



UN Delivering as One *with* the SOPs: Governments Gain

"In releasing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Countries Adopting the "Delivering as one" approach, the UN Development Group (UNDG) is responding to the request from UN Member States, articulated in the QCPR, to deepen the "Delivering as one" reform, and to ensure that all countries which wished to pursue it can do so. The SOPs are about making things work better across the UN system, by removing institutional bottlenecks which prevented coherence, improving standards and common operating systems, and motivating the use of shared data, policy analytics, and advocacy to support integrated solutions. While making the UN development system more transparent, common results-oriented, and accountable, the SOPs enable a more complete system-wide alignment of the UN contribution in country with national development priorities and plans." — Helen Clark, Chair of the United Nations Development Group (2014)

In countries around the world, the United Nations supports governments and other national partners, to achieve global and national development priorities and aspirations. Working together, different organizations in a UN Country Team (UNCT) combine to provide a valued policy, technical and operational expertise to tackle the complex, multidimensional development issues confronting countries today. In order to mobilize and engage this diversity and depth of UN capacity and experience, a country must ensure a UN team that delivers together on the country's Post 2015 development agenda.

THE SECRETARY-
GENERAL CALLS
FOR A SECOND
GENERATION
OF "DELIVERING
AS ONE" FOCUSING
ON MONITORING FOR
RESULTS, INCREASED
ACCOUNTABILITY AND
IMPROVED
OUTCOMES

Member States reaffirmed their commitment to further improve the coherence of the UN development system through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR 2012). They requested *"the UN system to build on best practices and lessons learnt in implementing 'Delivering as One' by a number of countries and to further consolidate the process by clearly outlining the core elements of each of the "ones", based on lessons learned, including by formulating standard operational procedures as guidelines for the successful work of the United Nations country teams in "Delivering as one" countries, as well as for other countries that consider joining 'Delivering as one'."*

Why does it matter?

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are now in application (as of Sept 2014), and they underpin the next generation of Delivering as one. Governments and the UN's other partners at country level gain from a UN Country Team that implements the SOPs. DaO with the SOPs improves UN coordination and impact in the following ways:

- A UNCT working together on data and analytics, and using the same data for its shared policy, is a better support to Governments in analyzing Post 2015 data and trends.
- The UNCT can also now better leverage its own expertise across the system to support cross-sector public policy responses to complex development challenges. It can and must call upon system wide capacity, and governments can ask that the UNCT do so.
- An emphasis on the joint *and* individual agency contributions to a set of core development results is put on One Plan, together with the accountability of the teams for achieving them. For a coordinating Government entity, this helps with aligning such to national priorities and the National Plan, and holding the UN accountable to deliver. It is also transparent to all.

- By having all UN resources being expended in a country on a Common Budgetary Framework, it provides government with a clear sense of what can be expected and planned for as resources from the UN in given areas.
- All of the UN agencies using the SOPs, agree to a set of common standards for monitoring and reporting, and it is done together. This reduces transaction costs and improves joined-up tracking. Through more structured Joint Annual Reviews and DaO based UNDAF evaluations, the oversight of the overall UN contribution to national development increases.
- Government has greater access to the expertise and resources across the UN system in these core areas, and can eliminate duplication of request and high transaction costs.
- Overseeing the UN delivering together in-country reinforces the national coordinating entity's own role and the ability to coordinate ministries and other entities to deliver results across-sectors.
- The SOPs for Business Operations results in more common services and the removal of redundancies, resulting in greater efficiencies and the optimal use of resources. More harmonized programme and business practices build on economies of scale and reduce transaction costs, for Governments, the UN and its partners.
- The SOPs, by providing the space and methodology for coordinated actions and mechanisms, reinforces and supports Government's national development coordination efforts across ministries and with its development partners.

Frequently Asked Questions by Government

What does the Delivering as One approach cover?

Delivering as one consists of five pillars that bring the UN at country level together in a more systematic and structured way: One Programme; a Common Budgetary Framework (and an optional One Fund), Communicating as One, One Leader and Operating as One. Each pillar has a set of core elements to ensure a better coordinated UN in-country.



What then are the SOPs and why were they developed?

The SOPs are the integrated package of guidance to implement the five pillars. They are based on proven good practices and innovations, including lessons from DaO evaluations. UN Member States through the General Assembly requested the formulation of the SOPs as the standard guidelines for UN Country Teams and Government wishing to use the DaO approach.

Can the Delivering as One SOPs be applied to any country?

Yes, they are designed to be adjusted to country context, and hence can be adapted to low income, middle-income, post-crisis and other country contexts. The SOPs strike a balance between flexibility and standardization. They can be adapted to specific development challenges, institutional capacities, UN roles and team configurations. They embed a set of core elements as essential. This enables the SOPs to be consistent and establishes minimum criteria quality control.

Is there a formal procedure to request Delivering as One?

Yes. The Government writes to the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) confirming their request for the UN in the country to use the DaO approach. The RC informs the UN Development Group (to the Regional Chair and UN DOCO) and discusses in full with the UNCT. The process underlines the importance of national ownership and leadership. An agreement between the Government and the United Nations can then spell out the details of starting and/or advancing Delivering as One.

Do we introduce all five pillars at the same time?

It can be done, but the SOPs can also be implemented in a step-by-step manner. For certain countries, some pillars will be easier to initiate and implement than others, depending on the stage of the programming process, resources available, partner interest and so on. The UNCT is expected to take steps towards the progressive implementation of the SOPs in their country. The UNCT would discuss a realistic roadmap within the team, and then with government and key partners. It would be key to set up a small group, under the leadership of the Government and RC, involving key partners to advise and support in this regard.

COMMUNICATING
AS ONE
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CLEAR AND
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STRATEGIC POSITIONING
OF THE UN AND
ITS VISION AT THE
COUNTRY LEVEL

Who leads on the Government side?

The Government coordinating authority¹ leads, but buy-in and effective support from technical line ministries is key to optimize the benefits of DaO. It also avoids mixed messaging if a whole-of-government message and approach is taken. As stated by the DaO country pilots, a 'One Government' helps deliver a 'One UN' in the country. Consistent and regular communications between Government and the UNCT, both structured and informal, helps ensure effective implementation of DaO.

What about the involvement of non-government stakeholders?

The Post 2015 agenda is one that benefits greatly from a more outward facing approach to involving multi-stakeholders in the development agenda and process. The same is true of the UN delivering together. Design and implementation processes that brings in both local and international stakeholders in the UN's programme of activity in a country, including in its efforts to Deliver as One, should try and engage its core stakeholders beyond government. Government remains the primary partner in this process.

Is there an optimal moment to initiate Delivering as one?

This can happen at any time, but a good entry point is the start of a new UN cooperation framework. The SOPs can be introduced at any point, but again, the start of a new programme cycle, or the design of a new project, common service or joint programme provides a practical entry point.

Who provides strategic guidance and oversight?

A Joint National/UN Steering Committee involving all national stakeholders, the UN team and often international development partners. It usually meets a couple of times per year, and is typically co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the head of the Government coordinating authority. The Steering Committee would review and confirm the strategic direction and overall priorities for the One Programme. A terms of references appropriate to country context (examples are available) is the basis for the committee's operations.

What does a UN Country Team do to get going on DaO and the SOPs?

The RC informs the Regional UNDG Chair and UNDOCO re the government request. The UN Country Team members, led by the Resident Coordinator, discusses the elements of the draft Road Map, and their own internal capacities and re-organisation required and makes joint decisions on the changes needed within their team. They also agree on different agency technical leads for various aspects of DaO pillars, including the agency heads who would be technical leads of results groups. The UNCT would carry out discussions with their staff and own government and donor focals, so all are on same page to embark together on DaO. The RC would act

UNDER
THE ONE LEADER,
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TEAM ACT
AS ONE LEADERSHIP

¹ The Government coordinating authority is the national entity that coordinates international development cooperation. If a different entity is in charge of coordinating overall national development policy, then this entity should co-lead.

as primary interlocutor on DaO with the central coordinating government authority, but all UNCT members would engage and be the voice and lead in their areas of technical results and expertise.

Does Delivering as One reduce transaction costs for Government?

Yes. Multiple programme and operations transactions and documentation can be reduced by having a joint document and a joint oversight process for a One Programme. Within the One Programme, agency specific annual work plans can be replaced by joint work plans for discussion with government (even where some agencies may still need to submit their agency specific work plans to their respective HQs). This provides a common overview and agreement on all UN agencies' work (both joint and individually provided) in given areas.

**BUSINESS
OPERATIONS
HARMONIZATION
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REDUCTIONS**

A government can request for the reduction of multiple processes and duplication by UN agencies, as relevant, in their interactions with them. In implementing DaO with the SOPs, the Government would commit to the transaction costs related to providing high-level oversight, including annual reviews and a minimum of two steering committee meetings a year. The start-up period to get all this in motion would involve a higher time commitment on both ends. Over time, this reduces as standard arrangements are put in place. In the medium to longer term, a well-coordinated approach reduces transaction costs for all.

Are there savings on the operations side?

Yes. A more joined-up Business Operations allows UN Country Teams to harmonize and eliminate duplication in procurement, ICT, human resources, travel, and administration. An agreed standard cost benefit analysis is used to quantify the benefits.

Is there additional resources to support DaO today?

DaO enables the UN to use available resources more effectively. Reducing transaction costs, duplication and fragmentation frees resources to support the achievement of development results; efficiency gains on the Operations side results in savings; the Common Budgetary Framework provides a sound basis for joined-up resource mobilization and transparent resource application, secured with both government and donors. Additional resources may come from donor contributions to One Funds and global multi-donor trust funds. In 2013, the UN Development Group also established the 'Delivering Results Together' Fund (DRT Fund), to finance joint UN policy initiatives in low-and middle-income DaO countries.

**THE COMMON
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PURPOSES.**

Can Governments in Delivering as One countries contribute to a local One Fund?

Yes, and they are encouraged to do so. This sends a clear message of Government commitment to joint programmes that help achieve national development goals. The process of contributing is the same for all donors, as well as for private sector.

Does the Government have to change any legal instruments to adopt Delivering as One?

The Standard Basic Agreement or equivalent that the Government has with the UN and its various entities stands as given for DaO. If a particular country context requires a more fundamental change to UN role and presence in a country this would need to be discussed separately.

Where can I find more information?

The UN Development Group has issued an [integrated package of guidance on the SOPs](#). More information can also be found on the UNDG website at www.undg.org, and support from UN DOCO is available through the Office of the Resident Coordinator in-country.