

DISCUSSION: FACING CHALLENGES

The following issues emerged that were critical to the performance of the GCF-III: engaging with the conceptual underpinning of a global programme, operationalizing the programme strategy, leveraging the practice architecture at all levels of the organization to improve UNDP effectiveness, matching demand and supply, creating and sharing knowledge, enabling South-South solutions, and managing institutional complexities.

4.1 SETTING THE PARAMETERS FOR THE 'GLOBAL' IN THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

The MDGs provided an overarching global framework for the GCF-III. The four practice areas and the two cross-cutting areas were directly relevant to supporting the achievement of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals at the country level.

What constituted the 'global' in the global programme²⁰¹ has evolved in the past three global programmes. In defining 'global', the GCF-II stated that "the development challenge being addressed must be a shared concern among a significant number of countries in different regions."²⁰² It had more extensive and restrictive programming criteria: "(i) The development challenge being addressed must be a shared concern among a significant number of countries in different regions; this will ensure the benefit of

cross-regional exchange of experience and good practice while exploiting programmatic economies of scale; (ii) The development challenge may be rooted in current global systems and regimes and thus must be addressed through global advocacy and intermediation; and (iii) UNDP must have a clear comparative advantage as a development organization in the specific intervention."²⁰³

The GCF-III adopted a more permissive scope for the global development challenges "as [those] identified by multiple developing countries in several regions."²⁰⁴ Clarity on this concept was essential to identifying the specific niche for the global programme. The GCF-III moved further away from having a focus on well-defined global issues that could not be addressed at the country or regional levels. In practice, the GCF-III dealt with a vast array of issues in the different practice areas and on internal UNDP operations.

Further, there was less emphasis on developing new global insights, providing cutting-edge policy research or contributing to global policy debates.²⁰⁵ In comparison with the GCF-II, the global advocacy purpose of the GCF-III was downgraded considerably. This may have been the result of a desire not to over-reach. A number of the global projects did deal with global issues in the poverty, governance, energy-environment and HIV/AIDS areas. However, the focus of most of the projects was on supporting country-level (and in some cases regional) interventions.

201. The same was observed by the GCF-II evaluation, which stated: "The term 'global' needs refinement... not to be simply used as a broad rationalization for any type of programming and funding initiatives." UNDP, 'Evaluation of the Second Global Cooperation Framework', UNDP Evaluation Office, New York, NY, 2004, p. 72.

202. UNDP, 'Second Global Cooperation Framework, 2000-2003', DP/GCF/2, 27 November 2000, paragraph 29.

203. Ibid.

204. UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme, 2005-2007', DP/GP/1/Rev.1, 22 April 2005, p. 4.

205. Influencing global agenda is one of the four rationales of the GCF-III. UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme, 2005-2007', DP/GP/1/Rev.1, 22 April 2005, p. 6.

This was done through the provision of knowledge products and services that built on globally sourced good practices. However, stakeholders in many case-study countries pointed out that without the accumulated experience and reputation in engaging with issues at the global level, the cost effectiveness and value of policy advisory services at the country level became questionable—particularly when compared with recruiting local or regional experts for the tasks at hand.

Case studies in countries, RSCs and Headquarters revealed a concern that the capacity of BDP and the GCF-III to influence the global policy agenda based on development experience gained at country level had been eroded. The lack of priority accorded to cutting-edge global policy research and advocacy in the GCF-III prioritized contributing to development outcomes at the country level over global policy analysis. Though “informing and influencing the global policy debate” remained an important part of BDP’s vision,²⁰⁶ the GCF-III was not used as the key modality to turn this vision into reality.

The Resident Representative Survey highlighted that their main interest in the GCF-III was in terms of its support to the country offices. However, 91 percent of the respondents expressed agreement (67 percent ‘strong agreement’) with the view that the next global programme should support “efforts to position UNDP as a global leader in development policy thinking.” In order for this to occur, a new global programme would need a much stronger emphasis on influencing global policy agenda in its design, implementation and resource allocation.



In summary, the move from the GCF-II to GCF-III represented a shift away from prioritizing the global character of the programme. The support to achieving the MDGs remained at the core of the programme, but there was less emphasis on translating country experiences into contributions to global development debates and influencing the global agenda.

4.2 OPERATIONALIZING THE GCF-III STRATEGY

4.2.1 IMPROVING FOCUS AND APPROACH

The GCF-III faced some of the same issues identified in the evaluation of the GCF-II—namely, the lack of a cohesive framework and the need for more focus.²⁰⁷ The ambition that the GCF-III would address all 24 service lines in the four main practice areas did not encourage cohesion or focus.²⁰⁸ While the GCF-III was able to meet some country office needs in a wide range of areas, its limited resources—especially human resources—were spread too thinly, a point that was also made in the GCF-II evaluation.

Under the GCF-III, there was a commendable effort to build some cross-practice work into both design and implementation. There were a number of initiatives, many in the form of global projects, that cut across two of the four main practice areas. In this respect, the GCF-III showed marked improvement over GCF-II. Management sought several ways to encourage cross-practice work. Despite these efforts, the practice areas, and even service lines, tended to work as silos. The most important exceptions were the added emphasis on promoting capacity development and gender as cross-cutting areas. This was a step in the right direction.

206. BDP’s internal website: <http://content.undp.org/go/bdp/intra/?src=bdp>.

207. Specifically, the GCF-II evaluation recommended the following: “Under GCF-III, UNDP should continue to narrow the focus on one or two practice areas plus a complementary but small set of secondary practices, thematic and cross-cutting areas.” UNDP, ‘Evaluation of the Second Global Cooperation Framework’, UNDP Evaluation Office, New York, NY, 2004, p. 72.

208. BDP’s Annual Report (2006) on the Global Programme recognized the problem: “Regarding the practice architecture, there is some feedback that it should be reviewed and updated as UNDP has changed greatly since March 2002 when the Practice concept was first launched.” UNDP, ‘UNDP Global Programme 2006 Annual Report’, UNDP BDP, 2007, p. 32.

Not all mainstreaming efforts were successful. Integrating development dimensions of HIV/AIDS into other practice areas needed further attention, particularly with regard to ensuring adequate levels of in-house capacity and developing new methodologies, tools and knowledge platforms and adapting them to regional and cultural contexts. The UNDP gender mainstreaming experience during 2006-2007 offered valuable insight for the new global programme to address these issues in full collaboration with all internal stakeholders.

As a framework, the GCF-III had considerable flexibility built into its design and there was little evidence of a broader programmatic approach in the GCF-III. In implementing the GCF-III, little effort was made to monitor outcomes and use evaluative evidence to manage for results. The GCF-III was extended to cover a period of four years, but no provision was made for a mid-term review. There were insufficient efforts to take stock formally at the mid-term in order to adjust the programme based on experience and in the light of a rapidly changing environment within UNDP and the developing world.

4.2.2 FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

The GCF-III's emphasis on partnerships was consistent with the MYFF 2004-2007, which considered 'forging partnerships for results' one of the six drivers of development effectiveness on which UNDP reported annually to the Executive Board. The GCF-III developed partnerships that were relevant to the main practice areas of UNDP, consistent with UNDP policy orientations and important for constituency building. In this respect, the GCF-III demonstrated progress when compared with the GCF-II.

However, effectiveness of partnerships was questioned by the results of the Resident Representative Survey. A majority (58 percent) of respondents felt that only 'to a small extent' was access to the global knowledge base expanded by the GCF-III-supported strategic partnerships. This view was consistent with the observation that the GCF-III strategies were determined globally, without adequate consultation with country offices,

and seemed to respond more to corporate needs (in particular resource-mobilization needs) than to partnerships that 'identify policy options' for countries. This survey result was also consistent with the finding that the ever-expanding number of UNDP partners was not always accompanied by clarity on the value added by these partnerships.

Case studies also pointed out that the decisions to partner with specific institutions should have taken into account criteria such as neutrality and impartiality, especially when the partnership applied to politically sensitive areas in which UNDP credibility was its main asset. While some partners had an international reputation that might have been an asset for the UNDP global agenda, their political identity and image at the regional or country level might have been detrimental to UNDP relations with national partners. Developing partnerships with a larger number of recognized Southern-based institutions would have balanced the impression that partnerships were still overwhelmingly with Northern-based and global organizations.

With the changing international cooperation environment, partnerships were influenced by global dynamics such as the new frameworks and mechanisms for development cooperation and assistance, as well as by the UN system's own reform process. While aid modalities were essentially the concern of country offices, UNDP engagement in processes such as the Joint Assistance Strategies inevitably influenced its relations with other UN organizations, the donor community, and national authorities and may have affected UNDP's traditional role of 'honest broker'. The GCF-III had a useful role to play in harnessing lessons in this respect and providing guidance and support to country offices.



In summary, the operationalization of the GCF-III had some of the same weaknesses identified in the evaluation of the GCF-II. The mechanical distribution of resources across 24 service lines in the four main practice areas spread resources

thinly and led to a continuation of a silo approach. This was somewhat mitigated by the increased emphasis on cross-practice work and the cross-cutting areas of gender and capacity development mainstreaming. The partnership approach improved but lacked a clear strategy. Learning processes were inhibited by the absence of a functional monitoring and evaluation system.

4.3 LEVERAGING THE PRACTICE ARCHITECTURE

Since the mid 1990s, UNDP has embarked upon a series of corporate processes to sharpen the organization's thematic focus. This was aided by the universal consensus on the Millennium Declaration and the adoption of MDGs in 2000. To this end, the second MYFF 2004-2007 identified five practice areas as the thematic focus for UNDP: achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty; fostering democratic governance; managing energy and environment for sustainable development; responding to HIV/AIDS; and supporting crisis prevention and recovery.²⁰⁹

Vertical policy alignment (alignment of all units with corporate priorities) was one component of the GCF-III rationale. The GCF-III was expected to leverage the practice architecture at all levels of programming (global, regional and country) to strengthen UNDP support to countries in these practice areas.

Within each practice area, significant contributions were found when all available assets and resources were used with this purpose in mind and when well-defined corporate policy frameworks included 'feedback loops' such as comprehensive reviews of country experiences and assessments of country-level demand for services were used; global projects were geared to the generation of knowledge products that distill UNDP global practice and

convincingly argued for new policy orientations; and good complementarity existed between the roles and support services of Headquarters and region-based policy specialists.²¹⁰

The TTFs also fulfilled a useful alignment function by providing incentives for innovation in the main practice areas based on guidelines that ensured a high degree of coherence among the projects that were formulated by country offices (thanks to the strong supporting role of the regionally based policy specialists).

UNDP staff had wide-ranging opinions on the role of the GCF-III in ensuring policy alignment. The vast majority emphasized the fundamental importance of policy alignment, yet saw the GCF-III as a necessary but insufficient condition to reach that goal. They pointed to several weaknesses and obstacles:

- The GCF-III was neither mandated nor equipped to ensure that corporate requirements were reflected in country programmes. Accountability to ensure substantive programmatic focus along the MYFF goals (and thereby ensure coherence between country-level activities and corporate priorities) lay with the Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator. The policy specialists were not empowered to assess or address the coherence of country office activities in the various practice areas. In fact, the emphasis given to the responsibility of policy specialists to respond to country-level demand practically eliminated the possibility of substantive oversight. That responsibility rested with the regional bureaux directors and senior management.
- There was uneven progress in the recent regionalization processes. Progress on vertical alignment hinged on the RSCs, since they increasingly provided the interface between

209. The first four became the practice areas under the GCF-III and the fifth one under the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

210. E.g. the Electoral Support and Anti-corruption sub-practices in the Democratic Governance Group, the Trade sub-practice in the Poverty Group, the Poverty-Environment Initiative in the Environment and Energy Group, and the HIV/AIDS, Human Rights and Gender focus area in the HIV/AIDS Group.

the global and country levels. However, the roll-out of the RSC model was still incomplete, which limited the analysis of their contribution to vertical alignment. Management models adopted by the Bratislava RSC and, to some extent, Bangkok RSC, Colombo RSC and the Pacific Centre, held the greatest promise in this respect. They used a more holistic approach to respond to country-level demand and favoured the formation of ‘integrated teams’ of advisors that operated as UNDP groups and no longer identified themselves on the basis of their source of financing (global or regional).

- There was continued lack of knowledge and clarity about the GCF-III role and objectives outside BDP. The majority of respondents to the Resident Representative Survey felt that the relevance of the GCF-III to country offices oscillated between ‘to some extent’ and ‘to a small extent’, and that, ‘to a great extent’ the GCF-III was not achieving its objectives.²¹¹ There was a perception in the country offices that BDP was excessively absorbed by Headquarters-level processes, lacking in capacity to capture regional and country-level specificities and trends in the evolution of demand for services.
- Inadequate attention was paid to the evolution of demands at the country level. The majority opinion was that, where policy alignment existed, it was essentially the result of top-down decision-making processes with marginal involvement of country offices.
- There was a decline in the explicit focus on producing cutting-edge knowledge products on global issues. This resulted in country offices being left with limited resources for analytical or policy guidance.
- The global projects were seldom designed in consultation with country offices and only sporadically engaged country offices for

implementation. Therefore, they were not seen as a conduit to policy development or as a means to ensure policy alignment.

- The varying demand for, and quality of, policy specialist expertise posed constraints on their ability to play a significant role as facilitators of policy alignment.



In summary, the GCF-III was expected to leverage the practice architecture to strengthen UNDP support to countries. Within each practice area, there were significant contributions to this end when resources were dedicated to this purpose and efforts were guided by policy frameworks based on assessment of demand for services and feedback on country experiences. Successes were achieved also when global projects were geared towards the generation of knowledge products that distilled UNDP global experience to argue for new policy orientation. A number of factors adversely affected vertical alignment. Some of these factors were linked to broader UNDP institutional arrangements and were beyond the control of BDP, such as the lack of mandate for the GCF-III to ensure that corporate requirements were reflected in country programmes, while others were internal to the GCF-III, such as inadequate attention to the evolving demands at country level and varying quality of expertise of policy specialists. The GCF-III would have benefited from systematic monitoring of performance and lessons learned.

4.4 MATCHING DEMAND AND SUPPLY

In a global programme—where resources are mainly at Headquarters or the regional level and development outcomes are at the country level—matching supply and demand was critical. The policy advisory services, the global projects and the knowledge networks and products embodied

211. Annex F, Resident Representative Survey.

the supply. This supply should have been matched only to demands that fell within UNDP corporate priorities and were consistent with BDP's comparative advantage.

Identifying 'demand' was very complex. It was not always possible for policy specialists under the GCF-III to meet all demands emanating from country offices or programme countries. Moreover, in practice, when there was limited capacity or knowledge, there was a need to 'create demand' by making potential services under GCF-III visible. However, there was no evidence of a system to map the use of knowledge products and assess their effectiveness.

A majority of country offices did not feel that the GCF-III supply matched the demand at country level very well. This was due to several contributing factors.

- UNDP was generally perceived as a good partner at the country level—its programme was well aligned with national agendas and was sensitive to national priorities and systems. However, not all the GCF-III activities were directly linked to the development demands of programme countries. For instance, the targeted projects were not always based on a systematic assessment of national demand, even though they were relevant to national priorities. Out of a sample of 20 global projects, 11 were ranked low on national ownership, 4 were ranked medium and 5 were ranked high.²¹² This was reflected in the annual report on results achieved under MYFF in the year 2006, which reported that national ownership received inadequate attention across all practice areas in 46 percent of country offices and all Headquarters units.
- The GCF-III was designed as a 'standard package' in which financial and human resources were distributed across practice

areas, service lines and RSC/SURFs without much consideration for variations in demand.

- The GCF-III programme document did not have a contextual analysis. Such an analysis would have paved the way for a better match between supply and demand. However, there were cases where the programme was implemented differently in different regions, taking into account the variations in their development contexts (such as Least Developed Countries or Landlocked Developing Countries), for instance, the work on trade issues in landlocked countries and macroeconomic policy in transition economies. Overall, the omission of contextual analysis in design and operationalization weakened the implementation of the GCF-III.

It was a matter of concern that 60 percent of respondents to the Resident Representative Survey questioned the usefulness of the GCF-III. Only 6 percent felt that the GCF-III supported their country in achieving the MDGs 'to a great extent', while 33 percent felt that it did 'to some extent', 48 percent 'to a small extent' and 12 percent felt it 'did not support at all'. In the case-study countries, staff confirmed that the GCF-III was not always seen as relevant or effective. Many had difficulties recognizing the programme and in most country offices there was little knowledge about the global projects. However the policy specialists (both in New York and at RSCs/SURFs) and knowledge networks were more readily recognized and appreciated.

Recently, BDP undertook a number of initiatives to better meet demands from country offices. These included identifying posts for RSCs based on an assessment of demand from country offices; systematically tracking requests; systematizing work with communities of practice; and instituting a new quality assurance process for global and regional products and publications.

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212. This contrasted with 'capacity development' which ranked 'high' in 14 of the projects. See also Annex G for the project analysis.

In summary, the GCF-III did not make an appropriate match between demand and supply. Viewed from the country level, the global projects and many knowledge products did not appear to be demand driven. The work of the policy specialists was more demand driven, but they sometimes had to ‘create’ demand for their services. Generally, a stronger contextual analysis could have paved the way for a better match between demand and supply.

4.5 CREATING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

UNDP was one of the first UN organizations to acknowledge the centrality of knowledge in fulfilling its mandate. It became one of the most active among the many multilateral and bilateral agencies in the field and was part of a second wave of focus on knowledge management. The number of knowledge sharing partnerships with UN organizations grew from zero to 15 since 2003, and UNDP’s model of knowledge networks was being considered for piloting in several other UN organizations such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Programme and the World Health Organization.

Since its introduction in 1997, the global programme was UNDP’s primary vehicle for the coordination and promotion of knowledge management.²¹³ The global frameworks were designed to help give coherence and direction to the substantive work of UNDP, especially during ongoing processes of decentralization and regionalization when strong vertical linkages and knowledge flows were needed to support organizational cohesion and effectiveness.

The GCF-III was essential to UNDP efforts to be a knowledge organization. UNDP was particularly well known within the UN system for its Human Development Reports and its pioneering models of global knowledge networks and communities of practice that aimed to connect people to expertise. However, at the country level, few were aware of the GCF-III knowledge products and projects to which they were end-users.

In the design of the GCF-III, key aspects needed to provide knowledge to developing countries’ policy agendas were well thought through. The GCF-III promoted ‘collecting’ (creating and codifying) and ‘connecting’ (sharing and learning) knowledge management strategies, and its three objectives all addressed the need for UNDP to be effective in both. This, however, required UNDP to field enough staff members with the appropriate expertise to advise country offices and national counterparts in priority areas, and/or who were skilled in creating, mobilizing, interpreting and sharing relevant knowledge across the organization and in service of programme countries. The GCF-III neither made available such a large, critical mass of staff in support of these function, nor did UNDP explicitly seek to integrate or mainstream such a function across the organization.

Another strength in the design of the GCF-III, which was not clearly reflected in the results framework, was that it linked the three key modalities of delivery—policy advisory services, targeted projects and knowledge management—and ensured that they were mutually reinforcing towards achievement of the GCF-III objectives.²¹⁴

213. The strong focus on knowledge was already articulated in GCF-I: “To distil from country-level experience lessons learned and identify new, innovative ideas ... to disseminate this knowledge globally and promote further research, debate and application as appropriate; to explore ways and means of translating global priorities into country-level follow-up action ...; and to encourage studies on concrete, practical policy measures ... to the emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. These purposes can only be achieved through a process of capturing the knowledge and experience of a diverse range of countries and regions and formulating them into tools and concepts with global application.” UNDP, ‘First Global Country Cooperation Framework, 1997-2000’, DP/GCF/1/Rev.1, 13 August 1997.

214. Analysis of the envisaged outcomes of the GCF-III showed that three of the four were focused on providing national stakeholders with appropriate and needed knowledge, using the established practice architecture and global projects as means to the end. Due to the nature of global projects (not country-specific) they were likely to support the production of useful knowledge rather than contribute direct assistance to national stakeholders. The focus on knowledge production was indeed reflected in the design and implementation of the projects.

The GCF-III design was to provide both the architecture (the practice and knowledge management experts) and the opportunities (to identify, create, codify and share knowledge) to move towards the common goal of strengthening national and country office capacities. This integrated approach was well articulated in the programme document²¹⁵ and provided a convincing argument for the management of the three components within one framework.

However, the knowledge management component of the GCF-III could not provide an integrating framework for the work of the other two components as intended, since it failed to fully capture experiences emanating from activities undertaken by UNDP programmes that were outside the GCF-III or BDP.²¹⁶

Establishing an effective framework required close collaboration with regional bureaux and country offices. Organizational systems and implementation processes therefore needed to promote such collaboration effectively if the programme objectives were to be achieved.

Two inter-related shifts during the evolution from the GCF-I to the GCF-III had significant implications: an increased focus on being demand-driven to ensure national ownership of development efforts, and a decrease in the focus on cutting-edge work on the production and distribution of public goods.²¹⁷ If the GCF-III design emphasized meeting national requests at the expense of being at the cutting edge of development work that could help countries, it would affect UNDP's comparative advantage and niche within and beyond the UN system. It would also affect how it structured its in-house

expertise, activities and incentives systems. This emerging dichotomy would have to be addressed in the design of a new global programme.



In summary, the global programmes played an essential role in UNDP becoming a knowledge-networked organization. An enabling environment was necessary to expand the early successes of knowledge networks and other knowledge products. More collaborative efforts were needed across UNDP to ensure that country experiences were fully reflected in the knowledge products. Efforts to integrate the three GCF-III modalities of delivery (policy advisory services, targeted projects and knowledge sharing) were not always successful in the operationalization and implementation of the GCF-III.

4.6 ENABLING SOUTH-SOUTH SOLUTIONS

The GCF-III programme document planned to respond to programme countries' request for South-based development solutions in two ways: through an increase in opportunities for SSC and Southern partnerships; and through collaboration with the Special Unit for SSC.²¹⁸ The GCF-III document also identified enabling "developing countries to benefit from interregional knowledge exchange and South-based experiences" as one of its three objectives.²¹⁹

Since the 1970s, SSC was a priority for UNDP and was pursued through global, regional and country programmes. However, the promotion of Southern solutions to development challenges introduced additional dimensions to the classic

215. This approach underpinned the whole document, but was articulated in particular in Section VI, paragraph 18. UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme, 2005-2007', DP/GP/1/Rev.1, 22 April 2005.

216. For example, the statement: "The outcomes of the project (Knowledge Services Project 11408) have taken the form of a number of inter-related outputs..." UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme 2006 Annual Report', UNDP BDP, 2007. The GCF-III reporting is project not programme-based and Project 11408 is the strategy for operationalizing the knowledge management component.

217. UNDP, 'Second Global Cooperation Framework, 2000-2003', DP/GCF/2, 27 November 2000.

218. UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme, 2005-2007', DP/GP/1/Rev.1, 22 April 2005, paragraph 8(c).

219. Ibid, paragraph 14(c).

definition of SSC, which was based on country-driven and country-owned exchanges of experiences, skills and resources.

The economic transformation of many developing countries, the growing stature of a number of countries as regional centres, and the emergence of non-Development Assistance Committee donors generated new dynamics for SSC and a reshaping of international cooperation. The traditional distinction between donor and recipient has become increasingly blurred, each being both a provider of support and a user of resources from other developing countries.

The GCF-III was expected to bring its own contribution to these dynamics and make the most of the growth of SSC to respond to the changing needs of programme countries. This would complement the activities of the Special Unit for SSC, which is housed by UNDP.

While the GCF-III generated and assisted many activities that included an SSC component, it provided neither a framework nor guidance that could bring together the global SSC experience. Thus the diverse efforts under the GCF-III to support SSC may not lead to a global outcome of promoting SSC. A recent evaluation of UNDP contribution to SSC noted that “the results of [UNDP initiatives are] affected by the absence of a corporate strategy that commits capacity and resources and enables learning from experience.”²²⁰ This evaluation concurs with that finding.

However, numerous examples illustrated how the GCF-III promoted Southern solutions through interregional transfer of knowledge, including:

- The International Poverty Centre’s research programme on conditional cash transfers analyzed the experience of major Latin American countries with a view to sharing lessons learned and policy guidance with

Sub-Saharan African countries through a network of experts and government officials.

- The Democratic Governance Group’s support to electoral assistance was based on lessons learned from a range of country experiences that were converted into case studies and shared with electoral institutions around the world in order to promote a transition from the traditional focus on ‘getting ready’ for election day to a focus on managing entire electoral cycles.
- The support provided by the Beirut SURF to the organizers of the first African conference on Human Development was an opportunity to promote innovative poverty measurement methodologies that were used successfully in several Arab countries.
- The knowledge fairs organized by the Panama SURF on local governance and the environment enabled Latin American authorities to share lessons from successful innovations and to offer methodological assistance on their possible replication or adaptation.
- Interregional knowledge transfer was facilitated by communities of practice and knowledge networks that reached out to national actors, as well as by the involvement of Southern experts in policy advice and technical assistance activities.

Many UNDP staff conceded that their use of SSC was more ‘casual’ than ‘structural’ and that more could be done to systematize the knowledge and convert it into a global public good. In many cases, they saw SSC as a succession of ‘one-off’ events or processes with little follow up, as opposed to being an integral part of policy and programme. Obstacles mentioned included the following: an insufficient understanding of what SSC meant or the extent to which SSC added value to UNDP work; the lack of time and resources for knowledge management; the

220. UNDP, ‘Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to South-South Cooperation’, UNDP Evaluation Office, New York, NY, 2007, p. i.

ongoing pressure of responding to individual country requests and resulting difficulties of ‘contextualizing’ through comparisons and cooperation with other countries; the frequent absence of explicit SSC components in country-level programmes and initiatives that policy specialists were called upon to assist; lack of accountability for SSC in UNDP; and the absence of resources to translate materials into other languages.

There was also potential for duplication between the GCF-III knowledge management mandate and the related information sharing mandate of the Special Unit for SSC. For example, funding for the SSC programme was provided in part “... to finance the sharing of successful South-South experiences, expertise and knowledge, with the objective of making them an integral part of country, regional and interregional programmes.”²²¹

Only a few instances of collaboration were found between the GCF-III-funded staff and activities and the Special Unit for SSC. There was no collaborative framework between BDP and the Special Unit for SSC. The Special Unit did not have a policy that defined the nature and extent of the services that country offices were expected to receive from it, nor did it participate regularly in practice-related policy advice and advocacy activities other than its own. Much could be done to address the emerging strategic features of SSC by combining the Special Unit for SSC global approach and the GCF-III practical involvement including involving new actors and donors; establishing partnerships between Southern countries;²²² creating new practices such as East-East cooperation; addressing the role of middle-income countries as providers of development solutions; and providing on-the-ground promotion of SSC in the main practice areas.

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In summary, the GCF-III had a vast but under-realized potential for promoting Southern solutions to development challenges. Collaboration between the GCF-III and the Special Unit for SSC was not used or made explicit through policy and programme guidance.²²³ A parallel between SSC and capacity development could be drawn in that, in the UNDP institutional culture, both were historically everybody’s business. Like capacity development, SSC was an important factor in the quest for stronger medium and long-term sustainability of development results. However, much remains to be done to mainstream SSC in the global programme.

4.7 MANAGING INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXITIES OF THE GCF-III

To address key challenges related to the management of the GCF-III, BDP launched a number of internal change management and re-alignment initiatives. The changes were intended to reconfigure BDP with improved service delivery, enhanced operations and strengthened management. While this was a positive step—and may respond to many of the issues raised in this evaluation—a better understanding of the underlying institutional complexities associated with the management of the GCF-III may lead to a better design, better management and more cost-effective delivery of measurable results. Some of these complexities are discussed below.

4.7.1 UNDP PROGRAMMING ARRANGEMENTS

The GCF-III core resources were allocated as a single line item in the financial framework of UNDP’s programming arrangements. A number of internal reviews of the programming arrangements pointed to the need for major changes to increase the flexibility and accountability in the use of core resources. The assignment of

221. UNDP, ‘Proposals on Programming Arrangements for the Period 2008-2011’, DP/2007/44, 3 August 2007, paragraph 36.

222. For example, IBSA, a trilateral, developmental initiative that brings together India, Brazil and South Africa.

223. While finalizing its report, BDP informed that, following the evaluation of UNDP contribution to SSC, it was taking the lead in developing a corporate approach and strategy to SSC in collaboration with the Special Unit.

responsibility for the global programme to BDP could engender a sense of entitlement: that is, the feeling that the GCF-III and its core funds belonged to BDP.

To address this issue, UNDP developed an internal proposal in 2007 for the inclusion of a ‘development effectiveness’ line in the programming arrangements for 2008-2011. The purpose of the proposal was to consolidate all policy advisory and programme support posts within UNDP under one resource allocation. This would have included policy specialist posts in BDP as well as similar posts in the regional programmes, central bureaux and some country offices. Based on this proposal, the decision to fund such posts from core programme resources would be open, transparent and would remove the potential for duplication across bureaux and country offices. The proposal was not submitted to the Executive Board in view of UNDP’s preoccupation with other major developments, such as preparation of the Strategic Plan, and time constraints. However, there may be an opportunity to revisit the proposal for a development effectiveness line, which would help resolve UNDP funding of policy advisory and programme support functions from all sources of core funding,²²⁴ including the global programme.

4.7.2 COMPLEX BDP BUSINESS MODEL

BDP is a complex organization, consisting of 16 separate business models, with a staff of 192 at Headquarters and 136 who are decentralized. These business models include the different practice groups, central bureaux structures, and units managing different funds, such as the GEF, Montreal Protocol and MDG Units. If the global programme continues with its present design of dispersing resources (staff posts and projects) across the numerous units at Headquarters and at the field level, planning for and determining

which results and outcomes are attributable to the global programme and which are attributable to other BDP inputs will continue to be a major challenge. Any meaningful performance measurement and accountability will be diluted or lost.

4.7.3 THE GCF-III AND THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF BDP

The management of the GCF-III was adversely affected by the multiple, and possibly conflicting, roles of BDP (roles that were funded by the GCF-III). Many country office staff had the perception that BDP was a distant think tank absorbed by Headquarter-level processes, removed from realities at the country level and caught in the tensions between different roles. The multiple roles and processes include:

- Policy and ‘think tank’—The GCF-III, as the UNDP global programme par excellence, did not support a cohesive UNDP policy development, applied research and development or coordination function. Further, the GCF-III did not support BDP to be “...the leading voice for UNDP in the development policy debate.”²²⁵
- Service delivery—BDP was heavily involved in the implementation of policy through the roll-out of the practice architecture, the delivery of policy advisory services and programme support to the country offices, and the management of knowledge networks. There were some benefits in a Headquarters unit such as BDP becoming involved in delivery at the local level (such as having feedback on factoring local experiences into global policy). However, the balance between policy work and service delivery was not always carefully managed to ensure synergy rather than conflict between operational units and the policy bureaux.

224. The team was informed that UNDP (Bureau of Management) is commencing a phased review of cost allocation, the end result of which may be proposals for major changes to the programming arrangements in the next cycle. The purpose of this review is to examine how posts in UNDP are classified and funded (programme, programme support and management).

225. UNDP, ‘BDP Alignment Process: Implementing the Strategic Plan and Accelerating Human Development,’ UNDP BDP, 30 January 2008, p.4 .

- Operations—BDP managed many funds and implemented hundreds of global projects, of which 121 were funded with the GCF-III funds. In the past, projects were executed and implemented by the UN Office for Project Services and other agencies. For global projects, BDP had become in some respects an operations agency, where project operation issues cut into the time of professional staff, including the GCF-III-funded policy specialists.



In summary, the management of the GCF-III faced a number of challenges: the programming arrangements assigned resources and responsibility to a single authority (BDP) while the performance of the GCF-III was dependent on number of units, particularly, the regional bureaux and country offices; the management involved a complex array of business models associated with different units within BDP; and the multiple and, at times conflicting, managerial roles required under the GCF-III (such as those related to policy advisory services, service delivery and operations).