Peer Review of the Implementation of MTSIP

Main Findings and Recommendations

Presentation to CPR Working Group on the MTSIP

By the MTSIP Peer Review Panel

18 August 2010
Mandate

Resolution 21/2 of April 2007 on MTSIP for 2008-2013 requested the Executive Director to establish an annual peer review process, in close collaboration with the Habitat Agenda partners, on the implementation of the MTSIP.

The Peer Review Panel Members

CPR members (4)
- Ambassador Agnes Kadama Kalibbala, Uganda
- Bruno Garcia-Dobarco Gonzales, the Kingdom of Spain
- Regine Hess, the Federal Republic of Germany
- Jong-seon Jeong, the Republic of Korea

Representative of Habitat Partners (1)
- Siraj Sait, the United Kingdom

Professional evaluators from a peer organisation (2)
- Segbedzi Norgbey, UNEP
- Michael Spilsbury, UNEP

Evaluation consultants (2)
- Arlette Klein, Independent Consultant, United States of America
- Stein-Erik Kruse, Nordic Consulting Group, the Kingdom of Norway

Total number of the Panel members 9
Appreciation

• The Panel extends thanks to all CPR members and the UN-Habitat secretariat staff who were involved in the process. The review was conducted with a team spirit and dedication; it was interactive and transparent.

• The Panel equally thanks the CPR members, donors and Habitat Agenda partners, who participated in interviews, group discussions and debriefing sessions to provide input that contributed to this review.

• The Panel wishes to recognize the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, which supported the conduct of the review in various ways and acted as a focal point for the Panel and other partners.

• Finally the Panel congratulates the Secretariat, the CPR, the donors and other partners for the initial MTSIP results achieved.

The Objectives of the Peer Review

According to the TOR:

• To assess the status of implementation of the MTSIP and make recommendations for improvement of the pace and quality of implementation;

• To assess institutional and strategic arrangements used to further strengthen the MTSIP implementation.

Answer strategic questions:

• Has UN-Habitat become more strategic with a sharper focus?

• Has UN-Habitat become more efficient and effective in its operations?
The Peer Review Focus

- Strategic and Programmatic Focus
- Organizational Structure and Programme Alignment for MTSIP Delivery
- Country Programme Focus and Coordination
- Programme Planning and Review Processes
- Business Processes
- Resource Mobilisation

Schematic outline of peer review process

1. GC Decision for MTSIP Peer Review
2. Development, and CPR approval of, peer review TORs
3. Selection and recruitment of consultants
4. Report revised and Peer Panel undertakes a ‘quality control’ process
5. Draft report reviewed by Peer Panel
6. Consultants conduct review and prepare draft report
7. Panel presentation of final report to CPR
8. Panel acceptance of Final Report
Main Findings

1. MTSIP Progress & Achievements

   A revitalized mandate and significant achievement
   • MTSIP has introduced several positive developments: Common vision; more enthusiasm; reduction in internal barriers; better collaboration on shared results; strengthened normative and operational linkages;
   • Strategic Results Framework, improved planning, monitoring and reporting;
   • There has been less progress in certain areas such as improved business processes, resource mobilization and organizational restructuring.

   Stronger institutional than programmatic attention
   • The institutional aspects have so far received the most attention both in the MTSIP action plan and regular progress reports.

   An on-going reform, some issues yet to be addressed
   • Articulating the new vision and making sure adequate human capacities are recruited;
   • Incremental approach to the reform has added considerable costs, maintaining overlapping planning and reporting systems.

   Constraints to effective implementation
   • Some constraints are beyond UN-Habitat control (governance structures, administrative services (UNON), mandatory procedures of UN Secretariat).

2. Strategic Programmatic Focus

   A clearer but not sharper focus
   • No evidence that major activities have been dropped and resources redirected. On the contrary, new priorities have been added.

   Insufficient strategic leadership in allocation of resources
   • Policy intentions have not been followed by strategic planning and allocation of resources among the focus areas.
3. Substantive Focus: Challenge of Communication

- Sustainable urbanization principles not adequately defined, yet central to five substantive focus areas;
- Five substantive focus areas do not always communicate well;
- Policy/strategy papers for five focus areas are variable in conceptual clarity and quality;
- Messages of World Urban Campaign need to be clearly articulated and communicated.

4. Structural Alignment Issues

- Changes were introduced in the formal structure to reflect priorities expressed in the MTSIP (e.g. RMU, External Relations in EO);
- There is a widespread view that there is need for improving the current organizational structure (Annex 4 is the UN-Habitat Structure as of August 2010).

5. Variable Organizational Performance

- Widespread perception that a small number of staff carry a disproportionate part of the burden;
- Weak management was identified in some sections and Units;
- Clear performance standards, staff incentives, quality control mechanisms and sanctions against underperformance are lacking.
6. Inadequate Coordination between Global, Regional and Country levels

- There is insufficient coordination of global regional and country level activities;
- With expanding number of activities at regional and country levels a more formal structure for internal coordination is required.

7. Progress in Integrating Normative and Operational roles

- Distinction between normative and operational roles has often been unclear (consensus; both required BUT what balance?)
- Operational mandate is emphasized by the RTCD;
- Others argue UN-Habitat has become too donor driven by increasingly taking on operational projects on contractual basis;
- Limited core resources are used for strengthening regional and country level normative work.

8. Complex Programming and Planning Structure

- The current planning structure is complex with several levels and a number of documents;
- The work programme and budget is missing details on prioritization and linkages to resource allocation;
- A proposal for establishing a unit for strategic planning, quality control and performance monitoring;
- A proposal to have an independent evaluation function.

9. Two Overlapping Programming Processes Maintained

- MTSIP is perceived by some as an add on to the biennial work programme and budget which has constrained the development of a more unified programming and reporting structures.
10. Categories of Results - Contributions to MDGs

Achievement

- Better understanding of results beyond outputs, but work still needed to develop good indicators for different types of result; (e.g. capacity building, advocacy, scaling-up)
- UN-Habitat should focus on results within its mandate that will ultimately affect and impact on long term MDG achievements.

11. Programme Review Process Strengthened

- The new PRCs at HQ and regional level are operational and using new guidelines;
- There isn’t much evidence that the MTSIP Steering Committee has fulfilled its responsibility to set corporate priorities and allocate resources appropriately;
- The financial threshold to delegate review to the regional PRC is considered too low by regional offices involved in emergency operations;
- Trust Funds maintain their internal review and approval processes, leaving the role of PRC unclear.

12. Mixed results in improving business processes

- UN-Habitat begun the process of streamlining travel, procurement, recruitment procedures as well as delegation of financial authority;
- Not all required procedures are in place and some of the problems are attributed to UNON;
- Need to review and update all service agreements between UN-Habitat and UNON;
- Improvement needed in practices and procedures, in use of, and requests for, office products and equipment and pre-approval of vendors.
13. Resource Mobilization

- Resource mobilization strategy has increased the awareness among staff on the need for coordinated fund raising;
- Working to expand the use of multi-year agreements;
- Dependence on a small group of major donors is considered the most critical risk for UN-Habitat and imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked remains a source of concern;
- The organization should intensify efforts to raise its profile and improve its image in the media through existing mechanisms such as WUC, WUF, award programmes, flagship reports and other publications.

Recommendations

High Priorities for Senior Management

1. The new ED should consider a new organizational structure with the aim of achieving better alignment with the MTSIP focus areas;
2. UN-Habitat to seek to establish a unified planning and reporting system for decision making, resource mobilization and reporting to all donors and avoid overlapping systems;
3. UN-Habitat to define clearly and transparently, in strategic framework and biennial programme and budgets, what priorities are for short and long term; criteria and process for allocation of resources among competing priorities; and special criteria that deal with allocation of resources to regions and countries;
4. Strategic planning, performance monitoring and reporting should be coordinated by Central Strategic Management section at the highest level of the organization directed and support by the Executive Director;
5. An independent evaluation function should be established;
6. Coordination at global, regional and country levels should be formalized and strengthened;
High Priorities for Senior Management (cont.)

- Regional offices to play a more active role in promoting a comprehensive and coherent normative and operational vision between divisions/focus areas and country programmes;

8. The programmatic aspects of the MTSIP should be further emphasised to create a clear and more strategic UN-Habitat while continuing with the institutional reforms;

9. UN-Habitat to intensify efforts to raise its profile and improve its image in the media through existing mechanisms such as the Global Campaign, the WUF, Awards Programmes, Flagship reports and other publications;

Priorities for Senior Management & Divisions

10. UN-Habitat to clearly define its roles and expected results in policy development, research and advocacy, capacity building etc and be held accountable for such results;

11. UN-Habitat to undertake a comprehensive independent assessment to document what has been achieved to date and learn lessons from MTSIP implementation experiences and identify mechanisms for systematic tracking of UN-Habitat’s work at country level;

12. Given the rapid increase of funding of disaster and post-disaster projects, an in-depth evaluation should be carried out to assess the extent to which it has contributed to ENOF at country level;

13. The MTSIP to focus on policy but also more on technical administrative reform;

14. Work should continue on implementing reforms of business processes;

15. UN-Habitat to prepare an assessment of financial risks;

16. The level of staff awareness and engagement with regard to the WUC should be assessed in the next UN-Habitat staff survey.
Suggestions for the CPR

17. The CPR, and in particular the donors, should review UN-Habitat’s current planning and reporting systems and requirements, in light of their own requirements, in order to reduce costs and duplication and strengthen coherence and quality;

18. The CPR should continue to address the following issues: UN-Habitat’s governance structures, UN-Habitat’s relationships to the UN Secretariat and UNON. Optimal organizational efficiency and effectiveness will not be achieved unless such systemic constraints are addressed and resolved;

19. The UN-Habitat Governing Council Resolution 21/2 of 20 April 2007 requested UN-Habitat “to establish an annual peer-review process, in close collaboration with the Habitat Agenda Partners, on the implementation of the MTSIP”. Major reviews at the organizational level (such as this MTSIP Peer Review) are complex and involve multiple stakeholders, varied sources of information and, therefore, require considerable time and resources. The timeframe within which such a process can be completed, and the time needed for higher level results from the MTSIP to become apparent, suggest that annual implementation of the peer review is not feasible. The Panel recommends that minimum period between such reviews should be at least two years.

Conclusion

• Significant achievements by MTSIP

• A lot remains to be done and there some fundamental challenges in implementing the MTSIP

• Congratulations for the initial results achieved