

Strengthening the National Statistical System Joint UN Project

TERMS OF REFERENCE National consultant to perform the final evaluation of Territorial Statistics Project Component

Potential Applicants:	Specialist in monitoring & evaluation
Contract type:	Individual Contract modality
Duty station:	Chisinau
Estimated Duration:	November-December 2014, 20 full working days
Contracting Authority:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Main stakeholder:	National Bureau of Statistics of RM, Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions, Ministry of Economy
Project's Component:	"Improvement of availability and reliability of regional statistics for decision-makers of the Republic of Moldova"

I. Background

Overall context

The production of reliable statistics and use of statistical data for evidence-based policy design and monitoring is fundamental to human development, the achievement of the MDGs and further approximation to EU standards for the Republic of Moldova. This development challenge has been anchored in the United Nations development assistance and partnership frameworks¹ and national strategic documents (national and sectorial development strategies, etc.). The European Neighborhood Programme Action Plan for Moldova, and later on the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement², also recognized the need for further assistance in harmonization of official statistics with European standards.

According to the global assessment of the official statistics system in the Republic of Moldova, conducted by Eurostat in 2007, the National Statistical System was evaluated as being reasonably developed, adhered to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and compliant with EU requirements at a certain extent³. Despite of this progress, at that time, data collection and data dissemination systems remained weak and not in line with international standards. The Moldova's data system still suffered from inconsistent methodology, multiplicity of data sources, weak capacity of data providers and data users to acknowledge the value and properly benefit of available data. A lot of statistical indicators were not disaggregated by required dimensions or, if disaggregated, then often not disseminated and not easily accessible or understood by users. The low statistical users' literacy generated poor use of available data for analysis of the current situation, participatory policy making, monitoring of policies' implementation and evaluation of their impact. Also, the National Statistical System faced many issues related to underdevelopment of computerized registers, fragmented statistical activities in line ministries, inadequate resources and lack of continuous training and capacity building.

As a response to all these circumstances, in 2007, UN Joint Project on Strengthening the National Statistical System⁴ of the Republic of Moldova has started aiming to provide more strategic and coordinated interventions to the Government of Moldova in the statistical field. The Project aimed to strengthen data production, dissemination and use and made a

¹ United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2007-2011, RM-UN Partnership Framework 2013-2017

² According to the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agreement (under chapter 6 of Title IV: Economic cooperation – Statistics), the national statistical systems should respect the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, taking into account the *acquis* in statistics, including the European Statistics Code of Practice, in order to align the national statistical system with the European norms and standards.

³ Global assessment of the system of official statistics in the Republic of Moldova, May 2007, by Willem de Vries, http://www.statistica.md/public/files/SeminareConferinte/conf3_4mai2007/Raport_Willem_de_Vries_en.pdf. General assessment results: 35% of the statistical domains fully correspond to the EU requirements, half of them - correspond to a great degree and 15% - partially correspond to the EU standards.

⁴ Statistics Project's card is available on <http://www.undp.md/projects/Statistics.shtml>, as part of the UNDP Democratic Governance Cluster.

critical contribution to improving the quality and accessibility of statistical data in Moldova which was possible due to combined complementary areas of expertise of the joint UN agencies.

The respective Joint Project was successfully implemented (as well as evaluated⁵) and in 2013 complemented with a new component on *Improvement of availability and reliability of regional statistics for Moldova's decision-makers*, representing developmental assistance from the Government of Romania in partnership, besides NBS, with the Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions and Ministry of Economy.

The given Project Component had to respond to the urgent need to improve the availability and quality of territorial statistics used to ensure that the disadvantaged areas of the country are clearly identified and their problems' nature is clearly understood. Statistical issues were identified and gradually resolved by exploring various approaches and learning from advanced experience of other countries, and building capacities of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) to monitor the implementation of their Regional Development Strategies.

In the long term, when sufficient evidence is made available through official and/or departmental statistics – to which the Project Component contributed - the local authorities will be able to increase their role in completing the process of local development, to develop feasible policies for the local/regional development and to increase the capacity of different stakeholders at local level to implement these policies.

Brief description of the Project Component to be evaluated

The overall objective of the Project Component is to contribute to the improvement of quality regional data made available to decision-makers and planners within the Moldovan central, regional and local government system so that government policy and planning on regional development at all levels is properly informed. Gaps in multi-dimensional disaggregated data at local/regional level were identified and filled, special focus being put on mechanisms fostering the capacities and cooperation between various data producers and targeting quality issues.

The successful accomplishment of the Project Component's targets should have led to the improvement of:

- 1) the system of socio-economic statistical indicators at local/regional levels (including data collection) and calculation methodologies;
- 2) the information flows, leading to the enhanced usage of administrative and statistical sources of information for production of reliable and disaggregated statistical data needed for the operation of LPAs and RDAs.

These objectives were tackled within three inter-related outputs as follows:

Output 1. *Regional statistics improved and policy-makers' capacities enhanced to undertake evidence-based monitoring of regional development policy.*

This output could be achieved through a complex approach starting with an inventory of available national statistics and identification of the relevant statistical indicators needed to follow the progress towards the achievement of Government's strategic goals in regional development. Then the completeness, accurateness and reliability of regional statistical data mapped were assessed towards their compliance with EU requirements in the field of regional and urban statistics⁶ and methodologically improved following advanced international experience and best practices. In addition to the available regional statistics, new territorial indicators were produced to enhance the monitoring of regional development. From the data users' perspective, the Project aimed to increase their awareness on territorial data produced via user-friendly publications, databank and targeted capacity building focused on gaining practical skills and abilities on data use by specialized central and public authorities.

The main implementer of this activity was NBS that had to apply its expertise and ensure the consultation and coordination with the CPAs as data producers and the main users of official statistics. The Ministry of Regional Development and Constructions (MRDC) and its Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were the main partners of NBS, formulating their specialised needs for the monitoring and evaluation framework, and being direct beneficiaries of the resulted output.

Output 2. *Feasibility of Moldova's alignment with EU NUTS statistical territorial Classification is assessed.*

The purpose of activities under this output was to identify the existing inconsistency with EU standards as it regards regional distribution of the country and possible ways of its further adjustment to ensure comparability of national statistics with the members of European Union. In this respect, the Project facilitated the assessment of possible options for improvement of statistics' regional breakdown in accordance with EU standards (NUTS Classification of territorial units

⁵ For more details the "End of Project Evaluation and Future Programming entry-points in the field of statistics and evidence-based policy making", UN commissioned Evaluation Report, Arkadii Toritsyn and Gheorghe Caraseni, UNDP Consultants, July 2013

⁶ EU Statistical requirements compendium, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-RA-11-012/EN/KS-RA-11-012-EN.PDF, theme 5.04 Regional and urban statistics

for statistics⁷) and best practices, taking into account Moldova's regional development policy and aspirations, as well as the specifics of national development context. The assessment results were consulted with Eurostat and concerned Government counterparts (State Chancellery, MRDC, NBS, RDAs) who should have acknowledged so far that the compliance of the country's distribution with EU standards will allow its international comparability with EU members and regions, facilitate the access of Moldova's regions to the available resources and capacities.

Output 3. *Qualitative and methodological review of Small Areas Deprivation Index (SADI) is undertaken to better observe disparities at the level of rural communities.*

Because of the SADI's⁸ quality issue, Project's activities aimed to undertake an analysis of Index's relevance for the current context of Moldova given the last years changes in the normative and regulatory framework, reforms and strategic priorities at the regional/local and national levels, etc. Such analysis was based on assessment of SADI's effectiveness, target beneficiaries & users, level of its usage and constraints, informational needs being covered by it, as well as SADI's comparative advantage, weaknesses and limitations versus other available sources of territorial data. An additional aspect that was considered represents the evaluation of the quality of primary data (from centralized data sources and LPAs), used to generate this Index, from the perspective of Eurostat quality criteria in statistics. In consequence of these two analyses, the methodology of SADI was revised in line with the current policy context and needs and recommending the use of most reliable data sources which would guarantee the quality of SADI data. The revised methodology had to also contain feasible and sustainable mechanisms for quality assurance at all stages of data production process, complemented by concrete argumentation/justification of SADI's institutionalization under a concrete institution and sustainability measures.

The project will develop the capacity of the National Bureau of Statistics to deliver an improved and high quality regional statistics. The State Chancellery, Ministry of Regional Development and Construction, Ministry of Economy and other Government institutions played the leading role of approvers and promoters of the outputs produced within the Project Component. On behalf of financing country, the key implementation agency was the Romanian National Institute of Statistics that shared its experience and expertise with the Moldovan statistician in the fields of concern, as well as facilitated the cooperation between the relevant stakeholders of the Republic of Moldova and the EU homologues institutions.

II. Purpose of evaluation

The purpose of the Evaluation is to review the progress made by the Project in fulfilling its agreed objectives under the described *component on territorial statistics*, through the planned activities, and to assess their efficiency and effectiveness and of resources used to generate results with special emphasis on impact and sustainability.

The Evaluation is expected to examine whether the activities, outputs and objectives outlined in project document have been achieved, as well to underline factors that impacted Joint Project's outputs and outcomes, capture good practices as well as lessons learned, including unintended consequences (positive and negative). The UNDP Country Office accordingly plans to make use of the exercise as a learning opportunity not only for the office but also for key partners and stakeholders, as inclusively and as practically possible. The findings and recommendations generated by the evaluation should inform the implementation and targeting of activities related to evidence-based policy M&E and strengthening the necessary statistical capacities planned within UN-RM Partnership Framework until 2017.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

1. Provide an objective and independent assessment of achievements and results, constraints, performance, impact, relevance and sustainability of the interventions ;
2. Generate lessons learned and good practices from respective interventions to inform current and future programming at the country level;
3. Assess whether the results achieved are relevant for the current statistics related environment in the country;
4. Provide clear and forward-looking recommendations that can guide UNDP, partner UN agencies and other players in developing effective, realistic and evidence-based strategies.

The evaluation should be comprehensive and cover the outcome, outputs, activities and inputs of the project. The results of the evaluation will be used for re-focusing the interventions and guiding future programming. In this context, the evaluation will:

- (i) Extract lessons for future interventions in the statistical sector;

⁷ REGULATION (EC) No 1059/2003 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 May 2003 on the establishment of a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:154:0001:0041:EN:PDF>

⁸ <http://www.mec.gov.md/ro/content/idadm>

- (ii) Propose improvement of the coordination between donor-supported interventions in meeting national requirements;
- (iii) Outline main areas of focus for future UNDP /UN projects.

III. General terms of Evaluation

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria, specific to the given situation and being tailored by the scope of activity, against which the subject to be evaluated will be assessed, include:

- *Relevance* - degree to which the overall purpose of the Project Component remains valid and pertinent in the current context and can provide basis for further statistics development in the country;
- *Effectiveness* - a measure of the extent to which the Project Component has contributed to achieve its results through an effective use of resources;
- *Efficiency* - measure of productivity of implementation process: extent to which the project management ensured quality and cost-effectiveness of the process of transforming inputs into outputs and outcomes, timelines of activities, proper co-ordination to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps; project's flexibility in adapting to changing needs;
- *Sustainability* - extent to which the changes, benefits and results brought by the Project Component can be expected to last/endure after project completion and when the involvement of UN partner agencies has ended, taking into consideration the existing capacity, structures and political context in the country;
- *Impact* - extend and ways in which the Project Component succeed to improve the national statistical system in terms of territorial data production and data use for policy formulation and monitoring.

In addition to this, the following approaches will be considered:

- *human rights-based approach and gender issues* - extent to which the Joint Project outcomes reflect and contribute to the improvement of availability and use of disaggregated data to capture the situation of the most vulnerable categories of population and phenomena which would affect their living such as social exclusion, marginalization, etc.;
- *potential application of lessons learned* - main lessons learned which should be avoided/considered and good practice examples which could be replicated and relevant for further planning and programming in the field of statistics and policy monitoring.

The rationale for not using a particular criterion, if such, should be explained in the evaluation report, as should any limitations in applying the evaluation criteria. Performance standards or benchmarks used in the evaluation should also be described. The comprehensive and tailored **set of evaluation questions** within the framework of stipulated evaluation criteria will be developed by the consultant and consulted with the UNDP.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation is expected to address the following issues:

Outcome status: What and how much progress has been made towards the achievement of the outcome (including contributing factors and constraints) to which the Project Component was contributing⁹:

- Determine whether or not the outcome has been achieved and, if not, whether there has been progress made towards its achievement (*Results of Joint Project's Evaluation as of July 2013 will be used*) ;
- List innovative approaches tried and capacities developed through UNDP assistance in the field of statistics;
- List the factors (positive and negative) that affect output completion.

Underlying factors - analyze the underlying factors beyond UN's control that influenced the outcome. Distinguish the substantive design issues from the key implementation and/or management capacities and issues including the timeliness of outputs, the degree of stakeholders and partners' involvement in the completion of outputs, the changing political environment and how processes were managed/ carried out.

Although the evaluators would not have the task to make judgments about the quality of the data produced with Project's support, some conclusions on accuracy and reliability of data might be drawn on the basis of specialist-experts' reports/visions/assessments and/or data user satisfaction — this would help to confirm the robustness of project outcomes and their longer term sustainability.

Outputs status: Were the outputs relevant to the outcome? Were the outputs achieved? What are the factors (positive and negative) that affect the accomplishment of the outputs?

⁹ See www.undp.md for the Country Programme Action Plan and Project Results Framework.

Activities status: Were the activities to achieve the outputs effective and efficient? How well the activities were planned and implemented? Were key methodologies and approaches that facilitate the success of the initiative, particularly regarding participation and empowerment, gender balance, and delivery of necessary inputs appropriate?

Inputs status: What contribution UNDP has made to the progress towards the implementation of activities and achievement of the output and outcome? How appropriate were the inputs? Were the inputs sufficient to achieve the results? How cost effective they were?

Partnership strategy: Ascertain whether UNDP partnership strategy has been appropriate and effective. What partnerships have been formed? What was the role of each of UNDP? How did the partnership contribute to the achievement of the outcome? What was the level of stakeholders' participation?

Objectively verifiable indicators: Where all of the indicators/targets set at the beginning of the project met? If not, why? Where any exceeded?

Statistical Issues: assess whether the applications and solutions were appropriate for the local context and local capacities, how were they selected and deployed and how sustainable are in the medium and long term in terms of cost, maintenance and user capacity.

Capacity development: as a key to development effectiveness, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and project sustainability.

IV. Methodology of work

An overall guidance on evaluation methodology can be found in the *Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)*¹⁰, *UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*, *UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators* and other relevant document. The evaluator should come up with a suitable methodology for the evaluation of this intervention based on the guidance given in the mentioned reference documents.

To fully undertake the assignment, the consultants are expected to apply the following methodological approaches for data gathering and analysis:

- **Desk review** of relevant documents (project documents with amendments made, narrative and review reports - midterm/final, donor-specific, Joint Project evaluation report, etc.);
- **Discussions and interviews** with:
 - senior management, programme staff of UNDP Country Office;
 - partners and stakeholders (including gathering the information on what the partners have achieved with regard to the outcome and what strategies they have used);
 - project team, project beneficiaries;

In addition, **briefing and debriefing** sessions, **consultation** and validation meetings will be conducted by Evaluator with NBS, the Government (in particular line-ministries), relevant UN partner agencies, Romanian Embassy and National Institute of Statistics, RDAs, other donors and partners.

V. Expected deliverable

The key product expected from this assignment is an **evaluation report on territorial statistics Project Component** (about 25 pages plus annexes), that may follow the structure of Joint Project's evaluation report 2013 and could include, but not be limited to, the following components:

- Executive summary (brief description of the purpose, context, objectives of the evaluation, main findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned);
- Introduction and description of the evaluation methodology;
- Analysis of the situation with regard to the outcome, the outputs and the partnership strategy;
- Analysis of opportunities to provide guidance for the future programming;
- Key findings, including best practices and lessons learned (in particular addressing issues related to effectiveness, efficiency and relevance)
- Conclusions and recommendations (the last based on evidence and analysis)
- Annexes: ToRs, brief notes on interviewed people, list of reviewed documents, etc.

¹⁰ UNEG Norms and Standards, http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4:

More guidance on the content of evaluation report, see in the UN evaluation reports standards in the list of references¹¹. The evaluator will prepare a presentation of the (preliminary/final) findings to be discussed at a roundtable with Project partners. The evaluator is required to discuss the full draft of the evaluation report with main stakeholders. The product shall be submitted in both Romanian and English, in electronic formats.

VI. Duties and responsibilities

Given the fact that the assignment aims at evaluation of one Project's components, which could not be evaluated in 2013, the evaluation team will consist of one National Consultant who will ultimately complement the 2013 evaluation, being assisted by the Project team for logistical issues and provision of materials.

The sought evaluator must not have been associated with the project's formulation, implementation or monitoring. Specifically, the Consultant will perform the following tasks:

- Review the available Project documents;
- Manage the evaluation mission;
- Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis) for the report;
- Collect and process relevant data and information;
- Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope of the evaluation described above) for the report;
- Draft evaluation report
- Finalize the whole evaluation report and present the results to Project's partners.

(If need is confirmed and funds made available, the present evaluation will be complemented by a parallel assessment of Project Component's results by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania.)

VII. Proposed Time frame

It is expected that the assignment will be conducted during the period November–December 2014, over a period of 20 working days (*full days of 8 hours*) during which all the activities and outputs/results envisaged under the present assignment are expected to be performed. The final evaluation report should be delivered by December 22, 2014. The detailed schedule of evaluation will be discussed with the evaluator prior to the assignment. The indicative activity timeframe includes:

<i>Activity / deliverable</i>	<i>Volume of work</i>
Evaluation methodology and work plan (<i>agreed with UNDP and NBS</i>)	1 day
Desk review of documents	4 days
Interviews with partners and key stakeholders	5 days
Draft evaluation report on Territorial Statistics Project Component	6 days
Debriefing with UNDP and partners	1 day
Finalization of the evaluation report (incorporating the received comments)	3 days

Note: The mentioned number of working days has been estimated as being sufficient/ feasible for the envisaged volume of work to be completed successfully and is proposed as a guideline for the duration of assignment, and it can not be used as criteria for completion of work/assignment. The provision of envisaged deliverables approved by the Project partners and concerned national stakeholders would be the only criteria for the Contractors work being considered completed and eligible for payment/s.

VIII. Required qualifications and skills

Academic Qualifications:

- Master degree or equivalent in management, public administration, development studies or other relevant fields;

Years of experience:

- At least 5 years of professional experience in the areas relevant to the assignment (public administration, democratic governance and its development, including participatory monitoring and evaluation, regional development);
- At least 3 years of experience in conducting evaluation of development projects / programmes in the socio-economic fields;
- Practical experience of work related to the use of statistical data and evidences and undertaking participatory monitoring;
- Experience of collaboration with Moldova's Government institutions in areas relevant for assignment;

¹¹ Standards for Evaluation in the UN system, Chapter 4, UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, www.uneval.org

- Experience of collaboration with UN/DP or other development organizations in Moldova or outside the country (in areas of managing, monitoring and evaluating projects);

Competencies:

- Familiarity with the national context (legal and policy framework) and international standards and best practices in the fields relevant for the present assignment;
- Excellent analytical abilities to draft reports,;
- Strong analytical and writing skills;
- Fluency in Romanian and English

Personal Qualities and other requirements:

- Good interpersonal skills, solid judgment/decision making, initiative and creativity;
- Availability to work with UNDP and Project's national stakeholders during the indicated/approved period;
- Cultural and gender sensitivity.

IX. Organizational settings

On operational level, the Consultant will work under the guidance of UNDP CO and under the supervision of the Project Manager for Project-related documentation, administrative and financial aspects.

The payment for services provided by the Consultant will be made according to deliverables completed, and approved by the UNDP. In-country transportation, if need arises, will be provided by UNDP.

Annex to ToRs: Reference and information sources

The following documents will be studied by the evaluator:

- UN/DP documents
 - UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results
 - UNDP Guidelines for Outcome Evaluators
 - UNDP Results-Based Management: Technical Note
 - UNDP Results-Oriented Annual Report (ROAR) for Moldova (2013)
 - Towards Unity in Action. United Nations - Republic of Moldova Partnership Framework 2013-2017, http://www.un.md/key_doc_pub/
- National strategies and reports
 - Moldova 2020, National Development Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2012-2020 <http://www.cancelaria.gov.md/libview.php?l=en&id=1051&idc=360>
 - Activity Program Government of the Republic of Moldova European Integration: Freedom, Democracy, Welfare 2011-2014, <http://www.gov.md/lib.php?l=en&idc=445>,
 - Regional Development Strategy
 - National Human Development Reports for Moldova
 - MGG Reports
- Project Documents
 - Statistics Projects Document, relevant reports and resulted outputs/materials
 - Reports on Assessment of the national statistical system
 - End of Project Evaluation and Future Programming entry-points in the field of statistics and evidence-based policy making”, UN commissioned Evaluation Report, Arkadii Toritsyn and Gheorghe Caraseni, UNDP Consultants, July 2013
- Other documents and materials related to the Project to be evaluated (from the government, donors, etc.)