Results of survey of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and members of UN country teams (UNCTs)

Preparation for the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

UNDESA

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Introduction

This survey of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and other members of UN country teams (UNCTs) was administered by UN-DESA as an input to the preparation of the Secretary-General's report to the UN General Assembly's Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) in 2012 of the UN system's operational activities for development. This online survey was carried out in parallel with a survey of programme country Governments, mandated by the UN General Assembly in resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence. The resolution called on the Secretary-General "under the auspices of ECOSOC and in cooperation with UN Resident Coordinators, to put in place a periodic survey, directed to governments, on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the support of the UN system in order to provide feedback on the strengths and main challenges encountered in their interaction with the UN development system."

The surveys were developed in consultation with outside experts and large number of United Nations officials, including the UNDG Advisory Group. The survey responses were received by UN DESA over an six-week period, from 7 February to 21 March 2012.

The survey comprised three parts: one for all RCs and UNCT members (Part A), one for respondents in UN 'Integrated Mission' countries only (Part B), and one for RCs in countries that prepared UNDAFs in 2010 or 2011 based on the 2010 guidelines (Part C). This report outlines the main results of Part A, presented mostly in the form of charts. Tables with the full statistics as well as the written comments from the respondents are contained in a separate annex. The findings from Parts B and C are contained in separate consultant reports, on Transition and on the UNDAF.

Note on terminology: To make the survey questionnaire as easy to understand as possible, the word "agency" was used throughout to refer to UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as departments of the UN Secretariat. For this reason, the word "agency" is used in the same way in this report.

<u>UN_DESA - Survey of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and other members of UN country teams (UNCTs)</u>

The survey results are presented below, question by question.

Demographics

1: Please check you agency or function:

Valid responses were received from 78 Resident Coordinators and 440 representatives of 'agencies' who are members of a UN country team, for a total of 518. Throughout this report, 'agency' will refer to any UN entity. The responses included 19 from country representatives of IOM: not a member of the CEB, but invited to join the UN country team in some programme countries. The Resident Coordinator response rate is judged as satisfactory, considering that vacancies are quite common. The most remarkable aspect of the responses was the number received from WHO representatives: 68 responses in total. UNICEF and UNDP came next, but they were far behind with 42 and 41 respectively.

The variability in the number of responses by agency means that the results should be treated with some caution as regards any agency-wise breakdown of the results.

2: Are you serving in a DaO pilot or self-starter country?

146 (28.2%) answered Yes, while 372 (71.8%) answered No. 48 respondents provided comments, many indicating that the country was moving in the direction of DaO. One stated, for example, that the Government and the UNCT had agreed to "develop and implement common programming tools that bear the hallmark of DaO: Light UNDAF, Common Action Plan, and potentially One Fund."

The category 'self-starter' appears to be the source of much confusion, because in many countries some agency representatives said Yes while others said No. There were 41 such countries, which compares with only nine self-starter countries where the agency representatives were unanimous in saying Yes.

3: Please select your duty station:

Responses were received from 118 separate duty stations out of a potential maximum number of 135, meaning that 87% of duty stations were represented by at least one response. The highest number of responses from a single duty station was 14. In one instance, the UN country team provided a single consolidated response. There was no response at all from 17 duty stations, of which 8 were in the Africa region. The remaining non-response countries were in various regions.   Thus Africa is somewhat under-represented in the overall responses. The response rate from countries with UN Humanitarian Coordinators was the same as the response rate for all countries.

<u>Questions 4 to 8 (RCs only) Income level and other aspects of host country status</u>

Additional demographic data was inserted into the online database in respect of the responses from RCs only. (It was not done for all respondents in view of time and resource constraints.)

Income level: The results showed that 24% of the RC responses came from low-income countries, 41% from lower middle-income countries and 28% from upper middle income countries and 6% from high-income countries. These percentages correspond fairly closely with the global distribution of programme countries by income level, although the upper middle-income countries are somewhat under-represented.

LDC status: 23 (30%) of the RC responses came from LDCs while 55 (70%) came from the remaining countries. This roughly mirrors the proportion of LDCs worldwide, which is 32% (48 out of 151).

SIDS status: 4 responses were received from RCs in small island developing countries. They included the two offices (Barbados and Fiji) that cover multiple small islands.

Integrated Missions: 4 responses were received from RCs in countries with integrated UN missions, which constitutes a rather low response rate, considering that there were 14 integrated missions. However, the responses from countries with integrated missions included 73 responses from agency representatives.

UN Humanitarian Coordinators: 20 out of a possible 32 RC responses were received from RCs who were also serving as UN Humanitarian Coordinators. This proportion is similar to the overall RC response rate.

Main Questions

Q9: How coherent is the UN in the country compared with 4 years ago?

The responses to this question are shown in the chart below:

Chart 1. How coherent would you say the UN development system is now compared to four years ago, RCs vs. Non RCs?
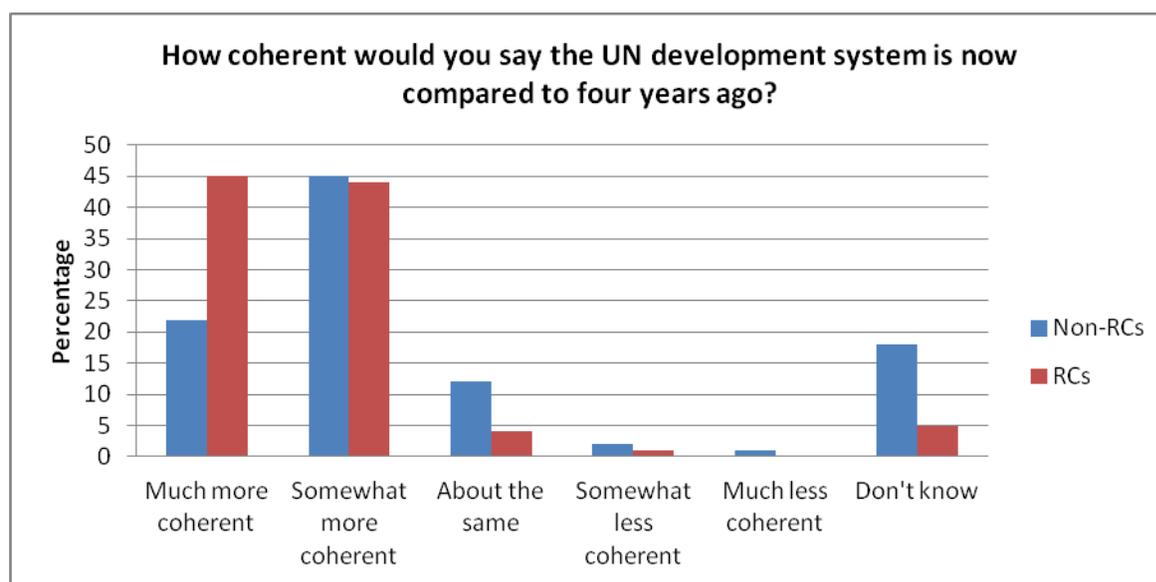
Among all respondents, 70.4% stated much more coherent or somewhat more coherent, 2.8% stated somewhat less coherent or much less coherent, while 26.9% said about the same or don't know. This data may suggest that the UN reform processes initiated in 1997 and reinforced with the Delivering as One initiative in 2007 have been producing some results.

The above chart also shows a considerable difference between the way RCs and non-RCs responded to the question. Since the RCs' own performance may be measured in part on this yardstick, the responses from UNCT members other than RCs may be more objective than the RCs' responses.

The responses also indicate that there may be considerable differences in perceptions among UN agencies, as can be seen in the chart below:

Chart 2. How coherent would you say the UN development system is now compared to four years ago, by UN agencies?[1]

> **How coherent would you say the UN development system is now compared to four years ago?**
> **-510 responses-**
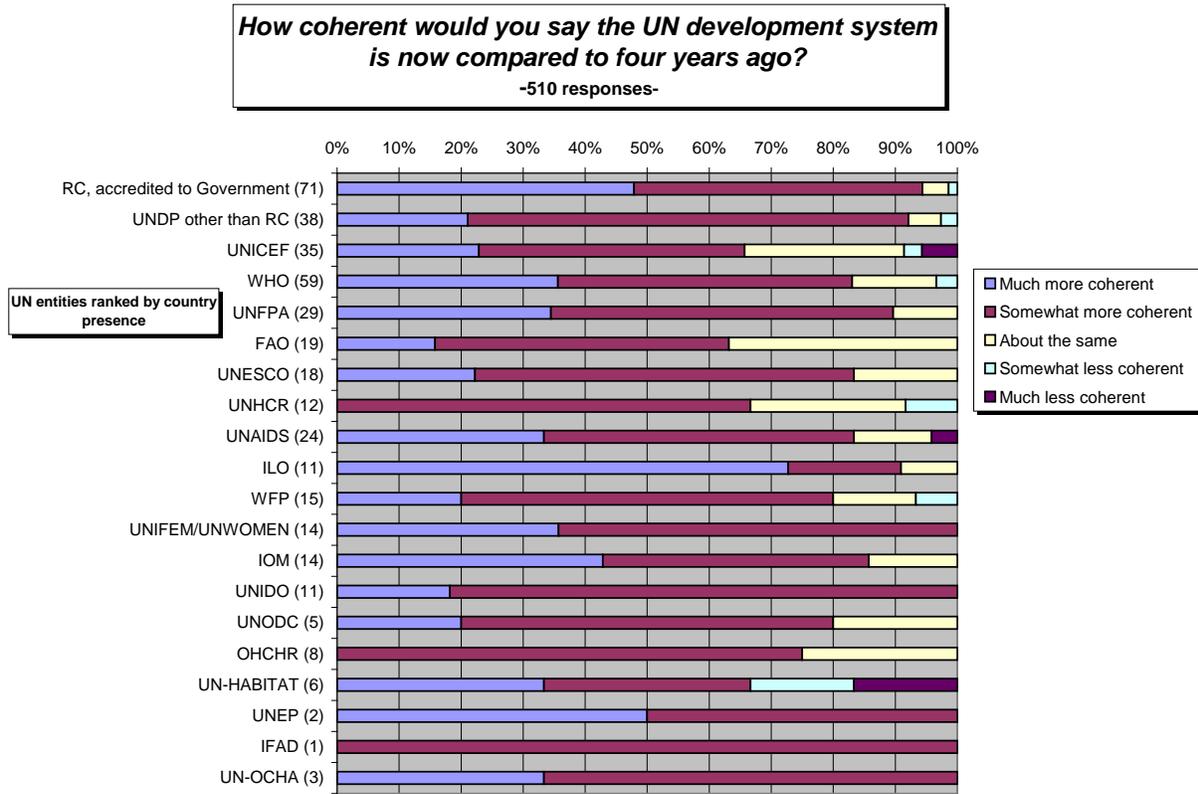
A breakdown of the responses from the RCs according to the income level of the country where the RC is posted is given in the chart below. The results indicate no significant difference between low-income and lower middle-income countries, but some difference between those categories and the upper middle-income category.   That is, RCs in upper middle-income countries tend to see less of an improvement with UN coherence. This result should be treated with caution, however, in view of the small absolute numbers in each group (the number of responses is shown in brackets in the chart key.)

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[1] The number in the brackets after the UN entities seen here are the number of combined responses given by respondents belonging to those entities. So in the case of RC we got 71 responses. In this graph the responses for "Don't know" has been omitted but for the entities seen here above those responses were 70.

Chart 3. RC perceptions of coherence by country income group:
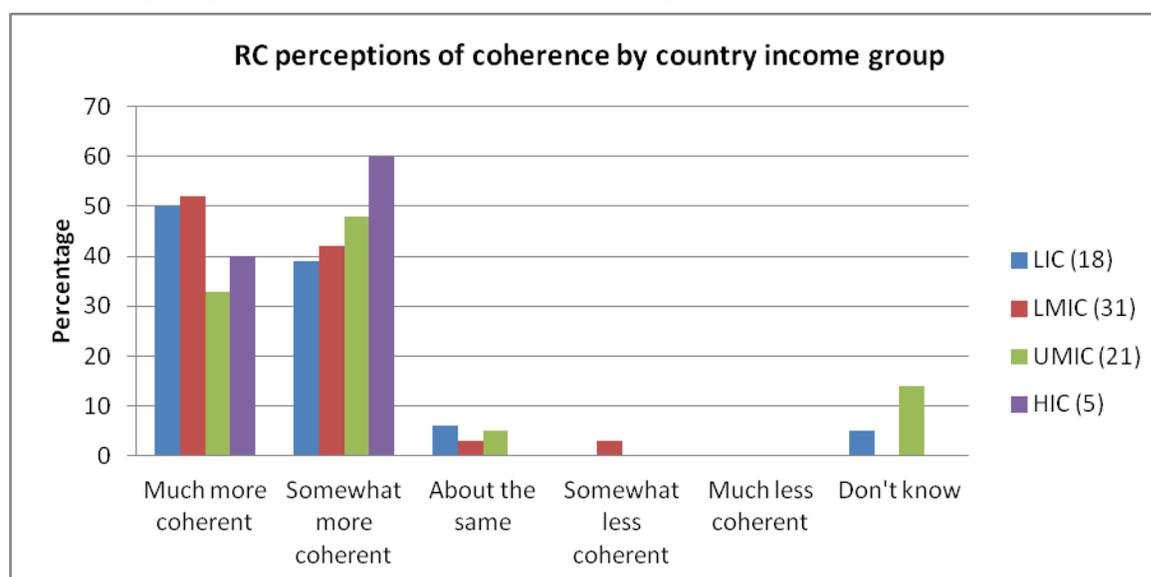
119 respondents offered comments on this question. Many of the comments were from representatives who had not been in the country for four years, were not able to judge, and therefore indicated 'don't know'. Among those who made substantive comments, a common theme was that progress is being made but more can be done. One respondent commented: "New generation of UNCT members, more committed to UN Reform and working together." On the other hand, a respondent in a country with a large common UN fund observed that: "The situation has become competitive rather than complementary." A specific question about competition among UN agencies comes later.

Q10. If the UN development system has become more coherent in the past four years, to which factors do you attribute this improvement?

This question gave respondents an opportunity to rate the relative importance of various dimensions of UN reform in terms of producing more coherence during the last four years. The full results are shown in Table 1 below.

Note: A similar table appears in relation to Q22 below, which asked which measures were thought most conducive to greater UN coherence *in the future*.

Table 1. Factors that had a positive effect on UN coherence during the last four years:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important at all
Programming instruments and processes that are more streamlined and harmonized	155	161	73	15

The new Management and Accountability System for the Resident Coordinator system	106	175	88	30
Programme coordination groups that actively monitor UNDAF implementation	157	154	62	28
Establishment of joint funding modality (e.g. MDTF, One Fund)	115	111	86	79
Increased use of joint programmes	158	145	76	25
Agreement on joint resource mobilization strategy	80	136	108	65
Establishment of common premises	76	95	96	118
Establishment of harmonized business processes	82	131	112	63
The commitment of the Government	184	114	69	28
The leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator	260	110	25	8
An adequately resourced UN Resident Coordinator's Office	158	139	69	27
The adoption of a One-UN plan	101	107	87	86
The support received from DOCO	49	130	133	75
The support received from the UNDG regional team	47	120	154	69
The support received from donors	115	117	92	69
An improved spirit of cooperation in the UN country team	283	93	28	3

The table shows that the factors that received by far the greatest number of "very important" ratings were those that reflected personalities rather than systems. This finding reinforces the widely-held view that progress with UN reform is highly dependent on the abilities of the RC and the teamwork he/she is able to engender.

Next in importance was the commitment of the Government. Also frequently cited as important were the programming processes, including the UNDAF and joint programming, the use of programme coordination groups (theme groups or 'outcome' groups) and an adequately resourced RC office. The other areas mentioned in the table were cited much less often. Nonetheless, each of the listed factors has proved to be very important in at least a few countries.

Based on the above data, the chart below was created, highlighting the distribution of responses between very or somewhat important on the one hand, and slightly or not at all important on the other hand.

Chart 4. Factors in more coherence of the UN development system:
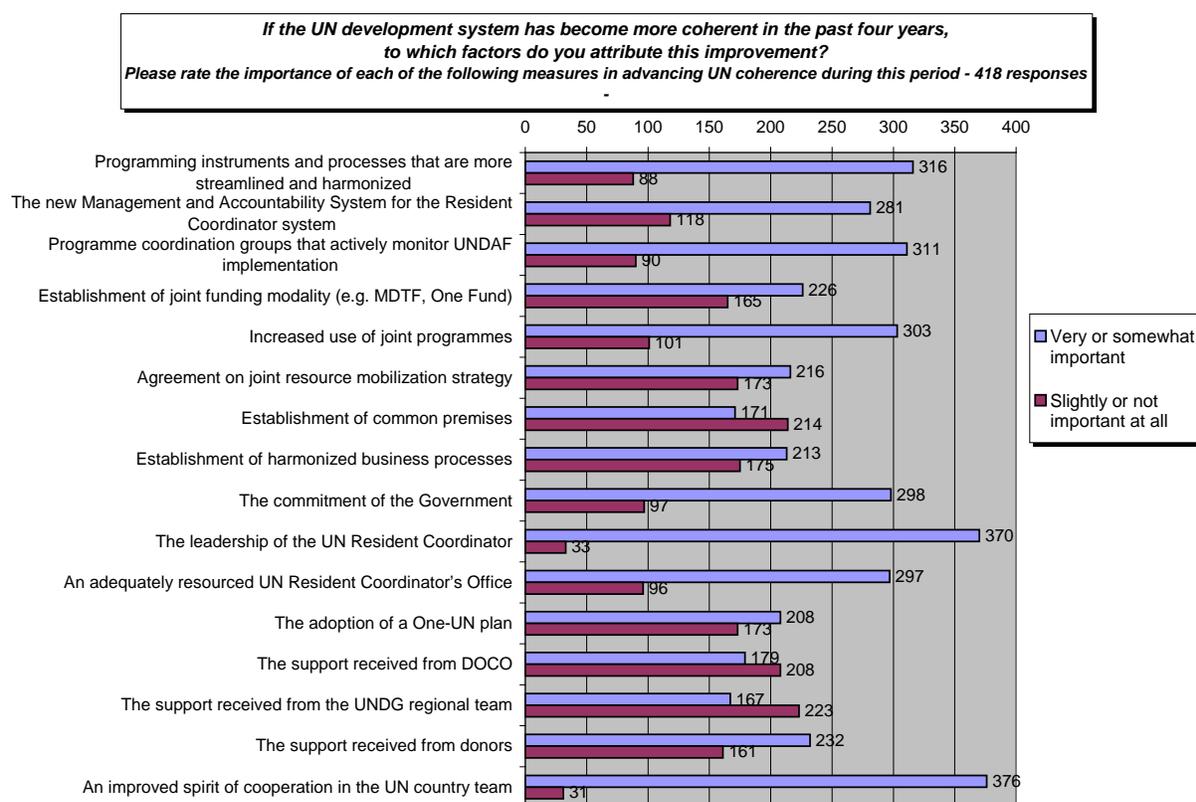
A total of 115 respondents provided supplementary comments on this question. Many explained that they responded "not important at all' because the factor did not yet apply in the country, not that it would be unimportant for the future. A fairly typical response was: "Some of the factors are marked low due to their lack of resources. If they had been better resourced they would have been highly important (e.g. DOCO)."

Factors not mentioned in the list that respondents said had also contributed to coherence were: "UNCT & RC setting ambitious targets on working together, including details on values, principles and division of labor", "Recognition and utilization of specialized agency capacities" and "Agreeing on one voice and establishing joint communication platforms such as UN website and UN newsletter."

Among the general comments, two of the more insightful comments were: "Lack of progress is mainly due to individuals and individual agencies opposed to change due to fear of loss of visibility, importance and fear of enhanced accountability" and "At the country level it is very much possible to create a truly motivated team effort but this is hampered because of lack of coherence among the UN system at corporate level which tends to somehow entail agency specific focus. There is little if any support from DOCO or Regional Teams to strengthen the RC system beyond rhetoric."

Q11. The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support to the country separately:

Chart 5. The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support to the country separately:

The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support to the country separately:

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Not applicable
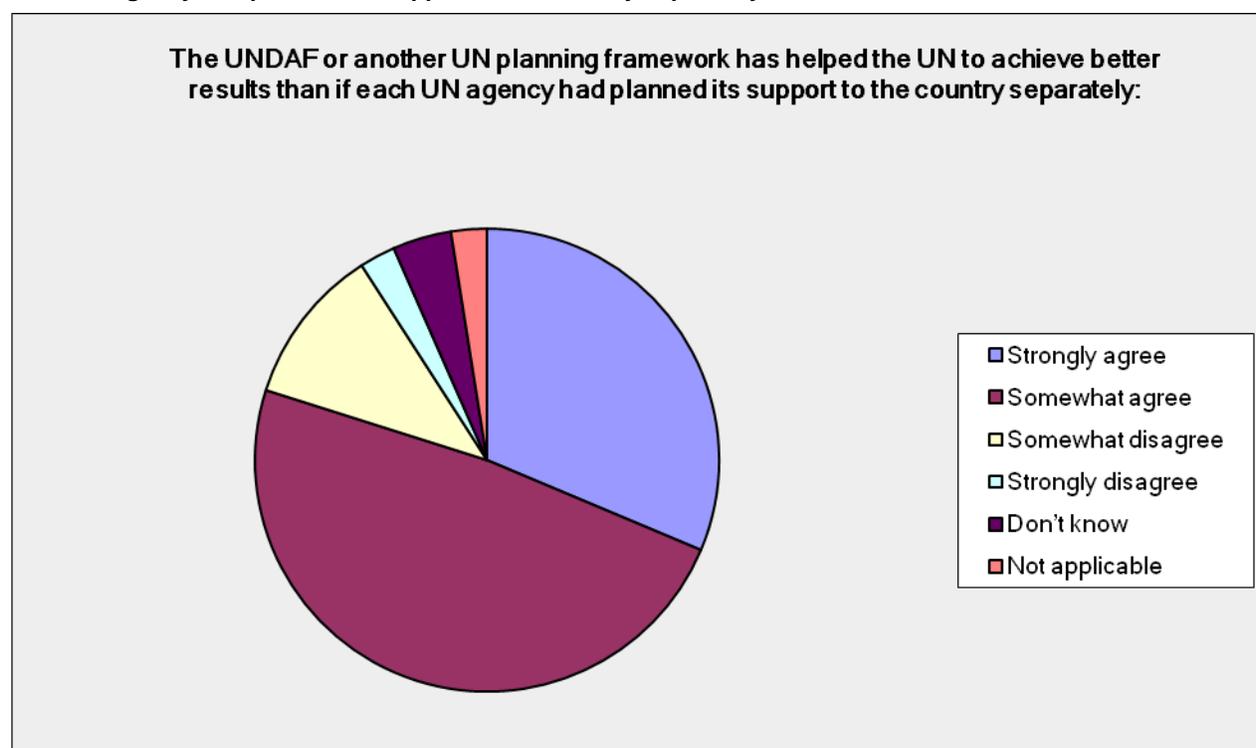
The responses to this question could be interpreted as indicating that the UNDAF is judged by 80.1% of respondents to have added value (strongly agree or somewhat agree to the statement), while 13.6% feel it has not added value (strongly disagree or somewhat disagree with the statement); the remainder answered don't know or not applicable (where there is no UNDAF).

The responses from Resident Coordinators contained a higher proportion of 'strongly agree' (65%), and the RCs in low-income countries were even more likely to state 'strongly agree': 78% of these RCs strongly agreed with the statement. However, in the case of many UN agencies the percentage of representatives who strongly agreed was much lower, as the chart below shows. The differences among agencies in regard to "strongly agree" is striking, with no obvious pattern. For example, the differences

seem just as marked within categories, such as 'specialized agencies', as they are between specialized agencies and funds or programmes.   Also notable is the substantial number who answered 'Don't Know': this result is consistent with the finding from the UNDAF study which commented on the lack of indicators that would allow the results of the UNDAF to be measured.

Chart 6. The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support to the country separately, UN agency:

The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support to the country separately
-508 responses-
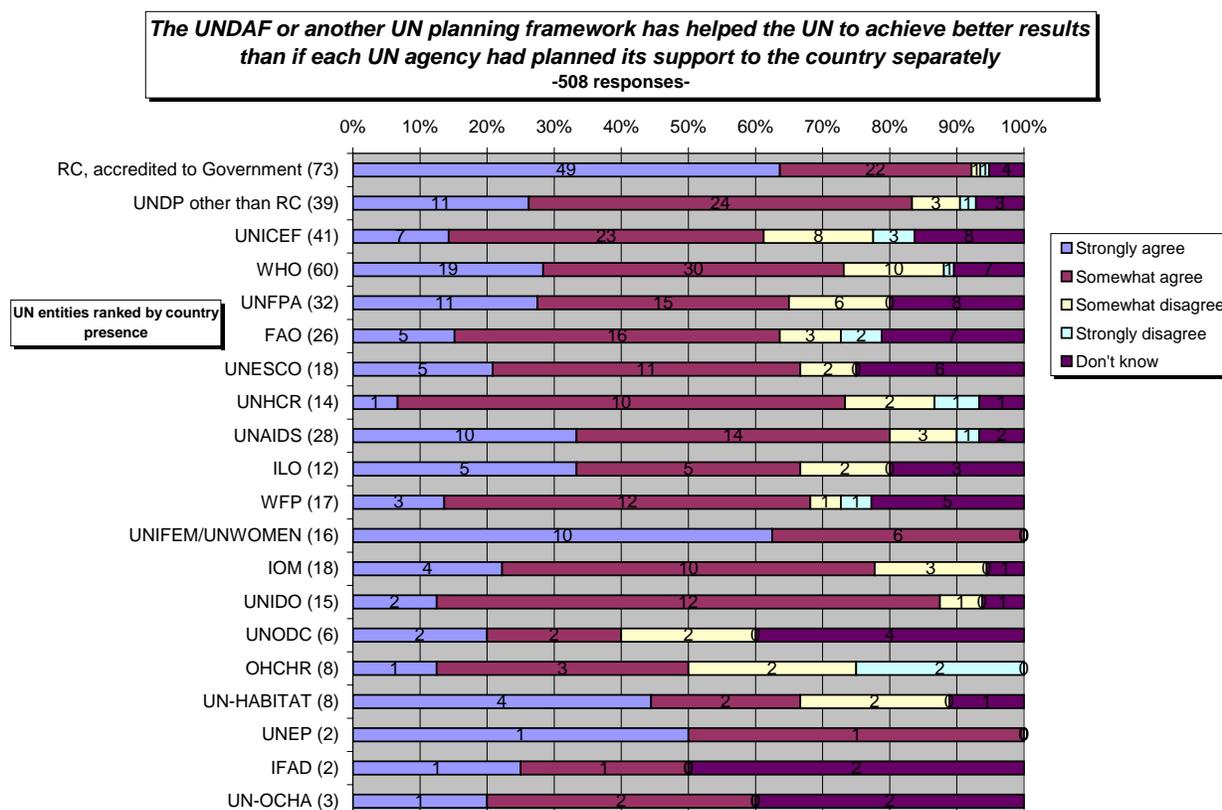
97 respondents offered additional comments on this question, including many thought-provoking comments, such as the following:

- "The previous UNDAF (2007-2011) was a bit of compilation of the country programmes and activities of different organizations and "all over the place". The current one (2012-2016) consciously segregated areas where coordination is essential for delivering the intended results from those where agency-specific actions are enough. This is making the notion of coordination much more clear and "actionable".
- "Further work is still required to ensure the UNDAF framework is utilized as the framework for UN planning replacing single agency frameworks. It will be important to ensure increased commitment of the UNDG members to have the UNDAF action plan replace country programme planning documents of specialized agencies, funds and programmes"
- "I strongly believe that the UNDAF at least gives us a semblance of unity and credibility and at best is the most effective and efficient way to work."

- "What really counts is the willingness of agencies to work together and pursue concrete (funding) opportunities--UNDAFs are , in my view, time consuming planning efforts --with frameworks which too often remain at the stage of plans."
- "A well prepared UNDAF is just one element, we need to give more attention to UNDAFs in the implementation stage (now much time dedicated to UNDAF design, much less to implementation.)"

The last comment cited above echoed a comment made by many respondents in the survey of programme country Governments: that the UN country teams need to pay more attention to the *implementation* of the UNDAF. It is also consistent with the findings of DESA's Funding Reports, which showed substantial differences between the resources planned in UNDAFs and the resources actually spent by UN entities during the lifetime of the UNDAF.

Q12: In your country of assignment, is there evidence that UN programmes are increasingly developed in response to the priorities identified by the recipient country?

93.9% of respondents stated that there was either strong evidence or some evidence that UN programmes are increasingly developed in response to the priorities identified by the recipient country. Over half the respondents (54.2%) stated there was strong evidence. Only 6.1% found there was little or no evidence. Many respondents, in their comments, pointed to the linkages between the UNDAF and agency programmes and national development plans.

Chart 7. In your country of assignment, is there evidence that UN programmes are increasingly developed in response to the priorities identified by the recipient country?

In your country of assignment, is there evidence that UN programmes are increasingly developed in response to the priorities identified by the recipient country?

1.0%
5.1%
54.2%
39.7%

- Strong evidence
- Some evidence
- Little evidence
- No evidence
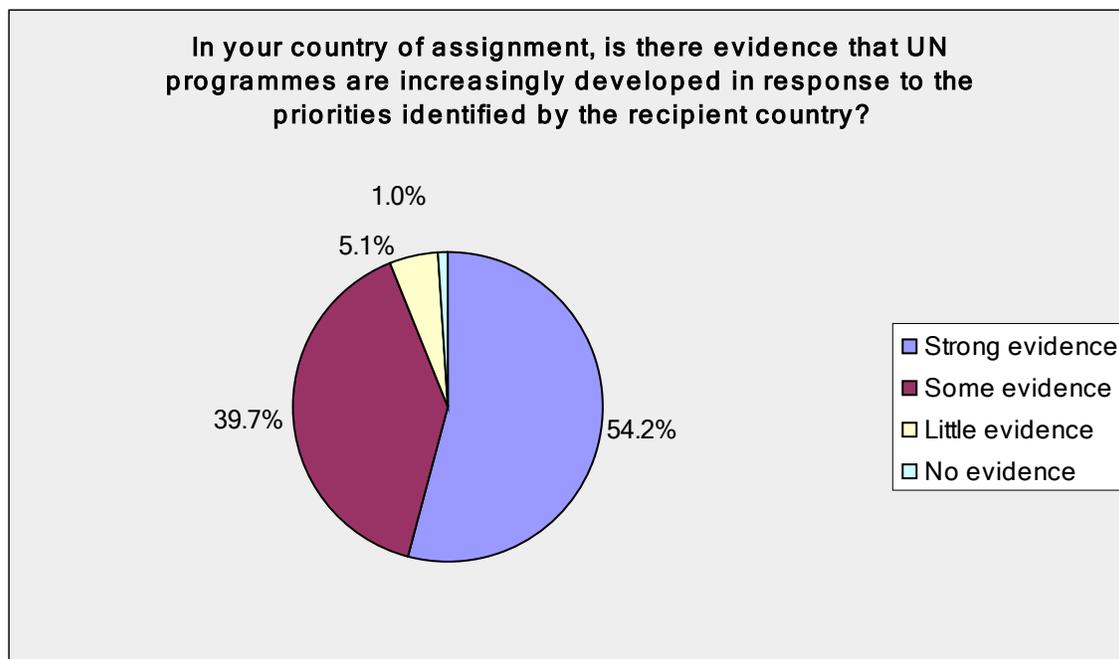
This result is consistent with the results of the survey of programme country Governments, which showed that 53% of respondents strongly agreed and 39% somewhat agreed that the introduction of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), or an alternative UN planning framework, has enabled the Government to ensure that the UN's activities are closely aligned with the national plans and strategies. The lack of widespread strong agreement on the part of Governments was echoed by some UN agency respondents, as reflected in comments such as: "UN programmes remain driven by mandates of agencies much more than by national priorities", "I view the UN as still too supply-driven" and "specific programmes are often developed in response to funding made available by donors."

Q13. The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped to strengthen the government's role in the overall coordination of UN activities in the country:

25.7% of respondents strongly agreed that the UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped to strengthen the government's role in the overall coordination of UN activities in the country. 48.3% somewhat agreed, while 19.6% either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The rather low percentage that "strongly agreed" appears consistent with the comments made by many Governments in the programme country survey, calling on the UN system to engage more closely with the Government. See, for example, the responses to question 26 in that survey.

Chart 8. The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped to strengthen the government's role in the overall coordination of UN activities in the country:

The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped to strengthen the government's role in the overall coordination of UN activities in the country
- 505 responses -

Strongly agree	25.7%
Somewhat agree	48.3%
Somewhat disagree	14.1%
Strongly disagree	5.5%
Don't know	3.8%
Not applicable	2.6%
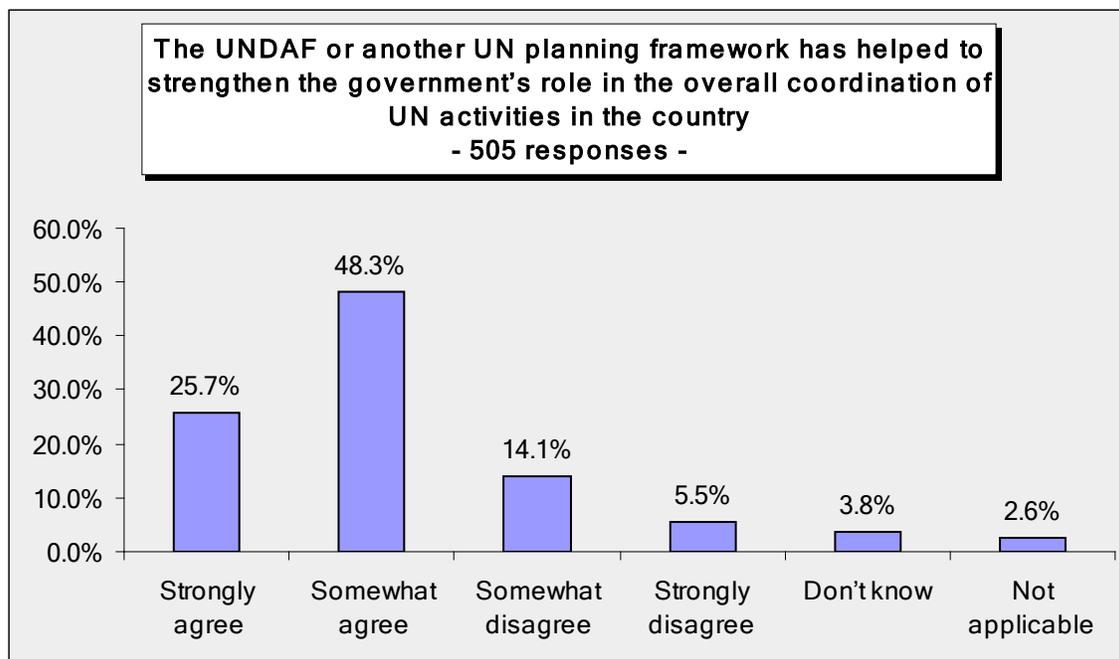
Some representative comments:
- "A senior government official, ministerial level, co-Chairs both the UNDAF Steering Committee and the UNDAF Trust Fund Steering Committee"
- "In the country I work, UN coordination is more of a matter of the UN agencies "getting their acts together" than the government taking a leading role in it."
- "The work of UN agencies is primarily with line ministries, not with the government department of donor coordination. Coordination must be around specific national policy issues, not just UN activities".

Q14: The UNDAF or another UN planning framework has helped to increase the participation of civil society in the work of the UN in the country:

On this question, a bare majority agreed. Only 8.8% strongly agreed, and 43.4% of respondents somewhat agreed, that the UNDAF or another UN planning framework had helped to increase the participation of civil society in the work of the UN in the country. 35.9% either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. This presents a very mixed picture, which may be explained by the widely varying role that civil society plays from one programme country to another.

Among the noteworthy comments by respondents were:
- "Due to the country situation, adequate consultation could not take place. But this is an evolving country context and consultations with civil society are envisaged in the implementation stage."
- "We remain weak on this front, and it is more at the UN Joint Programme and One Voice level that the interaction and engagement with civil society gets more firmly rooted. We

need to look at multiple instruments for such and not try and hang everything that must happen on an UNDAF or One Plan.

- "There is an absence of a functioning independent civil society in the country."
- "We have formed 5 "Outcome Groups" to assure follow-up of the UNDAF results. Each of these groups is very participatory, both in terms of relevant agencies, Government officials, donors and NGOs."
- "Civil society participation still varies depending on the agency country programme concerned. The existence of a UNDAF has not really affected this."

Q15. UN agencies receive contributions from donors for specific programmes and projects in addition to their regular (core) funds. In general, such additional donor-funded activities are less relevant to the country's needs and priorities:

20.7% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that non-core donor-funded activities are less relevant to the country's needs and priorities. 75.7% either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. This data suggests that in a majority of situations, non-core resources are being programmed in a way that is aligned with national needs and priorities as much as core resources.

Looking at the agencies most engaged in humanitarian activities (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR and UN-OCHA) the responses are even more clear cut: only 10.7% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that non-core donor-funded activities are less relevant to the country's needs and priorities, while 85.6% either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. This is perhaps not surprising, for the work is often unpredictable, making it inevitable that these agencies will seek resources on an as-needed basis.

A few respondents felt that this question should not have been phrased in a 'negative' way. However, an occasional 'negative' formulation offers a crude way to check for any acquiescence bias. We tend to conclude that the respondents displayed little if any acquiescence bias.

Additional notable comments were:
- "Donor-funded activities substantially contribute. For instance on HIV, external donors account for more than half of resource needs of country."
- "Those funds are critical for UN programming in country (being a MIC) receiving very little core support."
- "Occasionally, UN agencies will accept funds to implement activities that are not within their mandates, or projects that are not their top priority, simply because they need funds to survive. But that does not mean that this is always the case, nor does it mean those funds form the majority of the funding. It is an occasional fact. But, the best would be for donors to contribute to core funding, enabling agencies the flexibility to programme as needed."
- "To the extent that donors require that these programmes be implemented by multiple agencies, they are catalysts for improved coordination and collaboration among UN agencies."

Q16. From your observations, the growth in non-core/extrabudgetary/earmarked resources available to UN agencies has lessened the UN's ability to strategically plan its support:

51.7% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that non-core/extrabudgetary/earmarked resources available to UN agencies had lessened the UN's ability to strategically plan its support. 41.4% either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 7% stated that they did not know. The mixed responses and the high number of 'Don't Knows' suggest some uncertainty on the part of respondents as to how to answer the question, and the comments (see below) suggest that it may be inappropriate to look upon the UNDAF as a 'strategic planning tool'.

From among the varied responses, here is a sample of the 74 individual comments:

- "A strong core base at the beginning of the programming cycle is essential to plan and engage the counterparts appropriately"
- "Non-core earmarked resources can be strategic if the donor is aligned with government priorities and this is the case with several donors in this country."
- "UN's ability to plan/programme strategically is affected by the unavailability of funds. It is not affected because the funding is from core versus non-core. It is the fact that there is very little money to do anything, forcing everyone to spend enormous amounts of time searching for money when in fact they could be implementing programmes."
- "Firstly information on extrabudgetary resources of individual agencies is not shared and agencies tend to bend their priorities to the extrabudgetary resources, hence less space for joint strategizing."
- "Projects are timely responses to new needs. Core budgets lock in funds and programmes for a four year period."
- "In Rwanda, this challenge does not exist, as donors provide un-earmarked contributions to the One UN Fund. Agencies are not allowed to fund-raise in country individually."
- "The UNDAF remains the reflection of the "best scenario" more than a programming tool."

Q17. Do the UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding for projects?

In response to this question, 78.6% answered Yes, and 21.4% answered No. The question attracted a high number (107) of individual comments. Unlike the responses to some of the preceding questions, such as question 9, there was little difference between the views of RCs and those of other UNCT members.

Here are some of the comments, mostly on the 'Yes' side:

- "The lack of resources in MIC causes a complex dynamic where some smaller agencies compete desperately for their survival on the ground."
- "All the time! And this results in a lot of tension."

- "The political economy of the aid landscape provides counter-incentives for cooperation. UN agencies are competing for funding, including the specialized agencies. This results in a fragmentation of projects, rather than in coherence."
- "There still is a lack of transparency, competition for funding and agencies stepping into areas that clearly belong to the core mandate of other agencies."
- "UN should work to have clarity among agencies on mandates and areas of operations. This an exercise UNDG should lead."
- "This is a fundamental issue which relates to the overlapping of agency mandates, and government and donor preferences. It would be useful to have greater and more accurate mapping of UN agency competencies and service line capabilities."
- "Recently the approach has been for all agencies to prepare joint proposals for funding, with each agency responsible for the component of the project for which it has a comparative advantage, so there is more collaboration rather than competition."
- "Not at all, the UNCT under the RC leadership has become a space not only to strategically plan joint initiatives but also to share information and coordinate agency individual initiatives avoiding as much possible eventual competition on resources."
- "But as long as we are transparent and coordinate eventually (to avoid confusing the donors and wasting our own time), competition may not necessarily a bad thing."

The same question was asked in the survey of programme country Governments, and the results from the two surveys are shown together below:

Chart 9. Do UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding?
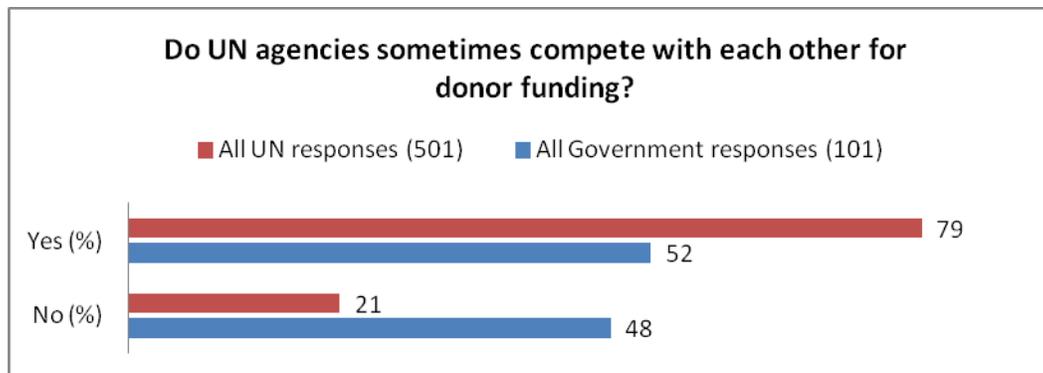
Perhaps not surprisingly, UN staff themselves are more aware of the competition than are Governments.

Q18. If the answer to the question above was Yes, please check any of the following statements that apply:

The responses to this question are presented in the following chart. The percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could check more than one answer:

Chart 10. Effects of competition:

If the answer to the question above was Yes, please check any of the following statements that apply:
- 374 responses -

Statement	Percentage
Competition among UN agencies is healthy and the Government welcomes it	11.5%
Competition among UN agencies creates confusion for the Government	67.9%
Competition among UN agencies increases the workload on Government officials	29.9%
Competition among UN agencies diverts the agencies' attention from the main tasks of providing support to the country	58.3%

In the comments box, respondents were invited to mention specific areas where they had observed competition, in addition to making general comments. Regarding the areas where competition was noted, the following list shows the number of times a topic was mentioned:

14 - Health, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and mother and child health
12 - Humanitarian interventions, including disaster response, risk management, refugee crisis response, early recovery and peacebuilding
9 - Environment, including climate change, water and sanitation, and GEF in general
9 - Governance, including social inclusion, anti-corruption, anti-discrimination, human rights, municipal support
6 - Food security and nutrition
5 – Gender
5 – Education
5 - Rural/area-based development, and income-generation
5 - Social services and social protection, migration, youth

It is notable that humanitarian interventions come near the top of this list in spite of the fact that they are not even applicable in a majority of programme countries. The 'recovery' area appears particularly problematic. One respondent suggested that "recovery has three challenges: the boundary between it and humanitarian action is open to interpretation; potentially anything can go under recovery, thus in

the absence of a clear division of labour one has chaos; "recovery" assumes a linear progression towards stability and development which is frequently not the case."

The data mentioned above are presented graphically in the following chart:

Chart 11. Areas of competition among UN agencies:

Areas where UN agencies see competition (minimum of five instances)

- Social services and protection, youth 7%
- Rural/area-based development 7%
- Education 7%
- Gender 7%
- Food security and nutrition 9%
- Governance, including human rights 13%
- Environment, including climate change, water and sanitation
- Humanitarian interventions, including early recovery and peacebuilding 17%
- Health, including HIV/AIDS and mother and child health 20%

Leaving aside humanitarian interventions, it appears that the topics most often cited as being subject to competition are those which tend to feature as UNDAF priority areas, on which UNCT's establish programme coordination groups, such as HIV/AIDS, environment, governance and gender. In other words, programme coordination groups are being established in those areas where more than one agency has a mandate, and where it is important to avoid duplication or competition, and to promote synergy instead.

While many comments referred to severe competition, and the negative consequences, a few referred to the possibility that overlapping mandates could mean that a Government had the opportunity to learn about different ways to approach a problem, which could be beneficial from the perspective of supporting the country's development. Two of the more balanced comments were:

- "The government welcomes it a long as it means more funds to it, but would prefer one voice from the UN."
- "It depends how competition is managed - sometimes it is healthy and other times not."

Q19*. Have any programme related measures been taken by the UNCT over the last four years that reduced the burden on the government when dealing with the UN system?*

In response to this question, 62.7% answered Yes, and 37.3% answered No. In the comment box, respondents were invited to state what measures had been taken that reduced the transaction costs of doing business with the UN.

205 individual comments were received. Measures that were mentioned repeatedly were: annual UNDAF reviews that replaced individual agency reviews, joint programmes, designating a single agency to speak for the UN in the respective government-donor coordination groups, speaking with one voice, using HACT fully, theme groups, joint missions, annual work planning, joint monitoring, joint reporting, simplified country analysis, the UNDAF itself, One UN programme, emphasis on capacity building, joint action plan, Delivery as One, UNDAF action plan instead of 4 individual CPAPs, reinforcement of the RC office, UNDAF steering committee, coordinated signing of CPAPs, and UN joint presence offices (in the Pacific). Of the above measures, the most frequently mentioned were the UNDAF annual reviews, joint programmes, the UNDAF formulation process, the work of programme coordination groups, and HACT.

On the other hand, one respondent in a middle-income country stated that he/she was "not aware that the country finds dealing with the UN a burden", while another felt the burden on the Government was not being reduced at all, commenting: "On the contrary, we keep asking for special treatment and favours."

Among the more forward-looking comments were:

"Many measures were taken in the DaO reform process that reduced the Government's burden and transaction costs when dealing with the UN system in the country. In fact, the entire reform process focusses on reducing the fragmentation of the UN system, and allowing the country to have a clearer overview of the UN's work and to really work with the UN as One organization."

And this, from an LDC: "In the health sector, which involves five UN agencies, a coordination arrangement that allows the UN to meet and plan with the Ministry as One team has helped reduce the burden of Government dealing with agencies separately. As part of this arrangement, the health related agencies will also develop one joint work plan with the Ministry which again simplifies their relationship with the UN agencies."

Q20. The Resident Coordinator's office receives clear strategic guidance from the UNDG on issues related to UN coherence at the country level, and

Q21 The members of the UNCT receive clear strategic guidance from their own headquarters on issues related to UN coherence at the country level.

The responses from RCs and UNCTs on these two questions are presented in the chart below:

Chart 12. Guidance to RCs and UNCT on coherence:
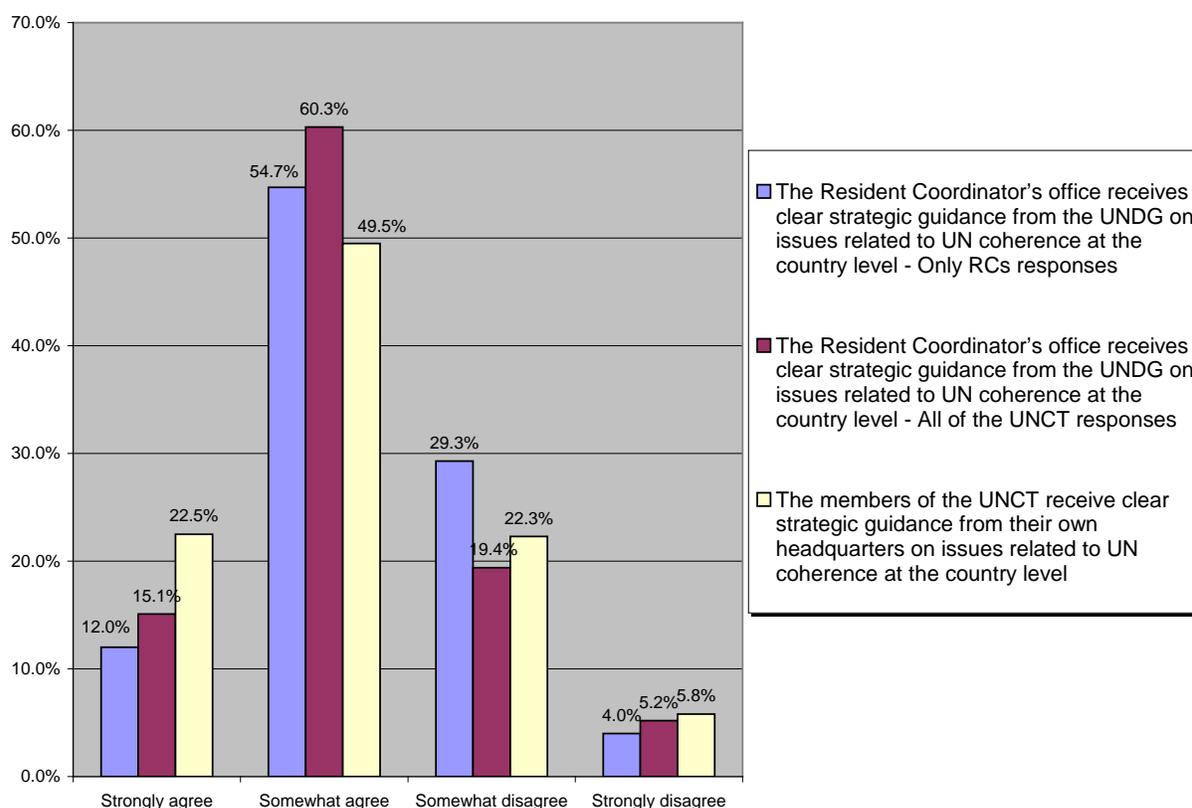
The most noticeable feature of the chart is the small percentage who strongly agreed with either proposition. This suggests considerable room for improvement, and may be read as consistent with the strong support expressed in question 22 below for agencies to send stronger signals to their country offices on the subject of UN coherence.

It is also apparent that the Resident Coordinators felt the insufficiency of guidance more keenly than other UNCT members: for example, only 12% of RCs strongly agreed that they received clear guidance from UNDG, and only 5.4% strongly agreed that their UNCT colleagues were receiving clear guidance from their respective headquarters. In general, the other UNCT members appeared to feel the need for clearer guidance less keenly than RCs: among them, the corresponding percentages were 15.7% and

25.3% respectively. Nonetheless, there was still a large absolute number (104) of agency representatives who strongly disagreed or somewhat disagreed that they were getting clear strategic guidance from their Headquarters.

In their comments on question 20, some respondents indicated that there was sufficient guidance, even too much sometimes, but not enough help was available in interpreting it. Others felt the guidance was ambiguous and again felt the need for support in implementing it. One respondent noted that the guidelines were non-binding, which led to "endless discussions on interpretation". Another called for firmer "rules" while yet another asked for more flexibility for the UNCT to apply the guidelines in the way that is most relevant to the country situation.   Several suggested that guidance is not enough and "there should be a set of good practical examples from pilot countries."

A few respondents referred to what they perceived as "domination" by UNDP and expressed concern about the RC breaching the firewall. One commented: "The UNRC represents the interest of UNDP rather than that of the UN family, especially as they are paid by UNDP." Other respondents were not sure that the RC office was sharing all the information they received.

Regarding question 21, on guidance from agency headquarters, many respondents commented that there was a lot of variation in the amount of guidance that agency heads receive. Several noted some ambiguity in the guidance. For example, one RC mentioned that: "A lot is said in theory from the corporate level, but actions and policies contradict it, leading to field level confusion", while another RC observed that "Agencies Hqs, including UNDP´s, show little interest in UN coordination."   Some mentioned that the guidance may be clear but not necessarily supportive of good coordination.

It was suggested that specialized agencies may receive less clear guidance than ExCom agencies. One specialized agency representative observed: "Coherence is expected to happen only at country level since our HQs still operate in their respective silos. Even agency guidelines for planning do not mention anything about coherence. Staff appraisal is silent on coherence or delivering as one." The RC in a large low-income country commented: "There is a high percentage of uninformed and un-trained or poorly briefed Agency Representatives. Furthermore, guidance provided to agency reps from HQ seems to be limited. Agency reps rely heavily on the RC's office for such guidance."

On the other hand, some agency representatives mentioned that they received clear, strong guidance to avoid competition and collaborate where possible with the other UNCT members: they were from FAO, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN-Habitat.

Q22. Looking to the future, how effective would the following measures be in improving UN coherence at the country-level?

The responses to this question are set out in the table below:

Table 2. Looking to the future, how effective would the following measures be in improving UN coherence at the country-level?

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Slightly effective	Not effective at all	Rating Average	Response Count
Further streamlining of the programming instruments and processes	265	164	46	11	3.41	486
Enhancing the role of programme coordination groups	201	218	56	17	3.23	492
Requesting UN country teams to set annual and multi-year targets for increasing coherence	186	196	75	34	3.09	491
Fully implementing the Management and Accountability System for the Resident Coordinator system	179	210	82	13	3.15	484
Giving the Resident Coordinator a stronger coordination role over all	151	135	108	97	2.69	491

the UN funds and programmes						
Giving the Resident Coordinator a stronger coordination role over all the UN country team members	176	119	101	93	2.77	489
Establishing common premises	121	120	152	96	2.54	489
Sending clear signals from agency headquarters advocating more UN coherence at country-level	290	122	68	10	3.41	490
Harmonizing the agencies' results-based management systems	245	174	55	17	3.32	491
Harmonizing the agencies' reporting procedures	240	166	62	26	3.26	494
Increasing harmonization of business processes	239	160	70	18	3.27	487

Providing the Resident Coordinator's Office with greater resources	258	133	77	25	3.27	493
Providing the UNDG Regional Team with greater resources	95	151	163	77	2.54	486
Answered question						**497**

As in case of Table 1, any one of the above measures could be very important, depending on the country context. To judge from the rating averages[2] (the last column in the table), the most important measures would appear to be:

First equal: Further streamlining of the programming instruments and processes
                    Sending clear signals from agency headquarters advocating more UN coherence at country-level

Runners-up (in order): Harmonizing the agencies' results-based management systems
                        Increasing harmonization of business processes
                        Providing the Resident Coordinator's Office with greater resources
                        Harmonizing the agencies' reporting procedures, and
                        Enhancing the role of programme coordination groups.

The data from the table is presented graphically in the chart below. The chart combines the "strongly and somewhat agree" responses (in blue) and compares them with the "slightly or not at all" responses (in red). This makes it easy to see which ones enjoyed the most widespread support and were the least contentious, and vice-versa.

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[2] The rating average is arrived at by assigning 4 points for 'very effective', 3 for 'somewhat effective', 2 for 'slightly effective' and 1 for 'not at all effective'. Thus, the highest possible score would be 4 and the lowest would be 1.

Chart 13. Looking to the future, how effective would the following measures be in improving UN coherence at the country-level?

Looking to the future, how effective would the following measures be in improving UN coherence at the country-level?
- 497 responses

Measure	Very or somewhat effective	Slightly or not effective at all
Further streamlining of the programming instruments and processes	429	57
Enhancing the role of programme coordination groups	419	73
Requesting UN country teams to set annual and multi-year targets for increasing coherence	382	109
Fully implementing the Management and Accountability System for the Resident Coordinator system	389	95
Giving the Resident Coordinator a stronger coordination role over all the UN funds and programmes	286	205
Giving the Resident Coordinator a stronger coordination role over all the UN country team members	295	194
Establishing common premises	241	248
Sending clear signals from agency headquarters advocating more UN coherence at country-level	412	78
Harmonizing the agencies' results-based management systems	419	72
Harmonizing the agencies' reporting procedures	406	88
Increasing harmonization of business processes	399	88
Providing the Resident Coordinator's Office with greater resources	391	102
Providing the UNDG Regional Team with greater resources	246	240

Some differences could also be seen in the responses depending on the income level of the country. This data is available for the RC responses. For the first three measures on the above list (streamlining instruments, enhancing coordination groups and setting targets), the income level of the country appeared to make no difference to how effective the respondents felt the measure would be. For most of the other measures, the assessment of effectiveness declined somewhat as the income level of the country rose. In other words, most of the measures are considered more effective in LICs than in LMICs, and more effective in LMICs than in UMICs. For example, 'sending clear signals' was rated very effective by 100% of RCs in LICs, by 90.6% of RCs in LMICs, by 85% of RCs in UMICs and 80% in HICs.

The respondents had many additional measures to suggest. They are reproduced below, in no particular order, except whether they came from an RC or another UNCT member. Some were mentioned just once while others were mentioned several times. They are reproduced at some length in view of their relevance to a discussion about how to improve the UN development system.

a. Comments by RCs

- A better interaction between DOCO and RCs
- All agency planning and programming documents for the country must be endorsed by RC certifying that apart from pursuing their agency specific activities, they do contribute to the UNDAF results

- The agencies while monitoring the implementation and reporting on results must report on the contribution their COs have made at the country level to the implementation of the UNDAF outcomes
- Agencies must allocate at the country level some resources to strengthen the coordination function - this is absolutely essential to instill a sense of ownership and accountability
- Giving Governments the tools and capacity to live the change alongside the UN
- Providing DOCO with greater resources
- RCs being consulted on appointments to UNCT ie Heads of Agency
- Greater individual accountability of UNCT members for their role in the team enforced by their respective agency HQ

b. Comments by other UNCT members

- In terms of resources for the regional team - it should be more in terms of profiles and capacity of human resources to handle supporting the UNCT
- UNDG indicating clearly what resources can be drawn from DOCO by country teams. If financial resources are not available what **are** the resources, advice, examples and tools available via DOCO colleagues to support country-led UN coherence?
- Providing clear and attractive financial incentives for increased UN coherence
- Institutionalising the RC's coordinating structure at the country level
- Providing training and peer learning facilities
- Reducing disconnects between UN planning framework and agency specific planning frameworks
- Reforming HACT to reduce transaction cost by extending accounting for funds period to six months and allowing carry-over of a balance
- Ensuring that for joint UN programmes the agreements between agencies is standard. If each UN Agency has its own LOA it creates challenges which often results in an aborted process for joint programme
- Consider rotating the RC function between accredited agency heads in countries with a smaller agency presence
- Find ways to incentivise clear recognition of the value added of UN agency diversity
- Motivate agencies to focus on their mandates and avoid competition by not seeking funding or a leading programmatic role in areas where other agencies hold a clear mandate and competency
- Respect and promote different models of increased coherence in different contexts rather than one size fits all
- Separate between the RC functions and UNDP Resident Representative functions
- Engage member states / governments and donors even more
- Establishment of joint funding modality (e.g. MDTF, One Fund)
- Increased use of joint programme
- Agreement on joint resource mobilization strategy
- Strong committed RC and firewall in place
- Emphasize the "Delivering" in the DaO concept
- Start discussion on "coordination for results" at the strategic level rather than continuously discussing "mechanics" of it in terms of structure, process and procedures
- The UNDAF should be supplemented with **joint** sector-based AWPs.
- For UNCTs in Middle Income Countries, additional measures for staff sharing, common business processes, common services, and better focus on greater value addition are important.

- UNCTs will focus minds when host governments speak with one voice and put pressure on UNCT to be relevant, useful and efficient
- Leave the UNCTs alone with the instruments they have to get on with their work and achieve the results they have committed to. Meanwhile, focus on bringing genuine coherence and DaO to regional teams and HQ locations
- Business processes must be harmonized at the HQ level - Programmatic harmonization can be invented at the field level but not the operational procedures
- Diversifying selection of resident coordinators. Not more people from UNDP
- Effective Monitoring and Evaluation is key
- Clear division of labour among UN agencies at country level - reflected in the UNDAF at outcome and output levels
- Clear code of conduct, when breached to be transparently addressed (and minuted) at UNCT meetings
- Flexible UNDAFs (cooperation frameworks) that allow UNCT's in transitional contexts (mixed humanitarian/development) to properly reflect the local context.

The respondents also used the comment box to underline certain points, notably to call for stronger signals from agency headquarters and for more resources for the RC office. The following comment was among the more thoughtful: "The mandate of the UN RC has been expanding over the years. However, in light of decreased resources available for coordination, the support has been declining. There is an imbalance between the responsibilities, and the high level of accountability that the RC has, with the significantly decreased human and financial resources to support this function."

Some respondents used the comment box to express concerns about the staff time that can get taken up in participating in inter-agency meetings, about processes that are considered too elaborate, and to note that common premises may raise security issues. Several references were made to the firewall, such as the following: "Empowering RC role is only helpful if the firewall is fully respected."

One respondent pointed out that "Harmonization in principle makes good sense. But too often harmonization is about reconciling all agencies' guidelines and processes. As a result, harmonization too often becomes the antagonist of simplification."

Q23. From your observations, please rate the willingness of key external development partners to collaborate with each other and with the UN at the country level. Please rate the partners on the scale 1 to 3 (with 1 as very willing):

In this question, the respondents were asked to compare 'International financial institutions (IFIs) and other multilateral organizations' and 'bilateral donors' on their willingness to cooperate with other external partners. Overall, the respondents found bilateral donors more willing to cooperate with others than the IFIs other multilateral institutions. Only 5% of respondents judged bilateral donors to be 'not willing at all' to cooperate, whereas 15.6% placed IFIs and other multilaterals in that category.

Some respondents commented on the difficulty in generalizing, as there could be substantial differences from one donor to another or one multilateral to another. The willingness to cooperate could also vary according to the sector, and according to the personalities of the agency representatives. One respondent remarked that "willingness depends on relative weight of partners in specific country situation" and another commented "the World Bank works alone until it "needs something" from the UN."

A rather long but insightful comment came from an agency representative in a lower middle-income country in Africa: "The country has limited donors and UN agencies have limited capacities while the country has plenty of resources and but poor capacities. There is a need for UN to play a leadership role to bridge the gaps and enhance relations between government and donors. UN coherence should play that role too, not the quest for funding. Donors expect greater UNRC role in promoting and improving coordination and UN coherence, and for this there is a need to have a very experienced RC."

Q24. How would you assess the cooperation between the UNCT and the World Bank at the country-level?

Among the 494 individuals who answered the question, 30.8% judged cooperation with the World Bank to be very or somewhat effective. A much larger percentage (54.3%) judged it to be slightly effective or not at all effective. The remainder checked don't know or not applicable.

Chart 14. How would you assess the cooperation between the UNCT and the World Bank at the country-level?
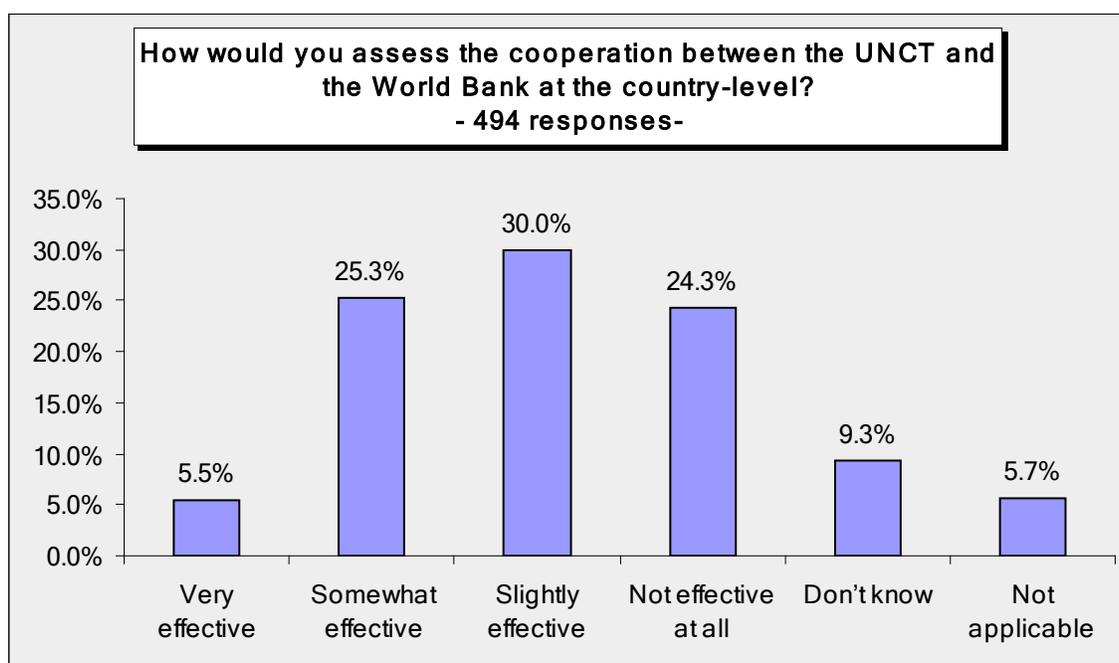
In the comment box, respondents were invited to indicate areas where cooperation had proved to be effective. The areas mentioned were as follows. Areas mentioned more than once are so indicated:

Post-disaster needs assessment
Peace consolidation x2
Conflict analysis and the development of conflict prevention measures
HV/AIDS x3
Health x2

Food security and nutrition x2
Education x2
Environment protection
Private sector development
Public sector modernisation
Anti-corruption / anti-money laundering
Social protection x2
Productive safety net programme

In a few countries, the World Bank was reported to be an active member of the UNCT, but more commonly it was an inactive member or not a member at all. It was reported that "some agencies (eg FAO) maintain good working relations with the World Bank at sectoral level." Another respondent mentioned a "common voice on issues of economic reforms and climate change, for example, but no institutional buy-in as part of One UNCT." Several respondents mentioned that the scope for more effective collaboration was substantial. One noted that "the World Bank is poised to approve a project aiming at strengthening the capacity of government in dealing with disasters while the UN agencies are already doing the same."

Q25. How would you assess the cooperation between the UNCT and the regional banks at the country-level?

The responses to this question are shown in the chart below. It presents a picture of very limited cooperation between the UN and the regional development banks. When the responses to questions 24 and 25 are compared, it appears that UN cooperation with the World Bank is judged overall to be more effective than UN cooperation with the regional banks.

Chart 15. How would you assess the cooperation between the UNCT and the regional banks at the country-level?

How would you assess the cooperation between the UNCT and the regional banks at the country-level?
- 495 responses -

A bar chart with the following values:

- Very effective: 3.6%
- Somewhat effective: 17.6%
- Slightly effective: 24.4%
- Not effective at all: 28.3%
- Don't know: 18.0%
- Not applicable: 8.1%
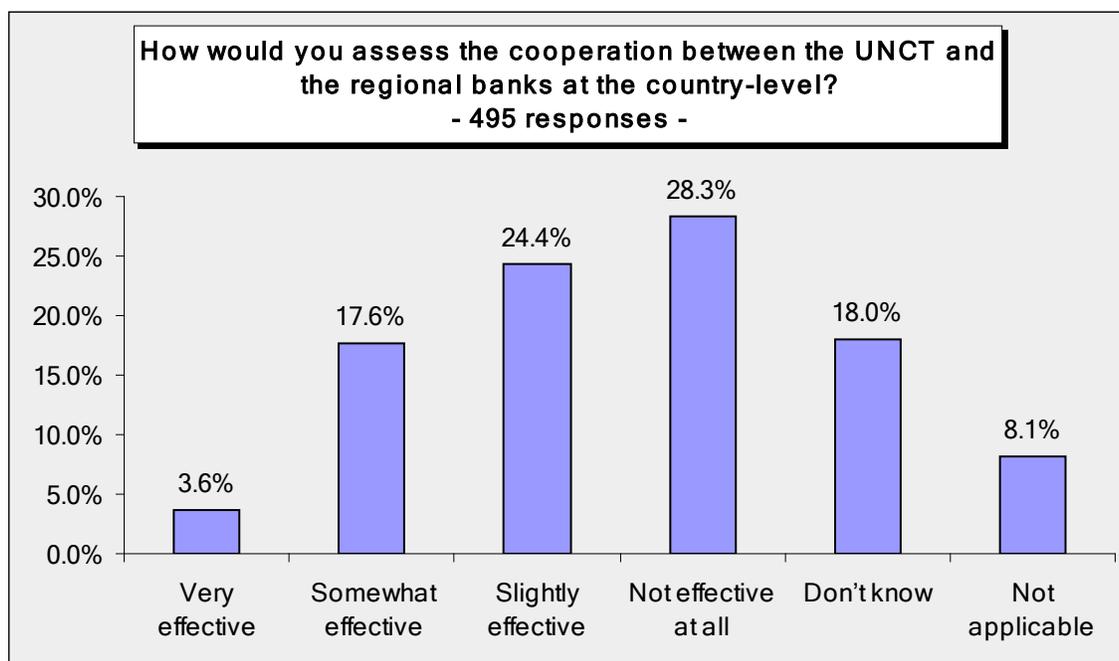
A few respondents mentioned positive experiences in the comments box, but the following comment is more typical: "They are represented on the security management team (SMT) and whilst several opportunities exist for collaboration, there has been little interest from them to do so."

Q26. Taking all factors into consideration, particularly the UN's effectiveness, efficiency and coherence, greater efforts should be made to involve non-resident UN agencies in the activities of the UNCT:

37.8 % of respondents strongly agreed and 40.4% somewhat agreed with this statement. 18.6% somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed. Not surprisingly, responses differed by agency. The larger the agency, the more likely they were to indicate disagreement with the statement. For example, UNDP and UNICEF were the only agencies for whom over 10% of representatives strongly disagreed with the statement (15% of UNDP respondents and 20% of UNICEF respondents.)   The level of agreement from Resident Coordinators was around the average for all respondents.

The individual comments suggest that non-resident agencies (NRAs) can add value, in efficient ways, and a number of examples were given. Many respondents felt that NRAs were already being used well. Others commented that this was easier said than done, and specific modalities were needed to facilitate it. One option would be for the role and voice to be formally delegated to a specific same-sector UN entity that is present in the country and who would be held accountable for also representing that NRA. An example was mentioned where UNDP had played a role somewhat like that.

Some respondents expressed concern that NRAs can create additional work for the UNCT, and called for the RC office to have increased capacity in order to handle the workload. Some felt that NRAs should contribute to those costs. One pointed out that "It is weighing transaction costs against greater synergies. It is already a challenge to between resident agencies." Another observed that "NRAs can also make things difficult for UNCTs if they plan directly with their implementing partners but come to UNCT when they need operational support. One respondent summed this up as follows: "Involvement of non-resident UN agencies should go both ways: the UNCT should try to reach out to these agencies, they should also try to keep in touch with the UNCT."

It was also recommended that: "Efforts to involve NRA from the country level should be strategic and from the NRA side, involvement should be made on the basis of a realistic assessment to meaningfully participate in UNCT activities." A respondent noted that NRAs sometimes send junior staff to participate in UNCT events, but they are not empowered to make decisions and thereby slow things down. Several respondents thought this was not just a matter for the UNCT to decide, it was for the Government to decide whether a particular NRA would add value to the work of the UN in the country.

Q27. Are there any additional comments or suggestions you would like to make?

98 respondents accepted this invitation to make some final comments. One RC (sourced from a specialized agency) reflected the views of many in observing: "There is a growing realization - evidence based - that UN working together creates enhanced development impact by optimizing the synergies and maximizing the knowledge and best practices function from all across the globe. However ways and means are not there to translate this realization and commitment into reality. For an RC to exercise the coordination and coherence role, (a) corporate commitment of agencies is absolute imperative in terms of harmonizing their business processes and results framework; (b) RC needs to be empowered to authenticate the CPAPs and country planning frameworks of the agencies; and (c) resource commitment has to be made by the agencies to strengthen the coordination function at country level and to ensure a wider ownership and accountability." More radically, another proposed: "Reduce the number of agencies with operational representation at country level and ask a reduced number of agencies to represent others."

Also noteworthy: "There need to be some development results and accountability oriented indicators for increased coherence. It is not helpful to talk of coherence in the abstract. There need to be indicators for accountability of individual agency Reps. Increased coherence is not the onus of the RC alone. Agencies at the country level need to contribute financially to the efforts of the UNCT for increased coherence in the absence of global funding. This cannot be voluntary or representation without taxation. With regard to RCO funding, the ideal situation would be to ensure predictable RCO funding from HQs - minimum 1 International Professional; 1 National Professional, 1 support staff plus additional funding for specific activities such as consultancy support and UNCT joint activities."

And: "Delivery as One should be because of added value and not just for the process. DaO & speaking with one voice does not mean the same voice always. Agencies should be able to speak on their particular mandate based on their comparative advantages. Ensuring that the firewall works enhances trust and motivation to contribute to the process. RC's office needs to be provided enough funds to function effectively. The dwindling resources to RC's office over the past 3 years is not encouraging."

Several respondents expressed views along the following lines: "There is much too much investment of time and money in guidelines and processes. In a small [middle-income] country, all we need is to work together collegially

and constructively, which will not come from frameworks, matrices, guidance notes, 180-degree assessments. It will come with goodwill, training in how to be collaborators and competitors simultaneously, and proper supervision by our regional directors."

The representative of a department of the UN Secretariat added: "If you want ONE UN you have to work to harmonize structures, accounting and administration systems. I have a headache every time I need to process a payment order because I am not allowed to use Atlas [the UNDP finance system], just a small example to tell you how difficult it is to work as one when each of us is so different." But another agency representative felt that: "Guidelines, procedures etc are fine, however what we really need to change is attitude, behaviour and corporate culture of individual agency heads who take themselves far too seriously and behave like small emperors."