

**The relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations  
Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)**

**A report prepared for the United Nations Department of Economic  
and Social Affairs**

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## List of acronyms

CAR	Central African Republic
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CPD	Country Programme Document
DaO	Delivering as One
DESA	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DOCO	United Nations Development Operations Co-ordination Office
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
GA	General Assembly
ISF	Integrated Strategic Frameworks
MfDR	Managing for Development Results
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NRA	Non resident agency
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBM	Results based management
RC	Resident Coordinator
RM	Results Matrix
SSG	Secretary General
RCO	Resident Coordinators Office
TCPR	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	UN Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## Executive Summary

i. This Report directly addresses ECOSOC resolution 2011/7 requesting the Secretary-General pay particular attention, in the report for the 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to among others “*an assessment of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks to determine, inter alia, their alignment with national priorities, their focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the effectiveness of their process, building on the review conducted by the United Nations Development Group*”.

ii. It draws on evidence from a number of sources, including: (i) forty UNDAF evaluations and reviews commissioned between 2008 and 2011; (ii) evaluations carried out by the independent evaluation offices of the individual UN agencies; (iii) results from opinion surveys conducted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs with the member-states (111 responses), resident coordinators (78 responses) and other UNCT members (449 responses); field visits to seven countries (Laos, Thailand, Ethiopia, Peru, Bolivia, Turkey, and Georgia); and interviews UN staff at HQ, regional and country levels using a semi-structured interview protocol.

iii. The UNDAF is a physical document and supporting results framework, signed by both the member-state government and UN Country Team (UNCT). It is also a strategic planning and implementation process that extends over several years. It is the effectiveness of the process that is the main focus of this assessment, as it is the overall effectiveness of the process that determines whether the UNDAF enhances the UN’s overall contribution to development results.

iv. The report was prepared by Paul Balogun (consultant), with support from Christian Privat (consultant) and members of the Development Cooperation Policy Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) between December 2011 and April 2012. It was checked for factual accuracy by both the individual UN agencies and the UN United Nations Development Operations Co-ordination Office (DOCO), for which thanks are given.

### Major Findings

*Has the UNDAF fostered greater alignment of UN support with national development priorities?*

v. A significant body of robust evidence clearly shows that the intended support from the UN outlined in the UNDAF frameworks is generally aligned with national priorities. When support in the UNDAF is not aligned with national priorities, this is usually because the UNDAF has not yet been revised in response to either a recent change of government or a major change in context, such as a natural disaster or conflict situation.

vi. The UNDAF process has also facilitated greater engagement by non-resident agencies at country level, partly because the UNDAF process gives them a process within which to engage and also supports them to engage. However, in most countries, it is probable that the UNDAFs still do not include all support from the UN; even for some of the agencies that have an in-country presence and significant operational expenditures.

vii. Ensuring alignment with government priorities has also been a major achievement of the UNDAF, albeit the actual degree of alignment has been affected by a number of factors. One factor has been that in many countries there isn’t a national development strategy with sufficiently clear strategic priorities with which to establish a strong link. In others there is no single national development strategy with which to align, but rather a range of strategies and plans with which the

UN must align to some extent. Another factor is the UN's normative role, which means that advocating with government and other national partners for re-prioritisation of government priorities to meet international norms is a normal, and accepted, part of the UN's business. The consequence is that UNDAFs normally include a mixture of support clearly in support of government and advocacy/research activities.

viii. To foster greater alignment with national development plans, significant attention has been paid by UNCTs to ensuring that the planning and implementation periods for recently designed UNDAFs and national strategies/plans are the same. Progress has been made in this area, but synchronising the implementation periods still remains a challenge in many countries.

ix. The UNDAF is also intended to be used to strategically prioritise the UN's support and ensure that it is better focused. There is some evidence of impact in this area. However, the overall conclusion is that attempts to prioritise UN support through the UNDAF and on the basis of the comparative advantage of the UN as a whole, or of the individual agencies, have been a relative failure. While some of the challenges accounting for this failure are unique to the UN, it is important to note that the UN's experience is broadly similar to that of most development partners when attempting prioritisation based mainly on comparative advantage.

#### *The value of the UNDAF in promoting the Millennium Declaration.*

x. Evidence would strongly suggest that intended support identified in the UNDAFs is focused on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. One significant question now arising is how to deal with support post-2015, when the MDGs are supposed to be achieved.

#### *Has the UNDAF promoted greater coherence in the UN system's operations?*

xi. A lack of a consistent and common understanding of what coherence and integration of the UN's support at country level mean creates difficulties for assessing the UN's progress in this area. Responses from the DESA opinion survey with RCs and other UNCT members indicate that they strongly believe coherence has increased over the past four years, although they also believe that more could be done.

xii. If coherence and integration are understood to mean that there is better communication within the UNCTs, then the evidence is strong that the UNDAF process has delivered this. The UNDAF formulation process has provided an opportunity for intensive internal discussion within UNCTs; albeit practical logistical and financial still circumscribe engagement by the NRAs. To varying degrees this dialogue continues during UNDAF implementation.

xiii. There is less evidence that the UNDAF has had a major effect on ensuring that the UN's support is then actually more coherent or integrated or leads to greater use of joint programming approaches. One possible reason may be that the UNDAF formulation process, as outlined in the UNDG Guidelines, does not specifically focus on identification of opportunities for greater coherence during implementation of the UNDAF. However, it is clear that UNCTs do this anyway. In addition, in many countries individual UN agencies and groups of agencies are in fact engaged in ongoing, constructive policy dialogue and efforts to enhance coherence outside of the UNDAF process. It may therefore be that these are actually considered more useful, vehicles for carrying out such work than those associated with the UNDAF. This conclusion would accord with the view from the field that the application of new systems and procedures has not been the major factor driving coherence. This is not to say that UNCT members do not see that systems and procedures – such as the UNDAF - as

insignificant factors; rather they are not seen as the primary factors driving enhanced coherence within the UN at country level. Instead, strong inter-personal relationships and presumably trust, the leadership of the RC and support from the RCO are seen as more important.

xiv. Many UNCTs also remain reluctant to develop joint programmes as part of the UNDAF process. Even in cases where UN agencies agree that there are solid reasons for development of a joint programme, they are reluctant to do so. This is often because the transaction costs, in a situation where their business practices remain unharmonised, are judged to outweigh the possible benefits. Instead, the growth in the number of joint programmes appears to have been mostly driven by the availability of new funding from the MDG Achievement Fund and others, where use of a joint programme modality has been a pre-condition of funding.

*Has the UNDAF reduced duplication of UN activities?*

xv. Whether the UNDAF process has led to a decrease in duplication of activities is difficult to judge. In their responses to this question, just over half of the member states agreed that there is still a significant degree of duplication in the activities of the UN, while approximately 30 percent disagreed. Some instances of a reduction in duplication of UN support were also cited in the UNDAF evaluations, but unfortunately assessing this was not a major focus of the evaluations. In the survey of UNCT members, some also commented that outcome groups are being increasingly established in those areas where more than one agency has a mandate, and where it is important to avoid duplication or competition, and instead promote synergy.

*Has the UNDAF reduced transaction costs?*

xvi. Evidence of a reduction in transaction costs is also limited. In terms of reducing transaction costs to UN agencies, the overall conclusion must be that introduction of the UNDAF has actually increased programmatic transaction costs in most situations. There have been some reductions in the programming requirements of the individual agencies, such as in UNICEF, due to the existence of the UNDAF. The recently introduced Action Plan may also reduce some transaction costs, but it is still too early to tell. But in general, these reductions have been modest. UNDAF programming requirements have therefore been an additional cost to agency programming at country level, rather than a process that has substituted for programming processes within the individual agencies.

xvii. In a number of the countries that have adopted Delivering as One (DaO) approaches, a major purpose appears to have been to reduce transaction costs for government partners. In these cases, coordination still remains important, but is likely to be carried out in government led coordination systems rather than within the UN-focused outcome groups. Whether this has been delivered reduced transaction costs to governments within the DaO pilots is for the *'Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from Delivering as One'* to judge. However, attention can be drawn to the recent experience of the World Bank and the bilateral donors on the issue of reducing transaction costs to government partners, which suggests that the results have been modest to date.

*Has the UNDAF enhanced the results focus of the UN at country level?*

xviii. Possibly the area in which least progress has been made has been in terms of enhancing a results focus at the level of the UNDAF/UNCT. Evaluative and interview evidence identify no examples of UNDAF level M&E systems working as suggested in the UNDG Guidelines or in the UNDAF M&E plans. This is despite UNDG having invested significant resources in addressing the technical short-comings in UNDAF results frameworks and M&E planning since 2006 and issuing new

guidance in this area. Notwithstanding the significant investment, review of recently developed UNDAF results matrices reveals little evidence of a significant improvement in their technical quality.

xix. It is probable that the lack of progress reflects more fundamental challenges, and that the greatest challenge is not technical. First, where does the demand for evidence of performance at the UNDAF level lie and therefore what does mutual accountability mean? At present, there is no evidence of a sustained demand for evidence of results and decision making processes reliant on such evidence at the level of the UNDAF. Second, how to use the UNDAF 'results framework' when it is not a 'results framework' as commonly understood, but rather a statement of intent that is then almost never updated to reflect what actually is implemented.

### **Overarching Conclusions**

xx. The assessment finds no evidence to suggest that the overall analysis under-pinning the development of the UNDAF and presented in the Secretary-General's 1997 reform proposals is either wrong or no longer valid. Nor is there evidence that the purposes for the UNDAF outlined in the resolutions of the TCPRs in 2001, 2004, and 2007 are wrong. It is also clear that the majority of the member-states, Resident Coordinators and other UNCT members, despite the problems identified, believe that the UNDAF allows the UN to achieve better results than if UN agencies had continued to plan separately. The issue is not the need that the UNDAF responds to, but rather how the concept of the UNDAF is operationalised in the context of individual countries and being realistic about what the various tools applied in the UNDAF process can be expected to deliver.

xxi. Experience clearly shows that what individual governments want from the UNDAF varies. This variation has been insufficiently recognised by either governments or the UNDG to date. In some cases, the governments appear to see little value in the process. In others, it is seen primarily as a way to reduce transaction costs and allow integration with national systems or to focus the UN in areas where it makes sense for there to be a coordinated UN response. UNDG may have recognised this variability at a strategic level, but not then reflected this in its Guidelines to the UNCTs.

xxii. A number of tools and approaches have been introduced where the evidence shows that the UN's experience with their application and usefulness has not been significantly different from that of others, both within the development field and more widely. At best, the failure to learn from other's experience has led to unrealistic expectations of what change these tools could deliver. The opportunity is that the relevant expertise on these issues exists in several of the UN agencies and many of the Resident Coordinators interviewed are aware as well. Moving forward, the challenge is how to more effectively harness this intellectual capital.

xxiii. The differentiation seen in recently formulated UNDAFs will address some of the problems found with older UNDAFs, but not all. In particular the approaches suggested within the current Guidelines do not address several of the key problems with the present approach high-lighted in this report, including: (i) the fundamental limitations of strategic planning as a planning tool; (ii) the ineffectiveness of using comparative advantage analysis as a tool for strategic prioritisation and focus; (iii) questions over the degree to which the UNDAF will deliver greater integration and coherence; and (iv) the relative failure of the UN to operationalise a results focus based around use of the UNDAF.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** *The UNDAF should be retained, but its meaning refocused.*

**Recommendation 2:** *The UNCT, led by the Resident Coordinator, and centre of government should define the purposes of the UNDAF in a country.*

**Recommendation 3:** *The UNDAF, except in exceptional circumstances, should be a strategic framework and not detailed planning tool.*

**Recommendation 4:** *The UNDG's decision to support differentiation of the UNDAF was correct, but in future should be less focused on differentiation of the 'same process' and more on differentiation in response to context and what the purpose of the UNDAF in a particular country is.*

**Recommendation 5:** *To achieve greater coherence, the UNCTs need to manage for coherence.*

**Recommendation 6:** *The UNDG should focus on strengthening reporting of results from the agency level country presence to the headquarters and then the Governing Boards. At country level, UN agencies should also focus on ensuring that evidence of results is reported through government reporting and management systems.*

**Recommendation 7:** *UNDG must agree an effective policy for adequately resourcing the RCO function on a sustainable basis.*

**Recommendation 8:** *UNDG needs to reduce contradictory guidance from the Headquarters' about engagement with UNDAF process and embed the UNDAF in agency policy*

**Recommendation 9:** *Member states are correct to urge the harmonisation of the vertical business practices of the individual agencies, but also need to recognise that a significant pay back is likely to be found in only some programme countries*

## 1. Introduction

1. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is the strategic programme framework that describes the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities. The 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) encouraged the UN development system to intensify its collaboration at the country and regional levels towards strengthening national capacities, in support of national development priorities, through the common country assessment (CCA), when required, and the UNDAF. It also recognized the potential of the UNDAF and its results matrix as the collective, coherent and integrated programming and monitoring framework for country-level contributions. Some form of UNDAF is now mandatory in all programme countries, unless the government states otherwise or the UN's presence is limited. Based on 2009 expenditure data, the UN currently has developmentally related operational activities in operational activities for development in 148 countries<sup>1</sup>, and UNDAFs or their equivalent cover 145 of these countries in 2011.

2. This Report directly addresses ECOSOC resolution 2011/7<sup>2</sup> requesting the Secretary-General to pay particular attention, in the report for the 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to among others “an assessment of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks to determine, inter alia, their alignment with national priorities, their focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the effectiveness of their process, building on the review conducted by the United Nations Development Group”. Terms of Reference laying out, in more detail, the study's scope and the expected approach<sup>3</sup> to be used are at Annex 1. The analysis and recommendations made constitute one of several inputs into the analytical preparations of the Secretary-General's report for the 2012 QCPR.

3. The UNDAF is a physical document and supporting results framework, signed by both the member-state government and UN Country Team (UNCT). It is also a strategic planning and implementation process that extends over several years. It is the effectiveness of the process that is the main focus of this assessment, as it is the overall effectiveness of the process that determines whether the UNDAF enhances the UN's overall contribution to development results.

4. The process normally starts two years before implementation starts, with a formulation stage lasting between three to nine months. In the year before implementation, the UNDAF document, which is the major product of the formulation process, is signed by both the government and involved UN agencies. Four UN agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA – also prepare individual country programme documents (CPDs), based on their contribution to support identified in the UNDAF, which are approved by their Executive Boards during the year before implementation starts. Other agencies, such as FAO and WHO, may also carry out country programming exercises at this point but their country programme documents are not approved by their Governing Bodies. The implementation phase, which is supposed to be synchronised with the period of the national plan, then normally lasts for four to five years.

5. Essentially, the UNDAF is a set of tools used to: (i) analyze the context (the common country analysis); (ii) manage strategic planning and prioritisation within the UN at country level (the UNDAF

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<sup>1</sup> Based on survey data gathered by UN DESA from 36 entities across the UN system that reported funding for operational activities for development in 2009. [http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/dcpb\\_stat.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/dcpb_stat.htm)

<sup>2</sup> ECOSOC (2011) *Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system*. 2011/7

<sup>3</sup> A key concern was the need for the study to be evidence based.

formulation process); (iii) encourage engagement by the UN as a whole with the centres of government<sup>4</sup> of the concerned Member States (the UNDAF formulation process); and (iv) enhance reporting and accountability for results (the UNDAF results framework and review/evaluation processes during implementation).

6. Key identified purposes of the UNDAF include:

- Supporting the alignment of UN support with national priorities;
- The promotion of the Millennium Declaration as the global context for national plans and programmes and of the Millennium Development Goals as benchmarks for progress in the implementation of those plans and programmes.
- Taking a strategic planning approach to link a common situational analysis and analysis of the UN's comparative advantage with decisions on where the UN's support would be best focused and most relevant;
- The promotion of coherence in the UN system's operations. This is variously understood to mean the UN speaking with one voice and/or creating one unified UN entity with which governments can engage when dealing with strategic issues, such as alignment with national priorities;
- Supporting the broadest possible participation of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional UN offices, in this strategic process;
- The reduction of duplication of programmed support across the UN agencies;
- The reduction of transaction costs on the part of both the government and the UN system when programming support; and
- Enhancing the results focus of the UN at country level.

7. Section 2 of the report describes the methodology used in the assessment. Limitations both in methodology and data availability and the implications for the robustness and credibility of the assessment's findings, conclusions and recommendations are also identified.

8. Section 3 then examines the genesis of the UNDAF as part of the Secretary-General's reform initiative launched in 1997 and subsequent resolutions made by Member States under the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews (TCPR) in 2001, 2004 and 2007 to clarify the purpose of the UNDAF. This section therefore identifies what was expected and therefore what the UNDAF's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency are assessed against. Understanding the reasons for the UNDAF's performance depends on understanding how the UNDAF is formulated and then implemented. This has, in the main, been shaped by Guidelines issued by the UN Development Group (UNDG) in 1997 and then revised in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010. While there has been considerable evolution in the Guideline's content over time, only what is suggested under the 2010 Guidelines is discussed in Section 4. This is because these are the Guidelines that most fully reflect the resolutions of the Member States and also represent the clearest articulation of what is currently expected by the UNDG to happen at country level. The section concludes with an analysis of how, in response to the 2010 Guidelines, UN country teams have developed very different types of UNDAF.

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<sup>4</sup> While varying from country to country, and over time, centre of government agencies would commonly include Offices of the President or Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning/Planning Commission and the Ministry of Social Planning (particularly in Latin America). Some countries' constitutions provide for a Cabinet having a policy and strategy-determination, resource-allocation and implementation-management role. The Cabinet Secretariat often resides in the Offices of the President or Prime Minister. What unites all of these agencies is that they are not directly involved in the implementation of government strategies and policies, which instead is the role of the sector level ministries. Responsibility for coordination both within government and between government and development partners is also found somewhere in the centre of government.

9. Evidence of the degree to which the UNDAF has delivered against the intended purposes identified above is set out in Section 5. Both alignment with national priorities and the focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are discussed within the broader issue of the degree of national ownership. Major conclusions and possible factors explaining the performance observed together with a set of broad and strategic recommendations are found in Section 6.

10. The report has been prepared by Paul Balogun (consultant), with support from Christian Privat (consultant) and members of the Development Cooperation Policy Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) between December 2011 and April 2012. A list of those consulted is at Annex 2, while Annex 3 includes a list of all documents referenced.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Approach

11. ECOSOC resolution 2011/7 requests an assessment of the UNDAF to determine alignment with national priorities, the focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the effectiveness of the process. The assessment's ToRs expand on this request to identify 24 issues to be covered in the analysis; grouped into five broad categories: (i) national ownership; (ii) relevance; (iii) contribution to strategic positioning and coherence; (iv) efficiency of the process; and (v) whether the UNDAF enhances a results focus. These issues were identified by DESA through an extensive consultation process with UN staff at the headquarters and regional levels involved in the UN reform agenda.

12. As discussed in Section 3 below, the CCA/UNDAF formulation process outlined in the Guidelines assumes that a strategic planning approach will be used to both align UN support with national priorities, and then prioritise that support. The work at the formulation stage is linked with implementation through the results framework and the UN inter-agency groups established to work on UNDAF implementation. During implementation, performance is then supposed to be assessed against baselines, milestones and indicators found in the 'results framework'. Approaches to establishment of inter-agency groups for development and implementation of the UNDAF are described more fully in Box 1.

#### **Box 1: Inter-agency groups and the formulation and implementation of the UNDAF**

Guidelines have consistently suggested that inter-agency working groups be established as part of the UNDAF process, although what these groups have been called has changed over various iterations of the Guidelines and also as some UN country teams have chosen to call them something else.

The choice of how many such groups should be established lies with the country team, but in general practice has been relatively consistent. In most cases, between three and five inter-agency working groups are established, with each group covering one of the broad national priority areas identified in the UNDAF. However, while the main 2010 Guideline document suggests continuation of this approach, the supporting Guidelines for the Action Plan<sup>5</sup> suggest that a group be established for each outcome found in the results matrix. This suggestion appears to have been taken up by the significant number of countries where the intention is to use an Action Plan, which will lead to a significant increase in the number of inter-agency working groups. To save confusion, in this report groups established at both levels are called outcome groups.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A description of what the Action Plan is can be found at section 4.2 of this report.

<sup>6</sup> As discussed later, this actually reflects the fact that many UNCTs have identified outcomes that are in fact national priorities, rather than reflecting the contribution of the UN towards a national priority, which is the definition of an UNDAF outcome suggested in the 2010 Guidelines.

Groups are also normally established to deal with the cross cutting issues of M&E and gender, and in some cases, environment. In addition, an inter-agency group is normally found that deals specifically with HIV/AIDs. These groups dealing with HIV/AIDs have been established as part of the overall approach adopted by UNAIDS, which can be seen as an alternative approach to the UNDAF, for achieving a coherent UN response.

13. Targets or indicators for tracking the added value of the UNDAF process/document have never been specified by either the General Assembly or by the Secretary-General. Moving to the level of the 24 issues identified in the ToRs, there are again no agreed benchmarks established against which to judge performance. Operational definitions of many of the terms used, including alignment and coherence, are also not agreed. One can therefore describe what has happened, subject to the availability of evidence, but the judgment of whether or not this shows effective performance is inevitably somewhat subjective. Being transparent about the basis for judgments made, and the evidence used, is therefore critical in any assessment of performance of the UNDAF.

14. In the absence of agreed benchmarks of success, in this assessment performance is first described against the purposes outlined within the General Assembly resolutions and key reports of the Secretary-General. The twenty four issues identified in the ToRs are not all directly answered in the report, but instead have been used to flag issues that need to be considered in the analysis. Judgment on whether performance has been acceptable has then been based on: (i) assessing whether the basic pre-conditions required for the tools to be effective were in place; and (ii) empirical evidence from the broader management research literature on applying such tools.

15. Central to judging performance has been the drawing on management literature. Why? Because what is included in the UNDAF results framework at the end of the formulation process is not the same as what the UN actually delivers over the period of UNDAF implementation. The results framework agreed and signed between government and the UNCT is actually a statement of what the UN wishes to deliver, subject to resource availability, and therefore a statement of intent.<sup>7</sup> What is actually delivered depends upon the availability of funds (and conditions attached to that funding), changing priorities and events, and actual decisions by the individual agencies with their partners on what support will be programmed. Ideally the assessment would therefore have examined the degree to which the **'intended'** strategy<sup>8</sup> represented in the initial results framework influences the **'realised'** strategy; what actually was done by the end of UNDAF implementation. The tools and approaches suggested in the CCA/UNDAF Guidelines issued to UNCTs by the UNDG would then have been examined for the degree to which they were effective at influencing the **'emergent'** strategy. These concepts are explained in more detail in Box 2 below.

#### **Box 2: Intended, realised and emergent strategies**

How strategy is actually made and the degree to which strategy and strategic planning actually influence what is done has been the subject to intense debate within the management literature since the 1970s. The debate was initially triggered by research and alternative conclusions on the hugely successful entry of Honda into the US motorcycle market. According to one high profile consulting company, the Boston Consulting Group, Honda pursued a rational, analytic approach to designing a strategy based upon exploiting economies of experience and scale to establish an unassailable cost leadership in the world motorcycle market. However, subsequent interviews with Honda managers told a different story: a haphazard approach to entry into the US

<sup>7</sup> UNDAF results frameworks also don't necessarily include all support that the UN wishes to deliver in a country, although with the increased focus on inclusion of the support provided by the non-resident agencies (NRAs), the results frameworks are increasingly comprehensive; at least in terms of intent.

<sup>8</sup> There is a massive literature on the differences between a strategy and a plan, but for the purposes of this discussion they can be treated as effectively meaning the same thing.

market, based on little formal analysis and no clear strategic plan. Honda's subsequent success was as much a surprise to Honda's managers as to anyone.<sup>9</sup>

While the debate continues, the important thing is that in the management literature there is an understanding that for most organisations, strategy is made through a combination of design (such as through strategic planning or designs of the Executive Board and senior management) and emergence (the result of multiple decisions made at all levels of the organisation, but particularly by middle managers). Hence the differentiation between the 'intended' strategy developed under the formal design process and the 'realised' strategy; what actually was done. The degree to which these two are the same depends upon the context in which the organisation operates, and especially the degree to which change in the environment is predictable. The more predictable the environment, the more value there is in using strategic planning approaches to shape operational plans for the medium term. In contexts where the environment is not predictable, 'emergent' strategies based on day to day decisions become more valuable

For any organisation the critical issues therefore are (i) determining the appropriate balance between design and emergence and, (ii) how to guide emergence.

16. UNDAF results matrices are supposed to set out a number of outcomes that reflect the UN's contribution. As such, the pre-defined indicators of UN performance for these outcomes assume that a certain combination of outputs will be delivered. This is the intended strategy and results. As discussed elsewhere in this report, in at least some, and possibly many, cases, the level of actual UN expenditure is up to twice what was indicated in the UNDAF. This suggests that additional outputs are delivered. Delivery of all outputs specified in the UNDAF results framework also depends upon the success of the individual UN agencies at raising the required money, so even when the total spent is in excess of that anticipated, this does not mean that all intended outputs will have been delivered. Finally, interviews suggest that some outputs identified in the results matrix may not be delivered, due to becoming too politically sensitive or because there have been significant changes in the external environment. Thus, by the penultimate year of implementation, it is likely that there will be a mixture of intended outputs which will be delivered or where more than initially intended may have been delivered, intended outputs which are not delivered, and outputs delivered that weren't even in the initial matrix. In other words, there will be a difference between the intended and realised outputs and hence the UN's intended and realised contributions. UNDAF annual reviews and evaluations never systematically set out the difference between the intended and realised strategies and contribution and the reasons why. Nor do they present the evidence of what has been done in a way that would make it easy for an external reviewer to do so. This is also the case for evaluations commissioned by most of the top seven UN agencies by level of operational funding – UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, UNFPA, and WFP.

17. The approach adopted in the assessment was as follows.

18. **Step 1:** Identify, to the extent possible, what the purpose of the UNDAF process was. This was done through review of documentation and discussion with key informants from both within the UN and Member States (see Section 3 below).

19. **Step 2:** Assume that the Guidelines issued by the UN Development Group (UNDG) in 2002, and then revised in 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010, were the major influence on how the concept of the UNDAF was operationalised at country level. Therefore analyse the Guidelines to identify what type of management tool the UNDAF was supposed to be (see Section 4). This analysis showed that the UNDAF was designed to be a strategic planning tool.

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<sup>9</sup> The two views on Honda are captured in two Harvard Business School case studies: Honda [A] Case 384049 (1989) and Honda [B] Case 384050 (1989). Harvard Business School, Boston.

20. **Step 3:** Compile evidence from the full range of data sources in an assessment framework that structured evidence into the five broad categories – national ownership (alignment is subsumed in this category), relevance, contribution to strategic positioning and coherence<sup>10</sup>, efficiency of the process, and whether the UNDAF enhances a results focus.

21. Major sources of evidence used were as follows:

- Forty<sup>11</sup> UNDAF evaluations and reviews commissioned between 2008 and 2011 by the UNCTs. Given that there are UNDAFs or equivalents for 140 plus countries, this meant that evaluations were available from approximately a third of the countries, although the evaluations weren't used as a representative sample. It is also important to note that these evaluations were not managed to provide an independent<sup>12</sup> assessment of performance, except in the case of the evaluation in South Africa, but were generally carried out by independent consultants and intended to provide an impartial<sup>13</sup> assessment of performance.
- Evaluations carried out by the independent evaluation offices of the individual UN agencies to examine whether the UNDAF had had a significant impact on programming decision making by the individual agencies at the country level.
- Results from the following three opinion surveys conducted by DESA as part of the overall exercise. Complete analyses of responses to these surveys and the degree to which they provide credible evidence can be found in separate reports that have been prepared by DESA:
  - Survey of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UNCT members to elicit their opinions on the degree to which the UN is becoming more coherent and coordinated. Responses were received from 78 Resident Coordinators and 449 other UNCT members across 116 countries.
  - Survey of Resident Coordinators in countries that had formulated a new UNDAF in either 2010 or 2011 to examine how they had responded to the revised UNDG UNDAF Guidelines issued in January 2010. Thirty-nine<sup>14</sup> out of the 65 eligible Resident Coordinators responded to this survey.
  - Survey to member-states covering a range of issues covered by the QCPR, including their opinion on the alignment of the UN with government priorities and the utility of the UNDAF. Responses were received from 111 countries and territories, or 74% of all countries and territories that received the questionnaire.

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<sup>10</sup> Both strategic/substantive coherence and coherence in processes

<sup>11</sup> Evaluations included those from the following countries: Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bolivia, Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, Djibouti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Papua New Guinea, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Surinam, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. These include both mid term and final evaluations, although in practice in most cases these have been done using the same basic evaluative approach and, in many cases, whether called a final or mid-term evaluation, have been timed to feed into development of the next UNDAF.

<sup>12</sup> Independence is defined by the UN Evaluation Group as work carried out by a function located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured.

<sup>13</sup> Impartiality is defined by the UN Evaluation Group as *'the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigor, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. In the event that interested parties have different views, these are to be reflected in the evaluation analysis and reporting'*.

<sup>14</sup> Albania, Bangladesh, Barbados & OECS, Belize, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Kosovo, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Sri Lanka Thailand, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

- Field visits by DESA staff or consultants, between early March and mid April 2012, to seven countries - Laos, Thailand, Ethiopia, Peru, Bolivia, Turkey, and Georgia. Short reports were prepared after each of these visits and the contents shared with the RCs to check factual accuracy. To allow freedom of expression on sometimes sensitive issues, these reports will not be published.
- Interviews with UN staff at HQ, regional and country levels (see Annex 2 for those interviewed), using a semi-structured interview protocol.

22. **Step 4:** Analysis was based around use of an assessment framework. This ensured systematic coverage of the questions identified by ECOSOC and in the ToRs. The strength of finding against each question was interpreted according to the nature of the evidence and the triangulation of the evidence. As countries visited and evaluations available were not selected on the basis of statistical representativeness, care has been taken when trying to generalise from these specific cases to experience or performance across all 120 plus countries.

23. **Step 5:** The draft report was checked for factual accuracy by both the individual UN agencies and the UN United Nations Development Operations Co-ordination Office (DOCO).

24. **Step 6:** Judging whether, based on the evidence, the tools and approaches suggested in the Guidelines issued to UNCTs by the UNDG have been effective at allowing governments and the UNCTs to strike the appropriate balance between intended and emergent strategies for achieving the purposes of the UNDAF.

## 2.2 Limitations

25. There are several methodological limitations in this assessment.

26. The major limitation of the assessment was not being able to compare the difference between intended and realised strategies at country level and the degree to which the UNDAF has been an effective process for managing this divergence; beyond noting that interviewees admit that the differences can be substantial. To some extent, this limitation has been addressed by drawing on wider experience in the use of such tools and processes.

27. As shown in Section 3 below, key documents from the General Assembly and Secretary-General do not specify in great detail what the added value to either national stakeholders or the UN of the UNDAF is supposed to be. In other words, what is the added value compared the scenario in which the UN agencies did not carry out a CCA/UNDAF process? What is the definition of coherence or fragmentation? Detailed evidence of individual governments', and others, views on what they really understood the purpose and value the UNDAF process to be and how the approach aligns with how governments work was limited.

28. There is a lack of impartial and independent, (i.e. evaluative) evidence of the performance of UNDAFs designed in response to the 2007, 2009 or 2010 revisions of the Guidelines. UNDAFs are generally designed two years before their implementation starts and then evaluated in their penultimate year of implementation. As most UNDAFs cover a four or five year period, this means that UNDAF evaluations carried out in 2011, for example, were mostly of UNDAFs designed in 2005 or 2006 and following the 2004 Guidelines. This also has other implications. For instance, considerable effort has been made in the past seven years to increase participation of the full range of UN agencies, including the non-resident agencies (NRAs), in the UNDAF process, but evaluative evidence on the effectiveness of this effort is not available and could not be collected as part of this assessment due to time and resource limitations.

29. The UN DESA administered opinion surveys and evidence provided by UN DOCO<sup>15</sup> produced some evidence on what is currently happening across the 120 plus countries which use an UNDAF or equivalent. They also provided some evidence of perceived current performance, although this was neither an independent nor impartial, judgment. Such evidence is also of limited value as gathering evidence of the added value of an UNDAF process in a particular country context requires a case study approach, with careful consultation with the full range of stakeholders involved. Limitations in both time and budget available meant that it was not possible to carry out such detailed case studies under this assessment.

30. The Country Teams are required to apply five programming principles - human rights-based approach (HRBA), gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management and capacity development - which are intended to strengthen the quality and focus of UN responses to national priorities based on the UN system's common values and standards. The effectiveness of the UNDAF as a process for strengthening the use of these principles by the UN agencies was not examined, as the required independent evidence was not already available and carrying out the required analysis as part of this assessment would have required more time than was available.

31. This assessment examines experience across the whole population of programme countries. This has presented a practical challenge in how to treat the eight Delivering as One (DaO) pilots, and the whole DaO initiative, which were concurrently being evaluated by the Independent Evaluation of the DaO but which have clearly influenced the UNDAF approach. This analysis has chosen not to examine experience in the DaO pilots in any depth and therefore provides an incomplete analysis of the implications of the DaO experience for the future development of the UNDAF.

32. Finally, conclusions and recommendations of this study must be reviewed within the context of conclusions and recommendations from other studies that have been commissioned in preparation for the QCPR that deal with issues that overlap with the UNDAF approach. Studies of particular importance include the study of the role of the Resident Coordinator and the study of UN experience in transition contexts.

### **3. What is supposed to be the purpose and added value of the UNDAF?**

#### **3.1 Some historical context**

33. The challenge of ensuring coherence in the governance and functioning of the UN has been a central issue for at least 45 years. To a certain extent, the current UNDG and tools such as the UNDAF are responding to the same set of problems noted in 1969 by Sir Robert Jackson in his *Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*<sup>16</sup>. As the famous introduction stated:

*“This is my greatest worry and it is shared by every responsible man and woman I have met, both within and without the system. Governments created this machine - which over the years has grown into probably the most complex organization in the world. ... Briefly, it is built up of the administrative structures of the United Nations and its component parts, ....and of about a dozen Specialized Agencies. In theory, it is under the control of about thirty separate governing bodies .... At the headquarters level, there is ....no central co-ordinating organization which could exercise effective control. Below headquarters, the administrative tentacles thrust downward into an extraordinary complex of regional and sub-regional offices, and finally extend into field offices in over ninety developing countries. .... Who*

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<sup>15</sup> Mainly based on survey responses from Resident Coordinators used in preparation of the 2011 Resident Coordinators Annual Report (RCAR).

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, R. G. A. (1969) *A study of the capacity of the United Nations development system*. Published by the UN, Geneva.

*controls this 'machine'? So far the evidence shows that governments do not, and also that the machine is incapable of intelligently controlling itself. This is not because it lacks intelligent and capable officials, but because it is so organized that managerial direction is impossible. In other words, the machine as a whole has become unmanageable in the strictest sense of the word. As a result, it is becoming slower and more unwieldy, like some prehistoric monster."*

34. In a United Nations system, made up of independent agencies, and where the United Nations Secretary-General is first among equals, coordination cannot take place through the exercise of power, but rather through processes of consensus building.<sup>17</sup> Jackson's main focus of attention was on the management and accountability of the system and his proposed solution was to draw on the experience of governments and establish an entity with the power to ensure coordination. This did not happen<sup>18</sup>. The 'Consensus', adopted in 1972, instead placed UNDP in the role of coordinator, but preserved the independent role of the specialized agencies. It did make UNDP the main source of funding for technical cooperation, but this solution soon unravelled, due to the financial crisis of the UN in the mid-1970s.

### **3.2 Genesis of the UNDAF**

35. The UNDAF was not specifically developed in response to a request from the Member States, but rather as part of a wide-ranging series of proposals for reform launched by the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 1997.<sup>19</sup> His report entitled "*Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*" (A/51/950), and presented on 16 July 1997 to the United Nations General Assembly, outlined proposals for a comprehensive reform process in the United Nations. It still remains one of the only documents to outline the major rationale for reform of the UN's operational activities. These reforms sought to establish a new leadership and management structure, and through it, a culture leading to a greater unity of purpose, coherence of effort and capacity to respond by the UN agencies against the goals expressed in the major international conferences; last but not least in the Millennium Declaration. Key outcomes of the 1997 reform process included strengthening United Nations operations at the country, and in particular improving policy and programme coherence by creation of:

- The United Nations Development Assistance Framework<sup>20</sup>;
- Moves to enhance harmonization of procedures;
- Strengthening of the resident coordinator system; and
- Rationalization of administrative processes and services.

36. The intended role of the UNDAF was outlined under Action 10 of the Secretary-General's report, which stated that "*In order to achieve goal-orientated collaboration, programmatic coherence and mutual reinforcement, the United Nations programmes of assistance will be formulated and presented as part of a single United Nations Development Assistance Framework with common objectives and time-frame. Programme funds managed by each of the programmes and funds will be included in the document, but remain clearly identifiable. Preparation would entail*

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<sup>17</sup> There were a large number of other reform proposals over the period between 1966 and 1997, described by Inspector Doris Bertrand in the 2005 JIU Report, Some Measures to Improve Overall Performance of the United Nations System at the Country Level, Part I A Short History of United Nations Reform in Development (JIU/REP/2005/2 (Part I)). She noted that the historical memory of the UN system on these proposals was limited.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy, C. N (2006) *The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way?* Cambridge University Press

<sup>19</sup> UN (1997) *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform* Report of the Secretary-General for the 51<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly. July (A/51/950)

<sup>20</sup> The first CCA guidelines came out in 1996.

*collaborative programming and close consultation with Governments, including compatibility with country strategy notes wherever they exist."*

37. It is important to note that when introduced in 1997, the UNDAF was a tool to be used by the UN Funds and Programmes – UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP. At this point, the specialized agencies were not expected to participate in the process. Their significant involvement really started in response to the 2001 TCPR resolution calling for inclusion of the specialized agencies under the UNDAF process.

38. The rationale for the UNDAF and what its added value should be is identified earlier in the 1997 document, where the Secretary-General's analysis is as follows:

*148. The diversity, distinctiveness and specialized focus of the United Nations funds and programmes involved in development operations provide important benefits to the United Nations and to developing countries. The reform process is designed to maintain and reinforce the distinctive nature of these entities while seeking to facilitate their functioning in a more unified, cooperative and coherent framework as members of the United Nations family.*

*149. With the increasing realisation that effective development requires a more holistic approach, there has been a tendency for each sectoral organization to broaden its activities to areas which overlap with others. This is a phenomenon witnessed in the case of all organizations of the system. Overlap of this type has increased the need for cooperation and coordination among the organizations concerned and compounded the problems created by the fragmentation of existing structures. At the country level, this fragmentation and overlap make it difficult for the United Nations to respond to the needs of countries in a consistent, coherent and cost-effective manner.*

*150. Fragmentation and overlap compound the problem of the decreasing relative size of United Nations operational activities resources in companion with other financial flows. Together, the expenditures of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA in 1994-95 amounted to just US\$ 4,706 million covering 135 programme countries. Despite the grant nature of this assistance, it remains a relatively limited amount. The way in which these resources are deployed, leveraged and managed is therefore critical to their effectiveness and impact.*

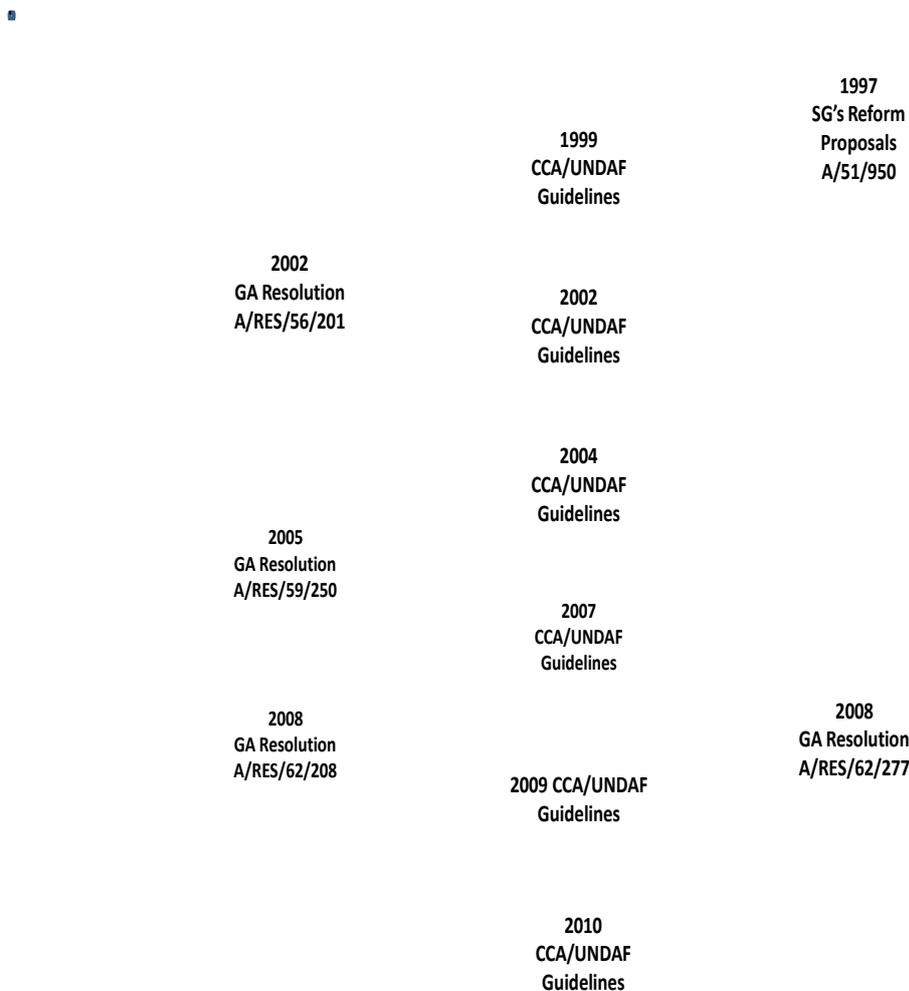
*151. The General Assembly, beginning at its forty-fourth session, adopted a series of resolutions which have sought to address these issues. While stressing that the mandates of funds and programmes should be respected and enhanced, it emphasized that the "separate funds and programmes and specialized agencies must make a commitment to work together to integrate assistance provided by the United Nations system into the development process of the recipient countries in a fully coordinated manner". It has "stressed that coordination in funding arrangements and procedures should maximize complementarities and avoid duplication so as to increase the positive impact of development cooperation activities on the development of developing countries". The General Assembly has also emphasized that "the United Nations system at the country level should be structured and composed in such a way that it corresponds to ongoing and projected cooperation programmes rather than to the institutional structure of the United Nations system".*

### **3.3 What has driven development of the UNDAF?**

39. Since its introduction in 1997, development of the UNDAF at country level has mainly been shaped by Guidelines. These were first issued in 1997, and then revised versions were issued by the

UNDG in 1999, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010. The strategic focus of these Guidelines has been influenced by resolutions of the General Assembly related to the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews in 2001, 2004 and 2007 and the 2005 analysis presented on system-wide coherence as shown below in Figure 1. The Guidelines have also been continually revised in response to new international agreements covering a wide range of substantive issues and to reflect substantive concerns of both individual UN agencies and the UNDG, but these changes are not the major focus of this analysis.

**Figure 1: The timeline for how Guidelines for the UNDAF have been influenced by General Assembly resolutions**



40. As high-lighted in Figure 1 there is a lag between relevant resolutions from the General Assembly, their incorporation in UNDG Guidelines, and then incorporation by the UNCTs into the UNDAFs at country level. This lag has further been accentuated by the fact that once an UNDAF is agreed, it is rare that it is changed to any great degree during implementation. This means that there will still, in 2012, be a significant number of UNDAFs that were designed in response to the Guidelines issued by the UNDG in 2007. These UNDAFs therefore will not have responded to the General Assembly Resolutions 62/208, issued in response to the 2007 TCPR.

### 3.4 Purpose of the UNDAF as identified by the Member States

41. A number of resolutions issued by the General Assembly specifically identify the purposes of the UNDAF, and to some degree, how it should be aligned with national systems. These have not changed significantly over time and therefore in this analysis, the purposes identified in the resolutions of the General Assembly in response to TCPR 2007 are set out below (A/RES/62/208). Key paragraphs in this document are:

*86. Underscores that the ownership, leadership and full participation of national authorities in the preparation and development of all planning and programming documents of the United Nations development system, including the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, are key to guaranteeing that they respond to the national development plans and strategies, and requests the United Nations development system to use the Framework and its results matrix, where applicable and with the agreement of the programme country, as the common programming tool for country-level contributions of the funds and programmes towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, to be fully endorsed and countersigned by the national authorities;*

*87. Recalls the potential of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and its results matrix as the collective, coherent and integrated programming and monitoring framework for the operations of the United Nations development system at the country level, bringing increased opportunities for joint initiatives, including joint programming, and urges the United Nations development system to fully utilize such opportunities in the interest of enhancing aid efficiency and aid effectiveness;*

*88. Emphasizes, in this regard, that planning and programming frameworks of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, need to be fully aligned with national development planning cycles, whenever possible, and that they should make use of and strengthen national capacities and mechanisms;*

*90. Recognizes the central role of resident coordinators in making possible the coordination of United Nations operational activities for development at the country level to improve the effectiveness of their response to the national development priorities of programme countries, including through appropriate resources and accountability;*

*91. Reaffirms that the resident coordinator system, within the framework of national ownership, has a key role to play in the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations system at the country level, including in the formulation of the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and is a key instrument for the efficient and effective coordination of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system;*

42. Examination of the resolutions suggests, at least in broad terms, little divergence between the views of the Member States and those expressed by the Secretary-General in his 1997 reform agenda. However, in practice, the lack of clear and agreed definitions of what many of the terms used means that there is ample scope for differing understandings of what the resolutions mean in operational terms.

### **3.5 Systems wide coherence and the UNDAF**

43. The Secretary-General's High Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment delivered a 2006 report "Delivering as One" to the General Assembly with far-reaching proposals for a more unified, coherent UN structure at the country level. This report triggered the piloting of the Delivering as One (DaO) reform initiative. It does not specifically discuss how the UNDAF should fit into the DaO approach, although this is implicit in its definition of the One Programme, as being:

- Country owned and signed off by Government, responsive to the national development framework, strategy and vision, including the internationally agreed development goals.
- Building on the United Nations country team's common country assessment or national analysis and reflecting the United Nations added value in the specific country context.
- Strategic, focused and results-based, with clear outcomes and priorities, while leaving flexibility to reallocate resources to changes in priorities.
- Drawing on all United Nations services and expertise, including those of non-resident agencies, in order to effectively deliver a multisectoral approach to development (with due attention to crosscutting issues).

44. The DaO agenda has had significant influence on how the UNDAF as a tool has developed; in particular in what have been termed the 21 self-starter countries. However, review of the plans for development of UNDAFs in 2010 and 2011 also reveals that a number of countries beyond the eight pilots and 21 self-starters have attempted to implement aspects of the DaO reform agenda.

### **3.6 The overall purpose of the UNDAF and what is different from before the UNDAF**

45. Combining evidence from across the sources discussed above, key identified purposes of the UNDAF include:

- i. Supporting the alignment of UN support with national development priorities;
- ii. The promotion of the Millennium Declaration as the global context for national plans and programmes and of the Millennium Development Goals as benchmarks for progress in the implementation of those plans and programmes.
- iii. The promotion of coherence in the UN system's operations. This is variously understood to mean the UN speaking with one voice and/or creating one unified UN entity with which governments can engage when dealing with strategic issues, such as alignment with national priorities. This has become an increasingly important purpose of the UNDAF;
- iv. The reduction of duplication of programmed support across the UN agencies;
- v. The reduction of transaction costs on the part of both the government and the UN system when programming support; and
- vi. Enhancing the results focus of the UN at country level.

46. The UNDAF is then supposed to deliver these through:

- The synchronization of the programme cycles of the national government and of as many agencies in the UN system as possible;
- The participation of national governments and other national stakeholders in the CCA/UNDAF process and their "ownership" of the products;
- Taking a strategic planning approach to link the common situational analysis and analysis of the UN's comparative advantage with decisions on where the UN's support would be best focused and most relevant; and

- The broadest possible participation of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional UN offices in the UNDAF process.

47. What is not comprehensively set out in the documentation is how the UNDAF approach is expected to add value against these purposes. This is only set out, to a limited extent, in the Guidelines. However, the UNDAF introduced three changes that are important:

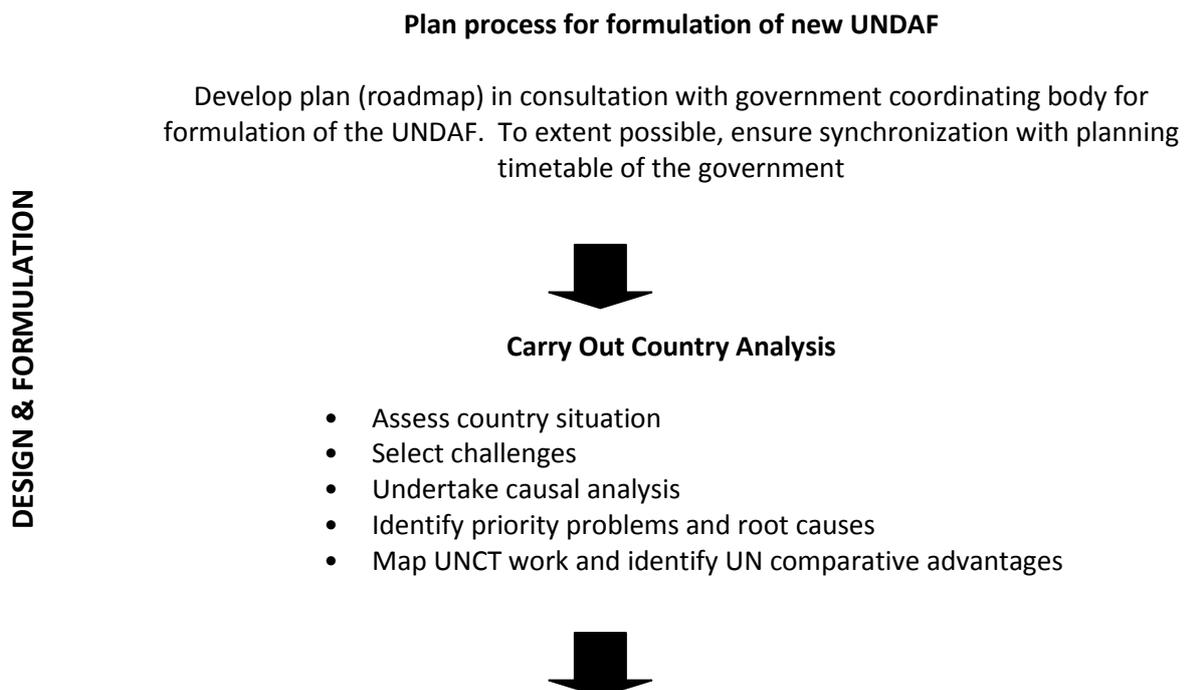
- For the first time, the UNDAF introduced a structured process that allowed engagement between the centre of government and the whole of the UN. Before introduction of the UNDAF process, most relationships were between the individual UN agencies and particular line ministries. Therefore it provides a unique platform for policy discussion among UN agencies with government on selection of strategic priorities and high-level areas to support.
- Whilst UN agencies had cooperated with each other before introduction of the UNDAF, the UNDAF process provided a structured process in which the UN agencies could talk to each other as a group.
- Finally, the UNDAF introduced a single document that identified most of what the UN as a whole was working on in a particular country.

## 4. The UNDAF process – What is the current situation?

### 4.1 What's expected in the 2010 Guidelines

47. The purposes of the UNDAF have not changed significantly over time. But, based on experience and lessons learned and views expressed by both the General Assembly and UNDG, the approach to development and use of the UNDAF have evolved over time. The current steps in the UNDAF process, as outlined in the 2010 Guidelines, are shown in Figure 2 below. A fuller explanation of each step can be found at Annex 4 Table 1. An analysis of how the Guidelines respond to the purposes of the UNDAF can be found at Annex 4, Table 4.

Figure 2: Steps in the UNDAF process



## Do Strategic Planning

- Carry out strategic prioritisation exercise
- Select priorities and outcomes
- Develop UNDAF Result Matrix
- Draft Document Narrative
- Develop UNDAF Action Plan (if using)
- Develop M&E Plan
- Develop and get approval for Country Programmes from UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA Executive Boards
- Government and UNCT sign UNDAF



## Monitor And Evaluate Progress

- UNDAF Annual Reviews
- UNDAF Progress Report
- UNDAF Evaluation

IMPLEMENTATION

49. Detailed analysis of the 2010 Guidelines indeed confirms that the UNDAF is basically a strategic planning approach (see Annex 4, Table 2), including all of the steps expected in such a process. The only way in which the approach suggested deviates from the norm is in terms of who approves the UNDAF, where it is not explicitly identified who approves the UNDAF plan and under what conditions (the UNDAF is signed by both the Government and the UNCT members, which de facto acts as the approval process).

50. We also see that the approach includes the classical strategic planning focus on basing the plan on a forecast of the future (see Annex 4, Table 3). In the case of the UNDAF in terms of both what demand is and therefore what the UNCT will deliver and the proposed budget. While unstated, the results framework and how it is supposed to be used, essentially assume that the UN's support for the period of implementation can be identified and included in the results matrix developed at the conclusion of the formulation process. Survey responses by Resident Coordinators (RCs) in countries where an UNDAF was formulated in 2010 or 2011 also tend to confirm that the UNDAF formulation process is, in practice, based on forecasting the future. When asked whether during the UNDAF formulation process:

- The UNCT were expected to forecast what partners would require from the UN for the period of the UNDAF, 35 out of the 39 RCs either strongly or somewhat agreed that this was what happened. Only four RCs somewhat disagreed that this was what they did.
- The UNCT were expected to forecast what funding the UN would get for the period of the UNDAF during the UNDAF formulation process, 33 out of the 39 RCs either strongly or somewhat agreed that this was what happened. Three somewhat disagreed that this was what happened and a further three strongly disagreed.

## 4.2 Responses to the flexibility in the 2010 Guidelines

51. The 2007 Guidelines introduced new flexibility in terms of the level and type of analysis that could be done as part of the country analysis and, while flexibility on the level of specification of results that might be included in the UNDAF document was introduced in the 2009 Guidelines. Table 1 shows how this flexibility has been used by the majority of UNCTs that developed an UNDAF in either 2010 or 2011.<sup>21</sup> It clearly suggests that there is now significant diversity in how an UNDAF is formulated and then, presumably, implemented across countries. However, in developing this analysis, it has also become clear that the options identified in the Guidelines are not mutually exclusive. For example, in several cases, UNCTs both developed an Action Plan and included both outcomes and outputs in the UNDAF results matrix.

**Table 1: Number of UNCTs that developed UNDAFs in 2010 and 2011 by how they interpreted the flexibility offered in the 2010 Guidelines<sup>22</sup>**

Level of specification of results in the UNDAF matrix	Approach to analysis adopted			
	UNCT participated in government-led analytical work and used of government analysis	UNCT carried out complementary UN-supported analytical work, with a focus on gaps in the existing national analysis	UNCT carried out full CCA	Total
<b>Outcomes only (outputs/activities specified in separate UN Action Plan<sup>23</sup>)</b>	5 Mozambique, Rwanda, Philippines, Lesotho, Morocco	16 Albania, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Ghana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Kosovo, Myanmar, Honduras, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Egypt, Vietnam	2 Central African Republic, Pacific	23
<b>Outcomes only (outputs/activities specified in agency documentation)</b>	1 Burkina Faso,	13 Costa Rica, Peru, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, Bolivia, Papua New Guinea, Burundi	3 Equatorial Guinea, Guinea, Mongolia	17
<b>Outcomes and outputs specified in matrix (pre 2009 UNDAF approach)</b>	0	5 Dominican Republic, Belize, Barbados, Guyana, Haiti	3 The Gambia, Lebanon, Nepal	8
<b>Total</b>	6	34	9	48

52. In broad terms, there appears to be a move away from doing the full Common Country Analysis. Instead, in some countries, the UNDAF formulation process now seems to be firmly

<sup>21</sup> This table shows the status in 48 of the approximately 65 countries where an UNDAF was developed during 2010 or 2011. Response rates from the Latin America and Caribbean and Arab regions were relatively poor. Please note that for the purposes of this analysis the Pacific UNDAF, which covers 13 countries in the South Pacific and is administered by the UN country teams based in Fiji and Samoa, is treated as if it were for one country.

<sup>22</sup> Based on responses from the Resident Coordinator survey, Part B administered by UNDESA and material available with the Regional UNDG teams.

<sup>23</sup> The UNDAF Action Plan is a single operational document for the coordinated implementation of the UNDAF. For each outcome, the UNDAF Action Plan reflects the outputs and key actions. The UNDAF Action Plan does not replace legal frameworks for cooperation or any partnership agreement or project document between a UN system agency and a partner. However, it should replace the CPAPs used by some agencies, thus ensuring a partnership agreement with the government on the basis of UNDAF. While the UNDAF Action Plan is voluntary, it is an operational tool legally cleared by the headquarters of all UN agencies.

embedded in the governments' own strategic planning process. In the majority of cases, the UNDAF formulation process remains a process run parallel with that of the government and UNCTs prioritise their analytical contribution. Examining this option in more detail does suggest that there has been significant experimentation in how to approach this. For example:

*In Egypt, instead of Common Country Assessment (CCA), the UN Resident Coordinator brokered an agreement between Government and development partners (inc. United Nations System) to support a team of Egyptian social scientists to prepare the study "Situation Analysis: Key Development Challenges Facing Egypt". This study was based on government documents and a wide variety of studies provided by national and international development partners (including the UN system), and numerous meetings with these partners (including with the UNCT). The end result was a high-quality, nationally owned study (which was endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers in July 2010) that identifies the key development challenges facing Egypt over the next 5-10 years. The way it was carried out allowed for quite a high degree of national participation. This study also replaced the UN CCA, which saved the UN and Government staff time and money.*

53. There has also been significant divergence in how UNCTs have sought to link UNDAF formulation with UNDAF implementation. Only nine of the forty-eight UNCTs identified in Table 1 are including outcomes and outputs in the UNDAF results matrix, which was common practice in the past. In these cases, the results framework therefore remains the major tool linking formulation and implementation. Instead, UNCTs appear to be mostly opting for using the Action Plan or adopting what is termed the UNDAF 'light' approach.

54. Under the UNDAF light approach, outcomes are still identified in the UNDAF document, but not the outputs. Whether what is decided in the formulation process is then acted upon during implementation greatly relies on ensuring a strong linkage into agency level programming processes. In some countries where the UNDAF light process has been introduced there is evidence of the UNCT moving to strengthen this linkage, such as in Papua New Guinea, although calling the process light in such countries would be wrong, as the processes used have made significant demands on the time and resources of the UNCTs involved. As discussed below in Section 5, this strong linkage cannot however be assumed and, in fact, there is little evidence from past UNDAFs of a strong and clear effect of the UNDAF on on-going agency level programming decision-making. While too early to tell, the fear expressed by several interviewees at regional and headquarters level was that UNDAF light countries are those in which the UNCTs have decided not to prioritise UN level coherence and integration. This fear would appear justified in at least some countries, as illustrated in the response below from the RC in one such UNDAF light country:

*"Agencies already had operations in the country. The UNDAF only helped document them. And besides since we signed the UNDAF, we have learned of other UN agencies that have programmes in the country which had not participated in the UNDAF....Messages from the UNDG and from Agencies are different. On paper it looks as if we are tasked and obliged to work together. But participate in agency reps meetings, and you will see where the priority is and how much attention is (is not) paid to working together".*

55. A significant number of UNCTs have opted to use an Action Plan. This approach draws on experience from the Rwanda and Tanzania DaO pilots. In UNDG's Guidance, the Action Plan is described thus - *The UNDAF is a strategic programme framework and does not specify details of implementation of programme actions; as such the UNDAF alone cannot ensure coherent and comprehensive operationalization. An UNDAF Action Plan reduces the risk that UN system agencies' programmes become fragmented, and together with the UNDAF it provides the opportunity for*

government to determine how UN system agencies will best support the achievement of national development priorities. It therefore complements the UNDAF by setting out, in a single operational document, "how" the UN system agencies will work with national partners and each other to achieve the results identified in the UNDAF. It therefore focuses on resource requirements and indicative resource commitments, governance structures, management and implementation strategies, and monitoring and evaluation. It also gives further detail of how programme results will be delivered, outlining how the UN system agencies organize themselves and work with government and other national partners to deliver those results.<sup>24</sup>

56. Table 2, based on responses from the RC survey and input from the Regional UNDG Teams, analyses the extent to which the conditions found in Rwanda, and assumed in the 2010 Guidelines, are found in other countries where the Action Plan approach is being implemented. The main conclusion is that there will be significant variation in how the Action Plan approach is implemented across countries, and therefore, the probable benefits.

**Table 2: Analysis of conditions in place for countries where an Action Plan has been developed**

Country	Government will have the lead role in prioritizing on an annual basis	The CPAPs of the individual agencies will be subsumed into a single document	A single authority will sign off all changes in the Action Plan and the work of the individual agencies.	Regular and substantial voice and participation of CSO and private sector representatives in the government led prioritisation process ensured
Albania	Y	Y	N	N
Bangladesh	N	Y	N	N
Cape Verde	Y	N	Y	Y
CAR	Y	Y	N	N
DRC	N	N	N	N
Ethiopia	Y	N	Y	N
Fiji	Y	Y	N	N
Gabon	N	N	Y	Y
Ghana	Y	Y	N	N
Guinea-Bissau	Y	Y	Y	N
Indonesia	Y	N	N	N
Kosovo	Y	N	N	N
Lao PDR	N	Y	Y	N
Lesotho	Y	Y	Y	Y
Morocco	Y	Y	N	Y
Mozambique	Y	Y	Y	Y
Myanmar	N	N	N	Y
Philippines	Y	Y	Y	Y
Rwanda	Y	Y	Y	Y
Thailand	N	Y	Y	N

Y = Yes, N=No, P=Under consideration

### 4.3 Inclusion

57. When initially launched in 1997, the UNDAF only covered the work of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP. In response to the 2002 TCPR resolution, the scope was expanded to cover all UN

<sup>24</sup> UNDG (2010) UNDAF Action Plan Guidance Note. UNDG, January 2010

agencies, with the expansion really starting from 2004 UNDAFs onwards. Evidence from the survey indicates that in recently completed UNDAFs, the average number of agencies included in the UNDAFs averaged 16. Whether this represents an increase in the number of agencies included compared with UNDAFs from the mid 2000s was not examined due to a lack of time.

#### 4.4 What the UN actually delivers at country level – an emergent strategy

58. Before examining the results, it is necessary to remind people that what is included in the UNDAF results framework at the end of the formulation process, the intended strategy, is not necessarily the same as what the UN actually delivers over the period of UNDAF implementation, the realised strategy. What will actually be delivered will depend upon the availability of funds (and conditions attached to that funding), changing priorities and events, and actual decisions by the individual agencies with their partners on what support will be programmed. All of these are part of the emergent strategy, which drives what the UN actually does.

59. For the UN, a major additional factor in the ‘emergent’ strategy is the funding gap and how it is bridged. These gaps are clearly illustrated in Table 3 below, which shows the financial situation at the start of implementation for the nine countries that were visited as part of the QCPR analytical process and a number of others that have recently completed Action Plans. It is important to note that the percentage of funds secured at the start of implementation normally reflects a mixture of annual or biannual pledging or assessed contributions from member countries (core/regular/assessed funds) but also less secure budgetary resources (earmarked non-core/extra budgetary resources) of UN system agencies.

**Table 3: The extent to which a number of recently developed UNDAF programmes were fully funded at completion of the formulation process**

Country	Estimated total resources required to deliver the UNDAF (US\$million)	Percentage of funds secured at start of implementation	Percentage resource gap
Bangladesh	1,765	40%	60%
Ethiopia	2,623	34%	66%
Ghana	531	56%	44%
Lao PDR	327	33%	67%
Maldives	41	37%	63%
Papua New Guinea	190	66%	34%
Philippines	190	66%	34%
Uruguay	178	61%	39%

60. Given the funding gaps, how the funding gap is filled becomes an important aspect of the emergent strategy. The more that resource mobilisation is driven by filling the specific gaps identified during the planning phase of the UNDAF, the more that the UNDAF can be seen as a process that helps ensure that the gap between the intended and realised strategies is small. Within this context, evidence suggests that initial estimates of the UN budget over the period of an UNDAF are often under-estimates of the amounts actually raised. This was noted in a few of the UNDAF evaluations, such as that in Chile and also found in the Secretary-General’s ‘*Analysis of the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2009*’.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> UN (2011) *Analysis of the funding of operational activities for development of the United Nations system for 2009*. Report of the Secretary-General. A/66/79–E/2011/107. May 2011

61. In terms of the utility of the One Fund approach, experience appears to be mixed, and it is expected that this issue will be discussed in detail in the *'Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from Delivering as One'*. Elsewhere, only limited evidence was collected as part of this assessment process, but what evidence was collected suggests that experience has been disappointing. For instance, in two of the countries visited, a One Fund had been established for about a year, but had only attracted very limited funding from one donor in each country and there was little reported interest from the other to contribute – this in countries with a large number of bilateral donors. In one of these cases, the funds provided had been earmarked for use in one of the three pillars in the UNDAF. In the case of countries where no One Fund is in place, the evidence is again mixed on the degree to which there is a specific focus on raising funds to fill the specific resource gaps in the UNDAF. On the one hand, according to the survey responses nearly all RCs see the UNDAF as a valuable tool for resource mobilisation, which implies that there is a focus on filling the resource gaps. On the other hand, individual agencies retain the right to continue to raise funding independently of each other and responses from the UNCT members to the survey suggest, perhaps unfortunately, that agencies remain locked in competition for funding, as shown (Table 4). A behavioural pattern confirmed in most interviews as well.

**Table 4: UNCT members' opinions on whether UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding**

Do UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding?	Percentage of responses from:		
	Resident Coordinators (n=75)	Other UNCT members (n=434)	Total (n =509)
Yes	79%	79%	79%
No	21%	21%	21%

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Alignment and ownership

#### 5.1.1 National ownership and leadership of the UNDAF process and framework

62. Interviews with selected Resident Coordinators identify a number of recently formulated UNDAF's for which the governments had taken ownership of the formulation process, although there was variation in the degree to which governments wanted to take an active leadership role in the process. Examples include Ethiopia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Mozambique, Thailand and Turkey. Comments provided by UN staff under the surveys also identified strong government ownership and leadership of formulation processes in a number of other instances. Across the seven countries visited, government officials in several cases also stated that they believed that the government had ownership of the UNDAF formulation process and had played a leadership role that they were comfortable with. Examples included:

#### Bolivia

*The Ministry of Planning was very clear in expressing its full ownership of UNDAF (2013-2017). From the start of the formulation process, there was a clear agreement with RC/UNCT that the UN would undertake all work and that government would participate and approve content at key intervals in formulation process. The objective was to keep demand on government's time and resources to the essential minimum, and to make the formulation process as quick, simple and uncomplicated as possible (UNDAF was formulated between April and December 2011). According to Minister of Planning, there were extensive discussions across government ministries and sectors on the priorities that ultimately are*

*reflected in the UNDAF. The Ministry of Planning had an internal consultative mechanism in place that allowed ministries and sectors to provide input to formulation process that was carried out by UN system. At the Strategic Planning Workshop, six ministers participated full time in the proceedings and had direct input to the final outcomes. Also UNDAF was shared with all governors, including two from opposition government, and no objections were presented to draft document.*

## Ethiopia

*The Government is a strong believer in the DaO approach. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) therefore established a steering committee consisting of the Government, three bilateral donors and UN RC to guide the UN UNDAF and UNDAF Action Plan processes. The Steering Committee worked closely with UN throughout the entire process to ensure proper harmonization with government plans and that the planning periods would be the same. As far as the UNDAF is concerned, there is full government ownership. The Government's view is that the planning process has been successful.*

*MOFED noted that the government itself provides 75% of the funding for its development plan, and it is expected that all donors will fit properly into the plan. Most large donors provide pooled funding with various steering committees etc used to ensure management and accountability. The exception is the UN, which does not pool its resources with everybody else. Thus, while the UNDAF is coordinated, government is concerned with the multiple business practices that apply at operational stage*

## Lao PDR

*At the start of planning the UNDAF formulation process, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) stated that the Government wanted a simplified process compared with previous UNDAF process. They wanted a process where UN did the work and government validated the analysis and decisions. At the end of formulation, Government ownership of the UNDAF and Action Plan is probably limited to a few people, mainly in coordination function of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the main champion within the Ministry has just moved on. At line ministry level, government officials know of the UNDAF but can't identify how it affects their relationship with the UN. Government officials do however think that an increased focus on aid effectiveness, and changes such as HACT and National Implementation have increased government ownership.*

63. As indicated in Table 1 above and in Section 5.1.3, in most cases, strong government ownership appears associated with situations in which the UNDAF formulation process, to varying degrees, has been embedded in the government led national strategic planning process. Examples include the DaO pilot countries<sup>26</sup> and some of the 21 self-starters but also others that have adopted aspects of the DaO approach, such as the Action Plan. However, the fact that not all governments will have the lead role in prioritizing support on an annual basis for countries where an Action Plan<sup>27</sup> is being operationalised (see Table 2 above) suggests that even under the DaO type scenario, the level of government engagement and leadership can still vary. This variation in the level of government leadership is also clearly suggested by the approach to country analysis found in many countries where an UNDAF has recently been formulated.

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<sup>26</sup> The 'Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from Delivering as One' may provide more evidence of this for the eight pilots.

<sup>27</sup> To date, the Action Plan concept is the most significant operational innovation to cross from the experience of the pilots into practice across the wider population of programme countries.

Evidence from the UNDAF evaluations suggests that even when there is strong government ownership during the formulation process, this does not continue into implementation. In fact, around half of the 40 evaluations explicitly commented on the lack of such leadership and ownership. Experience documented in the Jamaica (2007-2011 UNDAF)<sup>28</sup>, Egypt (2008-2012 UNDAF)<sup>29</sup> and Bangladesh (2006-2011 UNDAF)<sup>30</sup> UNDAF evaluations illustrate this issue. In all three cases, strong government involvement, led by the centre of government, in formulation of the UNDAF was followed by little engagement, principally by the sector ministries, in monitoring UNDAF implementation.

#### Example 1: Jamaica

*“ Despite the fact that the UNDAF is perceived as relevant by most actors, the ownership of the UNDAF by the Government – and other actors – seems to be very limited. A number of interviewees stressed this issue as a key problem. The Government and national entities were involved in the UNDAF preparation process. The UNDAF Results Matrix has set forth the mobilization of a number of ministries towards specific outputs, as well as CSOs and NGOs. It should be noted, however, that the Government does not seem to be sufficiently involved in the implementation and monitoring of the UNDAF”.*

#### Example 2: Egypt

*The review team encountered a certain level of frustration expressed about the Government not being in the driver’s seat, and not delivering its contribution at the level it should. This impression was shared by some high level Government officials, UN entities, and development partners. Possible hypotheses explaining this situation range from lack of time of senior officials overburdened with many assignments. There is insufficient involvement of appropriate staff, language problems, and a level of expertise that is sometimes problematic. UNDAF is not being prioritised, and there is a lack of understanding of the importance of UNDAF. The Ministry of Cooperation had suggested that the Outcome Task Forces be chaired by the UN during year one, and by the Government as of year two. This would serve as a tangible transition of ownership of the UNDAF. The review shows a situation where the participation of the Government falls short from showing a strong Government ownership in the UNDAF process.” ()*

#### Example 3: Bangladesh

*“ ... there has been limited communication and advocacy work around the UNDAF, with different ministries and national institutions, which also suffer from a quick rotation turnover. This has resulted in limited buy-in and ownership from the Government of Bangladesh in general.”*

Whether greater familiarity with the UNDAF process by both the UNCT and governments, and at least in some cases, greater use of government systems, will address this issue is open to question. However, if use of government systems is the major driver of government ownership, it should be

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<sup>28</sup> Gordon-Somers. T. (2010) Jamaica United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2007-2011. Evaluation Report prepared for the RCO. June 2010

<sup>29</sup> Privat, C. & J.S. Quesnel. *Egypt United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2007-2011)*. Mid-Term Review. Report prepared for the Egypt RCO, July 2009

<sup>30</sup> Privat, C. (2010) United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Bangladesh (2006-2011) - An Evaluation. Report prepared for the Bangladesh RCO, 1 Nov 2010

noted that in nearly all cases, even where the DaO approach is being used, implementation of the UNDAF is not managed through government systems.

64. In many cases, comments from staff in the surveys show that UN staff believe that the government neither leads the UNDAF formulation process nor owns the resulting UNDAF document. This finding was replicated across the UNDAF evaluations reviewed. This may be because the UNDAF process as outlined in the Guidelines and described earlier in Figure 2, is basically a UN led and managed process. Governments may be consulted at key points in the process – in agreeing the plan for developing the UNDAF, use of evidence developed by the UN to address gaps in the government’s analysis, and in the strategic prioritisation process – but their major role is to respond when consulted. In such cases, the evidence suggests a certain degree of ambiguity on the part of some governments over their role in the UNDAF formulation and implementation processes.

65. The evaluations identified a number of further reasons for the lack of government ownership. In many such cases, the evaluations found that governments had little real interest in engaging with the UNDAF process or assuming a leadership role, when so invited. In Honduras, the UNDAF evaluation<sup>31</sup> suggested that a lack of clear leadership from the highest levels in Government, combined with a lack of common understanding between Government and the UNCT on the purpose of the 2007-2011 UNDAF had led to a lack of ownership. This then combined with differing people being involved from the Government side in the formulation and the implementation of the UNDAF accentuated the lack of ownership. In other countries, sectoral ministries preferred to maintain their traditional bilateral relationships with particular UN agencies and were therefore uninterested in the UNDAF process. In other cases, governments explicitly stated that they did not have the necessary capacity to assume a leading role. The joint evaluation by the Government of South Africa and the UN Evaluation Group<sup>32</sup> provides a good example from the Government’s perspective on the issue of government ownership.

*‘The UN sometimes sends mixed messages about ownership of the UNDAF and programmes within it. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which South Africa was actively involved in, refers to country ownership of the UNDAF. But on a practical level, it has been the UN that is the primary driver of UNDAF content in South Africa. The relevance of the UNDAF as the main mechanism of UN-South Africa cooperation can therefore be called into question, for several reasons: The UNDAF has not been able to ensure high-level communication and strategic debate between the government and UN clusters. It is limited to development cooperation and does not cover many other fields of UN activity, such as those assessed for this evaluation. Major UN-implemented programmes are outside the UNDAF, such as those funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), by far the largest investments going through the UN system in South Africa. As only a ‘framework’, UN agencies along with government departments do not always feel bound by it or by the Common Country Action Plan, and often develop activities that are not included within them’.*

66. While the major focus has been on ensuring government ownership and leadership, the 2010 Guidelines also clearly state that *“The UNDAF, and the country analysis from which it emerges, needs to be based on and aligned with national development priorities and strategies. This requires government leadership and engagement of all relevant stakeholders, in all stages of the process, to maximize the contribution that the UN system can make, through the UNDAF, to the country*

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<sup>31</sup> Lauritto, R and M.A. Lopez Pereira (2010) Marco de Asistencia de Naciones Unidas al Desarrollo de Honduras (UNDAF), Evaluación Final del UNDF (2007-2011), Informe de Evaluación, República de Honduras UN, Oficina de Coordinación. 30 de Septiembre del 2010

<sup>32</sup> Fakie, S. et al (2009) Joint Evaluation of the Role and Contribution of the United Nations System In the Republic of South Africa. Independent evaluation for the Government of South Africa and United Nations Evaluation Group

*development process*". Other than government, the other relevant stakeholders that most often would be engaged in the process would be civil society. Survey responses do suggest that the UNDAF has enhanced, to a degree, the role of civil society in the work of the UN, as is shown in Table 5 below. Experience suggests that when civil society was strategically involved in UNDAF formulation, this required significant commitment by civil society and also investment by the UNCT in ensuring that civil society representatives had a clearly understood and agreed role and were sufficiently well briefed to play this role. Table 2, dealing with the recently introduced Action Plan, also suggests that at least in some cases, UNCTs are trying to support a regular and substantial voice and participation of civil society and the private sector representatives in a government led prioritisation process.

**Table 5: Degree to which Resident Coordinators and other UNCT members judged that the UN planning framework has helped to increase the participation of civil society in the work of the UN in the country**

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	Percentage of responses from:		
	Resident Coordinators (n = 75)	Other UNCT members (n=446 )	Total (n=521)
Strongly agree	15%	8%	9%
Somewhat agree	48%	43%	44%
Somewhat disagree	22%	28%	27%
Strongly disagree	4%	9%	8%
Don't know	8%	8%	8%
Not applicable	3%	4%	4%

67. Review of the comments to the survey however suggest that civil society engagement is more often as an implementation partner for projects, rather than as a strategic partner in the UNDAF formulation process. This lack of strategic engagement is also noted in the UNDAF evaluations, which clearly show that civil society is rarely involved at the strategic level of the UNDAF formulation and implementation process. A number of reasons for the comparative lack of civil society engagement have been identified. For example, the experience of Lao PDR illustrates that civil society may not always see engagement in the UNDAF formulation process as a priority. In Lao PDR, while civil society participated in the UNDAF formulation process, they were much more intent on ensuring substantive participation in the government established sector working groups that were focused on development of Government's five-year plan. Survey responses also revealed a number of countries where tense relationships between government and civil society meant that including civil society in an UNDAF formulation process with government would be difficult or be at the cost of less participation from government.

68. The question therefore arises over the degree to which true ownership and leadership of the UNDAF process, and possibly the UNDAF document, is a priority for the UNDAF. It is important to bear in mind that a lack of government ownership of the UNDAF document does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of government ownership of the UN's actual support to government. The UNDAF process is one of several processes through which the UN agencies engage with both government and civil society. The most significant engagement happens during the identification, design, implementation and monitoring of specific UN supported interventions. The UNDAF also has no impact on the choice of which partner assumes responsibility for managing implementation of a project and the trend has been for an increasing number of interventions to be managed by national partners. Therefore it is quite possible for government and other partners to have little ownership of the UNDAF whilst also having strong ownership of specific UN support. A clear example of this

was high-lighted in the case of the Philippines UNDAF 2005-2009. The evaluation<sup>33</sup> concluded that ownership of the UNDAF by government partners was poor. However, it also high-lighted the case of the UN's work in disaster management, where there was high government ownership and decision making was informed by the joint assessment and analysis. The whole process was characterized by joint planning, implementation and monitoring, improved accountability, and an overall effectiveness of service delivery. The effort for the emergency response was commended by the funding agency (e.g. Central Emergency Response Fund).

69. The fundamental question is whether the UNDAF is supposed to be primarily a UN tool, where value is increased by government engagement, or a halfway house to a situation in which UN support is identified and prioritised through governments' own systems and procedures.

### 5.1.2 Are UNDAFs focused on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals?

70. ECOSOC resolution 2011/7<sup>34</sup> specifically requests that the assessment of the UNDAF determine their focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Resident Coordinators were asked as part of preparation of the 2010 RC Annual Report which of the MDGs were supported under the UNDAF in their country. Their responses, as shown in Table 6, suggest that UNDAFs do focus on achievement of the MDGs. This is an opinion replicated in the responses of the member states to the DESA survey, in which 96 percent of the 110 who responded either strongly (60 percent) or somewhat (36 percent) agreed that efforts of the UN are focused on assisting their country in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

**Table 6: Which MDGs do Resident Coordinators think that the UNDAF supports?**

Which MDG	Number of RCs that stated that UNDAF responded to the achievement of the MDG
MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	100
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education	96
MDG 3 Promote gender equality and empower women	96
MDG 4 Reduce child mortality	97
MDG 5 Improve maternal health	99
MDG 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	99
MDG 7 Ensure environmental sustainability	92
MDG 8 Develop a global partnership for development	66
No MDG support	5

71. In general, evidence from the 40 UNDAF evaluations supports this finding that the UNDAFs focus on the achievement of the MDGs. This finding was also confirmed in two recent analyses of UNDAF documents. A 2011<sup>35</sup> study by the Consensus Building Institute reviewed 14 UNDAF documents for UNDAFs starting in 2009 or 2010<sup>36</sup> and found that:

<sup>33</sup> Bhattacharyya, M. (2010) The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2005-2009 in the Philippines: Lessons Learned.

<sup>34</sup> ECOSOC (2011) *Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system*. 2011/7

<sup>35</sup> Consensus Building Institute (2011). *UNCTs Engaging in National Policy Dialogue: Lessons from the Field*. Study by the Consensus Building Institute for the UN Development Group, 20 September 2011.

<sup>36</sup> The 2009 UNDAFs were from Azerbaijan, Chile, Iraq, Maldives, Tanzania, Uruguay. The 2010 UNDAFs were from El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Morocco, Montenegro, Sao Tome and Principe, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe.

*All of the UNDAFs we reviewed identify policy issues that affect development results. Many of the UNDAF CCAs or equivalent analyses provide clear and compelling assessments of policies that need to be created, changed or eliminated in order to advance national and international development goals.*

*In our sample, the Azerbaijan and El Salvador CCAs are notable for the depth of their analysis overall, including their policy analysis. For example, the Azerbaijan CCA notes the overarching national goal and challenge of diversifying the resource-based economy, and translating oil revenue into socially productive investments. It notes many areas where policy is established but implementation is lagging (e.g. environmental management), and highlights several areas (e.g. government decentralization) where both additional policy development and capacity development are needed.*

*The Azerbaijan CCA and UNDAF make only passing reference to the MDGs, however; they focus primarily on showing links to the national development priorities. This choice appears to have been heavily influenced by Azerbaijan's middle income status, and the government's strong focus on its own national plan.*

*The El Salvador CCA provides a systematic review of challenges to MDG achievement, including policy challenges. It also reviews serious problems with public security policies and strategies, and calls for the development of a new integrative policy both for El Salvador and for the Central American region (see also El Salvador case study).*

*In some cases, the analysis presented is more abbreviated, but nevertheless substantively clear. The Tanzania UNDAF (Development Assistance Plan) includes a concise and clear review of Tanzania's MDG challenges and highlights both policy and capacity gaps across sectors. There is explicit linkage of MDGs to government development priorities, which were themselves defined in large part by an MDG assessment (the "National MDG Midway Evaluation 2000-2015") in which the UNCT actively participated.*

*Overall, the sample of UNDAFs is fairly strong on both the identification of policy gaps and on the linkage between national and international development goals.*

72. The same broad conclusion was reached in another, possibly less independent, 2011<sup>37</sup> review of 13 UNDAF documents for UNDAFs<sup>38</sup> expected to start in 2012. This study concluded that:

*"It is clear that UNCTs have taken advantage of this opportunity to be a leader in advocacy, capacity development, policy advice and programming for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, internationally agreed development goals and other national priorities. The different elements analysed show that the UNDAF guidance package was probably useful for the integration of the five key programming principles, as this is done systematically, as well as for the MDGs, depending on country priorities."*

73. This assessment has not assessed a further sample of recently agreed UNDAFs to confirm that above findings, but in reading many of the recent UNDAF documents, the lead consultant saw no evidence that would cast significant doubts on these findings. However, the UNDAF document and results frameworks truly are more statements of intent than fully funded intended plans. As

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<sup>37</sup> UPN (2011) Synthesis of an interagency peer desk review of 2010 signed UNDAFs. Report prepared by a task team (led by ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, OHCHR and DOCO) of the UNDAF Programming Network (UPN). 25 August 2011

<sup>38</sup> Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Kosovo, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Philippines, São Tome and Principe, Somalia, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe

such, the conclusion needs to be qualified, as it is based on assessing whether what the UN says it intends to do, rather than what it actually does, is aligned with the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals.

### 5.1.3 Is formulation of UNDAFs now synchronised with government planning calendars?

74. Implementation periods for many of the UNDAFs designed in the early to mid 2000s were not synchronized with the implementation period of national plans and strategies of the member state governments. This is shown in the rationales given to their Executive Boards for delays in seeking approval for country programme documents by agencies such as UNDP<sup>39</sup> and UNICEF. The need to extend the implementation period of UNDAFs under implementation was also flagged in over half of the UNDAF evaluations carried out in the past four years. This lack of synchronisation was also confirmed by both regionally and country based staff consulted as part of this exercise.

75. Significant attention has been paid by UNCTs to ensuring that the implementation periods for recently designed UNDAFs and the national strategy/plan are the same. This has however been challenging in many cases. In the best case scenario, it has often meant that prioritisation of the UN's support and development of the UNDAF results framework has taken place concurrent with, rather than after, identification by government of its own strategic priorities and definition of targets, etc. Medium term planning within the UNDAF framework is also difficult for many of the agencies, which programme on a biennial basis, so making it problematic to make commitments extending over several biennia. It has also required careful scheduling of endorsement by the Governing Bodies of the UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA country programme documents. These need to be endorsed by the Governing Bodies after agreement of the UNDAF but before implementation formally starts. These endorsement processes undoubtedly make synchronisation of national and UNDAF plan periods more difficult. The cases of two recently completed UNDAF formulation processes, see Box 3, illustrate the difficulties clearly.

#### **Box 3: Challenges to ensuring that the implementation periods the UNDAF and the national strategy/plan are the same time – the experience of Bangladesh and Lao PDR**

In Bangladesh, the UNDAF 2012-2016 reflects the national priorities as stated in the Government's Outline Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010–2021 (Making Vision 2021 a Reality), the emerging Sixth Five Year National Development Plan, and the outcome of *The Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2009*. Therefore, the UNDAF started before the main national development strategy was completed. The Bangladesh example illustrates a challenge observed in a number of cases, such as in Cape Verde and the Gambia, where the national development frameworks/documents were not completed, but the decision was taken to proceed with the UNDAF – often strongly influenced by certain agencies whose programming calendar needs to be maintained and not disrupted by changes in the national planning calendar.

In Lao PDR, UNDAF implementation is not synchronised with the Socio-Economic Development Plan 2011-2015. The Socio-Economic Development Plan was presented by Government at a donor round table in October 2010 and Government recently produced a review of first year's implementation. But changes in the Plan's contents continued after October 2010 and the Plan was only formally endorsed by the National Assembly in June 2011. Therefore, different people have differing views on when the Plan actually started.

In Lao PDR, it appears that the RC took the decision to not attempt to start the new UNDAF at the same time as the official date for the national plan, but aim that the new UNDAF finish at the same time as the new national plan. This was reportedly partly because shortening the period of the UNDAF already under implementation would have been administratively complex. It also reflected the fact that the then RC left in January 2010 and there was a three – four month gap before the new RC in place. Delaying the UNDAF

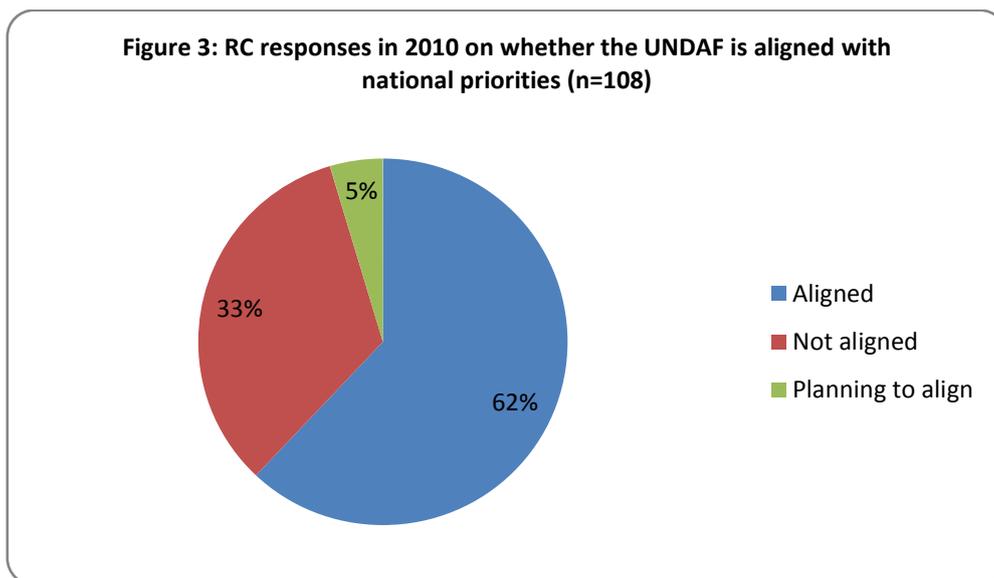
<sup>39</sup> See for instance DP/2010/25 from the Annual Session of the UNDP Executive Board (June-July 2010) and DP/2011/26 from the Annual Session of the UNDP Executive Board (June-July 2011)

formulation process therefore allowed the new RC to have input into the new UNDAF that they were going to be responsible for.

76. As challenging are cases where government does not have a single national development plan/strategy with which to synchronize, as in Georgia. Survey responses by Resident Coordinators suggest that this may be so in a significant number of programme countries, where only 40 percent agreed that the government carried out a regular medium term planning exercise, in which most issues were analysed for evidence, national objectives were set and operational plans to deliver against the objectives set refined/developed. A further thirty percent responded somewhat, while the remaining thirty percent said no. These responses therefore raise a question over what the UNDAF should be synchronized with in such situations. In this context, OECD governments, for example, do not generally have a single overall government strategy or operational plan, so this situation should not be as indicative of a government's lack of capacity but often a conscious decision by a government about how strategic planning will be done.

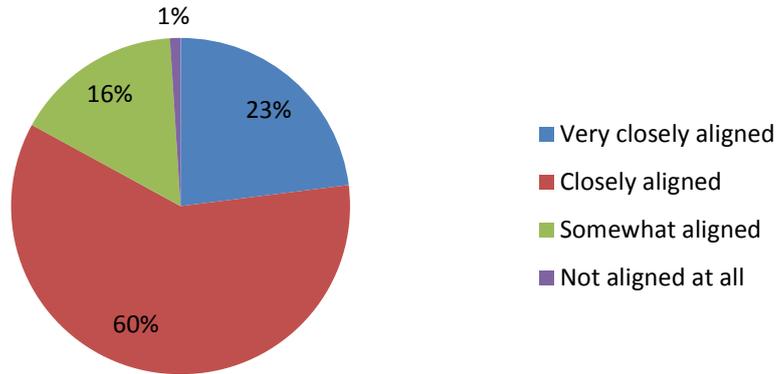
#### 5.1.4 Has the UNDAF enhanced UN alignment with national development priorities?

77. As shown in Figure 3, most Resident Coordinators in the 2010 RC Annual Report exercise reported that the UNDAF was either aligned with, or there were plans to align it with, national priorities.



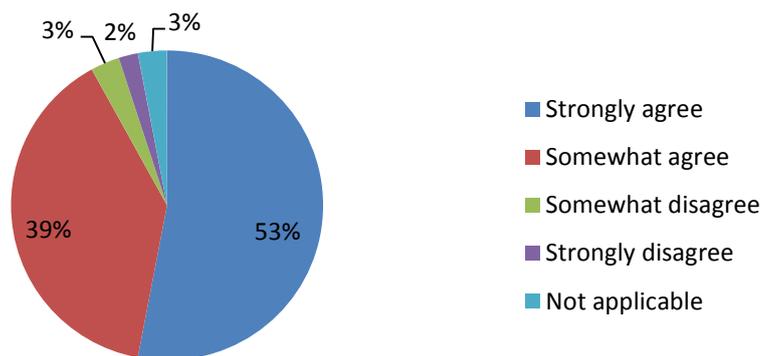
78. This opinion of the Resident Coordinators was mirrored in responses from the Member States to the DESA survey on how closely aligned to their country's development needs and priorities were the activities of the UN (see Figure 4). Over 80 percent thought that support was either very closely or closely aligned with national needs and priorities.

**Figure 4: Member state opinions on how closely aligned UN support is with national needs and priorities (n=111)**



79. Responses from the Member States to the DESA survey further suggest that they mostly believe that the introduction of the UNDAF, or an alternative UN planning framework, has enabled their Government to ensure that the UN’s activities are closely aligned with their national plans and strategies (see Figure 5). However, several member states stressed that the UNDAF on its own does not guarantee alignment. For example, one observed that: *“Le plus important c’est de veiller à ce que les interventions contenues dans le PNUAD soient mises en oeuvre à travers des programmes conjoints au niveau des agences pour favoriser la cohérence des interventions des agences et aller vers one UN pour faciliter l’alignement des interventions des activités de l’ONU sur les priorités du Gouvernement”*.<sup>40</sup> Other member states responses indicated that the UNDAF alone was not sufficient to ensure alignment and that that not all UN agencies had bought into the process or there was still “excessive fragmentation” of the UN system.

**Figure 5: Member states' opinions on whether introduction of the UNDAF, or an alternative UN planning framework, has enabled government to ensure that UN activities are closely aligned with national plans (n=111)**



<sup>40</sup> The most important thing is to ensure that the interventions included in the UNDAF are implemented through joint programmes to promote consistency of actions by the agencies and move to One UN to facilitate alignment of UN activities with the priorities of the Government.

80. The 2011 Consensus Building Institute<sup>41</sup> review of 14 UNDAF documents for UNDAFs starting in 2009 or 2010<sup>42</sup>, the 2011<sup>43</sup> UNDAF Programming Network review of 13 UNDAF documents for UNDAFs<sup>44</sup> expected to start in 2012, and evidence from the forty UNDAF evaluations reviewed all supported this view on alignment of the UN's support with national priorities and the role of the UNDAF in accomplishing this. The broad conclusion therefore is that intended support identified in UNDAFs is aligned with national priorities.

81. However, within this broadly positive conclusion, it is important to be clear on what alignment means in practice. First there is the difference between national needs and government priorities. National needs, derived from the country analysis, should not change when a government changes. However, the fact that a change in government was identified by RCs as the main reason for a change in priorities within the UNDAF strongly suggests that they see a clear difference between national needs and government priorities. This is also clearly illustrated by the importance given to the country analysis as an opportunity for a UNCT to advocate with government for a change in government priorities. The reality is that UNDAF results matrices normally include a mixture of UN support, ranging from advocacy work intended to lead to a change in government priorities through to more conventional capacity development support that is clearly aligned with specific government priorities.

82. Managing the balance between national needs and government priorities can be challenging for UNCTs, as noted in several of the recent UNDAF evaluations, such as the reflection on lessons learned about the Malawi UNDAF (2008-2011)<sup>45</sup>. The Mozambique UNDAF evaluation<sup>46</sup>: also includes a clear discussion of this issue:

#### Mozambique

*Alignment may not be possible, if there is any significant divergence between government and UN objectives or approaches (which is not considered to be the case at the moment, but presents a theoretical risk). This highlights the constant tension between government ownership and ensuring that international norms and standards that guide the work of the UN agencies are adopted and upheld by UN Member States. Several concerns were noted:*

*- Some UN staff interviewed indicated that the current PARP process has been less consultative so far than the previous PARPA II process such that there is a certain concern that not all UN objectives will be included. If there is significant divergence, alignment may be neither appropriate nor strategic for the UN system.*

*- Close alignment and the implicit endorsement by the UN of government models may limit the UN's ability to exercise its comparative advantage in the area of advocacy and policy support. This is of special concern to those UN agencies and entities that deal with humanitarian issues which are often politically sensitive. In that respect, these*

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<sup>41</sup> Consensus Building Institute (2011). *UNCTs Engaging in National Policy Dialogue: Lessons from the Field*. Study by the Consensus Building Institute for the UN Development Group, 20 September 2011

<sup>42</sup> The 2009 UNDAFs were from Azerbaijan, Chile, Iraq, Maldives, Tanzania, Uruguay. The 2010 UNDAFs were from El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Morocco, Montenegro, Sao Tome and Principe, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>43</sup> UPN (2011) Synthesis of an interagency peer desk review of 2010 signed UNDAFs. Report prepared by a task team (led by ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, OHCHR and DOCO) of the UNDAF Programming Network (UPN). 25 August 2011

<sup>44</sup> Barbados and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, Kosovo, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Philippines, São Tome and Principe, Somalia, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe

<sup>45</sup> UN (2010) Malawi Country Assessment, Experience Sharing. Report prepared by the, United Nations in Malawi, 2010

<sup>46</sup> KPMG (2010) UNDAF Evaluation – The UN in Mozambique. Report prepared for the Mozambique UNCT. January 2010

*agencies need to maintain their neutrality as well as their ability to advocate for the defence of human rights.*

*- Several agencies expressed a concern that alignment to national priorities should not be limited to government priorities and it is important to ensure that the focus of UNDAF is defined not merely in political terms but also, and more importantly, based on technical grounds. In that respect close alignment presents a risk as it may result in limited analysis. For example, it is noted that in the UNDAF under review some key questions and policy debates were not fully explored. This reflects a wider debate around alignment, reflected in the Accra Agenda for Action, which highlighted the role of parliaments and civil society.*

*- Close alignment gives very little space to address issues and policy gaps outside of government planning documents and processes such as PARPA, sectoral plans, annual PES and Joint Reviews. It is also noted that key government planning documents are bound to a five year outlook whereas many policies require a long term perspective of 10-25 years.*

83. Maintaining the balance between national needs and government priorities therefore appears to have had two major consequences. First, as high-lighted in the UNDAF results frameworks of some countries visited and in telephone interviews, a certain ambiguity can be found in the results matrices, especially in cases where an issue is considered politically sensitive and/or there is a significant divergence between government and the UNCT over what the priorities should be. Second, changes in government rather than the regular national multi-year planning cycle, is the major factor cited in survey responses triggering a re-appraisal of UNDAF priorities and development of either a revised or new UNDAF. Responding to changing government priorities was also identified by many Resident Coordinators as the most likely reason that they would consider a change in the outputs found in the UNDAF results framework during implementation.

84. The UNDAF process for alignment with government priorities also assumes that the UN's strategic priorities can be set during the strategic prioritisation exercise carried out towards the end of the UNDAF formulation process. This assumes that government priorities with which to align are in place. Yet the 2011 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration found that only 28 of the 76 countries that responded had a national development strategy with clear strategic priorities linked to a medium-term expenditure framework and reflected in annual budgets.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, given this finding, no evidence was found in the UNDAF evaluations that UNCTs have found a problem in aligning with government priorities, although a significant number of RCs and UNCT members acknowledged the challenge in their comments in the surveys and telephone interviews.

85. Alignment of the UN's support also assumes that most UN support is considered as part of the UNDAF formulation process, but this is not always the case. For example, WHO's is one of the seven major UN agencies in terms of operational expenditure. However, health has often been subsumed under the social sector pillar within the UNDAF, with the most common focus being on UN support in the area of HIV/AIDS. Thus most of the WHO collaborative programmes with a particular country were outside the UNDAF.

86. While UN support may be aligned with government/national priorities, it is also important to bear in mind that prioritisation of UN support is supposed to be based upon consideration of the comparative advantage of the UN agencies in contributing towards national priorities. This prioritisation happens in the strategic prioritisation exercise scheduled towards the end of the UNDAF formulation process. The evidence suggests that the UNDAF process has only, at best, a modest effect on prioritisation of UN support.

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<sup>47</sup> OECD (2011), Aid Effectiveness 2005–10: Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration, OECD Publishing, Paris.

87. On the positive side, when asked in the survey, 80 percent of Resident Coordinators for recently developed UNDAFs said that at least one agency had agreed not to do something that was important within the mandate and priorities of the agency, either because the issue wasn't a government priority or because there was no clear UN comparative advantage. On the other hand, little evidence of effective prioritisation based on comparative advantage analysis carried out as part of the UNDAF process is evident in the forty UNDAF evaluations. Evidence of the lack of prioritisation was noted in some instances. For example, the evaluation<sup>48</sup> of the Bangladesh UNDAF (2006-2011) concluded that:

*“The UNDAF was designed to accommodate everything, similar to a superficial listing or cut-and-paste exercise. ...While the UNDAF contains 27 Country Programme Outcomes, it does not indicate which are the most relevant and priority actions and programmes that should be implemented, jointly or individually, in order to achieve the key objectives of the UNDAF. If done, this would have resulted in a clear strategic direction. This issue is left for agencies’ own appraisals – and to some extent the UNCT’s – given the fact that there is no existing official mechanism linking agencies’ programmes and projects with the UNDAF, except for the UNDAF annual review process.”*

88. This view on the limited effectiveness of the UNDAF prioritisation process is also echoed in the views of UN staff that have supported UNCTs in their prioritisation work. These staff, when asked, were near unanimous that UNCTs still do not generally prioritise based on comparative advantage. Instead, the need to ‘show’ agency presence and ensure that the agencies’ mandates are represented is pre-eminent. The finding of a lack of prioritisation is also supported by the evidence from Resident Coordinators in Table 6 above which suggests a situation in which most UNDAFs include support aimed at achievement of nearly all of the seven major MDGs. Yet, the latest analysis of whether countries are on track or not to achieve the MDGs<sup>49</sup> would suggest that if national priorities/the MDGs were the major factor driving prioritisation by UNCTs, one would expect to see much more variation in the rates of coverage of the various MDGs; reflecting the differences in how close the population of countries are to achieving each of them.

89. Issues with how prioritised UN intended support actually is are also raised by review of a number of newly developed UNDAFs presented at the Executive Boards of UNDP and UNICEF in 2011. As shown below in Table 7, the number of outcomes ranged between 4 and 18 and averaged 10. The number of outputs ranged between 15 and 80 and averaged 45, with all outputs technically being treated as of equal priority. As stated in several UNDAF evaluations, UNDAF results frameworks of this size and complexity are not perceived by national stakeholders as an indicator of a UN that is prioritizing its support

**Table 7: Number of outcomes and outputs identified in recently formulated UNDAFs**

Country	Number of outcomes	Number of outputs
1. Lao PDR	10	77
2. Uruguay	18	47
3. Ghana	11	53
4. Maldives	15	52
5. Bangladesh	10	56
6. South Sudan	4	15

<sup>48</sup> Privat, C. (2010) United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Bangladesh (2006-2011) - An Evaluation. Report prepared for the Bangladesh RCO, 1 Nov 2010

<sup>49</sup> The Millennium Development Goals Report. [http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2011/11-31339%20\(E\)%20MDG%20Report%202011\\_Book%20LR.pdf](http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2011/11-31339%20(E)%20MDG%20Report%202011_Book%20LR.pdf)

7. The Gambia	9	39
8. Malawi	4	17
9. Iran	15	80
10. Algeria	4	18
<b>Average</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>45</b>

90. A finding on the ineffectiveness of the UNDAF as a tool for prioritizing UN agency support should not be seen as surprising. Each agency, based on its mandate decides what it will do and nobody, barring the government, has the power to say no to any agency. This does not mean that agencies do not take account of national priorities and the views of other partners, but the final decision on what to programme lies with the agency and there are no rewards for UNCT members that sacrifice agency visibility for the greater good of the UN and country as a whole. This challenge has, if anything, been exacerbated by the drive for inclusion of agencies within the UNDAF process and framework. Many are also of the opinion that prioritisation is difficult in a context where core funding for individual agencies has, at best, remained stable over the past decade and the UNDAF has been seen by some agencies as an opportunity to enhance visibility at the country level and the possibilities to access extra-budgetary resources. This is extremely important given that the majority of responses from the member-states, Resident Coordinators and UNCT members to the DESA administered surveys suggested that competition between UN agencies for extra-budgetary resources remains the reality (see Table 8), and some member states specifically commented that the lack of alignment of UN support with government priorities was due to the “drive” by UN agencies to seek non-core resources.

**Table 8: Do UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding?**

<b>Do UN agencies sometimes compete with each other for donor funding?</b>	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>	<b>Don't know<sup>50</sup> (%)</b>
All Government responses (108)	49.1	44.4	6.5
Resident Coordinators (n=75)	79	21.4	0
Other UNCT members (n=434)	79	21	0

91. The exception to this is the case of countries with a One Fund and joint resource mobilization strategy, where an agency can be rewarded for withdrawing from one area by a possible increase in funding towards another priority. Rewards, incentives and the reality that a successful UNDAF process is very dependent on the leadership of the RC and good will of the UNCT members is discussed in more detail in Section 5.2 – coherence.

92. A recent World Bank evaluation<sup>51</sup> of harmonization also provides an interesting perspective on broader experience of trying to prioritise support based on the concept of comparative advantage. Its findings and conclusions would tend to suggest that the UN's performance in this area is not necessarily out of line with that of others. It cites examples including the case of a division of labour exercise in Ethiopia and concludes that in reality, the driving force behind donors' presence in sectors was the political mandate from their headquarters, much more than what comparative advantage the development partners might have. A second case cited was in Malawi, where some partners in Malawi bluntly pointed out, —...[their] agencies continue to focus on their areas of comparative advantage as prescribed by their corporate policies, which [in the case of these

<sup>50</sup> The 'Don't know' option was not available in the Government survey. However, six countries used the comment box to state that they did not know. These responses are incorporated in the table. The fact that these six countries all took the trouble to do this, instead of just skipping the question, is testimony to a meticulous approach to the survey on the part of the Government respondents.

<sup>51</sup> IEG (2011). World Bank Progress in Harmonization and Alignment in Low-Income Countries: An Evaluation. Washington, DC: Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group.

agencies] are the MDGs and democratic governance. More importantly for the UN looking forward, the study concludes that:

*Governments may not be interested in selectivity per se, but they are interested in reducing transaction costs, which they would prefer to achieve through means other than selectivity. In Ethiopia, for example, the government is interested in having small donors participate in joint programs, as they consider that the benefits from dealing with small donors are not commensurate with the transaction costs incurred from dealing with them. Similarly in Uganda, senior government officials are interested in reducing the number of donors they need to deal with while having some development partners delegate funding to others. In other words, selectivity or division of labour is not an issue when there are few donors for governments to deal with, or few donors compared to the needs of the country. This is the case in Lao PDR, where having few donors and great needs has reduced duplication/overlap in donor support. Similarly in Benin, the fact that an extensive exercise was undertaken by Bank staff (in compliance with instructions from Washington) to help identify different partners' comparative advantages did not result in significant changes to the CAS was pointed out by other development partners as reflective of the widely held view that overlaps and duplication were not significant problems in Benin, given the small number of donors relative to its needs.*

93. As important is whether or not the UNDAF is really influencing programme decision making at the level of the individual agencies. Reviews of the 40 UNDAF evaluations and also a request to the evaluation functions of the individual UN agencies made during this assessment produced little evidence of an obvious and direct influence of the UNDAF on internal programming processes. At least in the case of UN agencies that produce their own country programme document (CPD), this link should be through alignment of the UNDAF and CPD contents and expected results. For UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA, programming should derive from a Country Programme Document (CPD), approved by the individual agency's Executive Board, and further articulated in the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP).<sup>52</sup> The problematic linkage between the UNDAF and country programming processes in the individual agencies was flagged in the 2006 Review of UNDAFs<sup>53</sup>, which concluded that:

*" ... there seems to be an imbalance between UNDAF preparation and implementation in terms of what roles and responsibilities staff take on. UNCT staff were concerned that after the effort to design the UNDAF, implementation was going to be even more daunting. This suggests that the paper trail is too long to this point and does not get any easier. In some cases, there was little correspondence between UNDAF country outcomes and agency 'country programme outcomes'; correspondence between indicators was hit and miss. Also, there was no clear link up between 'partners' in the various documents. This is a another clear example of skewed incentives between what ExCom<sup>54</sup> agencies do for their own HQs and what they do in the name of internal harmonisation, and is a priority that needs putting right."*

94. UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA have invested in attempting to improve the alignment between the UNDAF and their own country programme documents. UNICEF has monitored

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<sup>52</sup> The Funds and Programmes are not the only UN agencies to have such approaches. For example, FAO has just introduced the Country Programme Framework, although this will be only for internal use by FAO and will not be approved by FAO's Governing Council.

<sup>53</sup> Longhurst, R. (2006) Review of the Role and Quality of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks. Report commissioned by the UN Development Group Office (DGO), ODI, London, May 2006

<sup>54</sup> The ExCom means UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP.

alignment between the UNDAFs and its CPDs since 2007, and in its last report<sup>55</sup> provides evidence that the mis-alignment between UNDAFs and CPDS is becoming less of a problem:

*“In both 2007 and 2008, we found UNDAFs superior documents to CPDs both in the breadth and depth of their analyses. This was to be expected given the greater resources, both human and financial, brought to bear in the Common Country Assessments (CCA). Also unlike the CPDs with their page limitation, UNDAFs are not nearly as constrained in providing more room to incorporate good data and analyses to fashion their strategies. In both previous evaluations, we found some correlation between good UNDAFs in terms of data availability and analysis and good quality CPDs, although to be sure there were certainly cases of good UNDAFs and poor quality CPDs. In 2009, the evaluation signalled that the quality of UNDAFs was improving at a faster rate than the quality of corresponding CPDs (a different issue than CPD alignment). In 2010, with a surprising 16 percent improvement over 2009, CPDs seem to be, not only accelerating their alignment with corresponding UNDAFs, but also using key data and analysis from them to enhance the quality of their CPDs, including the accountability of key partners and the utilization of available disaggregated data both, in the body of the documents, as well as in their SRMs (in the narrative for the accountability factor, and in both for the use of, or explicit reference to the need for, better data).*

*Our principal conclusion is that CPDs and corresponding RMs are increasing their use of UNDAF data and analysis with the overall impact the production of better CPDs... Two reasons – mirror images of each other – can be given for the improvements that we have now documented over the past four years: 1) UNICEF headquarters’ policy guidance has begun to have an effect at the Country Programme level; and, 2) Country Offices are beginning to apply the guidance in the development of their CPDs.”*

95. Moving to a single UNDAF outcome from 2010, used in both the UNDAF and CPAP results matrices, and dropping the use of lower level agency specific outcomes should further ease the practical problems of aligning results statements across the UNDAF and agency levels for agencies that use a country programming approach. Indeed, the newly introduced UNDAF Action Plan approach, which substitutes the UNDAF Action Plan for the CPAPs, should also make this process easier. However, in at least one country visited, it was clear that alignment between UNDAF and agency programming processes still remained problematic. What has not been examined, is the degree to which there is a comparable formal linkage between the UNDAF and programming decision making in the vast majority of UN agencies, which do not use a country programming approach but also probably account for less than 10 percent of overall UN operational funding.

96. Finally, questions can be raised over whether an approach that assumes that one can carry out prioritisation of the UN’s support for possibly six years ahead in a single event – the strategic prioritisation exercise – is the right approach to aligning and prioritizing UN support. Evidence suggests that strategic planning approaches have ceased to be used more widely for operational planning in the medium term because of the difficulties of forecasting the future. Evidence of this flaw in the approach in the context of the UNDAFs is easy to find. For instance, all outcomes and outputs in results matrices developed in 2010 and early 2011 in the area of HIV/AIDs will have assumed a successful Round 11 replenishment process for the Global Fund to fight AIDs, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The subsequent failure of the Round 11 replenishment and uncertainty over future funding from the Global Fund means that all outcomes and outputs related to HIV/AIDs would need to be re-assessed. Yet there is little evidence of this happening. Again, from several of

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<sup>55</sup> Fox, L. and L. Cordoba (2010). A Quality Review of UNICEF’s Executive Board Country Program Documents for 2010. An independent consultants’ report submitted to UNICEF. March 2010

the country visits, it is clear that agencies, as part of their internal programming processes, were adjusting what their outputs will be, yet there was no intention of then reflecting this in a revision of the UNDAF results matrix. This was happening when the UNDAFs had only just started implementation. UNCT members in several cases also identified outputs within the matrices that were unlikely to be delivered, either because they were considered too politically sensitive or because shifts in donor priorities meant that funding was unlikely to be forthcoming. UNCTs also work in a context in which government priorities change, in response to disasters and significant changes in the macro-economic environment. Agency level priorities are also subject to change, in response to resolutions of the Governing Boards of the individual agencies and decisions made by the senior management. Finally, interviews with key informants on what makes a successful Resident Coordinator consistently emphasize that successful Resident Coordinators are those that can identify and seize opportunities as and when they arise. These reasons all throw doubt on the effectiveness of the UNDAF process as an instrument for strategically prioritising the UN's support at country level.

97. Adjustment of UNDAF results matrices, and re-prioritisation during implementation, is possible. This could be a purpose of the UNDAF Annual Review process but neither UNDG guidance nor practice in the field suggest that the Annual Review process is used for this purpose. Potentially, the UNDAF evaluation could also fulfil this role and, indeed, this was often given as the major purpose of the UNDAF midterm reviews/evaluations carried out in the past. But now that UNDAF evaluations have become mandatory, and will take place in the penultimate year of implementation of an UNDAF, the value of the UNDAF reviews/evaluations for adjusting priorities in the present UNDAF will be very limited. They will simply happen too late in the cycle to be useful for this purpose. What evidence there is on re-prioritisation strongly suggests that in response to an emergency or crisis, the UNCT will re-prioritise its support, but this is not done within the formal UNDAF process and the results are not then reflected in an amended UNDAF. An example can be found in Peru, with the UN's response to the 2007 earthquake. There is also evidence that UN agencies do re-prioritise their support during implementation of the UNDAF, but this is again not often reflected in an amended UNDAF results framework.

98. The strategic planning approach adopted by the UNCTs can therefore be contrasted with experience in the private sector, where strategic planning techniques were first developed (see Box 4). Here, there has been a change in role of strategic planning, away from its use as a tool for medium term planning, as still found with the UNDAF. Instead strategic planning tools are more used to: (i) provide channels and forums for communication and knowledge sharing; and (ii) as decision making has become increasingly decentralized, a structured process for dialog, adjustment, and agreement to coordinate between these dispersed decision makers.

**Box 4: The experience of using strategic planning more generally<sup>56</sup>**

The development of business strategy has been driven more by practical need of business than by the development of theory. During the 1950s and 1960s, senior executives were experiencing increasing difficulty in coordinating decisions and maintaining control in companies that were growing in size and complexity... Corporate strategic planning was devised as a framework for coordinating individual capital investment decisions and planning the medium to long term development of the firm. The foundation of the new corporate planning was macroeconomic forecasts of major economic aggregates, which were then disaggregated into forecasts for the firm's individual markets and specific products. The typical format was a five year corporate planning document that set out goals and objectives, forecast key economic trends, established priorities for the different products and business areas of the firm, and allocated capital expenditure.

<sup>56</sup> Abstracted from Grant, R.M. (2003) Strategic Planning in a Turbulent Environment: Evidence from the Oil Majors. Strategic Management Journal, 24: 491–517

During the 1970s, circumstances changed... Faced with a more turbulent business environment, firms could no longer plan their investments, new product introductions, and personnel requirements three to five years ahead, simply because they couldn't forecast that far into the future. Empirical evidence suggested that rapid change requires strategies that are flexible and creative—characteristics seldom associated with formalized planning: 'In the vast majority of companies, strategic planning is a calendar-driven ritual ... [which assumes] that the future will be more or less like the present' (Hamel, 1996: 70)<sup>57</sup>.

The result was a shift in emphasis from planning to strategy making, where the focus was less on the detailed management of companies' growth paths than on positioning the company in markets and in relation to competitors in order to maximize the potential for profit. This transition from corporate planning to what became termed "strategic management" was associated with an increased focus on competition as the central characteristic of the business environment and competitive advantage as the primary goal of strategy.

## 5.2 The effectiveness of the UNDAF in enhancing coherence

### 5.2.1 The present situation

99. Responses from the survey indicate that the UNCT members believe that the UN is more coherent than 4 years ago.

**Table 9: Opinion of UN staff on how coherent they would say the UN development system is now compared to four years ago.**

Response	Percentage of respondents		
	Resident Coordinators (n=75)	Other UNCT members (n=444)	Overall (n=519)
Much more coherent	46%	22%	26%
Somewhat more coherent	44%	45%	44%
About the same	4%	12%	11%
Somewhat less coherent	1%	2%	2%
Much less coherent	0%	1%	1%
Don't know	5%	18%	16%

100. Major factors identified, in order of importance, which have driven greater coherence are: (i) an improved spirit of cooperation within the UN country team; (ii) the leadership of the Resident Coordinator; (iii) the commitment of the government; and (iv) an adequately resourced UN Resident Coordinator's Office. While not surprising, Resident Coordinators rank their leadership above a spirit of cooperation within the UNCT, while other UNCT members rank a cooperative spirit within the UNCT above the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. This probably reflects the fact, as reported again and again in interviews, that for many staff the UNDAF is still seen as an imposition over and above their real work. Therefore 'selling' the value of the UNDAF by the Resident Coordinator both to reluctant UNCT members, and their staff, in a situation where consensus is required, is key. These findings on the pre-eminence of inter-personal relationships in the success of the UNDAF were confirmed in both in the interviews and country visits.

101. Possibly of concern is the consistent message from the country visits over the increasing challenge of funding the RCO function, as discussed below in Box 5. At present, and especially with the decline of funding from the UNDG via UN DOCO, funding of the RCO function is reliant on raising funding from the agencies at country level or in-country donors. The experience from the country visits suggests that in-country donors are increasingly unwilling to fund coordination activities within the UN. In the absence of a common policy from the UN agency headquarters level on such funding,

<sup>57</sup> Hamel G. (1996). Strategy as revolution. Harvard Business Review 74(4): 69–76.

approaches raising funding from the agencies at country level vary from country to country. However, in all cases the approach adopted could not be viewed as sustainable, as they are subject to the individual decisions of agency representatives. The difficulties of funding the RCO function is of particular concern in countries where the RCO function is expected to play significant coordination, resource mobilization and support roles, such as in countries where an Action Plan is to be used.

**Box 5: Challenges of funding the RCO function – experience from the field**

In all of the countries visited, the overall view was that the present approach to funding the RCO function was both unsustainable and unpredictable.

In **Lao PDR**, the RCO staffing has been reduced to one administrative assistant and one professional staff member (UN Volunteer). At present it is probably best to say that there is a mis-match between what people want the RCO to do, and the funds available to staff it to do so. Government's request was for a well staffed RCO with which they could interact as a one-stop shop, so cutting transaction costs to them. Costing to do this was done and suggested that funding an office with suitable staffing would require 1% of programme funding. It was therefore proposed that this 1% overhead be incorporated into all future project/programme proposals. Although some specialized agencies were willing to do so, no agreement was reached at UNCT level, so this not implemented.

In **Bolivia**, the RCO functions with only one national coordination officer and an RCO assistant. Some UNCT members stated that it was unrealistic to demand the delivery of the planned portfolio, given the level of funding available for the RCO. DOCO funding has been significantly scaled back within the past two years and gaps have been filled by contributions from UN entities and from one local donor (Sweden). One UNCT member stated that he had received orders from headquarters (at level of budget director) not to make a contribution to RCO 2012 appeal, but that he nonetheless decided to make the contribution at the requested level because the benefits of sustaining a coherent UN presence in Bolivia were more important to the UN entity than the risks of undermining the visible and active role that the UN plays in Bolivia. According to the UNCT member, this was a classic case where corporate-level decisions failed to understand far more important considerations of national context that would actually merit reaching the opposite decision.

In **Ethiopia**, resource mobilization for the RCO has been reasonably successful. The 2011 budget for coordination services was \$377,000, of which \$50,000 was from DOCO (reduced to \$25,000 for 2012). About 75% of the remaining gap was paid for by the Funds and Programmes, while specialized agencies were asked to pay about \$10,000 each, but this was proving very difficult to collect. The entire UNCT is very critical of funding being left at the country level. "If the UN system wants coherence to prevail, it must fund it."

In **Georgia**, all persons interviewed expressed the view that the RC office needed more capacity in order to adequately support the UNCT and the theme and working groups, so ensuring that these groups operated efficiently. Currently, the RCO is mainly funded from UNDP funds channelled through the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) that the RC had been able to allocate to help fund the RC office. However, this is not considered sustainable. Regarding any formula for cost-sharing among UN entities, the view was that such funding must be arranged at the HQ level and that it would be unworkable to collect contributions from agencies at the country level.

102. As important is the view from the field that the application of new systems and procedures has not been the major factor driving coherence. This is not to say that UNCT members do not see that systems and procedures – such as the UNDAF - as insignificant factors; rather they are not seen as the primary factors driving enhanced coherence within the UN at country level. Evidence from the country visits also clearly indicated that whatever done or said by either the Chief Executives Board<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> The Chief Executives Board meets twice a year and is chaired by the UN Secretary-General. Present at the meetings are the Heads of 27 United Nations system organizations (which include 15 specialized agencies, 10 UN Funds and Programmes, the World Trade Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency). The Chief Executives Board is

or the High-Level Committee on Management, business practices within the agencies are not harmonized. The consequence is that transaction costs for both joint programming and joint programmes remain unacceptably high.

**Box 6: Joint programming and joint programmes – what is the difference?**

The UN makes a distinction between two forms of coordination – joint programming and joint programmes. Joint programming is when the UNCT works together, sometimes, with partners to: strengthen country analysis; influence national priorities; and respond to those priorities as one system. The UNDAF formulation process is therefore an example of joint programming at a strategic level, although this should also happen at Outcome Group level during UNDAF implementation.

A joint programme is when UN agencies, with partners, combine their work and resources in a common work plan and budget. The work plan and budget form part of a joint programme document, which also provides details about roles and responsibilities of partners in coordinating and managing the joint activities. The joint programme document is signed by all participating organizations and national or sub-national partners.

103. Comments by survey respondents suggest a range of views on what is meant by coherence. This may partly reflect differences of emphasis in response to differing country contexts. It may also reflect the fact that what coherence of the UN at country level means has never been operationally defined. However, both the survey responses and evidence from the recent UNDAF evaluations indicate that coherence is generally understood to mean closer coordination and engagement between the UN agencies.

### **5.2.2 Evidence of increased coherence?**

104. The UNDAF formulation process, at least as outlined in the Guidelines, is not designed to explicitly identify opportunities for greater coherence. Nor is coherence, or where greater collaboration would have the greatest pay-off, a focus of the UN quality assurance process during formulation. As discussed above, the major focus of the UNDAF formulation process is on alignment of the UN's intended support with national priorities and then the prioritisation of that support, based on where the UN has a comparative advantage. Explicitly asking where the UN's contribution to development results would be greater if the UN's support were more coherent is not part of the approach outlined in the Guidelines, although the evidence does suggest that a number of UNCTs do look at this issue in formulation of the UNDAF. This lack of focus in UNDG guidance on identifying and managing for greater coherence is also reflected in the tools and approaches used during the UNDAF implementation phase, where only as part of the UNDAF evaluation is the issue of coherence examined in any detail.

105. In this regard, the increasing focus on inclusion of UN agencies, including the non-resident agencies (NRAs) is not *per se* an indicator of increased coherence – or coordination. During UNDAF formulation, ensuring participation of UN agencies is a major focus. However, evidence from interviews and evaluations suggests that ensuring participation of the NRAs remains a challenge. In practical terms this reflects the simple fact that the CCA process is a long drawn out process. NRAs rarely have the funds to allow HQ or regionally based staff to travel to the countries and there are limitations on the degree to which the use of video-conferencing and email exchanges can

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responsible for keeping up to date on current political issues and concerns that face the United Nations. Additionally, they approve policy statements on behalf of the system when the reporting bodies make recommendations to do so. There are three committees that support the Chief Executives Board; the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) which deals with global policy and other items that face the world at large, the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) which works to make businesses across the system work together, and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) which works to promote country level efforts within the system.

compensate for the lack of physical presence. For many NRAs, where the basic unit for programming is the global or regional level, engaging in a process where the unit of programming is the country, is also challenging. It should also be noted that staff at country level often state that it is difficult for them to achieve coherence when there is little coherence at the head office or executive levels. This issue has not been looked at in this assessment, due to the lack of time and complexity.

106. With a few exceptions, the approach to coherence/coordination during implementation is not prioritised. For most of the past ten years, UNCTs have established a variable number of groups charged with programme coordination (discussed in Box 1), that focus on implementation at the level of either the national priority or outcome. To be effective as an approach to coordination and coherence, an approach organized around outcomes or national priorities assumes that (i) outcomes and national priorities are based on a strong programmatic logic and (ii) within this programmatic logic, there is a strong rationale for coordination within the UN, and with other partners, at the outcome level. As discussed later, in many cases it can be questioned whether either of these assumptions holds in practice.

107. UNDAF evaluations show that in most cases staff within the UNCTs increasingly do talk to each other and this increased communication between UNCT members possibly accounts for the generally positive responses in the survey of UNCT members on the question of whether coherence is improving. However, the UNDAF evaluations also show that the degree to which the architecture of outcome groups is either established or sustained during the entire period of UNDAF implementation varies between countries. In a few cases, the outcome groups were never established. In most cases, the envisaged outcome groups were established, but then went through something akin to an evolutionary process, with some becoming totally inactive, others meeting infrequently, and some flourishing. Care has to be taken when generalizing from the UNDAF evaluations, but the evaluations suggest that scenarios in which most outcome groups become inactive or meet infrequently are common. The implication is that in many cases, the opportunities for UNCT members to talk with each other within the UNDAF process decline significantly as the UNDAF moves from the design to implementation phase.

108. Even in countries where the system of outcome groups has been successfully established, the degree of actual, as compared with intended, government participation in these groups has been variable. For example, in Egypt<sup>59</sup>, following approval of UNDAF (2007-2011) in March 2006, a series of meetings took place that brought together representatives of UN agencies, government and civil society to consider how best to monitor the progress of implementing UNDAF activities, with special focus on outcomes. The Monitoring and Evaluation system that was put in place by the UNCT and the Government of Egypt (especially the Centre for Project Evaluation and Macroeconomic Analysis, PEMA, of the Ministry of International Cooperation) was very comprehensive. It aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the development assistance as laid out in the UNDAF, strengthening national capacities and ownership, and reducing the reporting burden on Egypt. When the system was set up, it was agreed that Egyptian co-chairs of Outcome Groups would assume responsibility for the chairs from 2008 onwards. This was intended to increase their roles in guiding the monitoring process and facilitating access to information and working closely with their counterparts and other group members. According to the Chair of the UNDAF Coordination Team, this would have served as tangible transition of ownership of the UNDAF. This shift did not happen and government involvement was seen as possibly unsustainable.

109. In general, comments from both the survey and from evaluations suggest that the outcome groups have been used for two main purposes, First, to act as a forum within which UN agencies talk

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<sup>59</sup> Privat, C. & J.S. Quesnel. *Egypt United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2007-2011). Mid-Term Review.* Report prepared for the Egypt RCO, July 2009

with each other. Second, as a mechanism to organize reporting of results. With the UNDAF Annual Review process becoming minimum requirement, in 2010, it is probable that this latter function will have become more important, as outcome groups need to meet to coordinate compilation of results used in the Annual Review process.

110. Examples of the outcome groups working to use one voice when engaging with external partners or moving to stronger joint programming approaches are found, but are rarer. Possibly because this often may not be seen as their role, as the UNDG guidance on the roles of the outcome groups and of the higher level group with responsibility for oversight (usually composed of the UNCT and government) does not identify this as an explicit function of either group. Review of the actual terms of reference for these groups in a number of countries however show that some have made this one of the functions of the groups and, in other countries, this may be an unstated aim. Especially in countries adopting the DaO approach, there is also some evidence that the intent is that the role of the outcome groups expand. In such cases, the role is often expanded to include joint planning (integrated workplans), resource mobilization and budgetary framework, as well as discussing programme opportunities for joint interventions with other national and international partners, taking it way beyond “just” reporting. In some other cases, these went even further to broaden their scope and include the relevant government and donors partners involved in the same area. One can also question whether outcome groups are covering too wide a range of activities if collaboration and coherence is the real focus. As shown in Section 5.4.1 below, outcome statements are normally set at a very high level, and are designed more as a ‘chapeau’ to allow all UN agencies to include their support across the limited number of outcomes allowed in the results frameworks. As such, membership of the outcome group is based on representation rather than an analysis of who should participate to enhance collaboration/coherence.

111. In cases where evaluations high-lighted examples of working outcome groups, the UN’s work in HIV/AIDS was often cited as an example of coordinated support. However, it needs to be pointed out that UNAIDS Joint Programme has invested significant resources in supporting joint programming for the UN’s support at the country level and there is no evidence, one way or the other, that the UNDAF has enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of the UNAIDS Joint Programme approach.

112. A number of other examples of strong UN collaboration were also cited in the evaluations and other reports. Two examples from the Papua New Guinea<sup>60</sup> and Malawi<sup>61</sup> UNDAF evaluations show how the existence of the UNDAF has enhanced collaboration, but also that this is a complex issue:

Example 1: PNG

*“Since this outcome area and the coordination mechanisms mentioned above are largely supported by UNICEF (on behalf of the UN/TT), it is UNICEF’s “face” that is known and not that of the One UN. However, this does not appear to cause a problem because both the Government and development partners understand that technical and capacity development activities in a particular sector/theme are provided through the UN agency that has the most relevant expertise and international knowledge in this sector. Secondly, as a result of the DaO there is no longer duplication of activities, nor of “double dipping”. The UN has provided technical support, through UNICEF, to the formulation of the UBEP and it has constantly*

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<sup>60</sup> Chipande, G., E. t. Kwa, M. De Bresser (2009) Achieving Development Results in Partnership, Independent Mid-Term Review, United Nations Country Programme 2008-2012, Delivering as One in Papua New Guinea. Report prepared for the RCO. July 2009

<sup>61</sup> UNCT (2010) *Malawi Country Assessment, Experience Sharing*. Report prepared by the United Nations in Malawi, 2010

*advocated for universal basic education and the increased participation of the girl-child in education through a variety of activities. It is also supporting the formulation of an UBE Communications Strategy.*

*The UN's contribution is clearly seen and appreciated at the policy-making, planning and coordination levels. The ESIP has been singled out as a good example of a SWAP where the UN is playing a critical role in providing good quality technical advice and coordination support; additionally the UN's neutrality as a facilitator and its advocacy for "inclusiveness" i.e. ensuring the participation of non-government groups such as churches and provincial governments, are well appreciated.*

*However, because UNICEF provides the largest support (in funding terms and spread of activities) both ministry and development partner representatives generally do not experience a "One UN Face". Again this is not seen as a problem. At the sub-national levels the UN's programme appears less focused, including geographically.<sup>62</sup> For example, UNICEF focuses in 5 provinces in this outcome area and UNESCO could focus its literacy interventions in the same provinces; this approach also applies to other UN agencies working on education-related matters."*

#### Example 2: Malawi

*In Malawi, UNCT agencies and partners have undertaken several advocacy initiatives on gender in the past several years. ... a regional UNDG Gender mission, triggered by joint UNCT and government findings on the gender gap in MDG achievement, provided both technical advice on policy and programming targeting adolescent girls and their families, and opportunities for higher level engagement with senior policy makers.*

*The UNCT also provided technical analysis and advice on gender equality to the National Planning Commission as it prepared Malawi's next national development plan; the UNCT was able to strengthen its participation in the national planning process, and on gender issues in particular, by linking its UNDAF preparation process closely to the national planning process. Among the most significant has been the work of UNICEF and partners on changing the Ministry of Education's policy of expelling pregnant girls from school, as a deterrent to teen pregnancy. By demonstrating the prevalence of teen pregnancies and the impact on girls' school completion rates, and by linking development of a "second chance" policy to very active reproductive health, family planning and girls' empowerment programming, the UN and partners have made significant progress on this highly sensitive issue.*

113. Whether the UNDAF process has led to a decrease in duplication of activities is difficult to judge. In their responses to this question, just over half of the member states agreed that there is still a significant degree of duplication in the activities of the UN, while approximately 30 percent disagreed. Some instances of a reduction in duplication of UN support were also cited in the UNDAF evaluations, but unfortunately assessing this was not a major focus of the evaluations. In the survey of UNCT members, some also commented that outcome groups are being increasingly established in those areas where more than one agency has a mandate, and where it is important to avoid duplication or competition, and instead promote synergy.

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<sup>62</sup> Based on a desk review of the AWP's and results frameworks.

114. Instances of good UN coordination were also cited where the UNDAF appeared to not have driven the process. This was clearly shown in the conclusions of the recently completed study of UNCT's engagement in national policy dialogues.<sup>63</sup> This study's conclusions were that:

- All of the UNDAFs we reviewed show that UNCTs are using the UNDAF as a vehicle for addressing policy issues in their programming. In general, they provide good to excellent analysis of policy gaps that contribute to national development challenges.
- However, it does not appear that there is consistent, strategic use of the UNDAF process to match specific policy gaps with clearly defined UNCT comparative advantages, and then to define clear policy related results in areas of UNCT comparative advantage.
- The UNDAFs do not consistently demonstrate UNCT comparative advantages in addressing specific policy issues. Nor are UNDAF matrices used consistently to establish a clear division of labour among UNCT agencies and partners for achieving policy outcomes and outputs.
- It is unclear whether the UNDAF process is being used consistently or effectively as a vehicle for policy dialogue. In some middle income countries, the UNDAF may not be the best tool for engagement. In countries with strong DaO engagement and government ownership, it may be an excellent tool.
- Regardless of how effective the UNDAF process may be as a vehicle for policy dialogue, there appear to be many sectors and thematic areas where individual UNCT agencies and thematic groups of agencies are in fact engaged in ongoing, constructive policy dialogue outside the UNDAF process.
- While the UNDAF itself may not always be an effective vehicle for beginning or deepening policy dialogue, it appears that it can be a useful vehicle for building on ongoing policy oriented work of UNCTs.
- The country case studies (see below) suggest that despite the limited use of the UNDAF for policy dialogue, there are many other avenues for UNCT engagement on national policy and program issues.

115. The most formal approach to collaboration/coherence between the UN agencies is the joint programme; when UN agencies, with partners, combine their work and resources in a common work plan and budget. While some cases of joint programmes being developed within the outcome groups were identified, the evidence suggests that the UNDAF has probably not been the main driver for the development of joint programmes within the UN. Instead, in general the availability of funding from the MDG Achievement Fund<sup>64</sup> appears to have been the major driver for the increase in the number of joint programmes observed. HIV/AIDs is a special case, as the development of joint programmes in this area reflects the approach of UNAIDs and investment in both joint programming and joint programmes. The UNDAF process and prior existence of outcome groups might have affected the degree to which joint programmes funded under the MDG Achievement Fund are actually joint and synergistic rather than consolidations of separate proposals from different

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<sup>63</sup> Consensus Building Institute (2011). *UNCTs Engaging in National Policy Dialogue: Lessons from the Field*. Study by the Consensus Building Institute for the UN Development Group, 20 September 2011, page iii

<sup>64</sup> In line with the commitment for improving the quality and effectiveness of aid, the MDG Fund took on the challenge of contributing to the process of UN reform by generating experience related to joint design, management and evaluation, through 128 joint programmes in 49 countries, which on average have five participating UN Agencies, national counterparts and an average budget of US\$ 5.5 million. The MDG-F has added a strong focus on joint programmes, allowing potentially interesting analyses and learning from experience. With 86% of all UN Joint Programmes being funded by the MDG-F, the MDG-Fund is in a privileged position, as it encompasses the majority of all UN joint programmes actually in operation, with UN agencies planning, monitoring and evaluating together with the aim of delivering as one, and supporting the UN reform, the implementation of the Paris Declaration, and the Accra Agenda for Action. (taken from MDG(F) (2010) Report for the MDG Achievement Fund Steering Committee, Drafted by the MDG-F Secretariat. 24 September 2010, New York.

agencies. However, there is little evidence from the evaluations carried out of joint programmes supported by MDG Achievement Fund that the UNDAF has been a significant factor in this regard.<sup>65</sup>

### 5.2.3 Looking to the future

116. The ultimate purpose of the UNDAF is to enhance the UN's contribution to development results. Notwithstanding this, review of a selection of UNDAFs designed in the past two years suggests that there are distinctly different approaches for how the UNDAF is intended to achieve this. Some UNDAFs mainly focus on identifying where the UN's contribution can be most significantly enhanced by greater coherence/collaboration between relevant UN agencies. In other cases, the main focus of the UNDAF is on achieving reductions in transaction costs to government and enhanced integration within government systems of the partner government. Other governments appear to prefer a "laissez-faire" scenario, in which the opportunity for the UN to strategically prioritise the overall portfolio of UN support is limited and prioritization will reflect the degree to which there are prioritization systems within government.

117. The Thailand, India and Kosovo UNDAFs could be seen as examples of the first approach. This prioritised approach has also been suggested in UNDAF evaluations in a number of other countries, such as Chile.<sup>66</sup> For instance, the Thailand UN Partnership Framework 2012-2016, is focused on outcomes in which the UNCT, and in most cases Government of Thailand, have agreed to form joint partnerships. These have been identified on the basis that the sum of the UN's contribution will be greater if there is close coordination within the UN and with external partners. The significant component of the UN's work where closer coordination within the UN is thought not to add value is therefore not included in the joint partnerships. The UN's overall intended support is instead identified in an annex of the Partnership Framework document, but will not be monitored or tracked under the Partnership Framework. Instead, work not included under a Joint Partnership will be monitored by the individual agencies and other partners.

118. Those which appear more focused on reducing transaction costs to government are best illustrated by UNDAFs that reflect the DaO approach. In such cases, ensuring that as much of the UN's support as possible is included within the process becomes very important, as is integration into government systems. Examples of countries that have taken this approach include the Philippines, Malawi, Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea. The draft Papua New Guinea Action Plan is explicit about this orientation, stating in the introduction that: *The overall aim is to simplify and harmonize the way the UN works at country level and to ensure that the UNDAF is aligned with and in support of national priorities and that national systems and procedures are utilized for programme delivery to reduce transaction cost significantly.* Bangladesh also serves as a good example for illustrating the difference with the approach found in Thailand. Here, all UN support is identified under seven UNDAF Pillars and distributed across the pillars are 12 strategic outcomes and 56 outputs. Therefore, all UN support is potentially coordinated under one of the seven Pillars under the leadership of the Pillar Conveners. In these cases, the purpose of the coordination approach is to bring the UNCT members participating under each Pillar together to undertake periodic reviews of outcomes and outputs through the UNDAF Joint Annual Reviews, as well as on a regular basis review technical issues and monitor progress toward achievement of outputs. At least in the Bangladesh Action Plan, explicit responsibility for identifying opportunities where the closer coordination would clearly enhance the UN's contribution to development results, for UN agencies has not been assigned.

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<sup>65</sup> From interviews with staff of the MDG Achievement Fund.

<sup>66</sup> See Anon (2010) Evaluación de Medio Término del Marco de Asistencia para el Desarrollo del Sistema de las Naciones Unidas en Chile 2007-2010

119. Beyond the three scenarios outlined above, in which it is possible to identify the main purpose of coherence/coordination and there is a clear approach within the UNDAF, are a large number of UNDAFs for which it is difficult to identify what the main purpose might be. These are UNDAFs where we find neither the focus on reducing transaction costs to governments found in the DaO approach nor the focus on enhancing the UN's contribution to development results through focusing coordination on areas where there seem to be the most benefits. As such, these UNDAFs appear to take an approach similar to that in older UNDAFs.

### 5.3 The role of the UNDAF in enhancing efficiency of the UN

120. Efficiency cannot be looked at in isolation from effectiveness. The optimum would be an UNDAF process that is both effective and efficient. However, an effective but inefficient process is better value than an efficient but ineffective process.

121. The evidence suggests that the costs associated with coordination within the UN system have risen over the past few years; although funding that has been channelled through UN DOCO is now declining. A recent study<sup>67</sup> on the costs and benefits of coordination found that it is very difficult to define coordination costs, and therefore any measurement of them must be treated circumspectly. Bearing this caveat in mind, the study estimated the annual cost of coordination of UN operational activities to be US\$237million. 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. In relation to *all* spending on operational activities for development (including humanitarian as well as development expenditures) it amounted to some one per cent. The study concluded that these costs were not excessive and, indeed, it could be argued that the resources currently devoted to UN coordination were insufficient. This observation was partly based on evidence from UNDAF evaluations, where the costs of coordination the UNDAF and related processes were not found to be excessive. On the contrary, the assessment in every case was that there was scope to invest *more* to improve coherence of UN action at country level.

122. In a number of the countries that have adopted DaO approaches, the main purpose appears to have been to reduce transaction costs for government partners. Whether this has been delivered within the DaO pilots with such a purpose is currently under evaluation in the currently on-going '*Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from Delivering as One*'. In this assessment it is noted that a number of non-pilot countries have adopted approaches that are designed to reduce transaction costs to the governments. As these approaches are only now starting implementation, it is too early to make any conclusions on whether these approaches will deliver the intended reductions. However, as discussed earlier in this report, care should be taken not to assume that all countries where the UNCT says that it has taken a DaO approach may be focused on this purpose.

123. However, attention should also be drawn to the recent experience of the World Bank and the bilateral donors on the issue of reducing transaction costs to government partners.

*"In spite of this moderately positive set of findings in a majority of the country evaluations about improvements in collaborative behaviour and some simplification of donor policies and procedures, a cautionary element also emerges. With one exception there are no clear findings of reduced administrative burdens ('transaction costs') in managing aid for either*

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<sup>67</sup> Ronald, C. (2011) Costs and Benefits of Coordination of United Nations Operational Activities for Development. A background paper prepared for DESA. April 2011

*governments or donors and several evaluations specifically note that they find no reductions.”<sup>68</sup>*

*“The experience of joint strategies has indicated that the high transaction costs involved for all (the Bank, other development partners, and the government) are not worth the costs, whereas a coordinated approach is a good alternative.”<sup>69</sup>*

124. Finally, in terms of reducing transaction costs to UN agencies, the overall conclusion must be that introduction of the UNDAF has actually increased programmatic transaction costs in most situations. There have been some reductions in the programming requirements of the individual agencies, such as in UNICEF, due to the existence of the UNDAF. But in general, these reductions have been modest. UNDAF programming requirements have been an additional cost to agency programming at country level, rather than a process that has substituted for programming processes within the individual agencies.

125. In countries where a One Budget and Action Plan have been introduced, potential does exist to reduce programming costs for individual agencies. First, as donors will require one single funding proposal and progress report covering all expenditure under the One Budget, rather than the multiple funding proposals and progress reports. This should cut transaction costs for both parties. Second, a number of Action Plans also include the aspiration that funders will accept the outcome level annual work plan and work plan annual report, in lieu of other requirements. The extent to which funders will be willing to do so will be tested over the next few years. However, One Programmes and Action Plans are only found in a number of the over 120 programme countries which use an UNDAF or equivalent, and therefore benefits overall may be modest.

## **5.4 Strengthening the UN’s results focus**

### **5.4.1 What has happened?**

126. It is important to start from the finding that there is evidence of the UN making a contribution to achievement of, and influencing definition of, national priorities. As importantly, there is evidence of the UN working together and the sum of their contribution being greater due to working together. The issue is not that this does not happen, but rather does it happen frequently enough? Evidence, although of varying levels of robustness and credibility, was cited in all of the forty UNDAF evaluations reviewed as part of this assessment process and can also be found in other pieces of analytical work.

127. Starting from the 2002 CCA/UNDAF Guidelines, the identification and reporting of results at the UNDAF level has been seen as important. Interviewees consistently remark on a sustained pressure on the UN to be able to demonstrate results and this demand was reinforced in several paragraphs of the 2007 T CPR 62/208. Making better use of results based methods was identified as one of the three main measures that would enhance the UN’s effectiveness by over 60 percent of member states in their response to the DESA survey.

128. In response, the UNDG has invested significantly in strengthening guidance on development of the UNDAF results framework and on the reporting of results. First, between 2006 and 2008 a number of analyses were carried out of the experience with M&E under the UNDAF.<sup>70</sup> In the 2007

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<sup>68</sup> Wood, B; Betts, J; Etta, F; Gayfer, J; Kabell, D; Ngwira, N; Sagasti, F; Samaranayake, M. (2011) *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration - Phase 2 Final Report*. Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, May 2011.

<sup>69</sup> IEG (2011). *World Bank Progress in Harmonization and Alignment in Low-Income Countries: An Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group.

<sup>70</sup> See:

revision of the CCA/UNDAF Guidelines, results based management was introduced as one of five programming principles that needed to be used by UNCTs.<sup>71</sup> The Guidelines also explicitly highlighted that UNCT performance must be measurable, and accountabilities clarified, so that the system can deliver effectively. The Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System, introduced in August 2008, in turn made the Resident Coordinator accountable to the national government to report on UNCT results. The 2009 revision CCA/UNDAF Guidelines included a revision of the M&E guidance, providing more information on designing and implementing M&E frameworks, and clarifying that the annual progress reports, annual UNDAF review and a final UNDAF Evaluation would all become mandatory for UNCTs.<sup>72</sup> The 2010 revision of the UNDAF Guidelines reiterated the importance of RBM as one of the five programming principles of the UNDAF.<sup>73</sup>

129. Finally, in 2011, an RBM Handbook<sup>74</sup> was issued, intended to provide United Nations Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies with common ground for supporting national programme planning, implementation monitoring and reporting, based on best practices in the RBM field, for all UN staff members and stakeholders, particularly when developing and implementing their UNDAFs. A training package is being prepared that will be used to help support UNCTs, in particular those in UNDAF roll-out countries, when applying the RBM principles in developing and implementing their UNDAFs.

130. Results from the opinion surveys also suggest that the Member States, Resident Coordinators and UNCT members generally believe that the UNDAF planning/results framework has enhanced the contribution of the UN.

**Table 10: Opinion of UN staff on whether 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.**

Response	Percentage of respondents
1. Longhurst, R. (2006) <i>Review of the Role and Quality of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks</i> . Overseas Development Institute, May 2006.	
2. Balogun, P. (2006) <i>UNEG Study on the Evaluability of the UN Development Assistance Framework</i> . United Nations Evaluation Group, Dec 2006, 5.	
3. UNEG (2007) <i>The Role of Evaluation in Results-Based Management (RBM)</i> . UNEG, Feb 2007	
4. UNDG (2007) <i>Issues Note: Results Based Management in UNDAFs</i> , Task Team 1 of Working Group of Programming Policy, October 2007	
5. Balogun, P. (2007) <i>Issue Paper on Fundamental Revision of M&amp;E Aspects of UNDAF Guidelines</i> , Working paper submitted to the WGPP, January 2008. 3-5.	
6. MacKenzie, A. (2008) <i>Results Based Management at country level: Systemic issues that prevent good UNDAF results and the use of UNDAF results information</i> . A paper presented to the Working Group on programming policies. UNDG. September 2008.	

<sup>71</sup> The principle was defined as follows: Results-based management is a strategic management approach UNCTs must use with partners to plan, cost, implement, monitor and measure the changes from cooperation, rather than just the inputs provided or activities conducted. Using RBM, the UNCT ensures that its cash, supply and technical assistance contribute to a logical chain of results that increase in complexity and ambition higher up the logical chain from outputs to outcomes and then impacts - which are MD/MDG related national priorities that reflect the World Summit outcome document. RBM depends on critical assumptions about the programme environment and risk assessments, clearly defined accountabilities and indicators for results, and performance monitoring and reporting.

<sup>72</sup> These issues are discussed in greater detail in the analysis of RBM also commissioned as part of the QCPR preparation process.

<sup>73</sup> For an overview of the five programming principles and other key cross-cutting issues, refer to *How to Prepare an UNDAF: Part (II) Technical Guidance for UN Country Teams*, Chapter II, January 2010. For guidance on their practical application, see the *Guidance Note: Application of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF*, January 2010.

<sup>74</sup> *Results-based Management Handbook, Harmonizing RBM concept and approaches for improved development results at country level*, United Nations Development Group (January 2011).

	Resident Coordinators	Other UNCT members	Overall
Much more	65%	26%	31%
Somewhat more	29%	52%	49%
About the same	1%	12%	11%
Somewhat less	1%	3%	3%
Much less	3%	4%	4%
Don't know	1%	3%	2%

131. In terms of the number of UNDAF evaluations, it is too early to tell whether UNCTs have responded to the newly introduced mandatory requirement for such evaluations. However, the impression gained from looking for such evaluations suggests an increase in the number carried out. Reporting under the survey supporting the 2011 Resident Coordinator's Annual Report suggests that in 2008, 2009 and 2010 around 50 UNCTs (approximately 40 percent of the UNCTs stating that they had some form of UNDAF) conducted an UNDAF annual review in each year. This was before the UNDAF annual review became mandatory and no data are available on conformance with the new requirement in 2011. However, the UNDAF evaluations suggest that even when such annual reviews have been carried out, their value has been very limited.

132. However, while a fairly positive picture emerges from the opinion surveys the major question remains whether the UNDAF process has really strengthened the results focus of the UN at country level, and if so, has it strengthened mutual accountability between country level partners or coordination? Further examination of the evidence would suggest that in many countries, the answer is probably not.

133. The 40 UNDAF evaluations reviewed as part of this assessment were consistent in judging the quality of the UNDAF results frameworks as being technically poor. Outcome statements are broad statements, intended to allow all agencies to be included, while baselines and indicators remain either undefined or do not measure the intended change. In many cases, where the needed data will be found (means of verification), and who is responsible for its collection, remain undefined. The evaluations also consistently comment upon the lack of operationalisation of the M&E systems at the UNDAF level. When they cite evidence of the UN making significant contributions, this was rarely based on evidence from the UNDAF M&E system. As such, these evaluations' findings and conclusions echo those found in the global analyses of experience with RBM and M&E under an UNDAF carried out between 2006 and 2008.

#### **5.4.2 Has the enhanced guidance improved the technical quality of the UNDAF results frameworks?**

134. It is possible that the investment in guidance, tools and training made post-2008 has addressed many of the problems in more recently formulated UNDAFs. But as discussed below, the evidence would suggest not.

135. Under the 2010 Guidelines, UNDAF outcomes are supposed to: (i) show how the UNCT make a substantive and measurable contribution to the achievement of the selected priorities of the national development framework; (ii) reflect what the UNCT strives to achieve based on a participatory analysis of country needs, involving all relevant stakeholders, and drawing on the entire range of expertise to be found within the UN system, including of specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, in response to national development priorities; (iii) be specific, realistically achievable and measurable, so that the UN is accountable for their achievements; (iv) reflect the five inter-related programming principles and other key cross-cutting issues; (v) reflect the five Managing

for Development Results (MfDR) Principles<sup>75</sup>; and (vi) reflect the comparative advantages and capacities of the UNCT vis-à-vis other development partners and the government. One can easily imagine the challenge of defining outcomes that meet all of the above requirements. It is therefore not surprising to find that the defined outcomes do not reflect these criteria, as shown by the examples below which are randomly selected from recently developed UNDAF results frameworks:

- i. Le Secteur Privé, en particulier les MPME (Micro, petites et moyennes entreprises) des zones urbaines et rurales, ont un meilleur accès aux marchés et à des services d'appui leur permettant d'accroître leur compétitivité et leur contribution à la croissance et à la génération d'emplois décents. (Cape Verde)
- ii. Les institutions nationales en charge de la Réforme du Secteur de la Sécurité (RSS) améliorent la défense, la sécurité et la protection des personnes et des biens sur l'ensemble du territoire. (Central African Republic)
- iii. Public service reform strategy recommendation (on salary structure, capacities and professionalism) supported in partnership with WB and IMF. (The Gambia)
- iv. Women, youth, people with disability and rural households benefit from pro-poor private sector growth, decent employment and income generation. (Malawi)
- v. Vulnerable groups demand, access and use quality and equitably delivered social services. (Mozambique)
- vi. Improved national and sub-national capacities contribute to people living in/most at risk of capability poverty having enhanced access to and participating in education, health and social protection programmes which contribute to national human capital development. (Iran)
- vii. By 2015, the government promotes more equitable and sustainable growth. (Lao PDR)
- viii. Workers of the formal sector and the informal economy, and their families are covered and entitled to higher levels of benefits through contributory or partly-subsidized schemes. (Thailand)
- ix. La transparence et la performance de la vie économique et politique, la participation de la société civile, la modernisation de l'administration de la justice, les mécanismes de protection des droits de l'homme et les capacités de l'administration publique au service des citoyens sont améliorés. (Algeria)
- x. Strengthened capacities of data producers, providers and users for evidence-based socio-economic development planning and monitoring. (Vietnam)
- xi. By 2015, coherent policies and strategies to diversify economy, increase employment, decent work and productivity in the rural areas, SME and non-oil (fisheries, agriculture, industry and tourism) sectors are developed and implemented. (Yemen)
- xii. Capacities for integrating sustainable development and productive inclusion for poverty reduction. (Brazil)
- xiii. Para el 2016, la población empobrecida se beneficia de un crecimiento económico y desarrollo social sostenible, con igualdad de oportunidades. (Peru)
- xiv. Panamá habrá avanzado en la reducción de la pobreza y la desigualdad mediante esfuerzos articulados del gobierno, el sector privado y la sociedad civil para generar empleo productivo e ingresos de trabajo que fortalezcan el desarrollo nacional y favorezcan a los grupos en situación de vulnerabilidad. (Panama)

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<sup>75</sup> The MfDR five principles are: at all phases—from strategic planning through implementation to completion and beyond—focus the dialogue on results for partner countries, development agencies, and other stakeholders; align actual programming, monitoring, and evaluation activities with the agreed expected results; keep the results reporting system as simple, cost-effective, and user-friendly as possible; manage for, not by results; and use results information for management learning and decision-making, as well as for reporting and accountability.

136. The above outcome statements remain the high level 'chapeau' type statements that have been criticized in the past. Moving onto indicators and baselines, review of the results frameworks suggests that inclusion of relevant indicators and baselines remains patchy in many cases. The conclusion therefore is that many of the technical short-comings in the results frameworks remain.

137. However, it is probable that these technical issues will not be resolved, until two more fundamental issues are resolved. The challenges to operationalisation of the UNDAF as a tool for enhancing a results focus within the UNCT and other partners and increase the reporting of credible evidence of results lie in two areas. First, where does the demand for such evidence lie and therefore what does mutual accountability mean? Second, how to use the UNDAF 'results framework' when it is not a 'results framework' as commonly understood.

#### **5.4.3 Who are the intended users of results information and therefore where is the demand?**

138. The UNDAF results framework represents the first time that it has been possible to easily gain over-sight of what the UN proposes to do in a country. This is certainly viewed as useful by some governments, development partners, and Resident Coordinators. Reporting of results at the UNDAF or One Programme level also appears to be seen as useful in the contexts of countries where the UN is operating a One Fund. The One Fund approach, which draws on the DaO approach, has been implemented in a number of countries beyond the eight pilots, but does not appear to be used in the majority of the 120 countries that use an UNDAF or equivalent. However, in the last year that data were available for, 2009, in only half of countries was an annual review being carried out.

139. Obviously, systems are only operated effectively when those responsible for using them see value in doing so. In terms of using evidence for decision making and reporting, this means that systems are only likely to be implemented when it is clear to all who needs the evidence and these users can exert an effective demand. If these two conditions aren't met, the likelihood is that the system will be seen as an imposition, at best. Perhaps surprisingly, the UNDAF Guidelines have never explicitly identified how the results information should be used to improve management decision-making and whose decision making is important. This lack of clarity is also found in supporting guidance, as for example, that for the recently introduced Action Plan. In the 2010 Action Plan Guidance Note, this issue is not explicitly addressed. The closest the guidance comes is in its reminder that '*As noted in the UNDAF guidelines, attention should be given to the importance of aligning monitoring processes and mechanisms with national monitoring systems*'. An assumption underpinning the injunction to use national systems is that these are more likely to be used by government partners.<sup>76</sup>

140. If we examine the context at country level, there are two consistently identified sources of demand for evidence of UN agencies' performance. Nearly all UN agencies plan and work through programmes and projects of cooperation at country level. Whether this work is funded out of an agency's core funding or from some extra-budgetary source, such as a donor or the government, reporting and accountability requirements are imposed as a condition of funding. At this level, in cases such as the funding under the MDG Achievement Fund, there will be a focus on reporting at the collective UN level on progress by the joint programme.

141. Within the UN agencies, the driver for the introduction of a results focus has been the need to meet corporate level demands for evidence, in turn often required to meet the reporting demands of the Governing Boards. Interviewees from within the UN are consistent about the

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<sup>76</sup> UNDG (2010) *UNDAF Action Plan Guidance Note*. UNDG, January 2010. Para. 2.9

importance of these demands and the importance of those at country level being able to meet them. Accountability systems within UN agencies around these reporting requirements are also generally well understood by those involved.

142. However, this is a demand for evidence of individual UN agency performance. There is no comparable demand within the UN, at either the corporate or Governing Board level, for reporting of results at the UNDAF, rather than agency, level.<sup>77</sup> Nor, in truth, is anybody within the UN accountable for results at the UNDAF level.

143. In terms of demand for performance evidence from governments, much of the UN's work is carried out with government, and in many cases the government will be responsible for implementation. In countries with a well developed aid coordination architecture, there may also be other fora, such as the sector working groups, in which evidence of performance can be discussed. Again, assuming that the UNDAF M&E approach are aligned with governments' own monitoring and evaluation systems, this should also mean that evidence from the line ministry level, if required, will be reported to the centre of government. However, what alignment with government systems in this context means is comparatively unexplored. The only evidence was reported in the 2010 Resident Coordinators survey, where 54% of the 88 Resident Coordinators that answered the question reported that the UNDAF M&E system was aligned with national systems.

144. One significant challenge in this area is that the UNDAF review process assumes that a Managing for Development Results approach will be used, and yet, this is not the approach to performance management used by all governments and the UNCTs either. In the case of the UNCTs, in the survey, nearly all RCs responded that the outputs might change during implementation, but the expectation was that this would be triggered by a change in government and hence possible priorities. This is not what would be the major driver if MfDR were being implemented as intended. As implied in the title, MfDR is a technique developed within the donor community and is not necessarily the dominant approach to assessing results found traditionally within governments. This is clearly shown in Table 11 below, which summarizes the views of Resident Coordinators in countries where an UNDAF was prepared in 2010 or 2011 on whether the Government uses the 'Managing for Development Results' approach in its own development management? Around a fifth of governments didn't use MfDR techniques at all, while in over half the cases, MfDR techniques were only used in parts of the government. In summary, in nearly eighty percent of the governments, MfDR was not used as a whole of government technique, so raising questions over how the proposed UNDAF approach can align with that of the governments.

**Table 11: Proportion of countries developing an UNDAF in 2010 or 2011 where the Resident Coordinator considers that government is or is not using a 'Managing for Development Results' approach in its own development management**

The Government uses the 'Managing for Development Results' approach in its own development management?	Percentage of responses (n = 39)
Yes	23%
No	23%
In some parts of government	54%

<sup>77</sup> The Resident Coordinators draw on the results to a degree for reporting under the Resident Coordinators Annual Report, but this is strictly for reporting purposes and has no elements of accountability attached.

145. Using the results framework to strengthen mutual accountability also raises a further ambiguity. How is work by the UN advocating for change in government priorities to be treated? The requirement for formal government signature on the UNDAF therefore sometimes leads the UNCT to stay at a fairly general level with regard to sensitive or controversial policy issues. UNDAFs may deliberately leave open or ambiguous both the specific goal that the UNCT is trying to achieve on a policy issue, and the role the UNCT will play in addressing the issue. In other words, the fact that the documents are unclear does not necessarily mean that the UNCT is unclear about the nature of the issue or about its strategy for addressing the issue.

146. The difficulty in identifying what the real demand for results evidence at the UNDAF level is further illustrated by considering the implications of the 2010 Guidelines on this issue. The three key paragraphs state:

*Annually, the UNCT and the government conduct a review of the UNDAF. The UNDAF annual review process is aligned with the review of the national development plan, to the extent possible. The agency-specific annual review processes contribute to the UNDAF annual review. It is essential that the UNDAF annual review process is documented, even though an annual UNDAF progress report is not mandatory.*

*The annual review process is where the UNCT primarily engages with government and other partners to review overall progress towards results and take stock of lessons and good practices that feed into the annual planning processes and commitments for the coming year.*

*In order to facilitate the UNDAF annual review process, the UNCT engages with national review mechanisms, where such mechanisms exist for monitoring the national development priorities, and/or forms inter-agency groups around each national development priority reflected in the UNDAF. These inter-agency groups are responsible for using the results matrix and M&E plan as the basis for joint monitoring of outcomes, along with programme partners. The findings of these groups are a vital input for the UNDAF annual review process with the government.*

147. Reviewing the above raises three rather important questions. First, progress is being monitored and reviewed under the agency-specific annual review processes and, possibly, inter-agency groups. These processes are normally carried out as part of development of the next year's work plan with relevant non-UN partners and this schedule is normally driven by the budgetary approval schedule of the partners. Therefore, by the time the UNDAF Annual Review takes place, decisions on the next year's annual work plans and commitments will often have already been made. Second, government annual review processes are normally carried out at the policy/programme, sectoral, or sometimes, inter-sectoral levels. Review of operational performance does not take place annually across government.

148. In conclusion, what appears lacking, except in a few cases, is evidence of a sufficiently strong demand from the governments for reporting by the UN of results at the UNDAF level and clarity over what they would use this evidence for.

#### **5.4.4 What is the UNDAF Results Framework?**

149. Both the 2007 TCP/R and the UNDG Guidelines consistently refer to the UNDAF results framework. However, it is important to recognize that the UNDAF results framework is not a results

framework, as commonly understood. It is actually a statement of what the UN thinks it should do over a period of time. Why is this? As noted in the 2010 Action Plan Guidance, '*...for all UN system agencies, the resource commitments noted in the UNDAF Action Plan are indicative, and dependent on the UN system agencies' ability to raise funds. Such resources may also come in the form of technical advisory services*'.<sup>78</sup> Therefore both the UNDAF and Action Plan (where done) results frameworks diverge significantly from those used by governments, the International Financial Institutions, and bilateral donors. In such cases, a results framework identifies agreed results that will be delivered against an agreed resource envelop.

150. Defining of outcomes, identification of baselines, and setting of targets/performance indicators is supposed to happen at the strategic prioritisation stage or shortly thereafter. This means that the UNCT, with partners, is supposed to define these outcomes at least 12 months before UNDAF implementation starts, and the outcomes should show the UN's contribution after probably five years implementation; i.e. in six years time. Leaving aside the difficulty of forecasting the future, and the constraints of strategic planning discussed previously, the outcome is supposed to identify the UN's specific contribution, which will obviously depend upon what the UN actually does. Yet, as what is done is dependent on what gets funded and that is not predictable, how realistic is it to require UNCTs to define such UNDAF outcomes, establish baselines, and targets, all in the name of enhancing accountability?

151. In addition, two other factors increase the difficulty of defining and using such UNDAF outcomes. In response to the initial experience from 2002 – 2007 of UNCTs developing matrices with tens of outcomes and often between one hundred and one hundred and fifty outputs, the advice has been to restrict the number of outcomes and outputs, so that the UNDAF matrix is strategic and accessible. However, moves to ensure at the same time inclusion by the specialized agencies and the NRAs means that if one restricts the number of outcomes, by necessity they become 'chapeau' allowing everybody to be accommodated rather than outcomes based on, and derived from, a strong programme logic (as required for MfDR). This challenge is then compounded by a lack of alignment between the agency-specific RBM frameworks against which UN agencies have to provide reports to their governing bodies. At present, there is no consistency in these RBM frameworks from one agency to another. Consequently, monitoring and reporting on UNDAF results becomes an additional task, which increases transaction costs on all parties.

152. Both the 2007 TCPD and iterations of UNDG CCA/UNDAF Guidelines have also stated that the UN's main contribution is in terms of capacity development. Capacity is defined by UNDG as: the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. Capacity development: the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.<sup>79</sup> While not explicitly stated, much of the work within the UN that lead to development and agreement of this definition draws upon what is termed complex adaptive systems. However, Results Based Management and the essentially 'linear' logic inherent in results based management is at variance with how capacity development happens according to complex adaptive systems.<sup>80</sup> The implication is that results frameworks are not the most suitable tool to use when tracking capacity development.

153. Finally, the purpose of the UNDAF is to enhance collective, coherent and integrated programming and monitoring for the operations of the United Nations development system at the

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<sup>78</sup> UNDG (2010) *UNDAF Action Plan Guidance Note*. UNDG, January 2010. Para. 4.3

<sup>79</sup> UNDG (2006) *Enhancing the UN's contribution to National Capacity Development - A UNDG Position Statement*. United Nations Development Group. October 2006

<sup>80</sup> These issues are summarized in ECDPM (2008) *Capacity, Change and Performance: Insights and implications for development cooperation*. Policy Management Brief No. 21. Section 9.2

country level. If this is the case, the results framework doesn't actually tell you anything about the degree to which the UNCT is becoming more coherent and integrated. To assess these issues, one needs to construct a counterfactual of what the UN's support might have looked like in the absence of the UNDAF. It is therefore not surprising that there is almost no real evidence from M&E systems or UNDAF evaluations on this issue.

154. The fundamental questions therefore are: (i) what can the UN be held accountable for at the level of the UNDAF; and (ii) what does monitoring actually mean, when in truth it is not clear what the UN actually will do? In terms of accountability, this is currently outlined in the Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System agreed in 2008. Under this, the RC is accountable for: (i) reporting on UNCT results; (ii) achieving agreed RC results drawn from the UNCT workplan, and (iii) implementing the RC/UNCT "code of conduct". UNCT members are responsible for: (i) UN country team results where they have agreed to lead the team; (ii) implementing the RC/UNCT Code of Conduct; and (iii) agency results. Examining these accountabilities, it is clear that nobody is actually accountable for delivery of the purposes agreed for the UNDAF. In terms of considering what should be monitored, and for what purpose, there is little evidence of this issue being addressed either within the guidance developed by the UNDG or independently by the UNCTs.

## **6. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Summary of conclusions**

155. This section starts with two qualifications. The study has attempted to assess the value of the UNDAF as a tool that is used in over 140 countries. As such, the findings and conclusions reached have to be broad in nature and there will be countries, where due to exceptional circumstances, individual findings and conclusions do not apply. In response to changes in the environment and in the UNDAF Guidelines issued by UNDG in 2009 and 2010, there has also been a significant degree of differentiation in the UNDAF approaches adopted by countries that have undergone an UNDAF formulation process in 2010 and 2011. As implementation of these UNDAFs will only start from 2012, it is impossible to gather evidence of the effectiveness of these differentiated approaches and hence lessons that could be learned.

156. The assessment finds no evidence to suggest that the overall analysis under-pinning the development of the UNDAF and presented in the Secretary-General's 1997 reform proposals is either wrong or no longer valid. Nor is there evidence that the purposes for the UNDAF outlined in the resolutions of the TCPRs in 2001, 2004, and 2007 are wrong. It is also clear that the majority of the member-states, RCs and other UNCT members, despite the problems identified, believe that the UNDAF allows the UN to achieve better results than if UN agencies had continued to plan separately. As discussed below, the issue is not the need, but rather how the concept of the UNDAF is operationalised in the context of individual countries and being realistic about what the various tools applied in the UNDAF process can be expected to deliver.

157. The ultimate purpose of the UNDAF is to enhance the UN's contribution to development results. Notwithstanding this, review of a selection of UNDAFs designed in the past two years suggests that there are now distinctly different approaches for how the UNDAF is intended to achieve this and which of the purposes outlined under the various TCPR resolutions have been prioritised. Some UNDAFs mainly focus on identifying where the UN's contribution can be most significantly enhanced by greater coherence/collaboration between relevant UN agencies. In other cases, the main focus of the UNDAF is on achieving reductions in transaction costs to government and enhanced integration within the systems of the partner government. These UNDAFs are most often found in countries that have championed the DaO approach and includes countries above the

eight formal pilot countries. Other governments appear to prefer a “laissez-faire” scenario, in which the opportunity for the UN to strategically prioritise the overall portfolio of UN support is limited and prioritization will reflect the degree to which there are prioritization systems within government. However, there also appear to be a significant number of UNDAFs in which it remains unclear what the major purpose is.

158. ECOSOC specifically requested an assessment of whether the UNDAFs were aligned with national priorities. The conclusion, based on a significant body of robust evidence, is that the intended support from the UN outlined in the UNDAF frameworks is generally aligned with national priorities. Evidence would also strongly suggest that intended support identified in the UNDAFs is focused on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Cases where support identified in the UNDAF is not aligned with national priorities normally reflects situations where the UNDAF has yet not been revised in response to changing government priorities or a major change in context, such as a natural disaster or conflict situation.

159. While the support included under the UNDAFs may be aligned with national priorities, there are two issues that should be noted. There is evidence that the UNDAF process has facilitated greater engagement by non-resident agencies at country level, partly because the UNDAF process gives them a process within which to engage and supports them to engage. However, in most countries, it is probable that the UNDAFs still do not include all support from the UN; even for some of the agencies that have an in-country presence and significant operational expenditures. As discussed below, it is also important to note that the UNDAF indicates support that the UN intends to deliver and little analysis has focused on what the UN actually delivers.

160. Ensuring alignment with government priorities has also been a major achievement of the UNDAF, albeit the actual degree of alignment has been affected by a number of factors. One factor has been that in many countries there isn't a national development strategy with clear strategic priorities linked to a medium-term expenditure framework and reflected in annual budgets government priorities. In others there is no single national development strategy with which to align, but rather a range of strategies and plans with which the UN must align to some extent. Both raise challenges for alignment with national priorities. Another factor is the UN's normative role, which means that advocating with government and other national partners for re-prioritisation of government priorities to meet international norms is a normal, and accepted, part of the UN's business. The consequence is that UNDAFs normally include a mixture of support clearly in support of government and advocacy/research activities.

161. To foster greater alignment with national development plans, significant attention has been paid by UNCTs to ensuring that the planning and implementation periods for recently designed UNDAFs and national strategies/plans are the same. Progress has been made in this area, but synchronising implementation periods remains a challenge. In the best case scenario, it has often meant that prioritisation of the UN's support and development of the UNDAF results framework has taken place concurrent with, rather than after, identification by government of its own strategic priorities and definition of targets, etc. Medium term planning within the UNDAF framework is also difficult for many of the agencies, which programme on a biennial basis, so making it problematic to make commitments extending over several biennia. In other cases, internal UN issues such as the need to get agency level country programmes endorsed by the respective Governing Body or a change in key UN staff, such as the Resident Coordinator, have hampered attempts to synchronise implementation cycles.

162. A major purpose of the UNDAF is to strategically prioritise the UN's support and ensure that it is better focused. There is some evidence that the UNDAF has had some impact in this area. For

example, three-quarters of RCs managing recent UNDAF formulation processes say that as a result of the UNDAF prioritisation process, agencies agreed not to do things important within their existing mandates and priorities. However, the overall conclusion is that attempts to prioritise UN support through the UNDAF and on the basis of the comparative advantage of the UN as a whole, or of the individual agencies, have been a relative failure.

163. At present, each agency, based on its mandate and decisions of its Governing Body, decides what it will do and nobody, barring the government, has the power to say no. This does not mean that agencies do not take account of national priorities and the views of other partners, but the final decision on what to programme lies with the agency. There are also no rewards for UNCT members that sacrifice agency visibility for the greater good of the UN and country as a whole. This challenge has, if anything, been exacerbated by the drive for inclusion of agencies within the UNDAF process and framework. Many are also of the opinion that prioritisation is difficult in a context where core funding for individual agencies has, at best, remained stable over the past decade and the UNDAF has been seen by some agencies as an opportunity to enhance visibility at the country level and the possibilities to access extra-budgetary resources. This is extremely important given that the majority of responses from the member-states, Resident Coordinators and UNCT members to the DESA administered surveys suggest that competition between UN agencies for extra-budgetary resources remains the reality. However, while some of these problems are unique to the UN, it is very important to note that the UN's failure to prioritise strategically based on comparative advantage is the common experience across development partners more broadly, as evidenced in the World Bank's evaluation of its experience of harmonisation.<sup>81</sup>

164. As envisaged in the UNDG Guidelines that shape implementation of the UNDAF at country level, the UNDAF has over the past five years become an increasingly formal strategic planning tool. The UNDAF process has two distinct phases – planning and implementation. The plan, laying out the UN's future intended contribution to national objectives, is first developed by the UNCT, with varying degrees of engagement by other in-country partners. This planning exercise has two major aspects; the identification of where the UN might contribute based on an analysis of the country context and then the prioritisation of intended support based on an assessment of the UN's comparative advantage. Planning concludes with development of the actual United Nations Development Assistance Framework document, which summarises the plan of intended support. Implementation is then a distinct phase, during which implementation against the plan is monitored and adjustments may be made. Unfortunately there is little evidence that this approach has been effective in delivering the purposes of the UNDAF.

165. The factors identified above in paragraph 161 that drive behaviour of the individual agencies have undoubtedly made application of a strategic planning approach challenging. But there are more fundamental issues that call into question the value of the approach currently applied. First, in simple terms, attempting medium term strategic planning, where one is trying to identify in some detail what one will be doing possibly six years in the future doesn't work. This is because the future is too uncertain. This problem of uncertainty is exacerbated in the context of the UN where what funds will be available, and the conditions attached to their use, cannot be predicted with any certainty. For example, comparison of indicative and actual expenditures across a number of UNDAFs showed that actual expenditures over the UNDAF period were significantly greater than the sums indicated in the UNDAF documents. The ineffectiveness of the strategic planning approach has been exacerbated by the relative failure of the UN to operationalise a results focus based around use of the UNDAF, as discussed below. While the ineffectiveness of the UNDAF is disappointing, it is important to acknowledge that the UN's experience with using strategic planning approaches is not

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<sup>81</sup> IEG (2011). *World Bank Progress in Harmonization and Alignment in Low-Income Countries: An Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group.

unique and closely follows that of others who have attempted to use such approaches from the 1960s onwards. Drawing on the wider management literature, the present approach fails to recognise the difference between the 'intended' strategy represented in the initial results framework and the 'realised' strategy (what is actually delivered by the end of UNDAF implementation), and the importance of tools for manage the 'emergent' strategy (the factors and decisions that influence what actually happens). Again, experience from the broader management literature suggests the limitations of strategic planning for managing this emergent strategy. For example, an analysis of the use of strategic planning in the oil majors, among the major proponents and pioneers in the use of strategic planning, found that the critical strategic decisions that fundamentally affected the business portfolios and direction of development of the companies were, for the most part, taken outside the formal systems of strategic planning.<sup>82</sup> Such decisions were taken in response to either opportunities or threats. This experience is exactly the same as that described by RCs and UNCT representatives when discussing what drives change in what the individual UN agencies support.

166. Responses from the survey with RCs and other UNCT members indicate that they strongly believe coherence has increased over the past four years, although they also believe that more could be done. What this belief means in practice however has been difficult to assess. Neither the Member States through the TCPR process nor the UNDG have set out operationally useful definitions of what UN coherence and integration mean. This lack of a consistent and common understanding has been replicated in differing interpretations of these terms being used in the UNDAF evaluations and thus what they have assessed.

167. If coherence and integration are understood to mean that there is better communication within the UNCTs, then the evidence is strong that the UNDAF process has delivered this. The UNDAF formulation process has provided an opportunity for intensive internal discussion within UNCTs; albeit practical logistical and financial still circumscribe engagement by the NRAs. To varying degrees this dialogue continues during UNDAF implementation.

168. There is less evidence that this then means that the UN's support is actually more coherent or integrated or leads to greater use of joint programming approaches. This is partly because the outcome groups established to work during implementation, and which logically would be the main vehicle for joint programming, go through something akin to an evolutionary process. Experience documented in the UNDAF evaluations indicates that a significant number of outcome groups either never really meet or become moribund over time. It is also important to bear in mind that operational outcome groups mostly appear, to date, to have focused on the reporting of results rather than discussion of joint programming opportunities. Interestingly, especially in countries adopting the DaO approach, there is evidence that the intent is that the role of the outcome groups expand. In such cases, the role is being expanded to include joint planning (integrated workplans), resource mobilization and budgetary framework, as well as discussing programme opportunities for joint interventions with other national and international partners, taking it way beyond "just" reporting. In some other cases, these went even further to broaden their scope and include the relevant government and donors partners involved in the same area.

169. One possible reason for the variable experience with outcome groups is that the UNDAF formulation process, as outlined in the UNDG Guidelines, does not specifically focus on identification of opportunities for greater coherence during implementation of the UNDAF. This is logical if the UNDAF is seen as a medium term planning process in which formulation and implementation are

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<sup>82</sup> Grant, R. M. (2003) *Strategic Planning In A Turbulent Environment: Evidence From The Oil Majors*. Strategic Management Journal. 24: 491–517

seen as separate and sequential processes, with most of the strategic thought and analysis happening during the formulation phase. Given that in many countries individual UN agencies and groups of agencies are in fact engaged in ongoing, constructive policy dialogue and efforts to enhance coherence outside of the UNDAF process, in such situations, the UNDAF outcome groups may cease to operate because there are other, more useful, vehicles for carrying out such work. This conclusion would accord with the view from the field that the application of new systems and procedures has not been the major factor driving coherence. This is not to say that UNCT members do not see that systems and procedures – such as the UNDAF - as insignificant factors; rather they are not seen as the primary factors driving enhanced coherence within the UN at country level. Instead, strong inter-personal relationships and presumably trust, the leadership of the RC and support from the RCO are seen as more important.

170. Whether the UNDAF process has led to a decrease in duplication of activities is difficult to judge. In their responses to this question, just over half of the member states agreed that there is still a significant degree of duplication in the activities of the UN, while approximately 30 percent disagreed. Some instances of a reduction in duplication of UN support were also cited in the UNDAF evaluations, but unfortunately assessing this was not a major focus of the evaluations. In the survey of UNCT members, some also commented that outcome groups are being increasingly established in those areas where more than one agency has a mandate, and where it is important to avoid duplication or competition, and instead promote synergy.

171. Many UNCTs also remain reluctant to develop joint programmes as part of the UNDAF process. Even in cases where UN agencies agree that there are solid reasons for development of a joint programme, they often remain reluctant to do so. This is often because the transaction costs, in a situation where their business practices remain unharmonised, are judged to outweigh the possible benefits. Instead, the growth in the number of joint programmes appears to have been mostly driven by the availability of new funding from the MDG Achievement Fund and others, where use of a joint programme modality has been a pre-condition of funding.

172. Evidence of a reduction in transaction costs is also limited. In terms of reducing transaction costs to UN agencies, the overall conclusion must be that introduction of the UNDAF has actually increased programmatic transaction costs in most situations. There have been some reductions in the programming requirements of the individual agencies, such as in UNICEF, due to the existence of the UNDAF. The recently introduced Action Plan may also reduce some transaction costs, but it is still too early to tell. But in general, these reductions have been modest. UNDAF programming requirements have therefore been an additional cost to agency programming at country level, rather than a process that has substituted for programming processes within the individual agencies.

173. In a number of the countries that have adopted DaO approaches, the main purpose appears to have been to reduce transaction costs for government partners. In these cases, coordination still remains important, but is likely to be carried out in government led coordination systems rather than within the UN-focused outcome groups. Whether this has been delivered reduced transaction costs to governments within the DaO pilots is for the currently on-going *'Independent Evaluation of Lessons Learned from Delivering as One'* to judge. However, attention can be drawn to the recent experience of the World Bank and the bilateral donors on the issue of reducing transaction costs to government partners.

*"In spite of this moderately positive set of findings in a majority of the country evaluations about improvements in collaborative behaviour and some simplification of donor policies and procedures, a cautionary element also emerges. With one exception there are no clear findings of reduced administrative burdens ('transaction costs') in managing aid for either*

*governments or donors and several evaluations specifically note that they find no reductions.”<sup>83</sup>*

*“The experience of joint strategies has indicated that the high transaction costs involved for all (the Bank, other development partners, and the government) are not worth the costs, whereas a coordinated approach is a good alternative.”<sup>84</sup>*

174. Possibly the area in which least progress has been made has been in terms of enhancing a results focus at the level of the UNDAF/UNCT. Evaluative and interview evidence identify no examples of UNDAF level M&E systems working as suggested in the UNDG Guidelines or in the UNDAF M&E plans. This is despite UNDG having invested significant resources in addressing the technical short-comings in UNDAF results frameworks and M&E planning since 2006 and issuing new guidance in this area. Notwithstanding the significant investment, review of recently developed UNDAF results matrices reveals little evidence of a significant improvement in their technical quality.

175. As of 2010, less than 50 percent of UNCTs were carrying out the suggested UNDAF annual reviews, while many UNCTs were not carrying out the suggested UNDAF evaluations. In response, UNDAF annual reviews and evaluations were made mandatory from 2010 and it is therefore probable that more annual reviews and evaluations will now be carried out. However, it is probable that the lack of progress reflects two more fundamental challenges, and that the greatest challenge is not technical. First, where does the demand for evidence of performance at the UNDAF level lie and therefore what does mutual accountability mean? At present, there is no evidence of a sustained demand for evidence of results and decision making processes reliant on such evidence at the level of the UNDAF. Second, how to use the UNDAF ‘results framework’ when it is not a ‘results framework’ as commonly understood, but rather a statement of intent that is then almost never updated to reflect what actually happens and the realised strategy.

176. In summary, how should Member States and the UN assess the value to date of introduction of the UNDAF? Probably as an approach with value, where there is evidence of alignment with national priorities and the UN has responded to resolutions of the Member States under the TCPRs. However, especially given the investment to date, the value added has been limited by a number of factors:

- The challenge of ensuring coherence in the governance and functioning of the UN has been a central issue for at least 45 years. To a certain extent, the 1997 and 2005 reform initiatives respond to the same set of problems noted in 1969 by Sir Robert Jackson in his *Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System* and the decision of the Member States decision not to embark on more fundamental change in UN governance. The consequence has most clearly been seen in the limited progress in moving the UN agencies out of their individual silos and a situation in which there is no governance mechanism that looks at the UN as a whole’s performance in individual countries.
- Experience clearly shows that what individual governments want from the UNDAF varies. This variation has been insufficiently recognised by either side to date. In some cases, the governments appear to see little value in the process. In others, it is seen as a way to reduce transaction costs or to focus the UN in areas where it makes sense for there to be a coordinated UN response. UNDG may have recognised this variability at a strategic level, but not then reflected this in its Guidelines to the UNCTs.

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<sup>83</sup> Wood, B; Betts, J; Etta, F; Gayfer, J; Kabell, D; Ngwira, N; Sagasti, F; Samaranayake, M. (2011) *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration - Phase 2 Final Report*. Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, May 2011.

<sup>84</sup> IEG (2011). *World Bank Progress in Harmonization and Alignment in Low-Income Countries: An Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group.

- A number of tools and approaches have been introduced where the evidence shows that the UN's experience with their application and usefulness has not been significantly different from that of others, both within the development field and more widely. At best, the failure to learn from other's experience has led to unrealistic expectations of what change these tools could deliver. The opportunity is that the relevant expertise on these issues exists in several of the UN agencies and many of the Resident Coordinators interviewed are aware as well. Moving forward, the challenge is how to more effectively harness this intellectual capital.
- The differentiation seen in recently formulated UNDAFs will address some of the problems found with older UNDAFs, but not all. In particular the approaches suggested within the current Guidelines do not address several of the key problems with the present approach highlighted in this report, including: (i) the fundamental limitations of strategic planning as a planning tool; (ii) the ineffectiveness of using comparative advantage analysis as a tool for strategic prioritisation and focus; (iii) questions over the degree to which the UNDAF will deliver greater integration and coherence; and (iv) the relative failure of the UN to operationalise a results focus based around use of the UNDAF.

## 6.2 Recommendations

### ***Recommendation 1: The UNDAF should be retained, but its meaning refocused.***

177. The UNDAF has come to be seen by many as a process to develop a set of documents<sup>85</sup> rather than an opportunity to change in the way that the UN works, both internally and with national partners. Alternatively, the UNDAF can also be seen as a structured and potentially on-going process that fosters engagement between:

- The centre of government<sup>86</sup> and the whole of the UN. Before introduction of the UNDAF process, most relationships were between the individual UN agencies and particular line ministries.
- UN agencies as a whole to discuss issues with each other.

178. The meaning of what an UNDAF is should be re-focused on the two opportunities above and away from its current focus on the documentation for several reasons. First, it is calling for the meaning of the UNDAF to be refocused on its original purpose as identified in the TCPRs, as the "common strategic framework for the operational activities of the UN system". This entails the UN moving away from use of strategic planning to plan in detail over the medium term and instead use strategic planning as a framework for on-going management decision making around the emergent strategy. This would allow the UN to build on experience from elsewhere on how to use strategic planning effectively and would shift the focus from the production and review of documents. Second, and as important, this recommendation responds to the evolving context within which the UN operates. For example, this assessment on the one hand clearly shows that there are a number of countries where a strong relationship between the UNCT and the centre of government is required if transaction costs are to be reduced, as wanted by the governments. On the other hand,

<sup>85</sup> While the UNDAF results framework is seen as valuable for showing what the UN as a whole intends to do, instances of this having a significant impact were not found.

<sup>86</sup> While varying from country to country, and over time, centre of government agencies would commonly include Offices of the President or Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning/Planning Commission and the Ministry of Social Planning (particularly in Latin America). Some countries' constitutions provide for a Cabinet having a policy and strategy-determination, resource-allocation and implementation-management role. The Cabinet Secretariat often resides in the Offices of the President or Prime Minister. What unites all of these agencies is that they are not directly involved in the implementation of government strategies and policies, which instead is the role of the sector level ministries. Responsibility for coordination both within government and between government and development partners is also found somewhere in the centre of government.

it also suggests that reductions in transaction costs may not be the main priority for other governments. In both scenarios, engagement with the centre of government is essential.

179. As important, at the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the United Nations Member States considered proposals contained in the 2011 report of the Secretary-General on development cooperation with middle-income countries (A/66/220) and adopted a resolution reaffirming support of these countries (A/C.2/66/L.78, paragraph 2). The need for a coherent development strategy of the United Nations system for middle-income countries was highlighted, as was the need to ensure that strategies and programmes are tailored to the development needs and priorities of middle-income countries. This requires the United Nations system to reorient its internal planning and coordination processes, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, towards greater participation in national processes. This again requires engagement between the centres of government in the concerned Member States and detailed discussions within the UNCTs. This view on the future context within which the UN will operate is confirmed in the recent Evaluation of the Paris Declaration, which for middle-income countries concluded that there was: (i) less appetite for elaborate arrangements for a formal division of labour among the donors, explicit alignment exercises, complex sector-wide approaches or special emphasis on particular aid modalities; less concern about support for improving systems or capacities or engaging in policy dialogue; and (iii) emerging roles as regional and South-South leaders and providers of development cooperation. The report concludes that management challenges for such countries have changed, requiring more of a central management overview and senior policy engagement. This again emphasises the future importance of the UN's relationship with the centre of government.

***Recommendation 2: The UNCT, led by the Resident Coordinator, and centre of government should define the purposes of the UNDAF in a country.***

180. Ideally, an UNDAF requires clarity between the partners on what the UNCT and government want to gain from the UNDAF. This is a question that has been addressed in several countries but not in the majority. The implication is that if it is not clear what the government wants from the UNDAF process, it is less likely to be delivered. The evidence shows that there are at least three different things that governments may want<sup>87</sup>:

- a. Countries may prefer a highly centralized cooperation with the UN. In this case, the UN can respond with the Delivering as One UN.
- b. Countries may favour some key areas of concentration for the UN. In this case, the UN can respond with joint programming and joint programmes.<sup>88</sup>
- c. Countries may prefer a "laissez-faire" scenario. In this case, the opportunity for the UN to strategically prioritise the overall portfolio of UN support is limited and prioritization will reflect the degree to which there are prioritization systems within government.

181. Experience to date also suggests that not all governments will see great value in the UNDAF process and this needs to be recognised by the UN. Various explanations for this have been given for this, including that the government wants donor competition (rather than coordination) to provide more options or because of weak capacity. Examples cited in this report, such as the case of Egypt, also show that strong support from the coordination function at the centre of government does not necessarily mean strong support from the rest of government. The South Africa and Thailand experiences also high-light the need for both the government and the UN to understand in more detail how each works, if such approaches are to be effective. But possibly the most important

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<sup>87</sup> It is possible that they also want other things, as yet unidentified.

<sup>88</sup> The differences between joint programmes and joint programming are explained in Box 6.

conclusion is that from a recent World Bank evaluation which concluded that government capacity is critically important for effective coordination, but governments do not always want coordination, and it is not clear that external parties can influence this.<sup>89</sup>

**Recommendation 3: The UNDAF, except in exceptional circumstances, should be a strategic framework and not detailed planning tool.**

182. At present, the UNDAF is intended to be a strategic planning approach to link a common situational analysis and analysis of the UN's comparative advantage with decisions on where the UN's support would be best focused and most relevant. This is then linked to implementation through the results framework, and in some cases, an Action Plan. There is little evidence that this approach has worked. The UN's experience echoes that found elsewhere from the 1960s onwards of the limitations of such approaches due to the real world context within which organisations operate.

183. Looking to the future, the current approach of carrying out a strategic country analysis and 'planning' process that is timed to synchronise with the medium term planning or political cycle of the government should continue. It is valuable, as it offers an opportunity for the UN to build on the ongoing policy oriented work of UNCTs when engaging with government and other national partners. It also allows consideration of the degree to which the UN's support is aligned with national/government priorities.

184. One of the problems in the present approach is that the country analysis focuses on diagnosis of the situation and prediction of the best outcomes. For good strategy, the more important issue is to take the diagnosis and then define the areas in which the UN has the greatest leverage on affecting the outcome. An example may help explain this difference. In the United States, research clearly shows that social class and culture rather than expenditure per student or class size are the major determinants of student performance. This diagnosis isn't that helpful for developing school policy. While less important in terms of overall performance, analysis shows that performance is also influenced by how schools are organized. As school organization can be influenced by policy, this analysis is more useful for defining the domain of action that should be the focus in educational policy making.

185. A structured opportunity to influence the contents of the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, FAO and WFP country programming documents is also still needed. In response to GA resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence, in some countries UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA (with variable engagement by other UN agencies) have experimented with use of a common country programme document. This approach holds the possibility of fulfilling this role, but as yet it is too early to tell, although there should be sufficient experience to judge by early 2013. Issues that need to be examined before rolling out this option include: (i) how to avoid the danger of the common country programme document *de facto* replacing the UNDAF and then replicating the problems with the UNDAF approach set out in this assessment; (ii) how this approach can be used while maintaining the necessary inclusive nature of the UNDAF process; and (iii) whether this approach could be used as an opportunity to enhance reporting of the added value of greater UN coherence at the country level at the Executive Board level.

186. The UN's difficulties with using comparative advantage analysis to prioritise its support are similar to those found with many other development partners. As pointed out in the recent Paris Declaration evaluation, at least in middle income countries there also seems to be less appetite for

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<sup>89</sup> IEG (2011). *World Bank Progress in Harmonization and Alignment in Low-Income Countries: An Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Independent Evaluation Group, the World Bank Group.

elaborate arrangements for formal division of labour type approaches, as implied when using comparative advantage analysis. The limitations of approaches to prioritization based on comparative advantage analysis were also high-lighted in the recent World Bank evaluation of harmonisation.<sup>90</sup> The UNDG might instead consider whether it should instead draw on experience with competitive advantage approaches, in which the question asked would be *'what does the UN at country level need to do to maintain or enhance its competitive advantage?'*. This type of question would align much more closely with debates currently on-going within the UN over its role in middle-income and other contexts and what the UN can offer compared with other sources of support to governments and other national partners. However, using such approaches is only worthwhile if the focus is on identifying a set of concrete actions that the UNCT can implement.

187. In future, the UN should move away from the formulation process being focused on development of a results framework and move back to the using the formulation process as an opportunity to develop a framework. As such, this recommendation supports the move towards an UNDAF light approach, seen in a number of countries since 2010 - at least in terms of development of a 'document'.

188. The recommendation would however require more attention to linking the analytical process with implementation. In considering how to link analysis and implementation, the UNDG should consider the following elements:

- Based on what the main value of the UNDAF in the particular country is identified to be, the focus should be on approaches that allow on-going management of the UN's emergent strategy during the whole of the UNDAF period (see Box 2 for discussion of what an emergent strategy is). This includes recognising that critical strategic decisions that fundamentally affect what UN agencies do might, for the most part, will be taken outside formal systems of strategic planning.
- Regardless of how effective the UNDAF process may be as a vehicle for policy dialogue, there are many sectors and thematic areas where individual UN agencies and groups of agencies are in fact engaged in ongoing, constructive policy dialogue outside the UNDAF process. The question should be whether or not these should be included in the framework. At present, it would seem necessary to include most of what the UN does within the framework in countries where the government's main interest is the reduction of transaction costs and integration into national systems. In other contexts, where governments have less interest in comprehensive architectures for aid coordination/planning, it would seem better if the framework focused specifically on areas where there is added value from a coordinated response from the UN. Especially in these instances, the definition of outcome currently found in the 2010 Guidelines, while not used yet in many cases, would be the right approach to definition of outcomes.
- The approach advocated would imply a strong focus on use of management for development results (MfDR) approaches in future and less focus on reporting. This would require: (i) much greater attention to ensuring that there is a clear programmatic logic/theory for why contributions from the UN and other partners will affect the outcome; (ii) understanding that a results framework is not the same as a programme logic; and (iii) that under MfDR one does not have to identify all of the intended outputs during the formulation process, as is the current practice. Instead, an MfDR approach would mean a greater focus, on an on-going basis, of how new opportunities fit with the overall programme logic.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

- The recently produced Results-based Management Handbook<sup>91</sup> briefly discusses managing for UNDAF outcomes; noting that it is a process and needs attention in each UNCT meeting. While the Handbook possibly does not pay sufficient attention to this issue, it does identify the broad approach that would be expected:
  - Monitor financial commitments, as per the UNDAF;
  - Monitor the completion of major activities and the achievement of outputs, and track that they are contributing to outcomes;
  - Support government efforts to monitor outcome indicators - many of which should be aligned with indicators in the national development framework;
  - Reflect on the key assumptions and risks which underpin the UNDAF design and which are necessary for the achievement of outcomes;
  - Use this evidence to engage more regularly and effectively with national authorities to discuss performance and how to better align UNCT and government resources for greater effectiveness.
  
- Based on experience, an increasing number of UNCTs have opted to use an Action Plan to link analysis/formulation with implementation. In some contexts, initial experience would suggest that this is a promising approach. However, as illustrated in Table 2, the evidence also suggests that people should be cautious assuming that the benefits gained will be the same as in countries where the concept was initially developed. It is too early to judge one way or the other whether this means that the value of the Action Plan in these contexts will be either lost or different, but this needs to be assessed.
  
- Consider moving to approaches where there is less emphasis on written documentation, strategic plans are shorter, and there is less emphasis on set-piece presentations. Encourage more open discussion and the exchange of new ideas.

***Recommendation 4: The UNDG's decision to support differentiation of the UNDAF was correct, but in future should be less focused on differentiation of the 'same process' and more on differentiation in response to context and what the purpose of the UNDAF in a particular country is.***

189. Starting from the 2009 Guidelines, the UNDG has moved to allow greater differentiation in the UNDAF process. This was a response to the Member States' view that there should not be a 'one size fits all' approach but also to feedback from the field. The decision to encourage differentiation was correct.

190. This assessment would suggest that in future, differentiation will need to be focused less on differentiation of the 'same process' and more on differentiation in response to context and what the purpose of the UNDAF in a particular country is. This implies a fundamental re-orientation from tools being seen as ends in themselves to tools being seen as the means to achieving a clear purpose and being used when appropriate to achieving that purpose. Such an approach would also suggest a shift in what types of guidance is developed by UNDG at global level, with a greater focus on starting with an understanding of the differing contexts and demands and then development of tools appropriate to the context and demand.

***Recommendation 5: To achieve greater coherence, the UNCTs need to manage for coherence.***

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<sup>91</sup> UNDG (2011) Results-based Management Handbook. UNDG. October 2011

191. This assessment argues that coherence and a coordinated response is not always required, and in many cases governments are happy to maintain bilateral relationships between specific UN agencies and government ministries/departments. The current UNDAF outcome statements are also developed to allow inclusion of support from all of the participating UN agencies within a restricted number of outcomes. This means that outcomes are not identified based on where a coordinated response from the UN makes sense, despite this being the intent behind the new definition of an outcome introduced in 2010 Guidelines.

192. If coordination of the UN's response is the major objective, then the UNDG should encourage most UNCTs to move towards the approach now found in a limited number of countries, where the UNDAF does not encompass all that the UN does at country level. Instead the focus within the UNDAF is on the specific areas in which the UNCT, sometimes with government, identify that there is added value in a coordinated and coherent approach. This would require moving perceptions by many that inclusion requires that every agency and every intended activity needs to be included within the framework. In future, it also needs to be recognised that coherence and integration can be achieved through several vehicles and not just the UNDAF.

***Recommendation 6: The UNDG should focus on strengthening reporting of results from the agency level country presence to the headquarters and then the Governing Boards. At country level, UN agencies should also focus on ensuring that evidence of results is reported through government reporting and management systems.***

193. The UNDG and UNCTs have invested significant resources in developing UNDAF level M&E and reporting systems. Yet, there is little evidence of a demand for such evidence or of it being used to affect decision making and none that the M&E approaches envisaged in the Guidelines and the UNDAF M&E plans have been fully implemented anywhere. An alternative approach would be for the UNCTs and UNDG to focus on enhancing reporting on how the UNDAF process has enhanced the UN's, and individual agencies', contributions through the well-established systems that are already in place. First, through the reporting of results from the agency level country presence to the headquarters and then the Governing Boards of the individual agencies. Second, through the governments' own reporting and management systems. In both cases this would potentially shift the focus from developing a separate reporting system for the UNDAF to strengthening the reporting of the added value of coherence and other benefits of the UNDAF within the existing systems. Additionally, it would be better aligned with the 2008 TCPR resolution emphasising that the UN should make use of and strengthen national capacities and mechanisms.

***Recommendation 7: UNDG must agree an effective policy for adequately resourcing the RCO function on a sustainable basis.***

194. An adequately resourced Resident Coordinator's Office was identified as key to increased coherence by both RCs and other UNCT members. Yet, at the time that demands on the RCO function are increasing, funding for this function is in rapid decline. UNCTs are responding to this challenge in various ways, but a sustainable solution requires UNDG to develop an effective policy for adequately resourcing the RCO function on a sustainable basis.

***Recommendation 8: UNDG needs to reduce contradictory guidance from the Headquarters' about engagement with UNDAF process and embed the UNDAF in agency policy***

195. A clear message from the field is that progress is almost entirely based on the leadership of the RCs and the willingness of UNCT members to cooperate. Such approaches are by their nature unsustainable, as they depend on the people involved, and as the UNCT membership changes, so

will the willingness to participate and cooperate. This challenge has been accentuated by contradictory guidance issued from agency Headquarters and, reportedly, instructions from the Governing Bodies of the agencies.

***Recommendation 9: Member states are correct to urge the harmonisation of the vertical business practices of the individual agencies, but also need to recognise that a significant pay back is likely to be found in only some programme countries***

196. Significant decreases in transaction costs is a major concern of some, but not all, governments. Achieving the desired decreases in transaction costs when using joint programming and joint programme approaches clearly requires harmonisation of business practices. However, this presents both the member states and the UNDG with a dilemma, as harmonisation of business practices requires harmonisation of business practices for the work of the UN agencies in all countries, which is not without cost. Yet the need and probable pay back is likely to be found in only some programme countries.

## Annex 1: Terms of Reference

### 1. Introduction

#### *The QCPR*

The QCPR is the mechanism through which the General Assembly establishes system-wide policy orientations for the development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system in response to the evolving international development cooperation environment.

The 2012 QCPR will assess the impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence of UN operational activities for development. This will include (i) reviewing the implementation of policies established in GA resolutions 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review and 64/289 on system-wide coherence and (ii) Exploring in particular depth areas identified by ECOSOC resolution 2011/7 as deserving special attention by the Secretary-General in his analytical preparations for the 2012 QCPR. These included<sup>92</sup>

The QCPR process provides an important opportunity to Member States to engage in a dialogue on how to adapt UN operational activities for development to the changing global development cooperation context.

The Secretary-General facilitates the QCPR process by providing Member States with impartial, balanced and forward-looking analysis on the implementation of GA and ECOSOC policies through several methods, including survey of programme countries on UN operational activities for development; analytical studies on selected issues involving research and desk reviews of key documents in all substantive areas; and consultations with agencies and partners, including through visits to programme countries.

#### *Background*

ECOSOC resolution 2011/7 requests the Secretary-General to pay particular attention, in the report for the 2012 QCPR to among others “an assessment of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks to determine, inter alia, their alignment with national priorities, their focus on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the effectiveness of their process, building on the review conducted by the United Nations Development Group”. ECOSOC also mandated an analysis of how the characteristics, approaches and strategic and programming frameworks of United Nations system operational activities should evolve to respond to various country situations, based on the principles of national ownership and leadership, and to the evolving international development cooperation environment;

The UNDAF is the strategic programming and monitoring framework for the UN Country Team (UNCT), describing the collective response of the UNCT to the priorities in the national development framework (national development plan and strategy; poverty reduction plan). The UNDAF came into being as a result of the reform of the UN in 1997 “in order to achieve goal-oriented collaboration,

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<sup>92</sup> Those areas relate to; A review of progress to ensure national ownership and leadership, including through the use of national systems; An assessment of the functioning of the resident coordinator system; funding, the critical mass of core resources and recovery of support costs; progress to improve results-based strategic planning and management; An analysis of how the characteristics, approaches and strategic and programming frameworks of United Nations system operational activities should evolve to respond to various country situations, based on the principles of national ownership and leadership, and to the evolving international development cooperation environment; A review of progress at the country level in improving coordination on mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women; (k) An assessment of UNDAF;

programmatically coherent and mutually reinforcing”<sup>93</sup> in the UN programmes of assistance. It was expected to be a highly strategic framework, containing *common objectives* and *time frame*.

Since its inception, the content, format and process of the UNDAF have been constantly refined, drawing on lessons learned from country experiences. New guidelines have been given by intergovernmental bodies, such as on the need for closer alignment between agency programmes and UNDAFs as well as the need for the IFIs and the United Nations system to pursue greater harmonization of their strategic frameworks to enhance cooperation (ECOSOC 2011).

The recent revision of UNDAF guidelines by UNDG in 2010 furthermore simplified the UNDAF process, while also giving greater flexibility to the UNCT in determining the process, considering specific country contexts. The UNDAF Action Plan, was also introduced on a voluntary basis to operationalize the UNDAF with a common programming document, replacing individual agency country programme action plans and thereby promoting coherence at implementation level. Some countries have adopted a common country programme document, which is expected to reinforce the linkage with the UNDAF. The impact of these new developments is still to be assessed.

There are observations that the UNDAF improves alignment with national development priorities, contributes to better articulation of UN strategic priorities and strengthens the cooperation of the UNCT. In addition, it is meant to help avoid duplication or overlap of agency efforts, ensure a consistent approach across the UN system and avoid competition or conflicting advice and support. Furthermore, the UNDAF creates synergies and potential for joint and more impactful action than would otherwise have been possible. Last but not least, it is expected to provide cost savings and economies of scale for the UN, while reducing transaction costs and co-ordination burden for government counterparts.

However, several challenges warrant special attention:

First, there are continuing perceptions that the UNDAF may be overly driven by UN entities and based on their respective organizational mandates, priorities, and country presence, which sometimes may not fully reflect the priorities of governments. This means that recipient governments may not have the full range of choices and flexibility to determine the support they can draw from the UN development system.

Second, there is need for more evidence of the value-added of UNDAF over and above agency - specific programmes in terms of development results. In some instances, the UNDAF and agency-specific programmes are somewhat disconnected and therefore the UNDAF is seen useful only as a teambuilding exercise that brings UN agencies to the same table. There has also been mismatch between the planning figures in the UNDAF and the actual expenditures leading to undermining the usefulness of UNDAF as a programming document.

Third, in particular, more evidence is needed to demonstrate that the UNDAF drives coherence (e.g. joint programming, joint programmes, joint resource mobilization, joint implementation, etc.). There are observations that once the UNDAF is developed, business-as-usual supersedes in some cases.

Fourth, the process to prepare an UNDAF is perceived by some as lengthy and time-consuming, inflexible and costly in certain contexts. In cases where UN presence is small, the cost of developing a UNDAF may not justify its costs. Recent guidelines allow for more flexibility and simplification, but it remains to be seen whether there has been an impact on improvement in the process and whether this flexibility is well understood by UNCTs and regional UNDGs.

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<sup>93</sup> Action 10, A/51/950, Renewing the United Nations: A programme for reform, Report of the Secretary-General

## 2. Objective

The objective of the study is to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the UNDAF in fulfilling its original goals<sup>94</sup> in a changing development landscape. These goals are: ensuring national ownership and leadership of UN system operational work, goal-oriented collaboration, programmatic coherence and mutual reinforcement. This will include identifying UNDAF's strengths, benefits, weaknesses and costs, thereby informing the improvement or development of future frameworks to promote UN system-wide coherence at country level. It will constitute an important input to the analytical preparations of the Secretary-General's report for the 2012 QCPR.

This study will be also used as a basis to develop learning materials and training modules on the UNDAF. UNDESA will partner with the UN System Staff College to execute this project. The Staff College is selected as a partner, given that it has been providing training to UN system organizations on the roll-out of the UNDAF. The knowledge accumulated in the process and the expertise housed in the Staff College's team in support of UNDAF training will be an important contribution to the study.

## 3. Scope of analysis

Analytical preparations for the 2012 QCPR will particularly focus on policy issues felt to require special attention by Member States. This study will therefore focus on the following areas, which emerged in the follow-up to the 2007 TCPR (See annex for corresponding questions):

### A. National ownership and leadership

- ✓ Extent, depth and quality of leadership and participation of the government in the entire UNDAF process – involvement of other national actors
- ✓ Use of national systems
- ✓ Alignment with national planning cycles
- ✓ Adequacy of reporting to national authorities

### B. Relevance

- ✓ Alignment with national priorities and strategies
- ✓ Responsiveness and flexibility to emerging global, regional, and national development issues and changing national circumstances and priorities
- ✓ Reflection of the principle of "no one-size-fits-all" in terms of adjustment of priorities, sectoral focus, approach, nature of outputs/activities in different development settings, including transition settings.

### C. Contribution to strategic positioning and coherence<sup>95</sup>

#### 1. Strategic positioning

- ✓ The extent to which the UNDAF:
  - Focuses main support of the UN development system on selected clearly identified high impact priority issues and results
  - Identifies clear system-wide priorities as common UNCT priorities instead of being a collection of agency specific activities

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<sup>94</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Both strategic/substantive coherence and coherence in processes

- Addresses the normative role of the UN development system in national development (e.g., in support of internationally agreed development agenda, norms and standards)

## 2. Coherence:

- ✓ The extent to which the UNDAF:
  - Drives joint programming, joint programmes, joint resource mobilization and joint implementation
  - Guides individual agency programmes
  - Draws from the expertise of non-resident agencies
  - Strengthens the authority of the RC ( facilitated /led by RC)
  - Positions UN assistance in the context of support by other development cooperation actors and strengthens partnership of the UNCT with other partners, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, the private sector, NGOs
  - Supports a coherent approach to a smooth transition from relief to development
  - Coordinates with other strategic planning processes, including processes of the UN and BWIs and those in post-conflict and post-crisis situations

## D. Efficiency of process

- ✓ The extent to which UNDAF tools and processes reduce or simplify programming efforts for the UNCT members and partners
- ✓ The cost of processes against the cost of programmatic delivery
- ✓ Commonalities and differences in the UNDAF processes between varying UN country presence

## E. Impact on results

- ✓ How results are defined and reviewed/evaluated
- ✓ Identification of evidence that UNDAFs lead to better development results
- ✓ Clarification of the channels from the UNDAF to better development results (e.g. through multi-dimensional/sectoral approach, larger-scale intervention through wider scoping and combined resources, stronger normative content, better focus on vulnerable groups)

## F. Recommendations

- ✓ Actions to be taken to improve UNDAF-centered country-level coordination
- ✓ Models/modalities that may better support system-wide coherence at country level in view of future development landscape, challenges and varying country situations
- ✓ Ways to improve focus of UNDAFs on results

## 4. Methodology

The study requires a holistic and comprehensive collection and analysis of data from various sources, including:

First, desk review of intergovernmental, interagency and agency-specific policies/ guidance on the UNDAF and country-level programming;

Second, desk review of past UN and external studies/evaluations regarding, the role, value-added, relevance, quality of the UNDAF and the efficiency of its process, including recent UNDG reviews of UNDAF;

Third, analysis of UNDAFs against certain criteria in a sample of countries covering all country types by income (LDCs, MICs), fragility (normal development settings and countries in transition from relief to development, disaster prone countries), UN presence (large, middle or small UN presence) and reform status (delivering as one, self-starter or others);

Fourth, consultations with UN agencies and relevant interagency bodies and staff, Member States, think tanks, experts on the costs and benefits of and expectations about the UNDAF, through interviews, country missions, physical/virtual meetings, workshops.

In addition, the study will also benefit from: 1) a comparative analysis of UNDAF planning figures with actual expenditures in a sample of programme countries; 2) the findings of the survey of Member States on the quality of support provided by the UN development system; 3) the findings of the desk review of QCPR-related topics; 4) an analysis of findings of UNDAF evaluations and mid-term reviews, and 5) an analysis of new issues related to operational activities, all of which will be part of the analytical preparations for the QCPR.

The methodology and findings of the study will be peer reviewed by experts and selected UN evaluative bodies before being discussed in Expert Group Meeting(s) scheduled for April 2012.

## **5. Key tasks**

1. Prepare a brief inception note for the implementation of the study;
2. Review guidance and studies on the UNDAF and relevant topics;
3. Develop criteria to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the UNDAF in various development situations;
4. Review UNDAFs against established criteria and conduct case studies;
5. Identify development results of the UNDAF and clarify the result chain;
6. Consult regularly with relevant institutions and individuals within and outside the UN system on issues related to the study;
7. Lead the analytical work;
8. Prepare the draft report;
9. Finalize the report;
10. Serve as a resource person in workshops/trainings with Member States and UN system organizations on UNDAF related issues to be held in New York or other duty stations, as part of the QCPR preparatory process;
11. Perform other tasks as requested by DCPB.
12. Develop learning materials/training modules for DESA and the Staff College

## **6. Main deliverables**

Under the supervision of DESA and with the support of the Staff College, the consultant will be expected to produce the following deliverables:

1. Inception note containing recommendations on the coverage, scope, methodology and other related aspects of the study [7-10 pages by 23 January 2012];
2. The criteria to assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the UNDAF [2-3 pages by 10 January 2012];
3. First draft of approximately 15,000-20,000 words [by 28 February 2012];
4. The final report of approximately 15,000-20,000 words containing a dedicated section on methodology, a comprehensive assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of

the UNDAF and recommendations for future UN development assistance framework at country level [by 16 March 2012];

5. A 5-page synthesis of the main report to be included in the 2012 analytical report of the Secretary-General on the QCPR [by 1 April 2012].
6. Advice on the development of learning materials on the UNDAF to be developed in collaboration with the UN System Staff College and outline of a learning module (approximately 2 working days) [by 18 May 2012]

## Annex 2: List of those consulted

<b>Surname</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Agona	Odyek	UNFPA
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Baumann	Marco	UN DOCO
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Kasturiarachchi	Asoka	UNDP
Keopanya	Nisith	Governance and Public Administration Reform (GPAR) joint

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Tata	Srinivas	Regional Commission
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Topping	Jennifer	Resident Coordinator, Mozambique
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van den Boogaard	Mark	UN DOCO
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Wong	Janet	UN-Women, Lao PDR
Woo	Jong-Gil	UNOHCHR, Thailand
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## Annex 4: Steps in development of an UNDAF

Table 1: Summary of steps in the UNDAF process

<b>DESIGN &amp; FORMULATION</b>	<b>Develop Roadmap</b>	<p>UNCT and the government coordinating body should prepare and agree on a road map clearly aligning to the national development planning process, and laying out the steps and milestones for the UNCT's contribution to country analysis and UNDAF preparation.</p> <p>As part of the road map, the UNCT and national stakeholders agree on a consultative process, of their choice, for conducting the country analysis and for validation and review of the draft UNDAF. For increased ownership by all relevant stakeholders, the consultative process needs to be inclusive. UNCTs may identify appropriate coordination mechanism(s) for implementing the road map.</p> <p>As need to be fully aligned with the national development planning cycles, whenever possible, the duration and timing of the UN programming process, including the UNDAF, should be synchronized with the national planning cycle. Ideally the UNDAF begins when the national plan commences.</p>
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**Carry Out Country Analysis**

The purpose of the UNCT's analytical contribution is to strengthen country analytical capacities, processes and products, and thereby contribute to the articulation of high-quality development objectives and priorities within the UNDAF and the national development plan. Good analysis includes identifying areas where the country has not been able to reach internationally-agreed development goals and commitments to international norms and standards, and how to assist the country to do so. A clear comparative advantage that the UNCT can bring to a country's analytic work is to help identify priority development problems.

**Select Approach**

- Review existing analysis
- Select Analysis option
  - (i) UNCT participation in government-led analytical work and use of government analysis, including sectoral reviews and analyses;
  - (ii) complementary UN-supported analytical work, with a focus on gaps in the existing analysis; and
  - (iii) a full CCA.

**Analysis required**

- Assess country situation
- Select challenges
- Undertake causal analysis
- Identify priority problems and root causes

**Identify UN comparative advantage**

- Map UNCT work and identify UN Comparative Advantages

## Do Strategic Planning

**Carry out Strategic prioritisation exercise (e.g. SPR):** The UN system, including specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, and stakeholders, led by the government, including all line ministries concerned, participate in a prioritisation exercise. The aim is to relate the comparative advantages of the UN system to specific national development priorities in a particular country, as well as the collective resources of the UN system in relation to other resources available to the government, such as through national budget, private sector, international financial institutions and bilateral aid.

**Select priorities and outcomes:** After reviewing all national development priorities, and then agreeing on which national development priorities are appropriate for UN action, the UNCT, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, must agree on a set of outcomes to support each national development priority.

**UNDAF Result Matrix:** A results matrix must be developed for every UNDAF. The results matrix is the management tool within the UNDAF. Progress towards the results, with specific targets, and the contribution of each agency are regularly monitored, reported on, and evaluated.

UNCTs have three options for the level of results in the UNDAF results matrix.

- UNDAF results matrix only includes outcomes
- UNDAF results matrix includes outcomes and outputs

**Draft Document Narrative:** The UNDAF document does not exceed 15 pages. It includes the following sections: signature page; introduction, including summary of country analysis; UNDAF results; initiatives outside results matrix; estimated resource requirements; implementation arrangements; M&E.

**M&E Plan:** The UNDAF M&E plan is designed, with the full involvement of government and other partners, at the same time as the results matrix, which is the basis of the M&E plan. It may draw on the national M&E plan, of the national development framework, where available.

**Sign UNDAF:** The UNDAF must be signed and launched following the launch of the national development plan, whenever possible. The RC sends the signed UNDAF to all partners and to the Chair of the UN Development Group for submission to the UN Secretary-General.

**Monitor And  
Evaluate Progress**

**UNDAF Annual Reviews:** Annually, the UNCT and the government conduct a review of the UNDAF. The UNDAF annual review process is aligned with the review of the national development plan, to the extent possible. The agency-specific annual review processes contribute to the UNDAF annual review. It is essential that the UNDAF annual review process is documented, even though an annual UNDAF progress report is not mandatory.

**UNDAF Progress Report:** As required by the TCPR, UNCTs produce an UNDAF progress report to national authorities on progress towards the outcomes of the UNDAF results matrix. The UNCT draws on available evidence of what the UN has contributed towards these outcomes. The UNDAF progress report does not discuss UN-supported activities. It reports on how the outputs, produced by the UN or specific UN-supported projects and programmes, contribute towards progress in achieving the outcomes of the UNDAF results matrix.

The UNCT, in consultation with government and other key partners, may produce more than a single UNDAF progress report per UNDAF cycle, if this adds value.

**UNDAF Evaluation:** An evaluation of the UNDAF is required. Evaluation aims to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the UN system's contribution, as described in the UNDAF. It is essential for evaluation to be credible, independent, impartial, transparent and useful. The UNCT and government agree on the arrangements for conducting the UNDAF evaluation.

**Table 2: Does the approach suggested in the 2010 Guidelines mean that the UNDAF is a strategic planning tool?**

Classical strategic planning includes a number of steps in the process. Table 2 below uses a framework for analyzing a strategic planning approach drawn from Grant, R. M (2003) *Strategic Planning in a Turbulent Environment: Evidence from the Oil Majors*. Strategic Management Journal, 24: 491–517. Evidence on how these steps are covered is in the right-hand column.

<b>Strategic Planning Stage</b>	<b>Addressed in the 2010 guidelines?</b>
1. Planning guidelines. These guidelines and assumptions comprise two major elements. First, a view of the external environment. Second, corporate management’s overall direction to the planning process through a statement of priorities, guidelines, and expectations.	<b>Yes</b> The Guidance on how to approach the CCA process provides detailed direction on how to analyse the external environment. This is then combined with guidance issued on how to incorporate 5 principles in planning and programming - Human rights-based approach (HRBA), Gender equality, Environmental sustainability, Results-based management (RBM) and Capacity development.  Direction on priorities is also issued at both UNDG and at individual agency level, which should inform planning.
2. Draft Plans.	<b>Yes.</b> Draft narrative report and results matrix are the end point for the formulation process.
3. Discussion of Plan with corporate level.	<b>Yes.</b> The UNCT is required to share a draft with the regionally based QSA Convening Agency for final review by the PSG. The Convening Agency provides consolidated comments from the PSG within 15 working days. The UNCT then reviews and updates the UNDAF based on the comments and concerns received.  Guidelines also state that the UNCT and government should also seek feedback on the initial draft from other development partners.
4. Revision of Plans.	<b>Yes.</b> See above
5. Budgeting	<b>Yes</b> The Results Matrix is supposed to include the estimated financial resources required by the UN system for its contribution to the achievement of each outcome and estimated financial resources each agency will contribute (both regular budget and other resources) to the achievement of the outcome.
6. Approval	<b>Ambiguous.</b> The UNDG Regional Team’s role is quality support, and not assurance, and therefore the team has no authority to state that an UNDAF is not approved.
7. Setting performance targets.	At country level, the UNDAF is signed by both UNCT and Government. <b>Yes.</b> After reviewing all national development priorities, and then agreeing on which national development priorities are appropriate for UN action, the UNCT, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, must

**Strategic Planning Stage****Addressed in the 2010 guidelines?**

agree on a set of outcomes to support each national development priority. The outcomes:

- (i) Make a substantive and measurable contribution to the achievement of the selected priorities of the national development framework;
- (ii) Reflect what the UNCT strives to achieve based on a participatory analysis of country needs, involving all relevant stakeholders, and drawing on the entire range of expertise to be found within the UN system, including of specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, in response to national development priorities;
- (iii) Are specific, realistically achievable and measurable, so that the UN is accountable for their achievements;
- (iv) Reflect the five inter-related programming principles and other key cross-cutting issues;
- (v) Reflect the five Managing for Development Results (MfDR) Principles;
- (vi) Reflect the comparative advantages and capacities of the UNCT vis-à-vis other development partners and the government.

**8. Performance appraisal.****Yes**

The Annual Review, UNDAF Progress Report and UNDAF Evaluation are all now mandatory

**Table 3: Is the UNDAF based on a forecast of the future?**

<b>What forecast</b>	<b>Evidence from 2010 Guidelines</b>
<b>Forecast of the macro context</b>	<p>In order to ensure ownership, leadership and full participation of national authorities in all phases of the programming process, the UNCT determines whether a common country assessment (CCA) is necessary or whether it can select any other option. The purpose of the UNCT’s analytical contribution is to strengthen country analytical capacities, processes and products, and thereby contribute to the articulation of high-quality development objectives and priorities within the UNDAF and the national development plan.</p>
<b>Demand from government</b>	<p>The UN system, including specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, and stakeholders, led by the government, including all line ministries concerned, participate in a prioritisation exercise. The aim is to relate the comparative advantages of the UN system to specific national development priorities in a particular country, as well as the collective resources of the UN system in relation to other resources available to the government, such as through national budget, private sector, international financial institutions and bilateral aid. <u>In terms of identifying the UN’s comparative advantage, we should note that doesn’t specifically examine where United Nations has comparative advantage as a convener of stakeholders, as an advocate for international norms and standards and as a source of technical assistance and advice on how to build and strengthen institutions and barriers to moving away from being a myriad of niche players, which individually do not have the influence and authority to secure a strong voice in national debates.</u></p>
<b>Funding</b>	<p>Estimated financial resources required by the UN system for its contribution to the achievement of the outcome and estimated financial resources each agency will contribute (both regular budget and other resources) to the achievement of the outcome. Optional: may include government’s contribution or cost sharing. 2.11 It is useful to clarify that an UNDAF Action Plan is not a tool for approval or allocation of resources (both core/regular and non-core/other/extra-budgetary) by governing bodies for UN system agencies’ country programmes. Other documents such as biennial work plans and country programme documents serve this purpose and will continue to do so. An UNDAF Action Plan may, however, serve as the basis for joint resource mobilization by the UNCT or for accessing specific funds which require a coordinated operationalization of the UNDAF,</p>
<b>Results</b>	<p>UNDAF results (at all levels) are tracked through a manageable set of key performance indicators. All indicators are accompanied by baselines and targets. To ensure consistency, indicators, baselines and targets are usually not changed retroactively. If they are it is only with the consent of all partners.</p>

**Table 4: Degree to which the UNDAF Guidelines specify how a purpose will be achieved**

<b>Purpose of the UNDAF</b>	<b>How is the UNDAF supposed to deliver this purpose according to the 2010 Guidelines?</b>
Supporting the alignment of UN support with national priorities	The UN system, including specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, and stakeholders, led by the government, including all line ministries concerned, participate in a prioritisation exercise. The aim is to relate the comparative advantages of the UN system to specific national development priorities in a particular country, as well as the collective resources of the UN system in relation to other resources available to the government, such as through national budget, private sector, international financial institutions and bilateral aid.
The synchronization of the programme cycles of the national government and of as many agencies in the UN system as possible	Agreement on shortening or extending an UNDAF cycle so that synchronized with that of government can be made between the government and UNCT in consultation with the Regional undg Team.
The promotion of the Millennium Declaration as the global context for national plans and programmes and of the Millennium Development Goals as benchmarks for progress in the implementation of those plans and programmes	The UNCT is required to support national priorities and to advocate that those national priorities include governments' international/global commitments to the MD/MDGs and internationally agreed development goals, and their obligations under international human rights, international norms and standards, and other instruments.
The production of a common situation analysis	The UNCT is still required to do so, although since 2010 three options in terms of how this is addressed can be used. A full-fledged CCA is one of the three options. The other two focus on adopting or complementing the existing situation analysis (of the government and other partners in the country).
Taking a strategic planning approach to link the common situation analysis and analysis of the UN's comparative advantage with decisions on where the UN's support would be best focused and most relevant	Yes, see Annex 4 Table 2.
The promotion of coherence in the UN system's operations. This is variously understood to mean the UN speaking with one voice (an internal UN perspective) and/or creating one unified UN entity with which governments	Not actually discussed explicitly in the Guidelines.

can engage when dealing with strategic issues, such as alignment with national priorities (an external perspective)	
The broadest possible participation of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional UN offices in the UNDAF process	The Management and Accountability System for the UN Development and RC System identifies maintaining inclusive teamwork of the UN system, including specialized agencies and non-resident agencies, is the responsibility of the Resident Coordinator.
The participation of national governments and other national stakeholders in the CCA/UNDAF process and their “ownership” of the products	Major requirement in the formulation process identified in the Guidelines
The reduction of duplication of programmed support across the UN agencies	Supposed to identify opportunities to do this as part of the comparative advantage analysis
The reduction of transaction costs on the part of both the government and the UN system when programming support	Not discussed in the Guidelines.
Enhancing the results focus of the UN at country level	Major focus with development of mandatory Annual Review, UNDAF Progress Report and UNDAF Evaluation processes.