



The Joint Inspection Unit's contribution to mainstreaming results-oriented practices in the United Nations system

This article is part of an ongoing series to commemorate the Joint Inspection Unit's 50th anniversary and highlight the JIU's work and achievements over the last 50 years

Results-based management (RBM) is a broad management strategy focused on achieving results and aimed at changing the way agencies operate, with improving performance as central orientation. As a management tool, it should enhance responsibility, organizational learning and accountability in the implementation of programmes and budgets. The focus on results has been at the centre of different reform agendas within the UN, responding to global agendas such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), or the more recent Busan Global Partnership for Effective development cooperation (2011). Its introduction has been largely driven by demand from contributor countries for the United Nations to improve its efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

As such, the concept of RBM emerged in the 1960's as part of new public management reforms and was gradually introduced in the public administration of most OECD countries in the 1990s. RBM has been part of United Nations reform agendas since the late 1990s, with an initial focus on results-based budgeting approaches. Its introduction as an overarching management strategy followed in the early 2000. To this day, RBM remains an important component of accountability demands and of individual reforms within individual UN entities.

As the only oversight body with a system-wide mandate for evaluation, inspection and investigation, the JIU has played a key role in enhancing and supporting the development of RBM within the UN system and its entities. This contribution is illustrated in the following sections.

JIU's early contributions to planning, programming and reporting practices in the UN system

While the concept of RBM was emerging and yet to be stabilized to the comprehensive definition that is applied today, the JIU, through its reports, has assessed and provided insights into what can be regarded as key components of any RBM system today, such as planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation. From 1969 to 1988, the JIU produced a series of 6 reports which focused on programming and planning functions of the United Nations, including its reporting, monitoring and evaluation functions.

The first report of its kind entitled "Programming and budgets in the UN family of organizations" (JIU/REP/69/7) was published in 1969. This report, among other things, called on United Nations budgets to move from expenditure-related budget reporting to programme level.

In 1988, the JIU published a report on "Reporting on the performance and results of UN programmes" (JIU/REP/88/1). The report emphasized the need to move beyond reporting processes of the time, which provided only "a very mechanistic tabulation of thousands of programme outputs". It recommended, among other things, to strengthen the use of evaluations for performance reporting, to link performance reporting with programme budgets to

"...organizations often put great effort into establishing objectives and approving resources inputs, but fail to subsequently find out what was actually accomplished."

JIU/REP/88/1-Inspector Siegfried Schumm

reconcile results and intentions, and emphasized their importance for decision-making.

These reports constituted a first step on the way to results-based approaches, before the concept was formally introduced in the UN system. They provided unique system wide assessments which identified shortcomings which were expected to be addressed with the introduction of RBM a decade later.

... the United Nations possesses an assemblage of procedures and documents which are intended to constitute a programming system; yet the practice of ... budgeting by object of expenditure still survives, and in many cases the existing machinery is no more than a formal outer shell.

JIU/REP/78/1- Inspector Maurice Bertrand

In 1999 the Joint Inspection Unit issued its first report on RBM applications in the UN system: “Results-based budgeting: the experience of United Nations system organizations” (JIU/REP/99/3), following a request by the General Assembly to support the transitional from conventional budgeting arrangements to results-based budgeting. Among other things, the report highlighted the differentiated approaches in the implementation of results-based budgeting among organizations.

JIU’s contribution in the MDG era: The 2004 RBM benchmarking framework

Shortly after the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, which called for a paradigm shift in the way the system operated, the JIU issued a report on “The results approach in the UN: Implementing the UN Millennium Declaration” (JIU/REP/2002/2). This report identified shortcomings based on the experiences of the UN in terms of planning and results-based budgeting. It proposed among others to streamline country-level reporting to facilitate the monitoring of progress of the MDGs by Member States. To further support the new drive for RBM triggered by the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the JIU developed in 2004 a benchmarking framework for RBM implementation

and assessment in a series of reports on managing for results in the UN system. Each of the three reports covered the main pillars identified for the effective implementation of RBM. For each pillar, benchmarks were set up to support the development of harmonized and high impact RBM system, with due regard to organizational specificities. These reports were complemented by a summary report which provided an overview of the benchmarks.

Series of Reports on Managing for Results in 2004 Main Pillars of RBM



Although the operationalization of RBM can vary among organizations depending on their specific nature, mandate, structure and operational constraints, the JIU framework offered a unique guidance, at that time, common for all UN system organizations towards the implementation of RBM.

In recognition of the relevance and importance of the benchmarking framework, the General Assembly, by its resolution 60/257, endorsed the benchmarking framework requesting the Secretary-General and oversight bodies to use it to measure progress towards RBM in the system, and to implement the recommendations suggested for achieving the benchmarks based on recommendations formulated by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-fifth session. The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) subsequently invited all UN system organizations to endorse and use the framework as the chapeau for their respective implementations of RBM.

Building on the success of the benchmarking framework, the JIU applied it for the conduct of an assessment of RBM budgeting in peacekeeping operations (JIU/REP/2006/1) in response to a request from the General Assembly. In the same year, the JIU issued another report entitled “Results-based management in the United Nations in the context of the reform process” (JIU/REP/2006/6) which aimed to

assess the level of development of RBM across the UN system against the JIU framework.

An analysis of the 2008 Secretary-General's report (A/62/701) shows that many of its findings and recommendations are based on the guidance established by the JIU in its 2004 and 2006 reports. Furthermore, the benchmarking framework was used by OIOS to conduct its own evaluation of RBM in the UN Secretariat (A/63/268) in 2008. In 2012 the framework was also applied for an RBM study commissioned by UN-DESA in the context of the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of the General Assembly.

RBM in the SDG era: System wide review of RBM in 2015-16

As illustrated, the JIU has played a key role in supporting the development of RBM systems and culture in the UN system. The development agenda continues to place a great deal of emphasis on results-oriented management practices for accountability and organizational learning. In this regard, the commitment of the JIU in analysing RBM practices across the system remains.

The JIU continues to assess the mainstreaming of RBM principles, notably through its management and administration reviews (MARs) of single organizations. Most of the MARs conducted between 2004 and 2016 contain a section dedicated to RBM. The level of acceptance and implementation of RBM-specific recommendations on those is high.

Building on its past contribution in the area of planning and programming, the JIU issued in 2012 a report on strategic planning in the UN system (JIU/REP/2012/12). Focused on the pillar "Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation" identified in the 2004 Benchmarking Framework, the report provides an overview of ongoing practices in terms of corporate level planning, and sought to identify opportunities for harmonization, and enhancing system-wide coordination and coherence in major programmatic sectors. This report anchored itself in the reform processes at that time which aimed at strengthening the capacity of the system to Deliver as One, and constituted a relevant and timely contribution to emerging Post- 2015 Agenda debates.

Following a call by the General Assembly through the QCPR (A/RES/67/226), the JIU included in its programme of work for 2015 a review of the status of

RBM in the UN and system-wide results reporting across the United Nations system. 10 years after the publication of its benchmarking framework, the JIU decided to take this opportunity to revisit its benchmarks, reflecting on the experiences of UN entities, the important changes in the environment, but also on the evolution of the RBM concept over time.

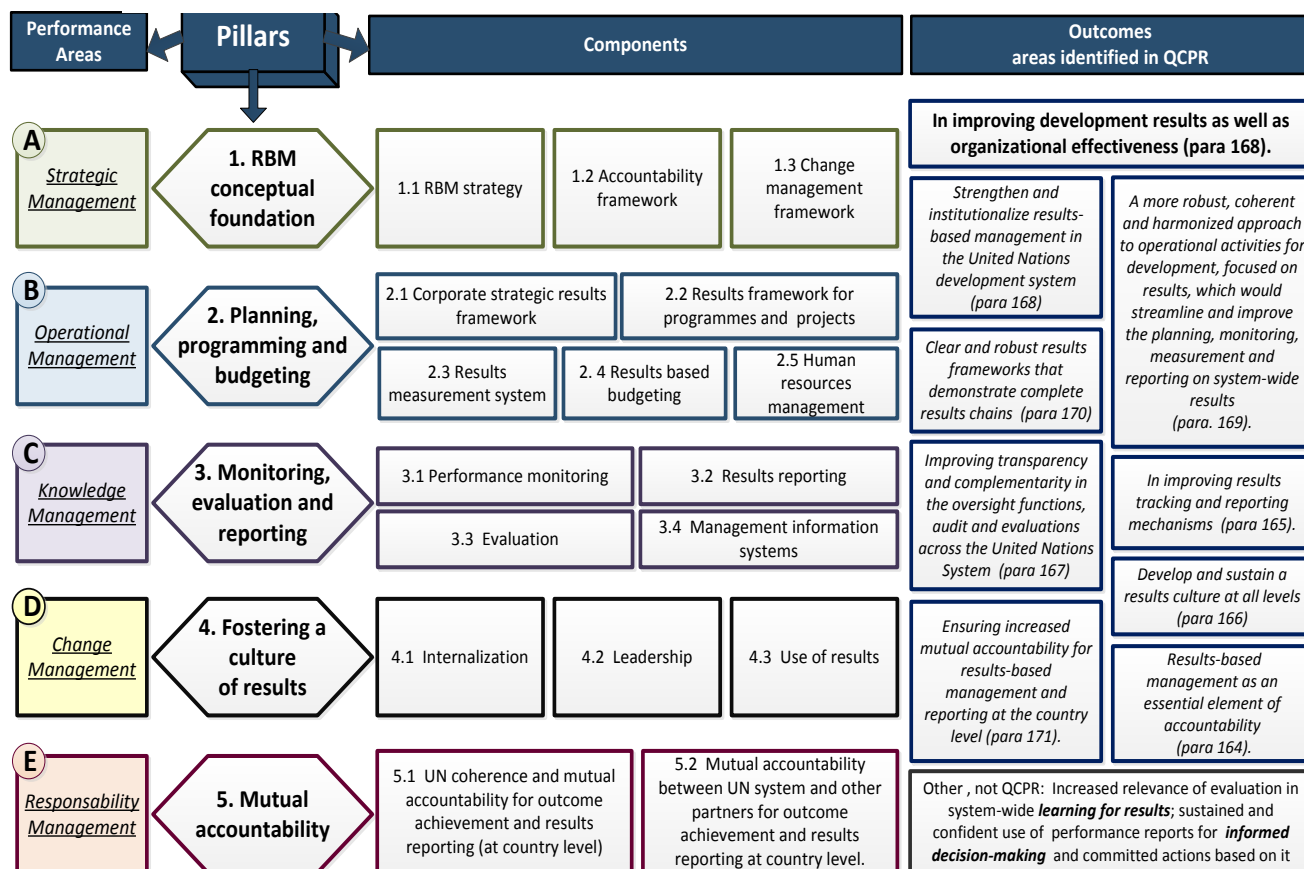
Adopting a highly participatory approach, the JIU organized three workshops in UN duty stations to engage with UN practitioners and reflect on their experiences within their entities. Based on these broad consultations, an updated analytical framework for assessing the mainstreaming of RBM principles was designed and tested for the assessment of a sample of 12 organizations of the UN system. This was complemented by a synthesis workshop to share and discuss emerging findings, and their implications for individual organizations and from a system-wide perspective.

The updated framework and a system wide-report are currently being finalized. The review will seek to reflect on the mainstreaming of RBM from a system-wide perspective and to enhance the development of RBM systems across the UN system. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a holistic and interdependent approach putting greater emphasis and urgency to enhance coherence and the development of UN system-wide functions. The current review of RBM, as well as future reviews, will seek to contribute to ongoing reflexion to ensure that the system is "fit for purpose".

... A system-wide strategy is as important as corporate priorities. What is most missing is a mechanism to facilitate coordination and cooperation to agree and implement common strategic plans, not only among organizations, but also among their governing bodies.

JIU/REP/2012/12- Inspector Tadanori Inomata

Organizing framework and components of results-based management framework (2016)



JIU reports in relation with RBM

