



**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards
Of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP
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Delivering as One: follow-up to Hanoi

Concept paper prepared jointly by
UNDP (coordinator), UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP

I. Introduction

1. In June 2010, the ‘High Level Tripartite Conference on Delivering as One: Lessons from country-led evaluation and way forward’ took place in Hanoi, Viet Nam. Representatives of the eight Delivering as One programme pilot countries and eight countries that indicated voluntary adoption of Delivering as One (DaO) reaffirmed that the “approach has been entirely voluntary, decided and led by each national Government, taking into full account the national particularities and conditions, and is in-line with the principle of ‘no one size fits all’”. They also affirmed that for those countries who have adopted the approach “there is no going back to doing business in the manner prior to the ‘DaO’ initiative. The momentum should be maintained and the process should only be taken forward in a strengthened manner addressing the challenges. Much has been achieved, more needs to be done. Delivering as One is the future for UN development activities.”

2. The participants also noted that the DaO initiative (i) responded to all elements called for in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/208; (ii) affirmed, as mentioned above, that the approach has been entirely voluntary, decided and led by each national government; (iii) is consistent with the principle of ‘no one size fits all’; (iv) stressed the importance of South-South cooperation as an emerging modality in the context of DaO; and (v) noted that United Nations reform has benefited from the participation of middle-income countries, which provide perspective on how priorities for cooperation shift as countries achieve higher levels of human development. The participants also highlighted that the impact of DaO must, in the end, be seen in better development results.

3. The views of the participants at the Hanoi meeting, as reflected in the Statement of Outcome and Way Forward, provide the basis for this concept paper, prepared through inter-agency consultations. In considering the issues that follow, it should be noted that two important processes are under way that, when complete, will provide important information, analysis and findings that will contribute to the ongoing discussions around DaO. These are an independent evaluation of the DaO pilots and a review of the Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System.

4. General Assembly Resolutions 62/208, 63/311 and 64/289 called for an independent evaluation of the Delivering as One pilots, based on the principles of national ownership and leadership and conducted in the context of United Nations norms and standards for evaluation. The findings of the evaluation will be presented to the 66th session of the General Assembly. The points that follow are in response to the resolutions above and the country-led evaluations undertaken in 2010. They will be further informed and reviewed in line with the findings of the independent evaluation.

5. A comprehensive review of the implementation of “The Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and the Resident Coordinator System, including the ‘functional firewall’ for the Resident Coordinator System.” is currently under way by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). The Management and Accountability System provides a framework for exercising both UNDP’s management of the RC system on behalf of the system, and the mutual accountability of the United Nations development system for development results. The UNDG review is important for determining progress to date and challenges in

implementing the Management and Accountability System, in empowering resident coordinators to strategically position the United Nations country teams and for ensuring mutual accountability for results through an empowered United Nations country team.

II. Increased coherence in contributing to development results

6. The experiences emerging from DaO point to increased coherence in planning, prioritizing and programming. UNDG has agreed on strategic priorities for 2010-2011 to further strengthen the support of the United Nations development system to national development priorities. UNDG has developed the accompanying work plan and designated roles and responsibilities to ensure system-wide commitment in working towards common priorities and objectives.

7. As part of this effort, the UNDG Task Force on MDGs has developed recommendations for UNDG follow-up to the outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals. The recommendations focus on responding more proactively and coherently to country needs while recognizing, strengthening and building on the links between the Millennium Development Goals. In the next phase, a flexible MDG Acceleration Framework, approved by UNDG, will be disseminated to all United Nations country teams to help them identify gaps in implementation of the MDGs and respond effectively in support of programme countries.

III. Increased coherence and relevance of programming at country level

8. Based on the findings of the country-led evaluations, the Hanoi Statement of Outcome and Way Forward stated that:

The 'One Programme/One Plan' approach is a significant improvement from the earlier way of programme planning and delivery. It has allowed the UN system to be more relevant, coordinated and coherent than the previous approach, to focus on upstream policy advice in support of government needs, and to address cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, HIV/AIDS, environment and others. The approach permits alignment of the UN development activities with national strategies and priorities, and provides wider access to the whole range of UN system mandates, expertise and resources, including those of non-resident agencies.

9. The lessons that have emerged from the DaO experience have fed into UNDG efforts to enhance the quality of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as the key strategic programming document at country level, in line with the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review. In 2010, UNDG made available simplified UNDAF guidelines that respond to the need for more flexibility, coordination, coherence and responsiveness in UNDAF formulation and implementation, taking into account national partners and country contexts and the corresponding engagement of United Nations country teams. The guidelines aim to improve alignment with national development cycles and timelines and to enhance coordination and coherence with national development plans. These guidelines were used by the 43 country teams preparing new UNDAFs in 2010 and three countries preparing strategic frameworks. The experience of the pilots has also increased substantive interaction with

specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, ensuring that their expertise and experience are available in responding to national development priorities. The pilots have also improved coordination of support to governments in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable populations.

10. In 2010 UNDG endorsed guidance for United Nations country teams that volunteer, in consultation with national partners, to develop UNDAF Action Plans. These are expected to improve the coherence and coordination of UNDAF operationalization. The action plans will also outline responsibilities and accountabilities among members of the country team for delivering agreed-upon results. The Action Plans include guidance for a Common Budgetary Framework. This builds on the experiences of the pilots in identifying the resources United Nations agencies can contribute to achieving the expected UNDAF results and the funding gaps that can be addressed through a ‘One Fund’ mechanism and joint resource mobilization efforts.

11. In a related development, General Assembly Resolution 64/289 on System-wide Coherence invited “those countries presenting a common country programme document (CCPD) on a voluntary basis to prepare it consistent with the UNDAF, where it exists, and to present in the common country programme the critical actions that will be taken to achieve the agreed results with available or indicative resources, as well as actions to ensure coherence of the assistance provided by the UN...” The Government of Tanzania has been one of the first to develop and submit a CCPD, and other DaO pilot countries have indicated their wish to follow suit. As follow-up to the General Assembly Resolution, the United Nations agencies have been working to develop CCPD guidance for country teams where governments have expressed interest in this modality.

12. However, challenges remain in increasing programming coherence at country level. The country-led evaluations note that the DaO approach has tended to be heavy on process, leading to high transaction costs for agencies as they adjust to new ways of doing business. The evaluations also suggest an increase in multiple reporting, which imposes a burden on national counterparts as well as on agencies. Additionally, despite United Nations efforts to respond to government needs in a more coordinated and coherent way, programming is still sometimes fragmented, and clusters of projects exist.

IV. Acceleration of progress on harmonizing business practices

13. General Assembly Resolutions 62/208 and 63/311 and more recently 64/289 on System-wide Coherence have all emphasized the need to continue progress in simplifying and harmonizing business practices. United Nations agencies have been working closely together to increase the efficiency of internal operations in support of more effective and efficient implementation of United Nations agendas and mandates, both normative and developmental. The country-led evaluations noted progress in this regard, but also highlighted that “further attention is required by Governments, UN Headquarters, and their respective field offices to accelerate the achievements of increased efficiencies.”

14. Country teams in the pilot countries and the countries voluntarily adopting the approach have developed and implemented common solutions in various business support areas. Many of these followed existing policies and built on earlier guidance developed by UNDG, such as on

the harmonized approach to cash transfers and on common services. More recently, innovative initiatives have emerged. For example, in Mozambique, a ‘one ICT’¹ platform was established, creating a virtual bridge among all the agencies in the country. Live since February 2010, the platform made possible such system-wide services as Internet access and a database of common suppliers. In Viet Nam, a ‘one UN communications team’ was created with staff from five agencies. Viet Nam also developed the first-ever common guidance on the use of national procurement systems, involving UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF.

15. In United Republic of Tanzania, a procurement team was established that has negotiated 25 long-term agreements. An independent study by the consulting firm KPMG, commissioned by the country team, has estimated savings of around US\$300,000 due to common procurement efforts. United Republic of Tanzania was also one of the first countries to explore harmonization of United Nations financial reporting with the national fiscal cycle.

16. Country-level initiatives implemented in the pilots created a sound basis for development of corporate guidelines, including a guidance note on harmonized procurement at country level and guidelines on Delivering as One in ICT. In finance, experiences of the pilot countries led to development of comprehensive guidance on establishment and management of multi-donor trust funds, on United Nations participation in sector-wide approaches and pooled funds, and on small transfers of funds between agencies for joint activities. UNDG endorsed a new guidance note on the ‘One Budgetary Framework’ based on the experience of the pilot countries. It is expected to help United Nations organizations to enhance mobilization and management of resources in support of UNDAF objectives.

17. To accelerate action to address bottlenecks in business operations, the chairs of UNDG and the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) launched a joint UNDG-HLCM high-level mission between March and July 2010, visiting Albania, Malawi, Mozambique and Viet Nam. In September, a joint meeting of UNDG and HLCM approved an implementation plan to realize the mission recommendations. It covers key priorities such as closer integration between programme and operations; advancing harmonization in procurement and information technology; and ensuring progress in harmonizing human resources policies and procedures.

18. While the high-level mission has increased momentum in terms of recommending common solutions and harmonized approaches in business practices, challenges and risks remain to be considered. First, there is a need to ensure consistent communication on agreements, solutions and guidance across the United Nations development system and to ensure consistent implementation of them at country level. The second challenge is addressing the premise that cost-savings from harmonization of business operations will be ploughed back into programmes. So far, efforts to develop reliable mechanisms to identify, calculate and accumulate savings so they can be put into programmes have not yielded practical results. This is due to difficulties in quantifying efficiency gains as well as ambiguities in calculating and monetizing ‘potential savings’.

19. The third challenge is the differences between agencies’ business and funding models and the sizable investments by many agencies in their internal systems (e.g. enterprise resource

¹ Information and communication technology

planning systems), which continue to limit the degree of harmonization that can be achieved in the short to medium term. It might be necessary to explore a shift towards standardization, common frameworks and approaches rather than full harmonization of all rules, regulations, policies and procedures.

V. Multi-year, predictable funding

20. The importance of “improving the quality of funding” was emphasized in General Assembly Resolution 64/289. The Hanoi Outcome Statement noted that “coordinated mobilization of resources through the One Funds has reduced competition and, therefore, fragmentation among UN agencies. The One Fund governance structures have enabled Governments to lead the decision-making process on issues related to the implementation of the One Programme.”

21. Participants in Hanoi also noted the decline of official development assistance but recognized that development results require predictable, multi-year funding, including in middle-income countries. The participants urged donors to provide sustainable funding for One Funds. In the Outcome Statement they noted that “the One Budgetary Framework and One Fund are the bedrock for achieving relevance, coherence, and a more strategic focus of the UN system at country level. The One Fund has facilitated the UN’s improved programming and brought about better management for results.”

22. To date, One UN Funds have been established in 17 countries (the eight pilot countries and nine countries that have voluntarily adopted the DaO approach - Bhutan, Comoros, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malawi, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea and Sierra Leone). Many countries have introduced performance-based criteria for allocation of funds to encourage timely delivery of results. Fourteen bilateral donors have contributed to the One Funds, and the European Commission has contributed to the Albania One Fund. All 17 One UN Funds have received contributions through the Expanded Delivering as One Funding Window, a facility established in support of DaO countries.

23. A continuing challenge is the sustainability, predictability, timeliness and multi-year nature of funding. The country-led evaluations identified benefits - coherent programming, enhanced national ownership and increased alignment with national development priorities - that can accrue from more predictable funding.

VI. Conclusion

24. This note recaps some of the key issues raised in Hanoi and highlights some of the developments in Delivering As One that have arisen from the experiences of the programme pilot countries. The paper points out areas in programming, the RC system, funding and harmonization of business practices that can benefit from further dialogue in the joint meeting of the Executive Board, thus helping to improve coherence in contributing to achievement of better development results.
