



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Poverty Reduction

Second session
23-25 November 2005
Bangkok

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND EVALUATION: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

(Item 8 (b) of the provisional agenda)

**ESCAP GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMME MONITORING, REVIEW
AND EVALUATION**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

In recent years, results-based management principles and methodologies have been adopted throughout the United Nations Secretariat. ESCAP is fully committed to implementing reform measures in support of results-based management. While the initial focus has been on planning and implementation issues, ESCAP is now turning its attention increasingly to the role of monitoring and evaluation in response to the importance attached by members and associate members. To this end, ESCAP is developing an integrated programme and project monitoring and evaluation framework, in line with overall guidance provided by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services. The framework will cover the requirements for project, subprogramme and organization-level monitoring and evaluation activities in ESCAP and provide guidance on measures to ensure appropriate sharing mechanisms for findings and the lessons learned.

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I. RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION: THE UNITED NATIONS CONTEXT

1. The concept of results-based management, with an initial focus on results-based budgeting, was introduced by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform”.¹ In subsequent years, the integral part of monitoring and evaluation in results-based management has been increasingly highlighted by the Member States. The Secretary General’s Bulletin entitled “Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation”,² which was issued pursuant to the relevant General Assembly resolutions, provides for an integrated planning, monitoring and evaluation framework that is still valid today. In this context, the General Assembly, in its resolution 58/269 of 23 December 2003 on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change, further emphasized the importance of monitoring and evaluation, as well as the role of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in leading and overseeing related reform measures.

2. In response to those developments, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has played a lead role in strengthening monitoring and evaluation in the Secretariat. In this regard, two of its recent reports, which were considered by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, are particularly noteworthy: “Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives”³ and “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on proposals on the strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation”.⁴ These reports outline a range of measures aimed at enhancing the role of monitoring and evaluation as a strategic means towards strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to deliver results to its membership. In line with these recommendations, OIOS provides a range of new information and advisory services intended to support departments in their efforts to enhance monitoring and evaluation.

II. STRENGTHENING MONITORING AND EVALUATION AT ESCAP

3. The sweeping measures undertaken at ESCAP over the past years in support of the United Nations results-based management initiative, including monitoring and evaluation, reflect the full commitment to change by the Executive Secretary. In this connection, ESCAP was particularly encouraged by the “First report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007” of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, which states that “The Committee commends ESCAP for its efforts to carry out this activity [monitoring and evaluation] in a systematic, comprehensive manner”.⁵

¹ A/51/950 and A/51/950/Add.6 on results-based budgeting.

² ST/SGB/2000/8.

³ A/59/79.

⁴ A/60/73.

⁵ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 7 (A/60/7)*, para. V. 42.

4. At ESCAP, monitoring and evaluation is now viewed as playing a key role in understanding the performance not only of the secretariat but of the programme of work as a whole. As such, it is an essential means through which to provide feedback to programme managers and, above all, to ESCAP members and associate members. Until a few years ago, performance was either presumed to be excellent or was understood to relate to the delivery of activities and outputs which could, in most cases, be shown to be high. In contrast, ESCAP now seeks to develop a more differentiating and credible assessment of its performance, one that focuses primarily on results rather than on activities and encourages critical self-review, in the expectation that the experience learned from mistakes constitutes lessons that are as valuable as successes in future planning and programming processes.

5. Within the ESCAP secretariat, a change in management culture is becoming increasingly apparent. Over the last few years, while many aspects of the work of ESCAP have been re-examined, streamlined and strengthened, more participatory and transparent working methods are being introduced. Above all, not only are ESCAP staff members increasingly aware of the importance of quality in the delivery of ESCAP products and services, they are also, based on a better understanding of results to be achieved, able to define quality criteria more clearly. In this regard, monitoring and evaluation is increasingly recognized as providing programme managers with knowledge about their performance: knowledge of what is going well now and what is not. Such knowledge is required in order to make decisions about how to improve performance and steer the implementation process. They are also provided with knowledge of what went well in the past and what did not. This knowledge is needed in order to make decisions about future results to be achieved and which strategies to use in achieving them.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF A MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

6. ESCAP is currently finalizing a monitoring and evaluation framework in line with the recommendations of the governing bodies and OIOS to renew emphasis on the results obtained through the programme of work and to report in a transparent and credible manner on the quality and relevance of the work of ESCAP. The ESCAP framework will thus correspond closely to the conceptual and methodological framework for monitoring, review and evaluation provided by OIOS.

7. The framework, which outlines the monitoring and evaluation system of ESCAP, will cover the requirements for project, subprogramme and organization-level monitoring and evaluation activities in ESCAP as well as suggestions on measures to ensure appropriate sharing mechanisms for the findings and the lessons learned. It must, moreover, be complemented by other "technical" and "process" tools relevant to particular substantive areas (e.g. transport, trade, health), specific cross-cutting issues (e.g. gender, human rights, sustainable development) and the broader policy framework of ESCAP (for example, programme of work, technical cooperation strategy).

IV. PURPOSE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8. Monitoring and evaluation helps to improve performance and achieve results. Its overall purpose is the measurement and assessment of performance in order to manage the achievement of outcomes, expected accomplishments and outputs more effectively. As part of the emphasis on results in ESCAP today, the need to demonstrate performance is placing new demands on monitoring and evaluation.

9. In the past, monitoring and evaluation focused on assessing inputs and implementation processes. Today, the focus is on assessing the contributions of various factors to a given development outcome, with such factors including outputs, partnerships, policy advice, advocacy, capacity development methodologies and regional coordination mechanisms.

10. In supporting the integration of results-based management at ESCAP, the two key purposes of monitoring and evaluation are as follows:

(a) Documentation. Monitoring and evaluation contributes to the detailed documentation of programme and project processes, thus enhancing informed decision-making by programme and project management as well as providing information to members and associate members and funding agencies on the process and results of the various investments made.

(b) Accumulation of experiences and organizational learning. Monitoring and evaluation provides ESCAP members and associate members and programme managers with feedback on the performance of the activities. As such, it contributes to the improvement of programmes and projects through the collation, analysis and dissemination of experiences from current and completed activities. Strong emphasis is thus placed on organizational learning with a view to enhancing future performance.

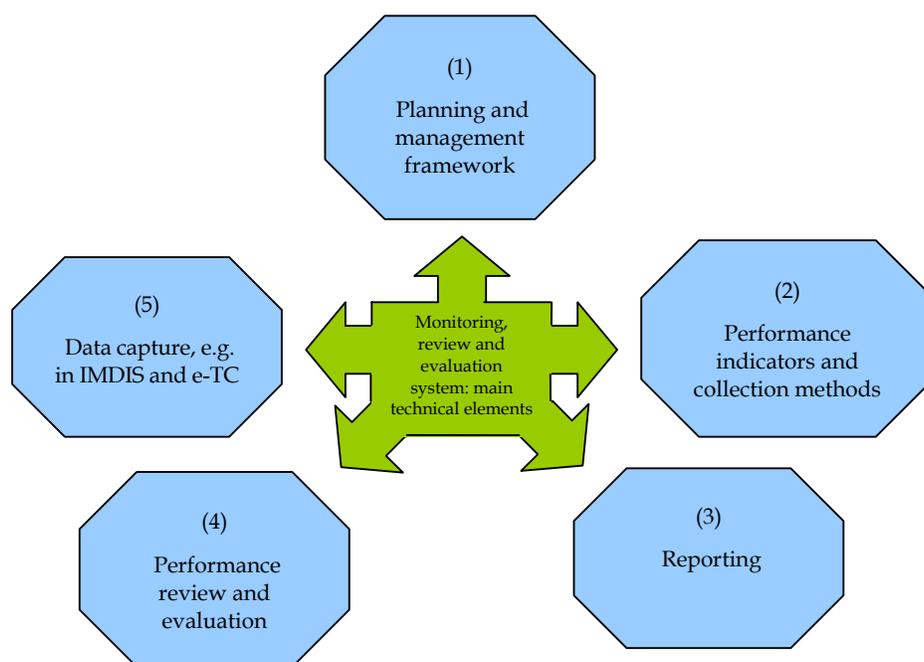
V. MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE ESCAP MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

11. There are five main elements in the ESCAP overall programme and project monitoring and evaluation framework. These are summarized in figure 1.

- (1) Planning and management framework. This refers to the broader programmatic setting of ESCAP, as reflected in the logical frameworks of the strategic framework and programme of work, including those of individual projects;
- (2) Performance indicators and collection methods. This refers to the quantitative, qualitative and time-bound targets that help to clarify performance criteria and standards for the range of results defined in the above-mentioned planning and management framework. Data collection systems and methods will be used to generate a continuous stream of information on whether performance indicators are being met;

- (3) Reporting. This refers to the requirement for programme and project managers to report regularly on ESCAP performance to key stakeholders, including member States and donors. Reporting fosters accountability, transparency and learning;
- (4) Performance review and evaluation. This refers to in-depth, periodic and time-bound assessments, both regular and ad hoc, of aspects of ESCAP performance;
- (5) Data capture. This refers to the need for monitoring, review and evaluation data and reports to be archived in such a way that they are easily accessible by different categories of users and stakeholders. A number of databases are used for this purpose, including the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and e-TC (ESCAP technical cooperation database).

Figure 1. Monitoring, review and evaluation system: technical elements



VI. PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT CONTEXT

12. In its effort to further strengthen results-based management, establishing effective planning and management frameworks is a priority concern for ESCAP since monitoring and evaluation builds on programme and project logical frameworks and their related performance indicators. A good planning framework, including indicators, is a necessary precondition for good monitoring and evaluation.

13. The overall planning framework is provided by the organization's biennial strategic framework. This requires the specification of the overall orientation of ESCAP, and then for each ESCAP subprogramme its: (i) objective, (ii) expected accomplishments, (iii) indicators of achievement and performance measures, and (iv) strategy.

14. The management framework is provided by the organizational structure of the United Nations and the ESCAP secretariat, and by the job descriptions of key staff.

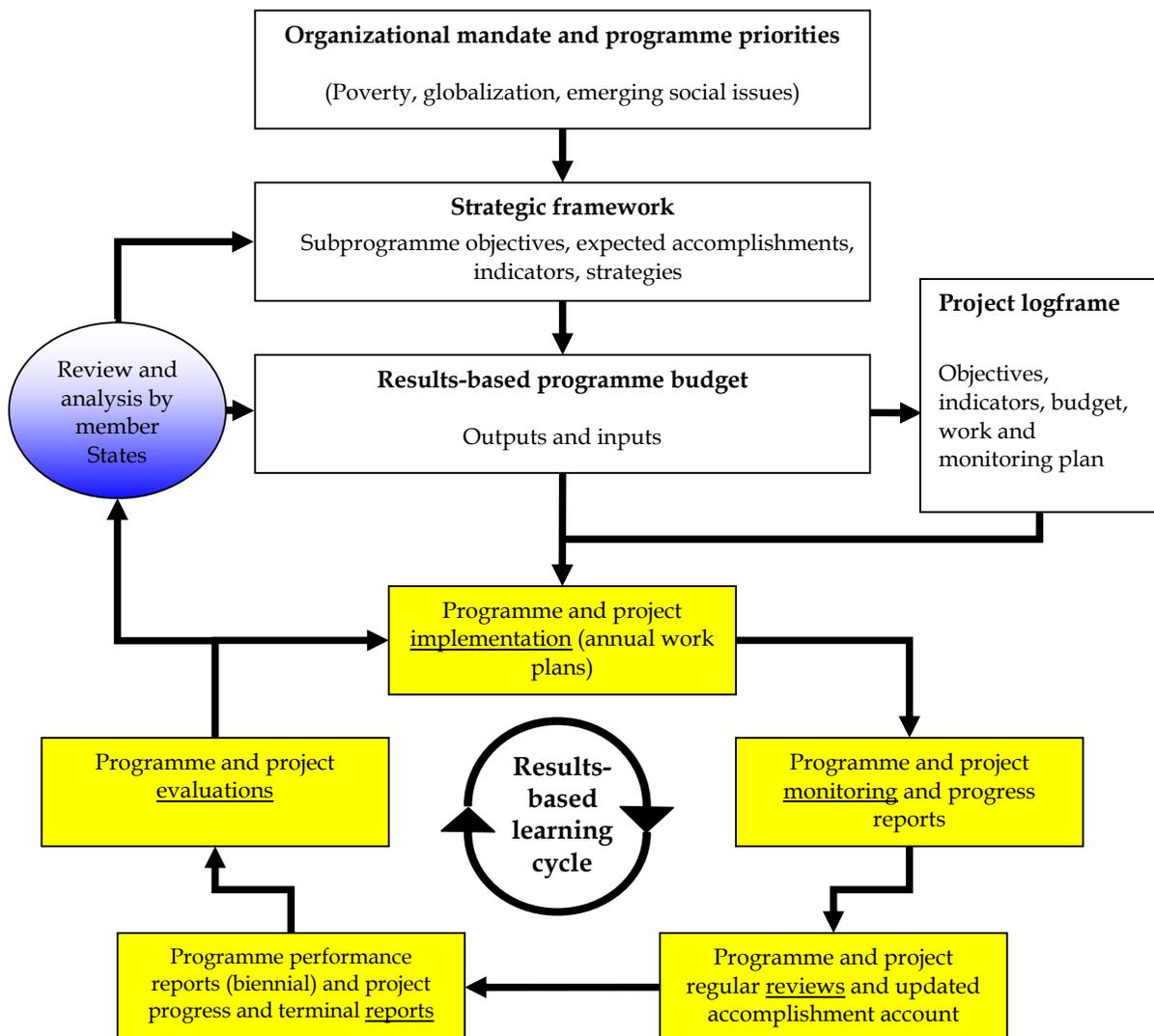
15. The programme planning and management cycle is summarized in figure 2. This emphasizes:

(a) The link between planning, monitoring, review and evaluation (none can happen in isolation);

(b) The fact that projects are designed and implemented to directly support programme priorities;

(c) That monitoring, review and evaluation activities have the primary purpose of supporting results-based management and learning.

Figure 2. Programme planning framework and management cycle



VII. THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

16. The primary analytical tool used to help to specify the hierarchy of subprogramme results and related performance indicators is the subprogramme results framework. This is based on the principles of the logical framework approach, which is also used in project planning.

17. The focus of the ESCAP monitoring and review activities (rather than evaluation) is on generating useful management information about the following:

(a) Achievement of expected accomplishments (building capacity and potential relevant to strategic priorities);

(b) Physical progress in implementing the programme of work (output/service delivery and activities);

(c) Efficient use of resources (inputs and budget).

These are within the “manageable interest” of the ESCAP secretariat and therefore deal with the part of the results hierarchy for which the organization can be held directly accountable.

18. The conduct of periodic evaluations and the peer review process managed by the Programme Management Division further supports the organization’s focus on results through investigating specific issues in more detail and/or assessing the contribution made by ESCAP programmes to development outcomes and impact.

VIII. INTEGRATION OF PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MONITORING AND REVIEW SYSTEMS

19. The systems and procedures used by ESCAP to plan, monitor and review projects and subprogrammes are integrated. All projects are integral parts of the subprogrammes’ efforts to achieve their targets. One way of achieving this integration is through the collection of client satisfaction data using a consistent methodology for projects which deliver one of the core types of an ESCAP output/service (e.g. training/workshops, publications, expert advice or inter-agency/regional meetings). These data will be aggregated to provide information on the performance of the subprogrammes.

IX. NEXT STEPS

20. The new monitoring and evaluation framework of ESCAP is expected to be launched in time for the biennium 2006-2007. To this end, guidelines and tools will be finalized over the coming months. Moreover, ESCAP will be provided with training on monitoring. Following the operationalization of the new system, it will be periodically reviewed with a view to further enhancing its effectiveness.

X. CONCLUSIONS

21. ESCAP efforts in strengthening monitoring and evaluation are expected to enhance access by its members and associate members, in particular the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, the legislative committees and the Commission, to objective and verifiable information pertaining to the results of the work of ESCAP. Such information, provided in a transparent manner and reviewed through participatory mechanisms, will place members and associate members in a considerably stronger position to take informed decisions about the future direction of the ESCAP programme, including the identification of issues of strategic importance and the elimination of obsolete work areas. While considerable progress has already been made in enhancing accountability at ESCAP, not least through the application of logical frameworks and indicators in the context of planning, the introduction of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system at ESCAP promises to further reinforce its results orientation and, ultimately, its ability to provide effective support to the development efforts of its members and associate members.

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