

Comments to the Results Framework from Norway

Theory of change

Chapters II and III contain two different result frameworks, one for policymaking organs and stakeholder engagement and the other for executive direction and management. Both these frameworks are following the same table format as the seven sub-programmes. However, while acknowledging they are important programmatic and cross-cutting preconditions for achieving the sub-programmes, we do not see them as directly related to the higher level environmental and climate effects. Apart from affirming that they both make reasonable sense and assuming UNEP use these frameworks actively in their operational management of the fund, we will not comment these further.

The use of “Theories of Change” (ToC) models for each of the seven sub-programmes in the PoW gives a useful illustration of the intended result logic or sequence of change. Typically, a good results framework is complemented by a narrative description of the ToC with details about causal relationships between different results levels, assumptions, drivers and sometimes elements outside the programme logic. This in turn can be complemented with a ToC model, as done here. However, as pointed out in previous feedback, we observe that there are many different levels (and terms) present in these models. Only the ‘expected accomplishments’ appears to be fully aligned with the results framework that can be found a few pages earlier in each sub-programme section. We further note that, while UNEP has made an effort to improve the narrative description of the ToC in the PoW text (in each strategy section), we believe this could be further developed in order to better bridge some of the gaps and clarify the links between the ToC model and the results framework. It would also help to maintain consistency in the wording of the results statements, as well as the terminology, to describe the different levels identically across the different diagrams and sections.

Indicators (attribution vs contribution)

A positive change from previous PoWs is the inclusion of ‘relevant impact level sustainable development goal [SDG] indicators’ for each of the highest result levels (‘objective of the organization’). While UNEP will not be held accountable for achieving results at this level (attribution), we expect them to track progress and analyse whether the interventions and expected results have contributed towards this objective. In this regard, it would strengthen the monitoring if UNEP can provide baseline and end line values for each of these SDG indicators. This does not have to be part of the PoW, but can either be an annex or as part of separate and stand-alone project documentation relating to relevant countries.

Indicators at ‘expected accomplishments’ levels are mostly good, although in a few cases they are formulated more as results (e.g. instead of ‘increase in the number of countries’ it should only say ‘number of countries’). While remaining mainly a cosmetic issue, we have already pointed out in previous assessments that ‘it is common practice that the indicator should be a neutral variable and that the baseline and target [or end line] together sets the direction/ambition for change’ (from feedback provided February 8th 2016). We have also raised concern in previous assessments around how progress will be assessed for some indicators. To what degree is something ‘integrated’ or ‘improved’ enough to generate the expected change? This is, for example an issue with indicators a - ii and b - ii of sub-programme 2, but also for indicators in other sub-programmes.

Norway gives priority to monitoring results on the higher result levels (here ‘expected accomplishments’ and ‘objective of the organisation’), in order to get a better overview of the effects for target groups. When the PoW refers to the lower result level (i.e. outputs) both in the ToC models and a listing towards the end of each sub-programme section, no indicators have been provided. This can be acceptable, as it is challenging to be very specific on outputs for a large organisation like UNEP. We do, however, expect that UNEP will be able to provide more detailed reporting on the scope of UNEP deliverable in a given country, when linking any progress on the Expected Accomplishments to UNEPs contribution.

Finally, we observe that UNEP now provides targets for all indicators and we very much appreciate how cumulative figures clearly illustrate how progress is planned each year for most indicators (although this good practice is missing a few places, e.g. under sub-programme 2). Baseline values are also missing for some indicators and, while acknowledging that some 2017 data may not be readily available, they should be updated as soon as possible (before any results reporting takes place). We also notice that in some cases there is reason to question the lack of progress between some baseline values and targets. E.g. in sub-programme 2 indicator b – ii the annual target values remain the same as the 2017 baseline (85%). While we appreciate that change may take time, one would expect to see some positive change after 4-5 years of intervention. The reasons for maintaining the targets at the same level as the baseline should therefore be explained.