

Joint Programmes

Overview

What is a Joint Programme?

Joint programming is how the UN works at the country level. The concept of joint programming has been considerably refined in the UNDG guidelines issued in March 2004 and is now clearly driven by the needs of each country situation. Enhancement of development impact is the key underlying principle. When agencies plan and design their programmes together they increase programme effectiveness. The identification of joint programmes is a way to support national implementation jointly where this raises effectiveness and efficiency.

A joint programme is a set of activities contained in a common work plan and related budget, involving two or more UN organizations and (sub-)national partners. The work plan and budget forms part of a joint programme document, which also details roles and responsibilities of partners in coordinating and managing the joint activities. The joint programme document is signed by all participating organizations and (sub-)national partners.

When should we develop a Joint Programme?

When agencies plan to support common or similar results, they should consider whether to undertake a joint programme. Their primary question should be “Will doing a joint programme boost our development effectiveness and increase our impact?” No one agency has a broad enough reach to enable it to resolve development challenges single-handedly. Joint programming is a way for agencies to mesh their individual expertise, strengthen their work, and enhance sustainability.

What sort of Joint Programme is appropriate?

The new guidelines are intended to provide a framework for UN Country Teams to make decisions as to when joint programmes may be a sensible option and what degree of jointness makes sense in each situation.

When more than one agency is working to support the same result, but with different national partners, it can make sense for them to plan and monitor their support together and manage their activities within a common work plan. In such cases, the parallel fund management option is likely to be the most efficient.

Where more than one agency is working to support the same result with the same national partner, stakeholder transaction costs will be minimized if the agencies manage their support together, especially the provision of recurrent costs support, or ‘cash assistance’. One agency, appointed managing agency, could transfer ‘pooled’ resources to government, against a commonly agreed plan and budget.

Where more than one agency is working to support the same result and a joint programme is developed, donors who support the joint programme may wish to channel funds through one of the agencies participating in the joint programme – this arrangement is called a ‘pass-through’ mechanism.

A typical joint programme could involve a mixture of any or all of these options.