

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Conference room paper

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**Operational activities of the United Nations
for international development cooperation:
follow-up to policy recommendations of the
General Assembly**

Effectiveness of the UN development system and its operational activities:
capacity of the system to provide country level
support and develop national capacities

Summary

This conference room paper reviews progress made and challenges met by the United Nations system regarding several aspects of the broad theme of capacity, which are fundamental to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations development cooperation. The paper provides an update on the UN system efforts to support capacity-building in recipient countries and provides a number of observations on the implementation of a more results-oriented programming of UN operational activities for development and on the capacity of the system to respond to evolving needs of recipient countries. The paper complements the overall assessment of effectiveness presented in the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (document A/59/85-E/2004/68) prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 56/201.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. As requested by the General Assembly¹, the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) contains an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and of the functioning of the United Nations development system at the country level. The 2004 TCPR² focuses on such questions as the development relevance of the UN system's work at the country level, its comparative advantage and value added and the main aspects of progress of the reforms of the operational activities of the United Nations.

2. The present conference room paper complements the information presented in the 2004 TCPR on the progress made and challenges met by the United Nations system regarding several aspects of the broad theme of capacity, which are fundamental to assess the effectiveness of the United Nations development cooperation:

- (a) promotion of, and support to, the development of national capacities in the recipient countries;
- (b) targeting of operational activities in relation to internationally agreed development goals and national priorities;
- (c) evolving capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the demands by recipient countries for development support.

3. Assessments contained in this paper are based on data and views contributed from the UN system organizations³ and by national authorities and other national stakeholders⁴ consulted in the course of field-missions conducted by DESA⁵ and through consultations at headquarters.

II. Building national capacities for development

A. Capacity-building and capacity development

4. Capacity-building has been central to United Nations operational activities from their beginning. The concept has evolved over time and continues to do so. At the inception of operational activities, capacity-building was synonymous with human resource development. Training individuals and groups was and remains an important component of United Nations system operational activities. Over the period 1980-1995, increasing attention was given to the organizational engineering dimensions of the development process. Many institutions were created or strengthened and some functioned well. Yet, those successes were not always durable.

5. Capacity created at a point in time cannot be assumed to remain relevant unless institutions and capacities evolve and make progress. It is no longer enough for the United Nations system to

¹ Paragraph 53 of General Assembly resolution 56/201, adopted at the conclusion of the 2001 TCPR.

² Report of the Secretary-General, A/59/85- E/2004/68

³ For the purpose of the assessments presented in this paper, reference to United Nations organizations includes the UN Funds and Programmes and the specialized UN agencies. When the discussion of issues is at the more conceptual level, such as general discussion on the concepts of capacity development or results-based management, reference to "organizations" would cover, as relevant, the Bretton Woods Institutions. It should be noted that the Bretton Woods Institutions are increasingly included by different stakeholders in the reference to "United Nations organizations" and that, in a number of countries visited by DESA (see footnote 5 below), they actively participate in the work of the UN Country Teams.

⁴ as advised by ECOSOC in resolution 2002/29, paragraph 24

⁵ 14 recipient countries were visited by DESA between November 2003 and March 2004: Benin, Bolivia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Madagascar, Pakistan, Paraguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia.

provide support just to help create or strengthen an organization or groups of organizations. Those institutions need to be capable of learning and changing to transform themselves, as necessary, in response to changing situations and requirements. Capacity-building is now understood as an endogenous country-driven, long-term process at the core of development, which requires the involvement of all sectors of the society. External support should not be limited to enhancing individual skills but should also address institutional, organizational and societal dimensions.⁶ The notion of national capacity for development reflects this understanding of the process and support needed, much broader than the concept of capacity-building, when it was first introduced. The new principles and concepts on capacity building are shared by the development community at large, as demonstrated by the broad Consensus reached at Monterrey on the question of shared responsibility for development results⁷. Such Consensus was further strengthened by subsequent processes such as the Rome⁸ and the Marrakech⁹ processes. These processes, which have enlisted the participation of International Financial Institutions as well as bilateral development agencies, emphasized respectively the need for harmonizing and aligning development interventions and for a greater focus on results as ways to promote national capacity and ownership.

B. Measures and decisions taken to strengthen UN support to national capacities for development

6. This broader approach to capacity-building has become more significant for the United Nations system because the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration implies that all countries should have or acquire the capacity to achieve the development goals contained in it. However, evaluations carried out by DESA in the context of the 1998 and 2001 TCPRs suggested that, in the past, capacity-building by the UN system had been seen as falling in large part under the competence of UNDP. Significant efforts had to be made to place capacity-building at the center of the system operational activities.

⁶ See United Nations system support for capacity-building, E/2002/58, and Development Effectiveness Report 2003, UNDP publication, in particular pages 8-10.

⁷ The post- Monterrey partnership has called upon developing countries to maintain their Monterrey commitment by adopting policies that will achieve results and upon donor countries and development agencies to contribute more effectively to these results by supporting national efforts and capacity for developing appropriate development policies.

⁸ The Rome Declaration on Harmonization held in February 2003 endorsed the principles of country ownership, donor harmonization and alignment, which were further developed in the DAC Good Practice Paper on “Harmonizing Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery”. These principles recognize the importance of ownership by partner countries and support an approach by development agencies that strengthens partner countries’ accountability to their citizens. Further they recognize the partnership between partner countries, development agencies and other stakeholders and the critical importance of strengthening local capacity to manage for results.

⁹ The 2004 Joint Marrakech Memorandum states: “we accord the highest importance to supporting countries in strengthening their capacity to better manage for results”. The Memorandum also indicates: “to steer the development process toward the goals they have defined, countries need stronger capacity for strategic planning, accountable management, statistics, monitoring, and evaluation”. (Second Round Table on “Better Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Development Results”, Marrakech, February 2004. The Roundtable was sponsored by the Multilateral Banks (African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and World Bank) in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD).

7. In 2000, the UN adopted a set of principles¹⁰ to provide an initial framework for the system's capacity-building activities for development and , in 2001, the General Assembly stressed that capacity-building and its sustainability should be explicitly articulated as a goal of technical assistance provided by the UN system at the country level. The Assembly reaffirmed that the system should use, to the fullest extent possible and practical, national execution and available national expertise and technologies as the norm in the implementation of the operational activities.¹¹

8. In 2002, a survey by DESA of current practices within the UN system was showing that awareness of the concept of capacity-building and its implications for development cooperation had increased and that the programme objectives of most United Nations entities included a capacity-building perspective. Nevertheless, the survey confirmed some findings of the evaluations carried out as an input to the 1998 and 2001 TCPRs and suggested that a coherent multilateral "doctrine" or interpretation of what needs to be understood by the term "capacity-building" in an era of rapid change had yet to be developed. UNDP and DESA cooperated in achieving a consensus among UN agencies on the definition and importance of mainstreaming capacity development in all programmes and organized in Geneva, in November 2002, an inter-agency workshop to review the experience acquired so far by the system in this respect.

9. The conclusions of this workshop were endorsed in 2003 by the CEB High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP), which agreed that an explicit system-wide strategy for development capacity should be developed by the United Nations system and its individual organizations to pursue the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed objectives¹². The same year ECOSOC¹³ reaffirmed the need for all organizations of the United Nations development system at country level to focus on capacity-building as one of their primary objectives, within their respective mandates, and urged these organizations to:

- (a) support recipient Governments and other relevant stakeholders in devising country-level strategies for capacity-building in the pursuit of internationally agreed development goals;
- (b) intensify inter-agency information sharing at the system-wide level on good practices and experience gained, results achieved, benchmarks and indicators, monitoring and evaluation criteria concerning capacity-building, and reflect them in the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and
- (c) invite all organizations to include reporting on capacity-building in their annual reports to their respective governing bodies.

C. Elements of a strategy to support development capacity

10. The concept of capacity for development has several programmatic implications for the UN system. A few illustrative cases follow:

- (a) One of UNDP early capacity development initiative took place during the 1990s to produce a comprehensive approach for developing national capacities to meet global

¹⁰ In 2000, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) — currently the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) — approved a set of system-wide guiding principles on capacity-building (ACC/2000/7, paragraph 4 and annex V) inspired by the 1999 ECOSOC resolution on poverty eradication and capacity-building (ECOSOC resolution 1999/5, paragraphs 13-18)

¹¹ resolution 56/201, paragraphs 28-32

¹² see CEB/2003/4

¹³ ECOSOC resolution 2003/3, paragraph 11

environmental management objectives. The UNDP Capacity 21 Trust Fund supported the development of integrated, participatory and decentralized strategies for sustainable development. Building on the success of Capacity 21 and other capacity development programmes, UNDP launched Capacity 215 to develop the capacities needed by developing countries and countries in transition to meet their sustainable development goals under Agenda 21 and the MDGs. UNDP carried out a major research effort on development capacity and, in early 2001, launched an initiative to take a fresh look at capacity development fundamentals and how external cooperation can best contribute to the development of lasting indigenous capacities. The most recent study carried out under this initiative¹⁴, noting that experiences in capacity development vary widely from country to country and that practical action cannot be guided everywhere by identical precepts, is presenting ten “default principles” that can help conceive, negotiate and chart a locally appropriate path towards change and development.¹⁵ UNDP is committed to mainstream in its different Practice Areas these ten default principles for capacity development, not used as a blueprint but serving as safeguards for policy makers and practitioners in pursuing sensible local solutions likely to reinforce local ownership and nurture capacities. UNDP is identifying enhancements needed in its operations regarding such matters as the timing of its interventions and adequate engagement over a long time, country offices institutional memory, the need to broaden national ownership and develop a greater understanding of the practical aspects of national ownership.

(b) UNICEF’s supports countries in articulating a well-adapted diagnosis of the problems they face in fulfilling the rights of children. UNICEF has a lead role in ensuring that the rights of all children be respected in the formulation of socio-economic reforms. The right-based approach to programming was adopted by UNICEF in 1998 and integrated into its programme guidance system in early 2000. The situation analysis and its programme preparation and implementation are its main contribution to building national capacity. While UNICEF has a holistic based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its programming is challenged by, and responsive to, the complexities of development and disparities existing from country to country. Together with the national partners, UNICEF is developing the use of its highly decentralized research and evaluation functions to understand better the factors which enable countries to implement effectively their National Plans of Action and optimize the benefits received from external support. While recognizing the importance of global goals and targets, as the MDGs, some UNICEF staff and external partners have recommended caution that the pursuit of quantitative global targets do not lead to neglecting qualitative systemic considerations, the importance of participatory processes and the national capacity strengthening for sustainable development. The advantages of global goals become self-explanatory once the goals are properly adapted to country realities and they serve as powerful rallying points for national action and international solidarity. Joint monitoring and evaluation together with national partners are determinant for national ownership and leadership and capacity development.

(c) UNCTAD support to capacity development relates to countries’ capacity to formulate, implement and evaluate home-grown policies linking trade, investment and

¹⁴ “Ownership, Leadership and Transformation: Can We Do Better for Capacity Development?” UNDP, 2003

¹⁵ Ibid., p.13 – Ten default principles for capacity development: don’t rush; respect the value system and foster self-esteem; scan locally and globally, reinvent locally; challenge mindsets and power differentials; think and act in terms of sustainable capacity outcomes; establish positive incentives; integrate external inputs into national priorities, processes and systems; build on existing capacities rather than creating new ones; stay engaged under difficult circumstances; remain accountable to ultimate beneficiaries.

development. Support is required at the three levels of capacity development: individual, institutional and societal. To address needs at the individual level, for example, UNCTAD offers training to government officials. Individual training is a precondition for the success of any change at the next level – the institutional level, where, more than at the individual and societal levels, UNCTAD can have a sustainable impact. There are three main conditions to ensure the success of institutional capacity development by UNCTAD: a solid, visible ownership by local authorities; the application, by relevant institutions, of the skills acquired through individual training; visible improvements in the institution's performance at the societal level, for instance by improving its dialogue with national producers concerned by the impact of new technologies. While individual training can be delivered in groups encompassing trainees from different countries, capacity development targeting institutional and societal levels can only be country-based. To ensure the adaptation of global knowledge to local conditions, it is the local component of knowledge that requires adaptation – which in turn requires active participation of those who know and understand the institutional environment. In this regard, UNCTAD faces one main obstacle, its lack of country presence, and is exploring solutions that would allow it to have a more consistent action in the field (see paragraph 49 below).¹⁶ Also, measures to correct problems such as insufficient adoption of long-term perspectives for capacity-building in UNCTAD's programmes are required.¹⁷

D. National ownership

11. It has often been sustained both from successful and less successful examples of development cooperation that national ownership is a determining factor in the effectiveness of external support and durability of its effect, although the notion of national ownership is far from self-evident. In the case of UN programmes, ensuring national ownership can sometimes be seen as a simple proposition: it is a fundamental characteristic of UN operational activities for development that they are carried out for the benefit of recipient countries, at the request of those countries and in accordance with the countries own policies and priorities for development¹⁸. However, in practice, achieving national ownership of development cooperation is a complex issue that has been given renewed attention in recent years (see paragraph 10(a) above). A number of factors should be considered in order to ensure that national ownership of development cooperation activities is achieved. Concepts like “national participation”, “national control”, “national leadership” and “genuine expression of national will or interests”, have often been used as synonymous of “national ownership”, even though each one of these concepts differs from the other. When does a country “really” own the development cooperation that it receives from external partners? The “real” ownership looks for factors that go beyond the formal endorsement of initiatives, or some formal subscription or expression of agreement on programmes or strategies, often used by practitioners as a mark of “national ownership”, even though those programmes or strategies have been almost completely conceived elsewhere. Real national ownership is rather the outcome of a process that makes the external development assistance, including that received from the UN system, part of a complex endogenous mechanism within the national society, an expression of its vital forces, its will, and its capacities, while responding to fundamental national needs and priorities (but the latter is not enough). National ownership is linked to capacity development as national ownership might become only apparent or difficult to sustain if there are not enough capacities at the national level to take the initiative in the formulation and implementation of the development plans.

¹⁶ see Capacity Development, note by the UNCTAD secretariat, TD/B/50/9-TD/B/WP/168, 27/08/03

¹⁷ see Evaluation of Capacity-Building in UNCTAD's Technical Cooperation Activities, TD/B/WP/155, 2002

¹⁸ ECOSOC resolution 2003/3, second preambular paragraph.

12. Progress towards full domestic ownership of development programmes has been hindered in many countries by excessive administrative burden on governments due to the different priorities, administrative requirements and cycles of numerous actors implementing development assistance programmes or projects, thirty or more in a given country. As a result, many recipient countries do not have the capacity to steer effectively the general effort. It is expected that greater coordination of development aid would enhance national ownership and the relevance of the assistance provided. The 2003 Rome Declaration on Harmonisation has provided a new impetus for donor alignment behind national priorities plan and procedures, and in the fourteen countries of focus for implementation of those commitments, especially but elsewhere also, there is increasing evidence of national leadership of the process. With its neutrality and multilateral character, the UN is well-positioned to support building the national capacity to coordinate external assistance.

13. There seems to be insufficient integrated follow-up at the national level to different strategies and agreements (National Long-Term Perspectives, PRSP, MDGs, NEPAD to name a few). The trend towards more upstream UN assistance should help, in the future, pay more attention and provide support for effective national institutional arrangements needed for the implementation of these strategies or agreements. The international consensus that underlies the acceptance of the goals agreed in the Millennium Summit places a particular obligation on the whole United Nations development system to support the efforts of Member States that desire to acquire or strengthen the capacities which they consider necessary in order to pursue the goals that they collectively identified. In this context, examples of good practices of the CCA and the UNDAF (see paragraph 29 below on the need to spread good practices) show that these instruments can contribute to clarifying MDGs definitions in relation to national priorities and provide the national authorities with appropriate methodologies and tools to monitor progress towards the MDGs.

14. The evolving role of development assistance is shaping expectations of agency contributions, not necessarily leading yet to clear precepts for action, as evidenced by the 2003 MOPAN pilot study.¹⁹ Technical advice provided by the multilateral organizations surveyed in the study was viewed as appropriate. However, the study reported that the gradual move towards a programmatic approach, with more upstream co-operation, entailed less use of the multilateral organizations as channels for project aid and more cooperation on policy. The organizations surveyed, which had agreed on the principle of fostering national ownership, were still weak in their contributions to promoting participatory processes and their ability to align with host governments' procedures. Although some progress was noted in recent years: it was perceived that agencies had become more open and flexible, with WHO and UNICEF, in particular, taking noticeable steps towards accepting government reporting and accounting procedures.

15. Attention is being paid to capacity building of local level institutions, which is becoming more important for development assistance, in line with decentralization as part of governance reforms. There are indications of increased demand for use of national/local capacities including the use of national volunteers, particularly in community-based programmes. In connection with arrangements for project implementation, a continuing issue is that of the "dual pay structure" created by external assistance programmes in general, including UN programmes, where national

¹⁹ pilot study on perceptions of effectiveness in health sector of WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks, carried out in 2003 by the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN).

professionals hired to work in these programmes receive much higher compensations than their counterparts in Government, causing “unbuilding of capacities”, or capacity drain.

III. Development results and better targeting operational activities

16. ECOSOC requested that the 2004 TCPR focused on such matters as the effectiveness of the reforms of the operational activities of the UN in improving development results and outcomes; the contribution of the Millennium Development Goals as a framework to support the alignment of the operational activities of the UN system with national development efforts and priorities; and the results, identified outcomes and lessons learned at the country level from evaluation activities.²⁰

A. Managing for results and national capacity

17. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a greater reflection within the UN system on the factors and conditions that produce sustainable results and more effective performance of development actors. There are important differences among UN organizations but the priority given to the implementation of a common set of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, has led to a better agreement on how to define and achieve results, both in terms of enabling environment and in terms of long-term impact, and a better understanding of the principles involved in managing for results²¹.

18. There is a general agreement on what elements are needed to effectively manage for results: the development objectives of a programme need to be clearly stated in terms of expected outcomes and beneficiaries, as well as the indicators and targets of intermediate achievements. Adequate baseline data is required to demonstrate progress and performance, as well as systematic monitoring of progress and continuous dialogue on results with stakeholders.

19. Since the primary responsibility for development results is with developing countries, the challenge of the UN development system in managing for results at the country level is to define the results of its own action in terms of developing national capacity and an enabling environment in the country that will help the country achieve progress and impact towards its own development priorities and needs.²²

²⁰ ECOSOC resolution 2003/3, para. 37 (h)-(j).

²¹ Managing for results builds on the principles set by the development community in the domains of country ownership, donor harmonization, and alignment. These principles, endorsed in the Rome Declaration on Harmonization held in February 2003 and further developed in the DAC Good Practice Paper “Harmonizing Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery”, recognize the importance of ownership by partner countries and support an approach by development agencies that strengthens partner countries’ accountability to their citizens. Further they recognize the partnership between partner countries, development agencies and other stakeholders and the critical importance of strengthening local capacity to manage for results.

²² This includes development countries’ capacity to articulate strategies that are based on analysis of appropriate data, are fully costed and have clear monitoring and evaluation systems that allow adaptation as necessary. The 2004 Joint Marrakech Memorandum states: “we accord the highest importance to supporting countries in strengthening their capacity to better manage for results”. The Memorandum also indicates: “to steer the development process toward the goals they have defined, countries need stronger capacity for strategic planning, accountable management, statistics, monitoring, and evaluation”. (Second Round Table on “Better Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Development Results”, Marrakech, February 2004. The Roundtable was sponsored by the Multilateral Banks (African Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank, and World Bank) in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD).

B. Progress in the use of results-based approaches within the UN system

20. Many UN organizations have adopted Results-Based Management (RBM) or other results-based approaches, within the context of strategic programming orientations to improve programming management efficiency and effectiveness and enhance organizational learning and accountability for results.²³ Although it is too soon to assess the impact of these approaches on UN organizations' activities at the country level, their introduction has generally helped enhancing the organizations internal planning coherence and has contributed to greater attention to performance measuring and monitoring from a narrow focus on processes and outputs delivery to outcomes, impact, and partnership. It has underscored the notion that success at the project and programme level may not translate into development results. It also underscored that a credible connection between organization activities and outputs and country's results should first be established to determine whether an organization is choosing its intervention strategically and is utilizing its comparative advantage effectively.

21. Progress has been made in this regard by a number of organizations. For example, the RBM approach has brought to UNDP a greater emphasis on results, specifically on outcomes. Evaluations look at outcome indicators and the factors that impede or facilitate changes in those indicators, and what is the contribution of UNDP, in partnership with others, to those changes.²⁴ Although there are no specific UNDP studies assessing the impact of RBM on UNDP activities, UNDP recorded that, by 2001, almost half of the organization's results were linked to efforts promoting policy change or informing policy formulation. This was interpreted as an indication that UNDP is increasingly focusing on and linking its activities to outcomes and as a validation of the positive correlation between "softer" dimensions of assistance,- such as coordination, policy dialogue and advocacy- and higher rates of outcome implementation.²⁵ In WFP, it was proposed to include output and outcomes indicators for the preparation of the Annual Performance Report to be submitted to the Executive Board in 2004. This proposal indicates the difficulty encountered by WFP to fully account for the higher level of output results detected in 2002²⁶ in terms of their contribution to outcomes. The full development of a results-based framework, with the inclusion of outcome indicators, intends also to demonstrate more clearly how WFP contributes to achieving the MDGs, the result of combined efforts of many actors. These indicators will try to combine broad MDG indicators with other measures more directly related to the outcomes that food and aid can influence²⁷.

22. As development issues are more and more addressed in terms of capacities needed to solve them, development solutions, identified at the time when programmes were formulated, need to be regularly adjusted to reflect new understandings obtained through the iterative consultative processes with national stakeholders, processes which are a requirement for capacity development. In this respect, most UN organizations realize that results-based frameworks,

²³ WFP, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA have introduced the RBM approach in their operations at the country, regional and headquarters levels and throughout their management processes (see their respective manuals on RBM). UNEP adopted a results-based budgeting system in 1999, as all UN Secretariat programmes did, and the system was implemented in the 2000-2001 biennial work programme. FAO has its own RBM system and WHO considers RBM part of its planning and budgeting processes, which are geared towards measuring impact, while the planning process has a built-in monitoring framework based on outcomes. UNESCO has an internet-based system called SISTER (System of Information on Strategies and Tasks and on the Evaluation of Results), as well as RBP (results-based performance). ILO has implemented a self-management approach called Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting System (MERS).

²⁴ 2003 Development Effectiveness Report, UNDP.

²⁵ 2001 ROAR, UNDP.

²⁶ In 2002, WFP distributed 3.7 million tons of food worth and 1.59 billion dollars to 72 million people in 82 countries

²⁷ WFP/EB.3/2003/4-A/1.

which include precise targets identified *a priori* before programme implementation, should be used with flexibility. Furthermore, a narrow and mechanic application of the RBM approach cannot be expected to measure or improve development effectiveness unless other elements and methodologies are in place. There are limitations in using RBM tools to establish rigorously causal links between programmes results and development outcomes or to suggest what changes are needed in the programmes to improve the outcomes. Performance measurement, which has been the focus of RBM cannot alone prove that certain results caused certain outcome or level of outcome or explain what programmatic change is needed to improve the outcome. Results-based frameworks cannot explain why certain interventions are more successful than others, cannot alone identify the better options for future programmes and need to be supplemented by an evaluation reflection.

23. The introduction of the UNDAF results matrix in the new generation of the UNDAFs, at the end of 2003, is an attempt to apply the RBM approach at the system-wide level and link agencies' country programmes and their performance measurements and incentives to the achievement of commonly defined outcomes at the country level. The Results Matrix is intended as an instrument to strengthen the commitment of UN organizations towards the achievement of identified results and as a mechanism to assess and report on the performance of individual organizations and of the system as a whole in relation to those results. A number of organizations, mainly UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP, have already taken steps to link their programming to the UNDAF process, which was facilitated by their harmonized programming cycles, levels of delegated authority and decentralization at the country level. Many organizations lag behind in this harmonization process. Also, for the moment, linking all UN programmes with the UNDAF Results Matrix might not be feasible as a number of programmes address development issues not always reflected in UNDAFs.

C. Main difficulties of implementation of results-based approaches

24. ***Attribution of results:*** As performance assessment moves away from inputs to various levels of results (outputs and outcomes) along the causal chain of the logical framework, it is more difficult for organizations to credibly attribute results to their own activities²⁸, particularly if the volume of invested organization resources in the country is modest compared to that of other development actors. There are too many factors influencing progress. Attribution and accountability for results become harder to observe and validate in relation to long-term goals and one can only attempt to assess how each actor/ organization is contributing and how its support is being organized in collaboration with other partners to development results. Benchmarks and indicators to measure performance would also need to be linked to macro-indicators of development changes at the country level, so to link organizations' results planned for a given programming cycle to the long-term desired country development impact. Availability and accuracy of indicators is crucial to this effort. Policy coherence and improved coordination and partnerships among development actors help clarify the interactions that may exist among the factors and players that influence a particular result. The question of how to define a credible link between specific activities and country development results requires further thinking and research.

²⁸ UNDP uses the sustainability of projects and programmes as well as the impact of given projects on target groups as performance measures addressing proxy/useful approximation of outcomes. UNDP recognizes that many of the factors affecting project sustainability may be beyond the control or influence of the organization-such as changes in the political climate, changes in country priorities and external shocks. But it also recognizes that sustainability is linked to UNDP's organizational practices as well-such as greater selectivity to reflect domestic priorities to enhance national ownership. UNCTAD also indicate sustainability of development interventions, and thus capacity building, as a proxy for development effectiveness. It recognizes that sustainability, which is central to capacity building, could be improved though greater attention to the long-term perspective as well as to institution building.

25. ***Performance incentives:*** Performance measurement and incentives of current RBM systems continue to be focused on agencies' output delivery as planned for a specific programming cycle, rather than on the contributions that these outputs make to the achievement of sustainable country results and on the organizations' performance in relations to these results²⁹. The lack of performance incentives linked to outcomes often induces managers to focus on outputs delivery in order to keep their programme funded. This leads to supply-driven rather than demand-driven decision making for programme management. More demand-driven approaches would lead to a better focus on the capacity building dimensions and recognize and address capacity and resource gaps both at the national and UN system level before programmes are implemented.

26. ***Harmonization of results-based approaches:*** Even though the focus on results is emphasized in most organizations and most of them have introduced results-based logical frameworks, there is still a great variety of definitions of effectiveness, objective and target, and of performance measurement systems. Organizations are at different stages of implementation, with, in general, a limited capacity to apply this approach at the country level and involve national partners. Harmonization of implementation of results-based approaches within the system and improved capacity to use them at the country level would have a positive influence to measure the development effectiveness of organizations, individually, and of the system, and hopefully lead to enhanced effectiveness.

27. ***Data and statistics:*** The lack of available and accurate data and statistics is a significant hindrance to a more comprehensive use of results based approaches within the system and programme countries. Building national statistical capacity is among the most important challenges for a more extensive system-wide use of results based approaches at the country level. Many, if not most of the UN organizations support the development of national databases, usually together with strengthening national capacities to process socio-economic data, including collection of data and reporting. Most notable is the development of the ChildInfo (by UNICEF) which has been recently adapted into DevInfo to assist the governments and the UN country teams in producing national MDG reports. However, the UN system in the field appears to have been rather slow in taking up such opportunities, and organizations' efforts continue to be sectorally focused.³⁰

D. Supporting national strategies

28. The main purpose of instruments such as UNDAF is to frame agreements that tie agencies organizational performance to national development outcomes. One implication of such approach is that specific organizations projects and interventions should be developed after national strategies are adopted. Existing activities might need to be significantly redesigned to fit new strategies.

29. By defining goals in terms of outcomes, the MDGs could be positioned as a viable results-based framework for assessing development impact. However, country evidence has shown that the MDGs still need to be better integrated into the national context and priorities before they can become a relevant development results framework for the planning of UN development assistance at the country level. They need to better reflect local priorities, as established by government, and need to be tailored to each country's current level of progress and institutional capacity for

²⁹ See Second Round Table on "Better Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Development Results", Marrakech, February 2004.

³⁰ See examples of common databases developed from methodologies used for tools such as ChildInfo: Beninfo, in Benin, and PARINFO, in Paraguay.

improvement. MDG indicators, in particular, need to be complemented by explicit, intermediate indicators for measuring and monitoring intermediate efforts contributing to the achievement of desired outcomes. Such indicators can be used in performance management and help reduce the attribution problems associated with outcome indicators³¹. The types of indicators that are monitored would depend, inter alia, on programme objectives, the nature of activities, and data collection and analysis capacity.

30. The relevance of results based tools to enhance the assessment of effectiveness of UN development cooperation will depend on the extent to which the results framework used at the country level reflects the national priorities and capacity gaps and the extent to which UN assistance is formulated in response to them. Development outcomes identified by the UNDAF Results Matrix, consistent with country's desired outcomes, should include strengthening national planning, statistical, monitoring and evaluation capacity and systems.

31. A broad participation in defining expected results is key to create ownership and commitment to achieving those results, including commitment of resources and activities needed. A broad participation also leads to a better understanding and knowledge of what each partner does, its strengths and comparative advantage, and how the combined efforts of all partners can achieve the desired outcomes.

IV. Capacity of the UN system to respond to evolving needs of recipient countries

32. The UN system presence in the field and its adequacy have been addressed several times by the General Assembly in past TCPRs³². In 2003, ECOSOC requested that this matter be reviewed in the 2004 TCPR³³. This section presents a number of general observations on the matter and the status of related reform efforts of the UN system.

33. Support to recipient countries by the UN system requires staff with technical skills in virtually all domains of human activity, as well as skills to assist in the formulation of national development policy, addressing multi-sectoral issues such as poverty reduction or gender mainstreaming. It requires also that UN staff be skillful in reconciling competing demands for programmes in a context of scarce resources. During the 1990s, different factors such as changing needs of countries, due to greater interdependence and vulnerabilities in the global environment, financial pressures on agencies and new management requirements, competition from other development actors, led to renewed efforts by the UN to clarify its comparative advantage in the field and develop further its capacities.

A. Adequacy of development support of the UN system and country-level structures

³¹ It has been suggested to tackle the attribution problem for development outcomes by using the log-frame itself. Indicators of outcome goals cannot realistically serve as measures of the agency's specific efforts but it is possible to develop indicators spanning the range of the log-frame from inputs to outcomes. (see "Evaluating International Cooperation: The road to nowhere? Results-based management in international cooperation", Howard White, Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK)

³² The General Assembly resolution 44/211, following its first comprehensive review, emphasized that "the UN system at the country level should be restructured and composed in such a way that it corresponds to on-going and projected cooperation programmes rather than to the institutional structure of the UN system." Three years later in its resolution 47/199, the General Assembly reiterated the same point; "the UN system at the country level should be tailored, taking into account the views of the recipient governments, to specific development needs of the country."

³³ ECOSOC resolution 2003/3, para. 37 (g): [the TCPR 2004 should focus, inter alia, on the] "adequacy of human resources and necessary skills available at the country level within the United Nations system to support national efforts and priorities"

34. The adequacy of the UN field presence is first influenced by the structure of country-level representation that prevails in each country where the UN system operates. This structure is not the outcome of a rational design – at the system-wide level – which defines the optimal composition of organization’s offices in response to national needs and priorities, in spite of the requests of the General Assembly³⁴. That structure is rather the result of the history of the individual organizations and accumulated decisions made along the course of several years, while trying to adjust country representation to mandates, agency-specific demands emerging from the countries, policy orientations of governing bodies, and, of course, implications of organization’s programmes workload, and financial and technical resources available. All these factors are of overwhelming importance in the decisions taken to have a country office or not, and what other mechanism is suitable to support country-level activities. In all cases, these decisions are organization-specific and respond to organization-specific considerations.

35. No system-wide approaches have ever been used to tackle the issue in a comprehensive way and it should not be surprising that the overall outcome is a structure that often does not reflect national priorities. There are organizations of the UN system that have no country offices at all, even though they deal with aspects that are of the highest priority for national development (see paragraph 48 below), while other organizations may have a well extended peripheral network of country and regional offices, even if they are insufficiently equipped or structured, making it impossible to provide adequate responses to country’s priorities and needs. At the same time, there are organizations that continue to have a highly decentralized operational structure at the country level, with qualified personnel and significant amount of resources, which play a key role in the work of the country teams. Although in recent cases of major conflicts or in transition situations, a concern to harmonize the response of the UN system to a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, peace-building, reconstruction and development has emerged, it is difficult to conclude that this may be the premise for a more coherent consideration of a rationalization of the UN system’s country presence.

36. An exception to this lack of system-wide approaches is the pilot experience launched in 2002 to examine the feasibility of a “joint office model”, which should ensure an integrated effort by establishing a common undg presence in countries with limited UN agency presence. That experience has been introduced as a pilot so far in two countries (Maldives and Cape Verde). However, the subject matter analyzed in the present paper is not whether we should integrate or unify country offices into single structures, but whether the country-level presence that the UN system provides reflects what is really needed or not. The composition of the country teams (i.e., which organizations have a country office) is only one part of the issue, since country operations can be undertaken also by organizations that do not have country offices. What is at stake is the effectiveness of different formats of presence at the country level, whether with country offices, regional offices or networks of international support, including from headquarters, and how all different formats should be conceived and interact with each other.

37. In today’s world, where networks of knowledge make information available in a much more flexible way (see paragraphs 51-53 below), evidence shows that presence in the country, whether through country offices or through technical support that easily can be made available in the field, still makes a difference in the capacity of an organization to interact with others in system-wide collaborations and is fundamental for the effectiveness of the operational activities. This is why the decision of the World Bank, a few years ago, to decentralize its structures by creating a network of country offices made a difference for its effectiveness, since it allowed the

³⁴ See above footnote 31.

Bank, which used to be highly centralized at the headquarters level, to perform a better job in a closer dialogue with the ultimate beneficiaries of the development efforts.

38. Is there room for considerations at the system-wide level as regards the suitability of the present structure of country offices and the level of technical support that they assure at the country level? The present paper focus on this issue mainly from the specific angle of the quality of the technical support that the UN system can make available to recipient countries, given the present structure of country, regional and headquarters offices. The big challenge is how to ensure adequacy and flexibility in the technical composition of the country offices, and the improved use of the support from regional and headquarters offices at the country level.

B. Measures taken to enhance field-level capacity of the UN system

39. ***Human resources policies and practices:*** The adequacy of the UN field presence is particularly effected by the quality of the staff mobilized as much as quantity. Towards the end of the 1990s and since then, many efforts have been made by UN organizations to better prepare their personnel to meet the changing demands placed on the system, in particular the need for greater coordination and to handle issues at the policy level, in the field. For example, to better equip its staff to function in a changing environment, UNIDO introduced general management principles for staff at all levels³⁵; UNDP's re-profiling exercise, which encompassed the entire organization at both headquarters and the 135 country offices, aligned staff competencies with its new mission; UNFPA undertook a similar re-profiling exercise; FAO embarked on the most significant re-organization since its founding to come closer to its Member States, with a more decentralized structure, a strong role to regional offices and increased delegation of authority. Comprehensive organizational learning and staff development strategies were implemented to re-shape technical, office management and general competencies. For example, UNICEF has invested in management training, which contributed to improved integration of operations and programme functions and increased inter-sectoral collaboration. Staff rotation was systematized and mobility encouraged, not only within the same organization but also between organizations.

40. In general there has been an increased focus on national and regional level activities, through greater delegation of decision-making to field personnel and, in cases when it was possible, greater decentralization of resources (see graph below). Decentralization is meant to better respond to the needs of the recipient countries in a timely and effective manner. Field presence is also an important way to demonstrate the value of the UN in the eyes of the people.

41. ***Support at the regional level:*** In order to better support its presence in the field, there is an on-going trend within the UN system whereby organizations are transferring more resources and more authority to the regional and sub-regional levels. In the last few years, there has been a significant increase in UN organization regional and sub-regional offices and, according to a recent estimate, about 15% of UN resources for development assistance is being channeled through inter-country mechanisms of one kind or another. The regional offices are equipped with technical capacities and resources to support country offices in designing and implementing programmes and projects. For example, UNDP's restructuring and decentralization has resulted in out posting of policy specialists to nine Sub-Regional Resource Facilities (SURFs) and UNICEF has seven Regional Offices fully responsible for the decentralized oversight of, and support to, Country Offices. WHO is shifting from 'basic' staff profiles to more specialized

³⁵ UNIDO seven principles of management are: empowerment, accountability, transparency, balanced management, result orientation, action/decision orientation, and leadership.

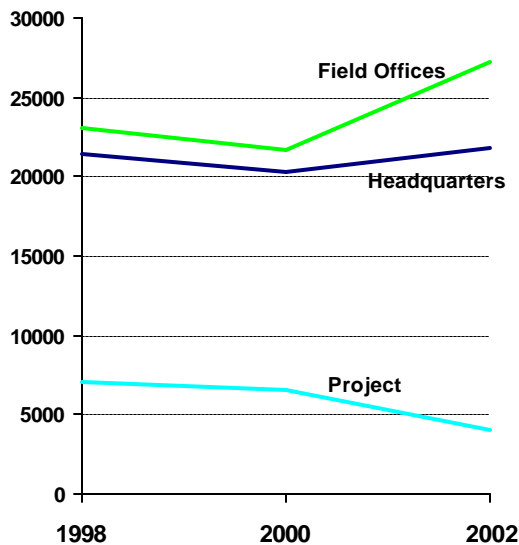
profiles to match specific country needs and is reinforcing its regional as well as country offices, making its technical cooperation more demand-driven. At the country and regional levels, FAO enlists the service of high-level academic and researchers under the academic and research cooperation programme and draws on a large pool of skilled and motivated experts under the national bodies and the private sector. UNFPA enhanced networking through regional and country multidisciplinary technical services teams, in particular under its priority programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health. Most specialized organizations have set up regional offices to promote their work and provide efficient support to national initiatives.

UN COMMON SYSTEM STAFFING PATTERNS*

Period: 1998, 2000, and 2002

(Between headquarters and field levels)

	<i>HQs</i>	<i>Field</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Total</i>
1998	21,409	23,064	7,128	51,601
2000	20,299	21,746	6,637	48,682
2002	21,850	27,245	4,148	53,243



Source: Personnel Statistics compiled by CEB Secretariat

* The total are from all UN Common System organizations: UN, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, UNRWA, ITC, ICSC, ICJ, UNU, ILO, ICAT, FAO, WFP, UNESCO, WHO, PAHO, UNAIDS, ICAO, UPU, ITU, WMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO, IAEA, WTO

42. However, regional structures of organizations of the system are organized in different ways. Regions are often defined with different geographical coverage and regional offices are placed in different locations. The undg shows increasing awareness of the need to bring more coherence to their operational activities at the regional and sub-regional levels, thereby optimizing the use of resources for strategically identified needs.

C. Results at the country level

43. In the 14 recipient countries visited by DESA, in preparation for the TCPR 2004, the caliber and technical skills of UN country office staff, including national staff, are appreciated by development partners. Regarding the use of national expertise, the UN is generally successful in attracting the best national talent both for administrative and programme functions. In many countries, international and national staff possesses comparable international credentials and

experience. This is an encouraging situation for the evolving composition and mix of UN teams and greater participation of national expertise in development assistance.

44. A less positive aspect is that, overall, the adequacy of technical capacity the UN can mobilize varies greatly from country to country. Also, for such functions as policy advice, monitoring, reporting, advocacy, communication and coordination, many of the UN Country Teams have limited in-house capacities. It is a matter of funding and numbers. In some countries there are staff of hundred or more but, in most countries, the UN system is represented by five or six people only. Criteria need to be further elaborated to ensure that adequate support is provided to the poorest countries, particularly in sectors critical to their economies.

45. While UNDP and UNICEF have generally large offices, and to a lesser extent UNFPA and WFP, most other UN organizations have very sparse or virtually no technical capacities. They depend almost entirely on ad hoc expertise and most often on their headquarters and regional offices. Government officials have expressed concerns about the skill mix at the level of individual agencies. The trend of increased reliance on national expertise, which is a positive trend, is not necessarily the result of a well-planned strategy and can be the ill-prepared outcome of cost cutting measures (see also the capacity-drain issue, paragraph 15 above). The majority of offices have insufficient resources to effectively maintain and develop staff expertise. The UN Staff College could be used more systematically to promote a system-wide staff development programme, linked to harmonized performance appraisal systems.

46. Most organizations members of UN country teams have a funding cycle of one to two year, less predictable than for the four operational development Funds and Programmes, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP. These differences present a major challenge to improve the sustainability of inter-agency collaboration and commitment with national partners. In some instances, Government institutions and donors hesitate to enter into partnership with the UN system organizations for field programme/project activities due to lack of autonomy of their country office representatives and their minimal capacity to participate in substantive dialogue.

47. Overall, the UN system is still slow in responding to the evolving needs of the recipient countries. In the TCPR consultations with different stakeholders, a number of reasons were cited: the long-term decline in core funding reduced the strategic capacity of organizations to respond to emerging needs; the UN reform agenda is still a work in progress at the different headquarters; knowledge and capacity development expertise present in the UN system is not sufficiently leveraged; UN organizations are still overly mandate-driven; the ability to assess specific capacity building needs in countries and adjust programmes accordingly is not well developed; country-level coordination needs strengthening.³⁶

D. Flexible use of human resources

48. The evolving development priorities and dynamics require that the UN system country-level presence be suitably adjusted. Not every organization can establish adequate field presence but, overall, the UN system field presence should reflect priority sectors and issues. For example, poverty eradication is the highest development priority and the role of agriculture and rural development in poverty eradication, with over 70% of the world's poor living in rural areas, has been recognized as crucial. But IFAD, which among the UN organizations has the most direct responsibility to eradicate rural poverty, does not have field presence or adequate resources for providing large-scale technical assistance.

³⁶ Findings from consultation meetings with UN agencies, Members States and Civil Society for the 2004 TCPR.

Similarly field-level advocacy for trade policy suffers since UNCTAD and ITC, the UN entities with direct responsibility on trade-related development issues, have no representation in the UN country teams. Sustainable use of natural resources requires expertise from UNEP and the elimination of slums requires advice from UN-HABITAT. A key issue to be resolved is how to involve, both substantively and operationally, non-resident organizations in the implementation of any comprehensive development programme.

49. In enhancing the technical capacities of field offices, where and when needed, care should be taken to avoid increasing the transaction costs of programme delivery. A number of organizations are considering such options as attaching officers to the RC office or to the larger operational agencies offices. In 2002, Action 14 of the Secretary-General's Agenda for Further Change calls for a UNDG plan that will include pooling of UN system resources and developing common databases and knowledge networks. UN country team members acknowledge that existing administrative procedures are constraining the flexible use of human resources that Action 14 requires. Different organizations present in a country should be able to exchange their personnel or to create pools of expertise they can draw from when needed, instead of requesting the services of outside experts, provided that this expertise is relevant to meet their needs.³⁷ The Resident Coordinator System (RCS) has the responsibility to pool human and technical expertise that exists throughout the UN system to provide better service to the programme countries. For the moment, the RCS does not appear to have adequate resources to effectively discharge this responsibility.

50. The greater support placed at the regional level can get the UN system expertise closer to the countries. Pool of expertise available to country teams from regional units has been a useful resource but, as is the case with using resources from headquarters, costs attached to this support have been charged to the country programmes, which is a disincentive. In that regard, more flexible funding and planning arrangements are needed.

E. Connectivity for Development

51. Improved coordination and more coherent programming, particularly programming of strategic value which is frequently related to cross-cutting issues, require a diversity of expertise which is not necessarily available in one single agency. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can facilitate mutual access to knowledge, including access to technical and referral services of any part of the UN system. There is notable progress in the area of information technology, which the system has put to use. The UN extranet, to access information among organizations, is operational and a UN system-wide search engine is being developed. When completed, this tool will facilitate information retrieval and enhance the system-wide databases contents management techniques³⁸.

52. One of the most difficult issues in development Knowledge Management (KM) is to create a knowledge culture and get people motivated to share what they know. Motivations to share knowledge come from the understanding that knowledge is perishable, short-lived and rapidly loses value if not exchanged. A few examples of good practice in knowledge sharing in the UN system, among many, are the FAO World Agricultural Information Centre (WIACENT) and the

³⁷ That should not prevent the flexible use of consultants when specialized expertise is required (e.g. food security, vulnerability analysis).

³⁸ A/58/568

UN Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN)³⁹ of UNDESA which serves as a portal for demand-driven and interactive two-way provider of information on public administration. UN-HABITAT is working to make ICT relevant to the real needs of cities in developing countries⁴⁰. Because of its decentralized modus operandi, UNICEF has invested significantly in maintaining connectivity and access world-wide and its intranet provides KM support to its country offices and national partners. The UNDP SURF system is geared to engage global advocacy and analysis to generate knowledge, alliance building and promotion of enabling environment for national capacity building. If and when systems such as the SURF system manage to create an inter-agency connectivity, these mechanisms will enhance the work of the UN system, as a whole. UNDG is exploring ways to harness more effectively the existing knowledge within the UN system through knowledge networks.⁴¹ and Communities of Practice (CoP)⁴².

53. At present, there is no institutional focus within the UN system to pursue technological issues and a challenge that remains is to ensure that the diverse information systems within the UN are harmonized so that organizations can effectively communicate and share knowledge. To address this issue, a UN system-wide strategy on ICT is currently being developed. The required organizational and skill structure that will be necessary to operationalize such strategy should include provisions for support in the field. At the country level, at least 54 UNCT websites have been established and several of these sites include access to inter-agency and/or national coordinating mechanisms on specific themes. However, the UN information technology environment at the country level is ad hoc, which inhibits the sharing of services. Organization standards being used in most country offices cannot be shared or are not updated, and some organizations do not have the resources to use IT expertise. At the national level, a number of matters need to be better understood, including: how are national stakeholders and their development partners dealing with the issues of knowledge management; how can the UN system work in partnership with them to integrate the knowledge available at the country level; and what are the ways and means available to the UN to help build national knowledge management capacities.

V. CONCLUSIONS

54. *National capacities for development:* Although building national capacities for development has been central to the United Nations operational activities from their beginning, previous TCPRs had reported that a number of organizations of the system were

³⁹ UNPAN's objectives include: far-reaching access to regional experience in the practice of public policy development and management at the regional, national and local levels; capacity-building and south-south cooperation in information and knowledge management; ease of access to worldwide information in all areas of public sector policy and management.

⁴⁰ A strategic partnership has been developed with the Environment Sciences Research Institute (ESRI), which is a leading developer of geographic information system (GIS) software. The partnership will lead to the provision of GIS technology and training up to 1,000 cities in the least developed countries, which will enable them to participate in the collection of urban indicator information and improve city management.

⁴¹ Thematically defined 'knowledge networks' function as global communities with a shared interest and professional focus and they are geographically organized. UNDG is: – a) establishing new networks or build on the existing ones such as MDG Network (which operate both global and country level), b) strengthening the capacity at the country level to manage knowledge, c) provide support to Government – monitoring and reviewing national plans and strategies, including PRSPs, etc.

⁴² Groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise – engineers engaged in deep-water drilling, for example, consultants who specialize in strategic marketing, or frontline managers in charge of check processing in a large commercial bank. Some communities of practice meet regularly...others are connected primarily by e-mail. Communities of practice many or may not have an agenda on a given week and even if it does it many not follow the agenda closely. Inevitably, however, people in communities of practice share their experience and knowledge in free flowing creative ways that foster new approaches to problems. (Wenger and Snyder, 2000: 140-1)

giving insufficient attention to capacity-building. In concluding its last TCPR, the General Assembly stressed that capacity-building and its sustainability should be explicitly articulated as a goal of technical assistance provided by the United Nations system (resolution 56/201). As requested by the Assembly, United Nations organizations have embarked in a fundamental review of their work in this field and, in 2002, they have achieved a consensus on the definition and importance of mainstreaming capacity development in all United Nations programmes. In general, building national capacities for development is recognized as an endogenous country-driven, long-term process at the core of development, which requires the involvement of all sectors of society.

55. In 2003, after a review of the efforts made within the United Nations system, ECOSOC urged the United Nations organizations to, *inter alia*, support recipient countries in devising country-level strategies for capacity-building, to intensify inter-agency information sharing on experience gained in this field, and invited the organizations to include capacity-building in their reporting to their governing bodies. It is too early, less than a year later, for a comprehensive review of progress on these required actions.

56. Assessments conducted in different parts of the United Nations system have helped identify weaknesses that existed in capacity-building programmes such as inadequate assessment of needs, insufficient long-term perspectives, inability of recipient governments to provide sufficient financial and administrative support to operate and maintain systems, focus on individuals rather than institutions and thinly spread resources over too many activities. Attention is given in many organizations to address these weaknesses and several of them are designing strategies it can be concluded that, at this time, the United Nations system needs to pursue in a determined way several key actions including:

- (a) to further elaborate a clear understanding by the United Nations, system-wide, of capacity development imperatives;
- (b) to improve the approaches used to assess and measure capacity;
- (c) to further reform the modalities of execution of development assistance to maximize their support to capacity development.

57. *Development results and monitoring and evaluation:* In resolution 56/201, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of the monitoring and evaluation of operational activities for development of the UN system in order to enhance their effectiveness and impact. The Assembly summarized a few principles that should guide the monitoring and evaluation process and actions to undertake. Among them were:

- (a) the conduct, where appropriate, of impartial and independent joint evaluations by the UN system;
- (b) closer involvement of national authorities and civil society in monitoring and evaluation by the UN system to achieve a comprehensive and participatory approach;
- (c) systematic application to programming processes of lessons learned in the course of monitoring and evaluation;
- (d) strengthening capacities of the recipient countries to perform effective programme, project and financial monitoring, as well as impact evaluations of operational activities of the UN system.

58. The UN system has made determined efforts to better measure the performance of its programmes and develop the tools to better understand the links between its activities and development results. For example, the UNDAF Results Matrix introduced by UNDG in the new generation of UNDAFs, at the end of 2003, has the potential to become an important

tool to promote the use of monitoring and evaluation at the country-level. To fully realize the General Assembly expectations that the monitoring and evaluation process contribute to enhancing effectiveness and impact of operational activities, the use of such tools should not be limited to the gathering of performance measurement information but should include a practical programme of evaluation to explain why, in a given context, certain activities have been more successful than others and help guide future programming.

59. More thought and energy should be devoted to determine how UN organizations, and their staff working in the field, can learn collectively from evaluations and make such lessons available to recipient countries in user-oriented form, as recommended by ECOSOC in 2003 (resolution 2003/3, paragraphs 19-24). The elements for a programme of action on monitoring and evaluation indicated in General Assembly resolution 56/201 should provide the basis for continued concerted action by the organizations of the UN system.

60. *Human resources and necessary skills available at the country level:* National ownership has always been a guiding principle of the UN development cooperation, which implies, among other things, that the UN system should be responsive to the national priorities and that the system presence in the field “should be tailored, taking into account the views of the recipient governments, to specific development needs of the country,” (General Assembly resolution 47/199). The UN operational activities should respond to these needs in a flexible manner, at the request of recipient countries, as some of their fundamental characteristics reiterated by ECOSOC in 2003. In this context, ECOSOC requested that the 2004 TCPR provides analysis on the adequacy of human resources and necessary skills available at the country level within the UN system to support national efforts and priorities (resolution 2003/3, paragraph 37 (g)).

61. In the face of changing needs of countries and financial pressure on organizations, the UN system made concerted efforts, towards the end of the 1990s and since then, to clarify its comparative advantage in the field and took a number of measures to enhance relevant field-level capacity. In general, there has been in recent years an increased focus throughout the system on national and regional level activities, with greater delegation of decision-making to field personnel. Organizations have implemented staff development strategies to re-shape their staff technical and general competencies, including the ability to handle policy level and coordination issues, ability in greater demand in the field as a result of the gradual move towards a programmatic approach, with more upstream coordination.

62. The Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals underscored the importance of cross-cutting issues and the necessity of increased support at the country-level for the formulation of comprehensive development plans. In this respect, the complementary mandates and capacities of the UN organizations are one of the strength of the system. No single UN organization can provide the complete range of expertise and resources required by programme countries to achieve their development goals but effective collaboration of the different organizations under such mechanisms as the Resident Coordinator System can make a unique contribution to development. Significant progress is being reported but more efforts are needed to arrive at the ‘unity of purpose and action’ of a more integrated system.

63. The adequacy of the UN field presence is first influenced by the structure of country-level representation that prevails in each country. Decisions on country-level representation are organization-specific and respond to organization-specific considerations. No system-wide approaches have ever been used to tackle this issue in a comprehensive way. The

composition of the UN country teams is only one part of the issue, since country operations can be undertaken also by UN organizations that do not have country offices. What is at stake and requires further review is the effectiveness of different formats of presence at the country level, whether with country offices, regional offices or networks of international support, including from headquarters, and how all different formats should be conceived and interact with each other.