BASIC RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM) TERMINOLOGY

It is recognized that many UN agencies are using different RBM definitions and terminologies, even though the concepts are, in many cases, analogous. To move towards a common ground for supporting national programming, the handbook proposes definitions of key RBM terms in Table 1. When adopted by the individual UN agencies, these definitions contribute to greater coherence and consistency among UN agencies and with national governments. The basic terminology used in this handbook is taken from several sources and is strengthened from best practices in the RBM field.

Table 1: Definition of Key Terms used in UN Country Programming

**Results based management (RBM)**
Results-based management is a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of development results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and higher level goals or impact) and use information and evidence on actual results to inform decision making on the design, resourcing and delivery of programmes and activities as well as for accountability and reporting.

**Results**
Results are changes in a state or condition that derive from a cause-and-effect relationship. There are three types of such changes (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) that can be set in motion by a development intervention – outputs, outcomes and impacts.

**Results chain**
The causal sequence for a development intervention that stipulates the necessary sequence to achieve desired objectives – beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes, impacts and feedback. In some agencies, reach is part of the results chain. It is based on a theory of change, including underlying assumptions.

**Impact**
Positive and negative long-term effects on identifiable population groups produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. These effects can be economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental, technological or of other types and should have some relationship to the MDGs and national development goals.
Goal
The specific end results desired or expected to occur as a consequence, at least in part, of the intervention or activity. It is the higher order objective to which a development intervention is intended to contribute.

Outcome
The intended or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs, responding to national priorities and local needs and UNDAF outcomes. Outcomes represent institutional and behavioural changes in development conditions that occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of goals.

Outputs
The products, services, skills and abilities that result from the completion of activities within a development intervention within the control of the organization.

Activity
Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilized to produce specific outputs.

Inputs
The financial, human, material, technological and information resources used for development interventions.

Performance indicator
A performance indicator is a unit of measurement that specifies what is to be measured along a scale or dimension but does not indicate the direction or change. Performance indicators are a qualitative or quantitative means of measuring an output or outcome, with the intention of gauging the performance of a programme or investment.

Baseline
Information gathered at the beginning of a project or programme from which variations found in the project or programme are measured.

Target
Specifies a particular value for an indicator to be accomplished by a specific date in the future. Total literacy rate to reach 85% among groups X and Y by the year 2010.

Benchmark
Reference point or standard against which progress or achievements can be assessed. A benchmark refers to the performance that has been achieved in the recent past by other comparable organizations, or what can be reasonably inferred to have been achieved in similar circumstances.
Results framework or matrix
The results matrix explains how results are to be achieved, including causal relationships and underlying assumptions and risks. The results framework reflects a more strategic level across an entire organization for a country programme, a programme component within a country programme, or even a project.

Performance
The degree to which a development intervention or a development partner operates according to specific criteria/standard/guidelines or achieves results in accordance with stated plans.

Performance monitoring
A continuous process of collecting and analyzing data for performance indicators, to compare how well a development intervention, partnership or policy reform is being implemented against expected results (achievement of outputs and progress towards outcomes).