Final Draft

Evaluation of the Process of Compiling National MDG Reports in Pacific Island Countries and Capacity to Measure and Monitor Development Performance

CONSOLIDATED COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS REPORT

Fiji Multi-Country Overview

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADR	Annual Development Report
BNPL	Basic Needs Poverty Line
CBMS	Community Based Monitoring System
CCAR	Consolidated Country Assessments Report
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHIS	Community Household Information System
EPPSO	Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office (RMI)
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission in Asia and Pacific
FCOSS	Fiji Council of Social Services
FIBOS	Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics
FPL	Food Poverty Line
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GIS	Geographical Information System
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCO	Fiji Multi-Country Office (of UNDP)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MDG-NC	MDG National Committee
MDG-TF	MDG Task Force
NESC	National Economic and Social Councils
NFPL	Non-Food Poverty Line
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NMWG	National MDG Working Group
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PSC	Public Service Commission
RMI	Republic of Marshall Islands
SEEDS	Sustainable Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Countries
SWS	Social Weather Stations
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations International Development Fund for Women
VANGO	Vanuatu Association of NGOs

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fiji Multi-Country Office's MDG-related support to the PICs took different forms, but most prominent among these has been the technical assistance provided to support the nine countries prepare and produce their first MDG Progress Reports. Beyond the production of the nine MDG country reports, the technical assistance also envisaged the processes of preparation of MDG reports to yield several additional benefits, both tangible and intangible. All nine countries covered by the Fiji MCO have now produced their respective MDG reports.

Purpose of evaluation

The Evaluation of the Processes of Compiling National MDG Reports in Pacific Island Countries and Capacity to Measure and Monitor Development Performance has been undertaken "to provide an analysis of the in-country process and the 'value-added', if any, that the national MDG reports have provided". In addition, it has also been envisaged that these evaluation reports – the Regional and the nine Country Assessment Reports shall "… provide the countries with an effective way forward towards improving the process for the next round of reporting, due 2009-2012, and produce an effective tool for policy making and planning". The Consolidated Country Assessments Report is a synthesis of key lessons of the nine Country Assessment Reports.

Key findings: reporting processes, direct and indirect benefits

It is evident from the analysis that the UNDP support given to the PICs to prepare and produce their first national MDG reports, has yielded a number of direct and indirect benefits – all of the nine PICs have now drafted, finalized and officially endorsed their MDG reports, with one or two exceptions.

Linked to the MDG reports has been the objective of empirical benchmarking of current country status – the identification of challenges faced and the definition of priorities vis-à-vis the eight MDG.

Notwithstanding variations in quality and depth, with statistics gathered and analyzed on key aspects of MDG such as poverty, gender, social development etc., and mainstreaming MDG indicators into national development plans, the key objective of benchmarking and prioritizing of MDG (localized) within the development priorities of the governments seems to have been accomplished to some extent. Although progress is uneven, official endorsement of the reports, followed by its mainstreaming into national development plans, reflects clear commitment by the governments to MDG and their ownership. Ownership also underscores the importance of follow-up.

Among other things, the MDG reporting process also appears to have helped the PICs to come up with their own definition of poverty, especially in terms of relative poverty or "hardship". However, more efforts are needed to improve data gathering, collation, standardization and analysis relating to poverty and gender. Poverty coverage is mixed and there are inconsistencies in data. Another outstanding feature of MDG is benchmarking of gender data, although more disaggregated data is required to understand the situation of women vis-à-vis goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 etc.

Other direct benefits include creation of new structures, such as the MDG task forces and MDG focal points within the governments etc.

The MDG reporting process has also yielded several *indirect benefits* such as highlighting the benefits of inter-agency collaboration and partnerships in development management, within and outside the government, in achieving common goals. Another important outcome of the MDG reporting process has been the shift in development thinking – policy makers are now better aware of and oriented to issues of poverty alleviation, gender development etc., as priority agenda of development. The MDG reporting process has also demonstrated the importance of evidence based priority setting and planning. It is also conceivable that the institutional dynamism of partnerships and collaboration created through the MDG reporting process may eventually progress to the evolution of operating frameworks of a public administration system that is coordinative, collaborative and above all, consultative.

Another important outcome of the MDG reporting process has been the participation of civil society organizations and NGOs in public policy processes. It is noticeable that the awareness built through the MDG reporting process has also prompted the broader community, including NGOs and civil society organizations, to get involved in and in some countries - such as in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - demonstrate clear commitment to continue work in advocacy and civic based policy dialogue and monitoring on MDG. NGOs in these countries have approached the Evaluation Mission for capacity building to conduct social research and policy dialogue relevant to MDG.

Best practices

The Evaluation Mission has recorded cases of several best practices and these range from the gender mainstreaming initiatives of Fiji to inclusion of local government in the MDG reporting process in RMI. The Mission also recorded several other best practices that are not directly linked to MDG reporting, but have the potential to enhance future MDG based reporting and planning. This includes Tonga's participatory initiatives ("peoples perspective on development") in the preparation of its national development plan – a good example of civic engagement in public governance, a norm advocated by MDG.

The Mission also recorded several "promising ideas" that are either at their conceptual or preliminary stages of implementation that reveal discernible potential for advancing MDG in the future.

Challenges

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that as each country has produced its MDG report - this being the main objective of the project - there has not been a single case that can be termed as a "failure". However, the Mission records several challenges that have either affected the quality of the current report or risk future full usage of the report, including future quality reporting.

These challenges include: (i) difficulty in obtaining timely and quality data from the sources, especially from line agencies and grass-roots - most data sources have neither the capacity nor the legal obligation or the incentive to produce and report timely and quality data; (ii) a general lack of a culture of evidence based planning acts as a disincentive to the production and generation of timely and quality data; (iii) further data disaggregation, for example in poverty and gender data, remain an unmet need; (iv) a lack of qualitative data on poverty or "hardship" and an absence of a system of regular measurement and monitoring of multi-faceted dimensions of "hardship" continue to weaken comprehensive understanding, especially the institutional and cultural issues, of poverty in most countries; (vi) insufficient gender data, especially in relation to goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 weakens formulation of comprehensive gender strategies in most countries and there is also lack of capacity to

translate gender data into policies as well as absence, in some cases, of the required level of commitment to advance the agenda of gender systematically; (v) non-inclusion of sub-national entities (except RMI) into the MDG reporting process has deprived the countries the opportunity to apply MDG indicators into the planning and monitoring initiatives of local governments - the level at which most MDG related services and products (health, education etc.) are expected to be delivered; and (vi) a lack of institutional and operational capacity to mainstream the MDG indicators into the regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of public sector policies and programmes of the government etc.

Furthermore, in several countries MDG task forces have either collapsed or have become dormant and the progress in mainstreaming the task forces within the existing planning committee is also slow. These regressive trends vis-à-vis the MDG task forces have the risk of affecting the next round of MDG reporting and at the same time, may affect adversely the country's capacity to drive MDG targets within the national development processes of the governments from within.

Lessons learnt

The Evaluation Mission records the following key lessons of the MDG reporting process: (i) strong in-country advocacy and orientation training in MDG by a host of donors including the UN as a group, and UNDP in particular, played an important role in motivating and preparing the governments (similar support may still be needed to maintain the momentum); (ii) technical assistance in data gathering, analysis and report writing including a reporting template introduced by the UNDP greatly assisted in raising capacity in data gathering and analysis and preparation of the report, although many believe that the skills learnt may not be sufficient to write the next report from within – further technical assistance will be required; (iii) establishment of in-country focal points and most importantly formation of and facilitation by MDG task forces, especially those that carried the right political clout played a key role in advancing the reporting process, although in recent times in some countries the task forces have either become dormant or even collapsed; (iv) utilization and updating of existing data (HIES, poverty data, population census etc.) and where appropriate, utilization of proxy or indirect indicators – the quality of existing data also played an important part in enhancing the quality of the report; (v) participation of NGOs and their quality greatly influenced the quality of some aspects of the report; (vi) wide sharing of the draft report including dissemination at the community level established the potential for accountability from the bottom; (vii) the commitment of the government in general, and that of the coordinating capacity of the MDG focal points in particular, advanced the process and created conditions for further follow-up; and (viii) official endorsement of the report and mainstreaming it in the planning and monitoring framework is seen as key to enhancing ownership – in some countries the report has been endorsed by the parliament, raising the prospect of its ownership and better follow-up, although in other countries the report is yet to be officially endorsed; also in most countries although the task of mainstreaming the report into their national development plan has been reported as completed, more work is needed to bring these mergers to operational level.

Key outputs and activities for future work

The main purpose of the current evaluation exercise has been to assess the extent to which the MDG reporting processes added value or otherwise, in building country capacity in future reporting, as well as assessing the quality and extent of mainstreaming the targets of MDG within the planning, monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the governments. The latter is important to ensure that the targets of MDG are pursued within the frameworks of national development plans, and that by orienting the monitoring and evaluation systems to these

targets, countries develop self-sustaining capacity to track progress and report accomplishments within the parameters of the MDG in future.

The framework of future work

The Evaluation Mission has examined the aspect of "future work to support MDG reporting" with two distinct but inter-linked perspectives: (i) outputs and activities that have the potential to fulfill the immediate objective of supporting the next round of reporting due in 2009-2012; and (ii) outputs and activities that have the potential to create self-sustaining in-country capacity in future reporting (beyond 2009), as well as to build capacity to implement the MDG from within in future.

The Evaluation Mission has conceptualized the "future work" from a number of perspectives:

(i) Substantive perspective;
(ii) Time perspective
(iii) Targeting or absorptive capacity perspective.

The *substantive perspectives* include issues such as: (i) measurement and monitoring related issues; (ii) the issue of gender mainstreaming; (iii) mainstreaming MDG in planning and monitoring; and (iv) other institutional issues.

The *time perspective* includes two timeframes: (i) immediate to short term; and (ii) medium to long term.

The *targeting perspectives* deal with the issues of in-country absorptive capacity and accordingly, the Mission recommends two different approaches in capacity development – one for the countries that are more resourceful and possess sizable absorptive capacity, and the other for the countries that possess less resources and absorptive capacity.

The Evaluation Mission also highlights several capacity building initiatives that are of a regulatory nature and are largely internal to the government, although in some of these there may still be need for external support such as advocacy and dialogue.

Listed below is an outline of the "future work" both in terms of substantive as well as time perspectives.

Substantive perspectives of future work

A. Measurement and monitoring related

- Capacity building and institutional development in information management – the flow of information from the primary sources to the centre
- Capacity in data measurement and analysis relating to further disaggregation and analysis of poverty data, especially by gender, ethnicity etc.
- Capacity development in qualitative assessment (measuring "hardship") and monitoring of poverty
-

B. Gender mainstreaming

- Deepening gender analysis by rural/urban distinction, ethnicity and gathering and analysis of gender data in goals 1, 4, 5, 6

- Mainstreaming gender indicators into the planning, budgeting and monitoring processes
-

C. Mainstreaming MDG reports within national strategic development plan/budgeting/monitoring

- Mainstreaming MDG indicators within the national development plans per committed targets and timeframe
- Capacity in policy analysis and policy development relevant to MDG
- Capacity in MDG based costing, budgeting and monitoring

D. Institution related

- Continuous advocacy and dialogue for sustaining and reinforcing commitment to MDG
- Capacity building of the MDG task forces, especially on gender issues
- Mainstreaming MDG task forces within the national planning committees/sub-committees
- Necessary legal, institutional and organizational initiatives and adjustments relevant to enhancement of MDG ownership and implementation
- Capacity building of MDG secretariats in inter-agency coordination, information management and follow up
- NGO capacity building in policy dialogue and participatory or qualitative poverty/hardship measurement and monitoring
- Technical and consultancy support for the next round of reporting – needs vary but most countries need assistance in data collation, analysis and report writing
- Coordination and complementarity of multiple donor initiatives in MDG measurement and reporting.

The time perspective

As stated earlier, the Mission recommends two time frames: (i) one in immediate to short term for activities that have the potential to assist better the next round of reporting; and (ii) the second for medium to long term, for activities that may assist building in-country self-sustaining capacity in MDG planning, monitoring and reporting.

1. Short to immediate term support activities (for 2009-2012 reporting**)**

   In terms of assisting the countries to prepare the next round of monitoring, the Evaluation Mission recommends the following actions:

   - Revamping of MDG task forces and their mainstreaming (where this is yet to be done effectively) within the national planning committees - this must be done strategically, after careful consideration of local considerations
   - Early initiation of advocacy and orientation work for the next round of reporting

- Immediate assessment of the in-country status of data – what exists and what does not, update of existing data where necessary, and fill in data gaps detected during the first reporting

- Advance analysis of data that are already available and have been obtained through the most recent surveys, studies etc. and collate the same within the MDG framework

- Consultancy support to collate and analyze data and write the report on their own – most countries have expressed a need for consultancy support

- In order to avoid duplication or confusion and to ensure maximum complementarities among various MDG related capacity building initiatives of various agencies (UN as well as donors), a regional level support facility - preferably at the UNDP - may be established to assist the harmonization and integrated planning and implementation of these initiatives. The Evaluation Mission regards establishment of a regional facility in coordination and facilitation of MDG related capacity initiatives crucial to guarantee efficiency and complementarity among these multiple initiatives. At the country level, in conjunction with the MDG secretariat of the government, the secretariats of the CDMs should take on this responsibility. However, in this regard the Mission stresses that the proposed coordinating frameworks (regional and in-country) should facilitate the process through information exchange and regular review without any controlling authority.

2. Medium to long term support activities

In order to build in-country self-sustaining MDG measurement and monitoring capability, it is important that the donors, as well as the UNDP, draws up a multi-year capacity development plan. Activities that may contribute to a self-sustaining capacity in MDG measurement and monitoring include, but are not limited to, the following:

- In order to strengthen capacity in information management – collection and collation of administrative data from primary sources to the centre - introduce on a pilot basis a Community Based Information Management System (CHIS)

- Capacity building in qualitative assessment of poverty/hardship through the introduction of a self-rating methodology of poverty and/or hardship assessment on a regular basis

- Capacity building in results based planning, budgeting and monitoring system for the medium term development plan with linkages to the targets of MDG

- Strengthening gender data by collecting addition information relating to gender empowerment and those that are relevant for goals 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the MDG.

3. Capacity initiatives internal to the government

As stated earlier, future successful MDG measurement and monitoring, including its implementation, will require a range of institutional, social, political and financial enablers that must come from within:

- Official endorsement of the MDG report. Several countries have already officially endorsed the report, especially at the parliament that has enhanced ownership and subsequent follow up. Other countries need to also follow this strategy.

- Creating the necessary and adjusting institutional arrangements for planning and monitoring in a way that allows multi-agency and multi-sectoral (especially inclusion of NGOs and the private sector) participation in the planning processes, that must also be oriented to MDG.

- Creating demand for quality data from within is key to MDG based planning and this can be achieved by encouraging the governments to lean more and more towards evidence based planning.

- Harmonization and standardization of data generated and gathered by various agencies requires immediate attention and the central planning and statistical agencies of the countries must take the lead in this initiative - if necessary with support from donor/UN agencies.

- Further disaggregation of data, especially by ethnicity, is key to understanding progress of development in ethnic sensitive areas such as gender development and empowerment, poverty, health, education etc.

- Strengthen capacity of the MDG secretariats. Steps should be taken to strengthen the analytical, logistics and coordination capacity of the MDG secretariats, if necessary with support from UNDP.

The targeting perspective

The Evaluation Mission also recommends that in terms of future capacity building initiatives, each country carefully examines its own potential within the contexts of its own needs - as well as its limits. Special attention must be paid to its **absorptive capacity**. There are limits to how much a country can do and absorb, regardless of whether it is the government or an NGO.

Furthermore, in terms of the extent of capacity building interventions and for economy of scale, the Evaluation Mission proposes two different approaches: (i) comprehensive in-country capacity building, especially in statistics, in those countries that are more resourceful and possess relatively better and stronger absorptive capacity; and (ii) for the smaller countries that possess relatively less in-country absorptive capacity, selective and limited capacity building with provision of supplementation of gaps driven by a regional facility such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

Countries such as Fiji, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands, that possess sound statistical infrastructure, seem to fall under the first category, while the rest may be targeted for selective and limited interventions with the provision of supplementation from a regional facility. SPC's idea of establishing a "roving team" for intra-regional or south/south technical cooperation in statistics may be given due consideration.

Finally, as is evident from the above, building sustainable MDG measurement and monitoring capacity in the Pacific would require a multi-faceted approach and most importantly, a long-term multi-year strategic plan, as well as support. Donors, including UN agencies, need to be particularly aware of this reality.

4. Capacity building initiatives recommended for UN/UNDP

(I) Capacity Building initiatives recommended for the UN

The UN Country Team as a whole - and more specifically UNIFEM and UNICEF/UNFPA - should continue building statistical capacity in goals 3, 4 and 5 of MDG, respectively. With regard to Goal 3, UNFPA can particularly assist the countries to develop analytical skills to use gender data for reproductive health planning and monitoring. UNICEF's DeveInfo is also a powerful tool for MDG-based planning and monitoring. However, before engaging the countries to adopt this tool, care should be taken to see that this does not duplicate an existing arrangement and, most importantly, ensure that the countries have enough resources to absorb and sustain this new technology.

The role of the Country Development Managers (CDM) in facilitating and advancing in-country UN initiatives, including MDG related initiatives, should not be underestimated. During the Evaluation Mission's data gathering phase, it was observed that the countries that have effective CDMs facilitated the work of the Mission better and more efficiently than those who do not. Therefore, further capacity building of the institution of CDMs should be given due attention and in the event UNDP takes on the task of the proposed matrix management of all MDG Capacity Building Initiatives in PICs (see below), CDMs will be required to play a very important role and therefore their further capacity building is crucial.

(II) Capacity building initiatives recommended for UNDP

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that in terms of MDG measurement and monitoring UNDP's comparative advantage is less in statistics and statistical analysis and more in facilitation of processes, advocacy, information management, participatory methods, results based monitoring and evaluation etc. UNDP also has an advantage in MDG costing and budgeting. It is in this context that the Evaluation Mission recommends the following capacity building initiatives for the consideration of UNDP:

A. Immediate to short term

(i) Assist revamping MDG task forces: Where these have become dormant or have collapsed, immediate steps to be taken to re-activate and if necessary, assist re-constitution of the MDG task forces and make sure that there is sufficient NGO representation, especially those that represent gender and environment sectors, and also include representation of the local governments.

(ii) Advocacy: Early initiation of advocacy and orientation work for the next round of reporting.

(iii) Immediate data update: Urgent steps to update earlier data and fill in data gaps detected during the first reporting.

(iv) Advance analysis: Advance analysis of data that are already available through the most recent surveys, studies etc., and collate the same within the MDG framework.

(v) Consultancy: Even though most countries have developed some capacity in MDG reporting, these are not considered enough to collate and analyze data and write the report on their own – most countries have expressed a need for consultancy support.

The Evaluation Mission also flagged under "capacity building support internal to the government" several initiatives that are internal to the government but may still require UNDP support. UNDP may discuss these with the countries and identify those activities that would require UNDP support.

B. Medium to long term

(i) Pilot testing of the proposed Community based Information Management System (CHIS): In order to improve overall information management systems, especially the aspect of data flow from the grass-roots to the centre, UNDP to consider providing support to pilot testing of the proposed CHIS in selected countries. In consideration of their existing capacity, the Evaluation Mission recommends the following countries for the proposed pilot testing of CHIS – Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

(ii) Capacity building in qualitative assessment of poverty/hardship: To complement the quantitative poverty measurement with qualitative measurement, especially the non-income dimensions of poverty (ie, "hardship"), UNDP to consider building capacity by training the government as well as NGOs, and pilot testing the self-rating poverty measurement and monitoring system, such as that of the Social Weather Station of the Philippines, or of similar successful initiatives undertaken elsewhere.

(iii) NGO/government capacity building in policy research and policy analysis: Support short and practical training courses on policy research and analysis. This is important for raising both government and NGO capacity in policy dialogue and policy development.

(iv) MDG oriented Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (M-RBME): Assist the PICs to incorporate within their national development plan, an MDG based strategic results framework and build capacity to assist planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the context of MDG.

(v) Advocacy for evidenced based planning: Through continuous advocacy and policy level dialogue, encourage the governments to provide the necessary institutional backing for the evolution of a culture of evidence based planning with the expectation that such a development will create the necessary incentives within, for an efficient data and information management system.

(vi) Facilitating best practices information exchange: From the information obtained through this report and on the basis of emerging best practice lessons, UNDP may take the initiative to promote information exchange in best practices. Websites of UNDP MCO and the UNDP Pacific Centre are already playing an important role in this regard. In addition, the provision of regular seminars, workshops and study tours may also be useful for practical lessons learning and upgrading of knowledge.

(vii) Coordination of all MDG related capacity building initiatives: In view of the fact there are multiple donors and agencies are engaged in and having future plans for MDG related capacity building initiatives in PICs, there is always this risk of duplication and sometimes, due to their uncoordinated implementation, there is the potential for intervention overload at the country level. While appreciating the benefits they receive from their support, many countries have also expressed their frustration with regard to confusion and stress created through the overload of uncoordinated interventions. It is true that the primary responsibility for donor

coordination lies with the countries themselves, but considering that the evolving pattern and strategy of development cooperation in PICs is more regional than country based, it is important that some regional level coordination and facilitation facilities are also developed. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that - to avoid duplication and most importantly, to ensure necessary complementarities among various development cooperation inputs - a central facility for donor coordination, especially for the MDG reporting and monitoring related interventions - be developed.

(viii) The Evaluation Mission believes that UNDP is well positioned to take on this responsibility possibly through an existing inter-governmental regional facility through its own institutional set up. The Mission suggests that in consultation with the PICs and the donor agencies - if necessary with support from the latter - UNDP develops a matrix of all MDG reporting capacity building initiatives (MCBI) and assists with the planning and implementation of the MCBI in an integrated and coordinative manner. In this regard, the Evaluation Mission suggests that a stakeholder consultative workshop made up of the governments, NGOs and donors be held soon to discuss and develop a country-by-country and donor-by-donor (including that of UN's) *MDG Strategic Capacity Building Matrix (see Annex VI).* The Evaluation Mission also recommends that with donor and country agreement the UNDP Fiji MCO may be assigned the responsibility of facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the entire MDG capacity building package (those of the UN and donors) in the PICs. The PICs, the donors and UNDP may take the advantage of the proposed regional workshop to prepare a matrix of MDG related donor/UN initiatives with a timeframe to enable UNDP to facilitate and coordinate their implementation over the years. Donors may consider giving UNDP the necessary resources for the MDG Capacity Building Matrix management. (See Annex VI for the Annotated Agenda of the proposed workshop.)

Furthermore, the aspect of good governance in the implementation of MDG may also be given attention. The agenda of human rights dimensions of the Millennium Declaration that sees good governance as a goal as well as a means to achieve MDG, seems to have also been prioritized by most PICs' national development strategies, and progress has been made, with a few exceptions, to implement good governance standards. The Evaluation Mission is however, aware that UN agencies have already developed indicators to monitor and report on governance trends in PICs. However, as good governance is a very crucial and essential element of the MDG, and as this aspect has not been included in the template of the first MDG reporting, it is the view of the Mission that UNDP may consider encouraging countries to include a separate section on governance in their next MDG report to report on governance trends on issues such as political rights, civil liberties, citizen engagement in public decisions etc.

1.0 BACKGROUND

This Consolidated Country Assessments Report (CCAR) records lessons drawn from the experiences of nine Pacific Island countries (PICs), covered by the Fiji UNDP Multi-Country Office (Fiji MCO) in Suva on the processes of Millennium Development Goals Reporting.[1]

1.1 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Set for the year 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are an agreed set of goals that, in generic terms, aim to achieve poverty reduction, social equity and environmental sustainability within each nation, but more specifically within each developing nation.[2]

A range of in-country and global actions are needed to achieve MDG, but the following are regarded as key to MDG-based planning and implementation:

(i) Sufficient in-country capacity for identification of data sets and their sources; the capacity to collect, collate and analyze data for articulation and quantification of MDG-related developmental challenges, indicators, opportunities and priorities, especially those that relate to poverty.

(ii) A participatory governance framework that includes civil society organizations, including non-government organizations (NGOs), other interest groups - such as the environmental, gender groups etc., as well as the private sector in the decision making processes of the government and their follow up.

(iii) Mainstreaming "localized" MDG within national development strategies and alignment of planning and budgeting processes and allocation of resources to realize these goals.

(iv) Capacity to monitor and evaluate progress of implementation.

(v) Provision of the required level of international financial and technical assistance, trade and debt concessions etc.

1.2 UNDP'S MDG COUNTRY STRATEGY

Generally, it is the **United Nations' Core Strategy on MDG** that defines UNDP's MDG strategy at the country level and these include:

- Campaigning and mobilization: Supporting **advocacy** for the MDG and working with partners to mobilize the commitments and capabilities of broad segments of society to build awareness on the MDG;

- Analysis: Researching and sharing best **strategies** for meeting the MDG in terms of innovative practices, policy and institutional reforms, means of policy implementation, and evaluation of financing options;

- Monitoring: Helping countries report advancement towards the MDG and **tracking progress**;

[1] The nine countries covered by the Fiji UNDP Multi-Country Office are: Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
[2] The eight MDG are: (i) Eradicating poverty and hunger; (ii) Achieving universal education; (iii) Promoting gender equality and empowerment of women; (iv) Reducing child mortality; (v) Improving maternal and child health; (vi) Combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (vii) Ensuring environmental sustainability; and (viii) Developing a global partnership for development.

- Operational activities: Goal driven assistance to support governments to tailor MDG to local circumstances and challenges, address key constraints to progress on the MDG.

In order to ensure that there is consistency between the UN's global MDG strategy with that of the country, this Assessment Report will apply the framework stated above to propose the Fiji Multi-Country Office's future course of action in the target countries.

1.3 FIJI MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE SUPPORT TO MDG REPORTING IN NINE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

The Fiji Multi-Country Office's MDG-related support to the PICs took different forms, but most prominent among these has been the technical assistance provided by it to support the nine countries to prepare and produce their first MDG Progress Reports. Beyond the production of the nine MDG country reports, the technical assistance also envisaged the processes of preparation of MDG reports to yield several additional benefits, both tangible and intangible.

The major expectations of this multi-country technical assistance have been that the processes of MDG progress reporting would assist the countries to focus better on issues; identify statistical benchmarks necessary for MDG-based planning and implementation; and consequently, mainstream MDG indicators within their national development plans to ensure cooption and tracking of these indicators during the period of implementation of medium-term plans.

This evaluation exercise includes two important outputs: (i) nine Country Assessment Reports: a country-by-country assessment of processes of MDG reporting, impacts, lessons learnt etc; and (ii) a Consolidated Country Assessments Report, documenting synthesis of lessons from the nine Country Assessment Reports.[3]

[3] The nine Country Assessment Reports are: (i) Country Assessment Report: Fiji; (ii) Country Assessment Report: Federated States of Micronesia; (iii) Country Assessment Report: Kiribati; (iv) Country Assessment Report: Marshall Islands; (v) Country Assessment Report: Palau; (vi) Country Assessment Report: Solomon Islands; (vii) Country Assessment Report: Tonga; (viii) Country Assessment Report: Tuvalu; and (ix) Country Assessment Report: Vanuatu.

2.0 THE CONSOLIDATED COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS REPORT

The Consolidated Country Assessments Report is a synthesis of nine Country Assessment Reports and records, in a generic way, progress made, gaps remaining and lessons learnt. The report also presents examples of best practice and promising intentions, and maps out future capacity building needs, especially those that are relevant to and within the comparative advantage of the UN Country Team in general, and Fiji MCO in particular.

2.1 PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The main purpose of the evaluation of the in-country processes of MDG reporting has been "to provide an analysis of the in-country process and the "value-added", if any, that the national MDG reports have provided".

In addition, it has been envisaged that these evaluation reports – The Regional and the nine Country Assessment Reports shall "… provide the countries with an effective way forward towards improving the process for the next round of reporting, due 2009-2012, and produce an effective tool for policy making and planning".[4]

The Consolidated Country Assessments Report has focused on the following issues:

(i) MDG Reporting and initiatives in MDG measurement and monitoring;
(ii) MDG reporting and the issue of MDG ownership;
(iii) Country capacity development;
(iv) Mainstreaming gender perspective;
(v) Key contributing factors for the success and failure of national MDG reports;
(vi) Best practices and promising ideas; and
(vii) Key outputs and activities for future work.

With regard to item (vii) above, "Key outputs and activities for future work", the Evaluation Mission examined two broad sets of issues – one that are required in the immediate to short term relevant for facilitating the next round of reporting, and the other for enhancing self-sustaining in-country capacity to undertake MDG based planning, monitoring and reporting, from within.

2.2 METHODOLOGY OF EVALUATION

As stated earlier, the Consolidated Country Assessments Report is a synthesis of nine Country Assessment Reports and preparation of the latter reports has employed the following methodology:

- Extensive briefing at the UNDP Multi-Country Office (February 23-March 3, 2009), Suva, Fiji;
- Briefing sessions at the UNDP Pacific Centre (February 24, March 1, 2009), Suva, Fiji;
- Desk research of relevant reports, publications, project documents, websites etc;
- Survey through questionnaire, February 14-April 9, 2009 (see Annex II: Questionnaire);
- Telephone interview/key informant interview/consultations (see Annex III for the list of those interviewed/List of Questionnaire Respondents);

[4] See Annex I for the full terms of reference of the evaluation.

- Field visits (Fiji: February 23-March 3, 2009; Solomon Islands: April 21-23, 2009: and Vanuatu: April 14-19, 2009).

- Stakeholder round table discussions held on March 17, 2009 at Nadi, Fiji, during the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Pacific Regional Workshop on Stock-Taking, Emerging Issues and the Way Forward, Radisson Resort, Daneru Island, Nadi, Fiji, March 16-20, 2009 (see Annex IV for list of participants of Nadi stakeholder meeting).

- Preparation and finalization of each country report followed lengthy and exhaustive consultations and was based on: a literature review and analysis of the responses of the questionnaire that the countries submitted; a first draft prepared and presented to each of the countries for their initial review and comments; preparation of the second draft; submissions to the Fiji MCO for review and comments. Depending on the nature of comments received from the Fiji MCO, additional information was gathered from the countries and after incorporation of new information, the country reports have been finalized.

- This report, the Consolidated Country Assessments Report (CCAR), is a synthesis of lessons learnt of the nine country reports. Preparation of the CCAR followed a similar process to that of the Country Assessment Reports except that prior to its finalization the draft of CCAR has not been submitted to the countries for comment - UNDP organized comments and assisted the final formulation of the report.

In summary, the Consolidated Country Assessments Report and the nine individual Country Assessment Reports benefited from the existing literature on the subject and most importantly, from the insights obtained through stakeholder consultations, selected field missions and from the responses received from the countries via the questionnaire. In this regard it is also important to mention that the quality of the Country Assessment Reports depended largely on the quality and the timeliness of the responses received from the countries on the questionnaire, as well as the draft country reports. The gestation period of country responses varied from two weeks (Palau) to three months (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati).[5] In an indirect way, the country responses to the evaluation process also reflected country commitment to and capacity in MDG reporting and monitoring.

2.3 CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The Consolidated Country Assessments Report contains nine chapters:

Chapter 1 sets out background information regarding Millennium Development Goals, the UN's overall strategy and, more specifically, UNDP Fiji MCO's MDG technical cooperation framework for the nine Pacific countries;

Chapter 2 deals with the scope and the methodology of this evaluation;

Chapter 3 presents the findings and impacts of MDG reporting on MDG measurement and monitoring;

Chapter 4 focuses on MDG reporting and the issue of MDG ownership;

Chapter 5 discusses country capacity development;

Chapter 6 focuses on mainstreaming the gender perspective;

[5] The delay in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu was caused by the restructuring of organizational arrangements including changes in MDG focal points.

Chapter 7 highlights key contributing factors for the success and failure of national MDG reports;

Chapter 8 presents best practices and promising ideas; and

Chapter 9 outlines key outputs and activities for future work.

3.0 MDG REPORTING AND INITIATIVES ON MDG MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING: IN-COUNTRY DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

This chapter focuses on assessment of the impacts of MDG reporting on building or otherwise of in-country capacity in the measurement and monitoring of MDG. To assess the impact of MDG reporting on measurement aspects, the Evaluation Mission has used the following indicators: (i) capacity built in collection, collation and analysis of data related to MDG; (ii) capacity in understanding and interpretation of data; and (iii) capacity to apply MDG indicators in planning, monitoring, policies etc.

3.1 OVERALL PROGRESS

Synthesis of the lessons from country assessments on the above issues suggests that, one way or another, each of the nine targeted countries benefited from the MDG reporting process. Supported by the UNDP and various other donor agencies, each country has received sufficient training in MDG-related issues that contributed to understanding data needed in monitoring and measurement of MDG. These countries have also become better aware of the anomalies that existed within their own statistical systems and recognized the importance of a cohesive and efficient statistical system capable of generating, gathering and collating data from various sources on a regular and timely basis.

The MDG reporting process also helped the countries to identify data sources. Many also recognized existing opportunities, as well as challenges, within the statistical architecture of their respective countries – the MDG reporting process has successfully revealed that in several cases, data do exist but in a disorganized and fragmented manner and are rarely updated.

Many also recognize that for a variety of reasons, weak commitment to evidence based planning and the absence of a culture of indicator based monitoring contribute to low priority being given to the use of hard data in planning and empirically based progress reporting. However, many now acknowledge that due to the advocacy of and technical support given by UNDP, and also by other development partners, to MDG reporting, the agenda of evidence based planning has since received renewed attention and, consequently, helped to some extent in prioritizing the agenda of capacity building in statistics. But progress has been uneven and this Evaluation Report reveals that the extent of capacity improvements in MDG measurement and monitoring varies from country to country; the former is dependent on a number of factors such as country conditions, quality of existing institutional as well as human resources standards, the country's absorptive capacity and most importantly, the political will of the governments.

3.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC PROGRESS

Presented below is an analysis of country-by-country progress in MDG reporting initiated capacity building in monitoring and measurement.

Fiji

The Millennium Development Goals: Fiji National Report, November 2004, recognizes that "government has rarely had sufficient data to objectively design, monitor and assess social policy. Since the early 1980s, the quality and quantity of social data provided through government agencies has steadily declined". However, despite these shortcomings the MDG reporting process helped to re-focusing government's attention on the importance of quality data, especially those that relate to social issues.

Guided by a 16 member National MDG Committee (12 government and four NGO), preparation of the MDG report built on several existing sources/statistical products the

country already held. These included the 1997 Poverty Report, 2007 Wadan Narsey Report, Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES) and other surveys including the Fiji Census Report etc.[6] Inclusion of the Head of the Social Division of Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics (FIBOS) as a member of the MDG National Committee equally ensured methodological rigour in data gathering and at the same time, ensured the vital link between the demand side (planning agencies, the users of data etc.) and the supply side (data generators and suppliers) of MDG data.

Fiji defined poverty as early as 1997 as "those who lack command over basic consumption needs, including food and non-food components" and by using 2002-2004 HIES data that include information on both household income and expenditure, and the production and consumption of home produced foods and other goods, poverty has been defined in a way that is multi-dimensional and includes components such as "the Basic Needs Poverty Line, BNPL, (the Food Poverty Line, FPL + Non-Food Poverty Line, NFPL); the Food Poverty Line, reflecting HIES food expenditure and minimum nutrition (with dietary preferences of ethnic groups accounted for); and the Non-Food Poverty Line with a focus on "essential" non-food expenditure by those not poverty stricken nor well off".[7]

Fiji has recorded important accomplishments accrued through the MDG reporting exercise. Firstly, the MDG reporting, whose main emphasis has been on quantifying and benchmarking poverty, has helped Fiji to reinforce its own definition of poverty developed earlier and update indicators for future follow up. The MDG reporting has also helped in incorporating MDG indicators into its Strategic Development Plan or as the document is currently called, the Sustainable Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy 2008-2011 (SEEDS). The Government has also taken steps to overhaul its planning and monitoring system. This initiative has the promise of improving the country's overall planning, implementation and monitoring system and presents a comprehensive framework for embedding MDG monitoring within the evolving monitoring and evaluation systems of the Government. However, these are early days. Several operational level decisions and capacity building are needed to implement a monitoring system that integrates fully the MDG targets into medium term public sector policies and programmes, those that facilitate tracking progress in a manner that reveals consistency - or lack of it - between the outputs produced of the development projects and the way these conform or do not conform to the targets of MDG.

In order to upgrade the status of national planning, the Government has separated planning from finance, and in early 2009 established the Ministry of National Planning under the direct patronage of the Prime Minister.[8] The main objective of establishing the Planning Ministry is "….to ensure improved and better coordination of national development efforts, particularly in the formulation of policies, effective implementation and monitoring of government initiatives….".[9] However, while the review of the charter of the Ministry of National Planning indicates that its mandate is quite broad and all-encompassing and includes, among other things, the provision for appraisal of capital projects "according to the criteria of maximum *social*[10] and economic returns", it is also revealed that the proposed operational frameworks of planning that elaborately describe the new planning principles and processes do not make any specific reference to MDG as such. This incongruity does indicate that even though the MDG and their indicators have been included in SEEDS as macro-economic goals, absence of similar mainstreaming at the operational level of planning, may obscure the MDG based planning in medium term programmes and projects.

[6] See bibliography of the 2004 Fiji MDG report for details.
[7] Margaret Chueng (1997), Fiji Poverty Report, UNDP;; "Poverty in Fiji", presentation made at the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Pacific MDG Workshop: Taking Stock, Emerging Issues and Way Forward, 16 – 20 March 2009, Nadi, Fiji Islands.
[8] See PSC Circular No. 6/2009.
[9] See PSC Circular No. 6/2009 dated 26/01/09 for the details of objectives of the Ministry of National Planning.
[10] Italics by the author to highlight its prominence.

FIBOS' capacity to generate quality data on a regular and timely basis seems also to encounter a number of challenges, including low motivation and high attrition of qualified staff in FIBOS; insufficient analytical skills; problems associated with accessibility; and, as reported by some, its prioritization of economic data over social data.[11]

Fiji has also developed a geographical information system based data management system (Atlas) but it has neither been fully operationalized nor has it updated the information on the population that FIBOS produced several years ago. The absence of FIBOS' direct participation in several of the policy sub-committees of the Ministry of National Planning also seems to keep the Bureau inadequately informed of the type and extent of data required by operational/sectoral organizations of the Government. Many also report difficulties encountered in accessing FIBOS products freely and easily equally hampers timely and effective use of data.

These existing gaps in the supply and demand of statistics and several weaknesses internal to both supplying as well as the user agencies of data, continue to challenge growth of an efficient data management system in Fiji. Furthermore, lack of full recognition among policy managers of the importance of evidence based policy or data backed planning as a crucial necessity of all planning - especially MDG-based planning which is target oriented and thus relies on hard data - seems to continue to weaken the resolve to further strengthen the statistical system in the country.[12]

Fiji's major strength is that in comparison to other PICs, it has a strong existing statistical capacity and some of its on-going surveys and statistical products have the capacity, if not the potential, to generate data relevant to MDG. The MDG reporting process has also brought about greater understanding of the types and sources of statistics that are relevant to defining and analyzing poverty and in the process, oriented its statistical organizations to the importance of greater rigour in analysis, disaggregating and timeliness in the generation and collation of data. However, the recent decision by the Government to abandon the practice of data gathering by ethnicity may significantly weaken its ability to understand, and thereby design policies and programmes relevant to, the evolving social matrix of the country. This is key to the equitable and sustainable socio-economic development of the multi-ethnic society, to which Fiji is committed.

Fiji has also taken the first step of mainstreaming MDG indicators within its national strategic plan, first in 2003-2008 in the Fiji Strategic National Development Plan and later, in SEEDS 2008-2011. What is now needed is the next step - incorporation of the MDG indicators into the sectoral and/or operational levels of the country's evolving planning processes. This can be done in a number of ways: (i) establishment of a results based framework for all sectoral programmes and policies; and (ii) linking the MDG indicators to the expected outcomes or results of these programmes and policies; then (iii) development of an M&E strategy that assesses progress of programme outcomes within the contexts of MDG indicators. In this entire process FIBOS must continue to play an important role, especially ensuring synergies between the supply of data with that of the demand.[13] What is also important is that in addition to introduction of an MDG based monitoring and evaluation system, the mechanisms of review and feedback at all levels, especially at the sub-national level, should also be strengthened.

Like other PICs, Fiji faces similar challenges in obtaining quality and timely data from the grass-roots level, as well as from line ministries. In this regard two ameliorating actions are envisaged: (i) introduction of a community based household information system that can collect and maintain socio-economic data at the community level; and (ii) to ensure that line agencies collect quality and timely data, promote within the Government a culture of an

[11] See Millennium Development Goals: Fiji National Report, November 2004 (page 9).
[12] Views expressed during discussions held at FIBOS by the Evaluation Mission.
[13] See Country Assessment Report: Fiji for more details.

evidence based planning system - meaning that the National Planning Office may not vet any projects that are not backed by sound socio-economic data and the necessary appraisal parameters.

Federated States of Micronesia
Like other countries FSM also benefitted from the MDG reporting and thus is now better aware of data needs and their sources. And its problems are also similar – low capacity at the statistical unit, difficulties of obtaining data from line ministries and sub-national levels etc. However, as FSM has since submitted its MDG report to the Parliament and to the National Planning Committee for endorsement and - in the meantime - has also presented MDG indicators to budget discussions, it is conceivable that these initiatives may have created a self-motivating setting for more self-sustained statistical capacity building in the country.

Kiribati
Kiribati's[14] MDG reporting was also guided and monitored by the Kiribati National MDG Task Force and its preparation was facilitated by the National Economic Planning Office of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. Kiribati went through extensive preparatory training in statistical methods and tools, including those that relate to conceptualization and analysis of poverty data. Preparation of the Kiribati National MDG Report 2007 gathered information from a variety of sources including HIES.

Kiribati has since incorporated the MDG indicators into the national development plan but further work is needed to translate these indicators into the regular monitoring and evaluation system of the Government.[15] It is not known whether similar steps have also been taken to link these indicators to the medium term/annual planning and budgeting processes of the Government. Moreover, while the review of Section 5 (Implementation, Monitoring and Review) of the Kiribati National Development Strategy (KNDS) 2004-2007 indicates a five step monitoring and evaluation plan, the emphasis seems to be more on input monitoring and less on impact monitoring. The monitoring plan also does not make any specific reference to MDG, although it is conceivable that implementation of certain aspects of KNDS is likely to contribute to some of the MDG targets. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the not incorporating MDG indicators in KNDS - and lack of specific linking of MDG targets to the operational frameworks of its planning, budgeting and monitoring processes - may significantly weaken its ability to track progress on a time bound results basis. Kiribati's low human resources capacity and its insufficient capacity to obtain timely data from sub-national entities and from line ministries continue to jeopardize its ability to sustain and improve further its MDG-based monitoring capacity. For obvious reasons these weaknesses continue to constrain its ability to measure progress of MDG targets in the medium term. However, Kiribati has indicated that even though the MDG reporting process has not changed much the "content of data", its usage has improved and the country needs further capacity building in data analysis.[16]

Republic of Marshall Islands
Starting in 2005, the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI)[17] went through a very lengthy and slow process of preparation and adoption of its MDG report.

Until recently RMI only had an unofficial National MDG Working Group (NMWG) that guided the development of the MDG report. However, lately the President has appointed a formal NMWG and designated the Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO) as the country's MDG secretariat.

[14] See Country Assessment Report: Kiribati for more details.
[15] Questionnaire response, Kiribati.
[16] Questionnaire response, Kiribati.
[17] See Country Assessment Report: Republic of Marshall Islands.

The MDG reporting process seems to have assisted EPPSO to understand the data implications of MDG-based planning and implementation, and appreciate better the importance of quality and the extent (disaggregation) of data required thereof. A MDG indicators matrix has since been developed (in MS Excel) and is being used for planning and monitoring purposes. Like other PICs the exercise seems to have also assisted RMI in identifying the type of data and their sources relevant to MDG-based planning and monitoring.

Although exact numbers are not available, the MDG reporting process trained several planning and statistical managers of the Government in MDG-related data needs; gathering and analysis of poverty data; application of participatory methods; and the application of computers in data analysis. However, it has also been reported that more efforts are needed to sustain the momentum and overcome several on-going challenges associated with data. These are: (i) unavailability of some of the quantitative MDG indicators and therefore, where applicable, qualitative or proxy indicators have been used; (ii) some data needs further disaggregation; and (iii) further dissemination of data, and capacity building to increase usage of data at all levels of planning and programming, especially at local government levels.

RMI is also of the view that in order to ensure greater ownership of and commitment to future training in statistical methods and tools, care should be taken to see that such initiatives are not focused narrowly on MDG, rather these should be extended to broader statistical skills relevant to overall socio-economic research required in planning and implementation of on-going development policies and programmes of the country.[18] In this regard it is also important to emphasize that all future training in statistical methods and tools not only consider the aspects of individual competencies but also the overall institutional and other human resource requirements relevant to evolution of an effective data management system, including enhanced capabilities in research and analysis.[19]

Palau

In Palau[20] the MDG reporting process seems to have improved the capacity to define data needs. The process seems to have also improved knowledge of data sources, but ensuring their quality and timeliness - especially at the primary level - remains a challenge. Presently, there is neither an incentive nor an obligation (legal or otherwise) for the primary sources to collect, maintain and generate timely and quality MDG-related data. This may be because many view, although erroneously, that MDG is an externally induced activity and thus fail to regard its data requirements as an integral part of overall socio-economic data needed by the Government in planning.

The MDG reporting process seems to have also contributed to the identification of a set of data required for MDG monitoring and reporting, but again, the fragmented nature of these data, inadequate storage, their poor maintenance and inadequate or non-existent integration of MDG indicators within the regular monitoring arrangements of the Government risks incentive for and meaningful use of these information in future.

Furthermore, although the MDG reporting process has highlighted successfully the importance of quality data, the Government's "pending" priority to utilize these data in policy discussions, as well as the lack of an institutional framework that obligates evidence based policy making, continues to stifle demand for the evolution of a more holistic, efficient and

[18] The narrow and stand-alone focus on MDG data training, without regard to greater national statistical priorities, fails to attract the level of commitment required of the government in such initiatives.
[19] Several donors including ADB, AusAID/Australian Bureau of Statistics, ESCAP/Government of Japan (e.g. the Assessment, Information, Monitoring and Statistics-AIMS project) etc. have been providing statistical capacity building assistance in South Pacific countries including RMI. However, these efforts need harmonization and most importantly, the focus needs to be more holistic. There is also the need to improve skills in data analysis.
[20] For more details see Country Assessment Report: Palau.

coherent statistical capacity in the country. It may also be useful that all future statistical capacity building initiatives in the country be not focused on MDG data alone, but subsume the latter within the framework of socio-economic research relevant to the country's overall agenda of development.

Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands**,** the MDG reporting process seems to have assisted the National Planning Office to understand the data implications of MDG planning and implementation and better appreciate the importance of quality and the extent (disaggregation) of data required.

MDG reporting seems to have also made the following tangible contributions to the data management capacity of the Government: (i) capacity to locate exact sources of data; and (ii) although at rudimentary stages, both the Ministries of Health and Education now have health and education management information systems and these, together with the National Census data, the HIES data and the Village Resource Survey data etc., produced by the National Statistics Office, have now established a much improved data set for MDG-based planning and monitoring in future.

Despite these gains, serious efforts are also needed to sustain the momentum and overcome several on-going challenges that continue to impede progress. Generation of regular and reliable data from the grass-roots level remains a daunting challenge. Existence of this particular weakness - and the Solomon Islands is not unique in the Pacific in this regard - indicates that regardless of how much is done to strengthen national level statistical capacity, which is important and must be done, systematic information gathering at the community level is crucial to improving the overall statistical capacity in the country.

Tonga

Among the nine targeted PICs, Tonga[21] employed the most engaging and exhaustive processes to determine its statistical and other institutional needs relevant to MDG reporting and later, MDG-based planning and monitoring. Consequently, the MDG reporting process seems to have assisted in improving its statistical capacity in a number of ways. Compared to the pre-MDG period when data was mostly disorganized, fragmented and difficult to collect and collate, the MDG reporting interventions have assisted in making identifying data needs and sources - and their collection - easier. The most significant accomplishment of Tonga in the MDG reporting process has been that stakeholders undertook a rigorous analysis to localize the MDG indicators and adopted 45 out of 48 indicators as relevant. However, it has also been reported that momentum will be difficult to sustain and that there is "no guarantee they [the required data] are consistently/timely collected".

In summary, Tonga's capacity to define data needs and their sources have improved and the extensive consultations employed during the MDG reporting process seem to have also raised community awareness and created improved conditions for data gathering and reporting. The MDG reporting process appears to have also contributed to the identification of a set of data required for MDG monitoring and reporting. However, it is also speculated that persistent weak technical and institutional capacity of the statistical organizations and/or the absence of a legal obligation to generate timely and quality data from the primary sources, do run the risk of compromising sustainability of the capacity gains accrued through the MDG reporting process in Tonga.

Tuvalu

[21] For more details see Country Assessment Report: Tonga.

The MDG reporting process has benefitted Tuvalu in a number of ways.[22] About 21 staff (11 male and 10 female) received training in socio-economic statistics, including the use of computers in data analysis. In addition, participation of a large number of government staff and NGOs in a range of MDG orientation/technical workshops equally assisted a significant number of Tuvaluans to become oriented to/trained in various aspects of MDG, including those that relate to data gathering and analysis. These include skills in measuring poverty; determination of a national poverty line; and poverty status discussions (this was initiated by the Asian Development Bank in 2003 and skills learned were applied in MDG reporting). Despite these gains, the following have been reported as the remaining challenges to MDG monitoring and measurement in the country:[23] "(i) partial success and task left unfinished; lack of firm commitment by the Government to monitor MDG; (ii) data collection still a challenge, revitalizing national commitment to monitor MDG (a necessity); (iii) strengthening follow-ups; and (iv) development of MDG-related policies in overall Government planning and development work." As is obvious, capacity in collection, collation, maintenance and usage of disaggregated data at all levels remains a continuing challenge for the statistical architecture of Tuvalu.

Like many small island countries Tuvalu, as an archipelago with a population of approximately 9,000, has both an advantage and a disadvantage. Its advantage is that being a fairly small country both in size and population, its statistical scope is very limited. However, being an archipelago with people living in dispersed locations puts Tuvalu at a great disadvantage as well. Its challenges are that it can ill afford to be over-ambitious and cannot afford to spend much on building a statistical system that is too elaborate and too costly to maintain. But, at the same time, the country must also have a system that can generate sufficient and timely data that can be used for planning and monitoring purposes.

In view of the above, Tuvalu's challenges are twofold: (i) how to bridge the disconnect between the MDG indicators and their incorporation into the budgeting and monitoring processes of the on-going developmental activities of line ministries; and (ii) to find an institutional option that ensures a minimum and a sustainable level of in-country capacity, with a regional facility that complements the deficits that are difficult to build and sustain within the country.

This is a generic suggestion for most smaller PICs. It is proposed that, to overcome its challenges of securing a regular flow of data from primary sources, especially from the grass-roots level, Tuvalu may consider establishing a community based household information system at a community level institution - such as a school or a health clinic or at any other administrative unit that collects and records community data on a an on-going and regular basis. It is suggested that the scope of data gathering activities of one of these types of units be broadened to include additional socio-economic information such as income, occupation etc., of household members, contributing to the establishment of a comprehensive database at the community level. However, for these entities to be able to undertake this additional responsibility, their capacity has to be built and, at the same time, there has to be some incentives for the community to regularly report and update information. The consolidated community data can then be submitted to relevant local government entities for further collation and use. The local government entities in turn can consolidate these data further by district, sub-district etc., and report the same to the next higher administrative level and the latter, to the central government for aggregation, analysis and reporting.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu's[24] MDG reporting process is reported to have assisted its National Planning Office to understand the data implications of MDG planning and implementation better and

[22] For more details see Country Assessment Report: Tuvalu.
[23] Questionnaire response, Palau.
[24] For more details see Country Assessment Report: Vanuatu.

appreciate more the importance of the quality and the extent (disaggregation) of data required in such endeavours.

The MDG reporting process seems to have also helped to identify current capacity and the quality and relevancy of data generated by various statistical organizations, including those produced by the National Statistical Office. As a part of the MDG reporting process - but mainly as part of the Government's overall commitment to establish a strategic development framework through the Priority Action Agenda, 2006-2015 (the strategic development plan of the government) - every agency including the Vanuatu Statistical Office has now developed its own corporate plan for the period 2008-2013. The impact of MDG reporting on these corporate plans is quite evident. For example, the Statistical Office in its Vision, Mission, Strategic Directions and Forward Work Programme 2008 to 2013 states that "The Vanuatu National Statistical Office should build strong relationships with the Ministry of Health and Education to ensure efficient and effective data compilation and reporting for MDG...".

However, it is also evident that in Vanuatu several concrete steps are still needed to sustain the momentum gained through the MDG reporting process and more capacity building initiatives are warranted to overcome several on-going challenges associated with data collection, generation, maintenance, quality control and timely reporting. From various discussions it also became evident that apart from skill deficits that exist at the central level of the country's statistical system - and that these must be rectified - the technical as well as logistical hurdle of obtaining data from the grass-roots level from remote locations of the country remains a problem and therefore, top down statistical capacity building without paying similar attention to the grass-roots level, will run the risk of compromising the achievement of the full potential of the former. The way to overcome this deficit is to introduce or strengthen an existing community based data gathering arrangement in a manner that helps generate and report a set of comprehensive socio-economic data from the bottom to the central level, on a regular basis.[25]

For the overall statistical capacity building of Vanuatu, what is needed is a holistic approach that links capacity development of horizontal (line ministries) and vertical (sub-national including community level) data generating entities with the collection, collation and analytical capacities of the central entities.

3.3 DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS

As is evident from the above, the MDG reporting exercise has yielded several direct and indirect benefits.

3.3.1 Direct effects

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the MDGR process has made important contributions to MDG measurement and reporting capacities of the PICs in a number of ways. A recent study (Haberkom, 2009) also confirms this trend and reveals that since the MDG reporting, PICs have made progress in a number of MDG related data gathering and reporting activities, especially those that relate to: (i) Goal 2 (primary education), (ii) Goal 3 (gender), (iii) Goal 4 (child mortality), (iv) Goal 5 (maternal and child health) and (v) Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS etc) of the MDG. However, the same report also highlights that progress in monitoring and measurement of Goals 1 (poverty), 7 (environmental sustainability), and 8

[25] During the Evaluation field mission, the health representative reported that each health clinic, even in remote locations, maintains and updates basic health data. However, due to lack of resources these data are not often properly collected and maintained. Consideration may be given to investigating whether this existing arrangement could be expanded to create a Community Household Information System and link it to all the statistical systems at central level. Such a bottom-up system has the potential to significantly bridge the gap in obtaining community based socio-economic information.

(partnerships etc) is somewhat slower.[26] Some countries also report that data gathered through MDG reporting is now being applied in their national development plan as "basic targets for the country's aspiration".[27] For some countries, inclusion of NGOs into the development discussions has been a "milestone" feature of MDG reporting.

Overall - and notwithstanding some continuing weaknesses that still persist in PICs - the MDG reporting has helped in: (i) localization of MDG with measurable indicators; (ii) establishment of a MDG database; (iii) identification of set of data sources as well as establishment of a database relevant to planning and monitoring of MDG; and (iv) staff were trained in data gathering, analysis and reporting, especially in poverty and gender issues, to some extent.

3.3.2 Indirect effects

In general, the exercise has helped refocus the attention of the countries to poverty and highlighted the importance of prioritization of poverty alleviation as a key component of their national development plan. Consequently, MDG reporting has also made the countries better aware of the extent and depth of data they need to implement poverty oriented development initiatives in their respective countries.

It is quite evident the MDG reporting process has encouraged the countries to examine the issue of poverty in a new light, in their own socio-economic and cultural contexts. To define poverty, each country has also taken initiatives to conceptualize, what has been generically termed as a "Pacific" definition of relative poverty, often referred to as "hardship".[28]

"Hardship" includes both income and non-income dimensions of poverty. Based on culture sensitive and country specific assumptions, each country has now defined its own national poverty line and has estimated its incidence of poverty accordingly.

However, as the notion of "hardship" is a composite of both quantitative as well as qualitative variables, it is important that the qualitative aspect of poverty be defined more tangibly to assist improved and more reliable monitoring of poverty in its multi-dimensional perspectives in these countries. As a compliment to the quantitative methods of measurement and monitoring of poverty, the potential of a participation based self-rating poverty measurement and monitoring methodology - as is currently practiced in other countries - may be looked at for introduction in the PICs (see Box 1 below that describes one such methodology that has been in practice since the mid-1980s in the Philippines).[29]

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that countries such as PICs where non-income aspects influence most significantly the determination of poverty, a qualitative assessment of poverty is key to understanding the multiple culture sensitive dimensions of poverty and will, no doubt, provide useful insights into and complement the data obtained through quantitative methods such as HIES. Traditionally, HIES and other quantitative methods fail to measure non-income or institutional dimensions of poverty.

[26] Heberkom, G. (2009), "Monitoring MDG progress in Pacific Island countries - data availability, quality and access" presented at the *ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Pacific MDG Workshop: Taking Stock, Emerging Issues and Way Forward,* 16-20 March, 2009. Nadi, Fiji.
[27] Tonga, for example.
[28] Most PICs contend the universal definition of poverty ($1.0/day income) is not applicable in their countries. Instead, in the absence of abject poverty, limited or lack of access to income to obtain a basket of food and non-food items constitutes what has been termed as "hardship" in the Pacific. However, as the concept of hardship - though real - connotes more qualitative than quantitative elements, it is important that a perception based methodology that helps define and quantify the phenomenon of hardship in their own cultural contexts is applied.
[29] While it is true that each country must tailor make its own system, it may be useful to consider participatory poverty measurement methods used in other countries, especially the self-rating poverty method (defining poverty on the basis of the perception of the poor themselves) used by the Social Weather Station, an NGO in the Philippines.

Box 1
Self-rating poverty survey: The experience of Social Weather Stations (SWS), Philippines

The general objective of these surveys is to provide an independent source of pertinent, accurate, timely and credible data on Philippine economic and social conditions. The surveys fill in gaps in data not covered by existing sources. They are meant to supplement, not duplicate, existing government statistical activities.

The Social Weather Surveys began on a semestral basis in 1986 and have been run quarterly since 1992. The surveys include both regular time series, or items to be monitored from survey to survey, and contemporary readings, or items to be modified from time to time. The time series include many variables which SWS has been monitoring for several years, thus providing trends in economic and social conditions. Among the regular topics are **self-rated poverty**, quality of life gaining/losing and optimism/pessimism, crime victimization, satisfaction with the performance of government officials and institutions, public opinion on current issues and electoral prospects. The surveys use highly comparable questionnaire wordings and sampling methodology.

The most recent SWS self-rated poverty survey (2007) reveals poverty incidence of 53% as against official figure of 25%.

Source: www.sws.org.ph

The MDG reporting has also highlighted several statistical gaps that currently exist in some of these countries. This renewed awareness, the need and the importance of a sound statistical system in policy making etc. seem to have been a milestone achievement of MDG reporting. The exercise has successfully drawn the attention of the governments as well as the donors to this hitherto neglected and yet vital component of development management.
The MDG reporting and the processes of mainstreaming MDG indicators within the national development plans has also revealed the importance of time bound measurable indicators needed in target based or evidence based planning. Thus it is conceivable that the awareness built through MDG reporting may eventually pave the way for building further statistical capacity in each of the PICs and thereby contribute to a process of evolution of a culture of evidence based planning and monitoring in these countries.

3.4 CHALLENGES

The evolving scenario of mixed results presented above indicates that more efforts are needed to consolidate and sustain gains yielded through the first MDG reporting exercise. At the same time, the results reveal that renewed efforts are needed to strengthen areas that are lagging behind. In general, the main and the continuing challenges of MDG measurements and monitoring that most PICs experience include, but are not limited to the following:

- Low priority given to statistics in general (caused mainly by low priority to evidence based planning); limited human resources caused by low staff motivation that also contributes to high attrition rates;
- Inadequate resources;[30]
- Poor data flow and maintenance and irregular and delayed reporting of administrative data from the grass-roots levels, as well as from line ministries to the planning entities;
- Insufficient skills in analysis, interpretation and use of data in policy research and policy development; and
- Difficulties of defining and measuring qualitative aspects of poverty or “hardship”.

[30] The MDG reporting process highlighted the need for increased statistical capacity, including increased resources for collection, analysis and reporting of data for future MDG-based planning and monitoring. In this regard, the questionnaire distributed by the Assessment Mission asked the countries whether the post-MDG reporting period had witnessed any increase in the budget of their statistical organizations - all nine PICs responded “no”.

In terms of the challenges of statistics faced by most PICs the following views have also been expressed by an expert (Haberkorn, 2009) who suggests that these countries:

- must continuously update data to ensure that these are not more than 2-5 years old;
- must standardize data to ensure consistency among multiple sources;
- use uniform reference groups and sources; and
- move away from "quick fixes" and resort to a long term strategy to build effective and self-sustaining national statistical systems.

3.5 SUMMARY

In summary, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that in the area of MDG measurement and monitoring, the first MDG reporting exercise in PICs has yielded several benefits, both direct and indirect. Although the indirect benefits outweigh somewhat the direct benefits, there is no doubt that the reporting exercise has improved to some extent the infrastructure of statistics and strengthened data management, created a reasonable set of data, and oriented policy managers to the issues relevant to MDG planning and monitoring.

The exercise has also highlighted existing gaps in organizing systems and developing capacity that can ensure timely and quality flow of data from the grass-roots level to the central level. For example, the Vanuatu Millennium Development Goals Report 2005, that more or less mirrors the challenges faced by most PICs on issues relating to data reports, "Despite considerable progress in improving data availability in Vanuatu …. there is still clearly a pressing need for much better and more reliable data in a range of socio-economic and governance areas to better understand local socio-economic challenges and target those most in need. In this context, there is a particularly urgent need for better data on HIV/AIDS, infant mortality rates, public safety, maternal mortality rates, access to safe water, and poverty among others, ideally gender disaggregated. Strengthening the capacities of statistics units will be needed to support the collection, compilation and analysis of such essential data and information".

The MDG reporting process has also revealed that most countries already possess basic statistical infrastructure and that several of their existing products and/or initiatives (e.g. HIES, Census – population, sectoral etc, GIS maps etc.) are capable of providing a reasonable array of data conducive to MDG reporting, tracking and monitoring. [31]

Furthermore, the MDG reporting exercises - however imperfect or inadequate these might have been (many believe that the MDG indicators are still quite aggregated and too general to be of any meaningful use) - seem to have also created the backdrop of and in some way, the incentive for, evidence based planning in these countries.

Many also now recognize that in most cases, data do exist but they are disorganized, scattered and are stored haphazardly and therefore, the immediate need is to standardize and harmonize data better. Another immediate need is to ensure regular and quality reporting of data from the sources.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, another significant contribution of MDG reporting has been reinforcement of gender mainstreaming as an indispensable component of all development (further discussed in Chapter 6).

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that comparatively, Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and to some extent Solomon Islands, possess relatively better statistical capacity at the central level and

[31] For a comprehensive understanding of the on-going progress of statistical activities in PICs refer to the website of the Pacific Regional Information System (PRISM) www.spc.int/prism/ hosted by the Community of the South Pacific.

have well established HIES, but like most other PICs they also lack capacity in gathering timely and quality data from primary sources.

The smaller PICs face far greater challenges. Although the MDG reporting exercise has had some positive impacts in building the data management capacity of some of the smaller PICs, staff shortage, attrition of trained staff, lack of resources and, most importantly, lack of capacity in data collection from primary sources remain a continuing challenge in these countries.

Table 1 below summarizes pre and post MDG reporting accomplishments in statistical/data management capacity.

Table 1: Statistical and Data Management Capacity: Pre and Post MDG Reporting Situation

Country	Pre/Post MDG Reporting Data Management Capacity	
	Pre MDG Reporting Period	**Post MDG Reporting Period**
Fiji	Collection and gathering: no set of standardized methodology used in the storage and collection of data	Collection and gathering: producers of data better aware of the importance of data and made changes accordingly in the administrative record
	Content and analysis: data recorded were not disaggregated in the MDG requirements	Content and analysis: further improvement in ministry's records have to be made
	Storage: manual	Storage: manual and computerized
	Reporting and dissemination: survey reports by other organizations and administrative records	Reporting and dissemination: information not reported
	Usage: information not available	Usage: is being used in planning, especially in the education sector
FSM	Collection and gathering of data: data collected from the FSM National Census, HIES, and qualitative data referred to the administrative data	Collection and gathering of data: no significant change
	Content and analysis: limited/lack of disaggregation data	Content and analysis: disaggregated data are now available and used
	Storage: storage both in manual and computerized	Storage: MDG data now computerized
	Reporting and dissemination: lack of knowledge and coordination	Reporting and dissemination: data collaboration and sharing of MDG data between SBOC and Dept of Health and Social Affairs on a quarterly basis
	Usage: availability of data was there but not organized and used for policy direction	Usage: MDG data became more accepted and utilized to guide the National Policy direction
Kiribati	Collection and gathering: no information available	Collection and gathering: information not reported
	Content and analysis: no data on poverty and environment	Content and analysis: information not reported
	Storage: no information available	Storage: information not reported
	Reporting and dissemination: no information available	Reporting and dissemination: information not reported
	Usage: no information available	Usage: information not reported
Palau	Collection and gathering: tedious due to scattered, disorganised and delayed furnishing of data by primary sources	Collection and gathering: ability now to pinpoint exact source(s) of data, yet no guarantee they are consistently/timely collected
	Content and analysis: lack of relevant data requiring utilization of proxy data, need to disaggregate data by gender and appropriate age categories - all which require extensive "cleaning" and analysis to fit MDGIs	Content and analysis: ascertained set of available data for MDG monitoring purposes and ease in analysing data
	Storage: poor (scattered) maintenance of data; manual maintenance of data and some "manual" data hard to locate or	Storage: demonstrated need for efficient data storage or maintenance but considerable resources needed to computerize

	require extensive time to dig into and process	
	Reporting and dissemination: being first MDGR, priority was to compile report and handle reporting of MDGIs to public and relevant stakeholders; there was no demonstrated need for primary sources to continually compile data and timely forward to Planning and Statistics Office (OPS)	Reporting and dissemination: pending task to report and disseminate MDGR contents and ensure "ownership"; Primary sources know now of need to consistently compile MDG data and forward to OPS and MDG Coordinator has to frequently remind
	Usage: MDG data available merely collected for the sake of data collection without real or useful utilization	Usage: demonstrated need for efficient and consistent data collection
RMI	Collection and gathering: no information available	Collection and gathering: information not reported
	Content and analysis: no information available	Content and analysis: information not reported
	Storage: no information available	Storage: information not reported
	Reporting and dissemination: no information available	Reporting and dissemination: information not reported
	Usage: no information available	Usage: information not reported
Solomon Islands	Collection and gathering: tedious due to scattered, disorganised and delayed furnishing of data by primary sources	Collection and gathering: ability now to pinpoint exact source(s) of data especially given the both the Ministry of Health and Education now has operational Data Information Management Systems together with HIES and DHS Reports and more importantly, the information collected in the coming National Population Census will be very important sources of data.
	Content and analysis: lack of relevant data requiring utilization of proxy data, need to disaggregate data by gender and appropriate age categories - all which require extensive "cleaning" and analysis to fit MDG	Content and analysis: ascertained set of available data for MDG monitoring purposes and ease in analyzing data
	Storage: poor (scattered) maintenance of data; manual maintenance of data and some "manual" data hard to locate or require extensive time to dig into and process	Storage: some improvement achieved in terms of data storage.
	Reporting and dissemination: being first MDGR, priority was to compile report and handle reporting of MDGIs to public and relevant stakeholders; there was no demonstrated need for primary sources to continually compile data and timely forward to Planning and National Statistics Office	Reporting and dissemination: pending task to report and disseminate MDGR contents and ensure "ownership"; primary sources know now of need to consistently compile MDG data and forward to Planning and MDG Coordinator has to frequently remind
	Usage: MDG data available merely collected for the sake of data collection without real or useful utilization - no baseline information to measure progress.	Usage: demonstrated need for efficient and consistent data collection.
Tonga	Collection and gathering: tedious due to scattered, disorganised and delayed furnishing of data by primary sources	Collection and gathering: ability now to pinpoint exact source(s) of data, yet no guarantee they are consistently/timely collected
	Content and analysis: lack of relevant data requiring utilization of proxy data, need to disaggregate data by gender and appropriate age categories - all which require extensive "cleaning" and analysis to fit MDGIs	Content and analysis: ascertained set of available data for MDG monitoring purposes and ease in analysing data
	Storage: poor (scattered) maintenance of data; manual maintenance of data and some "manual" data hard to locate or require extensive time to dig into and process	Storage: demonstrated need for efficient data storage or maintenance
	Reporting and dissemination: being first MDGR, priority was to compile Report and	Reporting and dissemination: pending task to report and disseminate MDGR contents and

	handle reporting of MDGIs to public and relevant stakeholders; there was no demonstrated need for primary sources to continually compile data and timely forward to Planning and Statistics Office	ensure "ownership"; primary sources know now of need to consistently compile MDG data and forward to Statistics Dept and MDG Coordinator has to frequently remind
	Usage: MDG data available merely collected for the sake of data collection without real or useful utilization	Usage: demonstrated need for efficient and consistent data collection
Tuvalu	Collection and gathering: labour intensive due to scattered, disorganised and delayed supply of data by primary sources	Collection and gathering: ability now to identify exact source(s) of data, yet no guarantee they are consistently/timely collected
	Content and analysis: Lack of relevant data requiring utilization of proxy data, need to collect data by gender and appropriate age categories- all which require extensive "cleaning" and analysis to fit MDGIs	Content and analysis: ascertained set of available data for MDG monitoring purposes and ease in analysing data
	Storage: poor (scattered) maintenance of data; manual maintenance of data and some "manual" data hard to locate or require extensive time to dig into and process	Storage: demonstrated need for efficient data storage or maintenance
	Reporting and dissemination: being first MDGR, priority was to compile Report and handle reporting of MDGIs to public and relevant stakeholders; and forward to Planning and Statistics office for consolidation and compilation.	Reporting and dissemination: pending task to report and disseminate MDGR contents and ensure "ownership"; primary sources know now the need to consistently compile MDG data and forward to Planning and Statistics office and MDG Coordinator has to be frequently reminded.
	Usage: MDG data collected did not address specific issues related to the MDG Report.	Usage: demonstrated need for efficient and consistent data collection
Vanuatu	Collection and gathering: no information available	Collection and gathering: information not reported
	Content and analysis: no information available	Content and analysis: information not reported
	Storage: no information available	Storage: information not reported
	Reporting and dissemination: no information available	Reporting and dissemination: information not reported available
	Usage: no information available	Usage: information not reported

Source: Compiled from the Questionnaire Responses (see Country Assessment Reports). Note: Except for Kiribati, RMI and Vanuatu, rest of the PICs reported required information in the Questionnaire.

Table 1 above reveals that most PICs have made progress in statistical and data management aspects of MDG related issues (the progress of Kiribati, RMI and Vanuatu who failed to report progress in the questionnaire on these aspects of impacts of the MDG reporting could not be assessed). However, the countries also report that these accomplishments are somewhat limited and relate mainly to improvements in awareness, knowledge about data requirements and sources, improvements in data storage and reporting etc. Many now stress that there is "a need to invest more in understanding and analyzing MDG data and related statistical methodologies"; "a need for considerable effort and resources to computerize data"; "a need for government to utilize MDG data in policies"; "coordination and standardization of statistics (not just for MDG)"; "need for continued usage of MDG data in public policy and in other public forums" etc.

4.0 MDG REPORTING AND THE ISSUE OF OWNERSHIP

This chapter assesses the issue of "ownership" by examining the elements of government commitment to MDG reporting, usage, aspects of dissemination, partnerships built etc.

The literal meaning of "ownership" is the rights of possession of property or a formal stake in an organization, such as a share in a corporation. Defining and measuring ownership in the development context is far more complex. In development, the concept of ownership may broadly refer to a situation of "buy-in" by a government. This may mean accepting an idea or attachment to a programme or operation, eventually moving from a position of appreciation of the concept to a position of owning, controlling and driving it from within. In other words, and as far as governments are concerned, the idea of ownership is a continuum and may mean getting the governments to move from accepting a concept or an idea, to a stage or a situation where the idea gets completely absorbed within the framework of the country's national development priorities and strategies. In practical terms, it may mean the following pathway: (i) internalization; (ii) implementation; and (iii) sustainability of the concept or the idea introduced. The stage of total buy-in or full ownership is reached when a concept gets fully formalized and internalized into the country's own system/s.

The issue of ownership of MDG reporting has thus been assessed within the context of this continuum and in particular, the MIssion examined the aspects of internalization to implementation from a variety of process perspectives, such as commitment of the government, mainstreaming into government policies, endorsement of the report etc.

4.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE PROCESSES CONTRIBUTING TO OWNERSHIP

The Evaluation Mission examined processes contributing to ownership or otherwise within the context of the following variables: (i) acceptance of the idea or the concept; (ii) formalization of the idea (i.e., the MDG reporting); (iii) processes devised to drive the concept from within, and (iv) internalization of the product (the report) and the steps taken to mainstream the product into the national planning, implementation and monitoring arrangements of the governments.

As MDG are a very new idea, and like all new ideas that take time and effort to get mainstreamed, the Evaluation Mission therefore assessed firstly the quality and the effectiveness of the processes that were employed to get the governments to accept, appreciate and formalize the idea of MDG reporting within their development practice. The Mission examined the quality of the following process elements: (i) introduction and acceptance of the idea of MDG reporting at the country level; (ii) facilitation aspects; (iii) the issues of formalization, internalization and full ownership etc. A number of indicators have been taken into account to assess the transformational aspects of the idea of MDG reporting and its ownership in the PICs and these are:

- Introduction and acceptance: steps taken to create demand for and measures taken to promote actions in preparedness for MDG reporting;
- Facilitation: the role of the MDG task force and other mentoring initiatives;
- Formalization: steps taken or otherwise to endorse the report and the political clout relating to endorsement;
- Internalization: steps taken to incorporate MDG report into the national development plan, implementation and monitoring; and

- Full ownership: relevant institutional changes, if any, including formation and mainstreaming of the MDG task forces within existing planning frameworks of the government, budgeting and implementation etc.

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the understanding of these process elements and the way the presence or absence of some of these elements influence the aspect of ownership is crucial. The absence or inadequacy thereof, of any of these elements has the capacity to either weaken the continuum leading to ownership or eventually, risk the commitment to and accountability of the MDG report itself.

4.1.1 Introduction of the concept and acceptance

In general, the processes of introduction of the idea of MDG reporting in nine PICs included, among other things, a lengthy process of preparation. With assistance from UNDP and other regional and international institutions including donor agencies, all the countries participated at a number of national, regional and international MDG-related workshops.[32] These workshops focused mainly on conceptual and definitional aspects of eight MDG and their measurement and planning needs.

Following the Millennium Declaration, these have been the first of a few steps that were taken to introduce the idea of MDG at a country level. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that these workshops and training - that included government and NGO representatives - successfully oriented and sensitized the countries to the requirements of MDG measurement and reporting to a great extent. Several of the countries have since reported that even though their governments signed the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, many line ministries were not aware of MDG until the commencement of the MDG reporting exercise at the country level.[33] This meant that most line ministries were ill prepared with data required for MDG. However, the MDG advocacy and orientation processes seem to have greatly helped in sensitizing the governments and other key stakeholders, including line ministries, and made them better aware of the reporting requirements including of the hard data needed for the preparation of the report.

4.1.2 Facilitation of the processes

To guide and facilitate the work of MDG reporting, most countries formed multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral MDG National Committees (MDG-NC) or task forces (MDG-TF). The political and/or bureaucratic level of the chairs of the MDG-NCs or TFs varied from country to country. In some countries these have been headed by the Prime Minister or a by the Planning Minister, while in others by the Director of National Planning or by an eminent citizen. For example, in Fiji the MDG-TF was headed by one of the country's Ambassadors-at-large. Although having a lower political level chair of the MDG-NC or TF did not necessarily mean MDG reporting in those countries received lower priority and thus have been of lower quality. But, in general, higher level chairmanships of the processes of MDG reporting seemed to help in attracting greater attention to and commitment of the government to these processes. Higher level political engagements in the MDG process seemed to have also ensured the continuity of task forces beyond its reporting phase and in some cases, have ensured or at least have demonstrated signs of better follow-up of the MDG report. [34]

The quality of the MDG task force also played an important role in improving the quality, reliability and usage of the report. Most MDG-NC or TFs have been multi-sectoral and included NGOs/civil society organization representation. As far as the latter is concerned,

[32] See questionnaire responses (Annex III) in *Country Assessment Reports* for details.
[33] Questionnaire response, Fiji.
[34] Tonga, for example. RMI's MDG Working Group was established by the President/Cabinet and thus appears to have committed itself to regular follow-up of the MDG report.

some countries included more than one NGO, while others engaged an NGO coalition, as a representative of all NGOs. The Evaluation Mission observes that the more inclusive a task force has been the more diverse has been their inputs. And the more diverse the inputs have been, the stronger has been the potential for ownership. This is quite evident in the aspect of gender or Goal 3 of MDG reporting. For example, the countries that have had more balanced and extensive gender representation in the task forces also succeeded in highlighting gender issues in greater depth. Vanuatu's MDG-TF comprised of 50:50 representation male/female, while FSM's comprised 80% male, 20% female. Vanuatu also included representation of the relevant government department, as well as a gender NGO coalition, the National Council of Women, in its TF. It is thus noteworthy that the gender section of the Vanuatu MDG report is much richer than that of FSM's. Similar strong gender representation has also succeeded in incorporating much richer gender inputs into the MDG reports of Fiji and Tuvalu.[35] It is also useful to note that stronger gender representation in MDG TFs not only enriched the content of the gender component of the report but, by incorporating a broad spectrum of gender representation, the process may have also created conditions for enhanced accountability and follow-up of - if nothing else of the MDG report – at least the gender component.

In terms of depth of horizontal and vertical inclusion of the MDG-TF, RMI stands out as unique. Established by the Cabinet, its MDG-Working Group included all permanent secretaries, all relevant government agency heads (including the head of the environmental agency), two NGO representatives, two representatives of higher learning institutions, a representative of the private sector and most *uniquely,* the President of the Mayors' Association. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that by enlisting the President of the Association of Mayors in the MDG reporting process RMI may have helped in promoting MDG-centric policy convergence between central and local government, and thus has strengthened the prospect of promoting the aspect of ownership of the report from the bottom up. Another unique feature of RMI has been that it has included the Director of the UN Joint Presence Office in its TF, thus giving the UN a unique institutional advantage in partnering and steering the MDG process in the country from within.

The Evaluation Mission noted that in addition to the above, a range of other factors and institutions also helped in facilitating and mentoring the processes of MDG reporting, especially when the activities tend to slow down. Acknowledgement of the contributions of these institutions is important for future capacity building in ownership.

The Evaluation Mission notes that in some countries the commitment and resilience of the operational staff responsible for MDG, the MDG focal points, played an important part in salvaging and sustaining the momentum of MDG. Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu are good examples of this phenomenon. In some countries, the Country Development Managers (CDM) also played an important part in steering and maintaining the momentum of MDG reporting and its follow up. The part played by the Tuvalu CDM is particularly noteworthy in this regard.

Through their efforts, these operational officials, both the government MDG focal points, as well as the UN CDMs, acted as catalysts in steering MDG reporting and its follow up, especially in periods slow development in some countries.

In summary, the Evaluation Mission infers that the aspect of facilitation and mentoring played an important part in driving the MDG report process and indeed is a key component of ownership. The Mission also concludes that the more broad based (inclusion of all interest groups including government stakeholders) and the more connecting (horizontal and vertical

[35] See MDG reports of these countries.

linkages) the MDG task forces and the processes have been, greater has been the potential for accountability and thus ownership, to the report.

However, in this regard it is also important to remember that the same momentum achieved during the reporting process may not necessarily be able to be sustained all along. A variety reasons - especially changes in the government, in personnel etc. - may change or deflect attention. In such situations, the role played by the MDG focal points and the CDMs in facilitating and sometimes stimulating a regressive trend is crucial and should not be underestimated. In several countries (e.g., Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands) a fledging MDG process seems to have been resurrected by their very committed and resilient MDG focal points. UNDP needs to be particularly mindful of this phenomenon and provide all the necessary support to ensure that the capacity of the mentoring institutions of MDG are continuously strengthened and sustained so that the impetus of MDG remains energized from within.

4.1.3 Formalization - the endorsement issue

Formal endorsement of the MDG report is an important aspect of MDG report ownership. The experiences of the processes involving endorsement of MDG reporting vary from country to country.

The Evaluation Mission regards the aspect of official endorsement as key to the mainstreaming of the MDG report into the national development strategy – the final step to ownership. Official endorsement of the report also guarantees accountability to its contents as well as its follow up, as a legal/administrative obligation. The processes leading to endorsement, both official as well as broad based endorsement, include steps relevant to sharing and obtaining feedback on the draft report, public dissemination including media coverage and the political level at which the report was submitted and received its final official endorsement. All these steps are important and depending on the presence or absence of any of these elements, have the potential to either strengthen or weaken the aspect of ownership.

With some variance, most countries circulated the draft MDG report to multiple stakeholders including, in some instances, church groups and community institutions.[36] Some countries also submitted the report to the parliament for further discussion and adoption, and others have submitted their reports to and obtained endorsements of the cabinet. There are also countries where the report is yet to be endorsed by any of the higher policy levels of their governments, rendering the prospect of ownership and its future use less tangible. Table 2 below describes the most recent status of endorsement of the MDG report by country:

Table 2: Status of Endorsement of MDG Report

Country	Endorsement Status
Fiji	Endorsed by the parliament[37]
FSM	Endorsed by the parliament
Kiribati	Launched at the donor meeting
Palau	Yet to be done
RMI	Will be done by the Cabinet and the Parliament in 2009

[36] Tuvalu, for example.
[37] The Fiji Parliament did not endorse the MDG report *per se*, but approved SEEDS that subsumed MDG targets.

Solomon Islands	Endorsed by the national planning committee
Tonga	Endorsed by the Parliament
Tuvalu	Endorsed by the national planning committee
Vanuatu	National planning committee

Source: Compiled from the Questionnaire Responses

It is evident from the above that, apart from Kiribati and RMI, the rest of the PICs have endorsed their MDG reports either at the national planning level or at the highest political level - the parliament. It has been reported that in RMI, since the President and the Cabinet approved the MDG Working Group, it is expected that its MDG report will also be endorsed eventually by the Cabinet and ultimately by the Parliament. Between the preparation of the first draft and its finalization, RMI took the longest gestation period - nearly four years. This is because the country embarked on a long, engaging and a vigorous consultative process to review and endorse the report.

On the issue of endorsement - the most crucial element of ownership - the Evaluation Mission is of the view that the countries that have endorsed the MDG report at parliamentary level demonstrate a higher commitment, and the potential for stronger ownership, than those who have not. It has also been observed that the parliamentary approval of an MDG report not only guarantees the aspect of mainstreaming of the report into the national planning and development strategies more tangibly, but also demonstrates the potential of translating its indicators into the budgetary and implementation processes of public sector policies and programmes, as a legal obligation. For example, in Fiji's MDG report, health has been identified as a priority issue and as such the Government is actively considering increasing the funding of the health sector by 0.5% of GDP in the 2010 budget.[38] Whereas, the opposite may have happened in countries where the MDG reports are yet to be officially endorsed, especially at a level that is high enough to guarantee sustainable use of and ownership to the report. For example, the absence of formal or official endorsement of the Palau MDG report has rendered the "continued usage of data for MDGR production and usage in national policy discussion and setting as well as other public forum discussion" a difficult proposition.[39]

4.2 INTERNALIZATION AND FULL OWNERSHIP: MDG MAINSTREAMING

A number of indicators have been used to assess the degree and extent to which the MDG report reached, or otherwise, the level of what can be regarded as full ownership. These indicators include: (i) steps taken to mainstream the MDG report within national development plans; (ii) incorporation of MDG indicators within the medium term plan and into monitoring and evaluation frameworks; (iii) MDG costing and budgeting; and (iv) sustainability and mainstreaming of MDG task forces within the national planning committee etc.

4.2.1 Mainstreaming the MDG report into national development plans, implementation and monitoring

Every country has taken steps to mainstream MDG indicators within their national development plans, although in many cases this may have meant nothing more than inclusion of a MDG table in the plan. However, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that even though some of these mainstreaming exercises are nothing more than a ritual, this is a good beginning. Efforts should now be made to assist countries to take the next step and undertake meaningful mainstreaming. This is particularly important for those countries who had their strategic development plan formulated prior to the MDG reporting. There are also countries who lack technical capacity to undertake the task of mainstreaming meaningfully.

[38] Submission from the Fiji MDG Focal Point.
[39] Questionnaire response.

Presented below is a country-specific status of MDG mainstreaming.

As stated earlier, in **Fiji** although the MDG report *per se* is yet to be presented to the Parliament for legislative endorsement, the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and its later version, SEEDS (Sustainable Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy) that incorporates MDG as an integral part of its plan, has been submitted to and endorsed by the legislative body. Coordinated by the National Planning Office and pursued within the framework of SDP or SEEDS, the Fiji planning process envisages incorporating MDG indicators at its sectoral planning levels. In recent times Fiji has also taken initiatives to revamp its MDG national task force which held its first review meeting after a long recess. The meeting discussed various aspects of MDG and options for advancing MDG indicators into the planning and monitoring frameworks of the Government. However, more work is needed to mainstream and operationalize the MDG indicators into the monitoring and evaluation framework of the medium term plan and its outputs. Linking the monitoring of results of the medium term plan with MDG indicators is an important step in ensuring full ownership, as the former guarantees guiding public policies and programmes to MDG targets. However, the challenges of accessing data at primary sources and incompatibilities with the budget process may continue to risk meaningful translation of MDG indicators into the planning and monitoring processes of the Government in Fiji.[40]

In **FSM** the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2004-2023 was prepared prior to the MDGR process. However, SDP contains elements such as health, education, environment and gender development, that are conducive to MDG. Although the objectives of FSM SDP do not specifically mention poverty alleviation, it is expected that the stated objectives of economic growth, self-reliance and social development etc. have the potential to contribute to economic development with poverty alleviation. Furthermore, since the production of the draft 2005 MDGR and establishment of UNDP's "in-country MDG desk", the Government is also making efforts to mainstream, monitor and implement MDG in a more coordinative manner. In contrast to the pre-MDGR phase when there was inadequate public discourse on or understanding of poverty issues, the MDGR has successfully articulated and engaged policy makers to discuss poverty issues in their multi-dimensional perspectives, and this has also encouraged budget discussions to account for MDG indicators, especially those that relate to poverty.[41] However, it has also been reported that further skills are needed in costing and budgeting for MDG.

In **Kiribati** beyond the statement that the MDG report indicators have been incorporated into the Kiribati Development Plan, there is no tangible evidence to suggest that these have actually been mainstreamed within the on-going budget and implementation processes of the development activities of the Government. Mere inclusion of MDG indicators (insertion of an MDG table) into the monitoring and evaluation plan without similar incorporation into the operational frameworks of the medium term plan, may not lead to fully-fledged MDG based planning and monitoring. However, in this regard it has also been reported that a "lack of capacity in how to cost the implementation of MDG" is constraining efforts to put MDG into the planning and budgeting processes of the Government.[42]

The **Palau** Master Development Plan 2020 was prepared in 1996, predating MDG reporting. The Plan envisages several goals such as "share economic growth on an equitable basis" that are conducive to MDG. Since the preparation of the Palau MDG report, efforts have also been made towards "defining of appropriate measures to counter demonstrated poverty (economic hardship)", on the basis of the information revealed through the 2006 HIES, 2008

[40] Reportedly the MDG database established through the MDG report has since collapsed due to staff movement (refer questionnaire response).
[41] FSM questionnaire response, see FSM Country Assessment Report.
[42] Kiribati questionnaire response, see Kiribati Country Assessment Report.

Poverty Analysis Report. To address the issue of poverty, there is now a new Government plan to provide a household stimulus fund.[43] However, the Evaluation Mission observes that Palau's monitoring and evaluation system is yet to be organized such as to pursue an MDG focused monitoring and evaluation strategy in the country.[44]

RMI's MDG Progress Report is yet to be officially approved and therefore, the task of inputting MDG indicators into the policies is also yet to be accomplished. With regard to mainstreaming of MDGR within the policy processes of the Government, the challenge for RMI appears to be twofold: (i) lack of technical skills needed in policy analysis and policy advice linked to the MDGR; and most importantly, (ii) lack of technical knowledge associated with the mainstreaming of the MDGR within the approved national development plan, the Strategic Development Framework (SDF), 2003-2018, Vision 2018. However, although the Strategic Framework does not refer to MDG *per se*, several of its milestones such as "more harmonized development in the context of healthy lifestyles and on prevailing culture and sustainable development", etc. do seem to allude to the goals that are not too far removed from the goals of the MDG.[45] It has also been observed that in recent times, the Government has initiated a "demonstrated usage of poverty data for policy discussions".[46] Furthermore, the Framework also stipulates that during the early years of the Plan, "a poverty survey will be undertaken" and that "with regard to ensuring equitable distribution of income among different income groups, our national vision incorporates strategic aims at raising income levels and for increasing job opportunities".[47] Exactly when and how this will be accomplished is not clear. Of all the PICs, RMI took the longest (four years) to finalize the MDG report. Therefore, at this stage many of the key initiatives concerning MDG based planning, budgeting and monitoring etc. are yet to take place, although in recent times the MDG Working Group has initiated steps to promote the MDG report to a wider audience including local government entities.[48] Hopefully these initiatives, accompanied by relevant capacity building, will assist RMI to incorporate and operationalize the MDG indicators within the SDF 2003-2018 effectively.

In **Solomon Islands** (SI), efforts have been made to "adapt and localize MDG" and incorporate the MDG indicators (MDG Report published in 2004) into the National Economic Recovery and Development Plan (NERDP) 2003. The Solomon Islands MDG report identifies "MDG Plus" as the "localized" targets of MDG in the country. The most significant among these are the gender empowerment goals and the goals of provincial equity (the goal of "provincial equity" is of particular significance for recovery and rehabilitation of post-conflict country such as Solomon Islands). In terms of gender empowerment, and as part of its "MDG Plus" agenda, the NERDP has incorporated several gender based economic as well as political targets into the plan. Similar targets have also been identified for bridging urban/rural inequality, poverty alleviation of vulnerable groups affected by conflicts etc. The MDG Plus also recognizes as part of NERDP the significance of regional and/or provincial disparities and expresses its commitments to address these challenges more strategically. However, even though the MDG report has helped in flagging these important issues in NERDP and that "some of the indicators are used to measure progress of the SL Medium Term Strategic Development Plan 2008-2010, lack of capacity and firm commitment of the Government to monitor MDG progress, insufficient data to effectively monitor progress, and a lack of sustained effort by the Government to promote MDG based planning and budgeting" etc.

[43] Palau questionnaire response, see Palau Country Assessment Report.
[44] As above.
[45] "The Strategic Development Framework 2003-2018, Vision 2018", page 38.
[46] See *Palau: Analysis of the 2006 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (2008)* for details on the country's definition of poverty and hardship where it states "…one in five households and more than one in four population of Palau may be living below the national minimum cost of living…".
[47] *Ibid,* page 52.
[48] RMI questionnaire response; see RMI Country Assessment Report.

have been cited as some of the on-going challenges of effective implementation of a MDG based planning and monitoring in the country.[49]

In **Tonga**, as a contrast to the pre-MDGR phase when there was little public discourse on or understanding of poverty, the MDGR process has successfully articulated and engaged policy makers in discussing and prioritizing poverty and proposing measures conducive to poverty reduction. The MDG have since been subsumed within the Strategic Development Plan 8 (2006/7-2008/9) goals, underscoring high ownership to and convergence of these two sets of goals into one.[50] And to strategize its poverty interventions better, Tonga's SDP 8 has also made an attempt to define poverty from a variety of perspectives: "Food Poverty Line", "Basic Needs Poverty Line", "Hardship" etc. Also quite unique to Tonga, in addition to using information from quantitative surveys such as HIESs, the Food Survey etc, the country also employed a participatory methodology to assess the regional and qualitative dimension of poverty.[51] The Evaluation Mission is of the view that these measures are likely to orient the development strategy of Tonga significantly to MDG targets and promote a high degree of synergy, if not ownership, to the MDG. Tonga is also in the process of preparing its next National Strategic Development Framework which will be for 5-10 years. It has also been reported that due to the merger of the Central Planning Department with the newly constituted Ministry of Finance and National Planning, the planning functions have been relocated to the newly formed Policy and Planning Division under the same ministry and that there is now one person who is responsible for MDG coordination and follow up. It has also been reported that the MDG focal point is working closely with the MDG technical committee.

In **Tuvalu,** its MDG report has had a significant impact on its national development plan, Te Kakeega II. Tuvalu ensured that MDG targets are aligned with the key strategic areas identified in Te Kakeega II. For example, in contrast to the pre-MDGR phase when there was little or no public discourse on or understanding of poverty, the MDGR has successfully articulated and engaged policy makers in discussing poverty issues in its local perspectives and has since proposed strategies aligned to MDG including poverty alleviation. These include, Tuvalu National Action Plan, Gender strategy, Social Development Policy, National Youth Policy, National Food, Nutrition Policy 2004 (this predates MDGR, though), Education Master Plan, Draft Health Sector Plan 2009 etc.[52] The Tuvalu National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) 2005-2015 also recognizes that not all of its goals are directly relevant to MDG. In this regard, and based on a minimum basic needs basket approach (food plus non-food items), Tuvalu has developed its own definition of poverty and established a national poverty line accordingly. Despite these accomplishments and even though some of the MDG monitoring indicators are consistent with Tuvalu National Development Plan, progress of mainstreaming these goals into the budgetary and trackable monitoring initiatives is yet to be further achieved and this is because of: (i) lack of technical capacity in planning and monitoring; (ii) insufficient data; (iii) lack of MDG awareness in rural areas and schools; and (iv) lack of technical capacity in costing and budgeting for MDG issues in the national and local government, as well as in NGOs.[53] Given the significant progress Tuvalu has made, and the resolve it has shown in advancing MDG, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that further capacity building, stronger administrative support, and provision of required funding will enable the country to make impressive strides in the implementation of the MDG, and thus its full ownership.

In **Vanuatu,** efforts have been made to mainstream the findings of the MDGR 2005 into the Priorities and Action Agenda (PAA) 2006-2015 of the Government. The PAA states that among many objectives "By 2015, Vanuatu will have achieved a significant increase in real

[49] Solomon Islands questionnaire response; see Solomon Islands Country Assessment Report.
[50] Tonga questionnaire response; see Tonga Country Assessment Report.
[51] Strategic Development Plan 8, 2006/2007-2008/2009.
[52] Questionnaire response.
[53] Questionnaire response; see Tuvalu Country Assessment Report.

per capita incomes, along with steady growth in levels of employment. Within the region, Vanuatu is seen as one of the leading countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in education, health, environmental management, and in other key social indicators."[54] However, Vanuatu's main predicament is not its intentions nor a lack of commitment to MDG, but its lack of capacity in a number of areas: statistical (especially in gathering time and quality data from sources); linking data to planning and planning to programme budgeting; and lack or weak institutional coherence. However, in recent times Vanuatu has taken steps to strengthen its MDG based planning and monitoring system and the government has also developed a results based framework for monitoring and evaluating its development activities. Using this results based framework the country has also produced its first draft Annual Development Report (ADR). These are early days and the ADR suffers from gaps of data and analytical rigour. However, it is a step in the right direction and what is needed now is capacity building in information management systems, programme budgeting and skills in data analysis and monitoring of results more substantively. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that given that its proposed results based M&E framework is sound as a design or a blueprint, further capacity building in operational and substantive aspects of the ADR process has the potential to greatly enhance its efforts in MDG based planning and monitoring.

Table 3 below describes the current status of MDG mainstreaming.

Table 3: Status of MDG Mainstreaming into the National Strategic Development Plans (NSDP), MDG Task Forces (MDG-TF), Budget and Monitoring and Evaluation (B-M&E) Processes

Country	Mainstreaming in NSDP	Mainstreaming of MDG-TF	Mainstreaming into M&E frameworks	Remarks
Fiji	Mainstreamed within SEEDS	MDG Task Force has been re-constituted	MDG indicators mainstreamed for review and monitoring by the working groups	Due to lack of capacity no MDG costing done yet; not clear whether MDG-TF has been incorporated within the National Economic Development Committee and into various sectoral working groups/planning sub-committees etc.
FSM	Strategic Development Plan, 2003-2023 precedes MDG report, now efforts being made to incorporate MDG indicators into the SDP.	No information on mainstreaming	MDG monitoring at local government level	UNDP's in-country MDG Desk assisting the mainstreaming process; lack of capacity in MDG costing and budgeting
Kiribati	MDG indicators incorporated in the Kiribati National Development Plan	No information on mainstreaming	No information on M&E	Beyond the statement that the "MDG indicators have been incorporated into the Kiribati National Development Plan", no specific information about M&E; lack of capacity hampering MDG costing and budgeting
Palau	Palau Master Development Plan 2020 formulated in 1996, predates MDG report	No information available	No, but has plan	The Palau Master Development Plan 2020 reflects key goals of MDG, but requires "firm commitment" of the Government to monitor; require more training in MDG costing and budgeting

[54] Priorities & Action Agenda 2006-2015, Government of the Republic of Vanuatu, Page 6.

RMI	Pending	Ad hoc MDG Working Group by the President is expected to be approved by the cabinet soon	Pending	RMI's MDG report has only recently been approved and therefore several tasks relating to mainstreaming the report into the planning, budgeting and monitoring processes are yet to take place
Solomon Islands	Localized the indicators and incorporated into the National Economic Recovery and Development Plan 2003 that predates the MDG Report 2004	Being reconstituted	Mainstreamed, some indicators of MDG used to measure progress of medium development plan	Further training needed in MDG costing and budgeting
Tonga	Mainstreamed within the Strategic Development Plan 8 (2006/7-2008/9)	Nine out of ten members of MDG TF represent government organizations – one member from the NGO umbrella organization and there is also an MDG technical committee supporting operational aspects of MDG	M&E arrangements under new set up yet to be made fully functional	Support to multi-sectoral data and statistics production key to enhancing overall statistical capacity and policy making and thus MDG mainstreaming
Tuvalu	Mainstreamed in Te Kakeega II	Nine out of ten MDG TF are representatives of government, one represents NGO sector	Some of the indicators have been incorporated into the 9th development plan	Capacity building in MDG costing and budgeting needed
Vanuatu	Mainstreamed in Priorities and Action Agenda (PAA) 2006-2015	Twenty one out of twenty two members represent government departments – one from a NGO coalition	A separate M&E unit at the Prime Minister's office being set up and a results framework for M&E of development projects has also been outlined	A permanent MDG Coordinator at Prime Minister's office has since been engaged; Government is also taking steps to streamline reporting requirements and its evolving results based M&E framework has potential to monitor and evaluate development projects with MDG indicators but requires capacity building

Source: Compiled from questionnaire responses.

Table 3 above reveals that Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have already mainstreamed MDG indicators into their respective national development strategic plans. In FSM and Palau, their NSDPs predate the MDG report and therefore efforts are now being made to incorporate the indicators gradually into the plans. In RMI the late preparation and approval of the MDG report is also delaying the task of mainstreaming. In Palau, the Palau Master Plan 2000 predates MDG reporting but the objectives of the plan include outcomes similar to MDG. However, it has also been reported that Palau needs "firm commitment" from the government to implement these goals.[55]

[55] Questionnaire response, see Palau Country Assessment Report.

4.2.2 Mainstreaming of MDG Task Forces

Sustainability and continuity of MDG task forces beyond the report process and their mainstreaming within the national planning committees is also an important element in MDG ownership in the sense that their continuation or, preferably, their co-option into existing national planning committees of the governments has the potential to sustain and guide a planning process that is MDG based. However, the Evaluation Mission observed that, except in countries where the MDG task forces/working groups have been established through Cabinet and or by the highest political level, the MDG task forces have either collapsed or have become dormant, although in recent times steps have been taken by some countries to revamp or re-constitute some of these MDG task forces.[56] What remains unclear at this stage is whether the MDG task forces - the old and the newly constituted ones – have, if at all, been mainstreamed within the national planning committees and if so, how and what are their operating arrangements.

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that without a clear definition of arrangements of integration between the MDG task forces and the national planning committees, and without clear articulation of the details of their operating arrangements, MDG task forces will always remain outside entities with little or no impact on national planning.

4.3 SUMMARY

In summary, countries that have engaged in extensive preparatory processes, constituted broad-based MDG task forces and endorsed their MDG reports either at the parliament or at least at a higher bureaucratic level (national planning committee etc.), seem to have succeeded in mainstreaming MDG reports in their national development plans more successfully and thus ensured the report's full ownership. However, the Evaluation Mission is also of the view that in addition to the challenges associated with legal issues, continuing weaknesses and lack of capacity to meaningfully mainstream MDG indicators in planning and monitoring frameworks seems to have also acted as an impediment in mainstreaming and thus the full ownership of the MDG report to a large extent.[57]

In most countries the aspect of mainstreaming of the MDG-TF into their respective national planning committee is unclear. In some countries the task forces are currently being reconstituted while in others, the predominance of government membership in these task forces indicates that sustainability of, and the collegial linkage between MDG task forces and development committees is somewhat implicit.

In Vanuatu, steps are currently underway to reconstitute the MDG task force and at the same time, an MDG secretariat and a permanent MDG coordinator at the Prime Minister's Office has been established, underscoring the Government's continuing commitment to and sustainability of the MDG processes.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, Fiji seems to have the most elaborate and comprehensive institutional framework, whilst Vanuatu appears to have also introduced a useful framework of results based monitoring and evaluation (see SEEDS of Fiji and Annual Development Report 2009 of Vanuatu).

Most countries also report that they need further capacity building in MDG costing, budgeting and monitoring.

[56] For example, in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu etc.
[57] Questionnaire responses.

5.0 IMPACT ON COUNTRY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter discusses the issues of MDG reporting and its impact on institutional as well as other value change aspects, such the role of the MDG task forces, impact on coordinating aspects, capacity in data collection, monitoring and evaluation etc.

The UNDP defines capacity development as the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen, and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time.

The indicators employed by the Evaluation Mission to measure country capacity development within the context of MDG reporting include those that are process, institutional change and outcome related, including MDG awareness building, partnerships for MDG, new institutions relevant to MDG, statistical and/or MDG measurement and monitoring capacity etc.

Indicators such as MDG awareness building etc. are process indicators that demonstrate the extent to which institutions, organizations, communities etc. have been made aware of and responded to the idea of MDG. Similarly, issues relating to institutional behavioural changes, capacity building and gaps remaining in statistics etc. have also been assessed. In terms of institutional development, special attention has been given to the aspects of partnerships for MDG, emergence of new institutions that changed relationships, new ways of doing business etc. that contributed - or otherwise - to the advancement of MDG in the target countries.

Box 2
The Issue of Ownership: Emerging Lessons

The Evaluation Mission observes the following as the emerging lessons of processes key to ownership of MDG reports:

- Extensive preparedness and orientation training etc. assist better understanding and articulation of issues and enhances the buy-in process;
- MDG task forces that engage NGOs and civil society organizations more extensively succeed in identifying issues, mainstreaming multi-sectoral perspectives into the MDG report better; an inclusive task force also assists enhancing prospects of MDG accountability, both from within as well as outside;
- The cause of gender mainstreaming is greatly enhanced if gender based NGOs are included in the MDG task force;
- Inclusion of local government in the MDG reporting process equally assists in sensitizing and committing sub-national entities into the MDG process and create potential for follow-up of MDG at the local government planning and development level;
- Formal endorsement of the MDG report, especially at the legislative level, is an important step forward to the incorporation of the report in the national development plan and thus ownership; however, it has also been observed that in many cases these mergers are more of an expression of intent than a strategy for implementation; the challenge is therefore how to integrate the MDG goals within the development agenda meaningfully;
- The main challenge of ownership of MDG is also how to translate the MDG targets into the planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the medium term plans of the governments; and
- Mainstreaming of MDG task forces into the national planning and other development related policy committees is an important way to ensure facilitation and guidance of the formulation and implementation of national development plans within the parameters of MDG.

5.1 MDG AWARENESS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

MDG awareness building initiatives played an important role in sensitizing the government and the society at large to the values of MDG.

There is no doubt that concerted efforts by donor agencies, including UN agencies, as well as governments, and prolonged preparation and continuous consultations relating to the MDG report within and outside the government, has helped in raising awareness in MDG in most countries. Some countries report that MDG reporting has enabled them to see where they belong in terms of key issues of development such as poverty, health, education and gender. Some also claim that the reporting has helped them to "oversee immediate and long term national strategy for achieving and coordinating the obligation of the MDG" through the MDG task forces, an initiative of MDG reporting.

In some countries involvement of sub-national entities, especially local governments, churches, schools etc. have also helped in orienting a cross-section of people to MDG, especially at the community level. The national awareness built through the MDG reporting process and the public awareness created thereby, seems to have also encouraged some NGOs to propose their own MDG related activities. NGOs in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, for example, have expressed interest in initiating citizen based MDG research, policy dialogue and monitoring processes in their respective countries.[58]

Another important MDG report induced activity has been the involvement of the media. Although this has been somewhat limited and deserves much greater engagement in future, the involvement of the media in relaying MDG messages equally strengthened MDG advocacy across the board. From available information it has been gathered that most countries conducted extensive MDG orientation workshops and subsequently - once the report was prepared - circulated it widely both within government as well as outside, including to the media. It is conceivable that these dissemination initiatives that included line ministries, non-government partners and in some cases, the media, significantly contributed to MDG awareness building across the board and, as has been reported earlier, influenced the NGO community to initiate activities relevant to MDG.

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The formation of multi-disciplinary MDG task forces that included government, NGOs, business, church groups etc. has been an important feature of capacity building relating to MDG reporting. These initiatives have helped strengthen the aspects of broad based participation in development planning and, to some extent, may have also helped in promoting a culture of broad based consultations in policy making. One country that reflects the trends in other countries reported that "…..the MDG working group has raised recognition of the MDG and the RMI's commitment to overall poverty reduction….".[59] Again, by incorporating NGOs into the reporting process both their awareness to and capacity in policy dialogue seems also to have been built to some extent. However, it has also been reported that in some countries the task forces have either collapsed or become dormant and many are yet to be mainstreamed within the overall development management structures of the government. In recent times, except for Fiji, it is not known whether the MDG task forces have met since the preparation of the MDG report. In Fiji efforts have been made to reconstitute the MDG task force and it held a meeting in July this year to discuss follow-up of the 2004 MDG report and to determine the next step vis-à-vis MDG in that country.

Another important contribution of the MDG reporting process has been the establishment of MDG focal points in most countries. In addition to having an MDG focal point at a central location - such as the planning office - some countries have also established MDG focal points in the vital sectors of health and education. These focal points undertake the tasks of coordination and facilitation of MDG based planning and monitoring in their respective

[58] During the Assessment Mission NGOs in at least three countries (Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) expressed interest in obtaining capacity building support to initiate citizen based MDG-oriented policy research, dialogue and monitoring (see relevant Country Assessment Reports for more information).
[59] Questionnaire response; see RMI Country Assessment Report.

countries, from within the government. In the case of Vanuatu a fully-fledged MDG secretariat with a full time MDG coordinator has now been set up at the Prime Minister's office. These are important institutional development induced by MDG reporting.

In some countries the MDG focal points have already started to demonstrate the important role they are capable of playing in championing MDG in their respective countries. In these countries the MDG focal points have greatly assisted in maintaining the momentum of MDG.

In summary, the key contributions of MDG reporting in institutional development include: (i) demonstration of the value of broad based partnerships in development planning; (ii) establishment of inclusive processes and operating frameworks relevant to dialogue, articulation of issues and priority setting in socio-economic development of countries; and (iii) capacity developed in accommodation and triangulation of diverse views and perspectives on common challenges. The MDG reporting, through its wide dialogue and dissemination processes, equally helped in building awareness of and commitment to MDG to some extent.

5.3 ENHANCEMENT OF STATISTICAL AND/OR MDG MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING CAPACITY

Among the MDG reporting related capacity development, the most significant has been the aspects relating to statistical data management capacity. All countries now report that the MDG reporting exercise has helped to broaden the knowledge of data, especially those that relate to poverty and gender, and also knowledge of the sources of data.[60]

In the process, MDG reporting has built statistical capacity, especially in raising awareness regarding the importance of hard and verifiable data in planning. The countries have also reported that they have gained insights in identifying sources of data and have recognized better the significance of timely and quality generation of data. MDG reporting also helped understand several weaknesses that currently persist in most statistical systems of the PICs. These include the aspects of harmonization, standardization, collation and interpretation of data. Currently, the data are scattered, disorganized and not uniform. These anomalies with statistics were always known to the PICs, but the collective attention of the donors, UN agencies and the government demonstrated during the MDG reporting process seems to have brought these deficits to the fore with renewed urgency.

The MDG reports have also encouraged most governments to conceptualize the notion of poverty within the Pacific's own socio-cultural milieu. A large number of staff also received training in statistical and measurement related subjects. The exercise has also helped identify gaps in skills and the capacity building needs of MDG reporting and monitoring. Most countries also report that data is now in a state of improved consolidation, and many have also computerized their database. There is also evidence of better utilization of data than before. For example, although progress is slower than expected, several countries have started to use MDG data in national planning, especially in the areas of health and gender – in Tuvalu, Fiji, Vanuatu etc.[61] These are important accomplishments in capacity development.

5.4 SUMMARY

In summary, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that the MDG reporting process has contributed to several aspects of capacity development: (i) broad-based awareness building in MDG; (ii) introduction of a culture of partnerships and participation in development planning; (iii) improved statistical and measurement capacity and their use in planning; (iv) emergence of new institutions and structures relating to MDG such as MDG task forces, MDG focal points etc; and (v) although limited, raised NGO capacity in policy dialogue.

[60] Questionnaire responses.
[61] See Country Assessment Reports: Tuvalu, Fiji, Vanuatu.

Mainstreaming of the MDG reports within national development plans is also recognized as another important milestone of MDG capacity building, but more work is needed to translate these convergences into reality.

6.0 MAINSTREAMING OF GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Like poverty, another outstanding feature of MDG reporting has been the focus on gender as a separate priority issue of development. Although the issues of women and children have always been highlighted by most donors, including UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA etc., MDG' focus on gender as a discrete set of targets helped to encourage all the PICs to collect, collate and analyze data on gender from two different perspectives – gender development and gender empowerment. Although in most cases data are inadequate and/or of poor quality, especially in the area of gender empowerment, the outstanding feature of the gender focus has been that the available data has presented itself as a framework that is sufficient to take gender issues forward. At the same time, the exercise has also drawn attention of policy managers to the data gaps that currently exist in this important sector.

6.1 ASSESSMENT OF PROCESSES CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Aspects of gender mainstreaming have been examined from a variety of perspectives: (i) the MDG reporting process and gender representation; (ii) the extent and quality of data collected and used in analyzing and articulating issues relevant more directly to Goal 3; and (iii) the extent and level of mainstreaming of gender in goals, other than Goal 3, such as in Goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 etc.

While item (i) above describes the process aspect of gender mainstreaming in the MDG reporting process, items (ii) and (iii) represent the substantive aspects of gender reporting.

Although it is true that the main test of gender mainstreaming is incorporation of gender indicators into the MDG report and implementation of gender targets, the aspect of processes that contribute to gender mainstreaming into the MDG report are no less important. The Evaluation Mission therefore examined the process aspect of gender mainstreaming in greater detail and analyzed how, if at all, the process contributed to the outcome. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the more inclusive the process has been, the better has been the accountability to the agenda of gender.

6.1.1 Gender representation in MDG task forces

The Evaluation Mission observed that the composition of the MDG task forces, both in terms of proportion of women as well as the representation of organizations that represent the interests of women, influenced, in some way, the depth and quality of gender mainstreaming in MDG reports.

Table 4 below illustrates the nine country status of gender balance in MDGR stewardship.

Table 4: Gender Representation in MDG Reporting Process

Country	Memberships of MDG National Committee/Task Force	Organization Representing Women's Interests
Fiji	75% Male/25% Female	Ministries of Home, Health, Education, NGO etc.
FSM	80% Male/20% Female	Ministries of Interior, Health, Education etc.
Kiribati	44% Male/55% Female	Ministry of Interior, NGO
Palau	70% Male/30% Female	Ministries of Health, Education etc.
RMI	60% Male/40% Female	Ministry of Interior/National Gender Development Centre
Solomon Is	Not known	Ministry of Interior
Tonga	70% Male/30% Female	Ministry of Interior
Tuvalu	51% Male/49% Female	Ministries of Interior, Health and Education, NGO
Vanuatu	50% Male/50% Female	Ministries of Interior, Health and Education; Vanuatu Council of Women

It is evident from Table 4 above that in terms of participation of women in MDG committees/task forces, all PICs ensured reasonable representation of women, with Kiribati recording the highest female representation (55%) and FSM the lowest (20%). In terms of organizational representation most countries represented gender issues through relevant government agencies, except in Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu. In these countries, in addition to governmental representations, gender based NGOs were also included in the task forces.

Countries that ensured stronger female participation in MDG Task Forces have ensured more explicit expression of gender issues into the MDGR. However, having said this the Evaluation Mission also cautions that although greater participation of women and their organizations result in more vigorous gender related inputs to the report, there is no guarantee that these inputs will automatically translate into formulation and implementation of a comprehensive gender strategy, especially those that reflect the commitments of CEDAW and ICPD. While some argue that there is genuine lack of political will to implement elements of CEDAW and ICPD, some also believe the key challenges facing the PICs are firstly, lack of sufficient gender related data and secondly, where data are available, lack of capacity to translate data into policies. Lack of political will has also been highlighted as another major constraint in the advancement of the mission of gender.[62] Some claim that while appropriate policies are in place, the main challenge is lack of resources needed for implementation of gender based policies and programmes.

6.2 ARTICULATION OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Most countries have successfully collected and analyzed data on gender development indices (male/female enrolment ratio at primary level) and revealed high achievements of enrolment at the primary level. This is either equal to or in some cases, higher for females in the targeted countries.[63] For example, in some countries, while male/female distribution at primary level is equal, enrolments at secondary and tertiary levels - as in the cases of Fiji and Kiribati - are higher for females than males. And, although gender balance is well maintained at almost all levels of educational enrolments in the targeted countries, in some - such as RMI - the pass rate is lower for females.[64] RMI's MDG report states that "….evidence from the primary and secondary levels appears to indicate that the potential for gender discrepancies can become an issue if not addressed at this point in time".[65]

What is also of significance, and can be attributed as one of the tangible benefits of MDG reporting, is that by reporting these phenomenon through measurable statistics, the reports have successfully drawn the attention of governments to these anomalies (where they exist) and thus influenced - at least in some cases - the decision regarding the next step such as: "…research is needed to be conducted to examine whether this trend is increasing or decreasing, and to identify what are the constraints and conditions that prevent females from succeeding or completing school."[66]

6.3 ARTICULATION OF GENDER EMPOWERMENT ISSUES

In the area of gender empowerment, several countries have also recorded, at least at the aggregate level, gender imbalances in waged employment, in professional jobs as well as in parliamentary seats. Other countries report that even though women do not have equal or significant representation at the legislative level, "…the Council of Iroij (Council of Chiefs) has primarily been composed of roughly equal numbers of males and females, and females have considerable influence on matters relating to traditional land tenure and customary rights" but

[62] Kiribati and Tuvalu, for instance; refer questionnaire response.
[63] See Country MDG reports.
[64] According to Tonga's MDG report, in that country the opposite is happening – females outperform males in education and due to a large male emigration, women also dominate waged employment in Tonga.
[65] Progress Report on Achieving Millennium Development Goals, Republic of Marshall Islands, February 2005.
[66] *Ibid.*

the same report also explains that, "overall, [women] find it difficult to push women's issues either in parliament or in national discussions."[67]

In the Solomon Islands the community is divided by patriarchal as well as matriarchal societies, and yet in modern sectors of the society there are significant gender gaps in waged employment, professional jobs and in legislative representation.

There are also examples where the gender gap in legislative representation has been bridged by strong NGO advocacy from outside contributing to important gender sensitive legislative decisions. For example, in Kiribati, women's groups and NGOs have lobbied the Government and succeeded in ratifying the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[68] and brought about amendments to the Evidence Act.[69]

Thanks to the MDG reporting exercise, some countries have also identified laws that disadvantage women.[70] However, as stated earlier more work is needed to localize the CEDAW commitments and translate these commitments into policies.

6.4 SUMMARY

MDG reporting has successfully highlighted gender issues across the region and drawn the attention of policy makers to the need for more research to help appreciate the challenges better and, in cases where the issues have been identified, initiate measures to plan and implement strategies that are capable of better addressing these challenges. For example, the most recently collected gender data in RMI reveals that even though male/female enrolment ratios demonstrate favourable trends for females in the early years of education, the same starts to fall in later years, indicating the need for further research and follow-up.

Depending on the availability of data, the MDG reports have also provided the opportunity to highlight gender issues in other goals as well - Goal 1 (poverty and hunger), Goal 2 (primary education), Goal 4 (child mortality) and Goal 6 (HIV/AIDS). Highlighting the significance of collecting and analyzing gender data beyond Goal 3 of MDG, a recent report argues that, "MDG 3 is more than elimination of gender disparity in education" and must include gender perspectives on poverty and hunger, malnutrition, access to information, access to markets, access to basic amenities, HIV/AID etc.[71] Most gender data also faces the difficulties of data disaggregating by rural/urban categories. This gap has arguably conceded an important part of the analytical depth required in gender mainstreaming. For example, with regard to Goal 1, Fiji's HIES data does not collect information on female-headed households, leaving an information gap that risks marginalizing the aspect of gender in poverty analysis.

It is also noteworthy that the countries that ensured significant gender balance in the MDG task forces (both by individual and by organizational representation) seemed to have succeeded in highlighting and mainstreaming gender issues better and more comprehensively. It is, therefore, important that in future countries ensure that their MDG committees and task forces are sufficiently gender balanced - both in terms of numbers as well as in terms of organizational representation (government and non-government). At the same time there is also a need to build capacity of future MDG task forces/committees in recognizing the importance of gender equality in development. Furthermore, as gender

[67] Tonga's 1st National Status Report, Millennium Development Goals, Today and Tomorrow, March 2005.
[68] CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, adopted by UN General Assembly 1979, ratified by Kiribati in 2004, is often described as the international bill of rights for women.
[69] An act to protect people from harm - especially in relation to protecting women against violence and promoting their rights.
[70] Millennium Development Goals: Status Report, Government of Palau, 2008.
[71] Flor-Smereczniak, Carol (2009), "What will it take to Achieve MDG 3?", paper presented at ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Pacific Workshop. 16-20 March, Nadi, Fiji.

issues and challenges vary between urban and rural areas, it is important that the MDG leadership incorporate rural gender representation in their deliberations.

By comparison, Fiji's gender data are relatively richer and availability of these data seem to have prompted the Government to identify and propose policies conducive to tackling emerging gender related challenges better.[72] Except in the HIES data, Fiji's gender data is significantly disaggregated by rural/urban distribution and even by ethnic distribution - at least that was the case. Recently the Fiji Government made the decision to abandon the practice of collecting, analyzing and reporting data by ethnic distinctions. This is unhelpful, because ethnic disaggregation is particularly important for gender analysis of a multi-ethnic society where beliefs, faiths and customs play important roles in gender behavior and the socio-economic mobility in the society. Therefore, gender data by ethnic disaggregation - especially in a multi-ethnic society such as Fiji - is crucial to better understand gender issues, especially from socio-cultural perspectives. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the Fiji Government's decision to abandon the practice of collecting data by ethnicity may render its future gender analysis factually opaque and analytically weak. As a result, its ability to propose a gender development and empowerment strategy that is ethnically diverse and culturally sensitive is going to be significantly compromised.

In summary, it is evident that the MDG reporting process has reinforced and made significant contributions to highlighting gender issues as a discrete component of both development as well as public policy in PICs. The MDG reports have also highlighted that in general most PICs have made good progress in the aspects of gender development, but they lag behind in the sector of gender empowerment. The Evaluation Mission noted that gathering and analyzing data by ethnicity and rural/urban disaggregation is key to effective to formulation of gender policies and suggests that these two aspects are accounted for both in the composition of the MDG task forces, as well as in data gathering and analysis in future MDG reporting. It is also important to strengthen the capacity of NGOs and civil society organizations in gender based advocacy and policy dialogue.

[72] Millennium Development Goals, the Fiji National Report (November 2005) offers the following policy suggestions: (i) mainstream gender perspectives, issues and concerns in the planning process. This includes a gender audit to be conducted in two pilot ministries (agriculture and health) and gender sensitization training in government and the private sector; (ii) ensure gender equality and non-discrimination before the law. This includes the enactment of the Family Law Act in 2003 and a review of the Mental Health Treatment Act; (iii) provide disadvantaged women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and to advisory and marketing assistance. This includes operation of the Women's Social and Economic Development Program and establishment of the National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprise Development, which is contributing to poverty reduction; (iv) ensure women's accessibility and full participation in power structures and decision making bodies. This includes the implementation of an equal employment opportunity policy within the Public Service Commission; and (v) educate the community and law enforcement agencies to prevent and eliminate violence against women. This includes programs of male advocacy training which work with police, military personnel and other groups of men, community-based training, and workshops on the economic costs of violence. The Fiji Law Reform Commission has begun to review domestic violence legislation in Fiji.

7.0 KEY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF NATIONAL MDGREPORTS

There are a range of factors that contributed to the success of MDG reporting and these are listed below.

7.1 SUCCESS FACTORS

The factors that contributed most to the MDG report process are:

- Strong in-country advocacy and orientation training in MDG by a host of donors including the UN as a group, and UNDP in particular;
- Commitment of the governments;
- Technical assistance in data gathering, analysis and report writing including introduction to a reporting template by the UNDP;
- Establishment of in-country focal points and most importantly formation of and facilitation by the MDG task forces;
- Availability, utilization and updating of existing data (HIES, poverty data, population census etc.) and where appropriate, utilization of proxy or indirect indicators – the quality of existing data played an important role in enhancing the quality of the report;
- Participation of NGOs and their quality;
- Wide sharing of the draft report including dissemination at community level;
- The quality and coordinating capacity of the MDG task forces and focal points in particular;
- Official endorsement of the report etc;
- Strong advocacy and facilitation role by UN/UNDP throughout the process; and
- Technical and financial assistance provided by the UNDP and other donors and regional institutions through consultancy etc.

The Evaluation Mission noted that most countries went through an extensive period of preparedness through advocacy and orientation workshops. These interventions created the necessary intellectual and organizational foundations relevant to the MDG report. The MDG task forces and the manner of their formation (by whom and at what level) also has had ramifications vis-à-vis their effectiveness. The inclusiveness in the composition of MDG committees/task forces etc. also played a crucial role in triangulating diverse views and perspectives on issues such as poverty and gender.

Most countries constituted fairly inclusive MDG task forces, although in some countries such as Fiji, Vanuatu and Tuvalu, more extensive involvement of women and participation of organizations representing women's interests into their task forces seemed to have also helped in articulating and deepening gender issues better.

Furthermore, it has also been observed that the more political clout the task forces had, the greater were the chances of their sustainability. Also, the more inclusive they were, especially the stronger NGO participation was, the greater the prospects of accountability were. However, even though inclusive and politically endowed MDG committees played important parts in advancing and sustaining the momentum of MDG in concerned countries, in some cases a change of government, transfer/attrition of relevant staff, low patronage (of the committee by the new government) and low commitment of staff themselves etc., have contributed to low sustainability of this important MDG induced institution in these countries. In the face of collapsing trends, another interesting development with regard to the sustainability or re-engineering of MDG committees and MDG processes themselves has been noticed. The Evaluation Mission noted that while some of the adverse forces mentioned above did contribute to near collapse of MDG committees/task forces in one or two countries, the motivation, dedication and commitment of the staff, especially those of the MDG focal points, helped to some extent in reversing the downward trend and revitalizing and re-establishing these committees/task forces and also the processes.[73]

The role of donors, in particular the UN system, should also not be underestimated. Several orientation workshops organized by the UNDP, as well as other UN agencies, the reporting template provided by the UNDP and the consultancy and training inputs provided through the UNDP's MDG support facilities appear to have greatly helped in conceptualizing, articulating and preparing the MDG reports in the PICs. The UN Country Development Managers also played important roles in assisting and facilitating the MDG reporting process. Recently, the introduction of MDG costing and budgeting training is also helping the countries to mainstream MDG indicators into their budgets and consequently, makes the countries better aware of the importance of hard data and their needs in planning and budgeting.

In summary, key lessons emerging from the first round of MDG reporting are that advocacy, orientation training, technical support services in data gathering and analysis, in-country commitment and the mentoring role played by the MDG task forces - as well as the on-the-ground inter-agency coordination role played by the MDG focal points and the CDMs - greatly contributed to the successful formulation, publication and in most cases, endorsement of the first MDG report of the PICs.

Production of the first MDG report and the processes it went through has no doubt created the necessary enabling environment, not only for future MDG reporting, but may have also paved the way for advancing MDG based planning and monitoring in these countries. But there are a number of difficulties to be faced.

7.2 DIFFICULTIES

Difficulties encountered during the reporting processes are:

- Outdated data supplied by the line ministries;
- Difficulties in accessing relevant, accurate and reliable data weakened somewhat the first MDG report, many had to use secondary information from international statistical sources;
- Lack of disaggregated data in several sectors but most importantly in the poverty and gender sectors, weakened the analysis as well as the benchmarking – in poverty assessment for example, the HIES data often did not disaggregate female-headed households; similarly gender data lacked information on the gender situation vis-à-vis goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 in many cases ;

[73] In Fiji and Vanuatu, for example.

- Lack of qualitative data relevant for defining hardship also hampered the tangible estimation of poverty; hardship is often cited as a unique feature of poverty in PICs and more often than not, includes institutional and cultural dimensions requiring participatory assessment to complement quantitative data on poverty;

- Frequent turn-over of key staff during the period of preparation of the report hampered continuity and follow up;

- Weak staff capacity in data gathering, storage and analysis;

- Weak government commitment;

- Absence of participation of local government in the MDG reporting process also hampered the aspects of awareness building and incorporation of community issues into the report content;

- In some cases inadequate NGO representation hampered full triangulation of issues, especially those relating to gender;

- Weak NGO capacity in policy research and policy dialogue affected the quality of NGO input in some cases;

- Delay in the formation and formalization of the MDG task forces delayed the entire process in some countries;

- Inadequate resources and weak technical capacity of the MDG task forces also weakened their capacity to facilitate and steer the process effectively, both administratively as well as substantively; lack of orientation of MDG task forces to gender issues particularly affected deliberations on and articulation of gender issues comprehensively; and

- Lack of in-house capacity in report writing necessitated engagement of external consultants in every country.

With regard to the difficulties faced by PICs, one country summarizes these as, “we risk regressing with the progress we made in our first MDG report’s production, given that the primary sources still face challenges in regularly maintaining their data. There is still limited data and statistical capacity in the ministries and agencies who provided data for MDG reporting…. we face a critical need of not just linking the MDG framework into our budget and planning process but also into institutions below the national government (state [provincial] governments, community organizations etc)”.[74]

7.3 SUMMARY

In summary, the on-going difficulties of MDG reporting relate to deficits in data management and analysis; lack of institutional arrangements and capacity deficits in information management and data collection, especially from the primary sources; skills deficits in socio-economic research; capacity gap in qualitative assessment of poverty relevant to hardship; and most importantly, there are continuing challenges of institution building in MDG oriented monitoring and evaluation of public sector programmes and policies. Many also fear that without immediate and further advocacy for and dialogue in MDG, the momentum gained through the first MDG reporting may soon be lost.

[74] Questionnaire response, Palau.

In view of the successes and difficulties listed above, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that the second generation of UNDP support to MDG capacity building initiatives must therefore build on what has already been accomplished. In this regard, and in view of its comparative advantage, UNDP should focus more on assisting the processes that firstly, contribute to preparation of good quality report and secondly, initiatives that link MDG indicators to on-going planning and monitoring initiatives of the government. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that these proposed synergies will help the countries link development outputs to MDG indictors and thus develop from within self-sustaining capacities in periodic measurement and reporting of progress of MDG over time.

Box 3
Civic action in policy dialogue and MDG accounting: initiatives of Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO) and Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)[75]

In recent times in Vanuatu, VANGO has either initiated or is in the process of initiating several "Advocacy Coalitions" (Advocacy Coalition on Economics, Women Issues, Youth, Education etc.) to initiate policy dialogue on issues of national importance by forming coalitions of stakeholders, practitioners, civil society organizations, policy makers etc. "to facilitate timely interventions" on agreed policies.

Similarly, the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) has taken the initiative to establish "MDG Watch" to track quality and quantity of public services and monitor implementation of MDG at the grass-roots level.

Both of these initiatives are new and highlight the potential of NGOs in policy dialogue and monitoring, both from within as well as outside, but they need capacity building, especially in policy research and technical dialoguing.

However, neither of these or similar initiatives by other NGOs to be treated as stand-alone activities, rather these should be seen as autonomous initiatives complementing the formal policy making and monitoring systems. Nor such autonomous initiatives should preclude NGOs to be members of regular MDG Task Forces or of other planning and policy committees.

Source: Gathered by the Evaluation Mission

The issue of building civil society capacity in policy dialogue and monitoring - especially those that contribute to MDG - may also be given some serious consideration. In future, a greater role for the media may also be seen as an important component of a civic based initiative in policy dialogue and monitoring.

[75] During 2004-2005 the UNDESA provided support to the South Asian Centre for Policy Studies, a regional civil society organization to formulate what they call "A Citizens Social Charter". UNDESA facilitated the dialogue process where country civil society organizations took the lead as principal discussants and the governments as observers and later, as mentors. The outcome of the dialogue, the report "South Asian Social Charter: An Agenda for Civic Action" has since been submitted to all seven South Asian governments for consultation and dialogue for formulation of social policies in their respective countries For details, see Khan, M. Adil (2008) World Public Sector Report 2008, "People Matter: Civic Engagement in Public Governance".

8.0 BEST PRACTICES AND PROMISING IDEAS

Best practices are those initiatives that have already taken place and yielded positive impacts either on institutions or on target groups and thus offer important opportunities for inter-country lesson learning. Promising ideas are those that are at their conceptual or initial trial stage of implementation but have potential for positive impacts in the future and thus warrant capacity building support.

The Evaluation Mission records several best practices and these have been examined from two different perspectives: (i) MDG induced best practices - that is practices that are MDG reporting induced and those that helped enhance the content as well as the quality of the report; and (ii) home grown best practices that are not MDG reporting induced *per se* but have the potential for MDG, especially for MDG based planning and monitoring.

8.1 MDG REPORT INDUCED BEST PRACTICES

The following are regarded as the best practices that have either enhanced the quality and the content of the MDG report or have assisted in advancing the messages of MDG:

- Paradigm shift in development thinking: all PICs
- Gender mainstreaming: the cases of Tuvalu and Fiji
- Inclusion of local government in MDG task force: the case of RMI.

In addition to country specific best practices that this Report lists below, the Evaluation Mission also records a major best practice that is common to all the countries, the shift in development thinking. Presented below are the cases of best practices including the best practice that is generic to all.

8.1.1 Paradigm shift in development thinking: all PICs

Existing commitment and priority attached to a certain development agenda prompts most governments to initiate actions that are all-encompassing and include, among other things, generation and availability of relevant data to promote that agenda.

For example, most PICs' existing commitments to health and educational development have ensured progressively good achievement, complemented by generation of relatively better quality data in these two sectors. These commitments have equally been backed by donor funding and capacity building of the sectors. In addition the NGO sector (community groups, churches, teachers' associations etc.) who actively engage the government in these two sectors, influence performance and quality and timely reporting. However, even in these sectors while the aggregate data show good progress, the lack of disaggregated data continue to constrain reporting of progress, in some cases by rural/urban, male/female distinctions. These data deficits have become particularly visible during the MDG reporting process.

And, even though poverty as a concern of development has always been highlighted as a priority issue in PICs (especially since the mid1980s) it was not until the Millennium Declaration and the start of preparation for the MDG reporting that attention to the issue of poverty attained such urgency. The current emphasis on poverty seems to have also helped in conceptualizing and prioritizing the issue in what has been known as "Pacific" dimensions. The result has been that even though many countries conducted regular HIESs, Employment Surveys, Census etc., data from these surveys were never disaggregated or analyzed sufficiently to depict the aspects of poverty in its varied forms. MDG' stress on poverty has prompted the countries to look at this issue more objectively and strategically. In the process, NGOs have also become more aware and are using national MDG reports as an advocacy and accountability tool. This two-way sensitization may have helped influence government

decisions to bolster pro-poor statistical capacity and, at the same time, strategize development such that it yields pro-poor outcomes.

8.1.2 Gender mainstreaming: the cases of Tuvalu and Fiji

Another area where existing social dynamics, government commitment and NGO movement etc. influenced both data availability, quality and improved planning strategy, is gender development and empowerment.

All PICs have recorded impressive achievements in gender development. However, in regard to gender empowerment not only do the achievements vary, even the quantity and quality of data for analyzing the situation vary. Strong and qualitative advocacy and dialogue on gender issues does seem to produce improved and accountable policy outcomes. For example, in Tuvalu both the Government and women's NGOs have been actively engaged in consistently pursuing gender empowerment strategies and these commitments have found their expression equally strongly in the Gender Chapter (Goal 3) of Tuvalu's MDG report. Similarly, in Fiji where the Government and NGOs collectively demonstrate strong commitment to gender empowerment, similar expression in the Gender Chapter of its MDG report are found. Fiji's gender chapter is rich in data that highlights progress reporting of a number of gender sensitive interventions. Vanuatu also demonstrates collective resolve on gender, but its weak planning capacity continues to impede progress. Kiribati reports impressive accomplishments in several gender goals but also points out that more work is needed to further achieve the aspect of political empowerment of women. Tonga highlights important leadership roles that women play in community based traditional organizations but lacks similar progress in political empowerment, revealing the need of a greater advocacy, sensitization and encouragement in the aspect of political empowerment of women in the country.

In summary, it is noteworthy that the countries that demonstrate gender empowerment as a collective goal of the government and NGOs and civil society organizations, are the ones that ensure inclusion and strong participation of women, as well as women's NGOs, in their MDG committees/task forces. Such broad based participation seems to also enrich the substantive content of the report as well as strengthen the commitment to advance the cause of gender development and empowerment more effectively.

8.1.3 Inclusion of local government in MDG task force: the case of RMI

In terms of inclusiveness in the MDG reporting process, RMI demonstrates a useful lesson. Its MDG national committee - endorsed by the President - included among others, the President of the Association of Mayors. This is significant. Firstly, because inclusion of local government representation may have ensured that the message of MDG reaches sub-national levels and, secondly, due to the sensitization of local government, the aspect of national/local government policy synergies, key to the effective realization of MDG at the grass-roots level, is likely to be achieved better through this engagement.

RMI is also taking steps to get its MDG report endorsed by the Parliament and then plans a follow-up with extensive sub-national advocacy, including media outreach. It is speculated that by garnering support for the MDG report at the highest political level and by sensitizing and encouraging sub-national levels - including local government - to co-opt MDG based planning, RMI may have positioned itself well to guarantee its MDG report's accountability and sustainability in a significant way.

8.2 HOME GROWN BEST PRACTICES WITH POTENTIAL FOR MDG

The Evaluation Mission identified at least two best practices that did not evolve as part of MDG reporting but are good development management practices or concepts with important and positive ramifications for MDG planning and monitoring. These are:

- People perspective in development planning: the case of Tonga
- Results based monitoring and evaluation: the case of Vanuatu
- UN/donor strategic interventions

8.2.1 People perspective in development planning: the case of Tonga

During its formulation of its Strategic Development Plan 8,[76] Tonga's Central Planning Department initiated the concept of "people's perspective on development" and engaged in the in-depth and extensive community consultations to gain feedback on community issues and challenges. These community consultations have revealed two important outcomes: (i) it created a linkage between national and local; and most importantly, (ii) it helped articulate and determine development priorities, as seen by the community itself. The result has thus been formulation of a national development strategy that is transparent and accountable and promises to attain high ownership. As MDG have also been incorporated in the Tonga plan, it is conceivable that the goals and strategies identified therein will be equally owned and be more accountable. The important lesson learned from the Tongan experience is this that employment of a participatory method that captures community aspirations better has also the potential to relate the priorities of development to MDG more effectively.

Also lessons derived from Tonga's people's perspectives indicate four important issues relating to participatory development needs assessment – one substantive and three methodological: (i) direct consultations with larger communities as well as community interest groups such as NGOs, churches, private sector etc. enhances ownership and articulates development priorities more accountably - this is the substantive aspect; and from the methodological aspects Tonga's peoples perspectives reveal the following lessons, (ii) structured discussions assist more focused dialogue; (iii) use of Tongan language in community consultation ensured enhanced inclusiveness; and (iv) application of a tool for ranking priorities removed bias from decisions regarding priority setting; and (v) establishment of coordinating frameworks at sub-national levels with linkages to the central level created enabling conditions for improved and coordinated implementation of its people centric development in the country.

Box 4
People's Perspectives on Development: Tonga's Innovation in Development Planning

During the processes of formulation of Tonga's Strategic Development Plan 8, the Central Planning Department undertook extensive community consultations that included representatives from villages and islands, district officers, town officers, village committee members, women, youth representatives and "anyone who was interested to take part".

Ninety people from NGOs (19), churches (35) and the private sector (36) participated in consultations in Nuku'alofa. The NGO and church leader consultations were conducted in Tongan, while those with the private sector were in English.

Community consultations involved the presentation of background and general information on the planning process, including a brief history of Tonga's National Development Plans. Information handouts in Tongan were distributed to participants at the beginning of the session. Participants were divided into groups in which key questions on community needs and development issues were discussed; and groups then reported back at the end of the session.

[76] "Looking to the Future, Building on the Past: Strategic Development Plan 8", Government of Tonga.

The key questions guiding discussion were: (1) What are the three main problems that families/villages/women/youth face? (2) What solutions can you suggest for these problems? (3) If you had three wishes, what would they be? (4) What three things should the Government do to improve the wellbeing of families/villages/women/youth? (5) What can you do yourself to improve your wellbeing? (6) Any other concerns?

In order to reflect the differing priorities according to location of participants, the outcomes of the community consultations are presented by main island groups. The issues of concern are ranked according to the priorities established by participants. These rankings were achieved by tallying the number of groups that identified the issue at hand as a concern. A quick tally can give one a list of the issues of most concern for the nation as a whole. However, it must be noted that some issues raised during the consultations have not been included as they were not common to all groups in the district but were of a local nature needing a local solution.

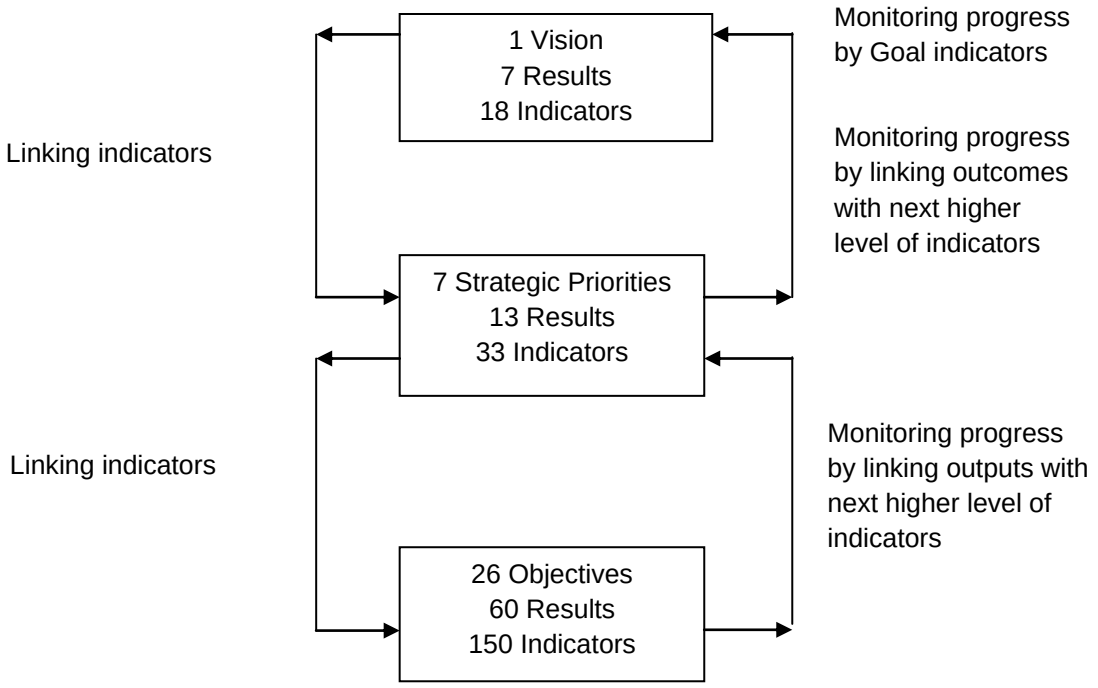
To facilitate its people centric development strategy that aims at providing assistance to disadvantaged residents, perceived to be vulnerable to poverty, the Government of Tonga has established Development Coordinating Committees for each of the main islands and at the centre, a Project Implementation Unit at the Ministry of Finance and National Planning.

Source: Compiled from "Looking to the Future, Building on the Past: Strategic Development Plan 8", Government of Tonga.

8.2.2 Results based monitoring and evaluation: the case of Vanuatu

Vanuatu's recently introduced practice of a performance based Annual Development Review (ADR) is an excellent example of an attempt at strategic monitoring based on results. The 2009 ADR (draft) - the first such report - emphasizes this principle: "The purpose of this report is not to show how many resources have been used for which objectives, but rather begin a process of looking at results against these key higher level indicators".[77]

Box 5
A Results Framework for Progress Monitoring: the Case of Vanuatu



Source: Compiled from Annual Development Review, 2009, Vanuatu

[77] 2009 Annual Development Review (draft), Department of Strategic Policy and Aid Management, Government of Vanuatu.

The ADR purports to report on changes in per capita income growth, employment and several of the MDG as contributory components of the "vision" of the Government that stipulates seven results and 18 indicators. Similarly vision is translated into seven strategic priorities with 14 results and 33 indicators. These are further disaggregated into 26 objectives with 60 results and 150 indicators. Suitable reporting formats have also been developed, but as these are early days reporting of data reflecting actual progress is facing several capacity deficits. The Government is well aware of its limitations and the 2009 ADR acknowledges that "over time the report will grow in length as more in-depth analysis occurs of progress of the seven strategic priorities and twenty-six objectives". This is a noble initiative and if pursued consistently can grow into a useful tool for planning, including those objectives that relate to the MDG. This tool also has the potential to strengthen the practice of evidence based planning in Vanuatu.

Although the first draft report is sketchy and deficient in a number of areas, a good start has been made. What is now needed is progressive improvement in data collection and integrated analysis of data that would help link results of public sector programmes and policies (26 objectives) with the indicators of strategic priorities, and the latter to indicators of vision. A results based framework is the most ideal way of monitoring progress of medium term development within the context of overall macro-economic goals. However, such monitoring - often referred to as results based monitoring and evaluation (RBME) or monitoring for results (MFR) - is quite complex and requires a range of reporting arrangements and analytical skills that must ensure regular flow of data from line ministries, and this reporting must be done on the basis of pre-fixed indicators that are results based and not just input/output based.[78]

8.2.3 UN/donor strategic interventions

Combined UN/donor strategic interventions equally helped the countries to prepare and technically equip themselves to successfully produce their first MDG reports. There are lessons to be learned from such partnerships. The strategic interventions that have advanced the MDG reports are: various MDG orientation training, including statistical training, organized and sponsored by various UN and donor agencies; the MDG reporting template introduced by the UNDP Pacific Centre and more recently, MDG costing and budgeting training also initiated by the UNDP Pacific Centre have greatly helped in building country capacity in MDG reporting and in initiating other MDG related follow-up activities.[79] The role played by the Fiji MCO and the UN Country Development Managers (CDM) in pursuing and facilitating the MDG reporting process should also not be underestimated. It is not usual for any assessment report to flag donor and UN intervention and the role they play in advancing certain ideas or concepts as best practice. However, the Evaluation Mission opted to highlight UN/donor interventions in advancing MDG in PICs for two reasons: (i) to stress the point that supply side issues, challenges and opportunities are as important as those of the demand side; and (ii) similar strategic and collaborative efforts will also be needed to build the countries capacity in the second round of reporting, as well as in implementation of MDG in the target countries in the future.

8.3 PROMISING IDEAS

The Evaluation Mission also identified several initiatives - termed promising ideas - meaning that these initiatives are either at the conceptual or at a very preliminary stage of implementation. As these ideas appear innovative, the Evaluation Mission chose to highlight them with the expectation that if these initiatives are supported appropriately, they have the

[78] Several countries have adopted an RBME model. The most prominent among these, especially in Asia, are Vietnam and Sri Lanka.
[79] In recent times, UNDP Pacific Centre has also introduced internet based training in MDG costing and budgeting.

potential to contribute to MDG monitoring and accountability from the citizens perspective. This section highlights these cases.

8.3.1 NGO Initiatives in policy dialogue and MDG monitoring

As has been stated in an earlier section in Vanuatu the MDG reporting process seems to have prompted the Vanuatu Association of NGOs (VANGO) to establish civic based policy dialogue coalitions to contribute to a number of public policy issues such as education, gender empowerment, youth employment, trade and commerce. This is in addition to VANGO's regular participation in formal Government sponsored development and planning committees. The idea of NGO driven consultations and policy research on important public matters is to allow the evolution of policy documents purely with NGO perspectives, even though - in this particular case - Government representatives are also invited to participate and give their input. The policy document thus produced through such NGO-only process is expected to present itself as an important tool for policy dialogue. This sort of approach has two advantages: (i) it allows NGOs to deliberate freely without the pressure to compromise and come up with a product that then serves as a tool of policy dialogue – many see this as a more collegial and less confrontational way of engaging in policy dialogue; and (ii) it strengthens NGO capacity in policy research which is the key to all policy dialogue including MDG based policy dialogue. These are innovative ideas that have been tried elsewhere and have experienced good outcomes. (See footnote 75 for details on a similar initiative.)

It is in this context that the Evaluation Mission has highlighted the initiative of the Fiji Council of Social Services' (FCOSS) "MDG Watch" - monitoring progress of MDG at community level - as a useful idea (see Box 3 for details). By applying a participatory method, the concept of community based MDG Watch can be extended to include measurement and monitoring of hardship at the grass-roots level on a regular basis. It is expected that qualitative data gathered from such interventions will complement well the data obtained through quantitative methods.

In summary, the Evaluation Mission argues that while the VANGO initiative is akin to civic-based policy research, the initiative of FCOSS is more conducive to qualitative or participatory measurement and monitoring of hardship at the grass-roots level. The latter is very similar to the Philippines' self-rating poverty method.

The Evaluation Mission is aware that these are new concepts are still at their rudimentary stages. As one of UNDP's mandates is to enhance civil society capacity in policy dialogue, it may be worthwhile to consider some, especially those that relate to social sector policies (a citizen social charter?) and participatory assessment of poverty etc. In this regard it is also important to point out that the Evaluation Mission is not suggesting that the two NGOs mentioned in this report should be exclusively targeted for capacity building. Nor is the Mission suggesting that these two particular initiatives should be selected either for capacity building support. What the mission is stressing is that there is real merit in NGO capacity building in policy dialogue and in qualitative poverty assessment and therefore, it is important that continuous efforts are made to identify the most viable options to undertake this task. The question is not whether, but how? The Evaluation Mission recommends that a broader framework be developed to address the issue of overall capacity building of NGOs in policy research and policy dialogue and in qualitative assessment of hardship.

8.4 SUMMARY

As stated earlier, the fact that every country has succeeded in producing its MDG report underscores its commitment to the process. In terms of best practices, only the cases where information has been made more readily available have been reported. Table 5 below presents an overview of best practices.

Table 5: A synthesis of best practices

MDG report induced best practices	Home grown best practices with potential for MDG	Promising ideas
Paradigm shift in development thinking - all PICs: MDG report oriented prioritization of poverty and gender issues and the importance of time bound, target and evidence based planning	People perspective in development perspective -Tonga: as a complement to its quantitative analysis, Tonga employed participatory method to gain qualitative insights into its Strategic Development Plan 8, highlighting potential for replication elsewhere for MDG based planning	Citizen coalition for policy dialogue - Vanuatu: conceptualized by Vanuatu NGO coalition is a very useful way to engage in and build civil society capacity in policy research and policy dialogue
Gender mainstreaming in MDG reporting - Fiji and Tuvalu: these cases demonstrate that collective commitment between the government and the NGOs yield better articulation of and commitment to follow up of gender	Results based monitoring and evaluation – Vanuatu: a results based framework linking substantively the project outcomes with indicators of vision of development has been development and though the framework is still at its preliminary stage and requires capacity building, offers a useful model for monitoring medium term plan with orientation to MDG	MDG Watch - Fiji: a bottom up MDG accountability and monitoring initiative proposed by the Fiji Council of Social Services, a good initiative that can be extended to build civil society capacities in general in the qualitative assessment, monitoring and reporting of progress of hardship at the grass-roots level
Vertical inclusion - RMI: RMI's inclusion of local government representation helped in ensuring central/local convergence in MDG reporting and follow up		
UN/donor collective and strategic efforts: The UN/Donor collective and strategic support greatly assisted in advancing the MDG reporting process		

In summary, the key lessons of best practice are:

- Collective advocacy and strategic capacity building has also the merit of advancing MDG related activities both within and across the government (as in the case of collective UN/donor MDG advocacy and capacity building in the first MDG reporting).

- The more inclusive the processes of MDG are, the greater the potential for accountability - the case of RMI in inclusion of local government in MDG task force;

- Shared commitment to common goals and collective efforts between the government and the NGOs prioritize key MDG targets such as gender mainstreaming within the policy strategies of the government more effectively (gender mainstreaming by Fiji, Tuvalu etc.).

- The case of Tonga reveals the importance of the participatory process in development;

- A results based monitoring and evaluation framework has the potential to successfully link MDG indicators to the medium term development plan and track outcomes of projects and programmes in relation to the former (the case of Vanuatu); and

- NGO sensitization and NGO capacity building has the benefit of promoting civic participation in policy dialogue and monitoring of MDG (as in the case of VANGO and FCOSS); and

- It is important that lessons learnt through the best practices and promising ideas are taken into account in future capacity building work in MDG.

9.0 KEY OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR FUTURE WORK TO SUPPORT MDG REPORTING: THE WAY FORWARD

The main purpose of the current evaluation exercise has been to assess the extent the country processes of MDG reporting added value or otherwise, in building country capacity for future reporting, as well as the progress made in mainstreaming the targets of MDG within the planning, monitoring and evaluation frameworks of the governments. More specifically, this Evaluation Mission has assessed the first MDG reporting process against the following key elements:

- Direct and indirect effects of MDG reporting initiative on MDG measurement and monitoring;
- Implementation and ownership of MDG;
- Impact of MDG report on country capacity development;
- Gender perspective adequately mainstreamed into the national MDG reports;
- Key contributing factor for successes and failures; and
- Key outputs and activities to support MDG reporting in each country.

The Evaluation Mission has examined these aspects, especially those that relate to future work to support MDG reporting with two distinct but inter-linked perspectives in mind: (i) outputs and activities that will fulfill the immediate objective of supporting the next phase of reporting due in 2009-2012; and (ii) outputs and activities that have the potential to create self-sustaining capacity in both reporting, as well as in implementation of MDG – the elements that contribute to full ownership.

The Evaluation Mission also highlights several support activities that are largely internal to the governments and points out that even though these are internal, some may still need external support to eventuate, especially those that are advocacy and dialogue related.

Table 6 summarizes the key milestones of MDG reporting, accomplishments, the remaining difficulties, lessons learnt and the way forward.

Based on the summary of analysis presented in Table 6, that reveals accomplishments, challenges and lessons learnt and the way forward, the Evaluation Mission argues for multiple perspectives to outline future work. These include:

- A substantive perspective: This includes work and activities that are relevant to enhancing future reporting as well as follow-up of MDG, that are (i) measurement and monitoring related; (ii) further work related to gender mainstreaming; (iii) MDG mainstreaming with national development plans, monitoring etc; and (iv) institutional development related.

- Timeframe perspective: Dividing the work into two time perspectives - immediate to short term and medium to long term - work that is related to the next round of reporting; and work that is relevant for building in-country self-sustaining capacity in both MDG reporting and implementation – activities that are internal to the government but are crucial enablers in MDG based reporting and follow-up.

- A targeting perspective: In view of the variable absorptive capacity of the countries the Evaluation Mission argues for a targeting approach that proposes one set of interventions for countries that possess more resources and higher absorptive capacity, and another for those who have less resources and less absorptive - as well as inadequate sustainability - capacity.

Table 6: MDG Reporting Key Milestones: Achievements, Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward

MDGR Key Milestones	Achievements	Lessons Learnt: Successes and Failures	Follow up including Mainstreaming	Way Forward: Future Work to Support MDG Reporting and Implementation
MDG measurement and monitoring	• Producers of data better aware of the importance of data and made changes accordingly in the administrative record; • Ability now to pinpoint exact source(s) of data, yet no guarantee they are consistently/timely collected • Ascertained set of available data for MDG monitoring purposes and ease in analyzing data • MDG data became more accepted and utilized to guide the National Policy direction • Some data computerized, some still manual • National poverty line benchmarked	• Training interventions of several donor agencies, regional institutions including relevant UN agencies assisted improved data management, measurement and analysis; • Countries that demonstrate relatively stronger commitment to and possess better in-country existing statistical capacity perform better • Difficulties with gathering timely and quality data from the primary sources constrain sustainability • Absence of qualitative data on hardship renders it difficult to understand true nature of poverty • Absence of evidence based planning culture discourages use of hard data in planning • Multiple data sources with different data on the same indicator create problem	• Pending task to report and disseminate MDGR contents and ensure ownership • MDG indicators have been mainstreamed in national plans, but not yet in the medium term planning, budgeting and monitoring framework • Primary sources know now the need to consistently compile MDG data and forward to Planning and Statistics office and MDG Coordinator has to be frequently reminded.	• Early advocacy and training • Efforts needed to build capacities in data gathering, collation and reporting from the sources • Efforts needed to build NGO/ government capacity in qualitative measurement and monitoring of hardship, complementing the quantitative analysis and reporting • Building capacity to establish computerized data based at all levels from the primary sources to the central level • Advocacy for evidenced based planning • Need for data standardization and harmonization
Ownership	• Countries now fully accept and appreciate the importance of MDG reporting • Contributed to formation of MDG task forces as a distinct entity, driving MDG agenda at the country level • In several countries MDG report has been endorsed at the parliaments making MDG permanent feature of development planning • Preliminary steps have also been taken to mainstream MDG into the national development plans – some countries claim that MDG report is influencing policy	• Advocacy and dialoguing play important role in advancing MDG ownership • Quality and political clout of MDG task force key to credibility and capacity to contribute – in some countries MDG task forces have either collapsed or have become dormant • Inclusion of NGOs in MDG task force improves triangulation of issues and creates conditions for accountability from the bottom • Official endorsement of the MDG report, especially at the parliamentary level creates conditions for full ownership of the report – in some countries absence of official endorsement is risking the report's full ownership and thus its usage.	• In some countries efforts are being made to revamp an existing task force or reconstitute one • Efforts to mainstream MDG task forces within the national planning committees, especially at the sectoral level is still pending • Some efforts have been made to mainstream MDG report within the national development plans but the MDG indicators are yet to be fully integrated within the frameworks of medium term planning, budgeting and monitoring.	• Steps are needed to re-energize MDG task forces and build capacities in MDG issues and planning implications • Need for capacity building in MDG mainstreaming both at the national development plan as well as at the frameworks of medium term planning, budgeting and monitoring
Country capacity	• Has built awareness to MDG right across the board, in some	• Advocacy and external guidance as well as technical assistance provided by a number of institutions	• Further training needed • MDG task forces need to be	• Two levels of training and capacity building needed in data

development	countries even at the community level • Has enhanced statistical capacities including identifying sources of information, skills development in data analysis and interpretation, to some extent • In some countries establishment of permanent secretariat and MDG focal point has created conditions for advancing MDG from within • Introduced the values of partnerships and participation in development planning • Established MDG task forces and MDG focal points in each country and built capacities in MDG based policy dialoguing and coordination • Has built NGO capacities in MDG based issues and policy dialoguing, prompting some NGOs to initiate MDG based activities (VANGO, FCOSS)	including the UN agencies helped in multiple capacity building • Resilience, commitment and capacities of MDG focal point are key to sustaining the momentum of MDG • Capacity building of MDG task forces/MDG secretariat key to improving triangulation of issues and quality of the report and momentum of MDG respectively • NGO capacity in policy dialoguing is key to improving the content as well as the accountability of the MDG report • Institutional enablers such as availability of required logistics, resources, synergic linkages between the data produces and the data users and willingness to use data in policy making is key to sustainability of data management and usage capacity • Staff attrition is risking capacity and contributing to regression of capacities in many statistical organizations • Some countries are losing momentum	mainstreamed fully at all of the planning levels of the government	management: (i) data management and analysis capacity at the central level; and (ii) capacity building in information management from the primary sources (community level) to the central level • Mainstreaming and capacity building of MDG task forces important • NGP capacity building in policy research and policy dialoguing and also in qualitative poverty assessment is important for measurement and reporting of hardship
Gender perspective	• MDG report process has reinforced and made significant contributions to highlighting gender issues as a discrete component of both development as well as public policy issue. • The MDG reports have also highlighted that most PICs have made good progress in the gender development, but lag behind in gender empowerment	• Greater the female participation and representation of gender based institutions in MDG task force stronger the potential for mainstreaming of gender issues in the report, though in some cases lack of understanding and appreciation of gender issues by some task forces also weakened gender component of the report • Most gender based data gathering restrict themselves to goals 2 and 3, and not extended to goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 • Also absence of analysis of gender data by rural/urban and in some cases, in multi-ethnic societies, exclusion of data analysis by ethnic and religious disaggregation has the risk of significantly weakening comprehensive mapping of gender situation and thus weaken design of a proper gender policy	• Several steps have been taken to mainstream gender data into the development and public policy frameworks of the government but combination of lack of capacity in strategizing data into policy and weak political commitment is slowing progress • Skills and capacities are also needed to disaggregate gender data in goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 • Disaggregation of gender data by ethnicity, religion etc. are key to understanding discreet gender elements in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, similar attention also needed to be given to rural/urban distinctions	• Capacity building of task forces in gender issues • Capacity building in deepening gender based data gathering and reporting, especially in Goals 1, 4, 5 and 6 as well as disaggregation by ethnicity, religion etc. • Capacity building in gender based planning, budgeting and implementation

9.1 THE SUBSTANTIVE PERSPECTIVE

The substantive framework of future work on MDRs reporting, including its follow-up, includes the following elements. This section also outlines work of institutional enablers that are internal to the government.

The aspects of substantive future work that may require technical assistance or external support include the following elements:

Measurement and monitoring related

- Capacity building and institutional development in information management – efficient management of the flow of information from primary sources to the centre;
- Capacity in data measurement and analysis relating to further disaggregation and analysis of social development data, including poverty data, especially by gender, ethnicity etc. This varies from country to country but there are still gaps in capacity deficits related to these aspects of data gathering and analysis;
- Capacity development in qualitative assessment (measuring hardship) and monitoring of poverty – this is key to comprehensive understanding, assessment and monitoring of poverty;
- Filling the existing data gaps – this also varies from country to country but there are still data gaps in several aspects of MDG reporting.

Gender mainstreaming

- Deepening of gender analysis by rural/urban distinction, ethnicity and gathering and analysis of gender data in Goals 1, 4, 5, and 6 is a key requirement;
- Mainstreaming gender indicators into the planning, budgeting and monitoring processes.

Mainstreaming MDG report within National Strategic Development Plan, Budgeting, Monitoring

- Mainstreaming MDG indicators within national development plans on committed targets and timeframe – current mainstreaming is a step forward but lacks operational details in terms of linking with medium term plans, budgeting and monitoring;
- Capacity in policy analysis and policy development relevant to MDG – this is a key capacity deficit: many countries lack capacity in policy research, analysis and policy development which is essential for MDG based planning and monitoring;
- Capacity in MDG based costing, budgeting and monitoring – UNDP has already taken initiatives to address this issue - especially the aspect of MDG costing and monitoring. However, efforts are needed to link public sector monitoring to MDG targets.

Institution related

- Continuous advocacy and dialogue for sustaining and reinforcing the commitment to MDG;
- Capacity building of the MDG task forces in policy discourse, especially on poverty and gender issues;
- Mainstreaming MDG task forces within the national planning committees/sub-committees;
- Necessary legal, institutional and organizational initiatives and adjustments relevant to enhancement of MDG ownership and implementation;
- Capacity building of the MDG secretariats in inter-agency coordination, information management and follow-up;

- NGO capacity building in policy dialogue and inclusion of NGOs in participatory or qualitative poverty/hardship measurement and monitoring;
- Greater inclusion of the media in advocacy and MDG follow-up work;
- Technical and consultancy support for the next round of reporting – needs vary but most countries need assistance in data collation, analysis and report writing;
- Coordination and complementarity of activities of multiple donor initiatives in MDG measurement and reporting;

In addition, the following are listed as support activities that are internal to the governments.

9.2 THE TIMEFRAME

It is evident from the above that responses to these challenges require an integrated approach but most importantly, a multi-stage approach. From the perspective of time the Evaluation Mission has grouped these activities under two broad timeframes: (i) immediate to short term – support needed for the next round of reporting; and (ii) medium to long term – support that will develop in-country capacity in future MDG planning, monitoring and reporting.

Presented below is a full description of these two levels of support activities.

9.2.1 Immediate to short term support activities (for 2010 reporting)

In terms of assisting the countries to prepare for the next round of reporting due in 2009-2012, the Evaluation Mission recommends the following actions in the immediate to short term.

(i) Revamping of MDG task forces: Where these have become dormant or have collapsed, immediate steps to be taken to reactivate and if necessary reconstitute the MDG task forces and make sure there is sufficient NGO representation, especially those that represent the gender and environmental sectors adequately. Also that these include representation of the local governments;

(ii) Advocacy: Early initiation of advocacy and orientation work for the next round of reporting, especially orientation of the task forces and key stakeholders to issues relating to gender, poverty, MDG costing and its implications on budget process etc;

(iii) Immediate data update: Urgent steps needed to update earlier data and fill in data gaps detected during the first reporting round;

(iv) Advance analysis: Advance analysis of data that are currently available through the most recent surveys, studies etc., and collate these within the MDG framework;

(v) Consultancy: Although most countries have developed some capacity in MDG reporting, it is not considered sufficient to collate and analyze data and write the report on their own – most countries have expressed a need for consultancy support.

9.2.2 Medium to long term support activities

In general, support needed to develop self-sustaining capacity in implementation, monitoring and future reporting of MDG include (i) the issues relating to meaningful mainstreaming of MDG reports within national development strategies; (ii) improvement of the data analysis and management system (statistical system); (iii) improvement in the information management system that ensures a regular flow of data from the sources to the planning levels; (iv) qualitative assessment of hardship; (v) results (MDG oriented) based monitoring

and evaluation system; (vi) MDG costing and budgeting; and (vii) gender based planning and development etc.

The Evaluation Mission is also of the view that strengthened capacity in these aspects has not only the potential to promote greater ownership of MDG but, by building a self-sustaining in-country capacity in MDG based monitoring, measurement and reporting these initiatives may eventually assist develop a culture of evidence based planning and monitoring relevant to MDG, in the countries.

Presented below is a detailed account of some of the support activities proposed above.

(i) Strengthening information management system: Most PICs face difficulties in gathering timely and quality data from their sources, especially collection and collation of disaggregated administrative data. While some suggest an executive order or enactment of a law as a way to compel submission of data, others are more inclined to seek options that are realizable through existing institutional means. In this regard the Evaluation Mission suggests introduction of a Community Household Information System (CHIS), if necessary on a pilot basis.[80] As explained earlier the CHIS should be instituted at the lowest administrative level where some data are already collected on a regular basis from the community. The idea is to expand the scope and the capacity of this existing facility.[81] However, in order to ensure that the community provides information to and updates data at this level on a regular basis, it is also important to ensure that such submissions yield benefits to them. If the community do not benefit from these arrangements they will have no incentive to participate in the process. Therefore, it is important that provisions are made to motivate the community to participate in the proposed CHIS process. One way of achieving this would be to link the CHIS to local government for their planning and service delivery. In this way, the community will be able to see that regular and accurate submission of data through the CHIS brings direct and tangible benefits.

Footnote 80 refers to the experience of International Development Research Centre - Canada's Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS). The CBMS has been experimented in countries in Asia and Africa. The key success factors supporting these initiatives are that there is sufficient decentralization of public functions at local government level and that in these countries - along with building community level institutional capacity in collecting and collating data - the information gathered through CBMS has also been linked to local government authorities for planning local level development and service delivery. However, in the case of those countries that are either not sufficiently decentralized or those that may face difficulties linking the proposed CHIS to local government planning, they still have to look for other motivational options to get the community to participate in the proposed CHIS. (See Figure 1 for the proposed CHIS model.)

(ii) Qualitative assessment of poverty/hardship: Analysis in Chapter 3 has revealed that assessment of poverty requires both quantitative as well as qualitative data. The

[80] Similar to a recent CIDA initiative - Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS) which has been piloted in nine countries (Bangladesh, Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Tanzania and Vietnam) with varied success. A recent report (Fighting Poverty with Facts: Community Based Monitoring System, by Celia Reyes and Evan Due) on CBMS highlights several benefits, especially its contribution to local level planning and development, but also cautions that "Development of CBMS is not linear, nor is it a blue print…CBMS works best where institutional and political factors at the local community level are supportive".

[81] A recent Draft Discussion Paper 1 by the Secretariat of the South Pacific also proposes a similar approach to maximizing "the use of administrative data" and proposes that "…if donor agencies incorporated into the relevant terms of reference the need to consult with NISs [national information system], NSOs [national statistical offices] in particular, to ensure that systems being developed maximized the potential for use of by-product data in producing key information". Refer "The availability, accountability, quality and utilization of statistical information in PICTs, Global Overview with an emphasis on economic statistics: Draft of Discussion Paper 1." Secretariat of the South Pacific. Undated.

latter is particularly important for PICs where non-income factors. more than the income factors, determine poverty. There are a number of participatory ways that qualitative aspects of poverty can be measured. In this report, the Evaluation Mission has highlighted the success of the self-rating method applied by the Philippines' Social Weather Station' (SWS). Practiced since the mid-1980s, SWS poverty studies are undertaken annually by using a fixed two-stage sample representing urban and rural populations. These annual assessments of SWS mainly ask the community two simple questions – do you consider yourself to be poor or not poor? If the respondent says he or she is poor, then further questions are asked to ascertain precise conditions (income and non-income) contribute to their situation of poverty. The results of these studies are than collated to demonstrate the situation of poverty measured on a self-rating basis.

Over the years, SWS studies seem to have brought out useful insights into poverty measurement and monitoring that successfully complement the formal poverty studies undertaken by the HIESs of governments. The outstanding feature of the SWS study has been that even though the poor define a lower income level than that of the HIES benchmark of poverty level income, by incorporating non-income dimensions of poverty into its assessment it reveals a higher incidence of poverty than that of the HIES.

What the Evaluation Mission wishes to point out is the merit of self-rating or qualitative assessment of poverty. Although in the Philippines the self-rating studies are undertaken solely by its proponent, the SWS, and that these are done independent of the government, given the growing recognition by the PIC governments of the importance of qualitative information and of the value of NGO involvement in such studies, there is no reason why such studies cannot be done in PICs - either jointly in partnership with NGOs or exclusively by NGOs. In either case, there is a need for capacity building and the Evaluation Mission is of the view that it should be done, initially on a pilot basis, especially in those countries where a reasonable level of NGO capacity in participatory research work already exists.

(iii) Linking regular monitoring and evaluation of public sector policies and programmes with MDG targets: While all PICs are committed to produce MDG performance reports every five years, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that it is important in the interim that governments build their internal capacity and frameworks of planning and monitoring within the context of the MDG. This can be done by (i) developing a results framework for medium term public investment programmes in a way that links the expected outcomes of the programmes and projects to the relevant MDG targets,; (ii) a monitoring and evaluation methodology that tracks progress on the basis of results indicators that link development outcomes to MDG targets. For example, in most PICs, as far as Goal 2 is concerned most countries have already attained or are close to attaining the target of enrolments but face the challenges of continuation and performance. To address the challenges, firstly it is important that the necessary resources are allocated and secondly, that programmes are formulated with a results framework that link the outcome indicators of the programme to the relevant target/s of the MDG. Thirdly, during monitoring and progress reporting assess the relationship between the planned outcomes with the MDG target relevant to the programme.

What is, therefore, needed is a strategic results framework that links the medium term development indicators to the relevant MDG targets and that these indicators are then tracked through, in an inter-linking way by regular monitoring, review and feedback. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that the introduction of a results based planning, monitoring and evaluation (PRBME) system in public sector programmes and projects with an orientation to MDG is key to ensuring that public

sector programmes produce results that are conducive to MDG targets. What is also important is to integrate the MDG within national development plans, costing and budgeting.

(iv) Gender based data development: It is evident that PICs have made impressive progress in gender development, but they lag behind in gender empowerment. A variety of factors are responsible for slow progress in the latter. Among these is the lack of sufficient and disaggregated gender data. It is therefore important that every country give due attention to this aspect of statistics and most importantly translates data into policy. While several initiatives are already underway to improve gender data, at least in some of the Pacific countries and that most of these are externally supported, the key challenge is to establish systems that collect, collate and analyse gender data on a self-sustaining basis.[82]

9.2.3 Support internal to the governments

As stated earlier, future successful MDG measurement and monitoring, as well as implementation, will require a range of institutional, social, political and financial enablers that are internal to the governments. These include:

(i) Official endorsement of the MDG report: As formal endorsement MDG report is an important step towards MDG ownership in a country, it is desirable that the countries that are yet to endorse their reports do so as soon as possible, preferably at a level that will ensure its co-option into the governments' planning and monitoring frameworks permanently.

(ii) Creating planning mechanisms that are inclusive and participatory: It is important that the necessary institutional arrangements that allow multi-agency and multi-sectoral participation in the planning process are established/strengthened and oriented to MDG. Attention is drawn to the planning structures and processes envisaged by the Fiji National Strategic Development Plan 2007-2011 (the actual work on the Plan and its processes began in 2002). With the National Planning Office providing the secretariat, the system envisages interactions of several thematic task forces and sectoral working groups that include relevant government departments as well as the private sector and NGOs. However, for such a system to take root, care should also be taken to see that these arrangements are followed through with the necessary technical support and indeed, required resources.

(iii) Creating demand for quality data from within: This is key to MDG based planning and can be achieved by encouraging the governments to lean more and more towards evidence based planning.[83]

(iv) Data harmonization: Many argue that the issue of harmonization and standardization of data generated and gathered by various agencies also requires equal attention. It has been said that in most targeted countries not only are data highly disorganized and fragmented within government agencies, and different sources report different data on the same subject. It has also been reported that various international agencies (including UN agencies) seem also to maintain their own data that often are not shared and/or cross-checked. These incongruities not only confuse the users but distort the analysis and thus the outcomes. Urgent efforts must, therefore, be made to standardize statistics at the national level and in this regard, the national planning and/or statistical organization of the government must take the lead. SPC with

[82] Vanuatu, with assistance from UNICEF and Global Fund, has produced the Vanuatu Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2007 that describes empirically the situation of women and children in the country.
[83] One way to do this would be to get donors and UN agencies to link development assistance to evidenced based planning. However, an indirect and perhaps more sustainable way to create demand for data for evidence based planning, would be to promote and establish citizen based reporting on development performance.

support from the donors and relevant UN agencies may provide the necessary technical assistance to the central statistical organizations to develop capacity in data harmonization, standardization and quality control.

(v) Strengthen capacity of the MDG secretariats: Steps should be taken to strengthen the analytical, logistics and coordination capacity of the MDG secretariats, if necessary with support from UNDP.

9.3 ACTIVITIES INTERNAL TO THE GOVERNMENTS

The following activities are internal to the governments and are important enablers of MDG based reporting and follow-up:

- Administrative, legal, regulatory and budgetary provisions to ensure that MDG implementation, including its reporting and monitoring, become an integral part of the agenda of each country's own development management process;

- In countries where this is absent and where multi-ethnicity is an important component of its demographic composition, data gathering, collation and analysis by ethnic disaggregation is key to understanding and reporting of socio-economic trends and development.

The Evaluation Mission is of the view that although many of the initiatives listed above are internal to the governments, some may still need external support, especially advocacy and dialogue for some of the regulatory, as well as institutional changes. Several MDG focal points have already highlighted the need for urgent and continuous dialogue as a way to resurrect the "regressive progress" that is currently being experienced in several countries.

9.4 TARGETING FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Mission also recommends that in terms of future capacity building initiatives, each country should carefully examine its own potential within the contexts of its own needs - as well as its limits. The governments must especially pay attention to its absorptive capacity. The Evaluation Mission proposes two approaches to capacity building in PICs: (i) comprehensive in-country capacity building, especially in statistics, in those countries that are more resourceful and possess relatively better and stronger absorptive capacity; and (ii) for the smaller countries that possess relatively less capacity, selective and limited capacity building with provision of supplementation of gaps by a regional facility such as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).[84]

Countries such as Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands that possess relatively better and more resourced statistical infrastructure fall under the first category while the remaining countries are more suitable for selective and limited interventions with the provision of supplementation at a regional level. In this regard, SPC's idea of establishing a "country technical support team" for intra-regional or south/south technical cooperation on statistical capacity building may also be given due consideration (see Box 6 below). This is a noble idea and augurs well for the future statistical development of the region in a cost-effective and self-sustainable way.

[84] It has been gathered that the SPC has already presented to the 38th Meeting of the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administration a "road map" for statistical capacity building in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories – it is therefore important that all future statistical capacity building initiatives take cognizance of this important policy document. See Rodger, J and Haberkorn, G. (2008), *A Regional MDG Monitoring Support Framework for the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.* Policy Discussion Paper.

In summary, it is evident from the above that building sustainable MDG measurement and monitoring capacities in the Pacific will require a multi-faceted and a multi-year approach, indicating the need for a multi-year strategic plan and support. Donors, including UN agencies, need to be aware of this reality.

Box 6
A Regional MDG Monitoring Support Framework for Pacific Island Countries and Territories: A Statistical Capacity Building "Road Map" by the Secretariat of South Pacific

- Agree on an organization-wide "minimum core data set of development indicators" across all sectors…inclusive of MDG indicators;
- These agreed "minimum core set of development indicators" to form the basis for all future monitoring and reporting of development progress at national and regional level; and
- Secure additional resources to implement this new approach and establish a dedicated "country technical support team" of statistics to provide direct assistance to countries.

Source: Rodgers, J. and Haberkorn, G (2008)

9.5 FUTURE WORK: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UN COUNTRY TEAM/UNDP

In the context of key outputs and activities for future MDG reporting outlined above, the Evaluation Mission is of the view that not all of these need to be tackled by either the UN system or by UNDP, although in areas where UN/UNDP are unable to provide assistance, help in drawing attention of other agencies including donors for their consideration and follow-up could be provided.

In terms of the UN/UNDP role the Evaluation Mission flags the following:

9.5.1 UN Country Team

The UN Country Team as a whole - and more specifically UNIFEM and UNICEF/UNFPA – should continue building statistical capacities in Goals 3, 4 and 5 of MDG respectively. With regard to Goal 3, UNFPA can particularly assist the countries to develop analytical skills to use gender data for reproductive health planning and monitoring. UNICEF's DeveInfo is also a powerful tool for MDG based planning and monitoring. However, before engaging the countries to adopt this tool, care should be taken to ensure this does not duplicate an existing arrangement and, most importantly, assess that the countries have enough resources to absorb and sustain this new technology.

The role of the Country Development Managers (CDMs) in facilitating and advancing in-country UN initiatives, including MDG related initiatives, cannot not be underestimated. During the Evaluation Mission's data gathering phase, it was observed that the countries that have effective CDMs facilitated the work of the mission better and more efficiently than those who do not. Therefore, further capacity building of the institution of CDMs should be given due attention and in the event UNDP takes on the task of the proposed matrix management of all MDG capacity building initiatives in PICs, CDMs will be required to play an important role and therefore their further capacity building is crucial.

9.5.2 UNDP

In view of its comparative advantage, the Evaluation Mission recommends that the UNDP focuses more on assisting the processes that firstly contribute to preparation of good quality reports in the second round, and also support initiatives that link MDG indicators to on-going planning and monitoring initiatives of the governments. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that in terms of MDG measurement and monitoring, UNDP's comparative advantage is less on statistics and statistical analysis and more on advocacy, information management,

participatory methods, results based monitoring and evaluation, inter-agency coordination, MDG costing and budgeting etc. It is in this context that the Evaluation Mission recommends the following specific capacity building initiatives for the consideration of UNDP:
In the immediate to short term UNDP may:

(i) Assist revamping MDG task forces: Where these have become dormant or have collapsed, immediate steps to be taken to reactivate and if necessary assist reconstitution of the MDG task forces and make sure there is sufficient NGO representation, especially those that represent the gender and environmental sectors, and also include representation of local government;

(ii) Advocacy: Early initiation of advocacy and orientation work for the next round of reporting;

(iii) Immediate data update: Urgent steps to update earlier data and fill in data gaps detected during the first reporting round;

(iv) Advance analysis: Advance analysis of data that are already available through the most recent surveys, studies etc., and collate the same within the MDG framework; and

(v) Consultancy: Although most countries have developed some capacity in MDG reporting, these are not considered sufficient to collate and analyze data and write the report on their own – most countries have expressed need for consultancy support.

The Evaluation Mission also flagged under "on-going support internal to the governments" several other initiatives that are internal to the governments but may still require UNDP support. UNDP may discuss these issues with the countries and determine appropriate actions accordingly.

In the medium to long term UNDP may:

(i) Pilot test the proposed Community Household Information Management System (CHIS): In order to improve overall information management systems, especially the aspect of data flow from the grass-roots to the centre, UNDP may consider providing support to pilot testing the proposed CHIS in selected countries. In consideration of their existing capacity, the Evaluation Mission recommends the following countries for the proposed pilot testing: Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. The Evaluation Mission also suggested that for pilot testing each country selects one or two areas for initial development of CHIS and then, on the basis of the lessons learnt, replicates the model to the rest of the country. Although the Evaluation Mission recommends only a small number of countries for the pilot testing, other countries that possess less institutional capacity may still opt for the initiative via its own resources, but with institutional advice and training support provided by the UNDP, including lessons learnt through information exchange from other more successful countries.

(ii) Qualitative assessment of poverty/hardship: To complement the quantitative poverty measurement with qualitative measurement, especially non-income dimensions of poverty (ie, hardship), UNDP to consider build capacity by providing support to pilot test the self-rating poverty measurement and monitoring system such as that of the Social Weather Station of the Philippines or similar initiatives undertaken elsewhere[85];

[85] A similar system is practiced in Bangalore, India. The system is called Citizen Report System that records on an annual basis citizens' responses to service delivery at local government level. However, the system does not measure poverty, as such.

(iii) MDG oriented results based monitoring and evaluation: Assist the PICs to incorporate within national development plans an MDG based strategic results framework and build capacity to assist planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the context of MDG.

(iv) Advocacy for evidenced based planning: Through continuous advocacy and policy level dialogue, encourage governments to provide the necessary institutional backing for the evolution of a culture of evidence based planning, with the expectation that such a development will create the necessary incentives within, for an efficient data and information management system in the countries.

(v) Facilitating best practices information exchange: From the best practices information recorded in this report and also from lessons from elsewhere, UNDP may arrange information exchange of these practices. The websites of UNDP MCO and the UNDP Pacific Centre are already playing an important role in this regard. In addition, provision of regular seminars, workshops and study tours may also be provided for practical lesson learning and upgrading of knowledge.

(vi) Coordination of all MDG related capacity building initiatives: In view of the fact there are multiple donors and agencies engaged in, and with future plans for, MDG related capacity building initiatives in the PICs, there is always the risk of duplication and sometimes, due to their uncoordinated implementation, there is the potential for intervention overload at the country level. While appreciating the benefits they receive from their support, many countries have also expressed their frustration with regard to confusion and stress created by an overload of uncoordinated interventions. It is true that primary responsibility for donor coordination lies with the countries themselves, but considering that the evolving pattern and strategy of development cooperation in PICs is more regional than country based, it is important that some regional level coordination and facilitation facilities are also developed. The Evaluation Mission is of the view that to avoid duplication and most importantly, to ensure the necessary complementarities among various development cooperation inputs, a central facility of donor coordination, especially for the MDG reporting and monitoring related interventions, be developed. The Evaluation Mission believes that the UNDP is well positioned to take on this responsibility either through an existing inter-governmental regional facility through its own institutional set up. It is suggested that in consultation with the PICs and the donor agencies, if necessary with support from the latter, UNDP develops a matrix of all MDG reporting capacity building initiatives and assists planning and implementation in an integrated and coordinative manner. The Evaluation Mission suggests that a stakeholder consultative workshop made up of the governments, NGOs and donors be held soon to discuss and develop a country-by-country and donor-by-donor (including that of the UN) an *MDG Strategic Capacity Building Matrix (see Annex VI).* The Evaluation Mission also recommends that with donor and country agreement, the UNDP Fiji MCO may be assigned the responsibility of facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the entire MDG capacity building package (those of the UN and other donors) in the PICs. The PICs, the donors and UNDP may take advantage of the proposed regional workshop to prepare a matrix of MDG related donor/UN initiatives with a timeframe to enable UNDP to facilitate and coordinate their implementation over the years. The donors may consider giving UNDP the necessary resources for MDG Capacity Building Matrix management. (See Annex VI for the Annotated Agenda of the proposed workshop.)

Table 7 shows future work which may be considered by development partners in the PICs, listed under two timeframes: (i) immediate to short term, and (ii) medium to long term.

Table 7: A Matrix Showing Future Work by Development Partner by Timeframe

Development partners/agencies	Future work	
	Immediate to short term	**Medium to long term**
UNDP	• Revamping MDG task forces • Early initiation of advocacy and orientation work for the next round of reporting • Consultancy for data analysis, report writing • Strengthen coordinating and information management capacity of the MDG secretariats • A stakeholders' regional workshop to share evaluation findings, follow up and strategize all capacity building initiatives and their integrated implementation	• Further mainstreaming of MDG reports within the national development strategies • Improvement in information management systems that ensures regular flow of data from the sources to the planning levels; pilot testing proposed Community Based Household Information System • Capacity building in qualitative assessment and monitoring of hardship on a regular basis • Capacity building in results based monitoring and evaluation with linkages to MDG • Training in MDG costing and budgeting • Capacity building in evidence based planning including strengthening capacities in policy research, analysis and policy development • Capacity building in gender based planning and development • NGO capacity building in social research and MDG based policy dialogue and monitoring
Donors/Regional Institutions	• Immediate data update • Advance analysis of data that are currently available	• Improvement of the data analysis and management system (statistical system)
Governments	• Revamping MDG task forces • Immediate data update • Advance analysis of data that are currently available • Consultancy for data validation, analysis and report writing • Immediate official endorsement of MDG reports where these are still pending • Institutional arrangements and frameworks for inter-agency engagements (including engagement of NGOs) in planning and monitoring • Mainstreaming MDG within the planning, budgeting and monitoring frameworks • Data harmonization • Strengthen coordinating and information management capacity of the MDG secretariats	• Further mainstreaming of MDG reports within the national development strategies • Institutional arrangements and frameworks for inter-agency engagements (including engagement of NGOs) in planning and monitoring • Promote a culture of evidence based planning • Data harmonization

In addition, the aspect of good governance in the implementation of MDG may also be given due attention. The agenda of human rights dimensions of the Millennium Declaration that sees good governance both as a goal as well as a means to achieve MDG, seems to have been prioritized by most PICs' national development strategies and progress has been made, with a few exceptions, to implement good governance standards in these countries.[86]

The Evaluation Mission is also aware that UN agencies have already developed indicators to monitor and report on governance trends in PICs. However, as this is a crucial and essential element to the implementation of MDG, and as this aspect has not been included in the template of the first MDG report, it is the view of the Mission that UNDP may consider encouraging countries to include a separate section on governance in their next MDG report.

The countries should include in this section the governance trends (political rights, civil liberties, citizen engagement in public decisions etc.) and to the extent possible, link these with issues of equity, protection of women and children against violence, corruption control and service delivery etc.

9.6 SUMMARY

In summary, the Evaluation Mission wishes to emphasize that while the capacity building initiatives proposed above are important, and that all of these deserve equal attention, the Mission is not suggesting that the UNDP alone should take on all of these initiatives.

The Mission particularly flags the following as priority areas for UNDP: (i) capacity building in information management systems; (ii) training and institutional capacity building in qualitative assessment of poverty; (iii) building NGO capacity in policy dialogue and monitoring; and (iv) capacity building in results based monitoring and evaluation.

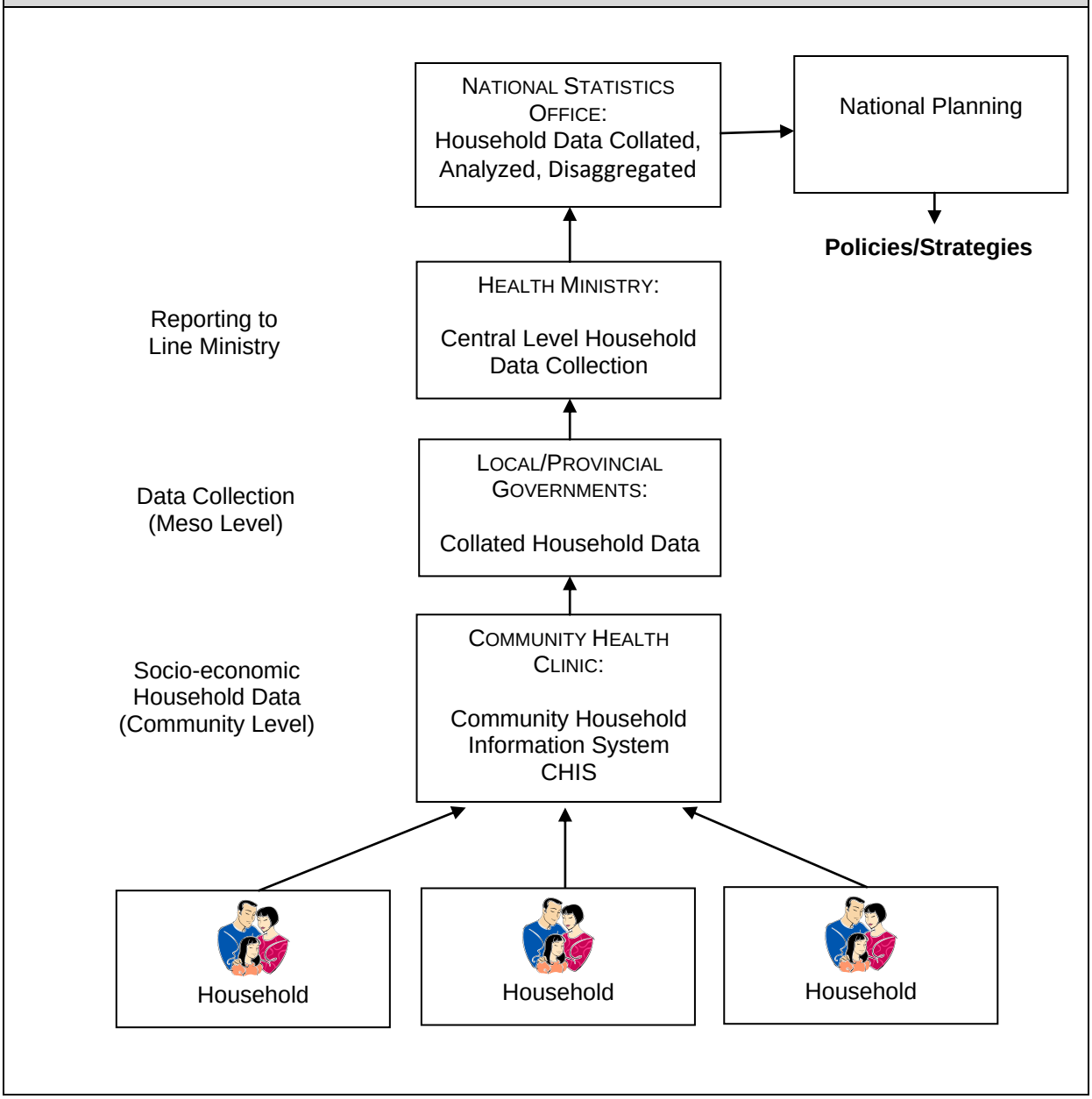
The UNDP's initiative in MDG costing and budgeting is also important and the mission understands that it has already committed itself to this initiative.

The UNDP should also consider strengthening the capacity of the MDG focal points/secretariat and the CDMs. To assist continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills, UNDP may also organize study tours and fellowships for the MDG focal points.

Finally, UNDP should take immediate steps to organize the proposed regional workshop to map out the future MDG capacity building matrix in PICs and, if possible and with support from the donors, take on the responsibility of overall coordination and facilitation of MDG reporting as the task of capacity building in mainstreaming MDG in the PICs.

[86] The key governance elements of MDG are: (i) full protection of all rights; (ii) practices of democracy and human rights including minority rights; (iii) inclusive political processes allowing genuine citizen participation; (iv) freedom of media and the right of access to information.

Figure 1
Proposed Community Household Information System: A Chart Showing Information Flow from Grass-roots to Central



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