



Summary brief on UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) – Status, trends and next generation

March 2016

The UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)¹ is the strategic medium-term (3-5 years) results framework that describes the collective vision and response of the UN system to national development priorities and results. It defines how the UN Country Team contributes to the achievement of development results, based on an analysis/assessment of country needs and UN comparative advantages.² The UNDAF is a compact between Government and the UN and fosters national ownership through joint identification of strategic priorities, coherent engagement in national and UN coordination processes, and alignment of the UNDAF with national planning cycles. Strategic guidance and oversight are exercised through a Joint National/UN Steering Committee with the participation of national stakeholders.

The UNDAF defines outcomes to be achieved over the course of three to five years by the UN and partners, with due consideration given to the importance of harmonization with the timing and duration of the national planning cycle. The UNDAF results matrix serves as a mutual accountability framework, indicating which UN agencies contribute to each outcome. Inter-agency UNCT Results Groups are organized around specific UNDAF outcomes through coordinated and collaborative planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The 2016 UNDESA “[Survey of Programme Country Governments](#)”³ revealed that 92% of Governments strongly agree or somewhat agree that the UNDAF has enabled the Government to ensure that the UN’s activities are closely aligned with the countries’ national plans and strategies. The UNDAF process was frequently referred to as key contribution factor that ensured very close alignment. The survey further revealed that 81% of Programme Country Governments strongly agree or somewhat agree that the UNDAF or another UN common planning framework has helped the UN to achieve better results than if each UN agency had planned its support separately.

Support to the development of the UNDAF is provided by the UNDG at the regional level. The 39 countries planning to roll-out their UNDAFs in 2016 will receive support from the six Regional UNDG Teams on strategic priority setting, analysis and advice based on their four core functions: (i) technical support to UN Country Teams; (ii) quality assurance of UNDAFs; (iii) performance management of Resident Coordinators; and (iv) trouble-shooting in difficult country situations. The support is provided by peer support groups consisting of UNDG member agencies at the regional level, facilitated by a secretariat of two regional coordination specialists funded by the UNDG cost-sharing arrangement in support of the RC

¹ Please see: [UNDG UNDAF Guidance Materials](#).

² In humanitarian situations, the UN system agencies should come together and organize themselves through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster approach, except for refugee situations, where UNHCR is mandated to assume the lead coordinating function. In countries where the principles of integration apply, the UNDAF may be combined with an Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) and should capture the strategic objectives of the whole UN presence and take into account humanitarian objectives and responses, with due consideration given to the protection of humanitarian space, as warranted and agreed.

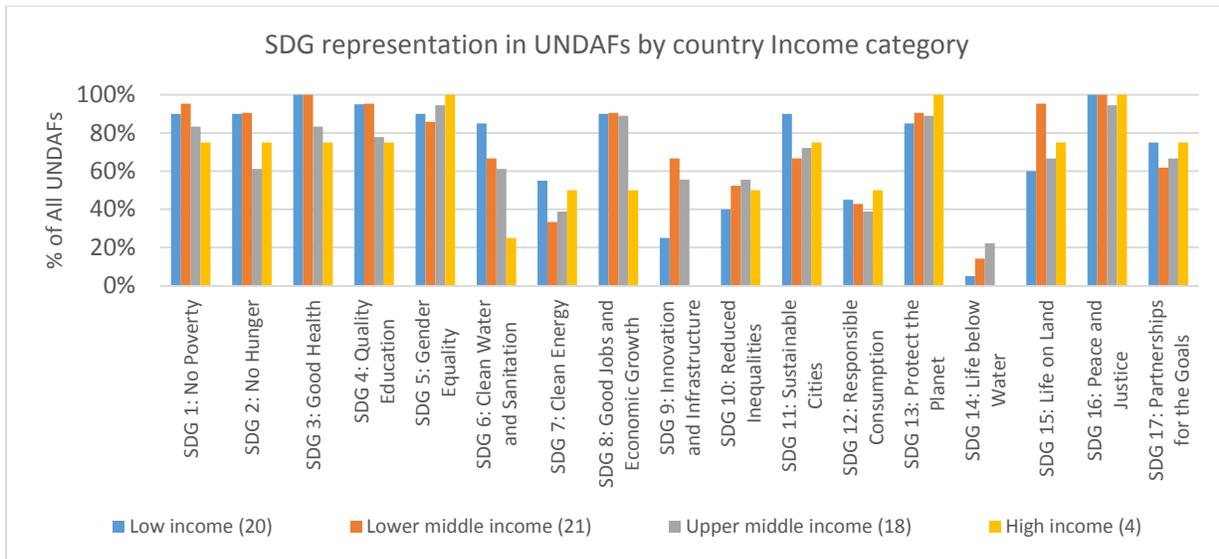
³ Results based on responses received from 129 programme country governments.



system. Backstopping at the global level is provided by three country and regional support team members in UNDOCO.

Status of UNDAF implementation

Currently, there are 125 UNDAFs⁴ in place, 8 of which are Integrated Strategic Frameworks (sometimes called UNDAF+), and 33 are UNDAFs by another name (One Plan/ Programme, Partnership, Cooperation, and/or Development Frameworks). In 2015 and 2016, implementation of UNDAFs will start in 16 and 29 countries respectively. A review of all UNDAFs starting between 2013 and 2016 showed a broad coverage of the SDGs (below) with differentiated approaches across income categories of countries.



Current trends showing in recently developed UNDAFs

- 1. More focus and fewer strategic priorities:** UNDAFs starting in 2016 show greater focus by having fewer strategic priority areas with an average of 3 to 5 strategic priority areas per UNDAF and more detailed and focused outcomes as in previous years.
- 2. Normative agenda at the center of development planning:** Human rights is the most frequently addressed normative issue in interagency groups at the country level (166 out of 766); UNCTs are increasingly engaged with human rights mechanisms.⁶ Out of 29 countries starting UNDAFs in 2016, 19 UN Country Teams (66%) will support national partners in the preparations for the Universal Periodic Review and follow-up of its recommendations.
- 3. From UN development assistance to UN partnership frameworks for sustainable development:** There are 14 UNDAFs, which have been framed as UN Strategic Development, Partnership or Cooperation Frameworks. The large majority of these countries are Middle Income Countries pointing to a changing role of the UN in these countries.

⁴ There are 131 UNCTs and 125 UNDAFs. The UNDAF for the Pacific includes (14 countries) both UNCTs in Fiji and Samoa. . There are 5 countries in which the UN has presence but no UNDAF or programmatic framework of cooperation, these are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius and UAE.

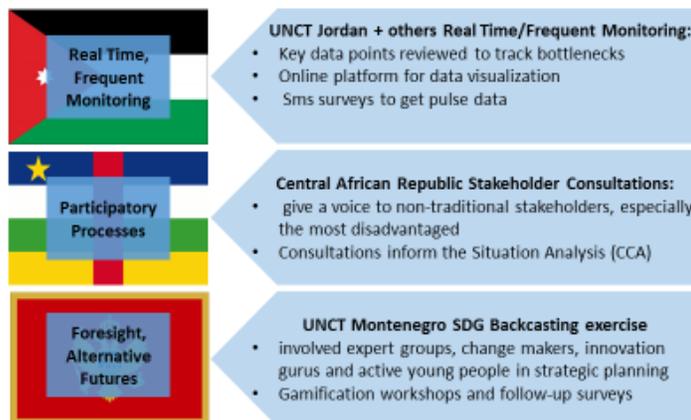
⁵ Source: Desk review of 63 UNDAFs that started implementation between 2013 and 2016

⁶ According UNDG Information Management System (IMS): country data & reporting system with over 50,000 data points; 2014-15 as baseline year



4. **Support to data quality (collection, monitoring and reporting):** All 29 UNDAFs starting in 2016 include support to national partners to collect, monitor and report on data. In countries such as Turkmenistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe, this support in data quality is translated in a specific outcome in the UNDAF.
5. **Broader and multi-stakeholder engagement:** The national consultations on the preparation of the 2030 Agenda led by UNCTs in 2014 have constituted a solid entry point for broader public engagement in the preparation of new UNDAFs.
6. **South-South/triangular cooperation:** Out of the total 29 UNDAFs starting in 2016, 23 include support to national partners in South-South/triangular cooperation as an approach or as a standalone strategy priority area.
7. **Multi-country UN Development Frameworks:** In line with the Samoa Pathway's call for UN system support for cooperation among small island developing states, the UN has one UNDAF for 14 Countries in the Pacific and a UN Sustainable Development Framework for 18 countries in the Caribbean. This integration of strategic planning and implementation fosters policy coherence and collaboration to resolve transboundary development challenges across small island states.
8. **Testing innovative approaches for strategic planning:** The preparation of new UNDAFs proves to be a window of opportunity for UNCTs to introduce innovative approaches to strategic planning, implementation and monitoring. New UNDAFs use new data collection methods, such as open data, real time monitoring, crowdsourcing, citizen data, and modern analytical tools such as foresight, collective intelligence, human centered design and behavioral insight techniques.

Existing examples in Jordan, CAR & Montenegro prove the added value of these UNDAF innovations



From emerging trends towards a new generation of UNDAFs for the 2030 Agenda

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* requires an integrated approach to sustainable development and collective action at all levels to address the challenges of our time, with an overarching imperative of addressing inequalities, eradicating all forms of discrimination and 'leaving no one behind'. Member States have emphasized the importance of system-wide strategic planning, implementation and reporting in order to ensure coherent and integrated support to the implementation of the new Agenda by the UN System.



In the current UNDAFs, UNCTs and Governments build on the flexibility of the 2010 UNDAF guidance and the 2014 Standard Operating Procedures / One Programme guidance to adjust to the extent possible to the requirements of the 2030 Agenda, e.g. through strengthened linkages between the UN's operational work and its normative standards and the move from assistance to partnership frameworks for sustainable development. In 2016, the UNDG is working on updating the UNDAF guidance based on emerging trends and demands at country level and to address the step change needed to best position the UN to support the SDGs.

The overarching drive behind the emerging next generation of UNDAF guidance is the need to adopt integrated approaches to programming that respond to the imperatives of the 2030 Agenda and effectively address the complex and interconnected nature of the SDGs. Features of the new UN programming include:

- **Relevance:** UNDAFs must support national sustainable development priorities and contribute to the implementation of internationally, regionally and nationally agreed normative frameworks for the achievement of sustainable development and human rights.
- **Strategic focus:** UNDAFs need to be strategic, recognize that the UN cannot do everything and focus efforts and resources on interventions that can have a catalytic effect, accelerating progress across a broad range of areas, while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and, where needed, supporting capacity development of duty bearers and rights holders.
- **Enabling support:** UNCTs must use UNDAFs as an enabling framework for UNCTs' country-level work, including as a platform for partnership development and innovation. UNCTs should ensure that UNDAF outcomes are commensurate with available resources, while moving to joint financing and investment strategies to underpin UNDAFs.
- **Inclusive:** UNDAFs should reflect, both in their design and their ambition, the people-centred and universal nature of the 2030 Agenda, with an emphasis on leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.
- **UN coherence and effectiveness in development and across the UN pillars:** UNDAFs must be built on strong UN coherence integrated planning frameworks across the UN pillars at country level, demonstrating the complementarity and coordination of UN country-level operations, giving due consideration to joint programming approaches and strengthened coherence between development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace building as mutually reinforcing efforts which can promote sustainable and inclusive development.
- **Leadership as accelerator for an effective UN system:** Supporting the agreed authority of Resident Coordinators (RCs) to mobilize and draw on all relevant assets of the in support of national priorities. Empowering UNCT Results Groups to do the same and implementing the Mutual Accountability Framework to recognize inter-agency work in all agency performance systems.
- **Accountability and technical soundness:** Being accountable, at all levels, for inter-agency approaches and agreements and align agency programming and operations with agreed principles of the UN Development Group (UNDG) and Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). UNDAF programming has to be evidence-based and apply results-focused management approaches, with an underlying theory of change. It also needs to provide for transparency and accountability of results and lead to cost-effective interventions that ensure 'value for money.'