

Palestinian Territories

Mid-Term Evaluation

Thematic window: Culture and Development

**Programme Title: Culture and Development in the Occupied
Palestinian Territory**

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Prologue

The current mid-term evaluation report is part of the efforts being implemented by the Millennium Development Goal Secretariat (MDG-F), as part of its monitoring and evaluation strategy, to promote learning and to improve the quality of the 128 joint programs in 8 development thematic windows according to the basic evaluation criteria inherent to evaluation; relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

The aforementioned mid-term evaluations have been carried out amidst the backdrop of an institutional context that is both rich and varied, and where several UN organizations, working hand in hand with governmental agencies and civil society, cooperate in an attempt to achieve priority development objectives at the local, regional, and national levels. Thus the mid-term evaluations have been conducted in line with the principles outlined in the Evaluation network of the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) - as well as those of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). In this respect, the evaluation process included a reference group comprising the main stakeholders involved in the joint programme, who were active participants in decisions making during all stages of the evaluation; design, implementation, dissemination and improvement phase.

The analysis contained in the mid-term evaluation focuses on the joint program at its mid-term point of implementation- approximately 18 months after it was launched. Bearing in mind the limited time period for implementation of the programs (3 years at most), the mid-term evaluations have been devised to serve as short-term evaluation exercises. This has limited the scope and depth of the evaluation in comparison to a more standard evaluation exercise that would take much longer time and resources to be conducted. Yet it is clearly focusing on the utility and use of the evaluation as a learning tool to improve the joint programs and widely disseminating lessons learnt.

This exercise is both a first opportunity to constitute an independent 'snapshot' of progress made and the challenges posed by initiatives of this nature as regards the 3 objectives being pursued by the MDG-F; the change in living conditions for the various populations vis-à-vis the Millennium Development Goals, the improved quality in terms of assistance provided in line with the terms and conditions outlined by the Declaration of Paris as well as progress made regarding the reform of the United Nations system following the "Delivering as One" initiative.

As a direct result of such mid-term evaluation processes, plans aimed at improving each joint program have been drafted and as such, the recommendations contained in the report have now become specific initiatives, seeking to improve upon implementation of all joint programs evaluated, which are closely monitored by the MDG-F Secretariat.

Conscious of the individual and collective efforts deployed to successfully perform this mid-term evaluation, we would like to thank all partners involved and to dedicate this current document to all those who have contributed to the drafting of the same and who have helped it become a reality (members of the reference group, the teams comprising the governmental agencies, the joint program team, consultants, beneficiaries, local authorities, the team from the Secretariat as well as a wide range of institutions and individuals from the public and private sectors). Once again, our heartfelt thanks.

The analysis and recommendations of this evaluation report do not necessarily reflect the views of the MDG-F Secretariat.

Mid-Term Evaluation of the MDG-F Joint Programme entitled
Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory
[MDGF-1841-G-PAL]

Final Evaluation Report

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March 2011

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I am now ready to submit this second revised version of the evaluation report on the MDG-F Joint Programme entitled *Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [MDGF-1841-G-PAL]*. This version has been revised based on the comments sent by the MDG-F Secretariat and the Evaluation Team on the draft report and the first revised version.

In my opinion, the findings herein fairly represent the activities and results from the programme since it officially started in March 2009. These findings were derived from my review of the programme documents, and the interviews and discussions with various informants from the UN Agencies, the participating ministries and non-state institutions in the oPT, the local Spanish Cooperation Office and the MDG-F Secretariat in New York, the programme staff, and beneficiaries.

The facts that are stated in this report are based on the documents and verbal information that were obtained during the course of the evaluation. I have assumed that these facts, likewise indicated in the draft version, have been reviewed by the stakeholder groups. Still, the opinions and conclusions that follow are mine, and these may not necessarily represent the views of the persons and organizations consulted during the evaluation.

The key persons from the Executing UN Agencies and UNSCO provided all the necessary information and support to complete this report. Their counterparts from the PNA Ministries also ably assisted in giving and clarifying the information which were used in the evaluation. The Technical Lead Agency delivered valuable service in convening the interviews and discussions, and freely extended other needs which were requested by the evaluation. In general, the stakeholder groups were cooperative to the exercise and receptive to the ideas that came out during the evaluation process.

It was a privilege to have been part of this exercise and the larger effort to successfully achieve the MDGs in Palestine.

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18 March 2011

List of Acronyms

AWP	-	Annual Work Plan
CAP	-	Consolidated Appeals Process
CBO	-	Community-Based Organization
ERG	-	Evaluation Reference Group
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization
HSTF	-	Human Security Trust Fund
M & E	-	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MDG-F	-	MDG Achievement Fund
MDTF	-	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MOA	-	Ministry of Agriculture
MOC	-	Ministry of Culture
MOLG	-	Ministry of Local Governments
MOPAD	-	Ministry of Planning and Development
MOTA	-	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
MOWA	-	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MTRP	-	Medium-Term Response Plan
NGO	-	Non-Government Organization
NPPC	-	National Plan for Palestinian Culture
NSC	-	National Steering Committee
OECD/DAC	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
oPT	-	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PLC	-	Palestinian Legislative Council
PM	-	Programme Manager
PMC	-	Programme Management Committee
PNA	-	Palestinian National Authority
PNP	-	Palestinian National Plan
PRDP	-	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
RBM	-	Results-Based Management
TOR	-	Terms of Reference
UN	-	United Nations
UNDAF	-	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	-	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	-	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN Women	-	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNSCO	-	United Nations Special Coordination Office

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Executive Summary

Preparations for the mid-term evaluation of the *Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT)* began in May 2010, until final arrangements were reached to conduct the field mission in November. This programme is one of two joint programmes being supported by the MDG-F in the oPT.

Interviews and group discussions with various informants were held before and during the field mission. Documents which were submitted for the exercise were also reviewed. An Inception Report was initially prepared, and forwarded to the members of the ERG. The approach applied by the evaluation was in consonance with the standards set by the UNEG.

All the target institutions were able to participate in the mission activities. Latest financial data were also collected, although these were not verified. Most of the proposed sites to be visited were also completed, except the one in Gaza.

The report established that there has been mixed developments in the overall context surrounding the programme area. On the positive side, the PNA had continued its efforts to achieve the MDGs. However, the political and security situation had at the same time regressed because of external and internal fighting. Because of the special situation in the oPT, the UN System has been combining humanitarian assistance with development work in the area.

The study also showed that there were changes made on the programme design, from its original concept until it was specified in the approved programme document. Some indications of a mismatch between the programme content and the budget were also noted.

An assessment of the programme's relevance led to a conclusion that the intervention is strategically relevant to the creation of a future Palestinian state. It is also clearly linked to the current plans by the PNA and the UN System in the oPT. At the same time, it did appear that the cultural agenda is not being prioritized by the PNA. Some clarification will also have to be made on how the programme can actually contribute to the achievement of the MDGs.

An analysis of the slow pace of the programme start-up was done, which showed that this was due to weak internal planning and external factors. The remedial plan prepared by programme management was also found to benefit to further improvement. Nevertheless, some key programme accomplishments were stated in the report, and reference was also made on the high quality of the programme activities.

On the aspect of outreach, the review reported that the programme is indeed covering the target areas. Still, it was pointed out that there is a gap in reaching out to the other target groups in the Palestinian diaspora.

The evaluation also explained while the programme is conforming to the standard concept in joint programming and is even designed to be highly robust, understanding how the joint programme should operate takes time. At this point, there is clear effort by the implementers only on the joint planning aspect. Because it is a learning-by-doing process, the management structures set for the programme are not yet fully working as effective and efficient mechanisms for solving the problems being faced by the programme.

Some pioneering effects being created by the programme were noted in the report, together with the immediate positive effects of the programme activities. On the other end, the programme synergistic effects were found to be a missing link.

The review posited that there was a programme weakness in the selection of the Programme Managers, and that this was a factor for the turnovers in the PM position. It was also pointed out that it remains to be seen whether the root causes of the turnovers have been fully addressed.

An additional point was also made on the mistake in the budget allocation for the first year which had affected the efficiency of the programme budget. However, it did appear that standard controls for cost efficiency are being followed in the programme.

Lastly, it was reported that while programme sustainability is a known concern, this is not yet being treated as a priority at this time. It is nevertheless obvious that there is no exit phase in the current plan.

The evaluation also noted the lessons from the programme experience thus far and its notable features.

In the end, the following recommendations were forwarded:

For Programme Management to -

- Consider including Palestinian target groups outside of the West Bank and Gaza areas in the programme outreach, and to include the Palestinian youth as a distinct sub-target group
- Make an effort to increase the financial commitment by the PNA on its cultural agenda and to include an indicator related to this change in the next revised version of the Results Framework
- Undertake a technical review of the programme content and budget to be reckoned from March 2009 to an extended period allowable under the MDG-F Guidelines
- Revise the second year work plan and budget, reflecting the changes made on the whole period (i.e. three-years plus an extension) work plan and budget
- Immediately submit an application for extension of the programme until the maximum time allowed by the MDG-F Guidelines
- Improve the Results Framework of the programme
- Elaborate the synergy that the programme intends to create, and clarify its actual contribution to the achievement of the MDGs
- Ensure that the chances for future turnovers in the staff positions are minimized
- Develop the M & E System and Strategy of the programme
- Prepare the programme's exit strategy and include an exit phase in the extension period
- Consciously upgrade the PMC and NSC to the level of becoming effective and efficient mechanisms for problem-solving, and
- Make systematic the field monitoring and post-activity monitoring of the programme activities

For the MDG-F Secretariat to -

- Consider the programme's application for an extension up to the maximum time allowed
- Release the second transfer of funds to the programme implementers on the basis of their disbursement rates, with prior clearance from the MDTF Office

I. Introduction

A. Background and Details on the Evaluation

1. Origins of the Evaluation

In May 2010, preliminary discussions were held between the Consultant and the MDG-F Secretariat in New York on the mid-term evaluation of the MDG-F Joint Programmes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT). Consultations have also been going on between the MDG-F Secretariat and the programme implementers in the oPT. It was agreed at that time that the field missions be carried out after the Ramadhan Period in September 2010.

Near the end of Ramadhan in September 2010, the MDG-F Secretariat renewed the earlier effort to undertake the mid-term evaluations. A critical point in the preparations was the scheduling of the field mission for the two joint programmes in the oPT. Finally, an arrangement was reached for the field mission to be held during the first two weeks of November 2010.¹

2. Evaluation Objectives

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this evaluation set the following objectives:

- a. To discover the programme's design quality and internal coherence (needs and problems it seeks to solve) and its external coherence with the UNDAF, the National Development Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals, and find out the degree of national ownership as defined by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action;
- b. To understand how the joint programme operates and assess the efficiency of its management model in planning, coordinating, managing and executing resources allocated for its implementation, through an analysis of its procedures and institutional mechanisms. This analysis will seek to uncover the factors for success and limitations in inter-agency tasks within the One UN framework; and
- c. To identify the programme's degree of effectiveness among its participants, its contribution to the objectives of the Culture and Development thematic window, and the Millennium Development Goals at the local and/or country level.

3. Approach and Methodology

This evaluation was designed following the basic standards set by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG). There was stakeholder participation in the planning of the exercise, various stakeholder groups were consulted during the field mission, and their inputs will be considered in revising this draft report. At the same time, the independence of the undertaking will be consciously asserted and its integrity will be protected.

This evaluation gives emphasis on the achievement of results expected from the joint programme (i.e. the outputs and outcomes committed in the Results Framework), which is being analyzed from the purview of Results-Based Management (RBM). While the evaluation identified certain weaknesses or gaps on this aspect, the intention was to clearly identify such weaknesses or gaps in order to come up with possible solutions which could still be done within the remaining half of the joint programme. This is also an effort to contribute to the lessons being learned on joint programming and the achievement of the MDGs.

¹ Aside from this *Culture and Development in the oPT* Programme, there is also a second joint programme entitled *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the oPT* Programme which is being supported by the MDG-F.

Given this approach, the evaluation first held briefings with the MDG-F Secretariat on September 2010. Documents which were provided by the MDG-F Secretariat were also reviewed and an Inception Report was prepared. This inception report was thereafter forwarded to an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) which provided comments on the initial findings and suggestions on the proposed methodology.²

For this evaluation, a field mission was carried out from November 7 to 11, 2010. Group and individual meetings with the participating UN Agencies, Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Institutions, Beneficiaries, the UN Special Coordination Office (UNSCO), Programme Management Committee (PMC), and other organizations were held during the mission. A preliminary meeting and a final debriefing were also held with the ERG [Annex A].

Prior to the field mission, a standard questionnaire was sent via e-mail to key informants [Annex B]. The responses to the questionnaires were used as bases in elaborating the structured, while open-ended, group and individual discussions with the persons consulted during the mission [Annex C].

More documents were provided during the mission by the informants who were consulted during the process. Other documents were also sent by the Programme Secretariat prior to the mission. These and other references were reviewed for the evaluation [Annex D].

This draft report will be forwarded by the MDG-F Secretariat to the ERG for factual corrections and comments. Factual errors will be corrected by the Consultant on the revised version, and comments will be considered. Thereafter, the MDG-F Secretariat will send the revised version back to the ERG, together with a template for an Improvement Plan which should be based on the recommendations later raised in the evaluation report.

4. Disclosure of Limitations

a. Extent of Institutional Participation

All the institutions that were included in the agenda prepared by the Technical Lead Agency were able to participate in the mission activities as planned [Table 1].

Table 1. Summary of Target and Actual Institutional Participation

	Target Number	Actual Number	% of Participation
NSC Members	3	3	100%
UN Agencies	4	4	100%
PNA Institutions	4	4	100%

b. Quality of Financial Data

This report made use of financial data which were cited in the latest monitoring reports [i.e. as of June 2010 and October 2010]. However, the evaluation was not able to verify these financial data.³

² Based on the guidelines set for the evaluation, an Evaluation Reference Group was formed especially for the exercise.

³ The sources of the financial data (e.g. audited financial reports of each UN Agency) were no longer examined by the evaluation.

c. Programme Sites Visited

The original agenda for the field mission also included a site visit to Gaza, aside from the visits to selected programme sites in the West Bank. Due to security constraints however, the visit to Gaza did not push through. In lieu of the site visit, a video conference with the Team Leader of the Gaza Research Team was held on November 10.

B. Context of the Programme Area

1. Changes in the Political and Security Context

After the finalization of the Programme Document in October 2007, Israeli war on Gaza broke out in December 27 2008 - January 18 2009. Around 1,300 people died and 5,400 were injured during the attacks. A large number of roads, 22,000 establishments, and social service infrastructure were damaged. It was also estimated that the number of persons displaced by the fighting could have reached some 25,000 per day.

While the violence eventually ended through the declaration of temporary ceasefires, there were continuing armed incidents in Gaza, although these have been of a lesser scale. The sanctions that were imposed after the fighting are however still in place, and these are leading to greater hardships. The closure of the perimeter borders is preventing the free movement of persons and goods from and towards the area. As a result, it is believed that more than 3,000 businesses closed down and 75,000 workers lost their jobs. Around 30% of the residents in Gaza did not have a regular supply of water because of the sanctions.⁴

In the West Bank, the situation is more peaceful and the economy is functional. Still, there are trends towards the disruption of peace brought about by the gradual physical constriction of Palestinian communities. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is on-going; in 2009, it was reported that there were over 130 of these settlements in the area. There have been incidents of fighting among civilians because of these events. The physical wall that separates Israeli and Palestinian areas within the West Bank has extended to roughly 400 kilometers. Roadblocks and checkpoints plus the identification card system further restrict the movement of persons and raise the cost of transporting goods.

Internal fighting between Palestinian groups is also contributing to political instability, the breakdown of peace and order, and the ineffectiveness of public governance. The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) remains dysfunctional since the dissolution of the national government in 2007. As such, critical policy measures could not be passed. Some Fatah-affiliated state institutions could not perform their duties in the Hamas-controlled Gaza area.

2. UN Strategy and Joint Programmes in the oPT

In view of the special situation in the programme area, the UN is combining humanitarian assistance in Gaza with development efforts in the West Bank. On-going development work by UN Agencies in the West Bank is guided by a Medium-Term Response Plan (MTRP) which is substitute for a UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The MTRP is a two-year plan which was adopted in mid-2009.⁵

⁴ The source of data used in this section is the Operational Guidance Note prepared by the UK Border Agency. Please refer to the attached list of references.

⁵ Parallel humanitarian work in Gaza is on the other hand guided by a separate document entitled "Consolidated Appeals Process" or CAP.

Based on the discussion with UNSCO, the programme being evaluated is among the first joint programmes to be implemented in the oPT. It is one of three joint programmes that are on-going in the area, two of which are being funded through the MDG-F. There is also a third joint programme supported by the Human Security Trust Fund (HSTF) which has started last July 2010 [Table 2].⁶

Table 2. Summary Data on Joint Programmes in the oPT

Programme Title	Implementation Period	No. of Participating UN Agencies	Budget/Fund Source
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the oPT	February 2009 – January 2012	6	US\$9.0 million/MDG-F
Culture and Development in the oPT	March 2009 – March 2012	4	US\$3.0 million/MDG-F
Livelihood Protection and Sustainable Empowerment of Vulnerable, Rural and Refugee Communities in the Jordan Valley	July 2010 – June 2013	4	US\$4.6 million/HSTF

Sources: UNSCO and UNESCO

3. Overall Progress in the MDGs

Despite the constraints, the PNA is continuing its commitment to work towards the attainment of the MDGs. Due to the continuing political uncertainty, the PNA is nonetheless considering two scenarios in achieving the MDGs within the time frame of 2015. The latest [August 2010] MDG Progress Report prepared by the PNA shows a high level of national confidence in attaining goals 2, 3, and 6, given both scenarios. The confidence level for goal 7 is, on the other end, low. The PNA seems to be confident in achieving the primary goal (1) under a condition of state sovereignty, together with goals 4 and 8 [Table 3].

⁶ It was clarified during the discussion that a previous programme under the Global Fund to Fight HIV, AIDS and Malaria implemented by UN Agencies in the oPT could not really be considered as a joint programme, with reference to the standards set by the UN Development Group (UNDG).

Table 3. MDG Data, as of August 2010

Goals, Targets, and Indicators	Probability of Achievement	
	Scenario 1: Occupation	Scenario 2: Sovereignty
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Unlikely	Likely
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	Likely	Likely
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Likely	Likely
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	Unlikely	Likely
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	Potentially	Likely
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Likely	Likely
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	Unlikely	Unlikely
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	Unlikely	Likely

Source: MDG Progress Report

II. Findings and Analyses

A. Programme Design

1. Development of the Programme Design

a. Original Programme Concept

In mid-2007, proponents of the joint programme entitled *Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* started the process of developing the programme concept. Preliminary efforts to develop the programme concept reportedly took place within a four-week period, through which a seven-page Concept Note was prepared. This Concept Note was submitted to the MDG-F Steering Committee on June 2007.

The original concept integrated 3 components: policy, planning, and institutional development; social cohesion; and economic growth. The outcomes related to these are to be delivered by UNESCO, UN Women, UNDP, and FAO. The estimated cost of the intervention given the envisioned scope of work was US\$11.9 million.⁷

b. Approved Programme Document

After the submission of the Concept Note, a technical review was conducted in October 2007. The technical review for the concept note for the oPT was done together with the rest of the countries which had their own submissions. E-Mail communications showed that the initial approval process had been competitive: most of the 45 culture and development concept proposals received by the MDG-F Steering Committee were adjudged to be of good quality. However, the total cost of these submissions had far exceeded the budget. In the end, 18 proposals were shortlisted, including the one done for the oPT, although the overall approach taken was to reduce the budget allocations for these pre-approved applications. For the oPT programme, the budget allocation was set at US\$3.0 million. Guided by this budgetary framework, the proponents began to develop a full programme document which was finalized and submitted to the MDG-F Steering Committee on February 2008.

By May 2008, an Approval Note on the programme document was sent to the programme proponents by the MDG-F Steering Committee. Aside from formally informing the proponents on the approval of the programme document, the note also acknowledged at the onset that the basic challenge facing the programme is that it will be the first time in the oPT to implement such a comprehensive (or holistic) approach to culture and development. The communication also mentioned that the programme document was a “faithful extension” of the concept note, and that there is plan by the MDG-F Secretariat to address the M & E Frameworks of all the approved programmes during that year [2008/2009]. On the programme design, the note had recommended to elaborate the security risk in the oPT and to propose a clear mitigation strategy, further justify the large (i.e. 75%) allotment for personnel and contracts, reconsider lodging the programme management office in the PNA instead of the UNCT (as originally proposed), and include baseline data and indicators.

c. Programme Inception

An Inception Workshop for the programme was carried out on November 3, 2009: this was already 7 months after the official start of the programme. On this point, the evaluation was told that communication with the MDG-F Secretariat about the inception took place only on September 2009. The first Programme Manager had also been hired only by that time, and that preliminary consultations with the involved agencies and Palestinian ministries had to be done prior to the inception exercise.

⁷ The Concept Note itself identified the outcomes of institutional development, social development, and economic development for the intervention. This review however deemed it more accurate to describe the concept according to the components discussed above.

The minutes of this activity also show that it was more of an orientation about the programme than a full inception. While basic questions and issues were discussed, these were not directed at elaborating the programme further as it was described in the programme plan (document). The Results Framework was not discussed and changes were made on it until December 2009, when a revised M & E Framework was adopted for the programme. It was also not clear from the minutes whether the concerns and recommendations raised in the Approval Note were addressed in the inception exercise. Apparently, there had been a weakness on understanding what the inception exercise was for and how it was to be conducted [Table 4].⁸

Further, while it appeared from the activity report that there were participants from the PMC, the PNA Ministries, and UN Agencies, there did not turn out to be representatives from civil society to this activity, and this was another weak point for the programme.⁹

⁸ Based on the comments on the draft report, there appears to be a need to clarify on what is meant by programme ‘inception’. From the evaluation’s perspective, there are 3 phases in a development intervention: the start-up phase, the implementation phase, and the exit phase. The inception activity is part of the start-up phase, and is the last planning step taken before moving on into the implementation phase. The inception of an intervention is a process taken after the formulation of the approved project or programme document. It now aims to elaborate on how the intervention is understood by the implementers at that particular point in time (i.e. what will be done), and how the intervention will be implemented based on such an understanding (i.e. how it will be done). Between the time when the project or programme document was approved and the time of inception, the design and methodology for the intervention can still be changed (or updated) in view of changes in the overall context or based on a sound assessment of the project/programme design. This means that the results, activities, budget allocation, and implementation methodology can still be changed at this intervening period. It also means that the Results Framework, plan of activities, and implementation strategy should have been reviewed during this time, and finalized during the inception activity.

In RBM, the basic concept being followed is the concept of a Results Chain. This means, among others, that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between activities and outputs (i.e. the first-level result). In other words, it means that once the activities have been completed, then the outputs associated with those activities will be achieved. This is why it is not easy to change the activities: changing the activities will affect the achievement of the outputs! This is also why the activities (and also the inputs and results) have to be finalized during the inception stage.

The inception of an intervention becomes more logically important in view of the new concepts in RBM. From this view, project/programme inception is very much different from a project/programme orientation.

It follows that the actual implementation of an intervention is done after the inception activity. Note that we are now referring to the “implementation of activities” in this phase: the activities which are supposed to lead towards the achievement of the outputs (i.e. no longer the start-up activities). From a purely technical standpoint, changes in the inputs, activities, and results should no longer be allowed in this phase. However, in real life, projects and programmes do allow changes even within this phase. The real question is how much change is allowable during the implementation phase which will not compromise the concept of a Results Chain (e.g. in some agencies, changes in activities and outputs are allowed, as long as the proper protocols are followed and the results framework remains logical).

⁹ The MDG-F Secretariat noted that in its mission held on November 2009, most of civil society representatives who were consulted had no information about the JP.

Table 4. Agenda of the Inception Workshop

	Topics Discussed
Morning	Focused Group Discussion 1: The Joint Programme ¹⁰ Introduction to the Programme Presentation of Joint Programme Activities
Afternoon	Continuation of Presentations Focused Group Discussion 2: Wrap-Up and Reflections

Source: Minutes of the Inception Workshop

2. Quality of the Current Programme Design

a. Results Framework

After the inception activity, the M & E Framework was revised on December 2009. Changes made on this framework from the programme document were nonetheless limited only to the indicators set for each output and outcome. However, comparing this framework with the original concept, it is obvious that the scope of components/outcomes had been reduced from 3 to 2 [Table 5]. According to the programme planners, the reduction in scope was the adjustment that they made on the programme design in consideration of the reduced budget allocation.

From the evaluation's perspective, this joint programme is designed to be *highly robust*, which is among its notable features: the outcomes are expected to be delivered by all 4 participating UN Agencies, and there are at least 2 agencies responsible for the delivery of each output. Specifically, in this JP, there are 4 participating UN Agencies. According to its current Results Framework shown on Table 5, there are also 4 Outputs (i.e. the first-level results). It could have happened that each UN Agency will be responsible for the delivery of each output. For example, UNESCO will deliver Output 1.1, UNDP for Output 1.2, FAO for Output 2.1, and UN Women for Output 2.2. If this was the way the Results Framework was structured, then the JP would be "weak". This means that while it is a JP because it has common results, work plan and a signed JP document, its level of "jointness" is weak. It can be criticized as "just an effort by the agencies to put it all together".

But the way that the JP was structured shows that it is "highly robust" (or strong). In Table 5, it can be seen that there are at least 2 UN Agencies that are responsible for the delivery of each output. This means that they will be working together (not separately) to achieve the first-level result. That is why the evaluation looks at this JP as "highly robust": in other words, its level of "jointness" is strong, compared to the first scenario described earlier.¹¹

¹⁰ The following selected guide questions were used in this discussion: *What do you know about how and why the programme was developed, what were the various phases of its development? Who were the parties involved? What were your first impressions when you read the programme document in its final form? What are the key issues you think we will face in the implementation of the programme?*

¹¹ The weakness in the current joint programme concept following the UNDG Guidelines is that it is easy to comply with: participating UN Agencies simply have to adopt a common set of results and work plan in a signed JP document. This is what can be called in plain language as "UN Agencies just putting it all together into a programme document and then call it as a joint programme".

However, there is a way to determine the degree of "jointness" of a joint programme (i.e. how joint is the joint programme?). This is what the report is trying to show. As explained in Annex E, the level of jointness or robustness (i.e. strength) of a JP can be weak, medium or high depending on how its Results Framework is structured.

Nevertheless, there remains a technical issue on this matter that should be addressed or clarified by the programme planners later on as part of the Improvement Plan. This issue is about the indicators at the level of outputs. In the current framework, the number of indicators does not match the number of participating agencies. For example, Output 1.1 only has one indicator while there are two UN Agencies which are supposed to be involved in its delivery. Output 1.2 has two indicators while three UN Agencies are included in the Results Framework. The same issue holds for Output 2.1 and Output 2.2. Are the UN Agencies working on the same indicator to achieve these outputs? What is the cause-and-effect relationship of each agency's activities to the achievement of the outputs based on the indicators? These are among the issues that the programme should clarify. Please refer to the summary of the Results Framework in Table 5 and the Technical Note on Annex E.

Table 5. Summary of Current Results Framework and Evaluator's Comments

Results	Indicators	Involved UN Agencies	Implied Type of Change	Time Frame	Evaluator's Comments
Outcome 1: Policies and practices for safeguarding cultural heritage are established	(1) 7 policies for safeguarding cultural heritage are developed or upgraded (2) 3 practices are implemented	UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, UN Women	- Change in plans and laws - <i>Not clear</i>	- 2 Years - 2 Years	- This change (i.e. laws) may take a longer time to attain - This indicator could be redundant ¹²
Output 1.1: The capacities of MOC, MOTA, MOA, MOWA and MOLG are enhanced	(3) The National Plan for Palestinian Culture (NPPC) is upgraded	UNESCO and UNDP	- Change in planning capacity	- 2 Years	- This is the only indicator for this output (i.e. there should be at least two) - This indicator could be part of Indicator No. 1 (i.e. the output and outcome cannot be the same)
Output 1.2: NPPC related activities are piloted and lessons from pilot activities are fed into planning and capacity building processes	(4) 4 NPPC related activities successfully are piloted (5) 2 lessons from NPPC piloted activities are documented	UNESCO, FAO and UN Women	- <i>Not clear</i> - <i>Not applicable</i>	- 2 Years - 2 Years	- This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator - This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator
Outcome 2: The potential of cultural and eco-tourism and creative industries is identified and utilized	(6) 20 job opportunities are created in the industries (7) 500 beneficiaries benefit from the activities (8) 40 activities and interventions (9) 1,000 visitors visit the sites	UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, UN Women	- Change in job opportunities - <i>Not applicable</i> - <i>Not applicable</i> - Change in client volume	- Not specified - 2 Years - 2 Years - 2 Years	- The magnitude of change (i.e. 20 jobs) could be too small - This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator - This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator - This indicator may be difficult to monitor
Output 2.1: Tourism Industry is enhanced and diversified	(10) 10 itineraries of local tourism agencies are modified/developed/revived (11) 10 activities and events are established or upgraded	UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, UN Women	- <i>Not clear</i> - <i>Not applicable</i>	- 2 Years - 2 Years	- What is meant by "itineraries"? - This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator
Output 2.2: Cultural diversity and pluralism are promoted	(12) 5 activities are conducted	UNESCO and UN Women	- <i>Not applicable</i>	- Not specified	- This is the only indicator set for this output (i.e. there should be at least two) - This is an activity (i.e. not a result) indicator

Source: M & E Framework in Special Monitoring Report as of 31 October 2010

¹² The M & E Framework states that "practices means the legislations and policies endorsed", which means that it could be the same as Indicator No. 1.

The current framework as summarized in Table 5 could also be further improved on the following aspects:

- *Coherence of Outputs with Outcomes* – While Output 1.1 is logically linked to Outcome 1, the cause-and-effect relationships of the other outputs with their respective outcomes is not clear. Because there is a weakness in the formulation of some indicators, the type of change implied by the design on some outputs and outcomes is also not clear;
- *Quality and Number of Indicators* – One indicator imply a change which is usually difficult to attain within a three-year programme period (i.e. a change in laws), some indicators are redundant, and several are “activity” indicators and not “result” indicators. Also, there is only 1 indicator assigned for some outputs; and¹³
- *Time Frame of Results* – If the information provided on the framework is correct, almost all of the results are targeted to be achieved by the second year of implementation. There is an obvious error here, because it means that the programme can already end by Year 2.

b. Programme Budget

As earlier reported, the working budget for the programme over a three-year period is US\$3.0 million. This was the budget recommended by the Technical Sub-Committee, as part of its technical review. It is not clear from the documents how this budgetary allocation was estimated by the sub-committee. Comparing this amount with the allocations made for the other proposals, it nonetheless turns out to be at the low end of the programme budgets set under the culture and development window.¹⁴

The budget of US\$3.0 million is ¼ of the original estimated cost of the programme concept. This was a sharp cut from the initial budget of US\$11.9 million, as envisioned by the proponents at the onset. However, the evaluation could not ascertain if the budget cut had a negative effect on the final programme design, which shows a reduction in scope from 3 components/outcomes to only 2.¹⁵ The assumptions and supporting data on the original and the final budgets are not readily available. The budgeting method applied for the programme does not also provide clear basis to determine if the costs have been rationally allocated with reference to the expected results: aside from reducing the outcomes, the programme planners have also apparently simply scaled down the activities according to the budget ceiling. However, there are indications that the budget is not commensurate to the programme content. As discussed later on, the first PM reportedly resigned over low pay to move to a higher-paying job. The salary allotted for a gender expert was also reported to be inappropriate, and this was a cause for the delay in recruitment. The post for M & E was also reported to have been changed to a consultancy item instead of a regular position because of the budget cut.

¹³ The OECD DAC defines an activity as “actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilised to produce specific outputs”, while a results “are changes in a state or condition which derive from a cause-and- effect relationship”.

¹⁴ The budgetary allocation of US\$3.0 million for this programme in the oPT is the lowest among the 18 Culture and Development Programmes in the MDG-F. According to the data obtained by the evaluation, the budgetary mode is US\$ 5.0 million (n = 4), and the highest allocations are those for Nicaragua (i.e. US\$8.5 million), Honduras and Bosnia and Herzegovina (US\$8.0 million each).

¹⁵ In the original Concept Note, there were 3outcomes which were mentioned: Outcome 1 was described as about “Institutional Development”, Outcome 2 was for “Social Development”, and Outcome 3 was on “Economic Development”. In the JP Document, these were reduced to 2 components: Outcome 1 was on “Institutional Development” and Outcome 2 combining the second and third outcomes on “Socio-Economic Development and social cohesion”.

Further, there is reason to believe that the yearly allocation of the programme budget is wrong. As summarized in Table 6, around US\$1.5 million or half of the three-year budget was allocated for the first year alone. This means that the programme plans to implement about half of the overall interventions for the initial year, which is highly improbable for any programme, and most especially for a first-time joint programme which has to pass through its learning curve. The estimated cost for Year 2 is also 37% of the total cost, which leaves only 12% for the programme to work with on its final year of implementation. This budget allocation reinforces the earlier point made by this report that the programme design could be erroneous, as it seeks to achieve the results by the second year of implementation.

Table 6. Budget Allocations Per Year

	Amount (US\$)	% of Total
Year 1	1,535,175	51%
Year 2	1,097,716	37%
Year 3	367,109	12%

Sources: Actual amount released for Year 1 and Annual Work Plan for Year 2. The amount for Year 3 is the estimated balance of the three-year budget.

3. Support to Programme Design

a. Financial Support

In 2007, the MDG-F Steering Committee advanced the amount of US\$20,000 to the Technical Lead Agency as support to the development of the programme document. This fund was used to cover the costs incurred by a Consultant who was hired to undertake the preliminary consultations with the concerned UN Agencies and write the programme document.

b. Technical Support

Based on the early documents, the Spanish Cooperation Office in the oPT as well as the Ministry of Planning and Development (MOPAD) were involved in the programme design stage. These agencies gave suggestions on the contents of the programme and how the programme should be implemented. Aside from the financial support to develop the programme document, the MDG-F Steering Committee also provided recommendations on the programme design. As earlier reported, this was done at a two-step process: at the first stage of programme conceptualization, a Technical Sub-Committee gave its recommendations on the programme concept, which served as bases in preparing the programme document; later on, suggestions were made on the programme document itself, the latest of which were contained in the Approval Note sent by the MDG-F Steering Committee on May 2008.

Looking back, however, further technical support to the design of the programme could have been provided on the following aspects:

- *Development of the Results Framework* – As earlier reported, the Results Framework could stand improvement and this could have been addressed at the programme onset. The plan to review the M & E Framework, as stated in the Approval Note of 2008, also apparently did not push through;
- *Rationalization of the Programme Budget* – A technical review of the programme budget stated in the programme document could have also been done. As will be discussed later, the yearly allocation of the programme budget was wrong and this had negatively affected the measurement and efficiency of the programme;
- *Conduct of the Programme Inception* – While the MDG-F Secretariat promoted the conduct of an inception exercise, there were no clear guidelines on what should be achieved from the inception process and how it is supposed to be conducted.

B. Relevance of the Programme

1. Strategic Relevance of the Programme

The on-going struggle for the establishment of the Palestinian territory and the internal dispute among political groups have led to a diaspora in the Palestinian population. It was estimated during the 1995 census that around 49% of the total number of Palestinians living in the oPt have relatives in Jordan, while there are significant populations located in Saudi Arabia, the other Arab countries, and in America and Europe [Table 7]. This has also been a long-standing diaspora, as it is believed to have started in 1948. As such, a generation of Palestinians may have been living most of their lives outside their homeland.

Table 7. Palestinians with Relatives Abroad, 1995

	West Bank	Gaza	Total
Jordan	61%	14%	49%
Saudi Arabia	8%	30%	14%
Other Arab Countries	10%	46%	18%
America and Europe	19%	9%	18%
Other Countries	2%	1%	2%

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 1995 Demographic Survey

Because of more recent security and political events, Palestinians could not also move freely across the West Bank and Gaza, and social fragmentation among Palestinians is exacerbated by bitter differences between the ruling political parties in the two areas. There is also a restriction in the movement of Palestinians to West Jerusalem, where a sizable Palestinian population is settled. This situation is adding to the complexities brought by the long-standing diaspora.

It is believed that the continuing diaspora has a negative effect on Palestinian culture and identity. The preservation of the Palestinian national culture is being made difficult by the geographical and political fragmentation of its constituents. Their sense of national identity is also being eroded. The loss of these social foundations could further add to the challenges in the creation of a future national state. Culture is also affected by occupation and continuous Israeli measures.

It is for this reason why the MDG-F Programme on Culture and Development is strategically relevant: it is part of a long-term and broader effort to preserve the Palestinian national culture, which will in turn be a crucial element in the establishment of a Palestinian identity and an envisioned unified Palestinian state. As the whole UN effort is working for a permanent solution to the problem in the area partly through the creation of a Palestinian state, it is also important to lay down the social basis for this future state, aside from its political structure. This is one aspect which the joint programme is working on: it is preserving the notion of a common culture in the oPT vis-à-vis the factors which are undermining its existence. The preservation of the Palestinian culture should then contribute to the adoption of a common Palestinian identity (i.e. regardless of their location in the West Bank, Gaza and the diaspora) and their recognition of one state that will represent their interests as citizens of the Palestinian homeland.

2. Current Relevance of the Programme to the Plans and Priorities in the oPT

The programme is also clearly linked to the overall development plan in the oPT. Current development efforts in the area are guided by a *Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP)* for 2008 – 2010 which acknowledges the role of culture in the creation of a future Palestinian state [Box 1].

Box 1. Vision of the Future Palestinian State

Palestine is an independent Arab state with sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on the pre-June 1967 occupation borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Palestine is a stable democratic state that respects human rights and guarantees equal rights and duties for all citizens. Its people live in a safe and secure environment under the rule of law and it promotes equality between men and women. It is a state which values highly its social capital, social coherence and solidarity, and identifies itself with Arab Palestinian culture, humanistic values and religious tolerance. [underscoring supplied] It is a progressive state that values cordial relationships with other states and people in the global community. The Palestinian government is open, inclusive, transparent and accountable. It is responsive to citizens' needs, delivers basic services effectively, and creates an enabling environment for a thriving private sector. Palestine's human resources are the driving force for national development. The Palestinian economy is open to other markets around the world and strives to produce high value-added, competitive goods and services, and, over the long term, to be a knowledge-based economy.

Source: Palestinian Reform and Development Plan, 2008 - 2010

A clear agenda on culture is also present in the Palestinian National Plan 2011-2013 (previously known as PRDP). Among its stated intermediate objectives is to "Develop the social capital of the nation, and preserve its culture and heritage, in order to reinforce social coherence". The plan also seeks to strengthen the tourism industry in the OPT and made mention of a Culture, Creativity and Heritage Program that will support the preservation, production and promotion of Palestinian art and literature.

However, the cultural agenda does not appear to be a priority in the PNP. Out of the total US\$583 million allotted for the social sector programs, only US\$3 million (i.e. 1%) has been set aside by the PNA for the culture program. Based on data from the PRDP, the line item "Culture, Creativity and Heritage" has the lowest budget among the other sub-sectors included in the Social Sector. In contrast, the allocation for education is around US\$300 million and over US\$100 million is allotted for health. Hence, raising the financial commitment of the PNA for the cultural agenda may be one good indicator of institutional development.

There is also a cultural agenda in the UN Medium-Term Response Plan (MTRP) for 2009-2010, which is partially aligned with the MDG-F Programme. There is one output in the Results Framework of the MTRP which is compatible with the Results Framework of the MDG-F Programme.¹⁶

3. Contribution of the Programme to the National MDGs and the Global MDG-F Theme

The latest regular Monitoring Report [June 2010] stated that the programme is contributing to the achievement of MDGs 1 (i.e. Eradication of Poverty and Hunger), 3 (i.e. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment), and 7 (i.e. Environmental Sustainability). The report however cited several indicators which are not among those at the level of outputs and outcomes, and could be at the level of activities, which are not applicable. Hence, the evaluation believes that while the programme is clearly contributing to the achievement of Goal 1, the same could not be asserted on Goals 3 and 7. Moreover, the actual contribution of the programme to Goal 1 turns out to be marginal: based on the current indicator, only 20 job opportunities are expected to be created by the programme [see Indicator No. 6 in Table 5]. The programme can therefore further improve the target for this result.¹⁷

The programme is nevertheless clearly contributing to the achievement of the global objectives set under the culture and development thematic window. As reported earlier, it is without doubt that the programme is working for the preservation of the Palestinian culture despite the challenges being brought by the diaspora and the fragmentation of Palestinian society. Aside from the link between culture and the creation of a future national state, the establishment of a national identity is also expected to have a key role in long-run social and economic development in the oPT.

¹⁶ There is no UNDAF in the oPT because of the special circumstances, and the MTRP is being used as an alternative planning framework by the UN Agencies. Output 4.1 of the MTRP Results Framework is also focused on the NPPC: *The capacities of relevant Palestinian institutions to develop and implement a comprehensive, gender sensitive, National Plan for Palestinian Culture are strengthened*. This is related to Output 1.1 of the MDG-F Programme [see Table 5].

¹⁷ What is meant here is that as it is right now, the programme cannot really say that it is contributing to goals 3 and 7. This is because the results being expected from the JP, as expressed by its indicators, are not logically matched to the MDGs. But it is still possible for the programme to establish that it will contribute to goals 3 and 7 if the revised set of indicators that will be adopted will now be logically related to the MDGs. So, it is not just the reporting which is the problem, but the current indicators in the JP. Also, we can only refer to the results indicators for the purpose, and not the activity indicators which are what are being used in the monitoring reports.

Further, the M & E Framework has been lengthened and made complicated by the addition of activities and indicators for these, which are apparently being confused with the results and the result indicators. See the frameworks used in the Special Monitoring Report [October 2010] and the regular June 2010 Monitoring Report.

C. Effectiveness of the Programme

1. Achievement of Results¹⁸

a. Delivery of Financial Inputs

On March 2009, an amount of US\$1.5 million was transferred by the MDTF Office to the head offices of the participating UN Agencies. This amount represented the budget allocation for the first year of the programme [Table 6]. The starting date of the programme was hence officially reckoned from this date of fund transfer.

b. Implementation of Activities

While the first financial input was delivered on March 2009, the months thereafter were devoted by the programme to preparatory and start-up activities. Consultations and planning activities with the PNA Ministries were done, the hiring of the Programme Manager (PM) commenced on May 2009 with the PM starting her work on September 2009, an inception workshop was held on November 2009, and an M & E Consultant was hired on December 2009 by which time the M & E Framework of the programme had been revised. Based on these timelines, the evaluation estimates that the culture and development programme could have really started only by December 2009 or January 2010, which is 9 – 10 months past the official starting date.¹⁹

The following factors were cited for the slow start of the programme:

- *There was a need to make consultations and planning activities with the PNA Ministries* – It was acknowledged that there were gaps in the involvement of the PNA during the design stage of the programme. PNA informants reported that they were not involved during the planning phase: hence, there was initial reluctance among them to participate in the programme when it started. However, this weakness was rectified later on through the series of consultations, planning sessions, and meetings of the PMC and NSC. According to the programme proponent, the timing of the preparation of the programme document had affected the process of consultations: after the technical review of the Concept Note on October 2007, the programme proponents worked on the programme document from November 2007 until February 2008, and the holiday break in December 2007 reduced the time for the consultations.

The evaluation also noted that a considerable period of time had passed from the programme design phase until the official start of the programme: the programme document was finalized on February 2008 and the first fund transfer was transacted on March 2009, which means an interval

¹⁸ The analytical framework used in this section is based on the concept of a “Results Chain”, which relates Inputs to Activities, and Activities to Results: (i.e. Inputs ► Activities ► Outputs ► Outcomes ► Impact). This concept implies the following cause-and-effect relationships: (a) financial and other inputs are needed to conduct the activities; (b) planned activities should be completed in order to achieve the outputs, (c) the attainment of outputs should lead towards the achievement of outcomes; and (c) the achievement of outcomes will lead to the realization of long-term impact. Hence, the framework is premised on the following assumptions: (a) a delay in the delivery of the inputs will also delay the conduct of activities, and ultimately, the results; (b) because the input requirements should match the planned activities, a lesser amount of inputs would also reduce the level of activities, and this will therefore affect the achievement of results; and (c) because the outputs are supposed to lead towards the outcomes, non-achievement of any output will place the attainment of outcomes (and the impact) at risk.

¹⁹ This point is based on a concept that distinguishes between three phases in a development intervention: the start-up phase, the implementation phase, and the exit phase. It further means that intervention cannot *logically* proceed into the implementation phase unless the start-up phase has been completed. Also, the exit phase can only *logically* commence only after the implementation phase.

of 13 months. This large intervening period would have required another round of consultations and re-planning activities anyway, because of the factors of turnover and new needs.²⁰

- *It took a long time to hire a Programme Manager* – Because of a need to re-do the basic planning activities with the PNA Ministries, the programme could not immediately begin the process of staff hiring. The evaluation was informed that the post of Programme Manager was advertised only by May 2009. Internal recruitment procedures at UN Agencies are also known to be lengthy: in this case, it took around 4 months for the PM to be fully on board for the programme.
- *The programme followed a series of steps which was based on the hiring of the Programme Manager* – The initial plan was to hold the inception workshop after the PM had been hired. Recruitment of the M & E Consultant also took place after the PM had come on board, and revision of the M & E Framework was done afterwards. However, the hiring of the PM was itself delayed, which affected the pace of the whole sequence of start-up.
- *The sequence of activities designed by the programme was complex* – It was reported that some activities could not yet be implemented by one UN Agency because these had to wait for the completion of activities by another UN Agency.
- *The level of difficulty in implementing this joint programme is higher* – Compared to the other joint programme which clearly had a single PNA Lead Ministry, there are two PNA Ministries involved in the programme that are both mandated on the field of culture.
- *This is the first effort among the participating UN Agencies and PNA Ministries to implement a joint programme* – There had been no previous experiences and models to build on, and it is believed that the MDG-F joint programme guidelines were also being developed at the same time as the programme was evolving.
- *Some turnovers among the agency focal persons occurred* – It was reported for instance, that the focal person in one participating UN Agency changed seven times since the programme was conceptualized. This had delayed the planning and implementation of activities related to that agency.

On the whole, the programme made a misjudgment in its plan, which led to difficulties in reporting its level of implementation of activities. The disbursement rate reported by the programme has been alarmingly low, and this is because of the mistake in the yearly allocation of the programme budget [Table 6]. This point came out and was discussed during the mission, and as a result of the discussions, a corrected budget for the first year was prepared by the Technical Lead Agency.²¹

Comparative estimates on the programme's level of completion of activities are shown on Table 8. If the original budget (i.e. US\$1.5 million) is used as the reference, the estimated level of completion of activities as of October 2010 (or 20 months after programme start) would be alarmingly low, at only 37%. This means that only around 1/3 of the planned activities for the first 12 months have actually been implemented for the past 20 months. However, if the corrected budget is used as an alternative measurement base, the estimated completion level would be much higher, at around 69%.

²⁰ This was the situation experienced by the *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the oPT Programme*. Because there was a large intervening period between the design phase and the implementation phase, there was a need to do another round of consultations and preparations because the PNA plans and their focal persons have already changed by that time.

²¹ A low disbursement rate implies that the activities are not being implemented as planned.

Table 8. Estimated Level of Completion of Activities

Results and Activities	Level of Completion (Original Budget)	Level of Completion (Corrected Budget)
Outcome 1: Policies and practices for safeguarding cultural heritage are established	39%	72%
<u>Output 1.1: The capacities of MOC, MOTA, MOA, MOWA and MOLG are enhanced</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>74%</u>
1.1.1 Develop and conduct training courses for ministry personnel on policy and programme formulation	12%	63%
1.1.2 Upgrade and make operational the NPPC	38%	80%
<u>Output 1.2: NPPC related activities are piloted and lessons from pilot activities are fed into planning and capacity building processes</u>	<u>52%</u>	<u>71%</u>
1.2.1a Enhance the capacities of MOTA and MOLG and other institutions to elaborate conservation and management plans	43%	71%
1.2.1b Enhance the capacities of MOA, MOLG and MOTA on land use, landscape planning and environmental impact assessment	104%	146%
1.2.2 Reinforce the capacity of MOC and relevant organizations to develop the knowledge-base	35%	61%
1.2.3 Conceptualization and design of selected marketable arts and crafts	39%	41%
1.2.4 Production, management and marketing of traditional and contemporary arts and crafts	27%	27%
Outcome 2: The potential of cultural and eco-tourism and creative industries is identified and utilized	28%	57%
<u>Output 2.1: Tourism Industry is enhanced and diversified</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>56%</u>
2.1.1 Promote cultural and eco-tourism development	59%	60%
2.1.2 Pilot community based tourism initiatives	0%	0%
2.1.3 Endangered local crop varieties are preserved	74%	75%
2.1.4 Support the development of the Businesswomen Forum capacity	18%	21%
2.1.5. Establish a start up mechanism based on grants for the development of business activities	0%	0%
2.1.6 Pilot feasible interventions for successful marketing of local agro-biodiversity products	90%	96%
<u>Output 2.2: Cultural diversity and pluralism are promoted</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>58%</u>
2.2.1 Develop partnerships for social responsibility and solidarity	41%	44%
2.2.2 Organize film, performing arts and living cultures festivals, agricultural and gastronomic fairs	63%	65%
2.2.3 Support the creation of innovative and gender sensitive media products	22%	44%
2.2.4 Design and carry out one programme of extra-curricular activities for 15 schools	15%	175%
Overall	37%	69%

Source: Consultant's Estimates based on disbursement rates

Nevertheless, using both measures, it does appear that the activities under Outcome 1 (i.e. the planning and institution-building component) are proceeding faster than the activities under Outcome 2 (i.e. the socio-economic component). The pace of implementation among the activities is also uneven: two activities (i.e. 1.2.1b and 2.2.4) could have been underestimated or re-phased onto the first half of programme implementation, while there has been no implementation at all for two other planned activities (i.e. 2.1.2 and 2.1.5) which were included in the First Year AWP.

In view of the low disbursement rate indicated in the monitoring reports and the concern raised by the MDG-F Secretariat on this matter, the PMC and NSC developed a remedial plan (i.e. an “*Emergency Rescue Plan*”) which aims to fast-track the execution of activities through parallel implementation and augmentation of programme personnel assigned at the PNA Ministries and UN Agencies. This is a good indication of the level of seriousness by programme management on the completion of activities and the achievement of results. Still, there are two basic weaknesses in this remedial plan that could be addressed further: first, the remedial plan is focused only on the Second Year AWP and it does not consider the whole sequence of activities until the third year of programme completion and also the error in the budget allocation for the First Year AWP; and second, there are still gaps in the current Results Framework by which the remedial plan is premised, which weakens its ability to deliver the results expected from the programme.

c. Accomplishment of Outcomes and Outputs

The Strategy for the Tourism and Antiquities Sector, as well as the Strategy for Culture and Heritage, were already completed. These accomplishments are currently considered as part of Outcome 1 of the programme (i.e. *Policies and practices for safeguarding cultural heritage are established*). These have also been assessed by the evaluation to be key milestones because these strategies will contribute to the development of the National Plan for Palestinian Culture (NPPC) and the new Palestinian Reform and Development Plan for the period of 2011 to 2013. The two strategies were reportedly already endorsed by the PNA Cabinet on March 2010.

Output 1.1 (i.e. *The capacities of MOC, MOTA, MOA, MOWA and MOLG are enhanced*) is in process. According to the Special Monitoring Report, the establishment of a national database of uncovered and moved artifacts in the oPT since 1967 has started. Training workshops on gender and culture, national intangible heritage inventories and museum exhibitions development and curatorial practices were also reported.

Output 1.2 (i.e. *NPPC related activities are piloted and lessons from pilot activities are fed into planning and capacity-building processes*) is also underway. In Sebastiya, the development of an integrated plan for the conservation and management of the archaeological site, historical center and cultural landscape has begun. An inventory of the culturally and economically important crop varieties in the area is also being done. At the national level, an inventory of intangible heritage covering three domains (i.e. traditional agricultural knowledge, fishermen culture, and food culture) is being done in Hebron, Jenin, and Gaza.

Compared to Outcome 1, there has been slower progress being reported in Outcome 2 of the programme (i.e. *The potential of cultural and eco-tourism and creative industries is identified and utilized*). However, at the level of the outputs, the latest report showed some programme headway.

Output 2.1 (i.e. *Tourism industry is enhanced and diversified*) has started with the programme’s effort to strengthen the Palestinian Rural Tourism Organizations Network, which is the network of tourism operators in the oPT. The first international workshop on sustainable rural tourism in the oPT has also been planned for, and two demonstration plots of endangered local crop varieties in Ya’bad and Arrabeh are being constructed in partnership with the respective municipalities. The Beit Qad Seeds Station is also being upgraded to benefit the farmers in Ya’bad and Arrabeh, and a programme for the production and marketing of local agro-biodiversity products was already completed.

Output 2.2 (i.e. *Cultural diversity and pluralism are promoted*) has also commenced with the establishment of the first Academic Music Programme in Hebron and the support being granted to cultural events at the local and national levels. Examples of the latter accomplishments are the revival of the Marj Ibn Amer in Jenin, a cultural event which stopped after the second intifada in 2000, and the celebration of Palestinian Heritage Day in ten governorates in the West Bank. The publication of a book entitled “Jericho: A Living History – Ten Thousand years of Civilization” was also supported by the programme.

2. Quality of Activities

The information gathered by the evaluation shows that the programme activities are of good quality. The partners and beneficiaries consulted during the mission perceived the programme activities to be of “high quality” or “quality”, “new”, “useful”, “practical”, “important”, and “within international standards”. These were the assessments of the informants from the PNA Ministries (primarily MOTA and MOC), the municipal government of Arrabeh, an NGO and a business group (i.e. International Art Academy and Palestinian Tourism Organizations Network), several women-beneficiaries, and individual experts who are involved in the programme. They particularly noted the ability of the programme to bring in international expertise for the training activities (e.g. the museum workshop). In addition, the mobilization of local experts who are known specialists in their respective sub-fields within the cultural sector in the oPT was also cited as a factor for the high quality of interventions.

This assessment of the quality of activities was aided by a field monitoring report on the effects of a training activity which involved the same women-beneficiaries who were consulted by the mission. In general, the women-beneficiaries confirmed the good quality of the activity which was indicated in the report. However, the same determination of the quality of activities could not be applied among the other informants because of the lack of field monitoring or post-training reports. Hence, further improvement could be made by the programme in this aspect.

3. Extent of Programme Outreach

It also appeared that the programme is covering its target number of institutions, beneficiaries and areas. The target PNA Ministries (i.e. MOTA, MOC, MOA and MOWA) are participating in the programme activities as planned. Key NGOs and business groups, such as the International Art Academy and the Palestinian Tourism Organizations Network, are also actively involved. Some local governments and CBOs are also featured in the programme.

There does not appear to be any difficulty in the programme outreach in the target areas within the West Bank. An informant also noted that one distinct feature in this programme is its ability to move out of the traditional culture center of Ramallah, and into the other areas in the West Bank.²²

As planned, the programme is also operating in Gaza: at the time of the mission, a research on intangible heritage (i.e. traditional agricultural and fishing practices) was going on. In Gaza however, the focal person on the research on intangible heritage reported some challenges that had to do with the overall situation in the area: there is a general feeling of distrust among the local informants which is negatively affecting the research work, and there is not much enthusiasm among them on the research about culture because of their more pressing security and economic problems. The research team is nonetheless doing its best to overcome these challenges in Gaza.

²² What is meant here is that the general approach for cultural projects in the OPT is to focus on Ramallah because it is recognized as the cultural center in the West Bank. It is not specifically referring to UNESCO, but generally all the cultural organizations in the oPT. Perhaps this is because the key institutions are based in Ramallah, or maybe it is influenced by the convenience of working in Ramallah, instead of the other areas where there are security restrictions.

Still, as pointed out by one expert on culture who was consulted by the mission, most culture projects in the oPT are implemented in the way that aid is delivered, which are focused only on the West Bank and Gaza. There is a weakness in this approach, because a larger number of Palestinians in the diaspora are not covered by the effort. The programme also appeared to be part of this overall weakness, as it does not clearly target the potential beneficiaries outside of the West Bank and Gaza areas.

4. Adherence to Expected Norms

a. Application of the Joint Programme Concept

By design, the programme is complying with the basic norms in joint programming set by the UNDG: a signed Joint Programme Document, which elaborates the roles of the participating UN Agencies and the PNA Ministries, has been developed specifically for the programme. Aside from the roles of each participating institution, the programme document also indicates the results expected from the programme. On this aspect, a Results Framework has been additionally set by the MDG-F Steering Committee, the template of which is intended to elucidate the link of results from the output to the outcome levels. As earlier stated, it turned out from the actual Results Framework that this joint programme is *highly robust*: whether intended or not, this is a positive feature of the programme being evaluated.

By practice, it is clear that the joint programme concept is also being applied. This is evident from the composition and activities of the PMC: the 4 participating UN Agencies (i.e. UNESCO, UNDP, FAO, and UN Women) and their counterpart ministries from the PNA (i.e. MOC, MOTA, MOA, and MOWA) are present in the PMC, which serves as a mechanism for joint planning and consensus-building. It is nevertheless the first time that the participating agencies are operating within the joint programme concept, and the main lesson being learned in this regard is that a higher start-up cost is entailed in a joint programme (compared to a regular stand-alone programme) because of the greater number of institutions involved. The joint programme has to work within the pace of each of the participating institutions, and the process of collective planning has taken some time, in the case of this particular programme.

b. Creation of National Ownership

As earlier reported, the time spent for consensus-building and programme planning was extended because of a gap in consulting the PNA Ministries during the early stage of programme design. Informants from the PNA Ministries confided that they were not privy to the programme details at the onset of the programme: this weakness has however been already rectified, and the PNA Ministries have since been actively participating in programme management through their involvement in the affairs of the PMC and the NSC. In programme implementation, the PNA Ministries are able to participate in the sharing of information on the programme progress (as to which activities which have been completed and what problems the programme is facing) and in decision-making (in terms of reviewing and approving the work plans and budgets which are then forwarded to the NSC). Actual implementation of activities also appeared to be co-shared between the PNA Ministries and the UN Agencies: while most activities are directly implemented by the UN Agencies, some activities are being coursed through the PNA Ministries.²³

The programme had also made adjustments in lodging the office of the Programme Secretariat (PS) to the MOC, in consideration of the original recommendations included in the Approval Note of the MDG-F Secretariat. At the moment, it was reported that the incoming Programme Manager will hold office temporarily at the office of the Technical Lead Agency, but will ultimately work at the premises

²³ From the five-point Lickert Scale used in the questionnaire [Annex B], 2 PNA Ministries reported that their opinions and interests were taken into account in the design and implementation of the programme only “*To some extent*”, which is the middle point in the scale. The other 2 PNA Ministries responded “*To a large extent*”.

of the MOC. This evaluation does not however assign much weight to the physical location of the PS to the element of national ownership.

5. Other Effects

a. Synergistic Effects

The element of synergy expected from the joint programme has not yet been established. This is a matter that should be elaborated later on by the programme implementers.²⁴

b. Pioneering Effects

There is a common belief that this programme is the first effort on culture and development in the oPT that is applying a holistic approach: aside from the capacity-building of relevant institutions in the field of culture, the programme is also working on the adoption of long-term plans; socio-economic interventions are also combined with planning innovations and capacity changes; and local activities are being done alongside national-level efforts. It is believed that previous approaches on culture in the oPT were focused only at the level of projects. An expert consulted during the mission also noted that the universities in the oPT have in the past been overlooked as important institutions in the preservation of local culture. On this point, there is information that the programme is working with some universities, aside from the key private sector groups (i.e. the members of the Palestinian Tourism Organizations Network). As earlier mentioned, the evaluation was also told that this is the first time that serious work on culture has moved on beyond Ramallah, towards other key areas in the West Bank. If these information can be verified further, it is likely that the programme will be able to create some pioneering effects that could add to its notable features.

c. Immediate Effects of Activities

During the course of the mission, programme beneficiaries reported positive effects from their participation in the programme activities. The evaluation also obtained field monitoring and assessment reports which further reinforced this finding. As an example, women-beneficiaries who took part in a training activity on food processing reported to have been encouraged in “starting their business” because of the self-confidence gained due to the training. This means that the training activity has actually led to economic activities undertaken by the participants, aside from the knowledge and skills that they obtained from the training. Another informant believed that they were able to financially assist their families through the sale of their products. Still, another woman-beneficiary concluded that they are now able to use their time “in a constructive manner.”

An evaluation of the cultural festivals supported by the programme summarized in the monitoring report also mentioned the creation of a “new partnership with important sectors, including the universities”, an outreach to areas which were previously difficult to reach (i.e. Hebron) because of security reasons which in turn broke the “psychological barrier” of the local people, and the revival of the festival celebration in an area which stopped after the Intifada (i.e. Marj Ben Amer). These are some immediate positive effects which are unfortunately not reflected in the monitoring reports.²⁵

²⁴ By “synergistic effects”, it is meant that the joint programme should be able to show differentiating effects from an alternative situation in which the participating UN Agencies implement the same projects and activities on their own. Theoretically, the donor could have entered into bilateral project partnerships with the four UN Agencies, instead of supporting this joint programme. From this view, the question is: what additional benefits are gained from the joint programme modality that will not be achieved from the bilateral project modality?

²⁵ The involvement of universities in the programme is believed to be an important feature because past efforts have failed to include this sector in the cultural activities. Also, as earlier reported, there had been a predilection in the previous interventions to focus on Ramallah because of security and other reasons, instead of reaching out to the other areas in the West Bank. The activities which were done by the programme in Hebron and in Marj Ben Amer were thus positively cited by the informants.

D. Efficiency of the Programme

1. Efficiency of the Management System

a. Personnel Staffing and Turnover

It has been previously stated that the recruitment of the first Programme Manager (PM) had taken some time (i.e. 7 months after official programme start), and this was because of the normally lengthy hiring process in the UN System, some practical problems, and the need to make preliminary consultations with the PNA Ministries. On the last point, it turned out that it was not easy to commence the hiring process immediately because the first steps (e.g. the qualifications and remuneration for the PM post) had to be discussed at the PMC. Before anything else, the PMC members had to arrive at a common understanding about the programme and time was also needed to regain stakeholder confidence.²⁶

The programme also had problems in staff turnover. The first PM worked only for 4 months: after starting work in September 2009, the post was vacated in December 2009. According to the PMC, the person left for a higher-paying job. Two factors were identified for this turnover: the first was the sharp cut in the programme budget (i.e. from US\$12 million to US\$3 million), which reduced the salary allocation for the PM; another factor was the alignment of the personnel costs within a range which was acceptable to the PNA. The programme planners believe that both factors led to a smaller salary offered for the PM post.²⁷

A second PM came on board by April 2010, which was 4 months after the vacancy of the post. Aside from the time required by the process of notification, examination, interviews, and selection, additional time was also needed by the selected candidate to serve prior notice with her previous employer. However, the second PM ended her work on October 2010. According to the technical lead agency, her contract was not renewed because of a failure to deliver according to expectations.²⁸

During the mission, there were some discussions with the technical lead agency and the PMC about this turnover problem. While recognizing that the turnovers are indeed a problem for the programme, it was not made clear whether or not the said turnovers were due to a weakness in management, specifically in personnel selection. For instance, some believe that the first turnover was something that the programme could not do anything about (i.e. how could they prevent someone from leaving for a higher-paying job?). The evaluation however believes otherwise: among others, the selection process could have considered the candidates' motivations and personal plans, and would have minimized the chances of turnover.²⁹

As of the time of this writing, a third PM had already been hired by the programme. The fast process of recruitment (i.e. 2 months) shows the ability of programme management to adjust to this basic staffing need. However, it will still have to be seen if the flaws in staff selection have already been identified and corrected, and if such corrections will ultimately reduce the possibility of another turnover in the post.³⁰

²⁶ It was clarified that the examination for the short-listed candidates for the PM post was set in June because it was difficult to have a common schedule among the applicants.

²⁷ It was also believed that the budget cut affected the hiring of the M & E Personnel for the programme. Because of the reduced budget, a consultancy item was allocated instead of a full-time M & E position.

²⁸ This was however contested by the PM, who noted that she was offered a one-year contract by the Technical Lead Agency before her performance appraisal, and this act reflects her actual job performance.

²⁹ On this point, the second turnover is more obviously due to a weakness in staff selection.

³⁰ On the problem of the salary of the PM, the Technical Lead Agency said that the budget for the post has already been adjusted (i.e. increased).

b. Structures and Functions

The minutes of meetings provided for the evaluation, as well the responses from the questionnaires, show that the management structures (i.e. the NSC and PMC) set by the MDG-F for the joint programme are functional. The PMC had particularly been active: 7 quarterly meetings have been held since programme start. One weakness here is that the first PMC meeting appeared to have been done in June 2009, which was already 3 months after the official start of the programme. As was earlier reported, this was apparently due to the initial time needed to clarify the roles and elicit the participation of the different agencies, particularly the PNA Ministries, on the programme and in the PMC. A second issue is the composition of the PMC. According to the MDG-F Guidelines and generic TORs, the PMC is supposed to be formed by the decision-makers in the agencies. However, a review of the minutes of the PMC Meetings shows that the Heads of UN Agencies are not part of these meetings. Hence, the programme may have to clarify on the modality being followed for the PMC. For its part, the NSC had only met thrice, and this was because of its perceived role as an oversight committee for the MDG-F joint programmes in the oPT [Table 9].³¹

The minutes of these meetings also show that joint planning is being done by the agencies: work plans are being discussed, schedules for common activities (e.g. the inception workshop) are being set, information and updates are being shared, and coordination of activities is being undertaken. However, joint monitoring is apparently not yet in place: while there are discussions about progress in activities, these are not done with reference to the M & E Framework. The ability of the PMC and NSC to solve problems being faced by the programme cannot also be established from the minutes: while the later PMC meetings discussed the *Emergency Rescue Plan*, it is not clear from the text whether the basic problems (e.g. the turnover in the PM post and the overall delay in the programme activities) have been substantially analyzed and addressed. It was nonetheless explained that it was not easy to just step in and jointly decide on a solution to a problem because of wariness on micro-managing the programme (i.e. getting into the details) and infringement on the internal affairs of the involved institutions.

Table 9. Details of NSC and PMC Meetings

Dates of Meeting	Duration
<u>NSC</u>	
April 2, 2009	
March 15, 2010	2 hours
November 3, 2010	2 hours
	2 hours
<u>PMC</u>	
June 10, 2009	
August 17, 2009	2 hours
November 17, 2009	2 hours
February 22, 2010	1.5 hours
May 5, 2010	2 hours
July 5, 2010	1.5 hours
August 4, 2010	3 hours
	3 hours

Sources: Minutes of Meetings

³¹ Both this *Culture and Development in the oPT* Programme and the *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the oPT* Programme are included in the agenda of the NSC Meetings.

In general, there also seems to be a weakness in the technical aspect of managing the joint programme. The programme planners as well as the MDG-F Secretariat missed out on checking some mistakes in the budget allocation for the first year and on the Results Framework. As discussed in the earlier sections, the budget allocation for the first year was overstated and this had damaging effect on the programme: it created a negative perception on the programme because the disbursement rate reported was alarmingly low. The Results Framework was also weak in terms of some redundant indicators, the use of “activity” indicators instead of “results” indicators, and the lack of indicators for some outputs. Human Resource Management could have been thorough (i.e. the turnover in the PM position could have been minimized if the causes for the turnover have been foreseen beforehand), and operations planning (i.e. sequencing of activities and timeliness of implementation) could have been better.

c. Monitoring and Evaluation

While an M & E Framework has been adopted for the programme, further work on the M & E System needs to be done. One gap that the evaluation observed during the mission is the absence of an empowering M & E Strategy that would enable the local institutions to themselves perform the M & E work even after the programme has ended. Another weakness is in the level of awareness and appreciation by the partner-institutions on the progress of the programme and the problems it faces: it did not appear that that the Palestinian partner-institutions (i.e. PNA Ministries and NGOs) have been made privy to the monitoring reports.

The evaluation was nonetheless informed by UNSCO that some effort to improve the M & E of the joint programmes will be done soon. The programme should maximize this opportunity to develop its M & E System. The programme budget should also consider the costs in implementing this system.

2. Financial Efficiency of the Programme

a. Cost Efficiency

Procurements follow standard UN and PNA procedures which ensure that least cost considerations are factored in, while aiming for quality specifications. The costs are also included in the budgets which are reviewed at the level of the PMC: this process serves as an additional control mechanism to keep the programme costs down to acceptable levels. In one of the meetings of the PMC, the PNA had also apparently advocated for the prioritization of local expertise over international hires which normally incur larger costs: this reflects the cost controls that are built onto the management structure of the programme.³²

³² The policy of prioritizing local experts was discussed in the PMC Meeting held on June 10, 2009. According to the minutes of this meeting, “international expertise was minimized according to NSC request, resulting in availing of local expertise”.

b. Budget Efficiency

However, there has been considerable underspending of the programme budget. As of the latest date [October 2010], only 41% of the first fund transfer transacted on March 2009 has been disbursed. This means the programme had disbursed less than half of the funds targeted for the first 12 months, within the 20-month period. This underspending is due to the mistake in the budget allocation for the first year (i.e. the budget for the first year was overstated) and the slow pace of programme implementation at the onset. Based on the review made by key programme staff during the mission, the budget submitted by UNDP had particularly been incorrect because the activities that were supposed to be implemented in Year 2 were already included in the Year 1 budget. This means that the budget of US\$1.5 million for the first year is a wrong estimate: it was overstated because the costs of some activities which were supposed to be for Year 2 were included in the Year 1 budget. In particular, the UNDP allocation was erroneously included in the Year 1 when it should have been for Year 2. According to the programme implementers, they also changed the sequence of the activities and this meant that the UNDP activities cannot proceed unless the UNESCO activities have been completed. [Table 5 and 10].³³

Table 10. Selected Financial Data

	Amount Transferred (US\$)	Amount Disbursed (US\$)		Disbursement Rate	
		As of June 2010	As of October 2010	As of June 2010	As of October 2010
UNESCO	753,983	172,273	362,488	23%	48%
UNDP	392,624	2,322	6,765	1%	2%
UN Women	199,939	26,723	113,347	13%	57%
FAO	188,629	113,047	153,024	60%	81%
Total	1,535,175	314,365	635,624	20%	41%

Source: Monitoring Reports

At this time, the programme implementers have submitted a request for the second fund transfer in the amount of around US\$1.1 million which is the budget for the second year AWP [Table 5]. The request was made on the basis of the commitment rate system, which allows the next fund transfer as long as 70% of the previous transfer has already been “committed”, in the form of contracts or actual invoices and receipts. This commitment rate system is a standard procedure across MDG-F programmes.

In the previous evaluations done by the Consultant for the MDG-F, the weakness of this system has already been reported. The commitment rate system is weak because it does not reflect the progress of the programme. The combined nature of the system also creates a disincentive for the agencies which are otherwise doing well, as they are not able to get their next budgets on time due to the inefficiency of the other participating agencies. When the gap between the commitment rate and the disbursement rate is large, usage of the commitment rate system also leads to fund inefficiency (i.e.

³³ The MDTF released the first tranche of funds to the UN Agencies on the basis of the budget indicated in the AWP for Year 1.

most of the funds released will not be utilized as planned). The same finding will apply to this culture and development programme: it will result to inefficiency in the programme funds, as it is likely that most of the money will not be utilized within the budgetary time frame. Further, the Technical Lead Agency had already come up with a corrected version of the budget, which is now different from the submitted amount in the second year AWP.³⁴

E. Prospects for Sustainability

The programme has been focused on the immediate needs that should be addressed, such as the hiring of the PM, the implementation of the remedial plan, the finalization of the second year AWP, and the preparations and assistance to this mid-term evaluation. There has been no real discussion yet on the sustainability of the programme, although the programme implementers are well aware of this concern, and are apparently just waiting for the aforementioned immediate tasks to be completed first before moving on this aspect.

It nevertheless appears that the programme design had also missed out on including an exit phase within the three-year time frame. Given an already delayed overall situation, such an exit phase should might as well be integrated within an extended period of programme implementation. However, it will be necessary for the programme to elaborate and formally put into writing its sustainability strategy at the soonest possible time.

³⁴ Except for FAO which posted a disbursement rate of 81% as of October 2010, it is not likely for the UN Agencies to significantly utilize their budgets within the immediate period. The corrected version of the budget shows that while around US\$1.36 million will be needed for Year 2, an excess amount of roughly US\$0.7 million will be re-phased from Year 1. If the fund request is granted, this may result in an over budget of approximately US\$0.5 million (i.e. US\$1.8 million less the corrected budget of US\$1.36 million).

III. Conclusions and Other Remarks

A. Conclusions

1. Critical changes were made on the budget and content of the original programme concept which were applied into the current programme design. While a final determination of the technical soundness of the programme content vis-à-vis the final budget cannot be done, there are indications of a mismatch between these two elements in the programme design. The programme design could also stand improvements on its Results Framework. Overall guidance and financial support by the MDG-F Steering Committee/Secretariat during the stage of programme design was visible. Further technical assistance to the implementers on the results-based management of the programme could however have been helpful.
2. The programme is strategically relevant to the creation of a future Palestinian state. The programme is also clearly linked to the current plans in the oPT: it is related to the PRDP and the MTRP. However, the cultural agenda does not appear to be a priority of the PNA, and this is a challenge that the programme should address. The programme also needs to clarify how it can actually contribute to the achievement of the MDGs.
3. The programme started out on a slow pace because of internal planning weaknesses and external factors. While a remedial plan has been adopted to catch up with the lag time, further improvement on it could still be done by expanding the time frame to the whole three-year planning horizon and by integrating the revisions from an adjusted Results Framework.

Despite the delays, the programme has some key accomplishments to show at this stage. Most of the programme activities have also been of above-standard quality.

4. The programme outreach is being covered as planned. However, there is a weakness in reaching out to critical target groups outside of the West Bank and Gaza areas.
5. The programme is conforming to the standard concept of a “joint programme”, and is designed to be highly robust. While the programme is indeed functioning as a joint undertaking by the participating UN Agencies and PNA Ministries, understanding how a joint programme should operate is taking a learning-by-doing process. At this mid-term stage, joint planning in the programme is already evident but the other dimensions of joint monitoring and joint decision-making are still to be discovered.

Hence, while the PMC and NSC for this joint programme are functioning, these structures have not yet evolved into effective and efficient mechanisms for problem-solving.

6. The evaluation has forwarded some pioneering effects that the programme can build on. There were also immediate positive effects of the programme activities which were noted during the mission. On the other end, the programme’s synergistic effects are still a missing link that can be further studied.
7. The programme has been weak in the selection of the Programme Managers, and this was a factor for the turnovers in the PM position. While the post was immediately filled, it is not clear whether the root causes of the turnovers have been fully addressed.

Programme efficiency had also been weakened by a mistake in the budget allocation for the first year and the initial slow start of the programme. The standard controls for cost efficiency are nevertheless being applied in the programme.

8. The sustainability of the programme is a known concern among the implementers but it is not yet a priority task at this time because of a felt need to address some more immediate issues. It is nevertheless already clear that an exit phase is missing from the three-year programme plan.

B. Lessons Learned So Far

The following lessons were noted in the review of this joint programme:

1. When there is a significant difference between the original programme concept and the final programme document, effort should be made to ensure that the programme design remains technically sound, aside from the determining if the programme document is still consistent with the concept note. In particular, in the event of a sizable budget cut, a technical assessment should be conducted in order to know if the financial allocation is still rationally commensurate to the programme content.
2. Aside from the guidance and support provided by the MDG-F, similar interventions in the future should include technical assistance to the programme implementers on RBM: in this experience, there was a need for assistance on results-oriented planning (i.e. development of the Results Framework and conduct of programme inception) and budgeting.
3. The involvement of the counterpart ministries in the programme planning stage is a critical element. Foregoing the consultative process at the planning stage raises the start-up costs of the programme. A large time interval between the planning phase and the implementation phase should also be avoided.
4. The management of a joint programme is more complex than a regular stand-alone programme because of the greater number of institutions involved. The learning curve for a first-time joint programme should have also been considered in the programme plan.
5. Stability in the staff positions should be aimed for. Turnovers, especially in the Programme Manager position, should be minimized.
6. The time frame being set for a joint programme or any other type of development intervention should distinguish between its start-up phase, its implementation phase, and its exit phase. The activities under each phase should also be made distinct.

C. Notable Features of the Programme

1. In terms of design, this joint programme is highly robust. As such, it could be an interesting and leading case for further elaboration of the joint programme concept.
2. According to an informant, this is the first major intervention on culture in the oPT that has moved out of the traditional center of Ramallah, and towards other areas in the West Bank. If this information is correct, this point could be further highlighted by the programme.
3. The programme is acknowledged to be the first intervention of culture and development in the oPT that is following a holistic approach. This feature sets it apart from the other efforts in the area.

IV. Recommendations

A. Recommendations to Programme Management

1. Programme management should consider the possibility of including Palestinian target groups outside of the West Bank and Gaza areas in the programme outreach, particularly those based in the neighboring Arab States, in order to respond to the situation brought by the diaspora. Electronic and other portable media may be utilized for this purpose; in this way, physical presence of the programme in the proposed expansion areas may not be necessary. It is also strongly recommended to include the Palestinian youth as a distinct sub-target group.
2. Effort could be made to increase the financial commitment by the PNA on its cultural agenda. This may be done through the inclusion of lobbying activities on the PNA budget, in lieu of some activities that are not turning out well (i.e. Activity 2.1.2 and Activity 2.1.5). An indicator related to this change may also be included in the next revised version of the Results Framework.
3. As a preliminary step, it will be necessary to undertake a technical review of the programme content and budget: in particular, it will be imperative to look back at the costs and the scope of work, and determine if these are indeed technically sound. If not, programme management will need to make tough decisions on which components or activities to forego. The time frame for the programme content may be reckoned from March 2009 to an extended period allowable under the MDG-F Guidelines.
4. It will also be fundamental to thereafter revise the second year work plan and budget which was submitted to the MDG-F Secretariat, reflecting the changes made on the whole period (i.e. three-years plus an extension until such time as may be allowed under the MDG-F Guidelines) work plan and budget.
5. An application for extension of the programme until the maximum time allowed under the MDG-F Guidelines should be immediately submitted by programme management to the MDG-F Secretariat.
6. The Results Framework of the programme may be improved with greater understanding of RBM concepts (e.g. Results Chain and logic models) and the standard OECD DAC definitions. For this purpose, an RBM Expert may be hired to facilitate the process of arriving at a common understanding on the Results Framework among the different stakeholders. In improving the framework, the following aspects have to be clarified and corrected: (a) the cause-and-effect relationships between the activities and outputs, and between the outputs and outcomes; (b) the difference between an "activity" and a "result"; (c) the definition of "output" vis-à-vis "outcome"; and (d) the use of proper and adequate indicators.
7. The programme also needs to elaborate the synergy that it intends to create, and clarify its actual contribution to the achievement of the MDGs. On the latter point, the evaluation specifically suggests to increase the target number of job opportunities to be created by the programme.
8. The programme should ensure that the chances for future turnovers in the staff positions are minimized. A Human Resource Management Expert may be tasked to perform a review of the full job specifications required by the post, to be crossed with the profiles of the personnel.
9. Aside from revising the M & E Framework in collaboration with the initiative of UNSCO, the M & E System and Strategy should be further developed and adopted by the programme. Among other elements, the M & E System should include: (a) the roles of the partner-institutions in the collection and analysis of the information; and (b) the process to be followed in the knowledge-sharing of the monitoring reports. Training on M & E among the participating agencies should be part of the M & E Strategy, as well as a clear identification and capacity-building of a local sustainable organization which will ultimately be responsible for the M & E function after programme exit.

10. An exit strategy should be developed for the programme, with its exit phase to be included in the proposed extension period.
11. Conscious effort should now be started to upgrade the PMC and NSC into effective and efficient mechanisms for problem-solving. A key step toward this direction would be to strengthen the M & E System and feed the monitoring reports in the meetings of the PMC and NSC. The agenda on the PMC and NSC Meetings should specifically include an item on "Problems Being Encountered". The minutes should also show the "Steps Taken" or "Decisions Made" by the PMC and NSC on these problems.
12. A systematic assessment of the quality and effect of programme activities could be done by strengthening field monitoring and post-activity monitoring (e.g. post-training) work. Field monitoring and post-activity monitoring reports should be systematically collected and assessed, as part of the regular M & E function.

B. Recommendations to the MDG-F Secretariat

1. The MDG-F Secretariat should consider the programme's application for an extension up to the maximum time allowable under the guidelines.
2. In the interim period, the MDG-F Secretariat may also release the second transfer of funds to the programme implementers on the basis of their disbursement rates (i.e. the estimated budget for Year 2 less the actual amounts disbursed as of October 2010). However, this option will have to be cleared up first with the MDTF Office, with particular reference to its effect on the subsequent transfers.

Annex A. Itinerary of the Field Mission

November 7 (Sunday)	AM	Preliminary Meeting with UNESCO
	PM	Preliminary Meeting with the Evaluation Reference Group Group Meeting with MOPAD
November 8 (Monday)	AM	Attendance in Opening Ceremony for Museum Training Individual Meetings with the Focal Persons for the Culture Sector Strategy, Palestinian Tourism Organizations Network, Intangible Heritage Team, and International Art Academy
	PM	Group Meeting with Focal Persons from MOC, MOTA, MOA, and MOWA Group Meeting with Focal Persons from UN Agencies
November 9 (Tuesday)		Field Visit to Arrabeh, Ya'bad and Jenin
November 10 (Wednesday)	AM	Preparation for Debriefing
	PM	Video Conference with Focal Person from Gaza Follow-Up Meeting with UNESCO
November 11 (Thursday)	PM	Debriefing with the Evaluation Reference Group
November 12 (Friday)		<i>Consultant's Departure</i>

Annex B. Questionnaires Used for the Evaluation

NSC Members

1. (For MOPAD) In your opinion, to what extent were the opinions and interests of the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development been taken into account in the design and implementation of the Culture and Development Programme? Please choose from among the following choices and elaborate briefly:

To the best possible extent To a large extent To some extent To the least extent Not at all

2. In your view, to what extent is the Culture and Development Programme relevant to the Policies and Priorities of the Palestinian National Authority? Please choose from among the following choices and elaborate briefly:

Highly relevant Relevant Somehow relevant Least relevant Not at all

3. Do you think that the governance and management structures for the Culture and Development Programme (i.e. National Steering Committee and Programme Management Committee) are working well?

4. What do you think are the major problems and challenges being faced by the Culture and Development Programme and how could these be possibly solved?

PNA Ministries

1. In your opinion, to what extent were the opinions and interests of your agency been taken into account in the design and implementation of the Culture and Development Programme? Please choose from among the following choices and elaborate briefly:

To the best possible extent To a large extent To some extent To the least extent Not at all

2. In your view, to what extent is the Culture and Development Programme relevant to the needs and priorities of your agency? Please choose from among the following choices and elaborate briefly:

Highly relevant Relevant Somehow relevant Least relevant Not at all

3. Is the Culture and Development Programme on track according to schedule?

4. What are the factors that are contributing to the progress or delay in the implementation of the Culture and Development Programme?

5. What do you think are the major problems and challenges being faced by the Culture and Development Programme and how could these be possibly solved?

Annex C. List of Persons Consulted

MDG-F Secretariat

1. Ms. Patricia Fernandez-Pacheco - UN Coordination Specialist
2. Ms. Nurit Bodemann-Ostow - Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

NSC Members

1. Mr. Maxwell Gaylard - UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator
2. Ms. Ana Urrutia-Enciso - Project Manager, AECID
3. Ms. Eva Suarez Leonardo - Project Manager, AECID
4. Dr. Estephan Salameh - Minister, MOPAD

PA Ministries

1. Mr. Yousef Tartoum - Focal Person, MOC
2. Mr. Hamdan Taha - Focal Person, MOTA
3. Mr. Samer Titi - Focal Person, MOA
4. Ms. Sumood Yassein - Focal Person, MOWA

UN Agencies

1. Ms. Louise Haxthausen - Head of Office, UNESCO
2. Mr. Giovanni Fontana - Programme Specialist, UNESCO
3. Ms. Areej Hijazi - Senior Programme Analyst, UNESCO
4. Ms. Sima Khoury - Programme Associate, UNESCO
5. Mr. Reginald Graham - Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP
6. Mr. Nader Atta - Focal Person, UNDP
7. Ms. Siham Rashid - Focal Person, UN Women
8. Mr. Azzam Saleh - Coordinator, FAO

Programme Secretariat

1. Ms. Hiba Tibi - Incoming Programme Manager
2. Ms. Luna Shamieh - Monitoring Consultant

Others

1. Mr. Jamil Hilal - Team Leader for Culture Sector Strategy
2. Mr. Raed Saadeh - Palestinian Tourism Organizations Network
3. Ms. Tina Sherwell - International Academy of Art
4. Dr. Shariff Kanaana - Ministry of Culture
5. Mr. Rashad al-Madani - Focal Person of Gaza Research Team
6. Mr. Adid Mohammed Al-Ardah - Mayor of Arrabeh
7. Various Women-Beneficiaries of FAO Training Courses
8. Officials of Canaan Fair Trade

Annex D. List of Reference Materials

Plans and Reports

MDG-F Secretariat. *Report for the MDG Achievement Fund Steering Committee*. 24 September 2010.

Ministry of Planning and Development. *Millennium Development Goals Progress Report*. August 2010.

Palestinian National Authority. *Palestinian Reform and Development Plan 2008-2010*.

UK Border Agency. *Operational Guidance Note - Israel, Gaza and the West Bank*. February 2009.

UN Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. *United Nations Medium-Term Response Plan (MTRP)*. May 28, 2009.

UNDP/PAPP. *The Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2002 Occupied Palestinian Territory*. August 2003.

Minutes of Meetings

Minutes of PMC Meetings held from June 10, 2009 until August 4, 2010.

Minutes of NSC Meetings held on April 2, 2009 and March 15, 2010.

Minutes of the Inception Workshop held on November 3, 2009.

Others

Guidance Note on Joint Programming by the UN Development Group dated 19 December 2003.

Implementation Guidelines for MDG Achievement Fund Joint Programmes dated June 2009.

Interoffice Memorandum from the MDTF to the oPT UNRC dated May 8, 2008.

MDG-F Secretariat Feedback Message - Year 2010.

MDG-F Secretariat Feedback Message - Year 2009.

Monitoring Report for the Period of 1 January - 30 June 2010.

Special Monitoring Report for the Period of 10 March 2009 - 31 October 2010.

Terms of Reference for Thematic Window on Culture and Development by the MDG-F.

Concept Note submitted to the MDG-F Thematic Window for Culture and Development.

Document entitled *Technical Evaluation Comments of Concept Notes Retained*.

Document entitled *Focus Group Results*. Results of FGD with Women-Beneficiaries of Food Processing Training. October 26, 2010.

Document entitled *Focus Group Results*. Results of FGD with Festival Coordinators. November 4, 2010.

Annex E. Conceptual Note in Determining the Robustness of a Joint Programme³⁵

1. A Joint Programme involves two or more UN Agencies working together to achieve a common result. This common result could however be an outcome and/or an output (and even an impact!).
2. There are participating agencies which are responsible for the implementation of activities specific to each output. Following the Results Chain concept, these are also the agencies that are therefore responsible for the delivery of each output. It follows that the agencies responsible for the delivery of outputs under each outcome is also (partly or solely) responsible for the achievement of that particular outcome. In the MDG-F Joint Programmes, these relationships can be seen from the Results Framework.
3. The simplest form of a Joint Programme could therefore be seen from a Results Framework in which each of at least two participating agencies is responsible for its own outcome [see Form 1 below]. These outcomes would then be linked to a common UNDAF Outcome.
4. Another form of a Joint Programme could be seen from a Results Framework in which at least two participating agencies are responsible for a common output. This means that while the agencies are each implementing their own activities in accordance with their respective expertise and mandates, they are working towards the achievement of a basic result – the output. It follows that the output cannot be achieved if the participating agencies do not complete their activities [see Form 3 below].
5. An intermediary form of a Joint Programme could be seen from a Results Framework in which at least two participating agencies are each responsible for the delivery of their respective outputs, although leading towards a common outcome [see Form 2 below].
6. While the three forms can be considered as joint programmes, it is obvious that the first form is a weaker version compared to the second and the third (i.e. the first form is what can be called in plain language as “just an effort by the agencies to put it all together”). The robustness of a joint programme can be determined from the way that its results are structured, as shown in this example:

Example: 2 Agencies, 2 Outcomes, 3 Forms

Result	Participating Agencies		
	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3
Outcome 1 Output 1.1 Output 1.2	Agency 1 Agency 1 Agency 1	Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 Agency 2	Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 and 2
Outcome 2 Output 2.1 Output 2.2	Agency 2 Agency 2 Agency 2	Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 Agency 2	Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 and 2 Agency 1 and 2

In this example, the level of robustness of the Form 1 JP can be considered as a “low”, “medium” in Form 2, and “high” in Form 3.

³⁵ This note was prepared by the Consultant for the purpose of elaborating the findings and opinions raised in this evaluation report. It does not necessarily represent the views of the MDG-F and any of the organizations mentioned in this report.