ENHANCING THE FUNCTIONING OF THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM

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Mandate for paper

- General overview of how RCS functioning today

- Propose measures that would enhance the functioning of the RCS

- Note: RCS taken to include: RC, UNCT, support at regional and global levels, programming instruments like CCA, UNDAF
    - subject to parallel UNDAF study

General Assembly Guidance

- General Assembly Guidance
  - "strengthened role for the senior resident official" – resolution 60/1
  - "RCS has a key role to play in the effective and efficient functioning of the UN system at the country level" – resolution 62/208
  - "requests the SG, in consultation with…UNDG, to ensure that RCs have the necessary resources to fulfil their role effectively" – resolution 62/208

RC system objectives -formal

- Effectiveness: coherent UN response to country's priorities

- Efficiency: gains for governments and agencies through harmonization and simplification

- Enhanced accountability: to both the host governments and the UN system

RC system objectives - informal

- Address the image of the UN system as fragmented and non-coherent
- Build donor confidence to attract increased levels of financing
- Get all agencies involved

RC system rationale

- Investment in coherence justified to increase UN system impact where:
  - interaction with individual agencies to ensure coherence of individual agencies with national priorities imposes considerable burden on host government; and
  - government does not wish to, or have capacity to, manage this burden effectively

Four key concepts

- Inclusiveness (representing the whole UN system)
- Coherence – (of the overall UN effort in line with government priorities)
- Efficiency – (is cost reasonable?)
- Effectiveness – (does it enhance the overall impact of UN activities?)

Different RCS approaches

- Standard RC approach

- Integrated Mission approach

- Joint Office approach (Cape Verde)

- Delivering as One – (separate evaluation underway)

- UNDP representation – e.g. UNIDO

- Multi-country accreditation of RC

- No RC

RCS – guiding principles

- RCS – owned by the UN system
- RCS – to serve the full UN system
- Managed by UNDP for the system
- Accountability through Chair of UNDG to CEB
- "Firewall" between RC roles as RC and as UNDP Resident Representative

Authority of RC

- To serve the entire UNCT
- Limited formal authority
  - <u>when consensus in UNCT not possible</u>
    - can set broader UN strategic direction
    - can allocate funds from "pooled sources"
    - authorities seldom used – in practice, difficult to operate without consensus
- Agencies to reflect role of RC in job descriptions for their country representatives (some have, some haven't)
- Authority primarily at the front end
  - little or no authority for operations
- Net result – it is the **personality** of the RC that determines effectiveness of the RC function – not the **authority** that goes with the position

Coherence of the UN

- Long-standing issue
- Led to creation of UNDP – central funding
    - coherence achieved for entire UN system through UNDP country programmes
    - failed eventually, due lack of donor support and other factors (most of which still present today)
- Now trying to re-create a coherence mechanism
    - RCS – UNCT – UNDAF – DaO - local resource pools – joint programming etc.

Coherence – three aspects

1. With government priorities
2. With other development/humanitarian partners
3. Within the UN itself

- Arguably, current efforts focus more on third than on first two
- Question – how important is internal UN coherence versus the other two?

Inclusiveness

- RCS serving and involving the entire UN system
  - 36 disbursing UN agencies in 2009
- Major evolution since original UNDG
  - originally the four major funds and programmes of the UNDG ExCom
  - ExCom (4 members) guided UNDG
  - UNDG Office (UNDGO) served UNDG and RCS
- Now all agencies involved – regardless of size
  - UNDG guided by Advisory Group (13 members)
  - DOCO (replaced UNDGO) now part of CEB
  - UNDP firewall
- Inclusiveness has a price
  - exponential complexity for all decision-making processes
  - more and longer meetings
  - decisions less "forceful" due consensus and much larger number of players
  - for UNDP – firewall presents many issues

- **Question – value-added for this additional complexity?**

RCS - costs and benefits

- **<u>Costs</u>**
  - heavy UNCT time commitments to manage processes
  - 3% of country programmable resources
  - 8% of UNDP's core contributions
  - directed donor support – (commitment wavering?)
    - EU decision to lighten their own coordination processes
    - limiting coordination expenditures to biggest programme countries
  - flexibility and speed of response
- **<u>Benefits</u>**
  - whole can be greater than sum of the parts
  - efficiency? - at least to date, perhaps less rather than more – coordination an added function
  - effectiveness? – some positive stories, but little hard data (admittedly - very difficult to do)
- **<u>Question:</u>** do benefits justify the costs?
- **<u>NB – we need a balanced assessment – not all parties yet heard from</u>**

Funding trends

- Work against coherence
  - 1994/2009 – almost all growth in non-core
    - in real terms: 2% for core, 350% for non-core
  - in 2009, 88% of non-core directed to specific projects/programmes
  - core funding through inflexible vertical "stovepipes"
  - few resources for country-level allocation
  - only 6% of relationships are meaningful (come from agencies that fall into the category of donors representing 80% of country spending)
- Despite criticism of lack of coherence
  - UN share of total ODA continues to grow
  - UN largest multilateral partner for DAC countries
- **Question:** if it is not coherence, what is the reason for positive UN funding history?
  - positive in total contributions
  - but less positive in quality of funding

Other realities

- Work against coherence
  - all funds, programmes and specialized agencies have some measure of independence
  - RC can only coordinate, not manage, because no single governing body or manager is "in charge"
  - few incentives to put "UN system interests" ahead of "agency interests"
  - governance lines are vertical
  - programming lines are largely vertical
  - legal structures are vertical
  - business practices are vertical
  - accountability lines are vertical

Observation

- Forces working for coherence:
  - RC - sometimes with committed UNCTs (and sometimes not)
  - limited global and regional support for RC
  - insufficient human and financial resources for coordination function
- **Observation: the forces working <u>against</u> coherence are much greater than the forces working <u>for</u> coherence**

Op. Activities Expenditure Analysis

- **Highlights**
  - across all countries, top 5 disbursing agencies represent 90% of UN funding in each country (not always same agencies in top 5)
  - average # agencies disbursing per country: 14.4
    - thus average of 9.4 agencies represent less than 10% of spending
  - 8 agencies represent 90%+ of total UN disbursements (2 – WFP & UNHCR) are largely humanitarian
  - in 50% of countries, average disbursement for the 29 "smaller agencies" is $357,000 per agency disbursing
  - 17 Integrated Mission countries represent 36% of total UN country-level spending (50% development – 50% humanitarian)
  - a further 19 LDCs (not IMs) represent 19% of total UN country level spending (59% development – 41% humanitarian)
  - these 36 countries represent 55% of total UN country-level spending

Possible directions from expenditure analysis

- Limit full application of RCS process to a limited group of countries where coherence most important
  - 17 IM countries where expenditures total 36% of total UN operational activities
  - additional 14 LDCs (not IMs) which with the LDC IMs would cover 91% of total UN op. activities in the LDCs
  - an additional 19 MICs where <u>development</u> (no LR or humanitarian) expenditures >$40 million/year – where govt. may not wish to coordinate directly (country analysis important)
  - would result in applying full RCS in about 50 countries
  - ultimately, country analysis should determine approach
- Use "lighter" RCS approaches elsewhere based on country analysis of what is required

General questions arising

- system-wide inclusiveness brings in many very small players at considerable cost in managing the process – what is the value added?
- number of countries where UN is a development player is very limited (perhaps 1/3 of total) – focus scarce coordination resources here?
- is <u>heavy</u> and <u>universal</u> focus on coherence and inclusiveness justified?
- does RCS need to be custom-tailored by country?
- If no: how will support for coordination be funded?
- If yes:
  - what criteria to use to determine "effort justified"
  - what elements of the RCS can be adjusted?