

UNDG Strategic Priorities for 2010-2011

To respond to the TCPR and global development priorities, and to ensure the UN development system becomes more internally focused and coherent, the UNDG has developed and endorsed a set of strategic priorities for 2010-2011. The UNDG strategic priorities give direction to UNDG efforts at the global, regional and country level to facilitate a step change in the quality and impact of UN support at the country level.

I. The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR)¹

Clearly the work of the UNDG is driven by member states – at global level and at country level.

On 18 December 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/208 on the TCPR. This resolution represented a solid political consensus with regard to operational activities for development. It underscores the fundamental principles of operational activities of the United Nations development system, national ownership and leadership, flexibility in responding to national development requirements, the centrality of developing national capacities and the importance of predictable and stable funding as well as stressing the need for efficiency, accountability, results and transparency in United Nations' work at country-level.

The resolution offered an overall framework with guiding principles to orient country-level functioning of the United Nations development system. It underscored that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to development and, the United Nations development assistance should be aligned with national development plans and strategies in accordance with the mandates of the United Nations development system.

The resolution has a strong focus on implementation and it gives the United Nations development system detailed guidance in the areas of: (i) funding; (ii) contribution of the United Nations operational activities to national capacity development and development effectiveness – capacity building and development, South-South Cooperation and development of national capacity, gender equality and women's empowerment, and transition from relief to development; and (iii) improved functioning of the United Nations development system – coherence, effectiveness and relevance, regional dimensions, transaction costs and efficiency, country-level capacity of the United Nations development system, and evaluation of operational activities for development.

The resolution reiterated the importance of core resources as the bedrock of operational activities for development. It recognized that non-core resources represent an important supplement to these resources.

¹ Source: Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

The resolution recognized that, development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. It also noted that the private sector and civil society, including non-government organizations can positively contribute to the achievement of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The resolution called for a more inclusive system-wide inter-agency collaboration at country, regional and headquarters levels for an efficient and effective functioning of the United Nations development system, including through further alignment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) cycle with national processes.

The resolution also called for further harmonization of business practices and human resources management.

II. UNDG Strategic Priorities

The set of strategic priorities targets the UNDG's collective efforts on accelerating achievement of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) in all programme countries; ensuring that UNCTs participate fully in nationally led and owned development dialogue, to ensure that the UN's collective effort is demand driven; and integrating global best practice in all programming, to maximize programmatic coherence and achievement of country-level results.

The diagram on the next page summarizes the strategic priorities and their inter-linkage as an integrated strategy for the next two years.

In order to ensure the UN development effort has maximum impact at the country level, the UNDG will focus on three major priorities:

- 1) At the country level and in response to national development priorities, maximize UN impact by supporting UNCTs to:
 - Contribute with government leadership to accelerating achievement of MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals (IADGs) and treaty obligations;
 - Engage "upstream" in policy and program dialogue and technical advice, especially in MICs and NCCs;
 - Discipline priority setting to ensure alignment between national priorities and UN comparative advantages, and identify expertise across the UN system to contribute to national priorities, including through effective inclusion of NRAs;
 - Strengthen institutional capacity development;
 - Build south-south and triangular partnerships;
 - Use targeted approaches to maximize impact in the specific contexts of UNDAF rollouts, crisis and transition countries and Delivering as One countries as well as those countries that have voluntarily adopted this approach;
 - Accelerate harmonization of business practices.
- 2) At the UN system level, drive key changes to increase country-level impact, working with UNDG agencies, funds and programs to:
 - Increase agency incentives and supports for UNCT collaboration on programming and business practices;
 - Intensify senior agency leadership engagement with Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs in key countries, to drive collaboration and priority setting;
 - Strengthen system capacity for managing and deploying world-class development knowledge and know-how at the country level.
- 3) Strengthen the UNDG's own coherence and ability to deliver results, by:
 - Reviewing the proposed strategic priorities at the CEB, to ensure maximum coherence among the priorities, strategies and work plans of the UNDG, HLCM and HLCP;
 - Creating a two-year work plan for achieving country- and system-level priorities, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, targets and timelines;
 - Identify the most effective working-level mechanisms to support the implementation of the strategic priorities.

UNDG Strategic Priorities

Maximize Impact at Country Level		
All Countries		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Contribute with government leadership to accelerating MDG/IADG achievement, especially in countries furthest from reaching their national targets ➤ Engage “upstream” in policy and program dialogue and technical advising, especially in MICs and NCCs ➤ Ensure UNCT discipline in priority setting to ensure alignment between national priorities and UN comparative advantages ➤ Strengthen institutional capacity development ➤ Build south-south and triangular partnerships ➤ Upscale implementation of common services and accelerate harmonization of business practices 		
UNDAF rollout countries	Crisis and Transition Countries	Delivering as One countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ UNCTs strengthen engagement in sectoral programming and national policy development ➤ UNCTs ensure UNDAFs are aligned with national priorities ➤ UNCTs responsible for UNDAF quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ UNCTs ensure that crisis and transition responses address underlying development issues ➤ UNCTs know and apply UN transition lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ UNDG continues focused support until completion of independent evaluation ➤ UNDG drives next generation business practice reform for global replication



Drive Key UNDG System Changes to Increase Country-Level Impact		
Increase Agency Incentives and Supports for Country-Level Coherence and Results	Deepen Senior Leadership Engagement with Regional UNDG Teams & UNCTs	Improve System Capacity to Deploy Knowledge and Know-How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agencies appraise and reward UNCT and Regional and HQ staff on contributions to UNCT systems and results through formal performance appraisal system ➤ UNDG & Regional UNDG Teams strengthen RC recruitment, appraisal and capacity development ➤ UNDG monitors key indicators of UNCT coordination and results ➤ Agencies jointly provide global and regional training on collaboration and leadership skills ➤ Agencies scale up business practice harmonization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Agency Principals send stronger, more consistent messages to HQ, Regional and UNCT senior staff on imperative of country coherence for results ➤ In all country contexts, Principals, Deputies and Regional UNDG Teams work directly with countries on policy dialogue and UNCT priority setting ➤ Principals and Deputies regularly join regional meetings of RCs, agencies and Regional UNDG Teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ UNDG, HLCP and HLCM collaborate to identify, deploy and mainstream best practices for country coherence ➤ Regional UNDG Teams and RCMs streamline and focus substantive support to UNCTs ➤ Agencies use joint regional meetings to share knowledge and know how

A. Maximize Impact at the Country Level

1. All countries

In all countries, the UNDG should ensure UNCTs support national partner efforts to accelerate achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs and national responses to climate change. Stronger UNCT engagement in sectoral programming and national policy development should help the UNCT, government, civil society and international counterparts focus their combined effort on MDG achievement.

In all country contexts, the UNCT should seek opportunities for “upstream” engagement through nationally owned, nationally led policy and program dialogue, technical advice, and institutional capacity development. There are legitimate roles for UN agencies to play in service delivery, particularly in humanitarian and recovery contexts and in some LDCs and LICs. While continuing this work where needed, the UN can often have greater overall development impact at country level by engaging at the sector and national policy level.

As they engage with national partners to pursue internationally agreed development goals, UNCTs should consistently assess their own comparative advantages, to clearly identify the national policy, program and capacity development challenges where the UN can best contribute. The UNDG should support the UNCTs in disciplining their priority setting so that the UNCT is consistently aligned with national priorities, in areas of individual and inter-agency comparative advantage, with the support of national partners. UNDG should support UNCTs in identifying expertise across the UN system, including through effective inclusion of NRAs, to most effectively support national development priorities.

Finally, UNCTs should be addressing national challenges in ways that develop national capacity, rather than seeking to substitute for it. Increasingly, South-South and triangular partnerships can be an effective vehicle for national capacity development. The UNDG should encourage UNCTs to identify areas for sub-regional and regional South-South cooperation for capacity development and other initiatives, and to play catalytic, convening and brokering roles to move these partnerships forward.

As the UNDG provides support and accountability for UNCTs on these global priorities, it also needs to help UNCTs meet context-specific goals:

2. UNDAF rollout countries

In UNDAF rollout countries, particularly LDCs and LICs, the UNDG should drive for full realization of the underlying purpose of the UNDAF, so that

- a) UNCTs use the UNDAF primarily as a tool for direct engagement in national and sectoral development planning, leading to strong UN alignment with national and international development partners, and greater impact of the UNCT on policies and programs through advising and capacity development;
- b) UNCTs are disciplined in priority setting to ensure alignment between national priorities and UN comparative advantages: all agencies, including NRAs, are involved in the process, but with strong, shared commitment to focus the UNDAF only on those national challenges where the UNCT demonstrates comparative advantage to produce joint results; and the UNCT fully applies lessons learned and best practices in joint programming, and thematic knowledge/know-how from

- across the UN development system. To do so effectively, the UNDG needs to make additional investments in inter-agency knowledge management, as noted below.
- c) UNCTs use UNDAF preparation and implementation to advance harmonization of business practices
 - d) UNCTs are responsible for the quality of the UNDAFs, using the January 2010 UNDAF guidelines and technical guidance (Part I and Part II).

In MICs and NCCs where many national capacities are strong, the UNDG should support UNCTs

- a) to move “upstream” from direct program delivery to engagement in national policy and programme dialogue and normative work, particularly on issues of continuing disparities in access to services and realization of rights; and
- b) where there is national government and/or civil society interest in taking on leadership roles in regional or global development, to help build South-South linkages and partnerships.

3. Crisis and transition countries

In crisis and transition countries, the UNDG should ensure that

- a) UNCTs are directly addressing underlying development problems (e.g. disaster risk reduction, lack of preparedness, and social vulnerability; inequality, exclusion and failure to realize rights) to reduce the risk of recurrence and maximize the potential for a self-sustaining transition; and
- b) UNCTs fully apply UN lessons learned (in the form of guidance and best practices) in integrated transition planning and programming.

4. DaO countries

In DaO countries, the UNDG should support the pilot process until the independent evaluation has been completed, and encourage full harmonization of business practices to develop models for global replication. The UNDG will also support countries which choose to pursue a high coherence approach.

B. Drive Key UN System Changes to Increase Country-Level Impact

To achieve greater development impact in each country context, the UNDG needs to drive the internal coherence agenda further in several key areas. The UNDG principals should drive three UN system changes that could have high leverage on UNCT collaboration and results:

- Increase agency incentives and supports for UNCT collaboration on programming and business practices;
- Intensify senior agency leadership engagement with Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs in key countries, to drive collaboration and priority setting to ensure alignment between national priorities and UN comparative advantages;
- Strengthen system capacity for managing and deploying world-class development knowledge and know-how at the country level.

Increase agency incentives and supports for collaboration

As noted above, the agencies, funds and programs represented in the UNDG need to send clear messages to all staff in their own organization about the need for interagency collaboration to achieve collective impact. UNDG action should strengthen incentives and supports for results-focused collaboration, including but not limited to the following:

1. Ensure agency staff appraisal systems directly appraise and reward country and regional staff on contributions to UNCT systems and results

The UNDG and its Advisory Group at both levels needs to drive full implementation of the performance appraisal elements of the Management and Accountability System as an essential step toward coherence. Though there has been some progress made on RC and UNCT member appraisal, there is a need to carry this work to completion in each agency's performance management and HR systems, for all staff who are normally expected to contribute to UN coherence and external joint results. It is also important to ensure that agencies are appraising and rewarding Regional Directors on their contributions to UNCT systems and development results. Similar solution should be found to monitor performance of relevant staff at headquarters of their efforts to support UN coherence.

2. Strengthen RC recruitment, appraisal and capacity development

Over the last several years, there has been substantial progress in making the RC role a catalyst for UNCT collaboration and achievement of joint results. However, there is a need to continue building the quantity and quality of the RC pool, to improve the assignment of RCs to ensure as good a fit as possible with the countries and UNCTs where they are assigned, to focus the ongoing appraisal of RCs more directly on their contribution to UNCT results, and to ensure that both first-time RCs and those on second or third posting have ongoing opportunities for professional and leadership development. The RC functional firewall needs to be strengthened, to further improve the credibility of the RC as the leader of all UN development agencies at country level. It is also of critical importance that all agencies implement the Management and Accountability System. In parallel, agencies need to support the authority of the RC to lead and coordinate joint programming efforts.

3. Monitor key indicators of UNCT coordination and results

The UNDG has a critical role to play in tracking and assessing progress on UNCT collaboration and contributions to development results at the country level. The UNDG should review on a regular basis Regional UNDG Teams reports on UNCT performance; UNCT results as demonstrated by UNDAF mid-term reviews and evaluations, and other results measures. The UNDG should use this data for benchmarking and tracking global progress, identifying outstanding and sub-par performance across all UNCTs, and taking action in response to trends and UNCT-specific performance.

4. Encourage agencies to partner in providing global and regional trainings on collaboration and leadership skills

The UN System Staff College has been providing increasingly effective and well-received inter-agency training on leadership and coordination skills. In addition, many individual agencies provide leadership skills training for their mid- and senior-level staff. There is a need for the UNDG to scale up opportunities for inter-agency leadership and collaboration skills training, both through the UNSSC and through inter-agency training partnerships.

These partnerships could bring together staff for a mix of thematic and leadership skills training, to encourage substantive collaboration as well as collaborative leadership.

5. Ensure that agencies scale up business practice harmonization

UNCT joint programming can only produce strong results if it is supported by harmonized management and administrative systems. There is now a substantial body of guidance and best practice in business practice harmonization. The UNDG's senior leaders, in close collaboration with HLCM, should drive, incentivize, and monitor UNCT business practice harmonization, and encourage business practices that support achievement of joint development results.

Deepen Senior Leadership Engagement with Regional UNDG Teams & UNCTs

Direct engagement of UNDG senior leaders with Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs is a key management tool to promote coherence and results. Demonstrated personal commitment of agencies' top management to support coherent and effective country programs and operations is one of the strongest messages that the UN development system can send.

1. Agency principals send stronger, more consistent messages to HQ, Regional and UNCT senior staff on the imperative of country coherence for results

To complement the stronger incentives for collaboration noted above, top UNDG leaders should send strong, clear messages about the importance of UNCT coherence to produce substantial, joint results. Leaders need to communicate consistently, and to link messages directly to accountability for joint results (e.g. through performance appraisal of senior staff and the UNCT as a whole).

2. Principals, Deputies & Regional UNDG Teams work directly with high impact countries on policy dialogue and UNCT priority setting

In all of the country contexts mentioned above (LDCs and LICs, crisis and transition countries, MICs and NCCs), UNDG senior managers can help with both policy dialogue and priority setting. Visits by senior UN officials can help RCs and UNCT members engage government and donors at the highest levels.

The Regional UNDG Teams should lead implementation and monitoring of the UNDG strategic priorities and the M&A System. There is a clear need to strengthen the direct engagement of Regional Directors and Teams across the range of country contexts, especially during UNDAF preparation and implementation, to promote disciplined priority setting to ensure alignment between national priorities and UN comparative advantages. There may also be situations in which direct involvement of UNDG ASGs is needed to resolve issues and promote creativity in joint programming.

3. Principals and Deputies regularly join agencies, Regional UNDG Teams and RCs in their regional meetings

Direct participation by UNDG Principals and Deputies in agency, Regional UNDG Team and RC regional meetings can help demonstrate commitment to UNCT coherence and the RC system. It can also provide very useful direct and informal feedback on how coherence initiatives are working at the regional and country level.

Improve System Capacity to Deploy Knowledge and Know-How

The UN development system's greatest value is arguably neither its financial resources nor its capacity for direct service delivery. Instead, the UN's impartiality, combined with its ability to deploy world-class knowledge and know-how for policy advising and capacity development, are its core comparative advantages.

There is a significant and growing risk to the UN's reputation and credibility in the area of knowledge management and deployment, because the UN has not developed effective systems that can quickly and consistently draw on the expertise available at all levels within and across UN system agencies. There is also a long-term question about the ability of the UN system to recruit, develop and retain highly qualified staff with expertise in policy advising and capacity development.

The risk may be greatest in MICs and NCCs, where governments can draw on substantial local expertise, and on the full range of global expertise, including private sector consultancies, universities and think tanks specializing in development and public sector management. Risks are significant in other contexts as well. In crisis and transition settings, quick access to relevant expertise may be essential to effective engagement with international and national actors. In UNDAF rollout countries, the UN's credibility as a partner in national policy dialogue depends on its ability to offer regional and global best practices as to how governments can address complex development challenges.

Each UNDG agency has a wealth of expertise in its core substantive areas, and there are some global, interagency thematic groups that could become the basis for stronger system-wide knowledge development, sharing and deployment. Further, within the CEB structure, the HLCP and HCLM have policy and management knowledge that could more directly complement the UNDG's operational knowledge and know-how.

To strengthen UN system capacity to provide UNCTs and their national partners the knowledge they need, when they need it, the UNDG will:

1. UNDG, HLCP and HCLM collaborate to identify and deploy best practices for country coherence

There are opportunities for closer UNDG-HLCP collaboration to link the programmatic guidance that HLCP provides to the UNDG's operational guidance and best practice in specific programmatic areas. Similarly, more systematic collaboration between the UNDG and HCLM could generate stronger technical advice to UNCTs seeking to harmonize business practices. There may also be need and opportunity for collaboration to focus HR systems on recruiting and retaining highly talented staff who are the ultimate sources of knowledge and know-how.

2. Regional UNDG Teams streamline and focus substantive support to UNCTs

The regional level is a critical focal point for translating global knowledge to regional, sub-regional and country contexts. As the Regional UNDG Teams are being asked to mobilize technical support to countries, the UNDG should be proactive in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the Regional UNDG Teams and Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), in line with the M&A System and other CEB agreements, for providing useful knowledge and advice to UNCTs.² In addition, the UNDG should ask the regions to develop stronger links to regional knowledge centers, including those in MICs, so that the UN system

² See CEB report CEB/2008/2 (UNDG report adopted by CEB in 2008)

at regional level can bring to bear not only its staff expertise, but also expertise available in universities, think tanks and consultancies.

3. UNDG leaders encourage their agencies to use joint regional meetings to share knowledge and know-how

Along with inter-agency regional trainings (mentioned above), UNDG agencies should regularly invite each other's regional and country staff who are working on the same thematic issues to participate in regional meetings. The direct engagement of staff in inter-agency, substantive discussions is one of the most effective means of knowledge sharing. The UNDG should encourage and support regional inter-agency meetings on global priority issues, with the HLCP, HLCM and RCMs in the regions.

III. Process for Implementing the Strategy

A. CEB and Linkage to Other CEB Pillars

As noted above, UN coherence at country level should be matched by coherence at HQ, particularly in the CEB, the highest-level UN body that is directly accountable for development results. The strategic priorities will be made available to the CEB to ensure maximum coherence among the priorities, strategies and work plans of the UNDG, HLCM and HLCP.

Stronger coordination across the three CEB pillars could enable UNDG to increase the direct, country-level impact of HLCP and HLCM recommendations and initiatives. Conversely, UNDG could better advise the HLCP and HLCM on operational challenges and opportunities as the HLCP and HLCM develop their recommendations and initiatives. As an ongoing effort to increase coordination between the HLCP and UNDG, the Joint Crisis Initiative may provide important lessons, and should be reviewed as one input to further development of coordination across the CEB pillars.

B. UNDG Roles and Responsibilities and Work Plan

To implement the strategic priorities, the UNDG will need to identify distinct roles and responsibilities of UNDG mechanisms (UNCTs, Regional UNDG Teams, DOCO and the UNDG itself), while maintaining consistency with and commitment to the Management and Accountability System. Attached to this document is an overview of proposed roles and responsibilities to implement the strategic priorities.

With the UNDG endorsement of the UNDG strategic priorities and the overview of roles and responsibilities for implementing them, the more detailed roles and responsibilities for UNDG mechanisms will be fine tuned.

In addition, the UNDG will create a two-year work plan for achieving the strategic priorities. That work plan will expand on the key actors' roles and responsibilities by generating specific targets, deliverables and timelines.

In line with the recommended roles and responsibilities, the UNDG will redefine its working mechanisms to help Regional UNDG Teams and UNCTs achieve those priorities. This redefinition may entail significant changes in the identity and mandates of UNDG Working

Groups, in their ways of working, their primary locations, and/or in DOCO support to them. The working mechanisms are expected to be time-limited and task-specific.

To support the work plan, roles and responsibilities between the UNDG and the Advisory Group at principals and ASG levels will be clarified. There may be ways to reduce overlap in topics discussed, and to further refine the distinctions among information sharing, advising and decision making in the agendas of these UNDG bodies.