

Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness and Relevance (CER): Key Messages for Donors

We are here to act. We are here to deliver results. We are agents of change. Our job is to change the UN—and, through it, the world.

—UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

See “Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Relevance: Key Messages” and “Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Relevance: Frequently Asked Questions” for more detailed talking points on these issues.

NOTE:

1. This tool/guidance has been developed based on the experiences of the DaO Pilot countries.
2. This guidance note is directed at UNCT/RCO to support them in their communication with stakeholders.



Donors benefit from a more coherent, effective and relevant UN

Donors and partners such as NGOs and the World Bank benefit directly from a more coherent, effective and relevant UN system. Working together in a common strategic framework helps UN agencies provide more relevant, demand-driven support that is better aligned with national priorities and draws from a deeper pool of UN expertise.

Working with an empowered Resident Coordinator, a coherent team and a comprehensive budgetary framework gives donors a clear picture of how the UN is spending their money. It makes it easier for donors to coordinate their work with the UN's activities, reduces the time spent in meetings with UN representatives and increases the accountability and transparency of UN operations.

Lowering UN country team overhead costs frees up more resources for programming that delivers results.

Implementing the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Working coherently helps the UN put the Paris Declaration into practice by ensuring that aid delivers equitable results for the people who most need it, strengthening the capacity of countries to manage their own development, and managing for results through strong, transparent and accountable partnerships. The process of formulating the UNDAF/common programming tool bases UN development priorities on national needs, as identified in the national poverty reduction strategy. UN agencies take these national priorities as a starting point and jointly determine in which areas the UN is best positioned to help the government realize its national development objectives. These areas form the primary focus for UN development assistance. In the end, the donors get a UN Country Team that can deliver more and better strategic support.

More relevant programming: By thinking, planning and implementing programmes together, UN organizations can provide better technical assistance and support for capacity development that draws on the full UN system. This more strategic approach is also boosting the UN's ability to engage in the upstream policy advice and sophisticated technical assistance that governments increasingly request from the UN. It is providing a clearer focus on the UN system's comparative advantages in supporting national priorities.

Increased efficiency and lower overhead costs: Working together efficiently helps the UN provide more value for money for the taxpayers of the world. By simplifying and harmonizing business practices and using common services and premises, UN Country Teams can reduce their overhead expenses. Cost savings liberate more funding for development programming and make every tax dollar the UN spends more impactful. It also makes it possible for the UN to channel more development assistance and do it more efficiently and effectively. People are more willing to contribute money for development if they believe it's being spent effectively and efficiently, so a better UN development system can lead to more funding for national development agencies.

For example, Cape Verde's Common Premises in its first year cost 25% less than the total costs of participating offices the preceding year. The common premises plans in Mozambique have also yielded significant cost savings. The plan to create a carbon neutral green UN office in Hanoi, Viet Nam, will result in significant savings in energy and other costs and will set a benchmark as the most environmentally friendly office in Southeast Asia.

Clear picture of full UN system support to the country: Bringing all of the UN Country Team's work together in a common programme supported by a common funding framework provides donors and partners with a clear overview of the full range of UN operational activities, financing and funding gaps. This helps donors plan their own expenditures more strategically and effectively.

Clearer communications between the donors and partners and the UN: Communication between the UN and governments, as well as the interaction of government with donors and other stakeholders, has improved thanks to more coherent UN country teams, led by resident coordinators working in tandem with government coordination mechanisms. The UNCTs are more effectively interacting with governments, listening to national priorities and finding ways to organize themselves in a way that best responds to those priorities. A united UN Country Team is easier to work with. By participating in a joint planning and programming process, donors and civil society representatives can get a full picture of what the UN is doing, provide points of view, proposals and recommendations, and play a more direct role in shaping UN programming.

Wider and deeper agency involvement: A more coherent UN makes more of the UN system's expertise available for country level work, including through increased involvement by non-resident UN agencies. Several issues the UN system works on have seen increased emphasis, notably support to the productive sector, employment, trade, protection of the environment, and adaptation to climate change. This improvement has emerged from a process where UN agencies that aren't physically present in the pilot countries have been able to spend more time advising their governments without having to set up costly offices. By providing better technical, policy and capacity building assistance and coordination, the UN makes it possible for donors to reduce their own country presences.

Greater use of national systems: As part of working more effectively, the UN system is increasingly seeking to make use of national systems and capacities wherever possible, and to develop national capacities to implement programmes. This helps to strengthen governments' ability to absorb and use direct budget support from donors.

Donors can support a better and more coherent UN system

Donors can play a very important role by providing coherent, un-earmarked funding that rewards effective programming. They can also regularly give the UN system consistent messages that encourage UN agencies to work together, plan strategically, and get rid of duplication and inefficient practices. And they can work to build consensus for reforms in the UN's governing bodies.

Coherent funding: Donors can help UN country teams deliver by fully funding the UNDAF or common programming tool in a coherent, coordinated way that avoids earmarking donations. Donors can increasingly pool their funding contributions at the country or headquarters level, and provide adequate quantities of funding. They can create positive incentives by rewarding good results with more funding.

Consistent messages: Donors can ensure that their representatives give consistent instructions in the governing bodies of the various UN agencies and at country level regarding their priorities and the importance of working together. They can encourage UN agencies to work together and deliver better. They can help the UN system prioritize and be more strategic, for example by telling UN agencies to stop doing things that are not part of the overall strategy and are not priorities for the programme country government.

Building consensus: Donors can work to persuade other member states of the merits of a more coherent, effective and relevant UN system. It's best if they can do so in a way that makes clear that this is not a purely donor driven initiative, but rather a series of improvements that are in everyone's interest. Building this kind of consensus also requires listening to and addressing the concerns of programme countries.

UN Member States are calling for UN agencies to work together and deliver better

The General Assembly and other UN governing bodies have welcomed the UN family's efforts to work together more coherently and called for further progress. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which UN Member States have welcomed, expanded on this agenda with an emphasis on making agreed policies operational. The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolutions of 2004 and 2007 call for us to improve operations at the country level through more relevant and coordinated programmes, improved delivery and increased leadership and ownership by governments of country programmes.

The Member States agreed on the following in the 2005 World Summit's landmark outcome document:

"We further reaffirm the need for the United Nations to play a fundamental role in the promotion of international cooperation for development and the coherence, coordination and implementation of development goals and actions agreed upon by the international community, and we resolve to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system in close cooperation with all other multilateral financial, trade and development institutions in order to support sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development."

The member states also called for increasing system-wide coherence by:

- *Strengthening linkages between the normative work of the United Nations system and its operational activities;*
- *Implementing current reforms aimed at a more effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated and better-performing United Nations country presence with a strengthened role for the senior resident official, whether special representative, resident coordinator or humanitarian coordinator, including appropriate authority, resources and accountability, and a common management, programming and monitoring framework;*
- *Inviting the Secretary-General to launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities so that they can make an even more effective contribution to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals....¹*

The General Assembly's **2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development** (TCPR) specifically mandates the UN system to become more coherent, effective and efficient, and to simplify and harmonize business practices. It endorses the UN Development Assistance Framework as the common planning tool for all the funds and

¹ A/RES/60/1 2005 World Summit Outcome, p. 36

programmes and a framework for the full UN system, and says it should be the basis for progress in aligning the UN response to national priorities and the national planning cycle, as well as the basis for the Resident Coordinator to report to the Government on progress made against agreed results.

The 2007 TCPR states that the Resident Coordinator System has a key role to play in the effective and efficient functioning of the UN at country level, and urges the UN system to provide further financial, technical and organizational support for the RC System. It recognizes the central role of Resident Coordinators in improving the UN system's response to national development priorities, and says the RCs should report to national authorities on progress made against the results agreed in the UN Development Assistance Framework. It also says UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies should "step up" their efforts to rationalize their country presence through common premises, and where appropriate to implement the joint office model and expand common shared support services and business units in order to reduce overhead costs.

In 2008, several Member State governments told the co-chairs of the General Assembly discussions on System-wide Coherence, Effectiveness and Relevance that they are eager and impatient for the UN development system to become more coherent, more efficient, and more effective in meeting the needs of their people, and more aligned with their national strategies. The governments of the eight pilots have said very clearly and firmly that CER/"Delivering as One" is making significant progress. A large and growing number of other developing countries are coming forward to embrace these new approaches. In the Maputo Declaration of May 2008, pilot government representatives formally asked the General Assembly to encourage them on the path they have chosen.