in the Pacific' project under the new Pacific Centre in Suva. PSLP has provided institutional capacity development to microfinance institutions and to key regional and national civil society organizations. It has successfully developed pro-poor public-private partnerships and piloted the rural banking initiative 'Banking the Unbanked,' where social equity was provided by UNDP through its Financial Literacy Education Training intervention and capital by ANZ Bank. The intervention covered 200 villages in Fiji and had approximately 22,000 clients, out of whom 4,000-6,000 have set up businesses. This innovative pilot project has been quite successful and has resulted in replication in other PICs, including Solomon Islands and Tonga. The Government of the Solomon Islands provided USD 500,000 to replicate the Fiji microfinance project.

The innovative partnership between PSLP and ANZ Bank has been successful in mobilizing political support. The Pacific NGO capacity building initiative has enhanced the civil society capacity to participate in determining the development agenda and engendered government and donor confidence in the NGO sector in the islands.

The rural banking and financial literacy initiatives have been crucial in influencing policies in PICs. Nevertheless, the downstream activities at the country and local levels should be left to the COs.

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27. UNDP, 'Will Tomorrow be Brighter than Today? Addressing Gender Concerns in Energy for Poverty Reduction in the Asia-Pacific Region,' REP-PoR, UNDP, 2007.

28. APPROTECH ASIA.

4.2.1.10 Conclusions

Overall, the poverty cluster has been successful in producing an impressive number of products, notably analyses and reports that are mostly of good quality. Where the programme has been lacking is in follow-up to these studies through dissemination and advocacy. This has led to less-than-optimal use and policy impact. It can, however, be argued that the country-level follow-up goes beyond the limited capacity of the regional programme and should be the primary responsibility of the COs. For this reason, it is important to establish better links with the country programmes. Where these links have been inadequate, the reason has sometimes been lack of communication with and involvement of the CO in the regional programme. It would also be important to involve the governments systematically when RCF missions visit countries in order to generate buy-in.

The benefits of the regional programme, including the workshops and training events under RCF, have been recognized as putting the individual participating countries into the regional context and for learning from others. Conversely, in many cases the COs have not had the resources to initiate follow-up even when the regional programme has been highly relevant to their needs. There is some demand for establishing a regional facility under the RCF from which the COs could draw on emerging topics.

The poverty cluster has been well managed with limited resources, which were further strained temporarily during the establishment of the regional centres. However, it is necessary to find an appropriate balance between undertaking regional programme work—including not only production of knowledge products, but also the necessary follow-up to them—and policy advice and technical backstopping to the COs. Also for this reason, a further consolidation of the programme focus is necessary. For the credibility of its programme, UNDP must also stay the course in the areas of its expertise over a longer period of time.

4.2.2 GOVERNANCE

4.2.2.1 Introduction

Democratic governance is one of UNDP's five core practice areas and under the RCF, 11 projects fall under the governance cluster as shown in Table

2. Five of the 11 governance programmes have participating countries from both the Asia and Pacific regions, while three each are for countries in the Asian region and for the PICs. With respect to the status of the 11 programmes, five have been completed, while the rest are currently on-going. Of the seven governance programmes that are still on-going, three are follow-on programmes of completed governance programmes to support and integrate the governance practices and processes.

The main goal of the governance cluster programmes is "to promote greater democratic governance practices and processes for inclusive and equitable sustainable human development and for achieving the MDGs." More specifically, the programmes are focussed on Service Lines 2.1: Policy Support for Democratic Governance; 2.2: Parliamentary Development; 2.4: Justice and Human Rights; 2.6: Decentralization, and 2.7: Anti-corruption. Most of the activities of the programmes take the form of policy research, analysis and advocacy; policy advice; and institutional capacity building in the participating countries.

4.2.2.2 Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP)

Launched in 1997, APDIP will run till the end of 2007. Initially executed by UNOPS, followed by UNDP Malaysia and currently by RCB, the project promotes the development and application of ICT as a cross-practice activity for poverty alleviation and sustainable development through policy development and dialogue; access; and knowledge management and content development. Under RCFII, APDIP has increased awareness and advocacy on the use of ICT as an enabler of socio-economic development by engaging itself at the highest level of policy dialogue as well as with civil society organizations (CSOs) in the majority of the Asia-Pacific countries. The project has also enabled interconnection between ICT, good governance and human development as demonstrated by the 2005 RHDR on ICTs and MDGs. Through collaboration with other regional analytical initiatives, APDIP provides a broad perspective of how ICTs are being used to facilitate social change. However, despite the attempts to undertake a gender perspective to ensure equity in participation and ownership, mainstreaming gender into national policies remains elusive.

Table 2. APRCF II Governance Programmes and Projects		
	Programme/Project	**Participating Region**	**Status**
1	Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP) (RAS/01/063 & RAS/05/060)	Asia-Pacific	On-going
2	Participatory Action Research to Advance Governance Options and Networks Regional Governance Programme for Asia (PARAGON) (RAS/02/002)	Asia	Completed 2005
3	Governance for Livelihoods and Development (GOLD) (RAS/01/360)	Pacific	Completed 2005
4	The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI) (RAS/02/001)	Asia	Completed 2005
5	Poverty Reduction and Access to Justice for All (PRAJA) (RAS/02/300)	Pacific	On-going
6	Regional Environmental Governance Programme (REG) (RAS/04/030)*	Asia Pacific	Completed 2006
7	Asia Regional Governance Programme (ARGP) (RAS/04/004)*	Asia	On-going
8	Governance in the Pacific (GOVPAC) (RAS/05/300)*	Pacific	On-going
9	Support to Asia Pacific Programme on Reinventing Government (REINVENTING GOV) (RAS/04/002)*	Asia-Pacific	On-going
10	Regional Initiative on Strengthening Policy Dialogue on Indigenous, Highland & Tribal Peoples' Rights & Development (RIPP) (RAS/04/001)*	Asia-Pacific	On-going
11	Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme (APGMP) (RAS/03/001)*	Asia-Pacific	On-going

* These projects were not covered by the Governance Cluster Outcome Evaluation.

APDIP has been prolific in its outputs, which are highly relevant to stakeholders and ICT for development will continue to be relevant and critical in responding to national priorities and beneficiaries' needs, as well as in fulfilling UNDP's development mandate as evidenced by the requests from national governments. Policy developments by national governments have in themselves created the platform for sustaining the impact of APDIP interventions. In addition to garnering donor contributions and donor parallel funds, including from the private sector, APDIP has been successful in drawing upon the human resources and organization support from its partners. Although this demonstrates the efficiency of the project to leverage its strategic partnerships, some stakeholders expressed concern about the potential influence and profit motives of the private-sector partnerships.

4.2.2.3 Participatory Action Research to Advance Governance Options and Networks Regional Governance Programme for Asia (PARAGON)

Under RCF II, PARAGON aimed to integrate rights-based approaches, tools and methodologies into national development strategies and programmes. To some extent, the effectiveness of PARAGON was attributed to the good interpersonal relationships of the key project staff and country officers. This is reflected in greater overall capacity of target institutions to prepare, implement and oversee governance policies linked to poverty, sustainable human development and security. In at least three countries, there are major institutional governance reforms underway and evidence of strengthened parliamentary capacity to identify and debate issues and to formulate policies that adhere to good governance principles and practice. The achievements are sustained by new or amended

legislations or through the creation of a more enabling environment for systematic review and oversight.[29]

PARAGON is also attributed with increasing the capacity of CSOs to work in conflict prevention and management and increasing citizen voice and participation in policy processes at the local and national levels. Improved key information and |support networks for change agents have created synergy between organizations and countries working in democratic governance. Some of the organizations supported by PARAGON have since become fully institutionalized as they continue to operate with independent management and funding. Capacity building tools developed and disseminated have been included in the regular curriculum of national training institutes while policy outputs were widely distributed and provided new insights to policy-makers. Pilot activities, such as the Social Audit, have become a constant annual cycle in Pakistan, and have been piloted in Mongolia. Lessons and follow-on activities of PARAGON are integrated in the Asia Regional Governance Project (ARGP).

4.2.2.4 Governance for Livelihoods and Development Project (GOLD)

Launched in 2001 and completed in 2005, GOLD set out to advance good governance in 15 PICs by addressing critical issues in the areas of parliamentary reform, accountability and ethics, and human rights. Through various activities, GOLD has managed to elevate governance issues on the policy agenda of the Pacific. GOLD's contribution has been recognized in the field of parliamentary strengthening, especially with respect to the legislative needs assessment surveys, which are highly regarded and have provided a solid foundation for further work in legislative development in several of the PICs.

As the project progressed, GOLD has been able to transform to a participatory, more demand-driven process as the ownership, commitment and more successful outcomes among stakeholders increased. This is most visible in the parliamentary strengthening field where the recommendations from the legislative needs assessments have stimulated stakeholders to seek follow-up initiatives. Many of the

lessons and initiatives of GOLD have continued to grow under the GOVPAC and provided the foundation for numerous follow-on activities. Although the collaborative work of GOLD with other agencies and the support provided was acknowledged, the programme did not have an adequate strategy to consult or coordinate with other donors and was unable to mobilize adequate cost sharing to implement planned activities. This resulted in derailment of some initiatives. The absence of a programme manager for about half of the programme period also affected the effectiveness of the programme.

4.2.2.5 The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI)

Under the RCF II, TUGI, which was executed by UNDP Malaysia, promoted social justice, political participation, economic productivity, cultural vibrancy and ecological sustainability as the basis of good urban development. TUGI focussed on furthering the capacities of target cities using the tools developed and field tested through local authorities and networks in the region. An extensive range of knowledge materials on urban governance—promoting the use of innovative, participatory based methodologies and advocating the inclusion of marginalized people in planning and policy-making at local levels—was disseminated through a web-based portal on good urban governance, with the quarterly newsletter "Urban Links" as the key project achievement. Despite the high demand for the information, it could not be sustained, apparently due to lack of alternative support arrangements before termination of the project.

While TUGI has responded to urban issues during a period of rapid urbanization in the Asia-Pacific region, the overall effectiveness was reduced by the project's difficulty in balancing demand from stakeholders and by not working closely enough with COs. In addition, the programme was constrained by efforts to sustain upstream and downstream work while also providing an insightful and timely information service, conducting research and disseminating information, strengthening national and regional networks, and building capacity at local level. Notwithstanding the knowledge outputs and enthusiasm shown during the implementation phase of the project, the lack of a single agency

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29. In China, three laws on corporate governance reform supported by PARAGON have been passed and made into formal legislation. In Mongolia, an Anti Corruption Agency Law has been passed.

responsible for follow-up activities of TUGI since its completion in 2004 makes it difficult for the initiatives to be sustained. Although partnerships were developed and regional alliances and networks forged between diverse stakeholders during the programme, none of these had the will, capacity and/or the mandate to sustain the initiatives.

4.2.2.6 Poverty Reduction and Access to Justice for All (PRAJA)

Jointly designed by the UK Department for International Development, Regional Rights Resources Team (RRRT) and UNDP, PRAJA is a fully funded cost-shared project[30] with a broad approach to addressing access to justice issues in the Pacific. This encompasses initiating and supporting legislative and judicial change, working with human rights implementing agents to break-down barriers to access, conducting research and publishing human rights materials, and building capacity of CSOs that work directly with marginalized communities. This integrated approach has proven effective to advancing human rights and good governance in the Pacific. At the regional, national and community levels, PRAJA/RRRT provides technical and policy advice, capacity building, training, advocacy and research services.

PRAJA is relevant to fostering democratic governance outcomes from both supply and demand perspectives. A major impact of the programme is that human rights principles have increasingly been endorsed by PIC governments. Despite the advances in access to justice and human rights, there is still room for deeper understanding and acceptance of fundamental human rights in all PICs. Under PRAJA, RRRT has moved towards autonomy and has been registered as a "not-for-profit company limited by guarantee" under Fijian law. While this gives the organization independence, there is concern that the organization may be subject to political interference. Financially, RRRT has been able to secure adequate funding and has a clearly defined partnership strategy that includes strategic work with governments and inter-government bodies, CSOs and international development organizations and donor agencies that extends beyond the life of the project.

4.2.2.7 Regional Environmental Governance Programme (REG)

REG, which was managed out of RCB through Capacity 2015, aimed to empower local communities in the decision-making processes that may impact the environment, to ensure fair and equal access to natural resources and the environment. It envisioned greater opportunities for dialogue between networks and non-traditional partners, both within countries and across borders. On a regional basis, REG advocated for demand-driven solutions and innovative strategies occurring at the local level, with a view to improving policy making relating to environmental governance.

Despite its small budget, the REG was effective in enhancing cross-practice collaboration through the use of electronic media in the assessment of environmental governance in 23 UNDP COs in Asia Pacific. Results were disseminated through its website. REG also lent its support to case studies that reflect a wide geographical diversity and mix of local and central level governance issues. These include valuable lessons assessing the inter-relatedness of governance and environmental matters.[31] REG also supported the implementation of innovative human rights based concepts to environmental governance at the local level through training, dialogue, knowledge sharing and through pilot activities.

While the regional platform was a good modality to promote information and activism among environment and development practitioners, the effectiveness was challenged by the short period allocated for realizing the targeted outcomes. The integration of local environmental governance concerns into policy-making processes requires more time to adequately engage national actors in local environmental governance issues in order to affect policy change.

Although other organizations have indicated interest in providing continued support to ensure the sustainability of the REG outcomes, as a global network, the question remains whether UNDP should continue to play a role in environmental governance and raise the issue of Asia's environmental crisis while empowering marginalized groups.

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30. PRAJA is funded by NZAID and AusAID.

31. Case studies were conducted in Mongolia, Thailand, Nepal, Philippines and Samoa.

4.2.2.8 Asia Regional Governance Programme (ARGP)

Launched in 2004, ARGP is one of the current flagship democratic governance programmes of the RCB and will continue through 2007. ARGP builds on previous regional governance programmes[32] in Asia with the objective "to promote greater democratic governance practices, and processes for inclusive and equitable sustainable human development and for achieving the MDGs." ARGP thus provides the bridge between UNDP's global and country programmes in the area of democratic governance and covers all the MYFF service lines of the Democratic Governance Practice. The project works with a broad spectrum of stakeholders in governance, focusing on people's participation and access, accountability of governing institutions and enhanced multi-country regional development cooperation. The activities include applied research and policy analysis, advisory services and technical support, capacity development and practice building, advocacy, and country-level pilots to catalyze new areas for development cooperation and methodology application.

Feedback from national stakeholders acknowledged the contribution of ARGP in elevating the governance issues at the country level. ARGP activities and outputs, such as the toolkits for judicial reform, were generally appreciated, but there were criticisms on the 'across-the board' cut in funds, which affected some of the activities. Notwithstanding the fact that the regional programmes have been formulated in a consultative manner and endorsed by six countries, there were also criticisms about the way some of the regional programme activities are brought in with little consideration on whether they are needed at the country level. The effectiveness of ARGP is constrained by the limited resources at the country level to support the regional activities. It is still too early to provide an evaluation of the success of the project.

4.2.2.9 Governance in the Pacific (GOVPAC)

Launched in 2005, GOVPAC is still on-going and will continue through 2007. This is the flagship democratic governance programmes of the Pacific Centre and builds on the previous completed regional governance programme, GOLD. The project aims to increase accountability and transparency for more inclusive economic and social development to achieve the MDGs. GOVPAC not only works at the region-wide and sub-regional levels but also provides regional support at the national level to design interventions and technical support during implementation, as in the case of the support to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme to assist its member countries to plan, develop and implement their National Action Programmes.

Out of the total budget of USD 3.23 million,[33] GOVPAC has been successful in mobilizing almost 65 percent of the budget from Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and New Zealand International Aid and Development Agency (NZAID). Although this demonstrates the efficiency of the project to leverage its strategic partnerships, it has been expressed that there is a need to extend the donor group to bring in international experiences beyond Australia and New Zealand. Despite the ability of the project to secure cost sharing support, there have been delays in recruitment of staff. It is still too early to provide an evaluation of the success of the project.

4.2.2.10 Support to Asia Pacific Programme on Reinventing Government (REINVENTING GOV)

Unlike the other governance programmes, REINVENTING GOV is executed by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York. Launched in 2004 and on-going till the end of 2007, the project has enabled senior officials from Asia Pacific to receive capacity development at five regional forums: three in Asia and two in the Pacific and in the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government in 2005.[34] In addition, the project provided direct country-level support to produce several case studies, which then served as orientation and discussion tools for the Regional Forums themselves, while providing additional conclusions for the prioritisation of project objectives and future activities.

This project complements the other governance

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32. APGEN, PARAGON and TUGI.

33. Source: RCFII Resources Picture07March 2007.

projects—GOLD, PARAGON, ARGP and GOVPAC—as it provides a platform for countries to introduce alternative experiences in government reinvention and to develop strategies for future innovations in governance. It promotes cooperation between government, the private sector, and CSOs to improve the quality of governance at national and local levels. By identifying potential areas of South-South and North-South cooperation and action at the local, national, and international levels, it enhances the capacity of countries for participatory and transparent governance and for coping with the challenges of globalization and achieving the MDGs by enabling the creation of networks to interconnect the key players in governance: government, business, and civil society.

4.2.2.11 Regional Initiative on Strengthening Policy Dialogue on Indigenous, Highland & Tribal Peoples' Rights & Development (RIPP)

Launched in September 2004 and on-going till the end of 2007, RIPP focuses on enhancing understanding of the rights of indigenous people and to support their participation in policy dialogues at all levels, advocacy and capacity development. The contribution of RIPP to good governance is in the area of access to justice and human rights, especially through inter-country sharing of experiences on priority issues facing the indigenous people, capacity building of national institutions, strengthening of information-sharing and knowledge networks among them, and learning for sustainable development.

While it has been acknowledged that RIPP has a neutral platform for sharing experiences and lessons on indigenous issues and for providing support on strengthening national policy and programming frameworks, RIPP tends to be constrained by political sensitivities in some participating countries. Despite the constraints, the RIPP research, training and advocacy activities are expected to contribute towards integrating indigenous rights into the broader law and policy framework, through

a governance lens, with special emphasis on access to justice and human rights.

4.2.2.12 Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme (APGMP)

This latest gender programme taps on the tools and partnerships[35] of the Regional Gender Equality Programme, Asia Pacific Gender Equality Network (APGEN), to advocate for gender-responsive governance through support of efforts to mainstream gender equality into national policies and programmes. Phase 2 of APGEN (2002-2005) continued to address women's economic rights and the mainstreaming of gender into macroeconomic policies and on women's participation in decision making within the rights-based framework of Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, with gender as a cross-cutting issue. APGMP focuses primarily on two areas: women's economic rights and engendering of macroeconomic policies,[36] and women's political rights and gender-responsive governance.[37] Although the programme is managed from the RCC under the poverty cluster, gender staff is also posted to the RCB to help build partnerships with other practice areas and regional programmes based there.

As the key objective of both APGEN and ARGMP is to ensure that gender concerns are addressed as an integral crosscutting issue, these two programmes worked closely with various regional programmes. APGEN worked with PARAGON to develop a training module on gender-responsive governance, sponsored regional training of women and men in media and politics, and cooperated with TUGI to organize a regional summit of women in local government. Likewise, APGMP conducted several joint projects and activities with other regional programmes, such as RIPP and APDIP. Yet compared to other areas, the performance of the gender practice has been relatively 'disappointing'.[38] While all the governance programmes included a gender perspec-

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34. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been organizing the Global Forums since 1999.

35. The key partners of APGEN include UNIFEM, UNDAW, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ESCAP, UNAIDS, regional media associations, NGOs, CSOs, and women-based NGOs such as Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, WIPPaC, South Asian Network for Political Empowerment of Women, and International Women's Rights Action Watch.

36. This focus area is led by the poverty cluster in RCC.

37. This focus area is led by the governance cluster in RCB.

tive at the design stage, mainstreaming gender into national policies remains elusive.[38] There is evidence in Lao PDR that even the UNDP CO was unaware of the APGMP.

4.2.2.13 Conclusions

Over the years, UNDP has accumulated influence in the area of democratic governance, especially in new and politically sensitive areas such as corruption, human rights and capacity building of parliaments. It continues to be very relevant in Asia Pacific and, with its comparative advantage, UNDP can continue to play an important role in fostering best practices at all levels. Overall, the regional governance programmes have contributed to fostering democratic governance practices and processes, especially in the newly emerging economies as well as in the smaller states in the PICs. The results of the programmes bear testimony to the value of the regional initiatives to elevate governance issues on the policy agenda of many of the countries.

While the effectiveness of the regional governance programmes has been attributed to the quality of the project staff and their ability to develop and establish cooperation with the COs, there is concern about the weak linkages between regional and country programmes and that the regional initiatives do not adequately address country priorities. Some CO staff have limited knowledge of regional initiatives and seem to work independently even when similar programmes are offered. There is need for closer coordination with country programmes and other donor initiatives at country and sub-regional level. The regional governance projects would greatly benefit from clearly defined partnership strategies with stakeholders and donor agencies to ensure impact through improved coordination of efforts in participating countries.

The outcome evaluation highlighted potential threats to effectiveness, including differing agendas of external actors, the sensitivity of some governments to human rights and governance themes, and the heterogeneous nature of the region. Some

stakeholders believe that UNDP projects are reluctant to address highly sensitive human rights issues even though these issues have been identified as key development constraints in the region. While the regional governance programmes have reinforced learning and contributed to reforms, they are prone to lapses where there is insufficient political will and critical mass.

The regional governance programmes have a unique position as they can operate in areas like justice and human rights that are sensitive at the country level. Furthermore, the initiatives have facilitated the way for future interventions through raising awareness on issues of gender mainstreaming, civic engagement, accountability and transparency and how these issues promote good governance. The projects have demonstrated that real reform takes time, and requires a sensitive approach to achieve outcomes. It also involves the identification and empowerment of key 'change agents' in order to build local capacity and ownership for governance activities and outcomes. Although the MYFF service lines have been designed out of regional priorities, there is a need for greater flexibility to enable the programmes to be 'opportunistic', to be able to respond effectively to short notice needs and demands but without compromising the overall strategic directions.

4.2.3 HIV/AIDS

4.2.3.1 Introduction

As part of the theme 'democratic governance for human development', four projects focusing on HIV/AIDS have been implemented; three have been completed and one is still on-going (see Table 3). Because of their distinct character, these projects have been treated as a separate cluster and the completed ones have been subjected to a separate outcome evaluation.[40] Taken together, the completed projects more or less cover the entire Asia-Pacific region. The completed projects were started in 2002 and were planned to be three to four years duration, but South East Asia HIV (SEAHIV) and Regional

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38. UNDP Gender Strategy for Asia and the Pacific: 2005-2006

39. Peacock-Taylor C and C Mathiasen, 'Second Regional Cooperation Framework 2002—2006 for Asia and the Pacific: Governance Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', PEM Consult, August 2006; Evaluation Team field interviews.

40. Molesworth K and K Wyss, 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region: HIV/AIDS Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', Swiss Tropical Institute, January 2007.

Table 3. APRCF II HIV/AIDS programmes and projects			
	Programme/Project	**Participating Region**	**Status**
1	Building Regional HIV Resilience (SEAHIV) (RAS/02/200)	South East Asia	Completed
2	Pacific Regional STI/HIV/AIDS and Development Programme (PRHP)(RAS/02/301)	Pacific Island Countries	Completed
3	Regional Empowerment & Action to Contain HIV/AIDS Beyond Borders (REACH) (RAS/02/003/A/01/31)	South Asia & North East Asia	Completed
4	Regional HIV & Development Programme for Asia (RAS/02/003—this is a substantive revision of project 3 above resulting from a merger of 1 and 3)	Asia & Pacific	On going

Empowerment & Action to Contain HIV/AIDS (REACH) were prematurely terminated in 2004. From 2005 one regional programme, Regional HIV and Development Programme for Asia, has been implemented by RCC.

A large number of agencies are engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Some of these have a narrow health perspective on the epidemic. In contrast UNDP places HIV vulnerability on the wider development agenda and moves responses beyond the confines of the health sector. Cross-border mobility—labour migration and trafficking—is a crucial but neglected factor fuelling the epidemic. All the projects aim at addressing the complexity of socio-cultural and economic factors and strengthening national and inter-regional capacity building.

Responding to HIV/AIDS was one of five core goals for UNDP's 2004-2007 MYFF. The intended outcome of the projects under this cluster has been: "To plan and implement multi-sectoral strategies for limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigating its social and economic impacts, institutional capacity built and strengthened." More specifically, the projects were focused on three service lines: 5.1 Leadership and capacity development; 5.2 Development planning, implementation and HIV/AIDS responses; and 5.3 Advocacy and communication.

4.2.3.2 South East Asia HIV (SEAHIV): Building regional HIV resilience

This project was designed in response to the rapid increase in HIV prevalence in South East Asia. It has a focus on trans-border movement. SEAHIV was responsible for formalizing the Chang Rai Recommendation on population movement and HIV vulnerability into a Memorandum of Understanding signed by China, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Thailand and Myanmar. UNDP also convened a Regional Task Force on Mobility and HIV Vulnerability Reduction (UNRTF), which drafted the 2004 Strategy on Mobility and HIV Vulnerability Reduction in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. Moreover, a website was set up, and more than 50 theme discussion papers, 'Blue Books', were produced.

The project was intended to run from September 2002 to August 2006, but it was terminated in December 2004. In view of the needs of the region, the project was highly relevant. However, UNRTF was working with a poorly defined mandate and suffering from lack of direction, thus it disintegrated after the end of 2004. Informants (both internal and external) criticized key project staff, especially for controlling UNRTF rather than fostering broad ownership. This gave UNDP a leading role in HIV and mobility issues, but at the expense of broad inter-agency ownership. UNRTF's approach was also criticized as being overly academic and for not doing enough to involve HIV-positive people. The number of discussion papers produced is impressive. However, fewer papers of higher quality could have been more cost-effective. More efforts should be made to capacity-build migrant and HIV-positive groups. Gender issues need to be more fully addressed. Both the approach and the abrupt termination have undermined sustainability.

4.2.3.3 Pacific Regional STI/HIV/AIDS and Development Programme (PRHP)

This was a joint UN agency programme, covering almost all PICs, aimed at "increasing PIC capacity for a more effective and sustainable response to the spread of HIV/STI and the care for those with AIDS," while also "creating a better understanding of the linkages between development problems in the region and the spread of HIV/AIDS." It has applied a multi-sectoral approach to HIV vulnerability and a holistic, socioeconomic perspective encompassing poverty, gender, governance and employment issues. Within the programme, UNDP has taken an approach involving civil society in the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS in national policy formulation. A number of transformational leadership workshops have contributed to this. An important partnership was developed with the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools.

Despite the low prevalence of HIV infection (except in Papua New Guinea), the programme has been relevant because of the high vulnerability of sections of the population, combined with an increase in prevalence in recent years. UNDP's partnership with the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools has been highly effective in changing attitudes in sensitive matters and getting the Church involved in supporting people with HIV. UNDP was instrumental in establishing the Fiji Network of Positive People. However this network has not functioned well due to internal problems. A partnership with the Fiji School of Medicine was effective in strengthening CSOs, but due to an abrupt reduction in funding, the project was unable to honour its commitment to several NGOs. This was demotivating for NGOs and CSOs and had negative implications for effectiveness and sustainability.

4.2.3.4 Regional Empowerment & Action to Contain HIV/AIDS (REACH): Moving beyond borders

This project's objective was to contain the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS in the region through integrated responses that promote gender equality, poverty reduction and good governance. More specifically, the project aimed to: advocate for policy change, strengthen knowledge and capacity, and protect dignity and human security. There was a special focus on empowering marginalized and vulnerable groups, including injecting drug users, homosexual men and people living with HIV/AIDS. The project established a web-based portal for Asia and the Pacific, disseminated a "You and AIDS" magazine and brought out a number of research-based publications and DVDs. It also provided direct support to a large number of regional groups. An important output was the 2003 Human Development Report titled HIV/AIDS and Development in South Asia.

On the whole, the project was effective in South Asia but less effective in North East Asia. It succeeded in achieving a high level of inclusion of migrant groups in its HIV initiatives. Compared to the other two projects (SEAHIV and PRHP) it also did more to address gender issues, such as feminization of the epidemic, e.g. related to trafficking. A regional approach was seen to be crucial to address the broad factors driving the epidemic. But country and regional teams should be more coordinated. The project had to absorb substantial budgetary cuts and was unable to honour all commitments. Funding problems thus hampered full capitalization of initiatives.

4.2.3.5 Regional HIV and Development Programme for Asia

Since 2005, RCC has implemented a Regional HIV and Development Programme for Asia, which has followed up on and merged a number of the activities of the three projects above. The overall goal is to strengthen the commitment and capacity in Asia Pacific to address the human development and trans-border challenges of HIV/AIDS. The programme comprises three main areas: policy advo-

cacy and dialogue; migration, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS; and empowerment of people living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, the programme provides technical support to UNDP COs. The programme has continued supporting a large number of HIV positive groups, loosely connected in an Asia-Pacific Positive Network. It has also succeeded in fostering partnerships with ASEAN, SAARC and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat for formulating and implementing sub-regional HIV/AIDS strategies that reflect the human development, governance and rights context of the epidemic. The programme has emphasized the gender dimension. At its first meeting in 2006, the External Advisory Board of the programme recommended strengthening the link with MDG work as well increasing the capacity of CSOs.

Establishment of the regional centres was costly, and this is one of the reasons for the cutbacks that hampered the HIV/AIDS projects. With a concentrated, albeit small, staff the RCC has infused the merged successor programme with new dynamics. But funding remains a bottleneck, and the level of financial resources is only about half of the level of the three previous projects combined. Given this situation as well as potential synergies, it was probably wise to merge the three discrete projects into one programme.

4.2.3.6 Conclusions

The projects in the HIV/AIDS cluster have focused on cross-border factors in the spread of the epidemic neglected by many other agencies, and in this area, the RCF has really made a difference. The regional programme has also proven its effectiveness in dealing with the sensitive issues that are linked to the epidemic. But although some of the activities have been focused at country level, the programme has not been sufficiently linked to country programmes. Even sensitive issues eventually have to be dealt with at country level, and the link between the RCC and the COs must be strengthened.

The effectiveness of the completed projects has been varying, and some of the project outcomes could not be sustained. All the projects have been hampered

by cutbacks in funding, although apparently there is some disagreement between RCC and RBAP about the causes and justification for this. Not all the activities under the three completed projects measure up to the regionality criteria. A clear division of labour should be found between the regional programme and the country programmes. The gender dimension of the epidemic is crucial and must be addressed much more consistently.

In 2005, a global task team addressed the issue of division of labour between the various UN and other agencies involved in combating HIV/AIDS.[41] The main purpose was to avoid duplication. This exercise confirmed the UNDP's leading role in three areas: HIV and human development; HIV and governance; and HIV, human rights and gender. UNDP can thus maintain a distinct profile in its HIV/AIDS work, but it is important that this is not at the expense of cooperation with the other agencies. The right balance was clearly not found in one of the completed projects (SEAHIV).

Although under the RCF there has been some cooperation with other UN bodies, notably UNAIDS, this cooperation should be strengthened. The same is true of the cooperation with regional institutions such as ASEAN, SAARC and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

Another question is whether HIV/AIDS projects need to be part of a *regional* programme such as APRCF. Most of the efforts to combat HIV/AIDS unfold at the national and local levels and are now well entrenched in most Asian countries.

4.2.4 SUB-REGIONAL COOPERATION

4.2.4.1 Introduction

Under the heading 'Fostering Sub-Regional Cooperation', seven projects have been clustered as shown in Table 4. This grouping is more of a modality rather than a thematic area. It comprises a group of heterogeneous projects with one common aspect: they aim to fostering cooperation in an Asian-Pacific sub-region. The substance of this cooperation varies from trade and economic cooperation over combat-

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41. Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination Among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors, 'Final Report', 14 June 2005.

Table 4. APRCF II Sub-regional cooperation programmes and projects			
	Programme/Project	**Region**	**Status**
1	Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP) (RAS/01/430)	North-East Asia	Ongoing
2	Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRRP) (RAS/05/061)	Central Asia & China	Ongoing
3	UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP) (RAS 03/100)	SEA	Ongoing
4	Peace-building & Crisis Recovery Project for the Pacific Region (PeacePac) (RAS/05/360)	PICs	Ongoing
5	ASEAN-UNDP Partnership Facility (ASEAN-UNDP) (RAS/03/260)	SEA	Completed
6	Regional Programme on Capacity Building for Sustainable Recovery and Risk Reduction in Tsunami Affected Countries (RAS/05/063)	India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Thailand, Indonesia	Ongoing
7	Capacity Development for Tsunami Aid Coordination (RAS/05/064)	Sri Lanka, Maldives, Thailand, Indonesia	Ongoing

ing human trafficking to peace-building and disaster mitigation. The projects under this cluster have not been subjected to an outcome evaluation. The UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP) was subjected to a separate evaluation in 2006 and Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP) was evaluated in early 2007.

Three of the projects, TRADP, Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRRP) and ASEAN-UNDP, were established in the 1990s and have gone through several phases. The two Tsunami-projects, in contrast, were started in 2005, after the devastating December 26 2004 Tsunami. TRADP, SRRP and ASEAN-UNDP are all linked to the RCF II theme 'globalization and economic governance'. PeacePac and the two Tsunami projects are linked to the cross-cutting issue of 'crisis prevention and recovery', which includes natural disaster mitigation and recovery.

4.2.4.2 Tumen River Area Development Programme (TRADP)

This programme was initiated in the early 1990s and has brought together five countries in North-East Asia: China, Russia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea and Mongolia. Tumen River runs through and separates the three former countries. Phase III of the project was intended to run for three years from 2001 to 2003, but it was subsequently extended annually and is still running today. The programme has aimed at fostering cooperation in a number of fields. In Phase III, the focus has been on cooperation in five sectors: the environment, trade and investment, energy, transportation and communications, and tourism. Since 1995, the programme has been implemented under the Tumen River Area Development Coordination Committee (with the three riparian states as members) and the Tumen River Area Consultative Commission (with all five member states). A small Secretariat has carried out the day-to-day operations.

At the time of its conception, TRADP was highly innovative, bringing together countries with different economic and political systems in a region riddled with tensions and conflict. Although it remains highly relevant today, the history of the programme has been marred by the huge gap between the ambitious objectives and the extremely limited resources. It has proven very difficult to make the involved governments fund the planned activities and take ownership of the programme.[42] The secretariat has always been understaffed and has, in recent years, been decimated to two to three persons. A number of studies have been produced in varying fields and a range of plans have been developed. But there has been little success in translating this into action, and gradually the programme has run out of steam. UNDP's commitment to the programme has also been fluctuating and ambiguous. While UNESCAP may be interested in getting involved, only full government involvement by at least a couple of countries can give the programme renewed momentum.

4.2.4.3 Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRRP)

Building on a broader Silk Road Initiative launched in the late 1990s, the SRRP was foreseen as a two year programme, funded by RBAP and Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS and implemented together with UNCTAD and UNWTO. The programme first became operational in April 2005 when China, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan endorsed the programme document. The aim of the programme is to build capacity for regional cooperation and development among the Central Asian countries and China. The main components are in the areas of regional cooperation, transport and transit, trade and customs, and tourism. The programme has, among other things, produced a Regional Investment Guide and held an Investment Forum in Xian as well as a regional meeting of Silk Road Mayors in Tashkent. Its core staff consists of only two persons.

There is little doubt about the relevance of the programme, but the gap between ambitions and resources is huge. It has been difficult to get the intended participating countries truly involved. The Chief Technical Advisor has recently made a proposal for the continuation of the programme,[43] which envisages the establishment of a number of national NGOs as well as national Silk Road Commissions in order to carry the programme forward. The realism of this proposal is questionable.

4.2.4.4 UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP)

This project was started in 2000 and has gone through two phases, 2000-2003 and 2003-2006. A third phase (2006-2009) was begun recently. Initially, the project was funded by UN Foundation, UNICEF and AusAID; in the second phase, it was funded by New Zealand, the Netherlands, United States, Norway and Sweden. The goal is to reduce the severity and harm associated with human trafficking in the region.

The main project components (Phase II) have been: building the knowledge base, strategic analysis and priority setting, targeted interventions and catalytic research, and advocacy[44]. The project in Phase II has succeeded in establishing a Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (COMMIT), based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the governments of China, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. National Action Plans on anti-trafficking have been adopted by all the countries except Lao PDR (where it is underway) and Myanmar. The project has also provided training, awareness raising and a limited amount of research in the area, and it has brought together different stakeholders, notably governments and NGOs. Finally, it has supported some specific anti-trafficking interventions. However, victims of trafficking have not sufficiently been brought into the project as responsible stakeholders.

With relatively limited resources and a high staff turnover, UNIAP has catalyzed anti-trafficking policies and activities both at sub-regional and national levels. The establishment of COMMIT—which was not foreseen in the project document—is

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42. The following builds on 'Project Evaluation of the Tumen River Area Development Programme', Ramboll Finnconsult, draft, March 2007.

43. Hubner W, 'Silk Road Initiative: A Concept Note for the Next Stage', February 2007.

an impressive achievement in view of the countries' differences and the history of tensions within and between them. It has started a process that gradually will reduce the role of UN agencies and put more responsibility on the involved governments. This process is planned to continue in Phase III. In many ways, UNIAP—albeit a UN inter-agency venture—can be seen as a model project for UNDP's regional programme, addressing vital and sensitive issues, fostering regional cooperation, bringing governments on board and catalyzing specific interventions. However, some stakeholders claim that UNDP itself has not been as active as it should have been during project implementation.

4.2.4.5 Peace-building & Crisis Recovery Project for the Pacific Region (PeacePac)

A Regional Facility for Peace Building and Post-Conflict Recovery in the Pacific was set up in September 2003 with funding from AusAID. From 2005, this was followed by the PeacePac project. In November 2006, UNDP's Pacific Centre submitted a comprehensive proposal, Strengthening the Pacific Region Crisis Prevention and Management Architecture, to BCPR, to a large extent funded by AusAID and NZAID. Over the years, a large number of disparate activities have been carried out, aimed at increasing regional awareness and cooperation on conflict prevention and peace-building and, at the same time, reducing vulnerability to natural disasters in the Pacific Islands. This has been done in close cooperation with governments, NGOs and regional institutions, notably Pacific Islands Forum, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, and the University of South Pacific. UNDP has, among other things, contributed to the creation of a Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network.

In view of the numerous conflicts in the Pacific Islands—recently in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Fiji—as well as the recurring natural disasters, such as the 1998 Tsunami that killed 2000 people in Papua New Guinea, it is obvious that projects in these areas can be highly relevant.[45] However, the link between peace-building and crisis recovery on the one hand and natural disaster risk reduction on the other is not self-evident. The two areas need very different kinds of expertise. It will be difficult for UNDP's Pacific Centre to establish sufficient 'critical mass' in both areas. Moreover, it is not entirely clear that UNDP possesses a comparative advantage in natural disaster management, which is a crowded field. In the peace and stability area, AusAID sees UNDP as a useful, 'neutral' conduit in a region where several countries have strained relations with Australia. Conversely, it is important for UNDP not to become too dependent on the dominant actor/donor in the region.

4.2.4.6 ASEAN-UNDP Partnership Facility

Since the 1970s, UNDP has collaborated with and supported the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) in Jakarta. For many years, the main effort was related to the establishment of an ASEAN Free Trade Area. Under RCF II, an ASEAN-UNDP Partnership Facility has been established that has provided technical advisory support to analysis, dialogue and advocacy to accelerate regional trade and investment liberalization. The focus has been on furthering an Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), adopted by ASEAN leaders in 2000, to narrow the development gap within ASEAN and between ASEAN and other parts of the world. A key component has been to assist new ASEAN member countries in their development and regional integration efforts with a goal to reduce the disparities between the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Vietnam) and the 'old' ASEAN member countries. Recently, ASEAN has adopted the Vientiane Action Programme 2004-2010, which broadens the cooperation to encompass three 'pillars'—political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation.

The long-standing cooperation between UNDP and ASEC, which is a crucial and well-established

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44. In addition to the evaluation team's interviews with project management in Bangkok, field staff in Lao PDR and Cambodia, and government representatives in Lao PDR, this section builds on the report: Bugnion C, 'Phase II Summative Evaluation: UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region', Subur Consulting, March 2006.

45. Apart from documentary evidence, this section is based on interviews with several staff members of UNDP's Pacific Centre, leading staff at Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, and the head of AusAID in Fiji.

regional institution, has its obvious merits.[46] The Partnership Facility's special focus on the development needs of the CLMV and the efforts to narrow the development gap between these very poor countries and the rest is clearly in line with UNDP's mandate and priorities. But it appears that the UNDP funding has been used for a range of activities serving the broader ASEAN agenda. Moreover, ASEC has expressed a wish for future collaboration with UNDP in such diverse areas as combating avian flu, disaster mitigation, trade negotiations, the IAI, good governance and private-sector development.[47] While all these areas are relevant and deserving, there is a case for tightening the focusing of future UNDP support.

4.2.4.7 Regional Programme on Capacity Building for Sustainable Recovery and Risk Reduction in Tsunami Affected Countries

Entirely funded by the 'flash appeal' in the wake of the disastrous Indian Ocean Tsunami of 26 December 2004, this programme started implementation in November 2005. It was originally planned for just one year but was subsequently extended until June 2007. Its focus is on Indonesia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The programme has three main intended outcomes: improving information management systems for post-tsunami recovery and disaster reduction efforts; making learning tools and initiatives available to the region for building post-disaster recovery and disaster risk management capacity; and enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of multi-hazard, end-to-end early warning systems at the local level.

It is too early to assess the extent to which these outcomes have been achieved. The April-June 2006 Quarterly Progress Report notes progress in several areas but also points to lacking and/or reduced capacity in this area in UNDP COs as a bottleneck for the regional programme. It underlines the complexity of establishing early warning systems, due to the many and various groups of stakeholders, and the need to identify a niche that the programme can address.[48] On the whole, UNDP's effort in this extremely crowded field must be assessed in its relation to the numerous other actors who came forward after the tsunami.

4.2.4.8 Capacity Development for Tsunami Aid Coordination

The Indian Ocean Tsunami resulted in greatly increased aid flows and continues to pose huge challenges to aid coordination, effectiveness and accountability. In partnership with OCHA, ADB and bilateral donors, UNDP has implemented an aid coordination project since April 2005. It was planned to be terminated by December 2006 but has been extended. The main aim of the project is to deliver tracking systems of development assistance to the coordination authorities in four of the Tsunami affected countries: Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Four development assistance databases have been customized to meet the requirements of the governments of the four countries, and a regional tsunami development assistance database has been established. At the same time, the project contributes to the Tsunami Recovery Impact Assessment and Monitoring System initiative. In Maldives, the project has catalyzed a new, more transparent aid coordination mechanism, the Maldives Partnership Forum. Overall, it is too early to evaluate the outcomes.

4.2.4.9 Conclusions

The projects in this cluster have are common in that they are truly regional, that is, they measure up to the regionality criteria that are important for the RCF. In other ways, they are very different in their substance, modalities, objectives and effectiveness. The Tumen River and Silk Road projects have been under implementation for a long time but are both characterized by a huge gap between towering ambitions and meagre resources. In both cases, it seems necessary for the involved governments to take ownership and contribute more actively to project implementation. Otherwise the results will

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46. Besides documentary studies, this section is based on interviews with a number of ASEC staff members as well as UNDP Indonesia CO staff.

47. These areas were listed during the meeting with the Evaluation Team Leader.

48. UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, 'The Regional Programme on Capacity Building for Sustainable Recovery and Risk Reduction in Tsunami Affected Countries, Quarterly Progress Report April-June 2006', pp 15-16.

continue to be of limited significance and a far cry from the potential. In contrast, UNIAP has been better endowed and succeeded in bringing several agencies together and governments on board. The project has addressed sensitive issues and been very effective in furthering an anti-trafficking agenda in the sub-region.

The PeacePac project deals with highly relevant issues in the PICs but offers its limited resources to so many different activities that it is less effective. It is a problem that the project tries to span human crisis as well as natural disaster prevention, risk reduction and mitigation. The ASEAN project forms part of a very long cooperation between UNDP and this important regional institution. To some extent, it has focused on building much needed capacity to narrow the gap between the new, very poor ASEAN countries, CLMV, and the rest of the ASEAN countries, but the UNDP funding appears to have been supporting a range of other activities, not all central to UNDP's mandate. Finally, the two tsunami projects form part of a response to an obvious need. The main issue is whether these projects will succeed in building capacity in a way that is aligned with all the other initiatives carried out by the numerous actors in the post-tsunami arena.

4.3. EFFICIENCY

With a total budget of USD 89,738,163 spread over five years,[49] limited resources have posed challenges to the RCF. As such, the efficiency is compromised when the programme tries to deliver too much in terms of thematic coverage to a large number of countries with its limited resources (as exemplified in the case of PeacePac). The limited resources have constrained the impact of many innovative programmes as they were unable to capitalize on the regional initiatives, as happened with the HIV/AIDS projects, the REG and other governance projects. Stakeholders indicated that the reduction in funding for several projects was demotivating for the civil society stakeholders and had negative implications. Furthermore, part of the

costs of implementing the activities of the RCF at the country level were shifted to the COs that already had their hands full with their respective country programmes.

The limited resources are aggravated by the complex financial tracking systems that make it difficult to monitor the efficiency of programme delivery.[50] The cumbersome and lengthy application, procurement and exit procedures have deterred some external stakeholders from engaging with UNDP because the disproportionate administrative and time costs required to access relatively small amounts of funds outweighed potential benefits.
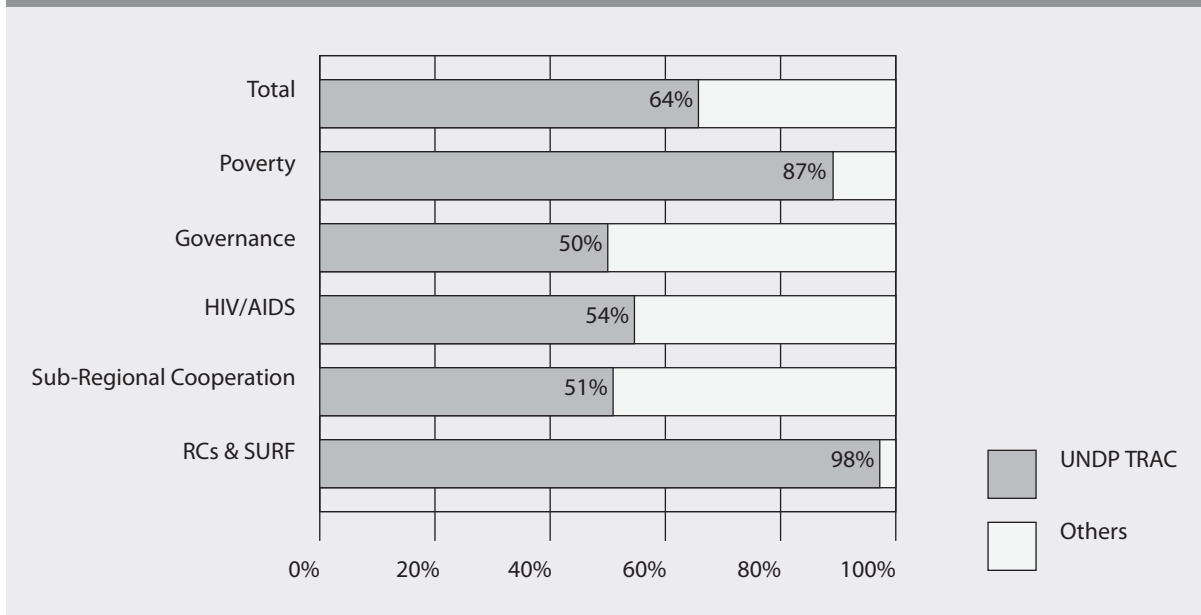
The financial modality of the second RCF was to engage with numerous partners—governments, NGOs, donors, regional organizations, etc. to ensure the cost effectiveness of the programmes. At the planning stage, it was envisaged that out of the USD 130 million estimated for the RCF, UNDP would provide USD 71 million while the balance 45 percent would be mobilized from other partners. In actuality, almost two-thirds of the funding for RCF II was from UNDP TRAC. While the projects under the governance, HIV/AIDS and sub-regional cooperation clusters, managed to secure almost half of their funding from other resources, in the case of the poverty cluster projects, total co-funding was only 13 percent (Figure 3). Furthermore, the projects in the Pacific Region generally are more efficient in harnessing co-funding from other donors, largely from AusAID and NZAID. Likewise only one project (APDIP) was able to secure significant co-funding from the private sector.

Prior to setting up the regional centres in 2004, the management and coordination of the governance programmes were decentralized with UNOPS as the executing agency. There were criticisms on how the RCF projects were being executed by UNOPS until April 2006 when the execution function was shifted to the regional centres. Since UNOPS was almost solely involved with administrative support, there was no backstopping staff that could interact

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49. RCFII Resources Picture 07, March 2007 (for the period 2002—2006).

50. Peacock-Taylor C and C Mathiasen, 'Second Regional Cooperation Framework 2002—2006 for Asia and the Pacific: Governance Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', PEM Consult, August 2006.

Figure 3, Sources of funding for Asia-Pacific RCF II

Category	UNDP TRAC
Total	64%
Poverty	87%
Governance	50%
HIV/AIDS	54%
Sub-Regional Cooperation	51%
RCs & SURF	98%

Legend: UNDP TRAC, Others

Axis: 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

substantively with the project personnel. Without having enough understanding of the importance or the substance of the projects, UNOPS's support was inefficient and characterized by chronic delays.[51] The efficiency of implementation had improved and was satisfactory overall.

Despite the relatively low budget, the second RCF for Asia-Pacific has managed to harness its resources to generate an impressively large number of studies that provide an alternate perspective and influence on national pro-poor policies within the region. These studies (such as the Regional and Sub-regional HDRs) have been produced in a relatively short period of time despite a limited number of professional project staff. The RCF II was also efficient in using electronic media to enhance networking with partners and stakeholders and to disseminate the knowledge products.

The technical regional programme staff generally is highly competent and professional. However, staff members are being stretched by demands for technical support and backstopping on country programme activities from the COs thus leaving little effort for dissemination and advocacy work. Unless well-managed, this will affect the efficiency of the staff.

The establishment of the regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo took up a lot of time and resources mid-way through RCF II. This created some turbulence and led to reductions in the budgets of a number of the projects at short notice. However, the centres have evolved remarkably well in relatively short time, and they have provided a new dynamism to the regional programme. From a narrow management perspective, it might have been more efficient to create just one centre, but the two centres, located in the South and South-East Asian sub-regions respectively and with their thematic division of labour, appear to be an appropriate institutional set-up given the political considerations as well as the development challenges.

Prior to the setting up of the sub-regional centre in Suva, the Pacific sub-region tended to be largely ignored in most regional programme interventions. The establishment of the Pacific Centre in Suva in 2005 certainly was a step in the right direction and has managed to infuse the programme with new dynamics in the Pacific Islands. Having a regional programme provide technical backstopping to several country projects sharing similar concerns has proven to be a cost-effective modality in the Pacific, which is separated by long distances. Furthermore, with its regional perspective, it was able

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51. Soni-Bhagat S and R Pillay. 'UNDP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region: Poverty Cluster—An Independent Outcome Evaluation', Abacus International Management LLC, May/June 2006.

to incorporate best practices from individual country experiences into project design. This also facilitated the sharing of experiences between national project staff and the beneficiaries of various projects and promoted learning and cross-fertilization of experiences. The use of regional expert resources has also assisted in the cost-effectiveness of the RCF.

Over the five-year period of the Asia-Pacific RCF II, there has been a move towards streamlining projects in the various clusters. This step is a move in the right direction to optimize staff resources at the regional centres as the limited resources necessitate an appropriate balance between undertaking regional programme work and providing policy advice to COs. To ensure overall efficiency of the RCF, a further consolidation of the programme focus is needed.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation found that the sustainability of the RCF outcomes and benefits varies. For instance, in the case of the TRADP, there is little evidence that the benefits have been translated into sustained activities. There are some criticisms that the RCF has not leveraged enough change through sustained advocacy and too often, at the country level, the regional activities are one-off events with little follow-up activities. While some of the projects have endeavoured to establish e-forums and websites to sustain the projects, response from the stakeholders to this modality has been lukewarm.

Stakeholders have stressed that the key to sustainability is to engage COs to take a role in maintaining momentum and sustaining national-level initiatives. Otherwise, while the RCF may have produced innovative initiatives, many of these will dissipate at the end of the project. However, some COs find it difficult to sustain the benefits from the RCF activities and policy changes when the initiatives do not rank high in the countries' priorities. Conversely, for RCF activities that are well-linked (and relevant) to country programmes, the benefits have been sustained and integrated at the country level, as in the case of some activities of REP-PoR and PSLP, which have managed to replicate their pilot project with private funds.

Generally, the RCF has been prolific in coming out with useful knowledge products, some of which are of high quality and empirically based. However, their contribution towards sustainability has been constrained by the limited dissemination. In many of the less developed countries, it is necessary to translate these knowledge products (including the toolkits) into local languages in order to reach out to stakeholders and to sustain the output benefits.

In aggregate, the project outputs of the PIC-focussed initiatives have been more sustainable in that either they have been successfully integrated into country plans and initiatives and/or are being used as a basis for policy development, and that they have led to follow-on activities. There are a number of notable examples of PIC activities (PSLP, PRAJA/RRRT and GOLD) having satisfied one or both of the above criteria. In this regard, the sustainability of benefits is considered to be fully satisfactory.

Against these positive findings, it was noted that with some of the activities there was a lack of commitment from the participating countries. With SRRP, for example, it has been difficult to get the intended participating countries truly involved. If this situation persists, it is not likely to lead to any meaningful or sustainable outcome.

It is clear that there is a need to assist some of the less developed countries in their efforts to establish and operationalize the programmes. Unless some additional resources can be made available through the COs to support these countries, the sustainability of many of the innovative initiatives will remain weak, as demonstrated in projects like TRADP and TUGI. Even for projects that have the advantage of the support from other donors like AusAid and NZAid, the challenge lies in the infrastructure limitations of the less developed countries to proceed without donor assistance.

Generally, sustainability in all the thematic and cross-cutting initiatives requires developing a long-term, multi-faceted partnership with all key institutions in the region and networking at all levels. However, with limited resources, there is a need for UNDP to make strategic choices in terms of target countries and thematic focus. Given the diverse and rapidly changing political and socio-economic environment in the Asia-Pacific region, there can never be a 'one-size fits all' approach for the RCF.

Chapter 5
Conclusions

The evaluation has dealt with the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the second Asia-Pacific RCF implemented over the five-year period 2002 to 2006.

5.1 RELEVANCE

By and large, the programme has succeeded in addressing vital problems in the Asian region and the Pacific sub-region. This has happened at a time when many parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands have gone through dramatic changes both in the economic and political spheres. The programme has been flexible enough to address changing needs of various parts, and partners, of the region. Its predecessor, the first RCF, was widely seen as being primarily supply driven. In conformity with the dominant trends in development cooperation, the RCF II has clearly moved in the direction of being more demand driven. This has contributed to its relevance (and effectiveness), but there is also a limit to how far this should go, lest the programme lose its strategic focus.

At the core of RCF II have been activities aimed at fostering sustainable human development and achieving the MDGs. However, the contribution to these goals has been largely indirect. The programme has primarily produced a vast range of knowledge products in these and associated areas. Most of the knowledge products have been relevant, but their dissemination has not been given the required attention. The knowledge products have been used for training, capacity development and advocacy, which are much needed but highly insufficient due to the limited resources of the programme.

Initially, the RCF had three thematic areas: globalization and economic governance, democratic governance for human development and sustainable development. The three areas were not very well defined and there was considerable overlap between them. In practice, the programme

has been structured under four clusters: poverty reduction and MDGs, democratic governance, combating HIV/AIDS, and fostering sub-regional cooperation. To a degree, the poverty reduction and MDGs and democratic governance correspond to the areas of globalization and economic governance and democratic governance for human development. But combating HIV/AIDS entails aspects under all three main areas, although it was originally included under the governance theme. Fostering sub-regional cooperation is a modality rather than a thematic area and comprises a group of very heterogeneous projects. During implementation, it appears that 'sustainable development'—also called 'environmental sustainability' in the programme document, although the two terms are not synonymous—has been toned down. Out of just three projects focusing on energy and environment (and their links to poverty), one has been under the poverty cluster, one under governance and one under sub-regional cooperation. Overall, there has been a lack of clarity in the structuring of the RCF. This militates against giving the programme a clear strategic thrust.

Moreover, the programme had two cross-cutting areas: gender and development, and ICT for development. Gender is certainly a very important cross-cutting development dimension and, as such, ought to be mainstreamed throughout the programme (but this has not happened). In contrast, ICT for development is more of a modality, albeit of continued importance. The programme, moreover, identifies 'crisis prevention and recovery' as a development dimension, but it is really more of an extra theme, somewhat parallel to combating HIV/AIDS, for example. In practice, it has only played a limited role, except in the Pacific Islands.

Despite these critical remarks, it is clear that the main themes of the RCF II—and the corresponding clusters of projects—have been relevant for the Asia-Pacific region. Despite the remarkable economic dynamism and the success in poverty reduction

in recent years, combating poverty remains the paramount development challenge. The regional HDRs and MDG reports, as well as a range of other knowledge products, have been relevant and useful as a basis for advocacy, capacity development and policy advice targeted at governments, regional institutions, NGOs and other development actors. To a degree, UNDP faces a credibility issue in dealing with macro-economic and trade issues, where many other actors—such as the World Bank, ADB and UNCTAD—have more intellectual capacity and a longer history. But if the human development perspective—and its relation to achieving the MDGs—is focused and refined, UNDP can maintain and strengthen its comparative advantage in a way that is highly relevant to the Asian-Pacific development challenges.

Democratic governance is a core value for UNDP, an important end in itself and a means to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable human development. As such, UNDP's competence in this area is recognized by other development actors. The Asia-Pacific region has a long way to go towards achieving good governance. The RCF has offered a wide range of activities aimed at supporting democratization and furthering transparency and accountability. Some of these have dealt with sensitive issues such as corruption and human rights, and with these issues a regional approach has been useful. On the whole, the governance projects have clearly been relevant to the needs of the region.

In view of the recent spread of HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region, the projects dealing with this have certainly addressed a vital issue. Moreover, a regional approach has had certain advantages given the sensitive nature of the issue. But the main battle against HIV/AIDS continues to be at the national level, and a substantial part of the project activities have, in fact, supported national efforts. It is not entirely clear that a UNDP regional programme—with projects such as those implemented under the RCF—has a clear role and a comparative advantage in what is a very crowded field.

The sub-regional projects have in common that they are truly regional in their approach and address transboundary issues. In other ways, they are very different from each other, but their relevance is generally high. One of the most impressive

projects under the RCF—UNIAP, dealing with cross-border trafficking in the Greater Mekong Region—belongs to this group. So do the two well-funded tsunami projects, whose relevance cannot be doubted (effectiveness is another issue). For some of the other projects, the gap between the ambitious goals and the meagre resources allocated has been to large. So, while theoretically relevant, in practice they have not been able to achieve much.

5.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Overall, it is likely that the RCF II has contributed to poverty reduction, human development and achievement of MDGs, but mainly indirectly. There have been a few downstream activities directly supporting poor beneficiaries, such as the microcredit programme under PSLP in the Pacific Islands. But the main thrust of the programme has been upstream, aiming at producing and disseminating knowledge, creating awareness, building capacity and influencing policies. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness, outcome, and impact of such efforts. There are many actors and factors at play, and the link between advocacy based on UNDP knowledge products, changes in policies and practices, and reduced poverty or enhanced human development is at best indirect and difficult to track down. Moreover, the RCF II has no framework for systeatic monitoring with baselines and indicators, and hence the evaluation has entailed a fair degree of circumstantial evidence and partly subjective assessments, mainly based on documentary studies and interviews with a large number of stakeholders.

The programme has been effective in producing a vast number of knowledge products, generally of reasonably good quality. Quality might have been better if the quantities produced under certain projects had been more limited. The flagship products have been the RHDRs and the MDG reports. These have been very useful and contributed to raise the profile of the RCF. The programme has also organized a large number of training sessions, workshops, seminars and conferences and used these to disseminate ideas, findings and policy advice.

Nevertheless, the dissemination, capacity building, advocacy and policy advice activities have not been given enough attention. The financial and

human resources of the programme have not been sufficient for this. Moreover, the link between the RCF and the UNDP COs has been too weak. Ideally, the major part of the capacity building and advocacy work could be carried out by the COs that have good relations with governments and other development actors. But this happens only to a limited extent, and thus good opportunities for increased effectiveness (and impact) get lost.

The RCF has successfully dealt with a range of sensitive issues such as corruption, human rights and those linked to HIV/AIDS. There is no doubt that a regional programme has a comparative advantage in tackling such issues, although ultimately they have to be addressed at the national level.

The programme has also focused on a number of cross-border problems and promoted regional advocacy. However, a number of projects—and activities under these—do not really measure up to the regionality criteria and might as well have been implemented at the national level.

Under the regional programme, there have been a number of innovative ideas. The Tumen River project and the Silk Road project were innovative at the time when they were conceived (after the collapse of the Soviet Union). But neither of them has been very effective. The microcredit activities in Fiji under PSLP have both been innovative and effective, but their impact has been downstream rather than upstream. The anti-trafficking UNIAP project is an example of good practice, as is the successful establishment of an MDG-inspired monitoring framework linked to the Pacific Plan (by the Pacific Centre). However, there has been little systematic effort to capitalize on innovative ideas and good practices.

The gender dimension has remained a weakness in the RCF II, despite attempts to strengthen it through the development of a gender strategy and setting up a gender steering committee and other examples. Mainstreaming gender in all parts of a future programme remains a huge challenge.

To a certain extent, the RCF has resulted in collaboration with important regional institutions such as UNESCAP, SAARC, ASEAN, ADB and the Mekong River Commission. With UNESCAP, which belongs to the UN family, a couple of MDG reports have been successfully produced. But there has been little cooperation in some areas of common interest, and the division of labour remains unclear with associated risk of duplication. Cooperation with the other institutions has varied, but there is scope for increased, focused cooperation.

The effectiveness of RCF II has been hampered by spreading the limited resources over too many themes, practice areas, projects and service lines. The aim of the programme was to concentrate on 20 to 25 projects; it ended up with 30. Perhaps more seriously, under many projects a wide range of somewhat disjointed activities have been carried out with little internal coherence and lack of prioritization. The programme has lacked a clear strategic focus, and the attempt to become more demand driven and responsive has resulted in the implementation of a vast range of different activities without any clear direction—other than some affinity to the RCF II themes. The aggregate result of this is that the programme has not sufficiently positioned the UNDP as a strategic development actor building on its comparative advantages.

5.3 EFFICIENCY

Against a projected RCF II budget of USD 130 million for the five year period 2002-2006, the budget that materialized was less than USD 90 million—a shortfall of more than 30 percent. UNDP core resources were USD 57 million against a projected figure of USD 71 million. The gap in mobilization of non-core resources was even bigger: USD 32 million against a goal of USD 59 million. The shortfall in resources has affected the 'sustainable development' theme, in particular. But it should also be noted that the 'poverty' theme only succeeded in mobilizing 13 percent of its budget from non-core funds.

The RCF II projects have also been affected by budget cuts necessitated by the costs of setting up the regional centres in Bangkok and Colombo and the sub-regional centre in Suva. The way this was implemented has adversely affected a number of projects. In many cases, the budget cuts came at short notice, and this has generated negative reactions among partners and staff members. Some have expressed the view that UNDP's credibility was eroded. Nevertheless, it is the view of

the evaluation team that establishing the regional centres was the right decision. The centres have infused the programme with new dynamics and provided an appropriate infrastructure for future regional programmes. The technical support and backstopping they offer to the UNDP COs is greatly appreciated, and the centres—with their division of labour—are better placed to provide a decentralized, effective and efficient implementation structure.

The programme has been quite efficient in producing a vast number of knowledge products and other outputs with limited human and financial resources. Overall, the staff has been dedicated and hard working. However, the resources have been spread too thin, and this has not only reduced effectiveness but also efficiency.

A significant weakness of the programme is the lack of an adequate M&E framework. This weakness is not just a problem for the RCF but a general weakness in UNDP's work. The Results-Based Management framework, which was introduced under RCF II, is not in itself sufficient. The general lack of a systematic monitoring framework with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to assess the progress of the programme as well as individual projects and results in evaluations that are based on somewhat shaky ground. This evaluation is no exception. An improved M&E framework could greatly enhance the programme's effectiveness and efficiency.

5.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The vast range of activities under the many projects and service lines has militated against sustainability of the outcomes and benefits. There have been too few resources, particularly human resources, to follow up on the many initiatives. Moreover, the focus on production of knowledge products has, to some extent, undermined sustainability. The dissemination and capacity development parts of the programme that are vital to sustain the benefits have not received enough attention.

The weak linkage between the regional programme and UNDP's COs has also limited sustainability. Ideally, the COs could play an important role in following up on, providing policy advice and building capacity, based on the regional knowledge products. But this has happened only to a limited extent. Finally, it is a problem that some of the projects under RCF II have been only two to three years in duration. Although this may be sufficient in some cases, there is a need to work with a much longer time horizon in many projects and themes. This will also contribute to making the outcomes and benefits more sustainable.

Chapter 6
Recommendations

The evaluation team has been asked to make recommendations for future regional programming in the Asia-Pacific region. The three outcome evaluations—on the poverty, governance and HIV/AIDS clusters of projects—include a large number of detailed recommendations. In contrast, what follows here is a limited number of recommendations of a more general nature.

1. *There is a need to concentrate on fewer objectives, themes, projects, service lines and intended outcomes.* This is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations, and it is key to greater effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

2. *A new programme should have a clearer strategic thrust, informed by UNDP's human development concept and focused on the link between governance and poverty reduction and achievement of MDGs.* This will both contribute to greater effectiveness and raise UNDP's profile in the region based on its comparative advantage. The MDGs do not provide sufficient strategic focus; the programme can not deal with anything and everything that is included in the MDGs.

3. *Concentration and a clearer strategic focus must entail a reduction of themes and practice areas.* The environmental theme was curtailed in practice under RCF II. Focus on this area may be reconsidered in the context of RCF III in view of UNDP's capacity and competence in relation to other strong actors in this area. Similar considerations might concern the area of natural disaster risk reduction. It should also be considered whether there is a continued need for regional UNDP HIV/AIDS projects.

4. *If macro-economic and trade issues are kept in the programme, this requires strengthening of the relevant competences.* The issues are clearly relevant for poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs, and the human development perspective is important. But UNDP faces an uphill struggle to become recognized as a qualified actor in a field dominated by actors with established credibility and large resources, such as the World Bank, ADB and UNCTAD.

5. *The programme must strike the right balance between supply (strategic focus) and demand (the region's changing needs).* Under RCF I, the programme was primarily supply driven. It has moved towards becoming more demand driven, and this has enhanced its relevance and effectiveness. But there is also a risk of becoming too demand driven and thus losing strategic focus.

6. *There must be a better balance in the programme between the basic production of knowledge products and more capacity development, advocacy and policy advice.* This will entail a better use of the many qualified outputs, hence greater effectiveness.

7. *The regional programme should be better linked to the country programmes.* The weak linkage between the regional programme and the COs is a recurrent theme in the outcome evaluations. The relevance and effectiveness of the programme can be enhanced if the COs get more involved in the programme planning (through substantial consultation) as well as in using the knowledge products for capacity building, advocacy and policy advice.

8. *The programme should concentrate on projects that measure up to the regionality criteria.* Having too many projects and activities that are not truly regional dilutes the programme and distorts its profile. It is important that the programme concentrates on issues and modalities that are regional in character.

9. *The gender dimension must be mainstreamed in the programme.* Despite recent attempts to strengthen the gender dimension, this remains a weak point. In view of the crucial importance of the gender dimension for poverty reduction, human development and achieving the MDGs, mainstreaming should be a high priority. It will be necessary to strengthen the gender competence (more gender specialists) in all three regional centres.

10. *Monitoring and evaluation needs to be strength-ened.* The lack of an appropriate M&E frame-work with baselines, benchmarks and indicators makes it difficult to monitor the progress of projects as well as the entire programme. An improved monitoring and reporting framework will also strengthen the foundation for reviews and evaluations. Thus it is both a management tool and an instrument for better documenta-tion of results.

11. *The regional programme and the regional centres should catalyze closer cooperation with other UN agencies based on a clear division of labour.* Building on the UN aim of 'delivering as one' UNDP must find its new role in closer cooperation with other UN agencies. The regional programmes provide important opportunities for furthering this agenda.

12. *There is scope for closer collaboration with regional institutions, but it must be selective, focused and based on a clear division of labour.* The coopera-tion with Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on the monitoring framework for the Pacific Plan was exemplary. However, cooperation with ADB can be intensified and support to ASEAN must be more selective and focused, based on UNDP priorities.

Annex 1

Terms of Reference

I. BACKGROUND

The Evaluation Office (EO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will undertake an independent, forward-looking evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the Second Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF), bringing together the evidence from the completed individual programme/outcome evaluations. The EO will report to the UNDP Executive Board on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation regarding the development results achieved by the RCF. The evaluation will focus on the outcomes and critically examine the achievements and constraints in the RCF thematic areas, draw lessons learnt and provide recommendations for the future. The evaluation will also recommend a strategy for enhancing performance and strategically positioning UNDP support within regional development priorities and UNDP corporate policy directions. The overall objectives of the evaluation are:

• Support the Administrator's substantive accountability function to the Executive Board and serve as a vehicle for quality assurance of UNDP interventions at regional level

• Generate lessons from experience to inform current and future regional programming

• Provide to the stakeholders in the programme an objective assessment of results (specifically outcomes) that have been achieved through UNDP support and partnerships with other key actors for a given multi-year period

II. SECOND REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2002-2006

The Second RCF for Asia and Pacific Region 2002-2006 was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in July 2001. The RCF was developed in response to the Millennium Declaration, the development goals of which underpin the overarching goals of the RCF. The RCF objectives are also parallel to those of the Second Global Cooperation Framework within the corporate mandate for poverty reduction. The RCF supports the provision of regional public goods, minimizing cross-border externalities and spillover, and promotes regional advocacy. The second RCF was designed building upon an extensive round of regional, sub-regional and national consultations, the mid-term review of the first RCF in October 1999, as well as more than 40 programme evaluations and best practices synthesised from 10 major programmes. The RCF covers three main thematic areas:

• Democratic Governance for Human Development —Enhancing the political, economic and social frameworks for poverty reduction and sustainable human development

• Sustainable Development—Addressing regional policy dialogue on the environment-poverty nexus and effective governance of transboundary natural resources

• Globalization and Economic Governance—Ensuring a more equitable system of globalization through the prioritization of pro-poor policies and sustainable human development

A basic element of the RCF is a regional public-goods perspective that seeks to minimize negative transboundary externalities or secure positive spillovers allowing the countries in the region to work cooperatively on cross-border concerns, such as HIV/AIDS and disaster and environmental management. In addition to the three main themes, three crosscutting issues are included in the RCF: gender and development; information and communications technology (ICT) for development; and crisis prevention and development.

The RCF is intended as part of a broader regional cooperation agenda pursued by the countries in Asia and Pacific, as well as other parts of the UN system. The RCF emphasizes consultative activities

with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and subregional intergovernmental groupings, as well as a close relationship with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The RCF is implemented under the overall supervision of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) in the UNDP headquarters. However, the management responsibilities have been decentralized. Primary management responsibility for day-to-day supervision and monitoring of programmes rests with the Principal Project Representatives (PPRs). There is a mix of management modalities, with UNDP country offices (COs) in the region, regional and intergovernmental organizations, as well as national entities hosting programmes. Important players in the implementation of the RCF include a range of intergovernmental, non-governmental, academic and policy institutions in the region. Results-based management (RBM), which includes beneficiary and stakeholder participation in monitoring and reporting, has been incorporated into the RCF.

The financial resources required for the RCF five-year period (2002-2006) estimated at approval were USD 130 million, with UNDP providing core resources for USD 71 million. Consequently, mobilization of non-core funds of USD 59 million was foreseen to meet the objectives of the RCF. The allocation between the main thematic areas was as follows: Democratic Governance for Human Development—core USD 26 million, non-core USD 8 million; Sustainable Development—core USD 20 million, non-core USD 44 million; and Globalization and Economic Governance—core USD 26 million, non-core USD 7 million.

III. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will assess the overall programme performance and outcomes of the RCF (2002-2006) covering its scope and range, policy advisory services, knowledge sharing and networking, and capacity development activities. Findings of the evaluation will provide inputs to the next RCF for the region. Specific objectives of the planned independent evaluation of the RCF are as follows:

• Assess the strategic position of the RCF within the region and in UNDP's overall programme.

• Assess the achievement of the intended organizational goals and development results, highlighting key results of outputs and outcomes, lessons learnt and good practices both as they relate to UNDP's specified programme goals and in relation to broader national strategies in the region.

• Assess the performance of the RCF and specify the development results achieved in the area of policy advice, capacity development and knowledge management within the main thematic areas that the regional programme has focused on.

• Based on the actual results, ascertain how the RCF has contributed to strategically positioning UNDP to establish its comparative advantage or niche as a major upstream global policy advisor for poverty reduction and sustainable human development and as a knowledge-based organization in the region.

• Identify innovative approaches used within the RCF programmed portfolio, their related outcomes and lessons learned within UNDP and in programme countries, as well as assess the scope and range of strategic partnerships formed.

IV. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation will be conducted primarily as a meta-evaluation, drawing on the conclusions of outcome evaluations undertaken during the period of the RCF, and will be largely based on secondary data. Individual outcome evaluations in three areas have been commissioned by RBAP and completed during the summer of 2006. The evaluation will assess the contributions of UNDP through the RCF to development results. 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:

• Strategic position of the RCF in the overall context

• Performance of the RCF programme portfolio and development results achieved, including the achievement of the immediate objectives

- Strategic focus of the RCF support and its relevance to the country and regional priorities, including relevance to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

- Organizational strategy and modalities/mechanisms, including linkages to the Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) of delivering results within service lines and their effectiveness

- 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 RBAP and the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific for programming, managing, monitoring and evaluating the regional programmes

- Institutional arrangements by the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP) for programming, delivery and monitoring of implementation of the RCF at the HQ level, at the sub-regional level (Sub-regional Resource Facilities) and at the country level

- Lessons learnt

V. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will use the methodology for meta-evaluation of UNDP's RCFs developed by the EO. The meta-evaluation will review and validate findings and data from existing evaluations (comprehensive desk review and analysis of outcome and project evaluations and other self assessment reports) combined with selective spot checks, i.e. in-country project visits and consultations with RCF stakeholders on the ground (a sample of three to four countries/locations), triangulation of sources of available data and information, and in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions with a variety of stakeholders.

Triangulation of information and data sources will constitute the primary methodology 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. This means that document reviews will be supplemented by interviews and focus group discussions with key informants and/or stakeholders at UNDP headquarters, the Regional Centres and COs that will be visited. If necessary, a rapid questionnaire and/or informal snap survey may be used to provide quick information on the programme. The Evaluation Team will consult with headquarters-based specialists and key partners in the region in order to obtain a broad range of views. More details of the analytical and evaluation techniques to be used are given below:

VI. WORK PLAN

Review and analysis by evaluation team The detailed evaluation methodology, approach and programme of work will be agreed upon between EO and the Evaluation Team Leader before the start of the evaluation. The Evaluation Team will assemble in New York in December 2006 for orientation, briefing and initial interviews with RBAP, BDP and other relevant actors.

DESK REVIEWS

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 analyze all outcome/programme evaluations undertaken by UNDP during the RCF period before country visits, and undertake additional desk reviews based on interactions with RBAP, the COs and Regional Centre, and other focal points for RCF activities during and after country visits.

SURVEY

The RCF's work is meant to influence and impact the work of COs, countries, donors, other development partners and constituencies in the region. The Evaluation Team will review and analyze data collected by the ongoing corporate and partnership surveys conducted by UNDP to ascertain the effectiveness of the RCF's work, particularly in

relation to policy advice, knowledge management, networking, and integration into UNDP's 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 COS AND REGIONAL CENTRE

A sample of at least three to four 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 the headquarters. Country visits will also be used to identify good practices and lessons for the future at both the country and corporate levels. The EO will, in consultation with BDP and RBAP, select the sample countries. The sample countries will be selected on the basis of the following factors: balance of programme and project portfolio, geographical locations of programme and projects, and lessons-learning potential. The Evaluation Team will also visit the Regional Centre in Bangkok for interviews with staff.

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 the RCF work links to country level priorities and vertical integration; obtain the views of the government and national stakeholders and the UN 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. The draft final report will be made available to the EO by mid-February 2007 at the latest and will also be submitted to RBAP 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/validation process and will make it available to the EO by March 2007 at the latest.

VII. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

An international team of consultants selected by the EO will be engaged to undertake the evaluation. The team will also include a designated Task Manager from EO to work with the team at the headquarters and during country visits, and to provide overall guidance and quality assurance to the evaluation.

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 Asia and the Pacific.

In general, the team members must possess educational qualifications in the Social Sciences or related disciplines. Preferably, the Team is 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, etc.

VIII. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

The main output of the evaluation will be the Evaluation Report. It should be an analytical report, not exceeding 30 pages, excluding annexes, detailing key findings and conclusions, identifying good practices, and providing clear and actionable recommendations for the next RCF in Asia and the Pacific, taking into account UNDP's corporate priorities.

IX. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The EO will manage the evaluation process, provide backstopping support and ensure the coordination and liaison with concerned agencies. The EO 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 EO will be responsible for the production of the Evaluation Report and presentation of the same to the Executive Board.

X. TIMELINE FOR EVALUATION OF THE RCF FOR ASIA AND PACIFIC

The outputs have to be delivered in relation to the timeframe of the evaluation process as follows

ACTIVITY	ESTIMATED DATE
Desk Review and analysis of documentation	December 2006
Briefing mission to UNDP HQ in New York	18-21 December 2006
Main mission to sample of countries	January 2007
Submission of First Draft Report	February 16, 2007
Comments EO and RBAP received	February 23, 2007
Issuance of Final Report	March 30, 2007

Annex 2
List of People Consulted

UNDP HEADQUARTERS, USA

BUREAU FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Marcel Alers, Manager, Climate Change, Global Environment Facility, Environment and Energy Group

Terence Jones, Director, Capacity Development Group

Kamal Malhotra, Senior Adviser and Cluster Leader, Inclusive Globalization, Social Development Group

Kamal Rijal, Policy Adviser, Environment and Energy Group

Alvaro Rodriguez, Policy Support Coordinator, Directorate

Rathin Roy, Public Resource Management Adviser, Social Development Group

Minoru Takada, Manager, Sustainable Energy Programme, Environment and Energy Group

Kanni Wignaraja, Policy Adviser, Capacity Development Group

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Taimur Khilji, Consultant, Regional Support Unit

Shashikant Nair, Programme Specialist, Regional Support Unit

Hafiz Pasha, Director

Selvakumaran Ramachandran, Chief, Regional Support Unit

UNDESA, USA

G. Shabbir Cheema, Principal Adviser & Programme Director, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Meredith Rowen, Governance and Public Administration Officer, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

Veda Gittens, Administrative Assistant, Division for Public Administration and Development Management

CAMBODIA

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Anne-Isabelle Degryse-Blateau, Programme Director and Deputy Resident Representative

Kristy Fleming, Project Advisor, UNIAP

Douglas Gardner, UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Resident Representative

Winta Ghebreab, Gender Focal Point, Poverty Reduction Cluster

Wisal Hin, Trade and Private Sector Analyst, Poverty Reduction Cluster

Lay Khim, Assistant Resident Representative & Environment and Energy Cluster Team Leader

Sara Ferrer Olivella, Assistant Resident Representative & Governance Team Leader

Hong Songkheang, Team Leader, Poverty Reduction Cluster

Seng Sutwantha, HIV/AIDS Manager

Kati Veijonen, Energy Programme Analyst, Environment and Energy Cluster

FIJI

OTHER

Richard Dictus (with 12 staff members), Resident Representative, UNDP Country Office

Hervé Berger, Head, UNESCAP Pacific Operations Centre

Iosefa Maiava, Deputy Secretary General, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

Bhaskar Rao, Deputy Director, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)

Mosese Sikivou, Manager, Community Risk Programme, South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC)

James Sweeting, Counsellor, AusAID

Karibaiti Taoaba, Senior Project Officer, Commonwealth Local Governance Forum

Timoci Vatuloka, Micro Finance Unit, Government of Fiji

UNDP PACIFIC SUB-REGIONAL CENTRE (PSRC)

David Abbott, Manager, Poverty Team

Lawrence Attree, CPR Team

Ernesto Bautista, Manager, Governance Team

Suki Beavers, Governance Team

Roderic Evers, Poverty Team

Carol Flore, Poverty Team

Ruth Lane, CPR Team

Jeff Liew, Poverty Team

Peter Muller, CPR Team

Antonina B. Ortega, Governance Team

Eugenia Piza-Lopez, Manager, Crisis Prevention and Recovery (CPR) Team

Charmaine Rodrigues, Govern Governance Team

Suliana Siwatibau, Member of PSRC Advisory Panel

Garry Wiseman, Sub-Regional Manager

INDONESIA

OTHER

Rajenthran Arumugam, Senior Officer, Bureau for Economic Integration, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat

Quang Anh Le, Coordinator, Customs Unit, Bureau for Economic Integration, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat

Pratap Parmasweran, Assistant Director, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat

Awal Subandar, Natural Resources Inventory Technology, Ministry of Research and Technology, Government of Indonesia

Dyah Retno P. Sudarto(with 8 other staff members), Programme Officer, Bureau for External Relations, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Caroline Åberg, Programme Officer, Governance Unit

Marcia de Castro, Country Director

Vera Hakim, Programme Manager for HIV/AIDS

Toshihiro Nakamura, Team Leader, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (PME) Unit

Owais Parray, Programme Specialist, MDG Support Unit

Sirman Purba, PME Officer

Teuku Rahmatsyah, PME Officer

Elaine P. Slamet, Programme Officer, Environment Unit

Gi Soon Song, Programme Officer, Governance Unit

Agung Djoyo Sumako, Programme Specialist, Partnership for Governance

Abdurrahman Syebubakar, Programme Officer, MDG Support Unit

Effendi Syukur, Programme Manager, Resources Management Unit

LAO PDR

Prasith Detphommatheth, Acting Director General, Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Government of Lao PDR

Øyvind Høyen, Project Officer, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Verena Linneweber, Head of the Office, UN Resident Coordinator's Office

Charlotte MacAlister, Aquatic Ecosystem Specialist, Environment Division, Mekong River Commission

Peter-John Meynell, UNDP Team Leader, Mekong Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme

Xoukiet Panyanouvong, National Project Coordinator, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Vonkham Phanthanouvoung, Officer, Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Government of Lao PDR

Vidaovanh Phounvixay, UN Coordination Associate, UN Resident Coordinator's Office

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Irenee Dabare, Deputy Resident Representative (Operations)

Yasmin Forbes, Public Information Office

Jamshed Kazi, Assistant Resident Representative & Head, Governance Unit

Hassan Latif Khan, Finance Officer

Panthanousone Khennalong, Programme Analyst, UXO

Phanchinda Lengsavad, Officer-in-Charge, Poverty and Economic Unit

Sirixai Phanthavongs, Programme Analyst, Environment Unit

Jukka-Pekka Snäkin, Unit Manager/Environment Specialist, Environment Unit

Setsuko Yamazaki, Deputy Resident Representative (Programme)

Sonam Yangchen Rana, Resident Representative & UN Resident Coordinator

MALAYSIA

Anwar Fazal, former Senior Regional Advisor, The Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI)

Khor Hung Teik, Research Analyst of Socio-economic & Environmental Research Institute, Penang, Malaysia & former coordinator of The People-friendly Penang Initiative (a TUGI-funded project)

MONGOLIA

FORMER PROJECT STAFF

Khorloo Enkhjargal, UNFPA HIV/AIDS Advisor (Ex-Director, National AIDS Foundation)
on REACH project

Tsogtsaikhan Gombo, Ex-Acting Director, TRADP-TUMEN Project (currently General Director,
Asian Initiative Institute)

Lkhagvajav Tur-od, Ex-UNDP staff on PARAGON project (currently Director for
Administration, XacBank)

GOVERNMENT OF MONGOLIA

Kofi Addo, International Policy Advisor, Trade Policy and Negotiations Unit (Trade and Human
Development Project)

D. Batmunkh, Deputy Director, Department of Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Industry and Trade,
representing the National Project Director, Trade and HD Project (APTI)

Purevjav Bolormaa, National Project Manager of Poverty Research Project on National HDR

Tsend Chukhalkhuu, National Project Manager, Trade Policy and Negotiations Unit
(Landlockedness Project)

Bataa Ganbold, Deputy Director, Financial Policy & Coordination Department, Ministry of Finance
and Country Coordinator on TRADP-TUMEN Project

S. Munkhtseren, Ministry of Finance, Poverty Research Group on Macroeconomics and
Poverty Reduction Project

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

L. Barhas, Governance Specialist

O. Enkh-Ariunaa, Poverty Specialist

Ts. Davaadulam. Governance Practice Manager

J. Doljinsuren, Programme Officer, Human Development and Trade Policy

Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Resident Representative

D. Nergui, Assistant Resident Representative (Programme)

S. Oyuntsetseg, PMO

U. Tungalag, Environment Practice Manager

PHILIPPINES

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Clarissa Aveda, Programme Manager, Environment

Maria Fe A Cabral, Empowerment of the Poor (Poverty) Portfolio

Amelia Dulce D. Supetran, Unit Head, Environment

Alma Evangelista, Unit Head, Peace and Development

Imee Manal, Programme Manager, Environment

Kyo Naka, Deputy Resident Representative

Jennifer Navarro, Programme Associate, Governance

Nileema K. Noble, Resident Representative

Merissa Sy-Chango, Programme Assistant, Empowerment of the Poor Portfolio

Corazon Urquico, Portfolio Manager, Poverty and MDGs

SRI LANKA

OTHER

B. Abeyganawardena, Director General, Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance and Planning

C.M.M. Chandrasekara, Additional Director General, Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance and Planning

Lucy Emerton, Regional Group Head, Ecosystems & Livelihoods Group, Asia, IUCN – The World Conservation Union

W.A.D.S. Gunasinghe, Deputy Director, Department of National Planning, Ministry of Finance and Planning

Shafinaz Hassendeen, Senior Programme Officer, International Labour Organization (ILO)

Ganga Tilakaratna, Research Economist, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

Dushni Weerakoon, Fellow & Deputy Director, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

UNDP REGIONAL CENTRE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (RCC)

Ratnakar Adhikari, Programme Specialist, Asia-Pacific Trade & Investment Initiative

Kay Kirby Dorji, Programme Advocacy and Media Advisor

Ramesh Gampat, Programme Specialist, Human Development Reports Unit

Aishath Jeelaan, Programme Advocacy and Media Specialist

Pramod Kumar, Senior Programme Specialist, HIV/AIDS and Development

James Lang, Gender Programme Advisor

Koh Miyaoi, Gender Advisor

T. Palanivel, Senior Advisor, Millennium Development Goal Initiative

Minh H. Pham, Regional Manager

Tham Pham, Chief, Knowledge Services Team

Anuradha Rajivan, Regional Programme Coordinator, Human Development Reports Unit

Ruwanthi Senarathne, Programme/Administrative Assistant, Human Development Reports Unit

Anuradha Seth, Senior Policy Advisor, Poverty & Macroeconomic Policies, Millennium Development Goal Initiative

Swarmin Wagle, Programme Specialist, Trade and Investment

Caitlin Wiesen, Programme Coordinator/HIV Team Leader, HIV/AIDS and Development

UNDP COUNTRY OFFICE

Frederick Lyons, United Nations Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator,

Beate Trankman, Deputy Resident Representative (Programme)

THAILAND

OTHER

Nwe Nwe Aye, Partnership Development & Mobilisation Advisor, Regional Support Team, Asia and the Pacific, UNAIDS

Thawilwadee Bureekul, Director, Research and Development Office, King Prajadhipok's Institute, Government of Thailand

Matthew S. Friedman, Regional Project Manager, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Kim Hak-Su, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Nanda Krairiksh, Chief, Programme Management Division, UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Hiroshi Nishimiya, Deputy Regional Director, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Melissa Stewart, Regional Adviser, UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Dechen Tsering, Senior Programme Officer, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

UNICEF EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE

Aya Aoki, Project Officer, Girls' Education

Shantha Bloemen, Communication Officer

Wing-Sie Cheng, Regional Adviser, HIV and AIDS

Richard Bridle, Deputy Regional Director

Mark Henderson, Regional Adviser, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Sawon Hong, Regional Adviser, Child Protection

Enrico Leonardi, Regional Adviser, Emergency

Jesper Møller, Project Officer, DevInfo Emergency

Mahesh Patel, Regional Adviser, Social Policy and Economic Analysis

Joachim Theis, Project Officer, Youth and Partnership

Niloy Banerjee, Capacity Development Advisor

Radhika Behuria, Programme Analyst, Asia Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme

James George Chacko, Programme Specialist, Access and Partnership Development

Sergelen Dambadarjaa, Team Leader, Regional Programme Support Services

Sergio Feld, Environment Advisor & Team Leader, Environment and Energy Practice Team

Elizabeth Fong, Regional Manager

Marcia V.J. Kran, Head of Policy and Programme & Deputy Regional Manager

Martin Krause, Regional Technical Adviser, Climate Change, Global Environment Facility

Nandita Mongia, Regional Programme Coordinator, Regional Energy Programme
for Poverty Reduction

Chandra Roy, Coordinator, Regional Indigenous People's Programme

Arusha Stanislaus, Deputy Coordinator, Asia Regional Governance Programme

Thiyagarajan Velumail, Programme Specialist, Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction

UNDP THAILAND COUNTRY OFFICE
Håkan Björkman, Deputy Resident Representative

Sirisupa Kulthanan, Assistant Resident Representative

Joana Merlin-Scholtes, Resident Representative & UN Resident Coordinator

Annex 3
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