

SYNTHESIS OF RESIDENT COORDINATOR ANNUAL REPORTS 2008

UN COUNTRY COORDINATION: Common Country
Programming: Quality CCAs and UNDAFs



UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT GROUP



Common Country Programming: Quality CCAs and UNDAFs

How does this contribute to development effectiveness?

The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as the main instrument of joint programming at the country level, offers a common strategic framework for UN country teams, developed with full government engagement, to support national priorities by integrating responses from all parts of the system in a coordinated and coherent way. It helps to strengthen the link between the UN normative agenda and its operational activities and to enhance aid efficiency and aid effectiveness.



Key Points

- ⊗ Over the next three years, 90 countries will be preparing their UNDAFs. This presents the UN system with an opportunity to provide strategic, relevant and focused support to countries and to enhance UN coherence across the globe in accordance with the mandate provided by the General Assembly's comprehensive policy review.
- ⊗ UNCTs have made tangible progress in aligning the UNDAF with national priorities: 75 UNCTs reported that their UNDAF cycles were fully aligned with the partner country's national development cycles; 110 UNCTs confirmed that their UNDAFs were aligned with national priorities contained in national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or other national strategies and action plans.
- ⊗ UNDAFs, however, continue to be of mixed quality, suggesting the need for more enhanced and systematic support throughout the common programming process. This includes making available direct technical support to enhance the capacity of UNCTs to apply existing guidance and tools while further strengthening other support mechanisms at regional and global levels.

UNDG Policy

In November 2008, the undg convened to discuss revisions to the 2007 CCA/UNDAF Guidelines and ways to strengthen and better support the UNDAF strategic planning and programming process based on the experience of and feedback from the roll-out process of UNCTs in 2007 and 2008. The resulting 2009 CCA/UNDAF Guidelines now provide enhanced guidance on strategic prioritization, comparative advantage, mainstreaming key principles, inclusiveness and engagement of all agencies, aid effectiveness, results-based management and monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, the undg is considering the introduction and provision of an enhanced package of support to UNCTs that identifies clear responsibilities and resources at country, regional, and headquarters levels, including direct technical backstopping and quality assurance.

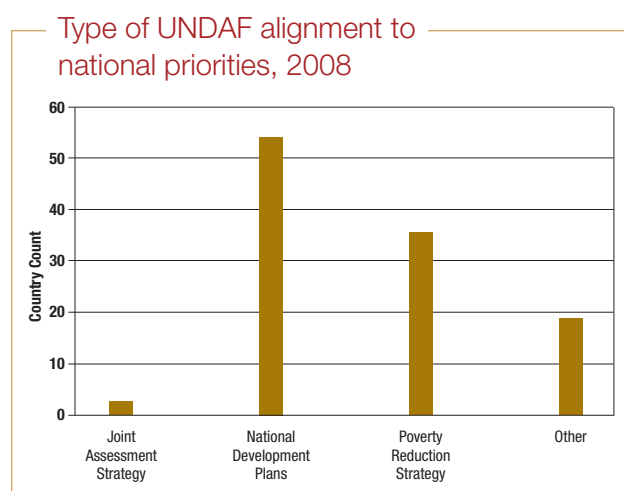
While surveys consistently indicate that UNDAFs are increasingly responding to national priorities and harmonizing with national development cycles, and that UN staff and agencies are increasingly aware of the development expertise available across different agencies, the quality of UNDAFs continues to be mixed. Focus and prioritization are persistent challenges for the strategic positioning of the UN at the country level.

The Delivering as One pilot countries have tested an integrated programme approach that links the strategic vision under the UNDAF more closely with its implementation plan, hence promoting greater coordination and coherence at the operational level. In the absence of an approach that helps to translate the strategic directions set out in the UNDAF into a more coherent implementation plan, the risk of a disconnect between the UNDAF and individual agency programming documents, and the likelihood of fragmented project activities, would be far greater. Moreover, in view of the current gaps in putting in place a fully harmonized approach to programme

implementation, monitoring and evaluation, the quality and effectiveness of UNDAFs as a framework for the coherent delivery of results is further undermined.

In 2009, the undg will be finalizing guidance for UNCTs voluntarily electing to complement the UNDAF with the UNDAF Action Plan, which operationalizes the UNDAF and ensures greater coherence of UN support throughout its implementation phase. The development of the UNDAF and the Action Plan will be one seamless process and, depending on what UNCTs and Governments agree, could be reflected in either one document or two separate but closely linked documents. The guidance helps UNCTs ensure that the Action Plan does not duplicate the content of the UNDAF but rather focuses on the modalities of implementing the results agreed in the UNDAF. Together with a high-quality strategic UNDAF, the Action Plan is another step in enhancing UN coherence as well as simplifying the UN common country programming process.

As the Delivering as One pilot countries have demonstrated, the best timing for introducing measures to enhance UNCT coherence, effectiveness and relevance is at the beginning of the UNDAF formulation process. Nonetheless, the UN system recognizes that a more concerted effort is required to boost country capacities and support systems for better quality results frameworks in 2009.



Quality UNDAFs should

- **Embody a strategic vision of the UN system's contribution to national priorities.**
- **Focus UNCT resources on issues or areas where the UN can make the biggest difference, based on its comparative advantage and capacities.**
- **Include a robust set of results that are measurable and for which agencies can be held accountable.**
- **Demonstrate how the UN has internalized in its programme the principles of aid effectiveness, capacity development and national ownership.**
- **Reflect the normative standards that the UN is mandated to promote, such as HRBA, gender equality and environmental**



Trends and Progress

According to the 2009 Vital Statistics Survey, 73 per cent of UNCTs reported having an UNDAF in place. Countries where there are no UNDAFs include crisis/post-conflict countries or where the UN presence is too small to justify one. In 2008, a total of 10 UNCTs launched the UNDAF roll-out process: Afghanistan, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. UNDG provided enhanced support to these countries in planning, priority-setting and the design stages of UNDAF formulation to strengthen the quality and coherence of country level programming. Many UNCTs commented on the highly inclusive and participatory nature of the strategic planning process, the increased involvement of partners and stakeholders, especially non-resident UN agencies,

government representatives, donors and civil society, the improved integration of cross-cutting issues such as human rights and gender, as well as the high degree of national ownership exhibited by Governments.

One hundred and ten UNCTs confirmed that in 2008 UNDAF focus areas and outcomes were aligned with national priorities, including national development plans, Poverty Reduction Strategies, and other key national frameworks, and were in areas where UNCTs demonstrate a comparative advantage. Seventy-five UNCTs reported that their UNDAF cycles were harmonized with the partner country's national development cycles in time and duration as compared to 56 UNCTs in 2007, 30 in 2006, and 21 in 2005; with 5 UNCTs planning to align and 30 that remain unaligned although they respond to national priorities. Where there is convergence between UN and government processes, UNCTs are finding that their strategies are more attuned to respond to national priorities in addition to offering an opportunity for mutually supportive planning between UNCTs and government partners.

Since 2006, UNCTs are increasingly relying on available national analytic work in place of carrying out a CCA. In 2008, 6 of the 10 roll-out countries reported finalizing their CCAs or undertaking a country analysis: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. UNCTs in Afghanistan, Armenia, Macedonia, and Tajikistan instead relied on available country studies, analysis and reports.

Innovations and Good Practices at the Country Level

Afghanistan

The UNCT integrated a conflict analysis in the preparation for the UNDAF to complement the poverty profile in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and as a way to mitigate

the impact of the country's dynamic security environment. The resulting UNDAF strategically positions the UN to address the nexus between stability and poverty alleviation through a human-rights based approach. The UNDAF also proposes innovative approaches such as the establishment of comprehensive provincial packages directed at select provinces that have received little investment and the creation of a UN common fund to ensure greater coherence of UN activities.

Botswana

The UNCT used the opportunity of the UNDAF roll-out process to begin developing One Programme, culminating in the signing of a *Road Map to a Government of Botswana – UN Programme of Cooperation* with the Government by seven resident and six non-resident agencies. The One Programme under development is an effort to improve UN system capacity to deliver coherent, coordinated and harmonized support at the Government's request.

Nigeria

To facilitate the implementation of UNDAF II (2009-2012), the UNCT is preparing medium-term cooperation frameworks (MCFs) that will improve the internal cohesion of the UN as well as the larger

partnership with the Government at federal and state levels. The MCFs will also provide a flexible and pragmatic interpretation of Delivering as One and thus bridge the existing gap between the high-level results in the UNDAF and the outcomes of agency programmes. Once endorsed, the MCFs will provide a means for clearly defining and assigning operational responsibility for the achievement of results. They will form the basis for programmatic collaboration between the UN system and States and guide the preparation of annual work plans and periodic assessments of mutual performance, including annual reviews. An MCF is a single document between each State and the UN system that represents the harmonization of State priorities with those set out in the UNDAF.

Tajikistan

The UNCT developed the UNDAF to specifically address the role of UN agencies in supporting national development strategies within the framework of the Joint Country Support Strategy. The Strategy embodies the vision of what Tajikistan wants to achieve and how it plans to do so and determines how the international community will work more synergistically and effectively to support the poverty reduction strategy.

LEARN More

Programming Reference Guide (UNDAF) <http://www.undg.org/programming>

Common Country Programming Processes <http://www.undg.org/CCPP>



Accountability for results and common country programming

Results-based management (RBM)

Accounting for development results must be central and integral to UN work on the ground. The results of monitoring and evaluating development efforts of an individual UN entity are significant but those of the UN development system in the country as a whole are much more relevant and have greater impact. Managing for results as One UN requires practicing results-based management through sound monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting results at the country level.

In this context, in its resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations to strengthen the culture of results-based management in development programming at the country level. In particular, the General Assembly:

“Underscores that the resident coordinator, supported by the United Nations country team, should report to national authorities on progress made against results agreed in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;” [Para 96] and

Requests the Secretary-General to continue to assess the effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including, in particular, by assessing the effective use of all capacities available to provide a comprehensive and flexible response to the demand of developing countries for development support, and to report on the results of this assessment in the context of the next comprehensive policy review [Para 131].”

Monitoring and evaluation is being used by the UN development system at the country level to manage and report on results, thereby helping to promote a greater sense of accountability. In aligning develop-



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ment strategies to national priorities, there is an increasing realization by UNCTs of the importance of integrating M&E at the initial programming stage. In other words, they are designing programming interventions with a view to the inputs that will be needed for undertaking annual reviews and final evaluation. This calls for strong RBM capacity in the realm of inter-agency collaboration.

In light of such realization, 2008 marked a new frontier for UNCTs to further address ways of operationalizing RBM into their programming process. From the Delivering as One pilot countries to other innovative UNCTs, a number of valuable lessons are being learned. For example, a number of experiences are revealing ways in which the UN can systematically approach annual reviews with the Government. Furthermore, there are several innovative common reporting mechanisms being derived through these efforts, ones that respond to the frequently discussed issue of transaction costs and operational efficiency in light of inter-agency collaboration.

For the UNDG, this has shown how country experiences can influence policy in support of RBM for the UN system at the country level. In 2008, the section on UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation in the CCA/UNDAF guidelines was reviewed and revised to make UNDAF annual review and final evaluation mandatory. The guidelines emphasize the importance of UNDAF evaluation that occurs at the end of the cycle and underline that it should be performed by external consultants. Furthermore, the guidelines note the importance of maintaining links between M&E of the UNDAF and that of individual agency country programming frameworks, especially outputs and indicators.

Consequently, a general trend of UNCTs proactively pursuing UNDAF annual reviews and final evaluation has been observed. For UNDAF annual reviews, from 2005 there has been an overall increase in the number of UNCTs that have engaged in the UNDAF annual reviews. While in 2005, only 4 UNDAF annual reviews took place, by the end of 2008, the number increased to 49. Regarding final evaluations, 36 out of a total of 104 UNCTs reported having undergone UNDAF evaluation in 2008 – about twice as many as in 2004.

Such trends also suggest an increasing commitment on the part of the UNCTs to jointly review development outcomes with the Government, adding to the spirit of coherence and national ownership. In these reviews, UNCTs have used M&E techniques to focus on the key strategic development results aligned to the national priorities. More than 50 per cent of all UNCTs that started their UNDAF cycle in 2008 have developed an inter-agency M&E mechanism for the UNDAF, including developing a governance model, establishing guiding principles of annual review and adopting standardized documentation. Several UNCTs undertook the annual review in 2008 and aligned their own review process with that of the national process.

RBM still offers great advantages for the UN, with potential for innovative solutions despite real development challenges facing nations around globe. The UN system at the country level will continue to explore ways of pursuing effective UNDAF annual reviews and evaluations as a practical method for managing for results. At Headquarters, on the basis of lessons learned, inter-agency efforts are focused on further developing guidance on UNDAF reporting as well as enhancing RBM capacities at all levels of the UN development system.



Operationalizing the UNDAF

As some of this year's Resident Coordinator annual reports make clear, several countries with strong national ownership and proactive UNCTs have advanced the UN coherence agenda in line with TCPR resolutions by developing joint operational frameworks to implement the UNDAF. By working together, UNCTs are delivering better support to Governments and achieving greater relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

One Programme

Each of the eight Delivering as One pilots has developed One Programme to support UN efforts to align more closely with national priorities and to ensure that Governments have access to the experience and expertise of a wider range of UN organizations, including non-resident agencies, in responding to those priorities. In some countries, the One Programme focuses on a sub-set of outcomes within the context of the UNDAF while in others it covers the entire UNDAF and clearly articulates areas for more effective inter-agency collaboration. One of the early lessons learned from the pilots is that the One Programme approach is best used when synchronized with the UNDAF roll-out process. It simplifies the programming process, ensures increased strategic focus and programme coherence and improves alignment with national priorities.

Common Country Action Plans

UNCTs that have developed common operational documents, such as those in Bhutan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda and Viet Nam, have found that they contribute positively to making the UN more effective in its support to Government. Common operational documents also reinforce the internal coherence of the UNCTs by offering:

- Better alignment between UNDAF and agency programmes; including a more concrete resource framework;

- Clearer division of labour between agencies;
- Stronger link between the M&E of agency projects/ programmes and of the UNDAF M&E, thereby strengthening accountability of UNDAF results;
- Enhanced resource mobilization as funding gaps in certain programme activities are addressed through the pooling of funds from other UN agencies.
- They also support predictability, transparency and accountability vis-à-vis partner Governments by identifying resource commitments, accountabilities, management and implementation strategies, and M&E.

UNCTs have reported that common operational documents are resulting in greater effectiveness and efficiency in programme planning as well as reduced transaction costs with national counterparts. UNCTs also found that while it is important to ensure that structures and processes are in place, it is equally important to ensure that new, simplified and harmonized structures contribute to making the assistance more effective. Experience has shown that a common operational document helps UNCTs to achieve this.

Joint Annual Work Plans

Bhutan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova and Viet Nam introduced joint annual work plans as a way of further ensuring the coherence of programmes and enhancing the coordination and working relations of UNCT staff of the various agencies in the implementation of common operational documents. In Papua New Guinea, the UNCT used the development results framework to develop 24 joint annual work plans with monitoring and evaluation done by each Task Team Leader and a joint annual review conducted by the Programme Steering Committee.

In Bhutan, the UNCT noted the enhanced coordination of activities and more sector-wide understanding of the support through the introduction of nine joint annual work plans in which all relevant UN agencies and existing and potential implementing partners participated.

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However, UN agencies, and particularly UNCT implementing partners, are finding that once signed, the joint annual work plans are split into agency-specific components to enable agencies to comply with requirements for reporting to their respective headquarters. This fragmentation adds to the transaction costs for both parties. UNDG is currently in the process of developing guidance to streamline reporting requirements.

UNDAF Governance Mechanisms

Having well-functioning and effective inter-agency governance mechanisms or theme groups in place to harmonize the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of each UNDAF outcome can significantly improve the management and coherent delivery of programme results in a more coordinated manner. These mechanisms are typically chaired by a Head of Agency, have dedicated staff, clear terms of reference and an annual work plan. They serve as platforms for internal UN coordination and implementation that allow UNCTs to better align with national priorities and national development plans. UNCTs (Bhutan, Djibouti, Mongolia, Swaziland, Thailand) that include the Government and other national and civil society partners as members of theme groups have reported strengthened partnerships under national leadership,

greater transparency and increased effectiveness of development aid. In all, 129 UNCTs reported on the use of theme groups to promote collaboration towards specific outcomes and coherent programmes, with the major theme groups being in: communications (70), disaster management (45), food security (34), gender (74), governance and democracy (35), health (35), HIV/Aids (115), human rights (39) and management and operations (55).

The Delivering as One pilots established programme coordination groups (PCGs) as an inter-agency coordination and management mechanism, which they have credited as being key to the implementation of the One Programmes. PCGs have enhanced interaction between programme stakeholders; allowed the UN to provide policy leadership in priority areas; developed effective joint advocacy positions when interacting with other stakeholders; and allowed the UNCT to increase the use of joint analysis and coordinate an increase in the number of joint programmes. PCGs have also recommended which participating UN agencies are best placed to take the lead in various programmatic areas. While the PCGs have implied an initial increase in transaction costs for UN staff, pilot countries have found the benefits of these front-end investments to outweigh the costs.

Major theme groups

