Preparations for 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of the General Assembly

Support to countries in transition from relief to development

Analytical Review

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I. Introduction

Focus of this study

This independent study was prepared as part of the analytical process managed by the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in preparation for the 2012 United Nations (UN) Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). It was designed in particular to inform the development of the Secretary General's report to the General Assembly.

The focus of the study is on the link between transition related policies and what happens on the ground, and whether policies that have been designed to increase the UN system's coherence and efficiency in transition contexts in particular have been applied with any success or impact.

A number of policies[1] have been developed and adopted since the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) with the aim of strengthening the efficiency and coherence of UN operations in countries in transition from relief to development. The following research aims to take stock of these policies and their impact, with a focus on:

i. The extent to which the new policies/strategies address the challenges associated with transitions from relief to development;

ii. The extent to which they have been implemented in transition countries;

iii. The impact that such implementation has had, in particular in terms of coherence and efficiency;

iv. What the obstacles have been in implementing them and/or in ensuring that their implementation had an impact on coherence and efficiency; and,

v. The extent to which some challenges require modification and/or new policies or implementation guidance.

Analytical framework/assumptions

Based on a literature review and in-country experience, the study was underpinned by an analytical framework. Such a framework assumes the following set of assumptions. In order for a link between policies and increased coherence/efficiency to take hold, the following needs to apply:

- Knowledge: People on the ground first need to know about and understand these policies: rationale, results expected, etc;

[1] Specifically policies outlined in: GA resolutions 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review (Section D on transition from relief to development); 64/289 on system-wide coherence; Resolution 2011/7; 2004 UNDG/ECGHA Working Group on Transition Issues report, referred to as the Bellamy report; more broadly, policies will also refer to the relevant Reports and Decisions of the Secretary-General, policies on aid effectiveness **within and external to the UN**; and, policies which refer to funding for transitions at corporate and field level.

- Evidence of relevance: For policies to have an impact, they must be implemented on the basis of clearly accepted evidence that there is a gap or an obstacle in this particular context that this policy can address;

- Implementation: There is clarity on how to implement those policies (timing, resources required, support expected, etc.) and adequate resources are made available (existing or additional) to implement them;

- Leadership: There is a "champion" to drive the process of implementation – was it the Resident Coordinator (RC) or Humanitarian Coordination (HC), or was it a coalition? Was there a national champion?

- Partnerships: Relevant counterparts are made aware, equipped (resourced) and willing to engage in the implementation of the policy;

- Accountability: There is proper alignment between responsibility for results, authority over implementation and capacity for task (including over allocation of resources);

- Support: Technical/programmatic engagement is supported by timely political support (to overcome internal obstacles or external resistance);

- Alignment of donor incentives: Where relevant, implementation of the policy receives donor support (political, increased funding flows, etc.); and,

- Monitoring: The UN is equipped with systems and capacities to monitor implementation and collect evidence as to its impact. Obstacles to implementation are recorded, analyzed and addressed, with adequate HQ engagement (this also means that feedback mechanisms allow for policies to be amended or abandoned, if need be, based on field experience)

Methodological considerations

The consultants have drawn their major findings and suggested recommendations on the basis of the following elements:

- A review of a number of transition related policies developed since 2007, with a focus on those designed specifically to address issues of UN coherence and efficiency, and those that include elements related to UN coherence and efficiency. Those policies are discussed in Section VI;

- A review of UN corporate and country specific reports, such as RC annual reports or Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) monitoring reports, or other documents in which issues of UN coherence and efficiency are discussed;

- A series of interviews with a range of constituencies, including member state UN missions, agency and secretariat desk officers and/or policy officers, and field based colleagues from UN missions and agencies, donors and/or government representatives;

- The results from the DESA administered survey to Resident Coordinators; and,

- The consultants' own experiences in transition settings, both with the UN and in other capacities

The consultants would like to emphasize the following six methodological choices and parameters:

1. There is no agreed or standard definition of coherence (or efficiency) in the UN system. In fact, a review of General Assembly resolution, internal UN documents and external literature reveals a variety of perspectives and expectations. There aren't any defined indicators to measure whether coherence and efficiency have increased in any particular setting. As a result, coherence and efficiency are, simply, in the eyes of the beholder. For the purpose of this study, the consultants have chosen to define coherence on the basis of fairly simple metrics, starting with the degree of communication within the UN system, and including the degree of consistency in messaging (from HQ to field, from the UN to partners) and in programming (with internal guidelines and in terms of alignment with major international principles). The concept of efficiency has been reviewed mostly from the perspective of the transaction costs that the UN's processes, procedures and requirements impose both on itself and to partners.

2. The discussion around transition related policies and the factors that determine their impact in the field was not designed to assess every single policy and its impact in transition contexts. The objective was to use a "policy sample" and examine a set of assumptions in order to determine the factors and conditions under which they have an impact on coherence and efficiency. The selection of policies for which the consultants offer specific findings (see Section IV) emerged from the interviews, and not from any ex ante choice. The selection reflects the level of awareness from the interviewees and their judgment on which ones have been most relevant to issues of coherence and efficiency in the field.

3. The choice of the research question was made for two reasons: one, the 2007 TCPR provided a launch pad for a fairly significant policy development effort. Prior to the 2012 QCPR, it was deemed that, if this new resolution were to set off another round of policy making, it would important to first take stock of the efforts of the last few years and explore the extent to which current policies are being translated in the field. Second, the research question, and the supporting instruments (questionnaire/interview guide) were used as an analytical starting point to draw out a range of broader issues. The report's findings reflect this expansion beyond the original research question.

4. The use of country case studies was designed to provide a reality check to HQ based discussions and document reviews, and to help frame the issues, constraints and recommendations with a focus on country level realities. **The objective was neither to evaluate UN coherence and efficiency in those countries, nor to present an exhaustive account of what the UN has done or experienced in each of them**. Moreover, given the lack of time and resources to conduct field-based work, the

consultants chose to draw on experiences from a range of other settings with which they have been associated to inform their findings and recommendations.

5. The choice of the case studies (Central African Republic (CAR), Haiti, Pakistan and South Sudan) was determined by the UNDG-ECHA Working Group. It must be noted that UN colleagues from South Sudan indicated that they would not partake in this study, due to time constraints and limited staff resources. Feedback and participation from country level colleagues was extremely uneven and difficult, given the overall timeframe accorded to the exercise and the multiple demands on their time. The consultants believe however that the combination of various other "sources" (documents, HQ desk officers, personal knowledge) complements direct interaction to yield, not scientific validity, but sufficiently evidenced analysis to support a conversation around global findings and recommendations.

6. Finally, the reader should keep in mind that the entire study was conducted over a six week period, from the initial discussion on the Terms of Reference, to the finalization of the report draft.

II. "Transitions" in Focus: Evolution of a Concept and an Approach

Since the 2007 TCPR, the international community's understanding of, and approach to, the concept of transition has fundamentally evolved. Policies developed since then reflect and respond in part to this evolution. For many respondents, within the UN and amongst member states, the 2012 QCPR would benefit from including the most current understanding of the concept, and the most recent thinking regarding international approaches to states in transition.

Questioning the 'continuum' concept

The TCPR described the post-conflict, post-disaster phase as one of "transition from relief to development", implying a linear progression from a set of short-term humanitarian imperatives to long-term development goals. Simplistically put, transition was perceived as a two-step programme that involved humanitarian actors effectively 'handing over the baton' to development agencies.

While the concepts of relief and development have evolved since the 2007 TCPR, the most universally contested aspect of the term "transition from relief to development" relates to the implied understanding of transition as a *"continuum"*. Countries in transitions are complex environments in which linear progression from one set of activities to another is difficult to achieve, if not impossible in any short-term timeframe. Complex processes in transition settings simply do not progress from A to B; such contexts are characterized by unpredictable shocks, fragile institutions and may be vulnerable to regional economic and political distortions, creating highly unpredictable environments.

From a more pragmatic perspective, a country in transition is unlikely to experience a crisis uniformly across its sub-regions: different regions may require different types of engagements within different timeframes. Additionally, humanitarian and development activities may be required simultaneously to cope with different yet overlapping needs. Most importantly, relapses into conflict or the recurrence of disasters are not only possible but highly likely; as the 2011 Report on 'Development in the Shadow of violence by the *Center for International Cooperation* states: "Fragile states are beset and defined by recurring cycles of violence, and violence feeds their chronic underdevelopment" [2]. Expectations of a linear progression betray the reality of complex and fragile settings, and can lead to unrealistic timeframes with unintended, negative consequences.

Expanding concept of 'transition': part of the Peacebuilding-Statebuilding paradigm

In addition to its development and humanitarian components, 'transitions' are now commonly understood to also include political, security and human rights components. This is in part tied to increasing inclusion of post-conflict practices under the banner terms of 'peacebuilding' and/or 'statebuilding' - even if the definition and scope of these terms remains a source of disagreement. Despite conceptual disagreements, policy actors increasingly agree that the priorities of the peacebuilding-statebuilding agenda include activities which span across all sectors of the international security and development fields, including basic security, justice, jobs, inclusive political settlements and government capacities to manage revenues and deliver basic services.

[2] Development in the Shadow of violence: a knowledge agenda for policy, report on the future direction of investment in evidence on issues of fragility, security and conflict, Geneva, September 22, 2011, prepared by the Center on International Cooperation

Peacebuilding and statebuilding contexts, therefore, increasingly involve UN and non-UN entities building societal capacities for peace and addressing conflict-related issues such as governance, unemployment or exclusion, alongside UN peacekeeping or political missions contributing to improving the security and political environment. A number of UN agencies and departments now collaborate to assist transition countries in building resilience by strengthening national and local mechanisms, resources, and skills through which conflicts can be resolved non-violently. As such, there is growing consensus that peacebuilding-statebuilding – no matter what the type of transition – is an approach, for which multiple, context specific, entry points can be explored.

Diversity of transition contexts and institutional understanding

'Context matters' is a phrase the international community has become accustomed to hearing and an approach it is now used to promoting. As such, it is essential to consider whether the transition takes place: in the wake of a sudden or slow on-set crisis; whether it follows a natural or man-made 'disaster'; whether it is affects a low- or middle-income country; and, whether the intervention occurs during an identifiable "phase" of the conflict or disaster (while acknowledging that such phases are unlikely to proceed in predictable, linear fashion)[3] – to name only a few of the variables to be taken into consideration when designing and implementing an international response. It is quite possible that an engagement may take place in a country experiencing a combination of several types of the 'transitions' in different parts of the country, or at different moments in time.

Given the diversity of post-conflict and post-disaster settings, it is no surprise that the concept also has many different institutional definitions. For DPKO, for example, it could refer to the drawdown of a particular mission, whereas for DPA it can refer to a political transition from interim authorities to established governments; for UNDP it may denote capacity building for national counterparts during or in the wake of a conflict or disaster, and the gradual scaling down of international engagements. As such, a *plethora of terms* now exist which refer to such settings including Low-Income States Under Stress (LICUS), fragile states, post-conflict settings, peacebuilding, statebuilding, etc. to mention only a few.

Defining 'countries in transition'

For the purposes of this report, the authors use the term "*countries in transition*" in place of the TCPR term "countries in transition from relief to development"; we define this by using and adapting the most recent definition of transition, as articulated in the March 2012 DAC Guidance:

> *"A transition period spans across a broad spectrum of activities along the path[4] out of conflict [and complex disasters[5]] and toward sustainable development, greater national ownership and increased state capacity. This includes recovery and reconstruction activities that traditionally fall between the humanitarian and development categories, and security-related and peacebuilding activities.*

[3] Chandy, Laurence, 'Ten years of fragile states: what have we learned?', Global Economy and Development, Brookings, Global Views, Policy Paper 2011-12.
[4] The authors note that this path is not uni-directional, as substantiated in the second paragraph of this definition.
[5] "Disasters" has been added by the authors of this Report.

> *Transition is a non-linear process that presents tensions and trade-offs between the need to provide rapid support to peace-promoting and life-saving activities whilst supporting the development of sustainable state structures. As such, it requires a shared space between humanitarian, development and security actors, as countries might experience humanitarian emergencies, longer-term development programmes and peacekeeping efforts simultaneously. This requires a flexible approach that does not compromise humanitarian principles"*[6]

The message we heard unanimously and incontestably amongst those interviewed was that the starting point for the 2012 QCPR had to be a more nuanced understanding of transitions, which underscores the diversity of contexts in which they take place, and the need for tailored, non-linear and long-term approaches to humanitarian, development and security-related challenges.

This message reflects the tenor of a series discussions held in the Joint Executive Board of UNDP, UNOPS, UNICEF, WHO, UN Women, and UNFPA over the last year and a half. The main conclusions and lessons learned from the last of these discussions in January 2012 included the need for increased coordination among these UN agencies, but particularly also with OCHA; the need for a strong commitment to the normative principles underlying UN operations in relief and development – human rights, gender equality and inclusiveness; and the importance of effective systems of accountability for national ownership.

The need for the UN to strengthen its work in transition settings were further echoed in the UN Secretary General's Five Year Action Agenda (January 2012), which includes a section on "nations in transition", highlighting, inter alia, the need to further scale up UN capacity in core areas of comparative advantage, support transition compacts, and deepen strategic and operational collaboration with other partners.

[6] International Support to Post-Conflict Transition, DAC Guidance on Transition Financing: Key message, March 2012

IV. Policy Developments since 2007 TCPR: A summary

The 2007 TCPR set in motion a vast wave of policy developments which responded – directly and indirectly – to the requests and invitations contained within the GA resolution. The TCPR contained recommendations for policy-making and action related to: first, funding for operational activities of the UN development system; second, the contribution of UN operational activities to national capacity development and development effectiveness, including: capacity-building and development; South-South cooperation and development of national capacities; gender equality and women's empowerment; and, the transition from relief to development; and, third, improved functioning of the UN development system including: regional dimensions; transaction costs and efficiency, country-level capacity of the UN development system and evaluation of operational activities for development.

This analytical review focuses only on those policies that relate to improving the coherence and effectiveness of UN operations in countries in "transition from relief to development". Despite this narrow focus on only *one sub-section* of the TCPR, what is striking is the sheer number of policies contained in the Secretary-General's Reports, decisions and directives, and external policies – making an 'evaluation' of those policies on an individual basis impossible to conduct; the number of policies is simply too overwhelming. However, despite the proliferation of policies since 2007, there appears to be a degree of convergence in the content of relevant policies around key concepts including: coordinating actors within each country to analyze, speak and act with one voice; the primacy of national governments and capacity building; and, an attempt to make aid more predictable and flexible.

This section of the review gives a summary of some of the major policies to have emerged in direct or indirect response to the TCPR's call for greater coherence and efficiency in transition contexts; it does not seek to provide a comprehensive inventory of *all* policies, but to provide an indication of the type of policies that have been developed and how they respond to the most prominent aspects of the TCPR section on transitions from relief to development, as they relate to the broader coherence and effectiveness agenda of the UN.

Setting the scene

The 2007 TCPR recognized "that the United Nations development system has a vital role to play in situations of transition from relief to development"[7]. The 2009 *Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict*[8] was the most prominent articulation of a response to this element of the TCPR, setting out a clear agenda for post-conflict and fragile settings. The Report provides guidance on both substance and process as it relates to the post-conflict period; it sets out five key areas for prioritization – where coherence and coordination are most needed and likely to be most effective - in fragile settings, including: basic safety and security; political processes; provision of basic services; core government functions; and, economic revitalization.

[7] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 68.
[8] A/63/881-S/2009/304

The Report also lays the foundation for operational coherence, both by setting a time-frame for activities and modalities for action in-country. It defines the two years after a conflict has ended a key "window of opportunity" when timely and coordinated action is most important. With the aim of improving the system's response to post-conflict settings, the Report also addresses the need for: leadership teams and senior level mechanisms to ensure the right leadership is in place as soon as possible; more support for Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNAs); member state funding alignment with the outcomes of such processes; need for increased inter-operability of expert rosters; improved and increased usage of Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTFs) and other pooled funding mechanisms designed to improve the availability of funds for peacebuilding priorities[9].

Similarly, the *Secretary-Generals Report on Women's Participation in Peacebuilding*[10] in 2010 underscored the essential role that women play in this transition period. It sets out a 7-point action plan to ensure gender equality is a realistic goal at the critical moment after conflict. The plan's 7 commitments seek to ensure that: women are engaged - and gender expertise provided - in peace talks; women play substantive roles in post-conflict planning processes; adequate financing is provided to address women's specific needs, advance gender equality and promote women's empowerment; deployed civilians possess the necessary specialized skills, including making state institutions more accessible to women; women can participate fully in post-conflict governance, as civic actors, elected representatives or decision-makers in public institutions; rule-of-law initiatives encourage women's participation in the process of seeking redress for injustices; and lastly, economic recovery prioritizes women's involvement in employment-creation schemes, community-development programmes and the delivery of front-line services.

Given the international community's evolving approach to countries in transition and the increasing complexity of operations in such settings, a number of more recent policies have sought to refine and add additional policy guidance with respect to engagements in post-conflict environments. Following up on the *Secretary General's Report on Peace in the Aftermath of Conflict*, the *Secretary-Generals Decision on Durable Solutions* [11] offers clarification on the coordination mechanisms for responsibilities regarding internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees returning to their country of origin, with the RC/HC taking the lead in coordination with the inter-cluster working group on Early Recovery. Lastly, in the same vane, in the *Secretary-Generals Decision on Human Rights Due Diligence policy*[12], all UN entities are requested to ensure that non-UN security forces are acting in accordance with principles, purposes and obligations of human rights principles, and outlines courses of action when this is not the case.

Improving internal coordination

Promoting internal coordination, both within and between agencies was a major component of the 2007 TCPR; it specifically called for "the organizations of the United Nations development system to strengthen interdepartmental and inter-agency coordination in order to ensure an integrated, coherent and coordinated approach to assistance at the country level, which takes account of the complexity of challenges that countries in those circumstances face and the country-specific character of those challenges"[13]; additionally,

[9] See sub-section on funding for more information.
[10] A/65/354–S/2010/466
[11] Decision No.2011/20
[12] Decision No.2011/18
[13] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 71

it requested the United Nations development system take measures, in line with guidance provided by Member States, "that further strengthen the coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of operational activities of the United Nations development system in countries in transition from relief to development"[14]. The UNDG-ECHA Working Group on Transitions has to this effect played an active role in promoting and discussing initiatives designed to strengthen both coherence and effectiveness of the UN system in transition contexts. It has in particular provided an important platform for policy development and review. In the constellation of UN inter-agency and inter-departmental coordination mechanisms, its comparative advantages lie in its inclusiveness (giving representation to agencies that may not be included in a range of other fora: ISG, etc.), its thematic focus (" the role and practice of development in transition contexts") and its function (as a policy incubator, where ideas and strategies can be exchanged and reviewed prior to formal UN approval processes). While a review of its strengths and weaknesses is beyond this study's remit, it is evident that the group can continue to play a critical role, if sustained by strong leadership, a focus on those comparative advantage, and strengthened links between its discussions and decision-making processes at principals level.

A large number of policies targeting internal UN coordination had already been developed prior to the 2007, so the TCPR sought to build upon and refine those policies, some of which were in the implementation phase. Particularly foundational was the *Delivering as one, Report of the Secretary-General Panel in 2006*[15] and the *Note of Guidance of on Integrated Missions*[16] also in 2006. The former emphasized "One UN" as a driving concept for overcoming fragmentation of the UN system both at HQ and country offices by working towards one leader, one programme, one budget and, where appropriate, one office; the report proposed 5 One UN country pilot countries by 2007, 20 by 2009 and 40 by 2010, with a full roll-out by 2012. The latter report emphasized the evolving nature of the integrated mission concept, seeking to provide additional clarity on roles and responsibilities within complex, multi-dimensional missions.

In terms of relevant policy-making in this domain since the TCPR, the *Secretary-General's 2008 Decision on Integration*[17] added extra impetus to the integration agenda, by endorsing the defining elements of integration as: seeking to maximize the individual and collective impact of the UN's response; a strategic partnership between the UN mission and Country Team; with a shared vision, closely aligned or integrated planning procedures, seeking to achieve an agreed set of results, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. The Decision also formalized an 'Integration Steering Group' convened by DPKO to help ensure the implementation of the integration principles and mechanisms, including instruments such as the Integrated Strategic Frameworks (ISF), and Integrated (Mission) Task Forces (called IMTFs for DPKO-led missions and ITFs for DPA-led missions) and align mission planning processes with existing UN system planning tools, such as UNDAF, Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP)/Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), PRSPs, and Results Based Budget(RBB)[18].

[14] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 74
[15] 'Delivering as One, Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel', *Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment*, Advance Unedited, Embargoed, 9 November 2006
[16] 'Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions, Clarifying the Role, Responsibility and Authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator', Note from the Secretary-General, Guidance on Integration Missions, 2006
[17] Decision of the Secretary-General- 25 June meeting of the Policy Committee, Decision No.2008/24-Integration
[18] PeaceBuilding Commission, Working group on Lessons Learned, Resource mobilization for peacebuilding priorities and improved coordination among relevant actors, March 29, 2011

Building upon the Integrated Mission Policy Planning Guidelines of 2006 and the principles prescribed in the above 2008 Decision, a 2010 directive on *Integrated Planning for UN Field Presences* provided further instructions on the mechanisms and planning products required for the planning of peacekeeping or special political missions that operate alongside UN County Teams. The policy recognizes the way in which the 2006 IMPP Guidelines foresee a progression from a DPA-led task force to carry-out the Strategic Assessment to a DPKO-led Integrated Mission Task Force once/if planning for peacekeeping mission is required"[19]; however, more complicated scenarios have arisen since requiring additional guidance (Somalia being a case in point). The Directive highlights quite pointedly the very wide range of transition contexts including, for example, mission start ups, steady state; mission, and transition/drawdown. To reflect this diversity of contexts and potential UN responses, the guidelines on the Strategic Assessment in particular allow for a country and needs driven approach to UN configuration.

More recently, but in the same spirit, the *Secretary-General's Decision on Special Circumstances in Non-Mission settings*[20] in 2012 gives guidance for cases where the Secretary General has recognized the need, in the absence of a UN mission, for a focused and enhanced UN system response to a crisis. The policy requires relevant entities to work together differently and more intensively than usual, and under the framework of specific time-bound measures including the appointment of an envoy or non-Resident Representative to lead the political response. It also indicates that an Inter-Agency Task Force should be set up within 48 hours and should include the designated envoy/representative, Resident Coordinator and/or Humanitarian Coordinator working closely with the entire UNCT to decide on a strategic response in coordination with the Task Force, as and where additional capacity is needed. The Decisions marks another recognition of the increasing diversity and complexity of UN settings.

A number of policies have also been developed to ensure programmatic coherence and align UN project approaches with internationally recognized practices. Building upon the 2009 Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding, the *Secretary-General's Decision on Rule of Law*[21] outlines the need for joint programming on rule of law in peacekeeping and special political missions, and the imperative for those in leadership positions to identify entry points for advocacy and the promotion of good practices. In line with similar policies on programmatic coordination, the UN Policy on *Post-Conflict Employment Generation, Income Generation and Reintegration*[22] seeks to develop a more coherent approach to creating jobs in post-conflict settings. The policy focuses on three major tracks; first, measures that stabilizing income and generate emergency employment; second, measures that stimulate local economic recovery for employment opportunities and reintegration; and third, measures that help create sustainable employment generation and decent work.

Strengthening the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator and Cluster systems

Seeking to strengthen even further the internal coordination mechanisms of the UN system beyond the broader 'integration concept", the TCPR also recognizes the important role that

[19] Decision No.2008/24-Integration
[20] Decision No.2012/1
[21] Decision No.20111/27
[22] *United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration*, United Nations, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2009

"effective and responsive resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator systems can play in situations of transitions from relief to development"[23]; it therefore requests the "resident coordinator system and the United Nations country teams, at the request of the national Governments and in coordination with them, to promote the inclusion of prevention strategies in national development plans, bearing in mind the importance of national ownership and capacity-building at all levels"[24].

The *Secretary-Generals Report on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict* highlighted the deficiencies of the RC system in transition contexts, pointing to weaknesses in coordination mechanisms when handing over from the HC, "just as the need for assessment, planning and coordination of recovery activities begins to increase"[25]. As such, a whole range of policies since the TCPR have attempted to respond to these weaknesses by providing a comprehensive policy platform for the RC system, including a Guidance Note on the RC and UNCT Working relations, greater clarity on the RC job description and the development of dispute resolution mechanisms for UNCTs.

More specifically, a Management and Accountability system (M&A system) has since been established and is already in the implementation phase; the system creates a long-term vision statement for the RC system, a set of agreements which clarifies how the RC system should be managed, and an accountability framework for the UN development system at global, regional and country levels. The "Functional firewall" is one of the most distinctive aspects of the M&A arrangements, seeking to ensure more clarity between UNDP's *programmatic* functions, relating to the organization's role as a development partner, and its *coordinating* functions performed on behalf of, and in support of, the entire UN development system. In effect, it recognizes that two different strands of M&A run through the RC system, with a management line running from the UNDP Administrator to the UNDP Regional Director and to the RR on the one hand, and an accountability line going from the UNDP Chair supported by DOOC to the Regional UNDP and the RC and the UNCT on the other[26].

A wide range of additional initiatives have been developed to address other gaps and challenges in the functioning of the RC/HC and cluster systems. The *Resident Coordinator Capacity Gap*[27] initiative, for example, endorsed by the *Policy Committee in 2009* defines coordination specifically as a service to be provided by the RC office, starting with the UN system itself, extending to the host government, the international community and civil society; it also suggests that in certain circumstances it may be necessary for the RC to establish coordination capacity at the regional and/or provincial levels. In the same vane of ensuring the primacy of national capacity development and smooth transfer of activities to governments, OCHA Policy Instruction on Transition suggests setting up support capacity with the RC when support to the HC is required beyond the closure of the OCHA office.

In late 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) agreed to a *Transformative Agenda* which focuses on ensuring a coherent and effective response in the first three months after an emergency especially, but contains policies which relate to the

[23] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 76
[24] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 84
[25] A/63/881-S/2009/304
[26] http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=15
[27] 'Capacity Requirements For Resident Coordinator Offices in the Context of Crisis and Post-Crisis Recovery and Peace-building', *United Nations Development Group*, 19 May 2009

humanitarian response more broadly. The clusters especially are required to become less process-driven, and more focused on delivering results, thereby transferring coordination activities over to national counterparts as soon as possible[28]. Most significantly, it was decided that the activation of clusters would be much more strategic, rather than automatic, and time-limited – with appropriate review mechanisms to ensure this; additionally, clusters will transition at slightly different speeds and develop their own "benchmarks" for transition to take into account differing capacity levels of the government across sectors. Lastly, the Transformative Agenda also seeks to increase *mutual* accountability for adherence to a transition plan as agreed at the HCT/UNCT level.[29]

Working with the Peacebuilding Commission

With the aim of furthering coherence between the different actors within the UN system working at any given time on challenges associated with countries in transition, the TCPR invited the UN development system to work more closely with the Peacebuilding Commission. More specifically, it requested the UN development system "to take into account in its assistance to countries emerging from conflict that are on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission [PBC], the advisory role that the Commission can play in relation to peacebuilding and recovery strategies, with a view to helping countries lay the foundation for their economic and social recovery and development and ensuring national ownership of the peacebuilding process"[30].

One of the most significant related developments since this request has been the revision of the terms of reference of the Peacebuilding Fund. The Secretary-Generals Report on peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict suggested that the terms be revised to "accommodate both a flexible and early release of funds for critical peacebuilding needs and a second catalytic release as other resources are mobilized". The *Arrangements for the revision of the terms of reference for the peacebuilding fund*[31] were drafted to ensure the fund would be a more responsive source of support for peacebuilding activities and to maximize the synergy between the PBC and the Fund. In particular, the revised procedures enables countries not on the PBC agenda access to funds in order to address critical gaps in the peacebuilding process, especially when no other funding mechanism is available.

The changes to the PBF's TOR thus restructured the Fund to create two funding mechanisms; the first is the Immediate Response Facility (IRF), which provides emergency funding for immediate peacebuilding and recovery needs. This part of the PBF was adapted to make it more responsive, by entailing less procedures for approval and raising the $1 million cap that had previously existed to $10 million – thereby allowing senior representatives in-country to request funds, and the Secretary-General to allocate them on a case-by-case basis. The second is the Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF), which provides longer-term peacebuilding and recovery support, dispersed on the basis of a priority plan developed in cooperation between national authorities and UN representatives.

Partnering with Bretton Woods Institutions

Recognizing the vital role played by other major development actors in states in transitions,

[28] IASC Principals Reform Statement (June 2011)
[29] Joint Workshop on lessons learned and good practice for the transition of humanitarian coordination mechanisms to support recovery and development, 23-24 June 2011, DOCO-OCHA-UNDP.
[30] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 80
[31] A/63/818

the TCPR also called for the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions "to continue their efforts to improve coordination with the regard to the transition from relief to development, including, where relevant, the development of joint responses for post-disaster and post-conflict needs assessments, programme planning, implementation and monitoring, including funding mechanisms, to deliver more effective support and to lower transaction costs for countries in the transition from relief to development"[32].

The most notable development in this regard since the 2007 TCPR is unquestionably the *United Nations-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis and Post-Crisis Situations*, signed in 2008. The agreement recognizes the opportunities for partnership between these two major actors, with a particular focus on joint assessments (through greater collaboration in Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Needs Assessments specifically) and pooled funds, through the use of fiduciary agreements to allow inter-operability of disbursements. The agreement also supports efforts to cultivate a culture of partnership, through joint training, events and briefings.

In parallel, substantive efforts took place since the TCPR in promoting a stronger technical cooperation between the World Bank, UN entities and other regional organizations (such as the European Union and the Africa Development Bank), in particular to conducting joint assessment and planning exercises in post-crisis countries, using the PCNA methodology. This was done through familiarization of staff of all institutions with the methodology and principles of the partnership and joint technical training of mid and senior level staff.

The more recent World Bank *World Development Report 2011 (WDR)* on Conflict, Security and Development has also provided significant avenues for greater partnership in the years ahead. The report confirms and elaborates on important points of convergence amongst the international community concerning conflict and fragility, emphasizing the cyclical nature of political and criminal violence, and its subsequent negative effects on developing contexts around the world. It suggests that the focus of the international community should be on strengthening institutions that provide citizens with security, justice and jobs. The WDR underscores the need for closer partnership between the UN and World Bank in key areas, and advocates for greater and more effective use of tools such as the MDTFs as a way to allow for more flexible coordination between different actors.

Alignment with external processes

The 21st century has witnessed a significant proliferation of actors working in the international development field, and an increasing orientation towards South-South partnerships as a model for learning and cooperation. The TCPR recognized this exchange of expertise and experiences as a useful mechanism, and encouraged "the further development of South-South cooperation modalities, including triangular cooperation modalities, in this regard, while recognizing the need to adapt experiences to national contexts"[33].

Several processes, policies and reports have responded to this call for greater South-South cooperation as well as the primacy of national contexts, both directly and indirectly. The *Secretary-General's Report on Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict*[34] in 2011

[32] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 73
[33] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 79
[34] A/66/311-S/2011/527

places particular emphasis global partnerships and advocates for investments in both "triangular and South-South cooperation mechanisms". It also stresses the importance of leveraging external capacity on the basis of comparative advantage, and the need to take into account other important initiatives, in particular through the International Dialogue on Peace and Statebuilding and the g7+.

The '*New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States'*[35] signed at the High-Level Forum in Busan, which builds on the Dili Declaration and the Monrovia Roadmap, appears to be the most significant process external to the UN of recent years. Signed by approximately 40 countries and donors, it sets out a new objectives and ways of working. One of the most relevant mechanisms to the coherence agenda is the notion of a *compact*; while recognizing the differences in fragility and national contexts, compacts aim to strengthen harmonization and donor coordination, and reduce duplication, fragmentation and programme proliferation by emphasizing that priorities are country-led, and requesting that UN and donor resources be aligned as such. While it is too soon to know the impact that the 'New Deal' will have on UN modalities for working, many see it as a unique opportunity to build consensus around more coherent and effective ways of working in countries in transition.

Improving funding mechanisms

Last but not least, the TCPR made several requests for more coordinated and flexible approaches to the funding of operational activities; it urged for the use of "multiple mobilization instruments" and stressed that "contributions to humanitarian assistance should not be provided at the expense of development assistance and that sufficient resources for humanitarian assistance should be made available by the international community"[36]. Furthermore, it underlined the need for "adequate, predictable and timely funding of operational activities for development in countries in situations from relief to development, and calls upon donors and countries in a position to do so to provide timely, predictable and sustained financial contributions for the operational activities of the United Nations system for early recovery and long-term development for countries in transition from relief to development"[37].

The TCPR implies a move away from a supply-driven approach to funding for countries in transitions, towards one based on the needs of stakeholders. Various policies since the 2007 TCPR have advocated for strengthening pooled funding mechanisms to countries in transitions. The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) for example, is one example of a funding mechanism developed to improve the humanitarian community's ability to address critical humanitarian needs in a timely and effective manner. Pooled funds however relate to both to humanitarian and development based arrangements. Multi-donor Trust Funds (MDTFs), for example, established prior to the 2007 TCPR and implemented since, are generally established to support UN Development Assistance Frameworks, (UNDAFs) as outlined in the UN Reform initiative of "Delivering as One".

The *International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), Policy Statement on Transition Financing*[38], recognized the need to "decrease fragmentation, competition and overlap between mandates and approaches" of donors, through the use of Transition

[35] A New Deal for engagement in fragile states, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/35/50/49151944.pdf
[36] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 82;
[37] A/RES/62/208, TCPR, 83
[38] DCD/DAC/INCAF(2011)3

Compacts which align behind national leadership and reinforce national mechanisms, with accountability among international actors to facilitate coordination and coherence efforts. It also recognized the need for pool funds to help manage risk and reduce transaction costs for donors and partner countries alike. This echoes the calls made in the 'New Deal' as well as the rationale behind other major policies outlined in this section.

V. Major Findings

1. There have been genuine efforts to increase in-country coherence and efficiency by, inter alia, conscious efforts to incorporate lessons learned and policies developed over the last few years.

. Such efforts are often dictated by circumstances on the ground, and would most likely have taken place even in the absence of dedicated policies. "We're doing some of this, we just didn't know there was actually a corporate policy" is often heard in one shape or the other. And there is nothing wrong with that. But there is also evidence that policy development has also provided momentum, incentives, and/or useful intellectual capital for colleagues to explore and implement ways to work more closely together.

. It is also highly probable that there are more good practices in the field than what is reported, given some of the costs associated with reporting on innovative solutions.

. Integration represents one of the most significant and impactful policies in the field. While challenges linked to the implementation of the integration agenda will be further explored, few respondents dispute the fact that missions and UNCTs are more joined at the hip, for better or worse, and have much more open and systematic channels of communication.

. Similarly, we found evidence of the UN making a concerted effort to think through how global policy and commitments, as articulated in the WDR and the New Deal, can and should be applied in their country context to strengthen delivery of assistance, and engage other partners, including government, in those conversations. The same can be said for a range of internal UN policies or commitments, such as the post-conflict employment policy and/or the Secretary-General's decision on Rule of Law and its call for joint programming. While many of these policies may require time to fully enter the programming bloodstream, anecdotal evidence of their incorporation into UN thinking, discussions, and strategies in the field belie the notion of an insuperable gap between policy development at the global level and in-country realities.

2. Such field-level efforts are all the more laudable when one considers the many challenges in pursuing a coherence agenda in transition contexts.

. Various respondents highlighted the incongruity of assuming that coherence can have an impact in politically charged environments, where what may make or break the transition has little to do with UN coherence and more to do with high stake political agendas of a very different nature. In fact, the UN's development relevance and impact in countries in transition should not be assumed or simply claimed. And claims of relevance should not be driven, or explained merely by references to coherence and efficiency.

. Such political pressures will not only be immune to coherence efforts, they will also result in highly centrifugal pressure on the UN system, which finds itself ill-equipped (resources, political support, leadership skills and authority, etc.) to maintain coherence in such contexts.

. The gap between efforts, resources and rhetoric placed on UN coherence on the one hand and what really matters (ie. what really has an impact in such contexts) on the other points

to a problem of expectations. There is a widespread feeling that the system is going in circles, debating the same issues for years, with little, or marginal improvements to show for despite this vast body of policies, and that too much is expected from coherence and efficiency. While some have broached the need to test the underlying theory of change, which stipulates that better coordination leads to better coherence, which in turns leads to more impact, a more widespread sentiment is that while coherence is desirable and needed, the UN, and Member States should either cease to expect too much out of it or agree to a set of fundamental changes that will truly allow real coherence and its impact on the ground.

. Indeed, in the absence of such fundamental changes to the UN's governance structure and fairly radical reforms to its funding arrangements, there are limits to the gains that people at HQ and in the field can achieve in terms of coherence. Once more, the gap between goals and rhetoric on the one hand, and what can actually be changed and accomplished without such changes on the other hand, is fueling disenchantment with the coherence agenda and its promises. The high transaction costs involved in making marginal progress may further prod a momentum shift away from coherence and integration, with parts of the system tempted to revert back to tried and tested, autarchic practices.

. With the recognition that coherence is a means, rather than the be all and end all of UN engagement in-country, there is also a sense that coherence may turn into a straightjacket, blinding the system to new opportunities, risk taking, and creative thinking. **The policy discourse should emphasize that coherence is desirable where it makes sense, and focus its efforts on ensuring that people in the field are skilled, equipped, and empowered to tailor coherence policies and tools to their context.**

3. ***The credibility gap between rhetoric, practice and impact also stems from the sheer number of policies that the UN staff in country-offices is asked to implement, and the related transaction costs.***

. Many colleagues emphasized that there were simply too many policies, instructions, and requirements to keep track of. While the policy community is finding satisfaction in the fact that many of the policies, agreements, and principles are now in relative alignment, this global convergence is of little comfort to people in the field who have expressed frustration with the sheer number of such policies.

. The fact that colleagues in the field, including those working in coordination function, were at times unaware of the existence of various policies is a revealing, if not damning, indicator of over-supply.

. There is also little guidance provided from HQ on the why, what, and how of these policies. Some agencies and/or departments have dedicated capacity to translate global or corporate decisions into actionable guidelines for field colleagues, others don't. There is in fact no systematic way of making policies known, adhered to, and monitored. As a result, desk officers at HQ are often unaware of recent policy developments, and find themselves ill-equipped to support their field colleagues in making sense of these policies.

. For some, one needs to be careful about what one asks for. Translation to the field and in-country implementation come with significant reporting requirements, often to a new entity that was created precisely to monitor field application. In other words, there are simply too many policies, too much to implement and report on, in pursuit of an objective that may or

may not materialize. **For now, the risks-rewards relationship is one that requires a significant leap of faith and a strong backbone to pursue**.

4. ***Coherence and efficiency are undermined by the persistent gap between responsibility, capacity, accountability and authority to implement reforms and bring the system together for more effective results.***

. The lack of coordination capacity (in support of the RC mainly, but not exclusively) has been well documented. It includes financial and human resources (see paragraph below) but also the absence of simple coordination systems such as system-wide project and resource databases.

. Yet, more coordination capacities would help but not completely address the leadership's ability to implement a coherence and efficiency agenda with sufficient authority. In a process such as the IMPP, **the current situation is often one where individuals or entities with little ultimate responsibility claim authority, while those individuals or entities with ultimate responsibility are denied this very authority**. In transition contexts, this gap leads to high transaction costs and delays, it can undermine the UN's credibility and ability to move, and it certainly foments growing disenchantment with the integration approach.

. Two additional elements contribute to this gap: donor fragmentation and inconsistency and disjointed, if not contradictory, HQ guidance and support.

. Member states have recognized that their capital or New York level calls for greater UN coherence are often undermined by their own behavior in the field. Simply put, even when everyone agrees that joint programming in Rule of Law should be actively pursued, for example, why should the UN spend so much extra time trying to implement this request when donors in the field continue to prefer to fund individual initiatives?

. Similarly, efforts by SRSG, DSRSG/RC or RC to rally the system around common approaches (strategic, programmatic, operational) are at times undermined by the conflicting messages that individual parts of the system/UN family receive from their respective headquarters. This stems partly from the aforementioned unevenness in HQ-based capacities to link policy to in-country implementation, but one suspects that the more fundamental reason lies in the absence of incentives to "play ball" beyond policy development. While many incentives exist to develop coherence-related policies, too many disincentives take over once the ink dries and it is time to implement in the field. The resource challenges, and the primacy of fragmented, non-core, project driven sources of funding in particular, result in significant pressures for competition and individual initiatives, absorbing time and resources away from coherence-type endeavors and driving different parts of the UN system in different directions.

. Amidst this confusion and the growing sense of frustration over this ad hoc approach to coherence - where success on the ground is a function of the willingness, skills, and fortitude of a few individuals - there are calls for strengthening the accountability dimension. While there is certainly space (and there are on-going efforts to this effect) to strengthen accountability procedures, those can only be both effective *and fair* to the colleagues on the ground, and the RC in particular, if the other elements of the equation are simultaneously supported. Accountability without proper capacities and authority is a losing proposition.

. Furthermore, any initiative to strengthen the accountability dimension must answer the following questions: for what? And to whom? There is no agreed definition of coherence, and no sets of indicators to measure it. For now, coherence remains defined by the eyes of the beholder. At the same time, the UN's multiple shareholders have multiple views on the desirability, purpose, and practicality of the coherence agenda. Post Busan, transition contexts benefit now at least from less cacophony among international actors and partner countries. But questions remain unanswered, for example: how does the New Deal apply to transitions in middle-income countries, where financial support plays much less of a role?

5. RC/HC skills, functions and responsibilities are at times ill defined and insufficiently tailored to transition contexts.

. In addition to the authority-responsibility-capacity nexus, there is a sense that the political dimension and skills of the RC/HC need to be enhanced or clarified, which calls, inter alia, for the division of labor between the SRSG and the DSRSG/RC to be reviewed (in integrated mission contexts). The 2011 WDR and the New Deal have both eliminated the classical distinction between political and security dimensions on the one hand, and development and humanitarian interventions on the other. The RC system in all of its dimensions must reflect this new reality: this includes training, support, funding, and job description.

. In this context, this study corroborates other QCPR related assessments, which challenge the current RC firewall approach. UN actors beyond UNDP almost unanimously describe it as an "illusion", and call for profound changes to the set of incentives provided, and the support offered to ensure that RCs speak, act (and fund-raise) on behalf of the entire UN system. Three caveats are necessary to inform further discussions of this issue. First, the statements reflect perceptions, and not hard evidence. In fact, there is little evidence offered, or to be found, of any preferential treatment accorded by the RC to UNDP. On the issue of PBF funding for example, the large share allocated to UNDP can reasonably be explained by the significant overlap between the fund's strategic scope and the UNDP's mandates and responsibilities in peacebuilding (in addition to its fund management role, which carries no implications for UNDP as recipient of programmatic resources). Second, however, the fact that other actors in the UN system continue to strongly feel that it is an illusion constitutes a problem in and of itself. Finally, the controversy reflects the absence of, and therefore the need to fully implement the provisions of the Management and Accountability framework to which all members of the UNDG have subscribed. In transition contexts, and especially in integrated mission situations, there is scope for trying new approaches (some of which are already applied in a few contexts).

. Few respondents brought up the legitimate question of the relationship between the RC and the HC functions and the option of delinking the two. This study recognizes the on-going discussions around the issue, and the work that has been undertaken on training and selection, and would emphasize here again the need for HQ coherence and close senior level engagement in making those choices. As previously mentioned, issues of reporting and institutional turfs pale in comparison to the country-level stakes and risks to the UN's credibility and relevance that the RC and HC functions must manage in such contexts. Ultimately, while the merging of both functions is in theory more conducive to coherence, the decision to link or delink them requires continuing involvement and collaboration of those in the system with responsibility and authority for those decisions.

6. The current planning approach for UNCT in transition does not always promote coherence beyond the document produced.

. Recent changes to the UNDAF planning guidelines have introduced a much greater degree of flexibility to the process, empowering the RC and the UNCT to determine the most appropriate nature and content of the UNDAF (or similar planning tool used in the context). Such flexibility has also been built into the ISF, with many countries experimenting with vastly different approaches. This newfound flexibility is welcomed by colleagues on the ground, and by a number of reports. The planning process should indeed be the opportunity for the UN to ask: "what makes sense here?" and "where do we need coherence and joint efforts". The answers to those questions vary: joint planning may be needed at the strategic level, or for common positioning and communication on sensitive issues, or in terms of ways to engage with partners, or when it comes to programmatic activities, or a combination thereof.

. However such flexibility is insufficiently exploited, with planning processes and documents still too heavily aimed at planning an intended strategy that will most likely never be implemented in those terms (due to changes in conditions on the ground, undetermined funding, staff turnover, etc.). Furthermore, UNDAFs and/or other strategic planning documents remain almost exclusively focused on presenting or agreeing on the "what" when in fact, in fragile and highly volatile environments, UN coherence, efficiency and, ultimately, impact will also be determined by a range of other factors.

. Coherence will not stem uniquely from a programmatic results framework but also, and in some contexts primarily from an agreement on: 1) Common positioning on systemic and sensitive issues. 2) Common rules of engagement with partners, from a political/communication standpoint, but including as well on approaches to capacity building, and 3) Configuration of the UN presence on the ground (footprint and business model). In fact, one could even argue that a programmatic results framework is useful only if these other elements have been discussed and defined.

. The study found however that the planning process pays insufficient attention to these parameters. Issues of common approaches and common positioning then drive an analysis of risks and how the system is organized to make real time management decisions, including on projects and programmes.

. In this regard, a number of respondents argued that the planning process (for CAP, for UNDAF, ISF, etc.) should also be the moment to agree on where coherence makes sense, or not, how and when Too often the agreed need for consistency and overall coherence is interpreted as requiring "forced joint-ness" across the board, and the superficial establishment of joint structures. In a transition context, the fundamentals appear to be joint situational analysis (risks, needs, demand), common external positioning, and clear approaches and roles for stakeholder engagement. Beyond those minimum "standards", coherence efforts should be pursued on a true cost-benefit analysis.

7. Funding for coherence in transition contexts is inadequate; yet the current discussion includes many – contradictory – claims.

. While overall funding for fragile/transition contexts represents a majority share of overall ODA funding, two key dimensions are affecting UN coherence and efficiency. The first relates to the volatility of aid, which remains acute in most fragile states according to a 2011 OECD/DAC analysis, and the second is the steady decline of UN core resources as a

percentage of overall UN funding (2009 numbers from DESA). These two factors, which favor a project-based approach, have a fairly significant impact on the UN's ability to finance coordination capacities and initiatives (including from a programming perspective) and support a "whole of UN", collaborative response. One should not ignore the significant increase in Trust Funds and, for some of them, the very substantial amounts of funds they manage, but two challenges persist: one, the sheer number of trust funds and their resources do not appear to translate into more coherence beyond the Joint Programme dimension (and even then, only if joint programming is a requirement for funding or at least, a positive factor). Two, recent reviews of trust funds point to "coherence weaknesses" among the multiplicity of in-country and global trust funds, in terms of programmatic choices, governance mechanisms, and capacity-building approaches. The same reviews have nonetheless highlighted under which conditions the trust fund promises (coherence, risk management, impact) can be realized. While they constitute a positive tool in the UN's transition arsenal, they are only one element of a broader response to the challenge.

. A recent report of the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly[39] estimated the annual cost of coordination of UN operational activities to be US$237million (2009 figure), a sum equivalent to three per cent of 'country programmable resources' and to 1.6 per cent of total development expenditures by all UN agencies combined. The availability of resources for "UN transition coordination" is very difficult to measure exactly, as one needs to account for multiple sources of funding that potentially support coordination, including OCHA resources, MDTF direct costs, mission staff (in integrated mission contexts), DOCO supported resources, locally mobilized funds, and/or PBSO provided capacities to coordinate PBC activities (where relevant). Yet, there is sufficient evidence to argue that such resources remain inadequate, and certainly incommensurate with the increased demands for coordinated processes (PCNAs, ISFs, etc.) which all require people, systems, and cash to support.

. Within the UN system, the budget for DOCO has suffered a significant decrease since 2007, with the growth in transition focused funding $2.6 million in 2007 to $6.6 million in 2010, followed by a leveling off since then, unable to compensate for such a decline. Across a sample of 18 transition countries or contexts, DOCO provided support rarely exceeds $500,000 (mostly in staff costs), while UN programmatic resources in transition countries, excluding humanitarian operations (2009 numbers) often exceed $50 million[40], for a coordination to programming ratio of under 1%. While other potential sources of coordination capacity are not included, neither is the number of processes and polices previously described which the RC function is asked to coordinate. Without claiming absolute scientific validity, it is reasonable to argue that coordination resources, without which coherence and efficiency simply can't be expected, remain too limited in light of the demands on the system.

. Discussions with a range of constituencies highlight, however, the competing theories around this issue, with "Show us evidence and we'll give your resources" versus "Give us the resources and we'll demonstrate results" as a simplified version of the two sides of the argument. In any case, a synthesis of these claims and other challenges to coherence highlights the real risk of calling for more funds if the expectations are mis-calibrated, if the messaging is unrealistic, and if other critical elements are not addressed simultaneously.

[39] "Analysis of the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system in 2009"; Report of the Secretary General, A/66/79-E/2011/107; 6 May 2011

[40] In 2009, UN development programming exceeded $50 million in the following countries: Sudan ($411 million), Afghanistan ($800 million), Somalia ($165 million), Nepal ($87 million), Haiti ($81 million), Burundi ($65 million), Liberia ($90 million), CR ($53 million), and Sierra Leone ($66 million)

. In particular, increased funding for coordination (a component of capacity) will have suboptimal results if it is not supported by increased investments (financial and/or technical and/or political) in other elements of capacity, such as skills, and in the areas of authority and accountability. Donors in particular bear a double responsibility. Simply put, they should either provide more funding for coordination *and* change their own behavior in the field, or do neither. One without the other is potentially a waste of time and money. A few respondents offered very practical changes to donor behavior: if, in certain areas of mandate overlap, the UN is investing in joint programmes, donors should prioritize joint programmes in their budget allocations. Similarly, funding decisions should be made in consultation with the RC and the relevant Head of Agency to determine whether a proposed activity or project is squarely planned for in a joint framework (or if isn't, if the RC and relevant HoA agree that this is so on the basis of legitimate reasons).

. Those elements should be captured in a formal common UN position on coordination support (which would include the Secretariat entities) to the Member States. Such a position (and the resulting advocacy to donors) should extend beyond the funding challenges faced by those entities with a primary coordination function (OCHA, DOCO, UNDP), and recognize the burdens that other agencies that are required to perform similar inter-agency coherence tasks (e.g. cluster leads integrating early recovery approaches, and/or transitioning to development, and/or handing over systems and capacities to national actors).

. Furthermore, the debate on funding for coordination should be consistent with, but not necessarily held hostage to the broader challenges associated with funding for transition contexts, including the need for greater flexibility and frontloading development resources. These challenges have been well documented and are currently being addressed in a number of fora, with guidance in particular being frequently disseminated by the INCAF network. It is noteworthy however that the most recent guidance on transition financing simply echoes the principles and calls made nearly a decade ago. Such a repetition may imply a lack of political commitment; it may also speak to the increasing recognition that traditional donor funding is no longer the only player in town, and perhaps not even the major one in some countries, including transition contexts.

There is a shift in the aid paradigm, including in fragile/transition contexts. Is the UN focusing on the right issues?

. Finally, both interviews with colleagues and the analysis of recent policy development and trends have put into sharp focus a critical, overarching point: to many, and the authors of this study included, there is a pervading sense that too much intellectual, political and time capital is spent on arguments and discussions that are insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

. As a result, major trends are developing, and passing by, with little notice or reaction from many parts of the UN, as people are too busy exchanging thoughts on the wording of a particular paragraphs in a joint document, or arguing over whether a working group should have one lead or be co-chaired. When this is the mindset, there is indeed little time to support senior management in thinking about UN outreach to new relevant actors, in analyzing complex conflict factors and their impact on programming, and, more generally, turning the organization(s) into an actor that partner countries trust and want to engage with. Fragile states have made a strong claim to have greater control over the terms of international assistance. New actors are emerging. ODA is dwarfed by FDI and

remittances. Technology is empowering civil society. All of these changes have a significant impact in transition settings, where UN relevance can no long be claimed on the basis of mandate and history. Is the UN fully mobilized to adapt?

Specific policies

As previously mentioned, this review did not seek to evaluate the implementation and impact of specific policies. The objective was to explore the factors that either promote or undermine effective internalization and implementation of the vast body of policy-making by the UN in the field, with a focus on those efforts designed to increase coherence and efficiency.

In the course of the interviews however, a number of sentiments were expressed in regards to a few of those policies. The following summary of findings is therefore meant to inform the broader discussion on UN coherence and efficiency, but its inclusion in this report should not be misconstrued as a statement of relevance vis-à-vis other policies.

1. **The SG Decision on Integration (2008) has had a significant strong impact on UN collaboration and coordination in the field, but its implications on actual programming decisions remains unclear.**

In integrated mission settings, the changes brought about by the Decision are very palpable. Simply put, missions and UNCT talk to each other a lot more than a few years ago, through planning processes such as the ISF and cross participation in coordination structures. Over a third of the RCs surveyed by DESA somewhat or fully agreed with the notion that integration between a mission and the UNTC had increased UN coherence and effectiveness in country. Joint programming has also increased. These elements, while insufficient to ensure real coherence, are nonetheless essential. There is however little evidence at this point to indicate that agency or mission specific programming is directly influenced by such collaboration. "We talk a lot more, but we don't necessarily program any differently than before" is an emblematic statement, and one that is not atypical.

2. **Implementation of the WB-UN partnership has been unpredictable**.

Various member states echo field colleagues in expressing disappointment with implementation of the partnership (over 65% of survey RCs offered a rather sobering view of the UN-WB collaboration in their setting), despite interesting but modest and transaction cost heavy collaborative initiatives funded by the Swiss trust fund.

Challenges include the lack of alignment between joint needs assessment and programmatic follow through, donor disincentives, over-reliance on personalities, inter-operability constraints, including the overly restrictive scope of the Fiduciary Principle Accord (FPA), and the little emphasis on thinking if and when the partnership should be encouraged. In short, the extent to which both sides have internalized the partnership principles and purpose remains unclear, and staff on both sides still face an uphill battle in bringing colleagues on board and overcome a range of institutional, cultural, and leadership barriers. The upcoming review of the partnership will yield important lessons for the SG report.

3. **The early recovery paradigm has tended to confuse, rather than unify the system in managing the transition from relief to development.**

While a specific review of the early recovery approach is beyond the scope of this report, many respondents agreed that what had been introduced with the intention of bringing clarity, consistency and coherence to how the UN supports the initiation of recovery processes had in fact increased transaction costs and turf battles. The implementation of the early recovery approach seemed to have suffered from over-conceptualization, inconsistent messaging, and over-emphasis on process to the detriment of practical, context specific solutions.

In response to these challenges members of the IASC Early Recovery Cluster have since sought to introduce a number of changes, some of which were developed within the framework of the IASC Transformative Agenda to increase clarity on concept and roles. The emphasis is now on streamlining early recovery as an approach across all humanitarian responses (to support national capacities and/or ensure positive spillovers of humanitarian interventions on people's livelihoods) rather than on creating additional structures or networks. While such changes may not be yet felt across the system (and the countries reviewed for this study), this lighter approach seems better suited to meet expectations and needs on the ground. Support should also focus on options and modalities for implementation, for the HC and HCT consideration.

4. **The SG report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict has influenced both the discourse and the practice on the ground.**

The report has provided a normative framework for programming as well as a structure for planning processes and discussions both within the UN and between the UN and partners. In particular, it has allowed for a common definition, and common language on complex peacbuilding issues.

As such, the report has had significant funding implications, by offering legitimacy to claims by agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR, or UNODC to apply and receive for peacebuilding resources (PBF, MDF Fund, etc).

5. **The peacebuilding architecture, and the PBC in particular, represents another promise that has yet to be fulfilled**.

The involvement of the PBC significantly raised expectations not only in terms of funding, but also with respect to the overall coherence and impact of the international community on the ground. Not surprisingly, few respondents and few reviews can attest to such expectations having been met. UN colleagues referred to the UNCTs' lack of coherence being, potentially, more exposed if the country is on the PBC's agenda but the repercussions of such an exposure seem unclear.

For now, it appears that the impact of the PBC in promoting greater coherence on the ground is a function of i) its Chair, and the leadership and his/her degree of involvement and ii) the extent to which PBF resources have been used in a way that promotes coherence, which has varied from country to country. In terms of efficiency, few would dispute that the first few years of the peacebuilding architecture will be remembered mostly for the high transaction costs imposed on the UN and the partner countries, and the next QCPR should be the opportunity to take stock of on-going efforts by the PBC, PBF and PBSO to streamline their engagement with the field.

6. **The WDR and the New Deal need time to get into the UN bloodstream, but there is evidence that their conclusions are already fueling a (re)thinking of strategies, programs and rules of engagement on the ground**.

It is too early to assess the field level impact of the WDR and the New Deal adopted in Busan. However, many respondents, including those located in the field, spoke to the importance and relevance of both "documents" in supporting the reform agenda.

Many see both as an opportunity to either "reset", clarify or improve the relationship between host governments and the international community, with the UN playing a critical role in facilitating the discussions. Few however spoke of what the WDR and the New Deal mean for UN positioning, an issue that is taken up in this report's recommendations.

VI. Concluding remarks

So what are the key drivers of coherence and efficiency in transition? Revisiting the analytical framework

These findings (general and policy-specific) and the use of the proposed analytical framework brought into focus a series of critical factors that either promote or impede UN coherence and efficiency in the field.

The most prominent ones revolve around a combination of leadership, in-country relevance (with circumstances offering an important filter to the deluge of policies), donor incentives, and the extent to which policies are implemented with a balance between process and outcome (and when the process is seen as being an important outcome in itself). It seems in fact that the key driver of coherence and efficiency consists of the coherence of variables, with strategy and principles (WDR, SG report) matched with funding (e.g. PBF, donor choices), leadership, and consistent HQ support.

While recognizing this "multiple star alignment" element, the following section provides a summary of the evidence and perceptions collected on each one of the framework's analytical assumptions.

- *Knowledge*: Evidently, but the transfer of policies from HQ to the field implementation needs to be distilled, filtered and focused. These requirements point to the frequent missing link between policy experts and desk officers responsible for on-ward transmission. Knowledge must focus on the policy's rationale, its relevance, its prospects, its risks, and how to navigate them.

- *Evidence of relevance*: Yes, but circumstances on the ground usually create the relevance. Moreover, few policies, and internal corporate UN decisions in particular, are provided with a clear articulation of relevance parameters that allow colleagues in the field.

- *Implementation*: In many contexts, colleagues are asked to implement policies that come with inadequate resources and high transaction costs (e.g. reporting). This speaks to the need not for new policies to be developed, but for current ones to be supported with more adequate levels of resources. More effort should be spent on thinking about the range of non-financial resources that can in fact help colleagues in the field promote an agenda of coherence and efficiency.

- *Leadership*: Absolutely, and there is evidence that political will is at times the function of one individual but that coalitions, while possible, are hard to build and sustain without coherent support from UNHQs and/or external actors? The desirability of having a national champion remains, but in many cases, the UN needs to demonstrate value first, and at times invest in promoting awareness of the policy and what is expected of national counterparts.

- *Partnerships*: The need for partnerships is, tautologically, policy specific but two challenges have been highlighted: the transaction and opportunity costs involved in securing the partnerships, in light of uncertain gains and inadequate clarity from HQ

on what is expected; and the significant reporting and administrative requirements involved.

- *Accountability*: Few initiatives can succeed without accountability for their implementation and results, but as suggested in a previous section, a push for greater accountability systems and approaches on those responsible for the coherence agenda would be both counterproductive and unfair if a) responsibility is too narrowly focused on a few functions, and b) such responsibility is not accompanied by commensurate increases in capacities and authority.

- *HQ Support*: An important finding, from this study and other reviews, relates to the need to augment technical/programmatic engagement with timely and common HQ political support to overcome internal obstacles or external resistance to coherence and efficiency initiatives. The current situation is too often characterized by a cacophony noise and turf battles at a programmatic level, and little coherent senior management involvement to guide or support leadership on the ground until it's too late.

- *Alignment of donor incentives*: Given the structural incentives of the UN system, including its funding arrangements, the need for coherent and consistent donor support to the coherence and efficiency agenda is a critical, sine qua non factor. Such support is both financial (fund coordination, fund projects that are in line with agreed UN strategy) and political. Such alignment between donor calls at capital level for greater UN coherence and their actions on the ground is fundamental, and uneven.

- *Monitoring*: Systems and capacities to monitor implementation and collect evidence of effectiveness and impact of policy implementation are desirable, but many respondents argue that results should be self evident, and addressed in existing strategic and programmatic reporting (to avoid another layer, another transaction cost). HQ colleagues should be playing a leading role as well, through better knowledge of policies and their relevance/application in the field. **More importantly, the issue of monitoring a policy's implementation brought up the issue of trust, both between HQ and the field, and between various parts of the organization**. Ultimately, there is a sense that excessive requirements and transaction costs in making the UN more coherent reflects a lack of trust within the system, which, in transition contexts, fundamentally undermines the UN's credibility and impact.

VII. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed, and are presented with the recognition, repeatedly expressed throughout this review, that without structural changes (governance, funding), there is only so much that the UN system can achieve in terms of coherence and efficiency. Expectations therefore need to be managed, and goalposts need to shift. Under current structural circumstances, the findings from the review suggest the following five areas of focus for the UN system in the next four years

1. **The UN should support effective implementation of recent global discussions on international assistance in transition settings, such as the set of objectives articulated in the Monrovia Declaration and subsequent provisions formulated in the New Deal.**

A number of issues highlighted above relate to the UN's operational effectiveness. However, as discussed, against the backdrop of the set of challenges which the UN faces in most transition countries, resolutions of such issues will only result in marginal improvements, and therefore, continuing frustration. What they collectively point to, and result in is a dilution of the UN's identity, or positioning in many of these transition contexts. Inadequate planning (with its under-emphasis on how the UN engages and why), gaps between authority, capacity and responsibility, centrifugal funding pressures and so forth all undermine the UN as a coherent actor, with potentially risky implications for its relevance.

Recent discussions at the global level on the role, purpose and ways of international assistance to countries in transition offer an opportunity however for the UN to strengthen its internal and external coherence by establishing the role it can play in facilitating the implementation of such discussions. Taking into account emerging trends (new actors, technology, role of regional organizations etc.) that are affecting the way in which relevance is defined, and achieved in transition contexts, such an exercise does not require new policies, but the deployment of strategies, skills and resources to offer national partners the time, space and resources to define for themselves the rules of engagement with the international community.

In some cases, this may require a move away from, or a lesser emphasis on project implementation, in order to focus resources and efforts on data collection and analysis, option generation (for nationally defined priorities and solutions), and partnership development (for national actors engagement with the international community), and norm promotion. The emphasis on role choice (which must be driven by needs) is particularly necessary for post crisis middle-income countries, where UN leverage is comparatively weaker than other settings.

Such roles, have a number of implications in terms of UN programming, staffing, and training needs. The ways in which the UN supports the implementation of New Deal principles and commitments will vary from one context to the other, as will its in-country configuration, its partnerships and its programmatic choices. Beyond these context specific variables, the paradigm shift now forces **the UN to focus on what it must do to be the**

kind of partner that host countries can trust, want to engage with, and choose to listen to. This will require, *inter alia*:

- Greater attention to real time management and responses across the political/security, human rights, development and humanitarian pillars, through i) greater delegation of strategic, programming and funding decision-making, both from member states and donors (through Agency Boards) to the UN system from UN HQ to UN country presences, and ii) building on progress made on integrated planning to achieve integrated programming and operations where relevant;

- Increased clarity on how the UN engages with national partners, notably in the course of UN planning processes, where greater focus should be dedicated to the what, how and why of partnerships, and common approaches to national capacity, shifting from a capacity *building* mindset to a capacity *transformation* or capacity *optimization* model); and,

- Greater alignment between responsibility, accountability, authority and capacities accorded to senior leadership tasked with implementing UN coherence and alignment behind New Deal principles; as indicated in the findings, this will require more coherent and more engaged leadership at HQ to overcome the centrifugal pressures emanating from structural conditions.

2. In support of a more contextual definition of the UN's value proposition in various transition settings, and in the absence of structural changes, **intellectual and financial resources should be dedicated to field level implementation of *existing policies*, and troubleshooting, on the basis of strengthened coherence of HQ support, and increased senior level support to field colleagues in navigating the multiple transition related challenges**

With only rare exceptions, the emphasis should not be on new policy development but on an effort that could begin with the harmonization of relevant policies (including merging or consolidating reporting requirements) and the provision of common training to UN staff (desk officers and field colleagues with programmatic responsibilities) on policy implementation, including by ensuring that they are part of RC/CD induction exercises.

It is essential in particular to ensure that HQ counterparts, and desk officers in particular, can provide clearer guidance on coherence related issues by supporting the translation of global policies into concrete, context relevant interventions, and marshaling the financial technical and political assistance required for effective implementation.

3. The **UN (UNDG and Secretariat) should develop a common position on coordination financing needs and modalities**.

A common position should clarify the different potential sources of coordination support in transition contexts, their volume, and purpose, to overcome the current confusion and contradictory claims. As stated earlier, such a position (and the resulting advocacy to donors) should extend beyond the funding challenges faced by those entities with a primary coordination function (OCHA, DOCO, UNDP), and recognize the burdens that other agencies that are required to perform similar inter-agency coherence tasks (e.g. cluster leads

integrating early recovery approaches, and/or transitioning to development, and/or handing over systems and capacities to national actors).

Based on current data and evidence of needs, a common position could articulate a rationale for a differentiated approach, with cost-sharing as the default modality in non-crisis countries, supplemented by dedicated arrangements for crisis or post crisis contexts.

A differentiated approach could include a range of options in crisis and post-crisis contexts, which would bring together various agreed policy and programmatic principles. For example, the use of assessed contributions in integration mission settings for coordination would support the integration agenda and member state calls for greater unity of purpose. Or, the use of MDTF resources for coordination beyond funding secretariat functions would be consistent with OECD/DAC guidance on aligning funding instruments with country strategies and risk management.

4. **Furthermore, the UNDG should further pursue its civilian capacity agenda**, with a particular emphasis on:

- A renewed dedication to South-South cooperation, including triangular cooperation modalities, with the UN expanding its sources of expertise beyond traditional providers to include countries and organizations whose experiences are well suited to find resonance and acceptance in current transition contexts

- A greater effort to account for, and engage with a range of new actors (emerging countries, private sector companies, remittance providers, etc.) who are now contributing experience, support and resources in a manner that was not foreseen in 2007; this will require, for example, their greater involvement in the range of post crisis instruments developed in recent years, including joint assessments, pooled funds, and rosters.

- Increased commitment and leadership support to maximize, within existing rules and regulations, opportunities for staff inter-operability and mobility, within the UN system, and between the UN and other organizations (World Bank, regional organizations, etc.) and countries.

- Sustained attention on the role that non-resident agencies (NRAs) can play in either directly providing expertise, or mobilizing and identifying the right civilian expertise; this will require efforts on the part of NRAs to update, upgrade and share their networks of expertise, and on the part of the UN system on the ground to provide appropriate modalities, including funding solutions such as civilian capacity joint programmes and/or civilian capacity windows in RC funds or MDTFs, to the deployment of NRA expertise.

5. **The UN should develop, promote and support the implementation of rigorous accountability approaches to ensure broad adherence to the set of principles, agreements and commitments developed since 2007**.

This report has highlighted both the multiple drivers of UN coherence in transition contexts, as well as their interdependence, and the incongruity of enforcing narrow

accountability procedures onto UN leadership in the absence of parallel changes to authority and capacity frameworks in particular. In this regard, the increased focus on value for money, and its RBM corollary, is important but not sufficient to fully address the current accountability gap, as it tends to ignore interdependencies and, in the case of the UN, the range of variables, including donor (dis)incentives, to which the organization is subjected.

Comprehensive and accurate accountability systems should therefore account for, and shed light on these interdependencies. As such, they could be built into the annual reviews of compacts, when and where such instruments are deemed appropriate. The UN could also promote other approaches, such as peer reviews and country level / system wide assessments, in a manner that maximizes transparency, minimizes transaction costs and accounts for the complex set of political and structural dynamics which drive results on the ground.

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