Summary Brief on the Cape Verde Joint Office model

March 2016

The Cape Verde Joint Office model was designed to reduce the overall costs as well as the transaction costs of a UN presence, especially in small countries. The standard individual agency office with full representation, was considered too large and expensive in relation to the size of the programmes. The Joint Office was launched in 2006.

Five distinct design features:
1. One Representative for the participating agencies: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and initially also WFP.
2. The One Representative would also be the UN Resident Coordinator (RC).
3. One organizational structure as a Joint Office using UNDPs operational platform with a single Common Country Programme Document (CCPD) instead of individual agency programmes and Country Programme Documents (CPDs).
4. One set of business processes, rules and regulations (for finance, HR, procurement, ICT, logistics) based on a UNDP operational platform.
5. The Common Country Programme would function under an established governance process that preserves the mandates/core issues of all participating agencies. The system put in place, thus ensures that each of the UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP programme mandates are reflected in a single Programme document, and ensures the host government has access to each agency’s technical expertise and services.

What does the evaluation say?
• The Joint Office model piloted in Cape Verde is a cost effective business model which may be of particular use in countries characterized by a smaller UN programme value and operational footprint.
• It has significantly reduced the cost of expensive separate UN agency representation.
• The Cape Verde model effectively introduced a single set of programme and operations policy guidance (taken from UNDP), and these govern all UN programmes and operations activities in the country level. It has thus removed a range of bottlenecks that other countries face due to multiple and very different UN agency policies and procedures, and significantly

“The process of articulating the joint programme with national partners is done jointly and concurrently, allowing for better identification of comparative advantages and areas of expertise of participating agencies and of available funds. The result is a more effective and efficient joint intervention.”

Quote internal review report
Joint Office model, 2013

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1 WFP ceased their activities in Cape Verde in 2010, and has no presence in Cape Verde since.
2 CCPDs are currently no longer supported by the UNDG, and got replaced with the more strategic and comprehensive One Programme approach.
3 Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One, April 2012 ; UN interagency assessment of the Joint Office model, Nov 2013
reduced transaction costs for government.

- Over time, greater coherence in UN programming and operations has been enhanced through the joint office approach
- Joint programming in a joint office has decreased the competition for funding among agencies and the transaction costs associated with separate resource mobilization and allocation process.

Some lessons learnt and issues to consider

- The Joint Office organization, was the combination of three (originally four) separate agencies into one single UN office in Cape Verde. This exercise was conducted on the understanding that no staff would lose their jobs in this first phase. A job matching exercise placed existing staff into units and an informal system of agency focal points was put in place which to some extent may have defeated the purpose, early on, to create a more streamlined and integrated office and capacities. The practice of agency focal point in no longer in place.
- The issue of inter-operability of ERPs remains a challenge. To overcome this, the Joint Office uses the UNDP Atlas system, which is also shared with UNFPA. The lack of interoperability between the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA systems have resulted in staff having to manually input information from one system into another.
- The staff in the Joint office are on UNDP contracts. UNFPA and UNICEF no longer have staff on their own agency contracts. There is growing concern by the CV team, that this has resulted in a visible lack of administrative relationship between these agencies HQs and these staff, and may potentially also limit their overall engagement and consequently the level of support provided to the office, putting at risk the capacity of the office to respond with highly technical expertise to some agency specific mandates. Greater oversight, technical assistance and guidance by the agency’s Regional Offices, and the Regional UNDG in particular is already being noted and should address this concern.
- The transfer of UNFPA and UNICEF staff to UNDP contracts decreased career opportunities of this staff within their former agencies due to, amongst others, the fact that they are now considered “external” candidates to their former agencies;
- With Agenda 2030 calling for an increasingly demanding role and responsibility for advocacy, analytics, policy voice and advisory services, the issue of optimal substantive capacity and organizational arrangements, with full support to the multi-hatted Resident Coordinator in the various areas of policy can become a growing concern. Who supports an integrated office, if there is no integrated presence at global or regional levels?
- This is one model of an integrated office. There are others, such as in the SIDS. And each carry their pros and cons, and must be judged by suitability to country context, and for the results they deliver.