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System-wide evaluation on progress towards a "new generation of United Nations country teams"

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Abstract

This evaluation examined progress towards a “new generation of United Nations country teams” mandated by A/RES/72/279. It assessed the alignment/derivation of UNSDG entity programming from Cooperation Frameworks, and the (re)configuration of UNCTs. It covered the period 2019-2025, all UNSDG entities and the Resident Coordinator system (including the Development Coordination Office) at country, regional and global levels. It was theory-based, and triangulated multiple data sources including: interviews with UN staff and external stakeholders, in-depth analysis of 21 UNCTs, extensive document review and analysis of survey data. It concludes that the strategic vision for a new generation of UNCTs is highly relevant, some improvements have been made, and key foundational elements established. There is broad alignment between Cooperation Frameworks and UNSDG entity country programming. However, Cooperation Frameworks have not significantly influenced substantive programming decisions or become the most important planning and implementation instrument for the United Nations at country level. “UNCT configuration exercises” have had limited results. UNCT ownership and strategic use of Cooperation Framework implementation tools, such as joint workplans, is limited. This gap between vision and reality is explained in part by the approach to reform implementation, but also by structural barriers including weak incentives for collaboration, fragmented governance, and funding quality. The evaluation makes seven strategic recommendations to the UNSDG, DCO and Member States, including: (i) recalibration of Cooperation Framework cycle delivery, (ii) revised approaches to UNCT configuration, (iii) strengthening the delivery focus of development coordination, (iv) more comprehensive integration of reforms within UNSDG entity accountabilities and incentives, (v) addressing institutional obstacles, (vi) accelerating Funding Compact commitments, and (vii) strengthening Member State engagement and oversight.

Foreword

In 2015, with their unanimous adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Member States of the United Nations highlighted the need for "coherent and integrated support to the implementation of the new Agenda by the United Nations development system." The subsequent 'repositioning', mandated by General Assembly resolution 72/279 in 2018, is arguably the most far-reaching and ambitious reform of the development system to date. A key element is the demand for a "new generation of United Nations country teams" that determine their priorities and tailor their presence and capacities in accordance with Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks signed with governments.

The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) conducted this evaluation, on the recommendation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, to provide independent analysis on the extent to which this key element of the repositioning is contributing to the goal of a more coherent, effective, efficient, and accountable United Nations development system. The evaluation does not provide an assessment of progress against the entirety of the reform agenda or the overall effectiveness of the United Nations development system. Nor does it assess the performance of individual UNSDG entities or United Nations country teams. Rather, it provides a unique, holistic assessment of how these aspects of the repositioning agenda have been pursued at country, regional and global levels, and, critically, explores the factors that have enabled or hindered progress towards the strategic ambition of the reforms.

The evaluation found many examples of behaviours and approaches consistent with the vision for a new generation of UNCTs and noted widespread appreciation for the vision itself. Many of the key foundations for a new generation of UNCTs are now in place. However, the overall picture that emerges from this assessment is that the Cooperation Framework is yet to become the "most important implementation instrument" and (re)configuration of United Nations country teams has proven challenging in practice. These key elements of the repositioning cannot be said to have resulted in the intended fundamental shift: they do not yet ensure the United Nations' collective offer is more than the sum of its parts or that it provides an optimal contribution to sustainable development at country level.

At the time of publication, the United Nations is entering perhaps the most challenging period in its eight-decade history. While the challenges for the development system multiply and increase in complexity, traditional sources of support and financing appear to be in decline. Amid this context, the ambitious changes envisaged by the repositioning of the United Nations development system are not optional, but essential, and increasingly urgent. The evaluation does not suggest that the ambition should be lowered. The response needs to be realistic and pragmatic, but with clear intent to further the ambitions of the development system repositioning and not erode or dilute them.

The evaluation identifies seven strategic recommendations requiring action across the United Nations development system. They should be addressed together as a holistic set, to achieve maximum impact. UNSDG entities need to drive substantive progress by focusing on changes that are within their immediate control. Action by Member States is also necessary to address fundamental systemic issues related to funding and governance. The evidence provided by this evaluation and its recommendations are highly relevant within the broader context of the ongoing UN80 Initiative which may provide opportunities to accelerate progress on the repositioning of the development system. However, the changes proposed by this evaluation will remain necessary and relevant notwithstanding the outcomes of the UN80 Initiative, to enhance the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations development system at country level.

I hope that this evaluation provides independent evidence and recommendations for both the members of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and Member States to support ongoing efforts to ensure that the UN development system is truly fit for purpose.

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Acronyms

CCA	Common Country Analysis
CF	Cooperation Framework
CPI	Country programming instrument
DCO	Development Coordination Office
EB	Executive Board
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
EQ	Evaluation question
FGD	Focus group discussion
GA	General Assembly
IBC	Issue-based Coalition
IMS	UNSDG Information Management System
KII	Key informant interview
MAF	Management and Accountability Framework
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MPTF	Multi-partner trust fund
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PDR	Programme Development and Results
PMT	Programme management team
PSG	Regional Peer Support Group
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platform
REC	Regional Economic Commission
RG	Results group
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SWEO	UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of reference
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDS	United Nations development system
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Executive summary

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Introduction

This evaluation on progress towards a new generation of United Nations country teams (UNCTs),[1] conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO), has a dual purpose of accountability and learning.

The evaluation responds to a request by the UNSDG Principals for an independent system-wide evaluation to examine two central elements of the repositioning of the United Nations development system at the country level. The evaluation explores, specifically, the: "good practices and opportunities for improvement on country programmes' derivation from, and alignment with, Cooperation Frameworks and UNCT configuration".

The evaluation is not an assessment of progress against the entirety of the reform agenda or the overall effectiveness of the United Nations development system. It does not provide an assessment or benchmarking of the performance of individual UNSDG entities or UNCTs. Rather, it is a holistic assessment of the contribution of two key reform elements to the goal of a more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable United Nations development system.

The reforms position the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as "the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country" (Figure 1). This evaluation, therefore, explores:

- **Derivation and alignment**: the extent to which individual UNSDG entity programmes are "derived from" and "aligned with" the Cooperation Framework
- **UNCT configuration**: the extent to which UNCTs have been able to (re)configure to deliver shared results in response to the priorities set out in the Cooperation Frameworks

While these processes and their outcomes are at the centre of the evaluation, the assessment of progress required consideration of the wider reform agenda and the broader enabling environment.

Figure 1: Cooperation Framework cycle

Source: Reproduced by SWEO, original from Cooperation Framework Companion Package

Context

The repositioning of the United Nations development system is arguably the most comprehensive and ambitious reform effort to date, aiming to provide more coherent, accountable and effective United Nations support to help Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was initiated by Member States in the 2014-2016 Economic and Social Council "ECOSOC dialogues" and the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution (A/RES/71/243). It was then taken forward by the Secretary-General in his reports on repositioning in 2017 (A/72/124–E/2018/3 & A/72/684–E/2018/7), mandated in the 2018 General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279 and reinforced by resolutions on the QCPR in 2020 (A/RES/75/233) and 2024 (A/RES/79/226).

1. On average, 19-20 resident and non-resident United Nations entities are led by a Resident Coordinator.

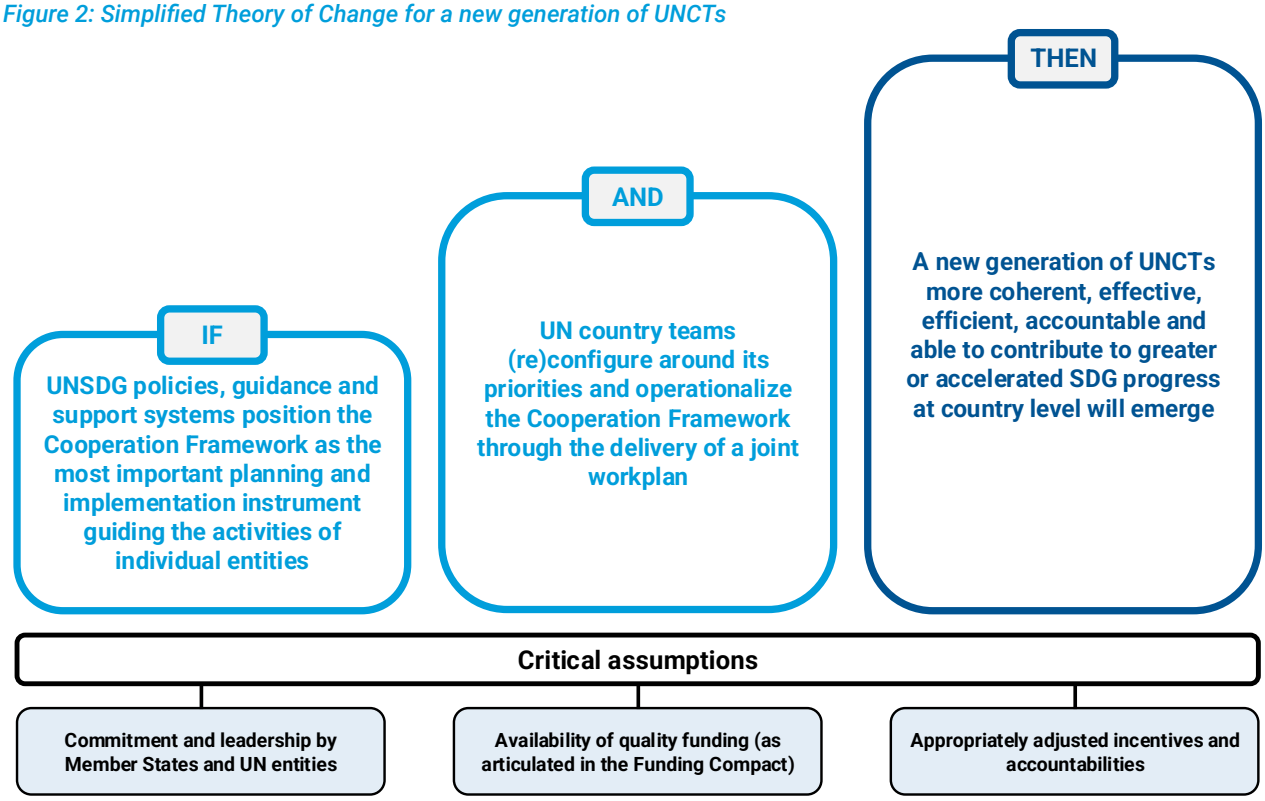
The reform package is broad. In addition to the elements at the core of this evaluation, it includes inter alia: the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system (de-linked from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and reporting to the Secretary-General); the repositioning of the development system's regional level, in order to enhance use of its capacities and resources at the country level; the creation of the Development Coordination Office (DCO) at headquarters level to provide support to the Resident Coordinator system and UNCTs; the Funding Compact between the UNSDG and Member States; and important system-wide efficiency initiatives. Monitoring and formal reporting to Member States on reform implementation is provided by the Secretary-General's reports on the QCPR and the UNSDG Chair's reports on the Development Coordination Office.[2]

Evaluation features

Scope: The evaluation is system-wide, including member entities of the UNSDG and its secretariat (the Development Coordination Office) at country, regional and global levels in the period 2019 to 2025. Adhering to key principles of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy – complementarity, subsidiarity and collaboration – it builds upon the existing evaluation and oversight work of UNSDG entity evaluation functions, the United Nations Secretariat's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and country-specific Cooperation Framework evaluations. It is focused on the collective results and system-wide issues that are not adequately addressed by these mechanisms.

Analytical approach: The evaluation took a theory-based approach, whereby the evaluation questions (EQs), data collection and analysis aim to assess progress against a theory for the realization of a "new generation of UNCTs". The core of this theory is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Simplified Theory of Change for a new generation of UNCTs



Source: SWEO

2. Most recently A/80/74-E/2025/53 and E/2025/61 respectively. For previous reports see: Guiding Operational Activities for Development | Economic and Social Council.

The evaluation takes a system-wide lens to holistically assess how this theory holds in practice and highlights key enabling or limiting factors (both internal and external).

Participatory nature: without compromising its objectivity and independence, the evaluation was conducted in close consultation with key stakeholders and users throughout. UNSDG entities were consulted on evaluation scope and design. Primary data collection methods were participatory, prioritizing and promoting inter-agency discussions. Briefings on emerging evaluation findings provided opportunities for their validation, and workshops were held with UNSDG and Resident Coordinator system representatives to discuss appropriate and feasible recommendations. The evaluation has sought to be outward facing, connecting when relevant with ongoing UNSDG and inter-governmental processes relating to United Nations development system repositioning.

Data sources: the evaluation took a broad sampling approach. Primary and secondary data were gathered and analysed across different stakeholder groups, and at country, regional and global levels of the United Nations development system. The findings draw on:

- Interviews and focus group discussions with 500+ key informants (United Nations system staff and external stakeholders including programme country governments and donors) at country, regional and global levels
- Country-level data collection in 21 focus countries (balancing typologies and regional representation) (see Figure 3)
- Review of relevant documentation gathered from 21 UNCTs and all 37 UNSDG entities (including existing independent evaluations)
- Re-analysis of system-wide survey datasets (including the UNSDG Information Management System and annual QCPR monitoring surveys of UNSDG entities, UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and programme country governments administered by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)[3]) collected between 2021 and 2024.

Figure 3: Evaluation focus countries

Source: SWEO

3. Number of respondents to QCPR monitoring surveys (2024): 122 programme country governments (one per country), 32 UNSDG entity headquarters (one per entity), 1041 UNCT members, and 129 Resident Coordinators.

Evaluation findings

Relevance and integration of key instruments

The evaluation finds that the Cooperation Framework Guidance (2019) and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) (2019, updated 2021), reflect the overall strategic intent of the United Nations development system repositioning. They support the ambition to introduce dual accountability models, focus on national priorities and further join up UNCT analysis, planning and reporting.

However, these instruments, which are the result of negotiation and agreement among UNSDG entities, lack clarity on the fundamental processes and expectations regarding country programme derivation from Cooperation Frameworks and UNCT configuration. Furthermore, as evidenced by subsequent findings, the evaluation considers that the design and execution of the repositioning has relied too heavily on the technical and administrative lever of new, inter-agency guidance, which, while necessary, is not sufficient to strengthen system-wide coherence, efficiency and effectiveness given the complexity and structural barriers within the United Nations development system.

Most UNSDG entities have taken steps to integrate elements of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework into their own strategies, guidance and support systems. However, this adoption has been gradual and uneven, often amounting to parallel or additional considerations with qualification and caveats, rather than fully integrated commitments to new ways of working that are supported by change management strategies and approaches. This can result in confusion or tension between entity-specific instruments and responsibilities and those relating to UNCT membership and the Cooperation Framework cycle.

Country programme derivation from Cooperation Frameworks

UNSDG entities appreciate certain aspects of the Cooperation Framework programme cycle, especially the strengthened Common Country Analyses (CCAs). They increasingly understand that country programming instruments should derive from the Cooperation Framework rather than *vice-versa*. Large majorities of UNCT members report that their programmes are “derived” from (or “aligned” with) the Cooperation Framework. However, the evaluation finds that the practice of “derivation” is inconsistently understood, unevenly applied and, when followed, more administrative than substantive. This is primarily due to a combination of:

- The weak mechanisms established by the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework for the demonstration of derivation (limited to the verbatim use of the Cooperation Framework outcome statements)
- The very broad nature of the outcome statements in Cooperation Framework documents (to which almost any programme could be reasonably judged as aligned)
- The inconsistent and unclear expectation regarding the role of the Resident Coordinator in supporting or certifying entities’ programme derivation from the Cooperation Framework.

Consequently, while country programmes of UNSDG entities are broadly aligned with the Cooperation Framework, there is little evidence that the substance of those programmes is significantly affected by the Cooperation Framework and its preparation process. This finding should not be read as a suggestion that UNSDG entity programmes are misaligned with national priorities – this is not necessarily the case. However, it does suggest that Cooperation Frameworks are not delivering a more focused, prioritized, and coherent United Nations development offer at the country level, as intended. For reasons highlighted in subsequent findings, UNSDG entities are incentivized to develop a broad Cooperation Framework that provides space for the incorporation of all mandates, the participation of all entities and the flexibility to adapt to opportunities presented by funding availability or government requests.

Concerningly, the process of deriving a UNSDG entity country programme from a Cooperation Framework has often been a source of significant friction between UNCT members and the Resident Coordinator due to the compliance points established by the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework and the competing timeframes between Country Programme Document approval by governing bodies[4] and Cooperation Framework signature by the government.

The evaluation did find examples of effective practices and processes that contributed to stronger ownership of the Cooperation Framework by UNCTs and more substantive alignment in programming, including the more robust and participatory Common Country Analyses phase encouraged by the repositioning. Otherwise, strengthened alignment was often facilitated by Resident Coordinators and UNCTs stepping outside of the processes intended by the guidance and developing more flexible, context-specific approaches to analysis, strategic planning and programming.

UNCT configuration

The Secretary-General's proposals for repositioning the United Nations development system and the direction given by Member States in the key resolutions asked for the improved configuration of the United Nations development system at all levels. This was largely operationalized as a key step in the Cooperation Framework development process: the "UNCT configuration exercise" at the country level. The evaluation finds that UNCT configuration exercises may provide some useful information on entity footprints and staffing and have provided some new opportunities for the participation of non-resident entities in UNCTs. But they do not result in actual changes in country engagement: they do not generate actionable plans and do not function as a tool to improve the UNCT's capability to deliver the Cooperation Framework. There are a number of reasons why this is the case:

- The disconnect between these exercises and UNSDG entities' decisions about country presence and capacities, which are typically taken on different timeframes at regional offices than that of headquarters
- The limited agility of the United Nations development system to quickly reconfigure capacities at the country level (including limited availability of flexible or pooled resources that may enable this)
- The understandable interest that the country-level staff responsible for conducting the exercise have in retaining the existing configuration
- Sensitivity regarding consultation of the government on UNCT configuration (especially in relation to normative mandates).

UNCT configuration exercises have, therefore, also not contributed significantly to the separate but related repositioning aims of enhancing country-level access to the regionally located assets and expertise of the United Nations system and shifting the United Nations offer from project or service delivery to upstream, integrated policy advice, even where there is government demand.

Flexible systems to allow staff to be hosted and deployed on other entities' platforms or within the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) exist but are little used. There are few examples of larger entities hosting, by mutual recognition, expert staff of smaller or non-resident entities.

Cooperation Framework implementation

Overall, the evaluation finds that UNCT ownership and use of the tools put in place to support Cooperation Framework implementation has been weak.

4. UNDP, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP).

Joint workplans: The "joint workplans" intended to operationalize the Cooperation Framework through contributions by entity-specific activities ("sub outputs") to the high-level Cooperation Framework outcomes, if complete, can provide a useful overview of the full United Nations footprint and a tool for coordination and communication. However, there is a lack of consistency in their scope and purpose. They are often a mere collation (often *ex-post*) of entity activities rather than being coherent and strategic and they rarely drive strategic coordination or meaningfully track progress toward achievement of strategic-level outcomes.

Coordination structures: In some countries, Cooperation Framework governance and coordination structures (often "results groups" under an overarching government-United Nations "joint-steering committee") serve as useful spaces to maintain focus on delivery. However, overall practice indicates that results and thematic groups have limited utility because they are seen as more focused on data collation (that is, compilation of existing activity into the joint workplans) than strategic delivery or identification of new, joint, or complementary initiatives. The strategic value of these groups and structures is further diminished when the participation of senior United Nations or government officials is limited.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation: UNSDG entities' disparate results-based management metrics and systems mean that data submitted for the purposes of monitoring Cooperation Framework implementation and tracking results are problematic. The aggregation of all United Nations development activities in a country is a useful and necessary endeavour for the purposes of coordination and transparency to the government (provided through the annual UNCT results report since the repositioning). However, it is associated with very high transaction costs and "double reporting" by all stakeholders involved. Cooperation Framework evaluations are typically under-resourced and there is little evidence that they provide significant input into the design of new Cooperation Frameworks.

Joint resource mobilization strategies: While UNCT joint resource mobilization strategy documents mostly fulfil the requirements of the guidance, there is little evidence they contribute to financing the Cooperation Framework implementation. Joint resource mobilization efforts by UNCTs are limited, with the exception of proposals to global pooled and vertical funds and the establishment of some country-level multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs). Such mechanisms were found to have the potential to promote greater coherence and collaboration within UNCTs, sometimes leveraging non-resident expertise, but many key informants perceived a mismatch between the transaction costs involved and the volume of funding typically available.

Factors influencing the evolution of a new generation of UNCTs

The evaluation findings on the practice of "derivation", "configuration" and Cooperation Framework implementation are explained by a wide range of factors. Some relate to the specific approaches and systems used to execute and support the repositioning of the United Nations development system. Others relate to systemic issues and the broader enabling environment that has been addressed less directly in the repositioning. These are summarized in Table 1 and elaborated below.

Table 1: Summary of key explanatory factors

Specific mechanisms and support systems	Broader enabling environment / systemic issues
• Guidance / MAF in action • Support systems for coordination • Leadership at country level • Leadership at headquarters level	• Transparency on work planning and resource mobilisation • Competition for funding • National engagement in the programme cycles • Governance architecture • Funding quality

Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF): Practice at the country level shows that there are challenges in how the Cooperation Framework Guidance and MAF are interpreted and used, with possible unintended effects. Despite intentions, the guidance is perceived as

somewhat prescriptive, "one-size-fits-all", lacking flexibility for different country contexts and incentivizing a focus on demonstrating compliance. The MAF articulates accountabilities, but compliance with MAF commitments is weak, and the principle of UNCT members' dual accountability (to both UNSDG entity line manager and the Resident Coordinator) is largely theoretical. The roll-out of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF focused, understandably, on country-level changes and the responsibilities of UNCT members, with more limited and later attention to the important responsibilities of UNSDG entity regional offices and headquarters.

Headquarters and regional support systems: The Development Coordination Office's support to Cooperation Framework cycles, at headquarters and regional levels, is seen as focused more on the design stages, compliance points, monitoring and quality assurance, and less on the facilitation of meaningful implementation, and horizontal and external engagement. Mechanisms for engagement between Resident Coordinators and entity regional directors to support Cooperation Framework implementation are highlighted as a gap, with the most active regional mechanisms focusing on Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Framework quality assurance checklists.

Resident Coordinator and UNCT member leadership: Strengthened alignment and collaboration within the United Nations country team is frequently attributed to the leadership skills of UNCT members and Resident Coordinators, rather than the tools and processes put in place to support Cooperation Framework implementation. The de-linked, impartial Resident Coordinators are especially appreciated for the entry points they provide to senior levels of government, their ability to convene donors and governments and their potential to shape collective agendas.

Headquarters and regional leadership: UNSDG entities' commitment to the reforms is weaker at headquarters and regional levels than at the country level. Practice varies across the system, with smaller and non-resident entities generally demonstrating stronger buy-in to the repositioning due to the enhanced opportunities for engagement at the country level that it can offer to them. But, overall, UNSDG entities have not instituted the necessary incentives and accountabilities within their own structures to change behaviour and ways of working at the country level. There is confusion in relation to the global function of UNDP to support its repositioning as an "integrator": for example, whether this means UNDP is offering SDG integration to the country as a service or as an integration platform for the UNCT. In both cases the precise division of labour with the Resident Coordinator's Office would be unclear and has not been defined, seven years into the repositioning.

Competition and transparency within UNCTs: A major impediment to the realization of a new generation of UNCTs is competition for funding and a lack of real-time transparency over workplanning and resource mobilization within most UNCTs. This is driven by existing incentive structures within entities, short-term and project delivery-based business models and donor behaviour, and runs counter to the collaborative ethos envisaged by the repositioning. These dynamics impede the development of joint strategies and joint programmes and the leveraging of resources and expertise from across the United Nations system to deliver maximum and longer-term impact in response to national priorities.

National engagement in Cooperation Framework cycles: Programme country governments are highly appreciative of the strengthened "whole of government – whole of UN" agreement provided by the elevated Cooperation Frameworks. However, the extent to which governments engage actively in the governance and coordination of the Cooperation Framework *cycle* (both the design *and* implementation) is a key factor in driving greater alignment and more coherent implementation of UNSDG entity activities at the country level. The degree of this engagement varies significantly by country and context.

Governing bodies: The repositioning of the United Nations development system did not initiate reform of the entity-specific governing bodies. These arrangements are considered by many stakeholders to impede the extent to which UNSDG entities can fully integrate the reforms. Despite efforts by some Member States to use their "entity governing body" membership to reinforce the reforms, UNSDG entity governing bodies tend to

prioritize entity-specific mandates, visibility and results-attribution over system-wide results and reinforce the repositioning changes only to a limited extent.

Funding: Donor behaviour and funding trends have a strong influence on the effectiveness of the reforms at the country level. Donor representatives at the country level have varying degrees of understanding of the reforms and the intended status of the Cooperation Framework. Many value the Resident Coordinator as an entry point, but few have been guided by their capitals on how to engage with the repositioned United Nations development system. Very few donors use the Cooperation Framework as a guide for funding decisions. Bilateral approaches by UNSDG entities to country-level funders and vice versa remain the norm.

The development system repositioning recognized the key importance of funding quality and included a global Funding Compact between Member States and the UNSDG. Progress on Funding Compact commitments – particularly the availability of core, flexible and pooled funding – has been very limited (E/2025/53/Add.1). Persistently high levels of earmarking continue to present a significant impediment to optimal UNCT configuration and coherent implementation of Cooperation Frameworks over multi-year periods.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation concludes that the vision for a new generation of UNCTs remains highly relevant. Some aspects of the reforms have improved the quality and coherence of UNCTs. There has been notable improvement in the inclusivity, cooperation and collaboration in joint analysis and Cooperation Framework design. The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system is widely appreciated by United Nations and programme country government stakeholders. There are examples of behaviours and approaches that match the ambitions and spirit of the reforms. The repositioning has also made some important and necessary changes to how the United Nations development offer is organized at the country level, and many of the key foundations for a new generation of UNCTs have been established.

In the areas of programme derivation from the Cooperation Framework and UNCT configuration, however, overall progress has been incremental and is far from achieving the vision of a significantly more strategic, coherent and agile United Nations development system offer to countries. Good practices and innovative approaches do exist, and the United Nations development offer remains broadly aligned with and relevant to national priorities. However, the Cooperation Framework has not yet become the "most important instrument for the planning and *implementation* of United Nations development activities in each country" and UNCTs have not yet significantly "re-configured" in line with Cooperation Framework priorities. These central elements of the United Nations development system's repositioning at the country level cannot be said to have resulted in the intended fundamental shift: they do not yet ensure that the United Nations collective offer is more than the sum of its parts or that it provides an optimal contribution to SDG progress at the country level. There remains a significant gap between the highly relevant strategic intent and operational realities. The evaluation identifies a variety of reasons for this, including systemic and structural limitations, and some of these were identified as critical in the Secretary-General's proposals for repositioning in 2017, for example, fragmented governance arrangements and funding quality (A/72/124–E/2018/3 & A/72/684–E/2018/7).

The ongoing repositioning of the United Nations development system is arguably the most far-reaching and ambitious reform of the system to date. The level of decentralization and complexity in the United Nations development system has made, and continues to make, system-wide coherence objectively challenging. The 37 entities that constitute the UNSDG have distinct mandates, varying degrees of autonomy and their own entity-specific accountability lines. The repositioning introduced new systems and structures within a very short timeframe. There was little time to pilot and test new guidance, systems and structures before they were applied globally. The application of these new systems has also been to some extent voluntary. These factors made the repositioning extraordinarily challenging, and the complexity of the change processes required to achieve the reform informs many of the evaluation's conclusions. While these ambitious reforms are now at a critical juncture, this assessment does not suggest that ambitions should be lowered. The response

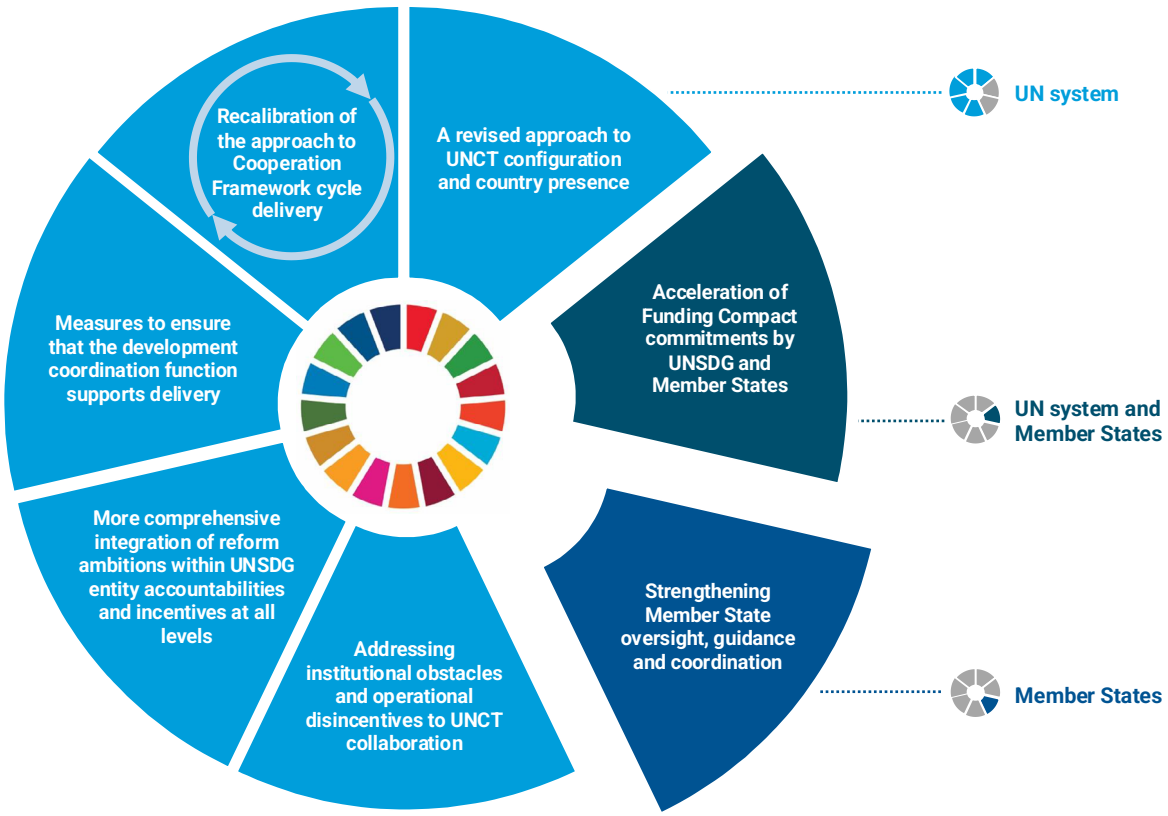
to the evaluation needs to be realistic and pragmatic, but with clear intent to further the ambitions of the development system repositioning and not erode or dilute them.

The evaluation's analysis reaffirms that leadership from different stakeholder groups will be necessary to drive change in a complex system. Action by Resident Coordinators and UNCT members is necessary but not sufficient: action is needed from staff at all levels of the United Nations development system. Likewise, Member States, in their roles as programme country governments, governing body members and donors, also need to take action.

As explained in section 1.3, without compromising its ultimate independence, the evaluation engaged in a consultative and participatory process with United Nations development system stakeholders to validate the conclusions and support the development of a holistic set of recommendations.

The evaluation reaches seven conclusions related to the key factors that explain the gap between strategic intent and operational reality. Change is needed in all these areas to better realize the vision for a new generation of UNCTs that are more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable and more able to contribute to increasing progress towards the SDGs at the country level. Reflecting these conclusions, the evaluation makes seven recommendations to the UNSDG (collectively), UNSDG entities (individually), the Development Coordination Office and Member States (Figure 4).[5] The evaluation team considers that maximum value will be obtained if all recommendations are addressed concurrently as a holistic set.

Figure 4: Overview of key conclusions and corresponding recommendations



Source: SWEO

Cooperation Framework cycle delivery

The evaluation concludes that country-level activities of UNSDG entities are broadly "aligned" with the Cooperation Framework. However, there is little evidence that the substance of their subsequent interventions

5. The order in which the recommendation areas are presented in this report is not indicative of prioritization.

is significantly affected by the Cooperation Framework and its preparation process; other factors are of greater significance. The ambition for UNSDG entity country-level activities to be derived from and aligned with the Cooperation Framework is relevant, necessary and increasingly understood. However, in practice, "derivation" is largely an administrative rather than a substantive exercise and the current mechanism can cause friction within UNCTs. After Cooperation Frameworks are signed, UNCT ownership of the "toolkit" designed to facilitate coherent implementation (including joint workplans) is typically very weak: tools, processes and coordination structures generate high transaction costs and add limited value. Transparency and mutual accountability within UNCTs are limited and competition for resources persists. The evaluation recommends a recalibrated approach and different mechanisms to achieve the necessary step change required to deliver on the reform ambitions for more substantive derivation and alignment.

Recommendation 1: The UNSDG should develop clear proposals for a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework delivery to strengthen implementation, ensure that the UNCT operates transparently throughout the cycle, reduce transaction costs and increase flexibility. The proposals should be focused on ensuring Cooperation Frameworks are "revitalized, strategic, flexible and results- and action-oriented" (as reiterated in A/RES/79/226 - OP 83) and should be informed by the conduct of a rapid review to identify the changes needed and define a clear way forward.

***Timeline:** Q4 2025–Q1 2026*

Several mutually reinforcing changes are required to strengthen substantive alignment and facilitate coherent implementation and delivery of collective results. These changes should shift the balance from design, quality assurance and compliance monitoring to Cooperation Framework delivery. There is a need to improve transparency and mutual accountability among UNCT members, reduce transaction costs, and enable flexibility and adaptation to context.

Sub-recommendation 1.1: To enhance the effectiveness, accountability and collective impact of the UNCT, the UNSDG should redefine the approach to Cooperation Framework implementation.

The aim should be to progressively increase the extent to which UNCTs provide more integrated, strategic and transformative development support over time, taking account of the following points:

i. The Cooperation Framework design process should be a lighter and swifter exercise than in current practice. The Cooperation Framework should continue to provide a high-level articulation of the multi-year UNCT "offer" in response to the Common Country Analysis and national priorities; but it should no longer be required to provide a comprehensive results framework for all existing and anticipated activities.
ii. UNSDG entities should continue to demonstrate how their country programming instruments, and country-level activities align with the Cooperation Framework (see sub-recommendation 4.1) and should engage the Resident Coordinator and UNCT when developing their country programming instruments. However, the formal requirement for Resident Coordinator to confirm the derivation of Cooperation Framework outcomes should be discontinued (and replaced by measures proposed in sub-recommendation 1.2).
iii. The joint workplan should be reformulated (and renamed) to become a more focused operational plan for a smaller number of more strategic UNCT responses targeted to the highest national priorities,[6] delivered through appropriate combinations of joint and coordinated programmes, integrated policy advice, investment strategies, and enhanced partnerships with non-United Nations development partners. It should no longer encompass all United Nations activities or attempt to create a single

6. As an example, these may be designed around the "transitions" and "transformative pathways" or other identified entry points to maximize SDG acceleration: UNSDG | Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs.

United Nations results framework which seeks to connect every activity to the Cooperation Framework outcomes as "sub-outputs".

iv. The Resident Coordinator should have a leading role in facilitating the implementation of the reformulated (and renamed) joint workplan, including leading on coordination, engaging with external stakeholders and supporting the joint mobilization of quality funding and financing (see recommendation 6, ii).

v. Annual UNCT results reports should continue to provide transparency on the total United Nations contribution in the country but might also spotlight the achievements of the reframed joint workplan. The requirements for Cooperation Framework evaluations should be revised to ensure that they provide more robust assessments of UNCT performance and collective results.

Sub-recommendation 1.2: To maximize synergies, reduce duplication and promote more substantive alignment, the UNSDG should commit to, and be accountable for, greater mutual transparency in relation to all aspects of country-level activities, including funding streams. All UNSDG entities should share their current workplans, or equivalent documents, (including resource mobilization plans) with the Resident Coordinator and UNCT, allowing Resident Coordinator Offices to provide the UNCT with a mapping of active interventions. This provides transparency on the extent of entities' substantive alignment in real time and throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, shifting the focus of accountability from programming documents and the design phase to the implementation phase.

Sub-recommendation 1.3: To ensure enhanced responsiveness to each country's specific context, United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators should have the flexibility to adapt elements of the Cooperation Framework cycle to fit their specific context (building upon common minimum requirements). For example, there should be flexibility for the UNCT to determine what coordination mechanisms are needed to drive collective delivery.

UNCT configuration

The evaluation concludes that the tools deployed to review and optimize the configuration of UNCTs have had limited impact. They have not been equal to the ambition for a significantly more agile and flexible approach to UNCT configuration envisaged by the Secretary-General's proposals on repositioning the development system. They have not led to significant changes in UNCT composition or capabilities, with the exception of providing improved access to UNCTs for some non-resident entities. The UNCT configuration exercises at the country level are occasionally valued for providing a mapping of the UNSDG footprint and capacities. However, they have been largely ineffective in adjusting configuration, principally because UNSDG entities do not make significant decisions on resourcing either at the country level or at the same time as the Cooperation Framework is designed.

There are also more fundamental and systemic issues that explain why the United Nations development system is not currently well placed to reconfigure around the priorities of a Cooperation Framework. These issues are illustrated by the lack of progress in the regional-level reforms (specifically, the intention to significantly enhance the contributions of regional assets and expertise to UNCTs through Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) structures) and by the slow progress in the overall shift anticipated from project delivery to upstream policy advice. A more agile and coherent development offer that is responsive to country-level priorities requires a move away from traditional approaches to physical presence and current business models.

Recommendation 2: The UNSDG should take action to deliver on the strategic ambition for a more agile United Nations development system with a "needs-based, tailored country presence" to "ensure the best configuration of support" (A/RES/72/279) and provide capacity at the point

of delivery. In doing this, the UNSDG should recommit to and deliver on the Secretary-General's proposals for "more creative models of physical presence" (A/72/684–E/2018/7).

Timeline: *Q4 2025–Q4 2026*

The UNSDG needs to consider, collectively, how it can provide, with greater agility and flexibility, the required capacities at the country level to respond to national priorities. The evaluation notes that UNSDG entities are already reconsidering their business models, including capacities at the country, regional and global levels. It is important that UNSDG entities use this opportunity to collaborate and take joint decisions to optimize the configuration of capacities to meet country-level priorities to minimize gaps, reduce duplication and maximize synergies across the global UNSDG footprint.

Sub-recommendation 2.1: The UNCT configuration exercise, as a mandatory step in the Cooperation Framework cycle, and typically a one-off moment at the country level, should be discontinued. It should be replaced by more comprehensive mapping of the full footprint and capacities of the UNCT, which enhanced transparency standards and improved information management systems should provide (see sub-recommendations 1.2 and 3.1).

Sub-recommendation 2.2: Decisions on UNCT configuration to respond to the Cooperation Framework should be elevated to dialogue at the relevant level of decision-making, while remaining grounded in the response to national priorities and requests of the host government. This should encompass the resident and non-resident capacities needed to deliver the Cooperation Framework, engaging Resident Coordinators and entity regional and headquarters directors (as appropriate) and facilitated by the Development Coordination Office. This formal dialogue should take place at the start of Cooperation Framework implementation and should be subject to regular review.

Sub-recommendation 2.3: The UNSDG should collectively establish creative models for short-term and long-term physical presence at the country level, which may include: revision or clarification of options for hosting and representation of UNSDG entities within other entities or in Resident Coordinator Offices, system-wide expert rosters and surge capacities, or fee-for-service models. Progress in delivering system-wide efficiencies (see recommendation 5) would facilitate the introduction of these kinds of changes.

Guidance and systems for development coordination

The evaluation concludes that the frameworks, guidance and support systems that support the repositioning of the United Nations development system do not focus sufficiently on the coherent implementation of Cooperation Frameworks. They are more focused on the design stage of the Cooperation Framework and give less attention to supporting coherent delivery or to addressing barriers to coordination and coherence. The support systems were developed at pace, retaining some legacy functions, systems and tools that were used prior to the reforms.

Now is the time to revisit them to better reflect evolving requirements and provide greater flexibility and responsiveness to the country context. Development coordination support systems need to focus less on guidance and process, and more on facilitating delivery, seeking to build on and expand existing good practice and addressing barriers. A recalibration of the development coordination function is necessary to ensure that it adds greater value to the work of UNCTs while minimizing transaction costs.

Recommendation 3: Support systems for development coordination should be rebalanced to facilitate implementation at the country level. The Cooperation Framework Guidance and Management and Accountability Framework should be revised to strengthen mutual accountability and transparency, to streamline systems and to reduce transaction costs for UNCTs.

***Timeline:** Q3 2025–Q3 2026*

Sub-recommendation 3.1: The UNSDG should revise the Management and Accountability Framework and Cooperation Framework Guidance as necessary to provide greater clarity in critical areas identified by the evaluation. Most importantly, revisions should set clear expectations in relation to horizontal and collective accountability and establish minimum standards of transparency in relation to all aspects of country-level activities, including sharing of entity workplans and resource mobilization plans (see sub-recommendation 1.2).

Sub-recommendation 3.2: The Development Coordination Office should review its operations and staffing at all levels to shift the focus to the delivery of collective results. Further:

i. At headquarters and regional levels, the Development Coordination Office should reorient focus towards the facilitation of implementation, horizontal engagement with UNSDG entities and external partners, and away from vertical quality control, monitoring and compliance; it should prioritize sharing learning and good practice with UNCTs; and it should routinely review and adapt systems and processes to ensure they have the desired impact when applied.
ii. At the country level, a more flexible and bespoke approach to the Resident Coordinator Office composition in response to context should also be considered.
iii. The Development Coordination Office should continue to prioritize the deployment of Resident Coordinators with high quality leadership skills and ensure that performance management and support systems incentivize their outward-facing, agenda-setting, convening function.

Sub-recommendation 3.3: To enhance the contribution of regional capacities to the implementation of Cooperation Frameworks, the UNSDG should review regional support structures and coordination mechanisms and develop clear proposals to improve responsiveness to requests for support from UNCTs and programme country governments.

Sub-recommendation 3.4: UN DESA and the Development Coordination Office, in line with QCPR A/RES/79/226, should rationalize and streamline the monitoring frameworks for the QCPR and the Resident Coordinator system results framework and associated United Nations system-wide monitoring frameworks, ensuring that these are more strategic and focused on the achievement of results rather than the design stage and compliance with process.

Accountability and incentives

The evaluation concludes that weak accountabilities and incentives for collective action are among the key factors limiting progress towards the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. While entities have demonstrated their adoption of reform elements to varying extents, these elements have generally not yet been fundamentally integrated into their internal accountability structures. Accountability mechanisms and incentives continue to encourage UNSDG entity staff to raise funds for, provide visibility to, and attribute results to, their own entity rather than working in a more effective and integrated way to deliver on collective results.

The Management and Accountability Framework is relevant and necessary. However, it is not enforceable and compliance remains weak in some key areas. It is also undermined by stronger countervailing entity-specific

priorities, accountabilities and incentives. The collaborative and coherent ways of working intended by the reforms, are, at all levels, frequently seen as “extra work”, or “additional” to core responsibilities, and they are widely considered to impose additional transaction costs and, at times, create unnecessary friction.

Recommendation 4: UNSDG Principals should introduce and enforce changes within their entities to ensure that accountabilities and incentives at all levels are aligned with the ambitions of a new generation of UNCTs. These should drive greater transparency, mutual accountability and associated behavioural changes, including dual accountability of entity heads, within the UNCT.

***Timeline:** Immediate and ongoing and by Q4 2026*

A combination of measures is needed to strengthen accountability and incentives to encourage entities to better integrate the spirit and the letter of the United Nations development system repositioning. This is based on recognition that the vision of a new generation of UNCTs cannot be achieved by the actions of UNCT members alone, as acknowledged by the Secretary-General in the 2017 repositioning reports. A renewed focus on robust accountabilities and stronger incentives for a more coherent and agile United Nations development system is required at all levels. This includes at the levels of UNSDG Principals, regional directors and entity heads and staff at the country level. To be effective in changing behaviours, measures need to be integrated into existing systems and structures.

Sub-recommendation 4.1: UNSDG entities should ensure that global strategic plans, results frameworks and business models are aligned to fully integrate development system reform ambitions. They should clarify relationships between entity-specific priorities and system-wide performance (including how they will demonstrate substantive alignment with, and contribution to, Cooperation Frameworks) and create high-level accountability for joint work and collective results.

Sub-recommendation 4.2: UNSDG entities should embed reform-related accountabilities and system-wide indicators in performance management systems at all levels (specifically, including senior leadership compacts at executive head-level, as well as regional and country-level staff) and remove accountabilities and incentives that run counter to reform ambitions.

Sub-recommendation 4.3: At the country level, UNSDG entities should fully and systemically open UNCT member performance appraisal processes to input by the Resident Coordinator. More broadly, all UNSDG entities should institutionalize 360-degree appraisal for all staff to seek inputs from key United Nations colleagues to strengthen mutual and horizontal accountabilities and promote collaboration.

Institutional obstacles that impede effective collaboration

The evaluation concludes that institutional obstacles within the United Nations system disincentivize or impede collaboration and joint work and constrain the realization of the vision for a new generation of UNCTs. While business operations and efficiencies were not a focus of the evaluation, they emerged from the analysis as a critical enabling or constraining factor.

Greater efforts are necessary to harmonize and simplify business operations and processes. Persistent institutional barriers to effective collaboration need to be removed. The UNSDG needs to accelerate efforts to provide a stronger enabling environment for joint programming and integrated and agile support at the country level. Ongoing processes, such as the “UN80” Initiative, and existing forums, including the High-Level Committee on Management and the UNSDG Business Innovations Group, also provide opportunities to identify and drive the implementation of priority actions.

Recommendation 5: The UNSDG and its member entities should address priority efficiency and business operations initiatives to improve the enabling environment for collaboration within UNCTs and remove persistent institutional barriers and disincentives.

***Timeline:** Q3 2025–Q4 2026*

Further integration and harmonization of services is required across functional areas including human resources, procurement, administration, information and communication technology, logistics and finance, as well as harmonization (or interoperability) of systems that support planning, implementation, management, monitoring and reporting, taking into consideration the following:

i. The UNSDG Business Innovations Group should identify and drive uptake of priority measures to remove persistent barriers for collaboration and personnel mobility for a more agile United Nations development system at the country level.
ii. Full application of the principle of mutual recognition should be made within the United Nations system through the implementation of the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2024/4).

Funding quality

The evaluation confirms that, as anticipated in the Secretary-General's proposals for repositioning, the quality of funding received by the United Nations development system is a critical enabler of progress towards the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. This was agreed in the 2019 Funding Compact and its 2024 update. However, progress has been limited. High levels of earmarked funding continue to limit the ability of UNCTs to respond strategically to national development priorities and increase transaction costs, fragmentation and competition among UNSDG entities. In the current context, there is a significant risk that funding pressures will exacerbate competition and fragmentation. Joint and pooled funding provide incentives for innovative joint programmes, but volumes are insufficient. Greater progress on Funding Compact commitments would alleviate some of the key challenges highlighted by the evaluation.

Recommendation 6: Member States and other funders are encouraged to improve the quality of funding available to the United Nations development system, including through flexible, core and pooled contributions. UNSDG entities are encouraged to develop more effective approaches to accelerate progress on Funding Compact commitments.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Decisions on the provision of core, flexible, pooled and multi-year funding to the United Nations development system primarily rest with funders, and processes for funding the United Nations development system are complex and diverse. Rather than simply calling for greater volumes of quality funding, the evaluation identifies specific measures for Member States, UNSDG entities and the Resident Coordinator system to accelerate progress on relevant Funding Compact commitments.

Sub-recommendation 6.1: To better align funding decisions at the country level with Funding Compact commitments, Member States may consider reviewing their internal resource allocation processes and take steps to ensure that all their staff who engage with the United Nations development system are fully aware of these Compact commitments.

Sub-recommendation 6.2: Resident Coordinators should play a better recognized and supported leadership role in joint resource mobilization for the UNCT, to convene UNSDG entities, national stakeholders and funders

around the priorities of the Cooperation Framework, including through better use of country-level funding dialogues as a key tool (see recommendation 1.1 ii).

Sub-recommendation 6.3: UNSDG entities should develop more effective approaches to accelerate progress on Funding Compact commitments at the country level.

Member State governance, oversight and coordination

The need for improved horizontal oversight of the United Nations development system is well established. It was noted in General Assembly resolutions on the QCPR (A/RES/79/226 and A/RES/75/233) and highlighted by the Secretary-General in his proposals for repositioning the system. Member States have a fundamental role in guiding operational activities for development: through their engagement as programme country governments; in their capacity as members of UNSDG entity governing bodies; and through the different types of funding they provide.

The evaluation concludes that, in general, Member States have not held UNSDG entities sufficiently accountable for delivering on the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. It confirms that current governance arrangements present obstacles to effective oversight of system-wide performance and collective development results. More consistent and coordinated Member State engagement is key to ensuring that UNCTs are accountable for coherent delivery of the Cooperation Frameworks in line with national priorities. Member States also need to sharpen their demand and provide stronger guidance for a more coherent and integrated UNCT offer at the country level to deliver on collective Cooperation Framework results.

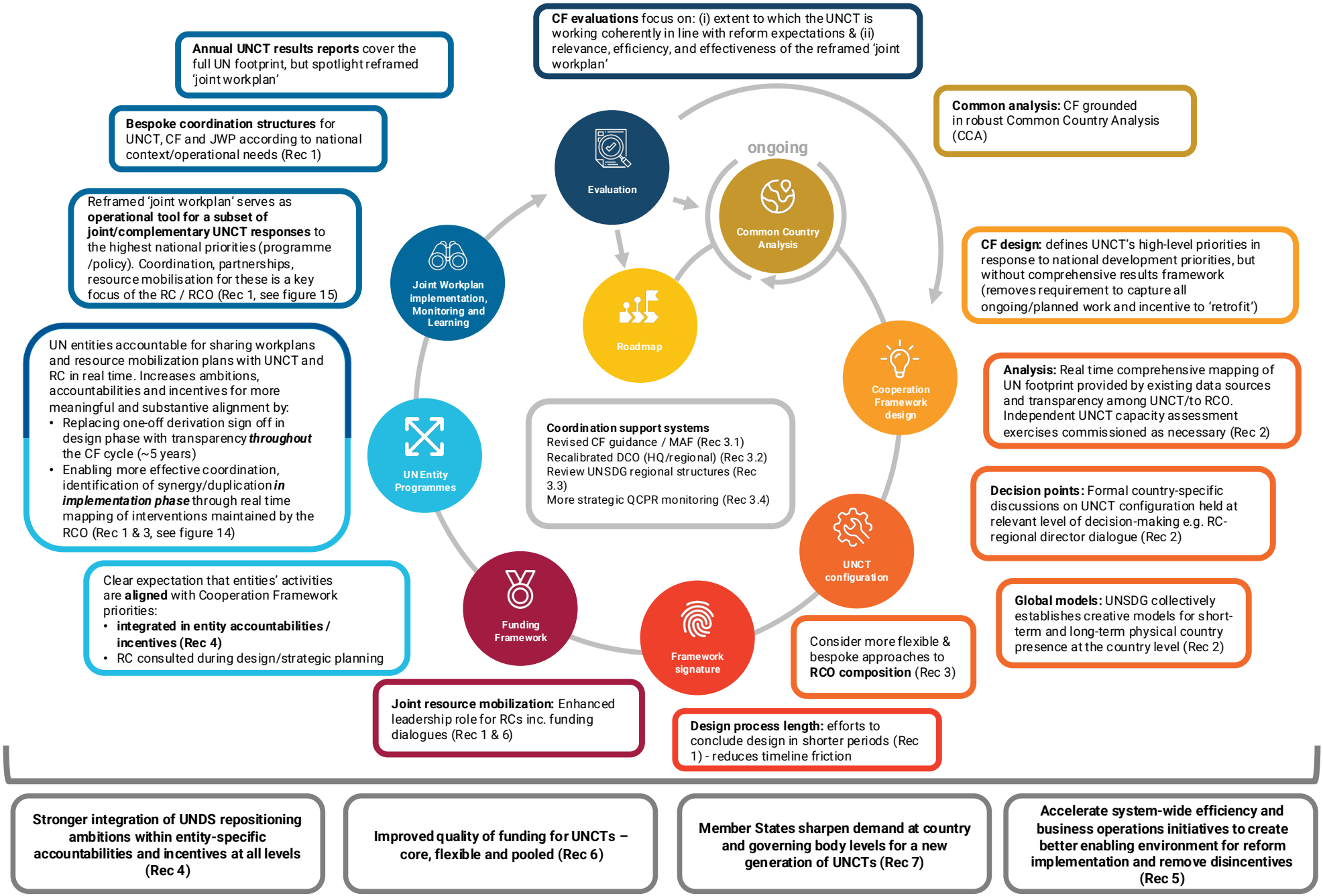
Recommendation 7: The evaluation encourages Member States to provide more effective and coherent oversight and guidance with more consistent engagement on the collective performance of the United Nations development system (in accordance with A/RES/72/279 and resolutions on the QCPR); both through their engagement as programme country governments and in their roles in legislative and governing bodies, taking into consideration the following suggestions:

i. Programme country governments are encouraged to set out clear expectations and to hold UNCTs to account for the collective action and results delivered throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle.
ii. UNSDG entity legislative and governing bodies are encouraged to enhance ways of working to more clearly and consistently hold UNSDG entity leadership to account for their performance in responding to the ambition of the reforms; and for implementation of the recommendations made by this evaluation.
iii. Member States are encouraged to consider how to provide more effective and coherent oversight and guidance in legislative and governing bodies to encourage the United Nations development system to make greater progress on the reform ambitions, ensuring that there is consistency in their engagement and messaging.

Opportunities for adjustments include: responses to the 2023 report of the Joint Inspection Unit on governance and oversight provided by the New York Executive Boards (JIU/REP/2023/7), and consideration of the strengthened role for ECOSOC in oversight of the development system (A/RES/78/285).

Figure 5 provides visual a representation of how the recommendations of the evaluation contribute to a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework delivery and better realization of the vision for a new generation of United Nations country teams.

Figure 5: Contribution of recommendations to a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework cycle delivery and new generation of UNCTs



Source: SWEO

1. Introduction

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1. This independent evaluation was conducted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) between July 2024 and May 2025. It responded to a request by UNSDG Principals in late 2022 for an independent system-wide evaluation to examine "good practices and opportunities for improvement on country programmes' derivation from, and alignment with, Cooperation Frameworks and United Nations country team configuration". The evaluation title was simplified to "progress towards a new generation of United Nations country teams", which encapsulates the overall intended outcome of both: (i) derivation and alignment; and (ii) United Nations country team configuration. It focuses on these core elements of the repositioning of the United Nations development system launched in 2018. It is not an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the United Nations development system in fulfilling its mission.

1.1. Repositioning the United Nations development system: an ambitious agenda

2. In September 2015, Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the resolution "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (A/RES/70/1) (2030 Agenda) including, at its heart, a comprehensive set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals. In 2016, Member States recognized, in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR - A/RES/71/243), that supporting this ambitious agenda required the United Nations development system to transform. The Secretary-General's vision for this transformation was set out in his 2017 reports on repositioning the United Nations development system (A/72/124–E/2018/3 and A/72/684–E/2018/7).

3. The decision to reposition or reform the United Nations development system was mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/72/279 of 31 May 2018. The overarching purpose of the repositioning is to provide more coherent, accountable and effective United Nations support to help Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Member States' guidance and mandates on United Nations development system reform have been reinforced in subsequent resolutions and declarations, for example in the 2020 and 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews (QCPRs - A/RES/75/233 and A/RES/79/226).

4. More specifically, the repositioning aims to deliver:

- A reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system, de-linked from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with Resident Coordinators serving as the highest-ranking representative of the United Nations development system at the country level and reporting to the Secretary-General
- A revitalized, strategic, flexible, results and action-oriented Cooperation Framework as the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country
- A new generation of United Nations country teams[7] that deliver shared results in response to the priorities set out in the Cooperation Frameworks, which themselves are aligned with national priorities
- Clear and more robust lines of accountability between: (i) the UNCTs and host governments, and (ii) Resident Coordinators and UNCT members
- A more coherent and better coordinated use of United Nations development system regional capacities and resources at the country level (for example analysis, policy advice and technical assistance)
- Focused support infrastructures for the Resident Coordinator system and UNCTs, including the Development Coordination Office (DCO) at headquarters and regional levels
- Implementation of the commitment contributing countries made to shift towards more predictable and flexible resources that allow the United Nations development system to tailor its support
- Streamlined operating practices through the consolidation of common premises, back offices and service centres, resulting in both higher quality services and efficiency gains

7. See Box 2 for an explanation of how United Nations country team is defined and used throughout this report.

- Increased and better communication on the impact of the United Nations development system.

5. Since 2018, these aims have been advanced through a variety of processes and instruments (see the timeline in Figure 6), including:

- The Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System
- The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guidance, its consolidated annexes and companion package
- Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
- Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes
- Reviews of the United Nations development system regional assets and multi-country Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs)
- The voluntary, non-binding Funding Compact between the United Nations development system and Member States
- Efficiency interventions including business operations strategies, common back offices, common premises and mutual recognition.[8]

6. A cornerstone of the reforms, and the main focus of this evaluation, is the status of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, referred to in this document as the "Cooperation Framework". General Assembly resolutions A/RES/72/279 (on the repositioning of the United Nations development system), A/RES/75/233 (the 2020 QCPR) and A/RES/79/226 (the 2024 QCPR[9]) recognize the Cooperation Framework as:

> *The most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national governments.*

7. Importantly, Cooperation Frameworks should constitute a partnership document with national governments. They are to present a clear, action-oriented United Nations response to national development priorities, and be a comprehensive and integrated approach in responding to the national context and relevant regional dynamics as articulated in the Common Country Analysis (CCA).

8. The United Nations development system repositioning is arguably the most far-reaching and ambitious reform of the United Nations development system to date. The Secretary-General's reports (A/72/124–E/2018/3 & A/72/684–E/2018/7) aimed for a fundamental shift in approach, making the United Nations development system "fit for purpose" to deliver on the 2030 Agenda's promises and to leave no one behind, as mandated by Member States in A/RES/72/279 and subsequent resolutions on the QCPR (A/RES/75/233 and A/RES/79/226).

9. The repositioning of the United Nations development system introduced new systems and structures within a very short timeframe – with new structures officially launched on 1 January 2019. The systems and procedures to establish these new ways of working were developed as the new structures were established. The changes in the United Nations development system were also introduced at the same time as similarly fundamental reforms to the peace and security pillar,[10] and to overall United Nations management.[11]

8. UN. n.d. Business Operations. 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.
9. A/RES/79/226: "83. Welcomes a revitalized, strategic, flexible and results- and action-oriented United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, as the most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the programme countries' policies, plans, priorities and needs, to be prepared and finalized in full consultation and agreement with national Governments, through the United Nations country team, under the leadership and coordination of the Resident Coordinators".
10. https://reform.un.org/content/peace-and-security-reform
11. https://reform.un.org/content/management-reform

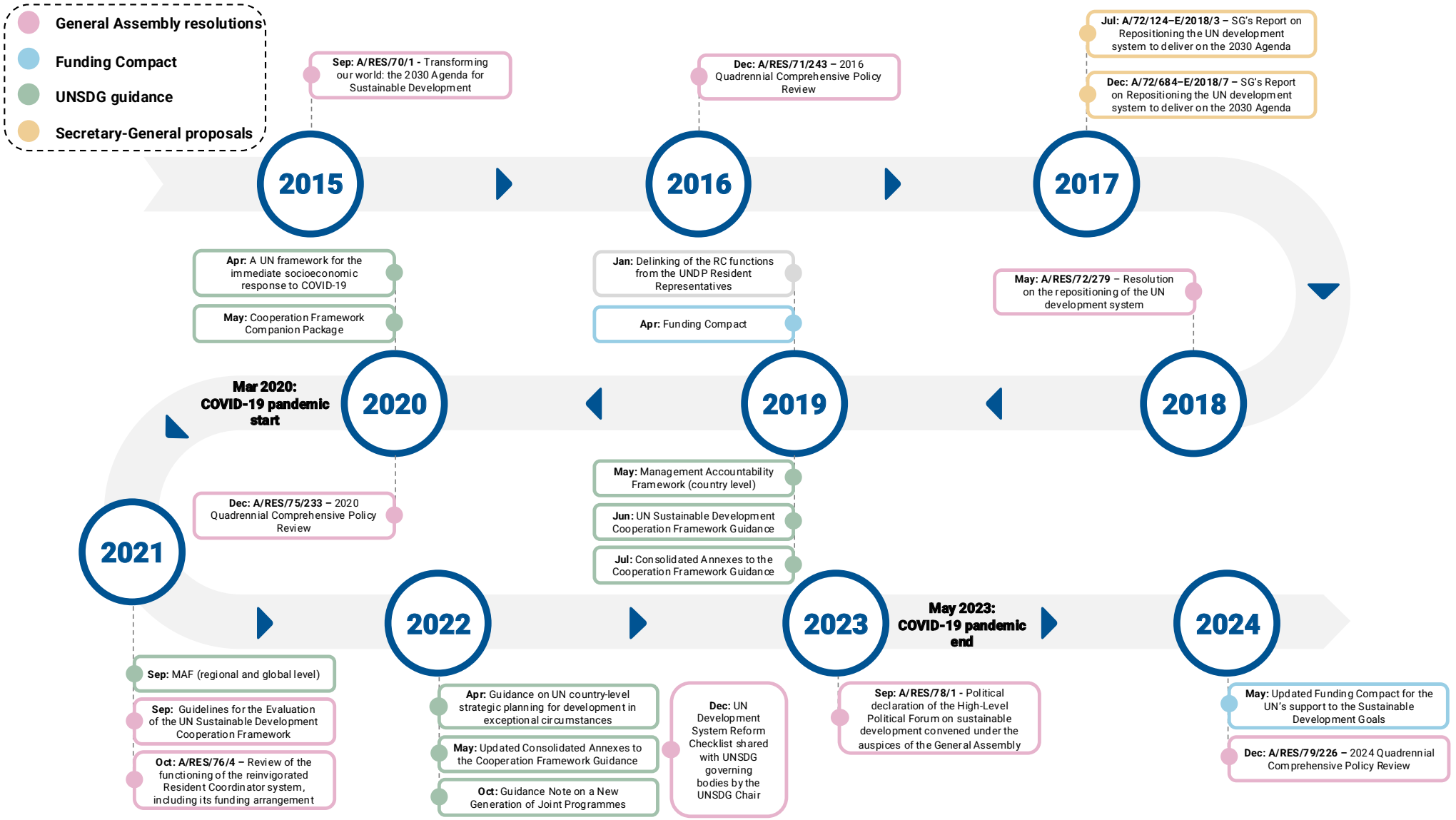
10. At the global level, the UNSDG[12] serves as a high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making. Its role is to guide, support, track and oversee the coordination of development operations in 162 countries and territories. The 37 entities that constitute the UNSDG (Box 1) have distinct mandates, varying degrees of autonomy and their own entity-specific accountability lines. The level of decentralization and complexity in the United Nations development system makes system-wide coherence challenging to achieve.

11. The 2018 United Nations development system repositioning drew on experience and lessons from earlier pilots. Launched in 2007, the "Delivering as One" initiative sought to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations development activities at the country level.[13] It responded to recommendations by the High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, and aimed to improve coordination, coherence, and resource allocation among United Nations entities. The initiative encouraged participating UNCTs to operate under unified leadership, within a single programmatic framework and to use a single budgetary framework to streamline operations and avoid duplication of efforts. Several pilot countries initially participated in testing this approach.[14] This was followed by the development of Standard Operating Procedures for the wider, voluntary adoption of the Delivering as One approach, which more than 40 UNCTs had adopted by 2014. Many of the Delivering as One principles were integrated into the broader United Nations reform processes, on which this evaluation focuses. The repositioning sought to roll out key Delivering as One principles simultaneously throughout all programme countries.[15] This scale of ambition is thus commensurately greater than the Delivering as One initiative.

12. The United Nations development system repositioning also included a complementary but separate workstream, which this evaluation does not directly address. That workstream focused on making the United Nations development system's business operations more efficient and cost-effective. The UNSDG Business Innovations Group (BIG), seeks to drive innovations that strengthen how the United Nations development system manages its administrative and operational functions. It includes changes to consolidate support services such as human resources and procurement at the country level, encouraging agencies to recognize each other's administrative processes (mutual recognition) to promote inter-agency efficiency and collaboration, and use common premises to enhance integration and reduce costs.[16]

12. See Box 2 for an explanation of how the term UNSDG is used and should be understood in this report.
13. For background on the initiative: E/ESCAP/63/20; UN. 2014. Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Adopting the "Delivering as One" Approach. August 2014; UN. 2012. Report of the Secretary-General: Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Advanced unedited version. May 2012. Independent evaluation of Delivering as One (A/66/859). June 2012.
14. Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.
15. See https://reform.un.org/content/development-reform for details of the roll out.
16. For detail on the changes and on UN-reported progress to date, see these reports.

Figure 6: Timeline of key reform milestones



Source: SWEO

The Cooperation Framework cycle

13. The Cooperation Framework Guidance, including its annexes and companion documents, sets out the cycle, milestones and processes by which a Cooperation Framework is designed, implemented and evaluated (see Figure 7). The priorities of the Cooperation Framework are directly derived from the United Nations independent, impartial and collective assessment and analysis of country priorities and needs: the Common Country Analysis. The guidance sets out the steps and parameters of how to develop and present the framework. A UNCT configuration exercise is included as a mandatory step, requiring UNCTs to reflect internally and then consult with the government. The Cooperation Framework is intended to form the basis of each individual entity's country programming instruments.[17] United Nations entity country programming instruments should therefore be derived from the Cooperation Framework, in addition to being informed by each entity's individual mandate, strategic priorities and comparative advantages. The Cooperation Framework is to be operationalized through entity country programming instruments and the development of a joint workplan. Joint workplans link the Cooperation Framework outputs to entities' contributions, which are to be delivered individually or in joint programmes.

14. The body of the evaluation report (section 2) broadly follows the steps in the Cooperation Framework cycle and focuses on "United Nations entity country programmes", "UNCT configuration" and then "joint workplan implementation" (see Figure 7). However, these key stages can only be assessed within the context of the whole cycle and the external environment. As such, the full cycle and the macro funding context is illustrated here and referred to throughout the report to appropriately contextualize the evaluation's findings.

Figure 7: Cooperation Framework cycle (Figure 1 duplicate)

Source: SWEO

15. The Cooperation Framework Guidance applies to all UNCTs.[18] The roll-out of Cooperation Frameworks has been gradual, with new Cooperation Frameworks beginning in the year after the conclusion of the previous United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) cycle. The cumulative roll-out of first-generation Cooperation Frameworks since 2020, by region, is set out in Table 2. As of early 2025, 124 UNCTs have begun the implementation of at least one Cooperation Framework cycle.

17. See Box 2 for explanation of how this term is defined and used throughout the report.
18. The UNSDG also recognizes that as a result of "exceptional circumstances" some UNCTs may be unable to fully implement the Cooperation Framework Guidance and sign a fully-fledged Cooperation Framework with the host government: UN. 2022. Guidance on UN Country-Level Strategic Planning for development in exceptional circumstances. April 2022.

Table 2: Roll-out of first-generation Cooperation Frameworks (2020-2025)

Year	Africa	Asia-Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean	Eastern Europe	Arab States	Cumulative Cooperation Framework roll out[19]	Notes
2020	8	0	4	0	2	14	Developed in 2019, applying UNDAF guidance initially with limited opportunity to apply the new Cooperation Framework Guidance (published June 2019)
2021	6	4	4	12	1	41	Developed in 2020 amid disruption of COVID-19 pandemic onset and in parallel to the finalisation and issuance of the Cooperation Framework Guidance Companion Package
2022	9	5	5	2	3	65	Developed in 2021-2024, providing full opportunity to apply the new Cooperation Framework Guidance, with the accompanying Companion Package, and enhanced support from a strengthened DCO headquarters/regional structure
2023	17	8	7	4	4	105	
2024	11	5	0	0	0	121	
2025	3	0	0	0	0	124	

Source: UN-INFO and evaluation team analysis

Funding for repositioning

16. At the outset of the repositioning, it was recognized that "more coherent, accountable, and effective support to help Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals" would require changes to the types of funding provided for the United Nations sustainable development activities and a diversification of the donor base. High levels of earmarked funding limits the ability of the United Nations to respond strategically to national development priorities and increases transaction costs, fragmentation and competition among United Nations entities.[20]

17. In 2018, Member States called for a funding compact (A/RES/72/279) to address these challenges. The Funding Compact was agreed in 2019, updated in 2024,[21] and represents a non-binding instrument for voluntary action by individual Member States, other cooperation partners and entities of the United Nations development system. It recognizes that flexible funding is a necessary enabler of an effective United Nations development system and that, in turn, an effective United Nations development system itself serves as an incentive for providing better quality funding.

18. The Funding Compact commits the United Nations development system to:

- Strengthening accountability and transparency of results, funding needs and expenditures
- Working seamlessly as one system to mobilize resources for, and contribute to, integrated and accelerated SDG achievement

19. Number of UNCTs that have, cumulatively, begun the implementation of a first-generation Cooperation Framework since 2020. Includes some multi-country Cooperation Frameworks. Excludes second-generation Cooperation Frameworks now rolled out in a number of countries and an ongoing framework in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which includes only humanitarian activities.
20. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). 2018. UNDS Repositioning – Explanatory Note #12. The Funding Dialogue. March 2018.
21. A/74/73/Add.1 – E/2019/14/Add.1; A/79/72/Add.2 – E/2024/12/Add.2; E/2024/L.12.

- Giving clear visibility to outcomes and impacts achieved through core and flexible funding
- Deepening the achievement of efficiencies within and across entities to increase resources for programmes instead of administrative costs.

19. Member States commit to taking steps to improve the quality of their funding to the United Nations by:

- Strengthening core funding and increasing the flexibility and predictability of non-core funding
- Increasing contributions to inter-agency pooled funding
- Aligning contributions to priorities and needs outlined in strategies and budgets and Cooperation Frameworks at the country level
- Harmonizing requirements across donors.[22]

1.2. Evaluation purpose and scope

20. The evaluation has a dual purpose of accountability and learning, with a particular focus on learning lessons from the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks, and identifying good practices and opportunities for improvement.

21. The evaluation aims to:

- Assess progress against the expected results of Cooperation Framework Guidance implementation, specifically in the areas of country programming instrument alignment and derivation and UNCT configuration[23]
- Understand the reasons why the intended changes have occurred or not, identifying internal and external factors that have enabled or constrained progress
- Identify good practices, lessons learned and opportunities for improvement from the implementation of the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks
- Make recommendations for consideration by UNSDG Principals and governing bodies on:
  - Derivation, alignment and configuration processes and oversight
  - Revision of the Cooperation Framework Guidance; and the Management and Accountability Framework, including its regional and global chapters.

22. The evaluation is strategic and forward-looking. As a system-wide evaluation, it does not seek to measure compliance or the performance of individual UNSDG entities. It provides a holistic assessment of these aspects of United Nations development system reform by assessing the reform intentions, policies and guidance themselves and how they have been implemented. Importantly, it highlights the internal and external factors that have enabled or impeded progress.

23. The evaluation, while independent, was conducted while keeping in view UNSDG processes such as the ongoing review of the Cooperation Framework Guidance, the Management and Accountability Framework,[24] a proposed review of UNSDG business models,[25] and in its later stages, the Secretary-General's "UN80 Initiative".[26]

24. A unique feature of a system-wide evaluation is its scope. As set out in the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy (adopted in November 2024), system-wide evaluation is "the systematic and impartial

22. This evaluation uses these Funding Compact criteria as its definition of "quality funding" or "funding quality" – terms used frequently in some sections of this report.
23. See Box 2 for an explanation of how these terms are defined and used in this report.
24. This evaluation reviews the MAF's provisions with regard to programme derivation and UNCT configuration and refers to the MAF as an enabler or inhibitor of progress in these areas. It is not a comprehensive review of all provisions in the MAF.
25. Responding to OP64 the 2024 QCPR: Encourages the United Nations development system entities to ensure that their business models are structured in a manner that supports the accelerated, comprehensive and balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
26. UN. 2025. Secretary-General's press encounter on the UN80 Initiative. March 2025.

assessment of the results and performance of the United Nations development system to provide integrated and comprehensive support to address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs".

25. In the case of this evaluation, the "evaluand" includes all member entities of the UNSDG[27] and its secretariat (the Development Coordination Office) at country, regional and global levels, with a focus on the extent to which the system is collectively making progress in meeting Member States' reform expectations. It includes all UNSDG entities and UNCT members, irrespective of their approach to country programme development. It includes entities that produce formal Country Programme Documents and that use other tools and modalities. The evaluation does not explicitly seek to assess or benchmark the individual performance of entities or their compliance with guidance. A full list of UNSDG members is provided in Box 1.

Box 1: United Nations Sustainable Development Group membership

Members:
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- International Trade Centre (ITC)
- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
- United Nations Department of Political Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)
- United Nations Development Programme* ** (UNDP)
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa (UN ESCWA)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
- United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism*** (UNOCT)
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (UN PBSO)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)
- United Nations Volunteers (UNV)
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Chair:
Amina J. Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations)

Secretariat:
United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO)

*** UNDP includes UNCDF and UNV**
**** UNDP Administrator serves as the UNSDG Vice-Chair**
***** UNOCT joined the UNSDG during the evaluation data collection phase**

27. UN. n.d. Who we are.

26. The evaluation scope did not include humanitarian programming, or specific questions on linkages between the United Nations development system and the humanitarian system and humanitarian country teams and their respective planning and coordination approaches.

27. The evaluation covers the period from when the Cooperation Framework Guidance was issued, June 2019, to the conclusion of the evaluation's data collection phase in early 2025. The geographic scope is global: it includes UNSDG entities' programming in all countries covered by a UNCT and Resident Coordinator's Office (or Multi-Country Office), as well as all regional offices and headquarters locations.

28. The evaluation adheres to key principles of the System-Wide Evaluation Policy, namely complementarity, subsidiarity and collaboration. It complements the existing evaluation and oversight work of UNSDG entity evaluation functions, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluations of the Resident Coordinator system and DCO,[28] as well as the small but expanding body of country-level Cooperation Framework evaluations commissioned and managed by Resident Coordinators with UNCTs. It focuses on the collective results and system-wide issues that cannot be adequately addressed by these mechanisms. The evaluation draws on and does not duplicate existing analyses, as well as a rich body of survey data.

29. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the UNSDG entities, United Nations senior leaders, the Development Coordination Office, and the various intergovernmental bodies that exercise governance and oversight of the United Nations development system. Secondary users of the evaluation include United Nations development system stakeholders at regional and country levels. The evaluation results will also be of interest to Member State governments and their development partners globally. A detailed analysis of evaluation stakeholders and users prepared during the design phase is available in Annex D.

1.3. Evaluation approach and methodology

30. The evaluation was conducted in four phases:

- Preparation and scoping phase – April to July 2024
- Inception phase – July to October 2024
- Data collection and analysis – October 2024 to February 2025
- Reporting and dissemination phase – March to July 2025

31. The evaluation sought to be transparent and participatory, involving its primary stakeholders and users throughout the process. A detailed stakeholder engagement plan was followed, ensuring stakeholders were involved in the evaluation scoping, design, data collection, validation of findings and discussion of resulting recommendations. Key elements of this approach include, but are not limited to:

- **An outward-looking and forward-facing approach:** Without compromising its independence, the evaluation sought to engage with and follow ongoing processes including the review of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and review of the Management and Accountability Framework, Member State and UNSDG discussions on the funding of the Resident Coordinator system, and strategic plan evaluations of large United Nations entities. Its analysis has also been conducted in the context of the QCPR resolution adopted in December 2024 (A/RES/79/226), and its reporting and dissemination phase takes account of the proposed review of UNSDG business models and UN80 Initiative.
- **Participatory data collection and validation:** The evaluation used participatory data collection methods, especially focus group discussions (FGDs) with United Nations staff, to maximize participation and promote inter-agency discussion. The evaluation team met with UNSDG and

28. The scope of OIOS evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system and DCO extends to the United Nations Secretariat only, while system-wide evaluation scope covers the full United Nations development system, including all agencies, funds and programmes that carry out operational activities for development.

Resident Coordinator system stakeholders before the reporting phase in February 2025 to validate emerging and tentative findings. Further briefings and discussions on the draft report were held for UNSDG stakeholders and UNSDG entity regional directors in March and April 2025.

- **Consultations on recommendations:** Four workshops to consult on and discuss evaluation recommendations with senior UNSDG entity staff[29] and Resident Coordinators were held in April 2025. The evaluation's preliminary findings and conclusions were discussed among UNSDG Principals and presented to Member States through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Operational Activities Segment in May 2025. Following the publication of the evaluation, the UNSDG Principals will provide a management response to the recommendations, facilitated by the UNSDG Secretariat (DCO).

32. The UNSDG inter-agency working group on programme development and results (and additional focal points identified by members to participate in the evaluation) served as the *de facto* reference group for the evaluation.

33. The evaluation was conducted in line with the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy,[30] the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards[31] and the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.[32] Quality assurance was provided by the Executive Director of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office and an inter-agency evaluation management group of senior evaluation officers from UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC and WFP. External perspectives and advice were provided by an independent expert advisory group.

Methodological approach

34. The evaluation's methodological approach was in line with the expectations set out in the terms of reference (ToR). The evaluation had both formative and summative dimensions, focusing on understanding stakeholder perspectives and assessing collective accountability. It sought to understand how the concepts of "derivation," "alignment," and "UNCT configuration" were applied. Instead of only focusing on compliance or performance metrics, the evaluation sought to identify actual practices and to highlight opportunities for learning and improvement.

35. The evaluation took a theory-based approach, whereby the revised evaluation questions were developed to "test" the relationships between inputs, processes and outcomes implied and key assumptions in a reconstructed Theory of Change for the aspects of United Nations development system reforms under evaluation (Figure 8).

36. The central premise underpinning the Theory of Change is that to meet the requests of Member States to deliver better results and to effectively support accelerated progress towards the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations development system must act in a more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable manner, at global, regional and country levels. The evaluation team developed the Theory of Change by expanding this simple model and focusing it on the reforms related to the "new generation of UNCTs" and building on a Theory of Change elaborated by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in 2016.[33] Key processes and relationships marked as A, B, C, D and E in Figure 8 are the focus of the evaluation. They are detailed below:

A. Key to this transformation of how the United Nations development system works is that the vision set out in the Secretary-General's report and the General Assembly resolutions on repositioning of

29. Workshops for UNSDG stakeholders were held in New York and Geneva (in person) and online (for entities headquartered elsewhere). Representatives of 31 UNSDG entities, DCO, multi-partner trust fund offices (MPTFO), Joint SDG Fund and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General participated. A similar workshop for Resident Coordinators was held online.
30. UNSDG SWEO. 2024. United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Policy.
31. UNEG. 2016. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System.
32. UNEG. 2008. UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.
33. UN. 2016. A "Theory of Change" for the UN Development System to Function 'As a System' for Relevance, Strategic Positioning and Results. Summary Paper Version 1.0. January 2016.

the United Nations development system should be: (i) reflected in appropriate and clear guidance; (ii) reflected in strategic direction and guidance within the relevant United Nations entities; (iii) supported by appropriate mechanisms and support structures; (iv) supported by a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system with sufficient capacity; and (v) that all levels have sufficient knowledge of these elements to be able to engage and advance these processes.

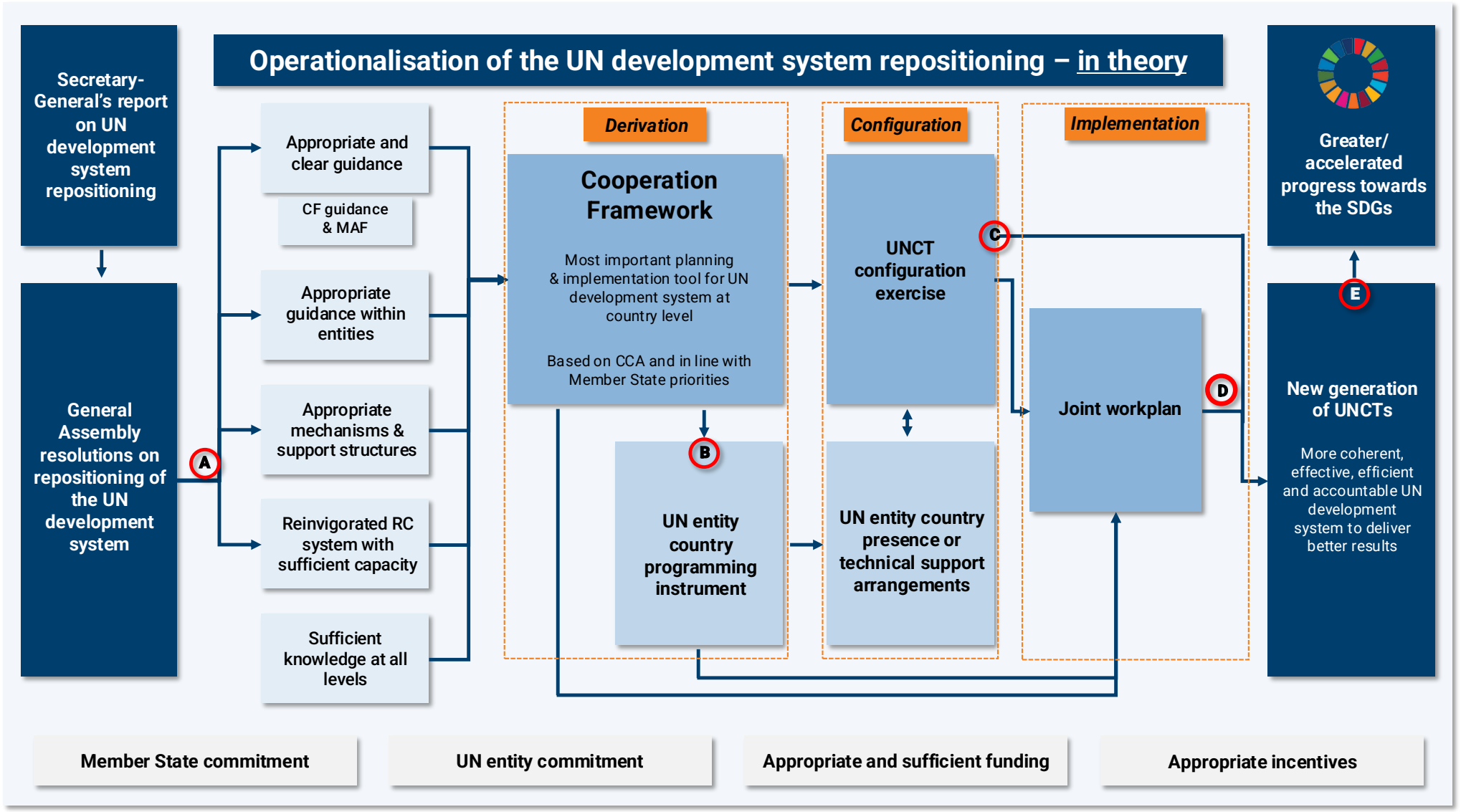
B. For the Cooperation Framework to be the most important tool for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country, in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Cooperation Framework must form the basis for an individual entity's country programming instruments. The Cooperation Framework should respond to national priorities and agendas. United Nations entity country programming instruments must be derived from the Cooperation Framework, in addition to being informed by each entity's individual mandate, strategic priorities and comparative advantages.[34]
C. The Cooperation Framework is the point of departure for the configuration of UNCTs, which is also informed by the existing capacities, skill sets and comparative advantages of the respective entities.
D. United Nations joint workplans operationalize the Cooperation Framework. Joint workplans should reflect: Cooperation Framework outputs; all related key United Nations development contributions delivered jointly or by individual entities, with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication; and resources that are required and available, as well as funding gaps. Joint workplans are the tool in which the United Nations entity mobilization of assets and resources to the priorities collectively set in the Cooperation Framework is clearly articulated. It is a key instrument in ensuring the emergence of a new generation of United Nations country teams.
E. The last step in the overarching relationship is where one would expect to see a more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable United Nations development system in the form of the new generation of United Nations country teams delivering better results and supporting their respective counterparts making greater progress towards the SDGs.

37. These key relationships are dependent on underpinning assumptions, which are also illustrated in Figure 8. Firstly, the theory assumes that Member States of the United Nations will support the operationalization of these aspects of the reforms through their participation in the functioning of the United Nations development system, including in their roles as members of the governing bodies of United Nations and in their engagement with the United Nations development system as programme country governments or contributing countries. Secondly, the theory assumes that the United Nations entities have a commitment to the reform's intent and different ways of working in pursuit of improved collective results. Thirdly, and critically, the theory assumes a progressive improvement in the quantity and quality of funding provided to the United Nations development system, as agreed in the Funding Compact (2019). Finally, it assumes that all stakeholders are sufficiently incentivized to make changes to their ways of working, rather than to continue operating as per the status quo ante.

38. This report revisits the Theory of Change in section 2.7 to reflect on the evaluation findings and consider how the system is working in practice.

34. Country programming instruments (CPIs) include all programming documents of all entities. As the ToR explained, the evaluation scope includes "all UNSDG entities/UNCT members, irrespective of their approach to country programme development; both entities that produce formal country programme documents and those that use other tools and modalities" – para. 51.

Figure 8: Reconstructed Theory of Change



Source: SWEO

39. The evaluation questions were refined and finalized on the basis of consultation with the evaluation reference group in the scoping and inception phases. Table 3 details the evaluation questions (EQs) and sub-questions, how these connect to or "test" the key relationships in the Theory of Change, and the section of this report that contains the related evaluation findings.

Table 3: Evaluations questions and sub-questions

Evaluation question	Sub-question	ToC element in focus	Report section
EQ1: To what extent is the guidance and direction provided adequate and relevant to the objectives of a new generation of UNCTs?	1.1. To what extent do the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF reflect the strategic intent of the reforms, in particular in relation to derivation, configuration and aligned implementation?	A	2.1
	1.2. How useful is the guidance in providing Resident Coordinators and UNSDG entities with the tools to deliver Cooperation Frameworks, encourage meaningful derivation, aligned implementation, and support the reconfiguration of UNCTs?		2.1/2.6
	1.3. To what extent have United Nations entities adapted their processes and provided their staff with the necessary capabilities to support the new generation of UNCTs?		2.1
EQ2: How have Resident Coordinators and UNCTs executed the guidance on country programme derivation?	2.1. How have Resident Coordinators and UNCTs executed the guidance on Country Programme derivation in different contexts?	B	2.3
	2.2. What factors explain the variable implementation of the guidance across entities and countries?		
EQ3: How effectively have Resident Coordinators and UNCTs executed guidance on the UNCT configuration process?	3.1. To what extent have UNCT configuration exercises sought to collaboratively put in place a needs-based tailored country presence?	C	2.4
	3.2 To what extent have the UNCT configuration exercises mapped existing capacities against those needed to deliver the Cooperation Framework?		
	3.3. What factors explain the variable implementation of the configuration guidance across entities and countries?		
EQ4: What are the observable outcomes of derivation, reconfiguration and alignment?	4.1. To what extent do entities' interventions derive from Cooperation Frameworks and to what extent are they implemented in alignment with joint workplans?	B&D	2.3/2.5
	4.2. To what extent have UNCTs been reconfigured so that they are in line with needs identified in the Cooperation Framework and configuration exercise?	C&D	2.4
	4.3. To what extent have UNCTs been able to deliver the Cooperation Framework development results?	E	2.7
	4.4. Have derivation, and UNCT configuration exercises and Cooperation Framework implementation led to unanticipated results (positive or negative)?	Assumptions	2.6

Data collection

40. Given the broad scope of the evaluation, a strategic sampling approach was used to provide comprehensive coverage and meaningful system-wide insights. Faced with the challenge of balancing breadth and depth of inquiry, the evaluation team chose to prioritize breadth. This contrasts with and complements other evaluation designs that have prioritized depth of inquiry in a small number of case study countries.

41. The evaluation sampled 21 focus countries (see Figure 9). The sampling approach was purposive, designed to include a span of recent UNCT experiences of designing and implementing Cooperation Frameworks in different contexts, to maximize opportunities for the identification of good practices and

opportunities for improvement, and to provide greater confidence in the identification of system-wide trends. Full details of the multi-level sampling criteria are provided in Annex B.

42. The data collection and analysis subsequently indicated that, while the sample was purposively selected, it is representative of UNCT experiences globally. Firstly, the sampling did not restrict the evaluation evidence focus to these 21 countries alone. All interviews and focus groups also invited evidence from additional countries where participants had experience. Furthermore, regional and global interviews also provided evidence and examples from specific countries and confirmed that dynamics commonly observed in the 21 countries were recognized elsewhere. Finally, the evaluation engaged in a participatory validation process for the emerging findings with stakeholders representing UNSDG entities and the Resident Coordinator system globally.

Figure 9: Sampled focus countries (Figure 3 duplicate)

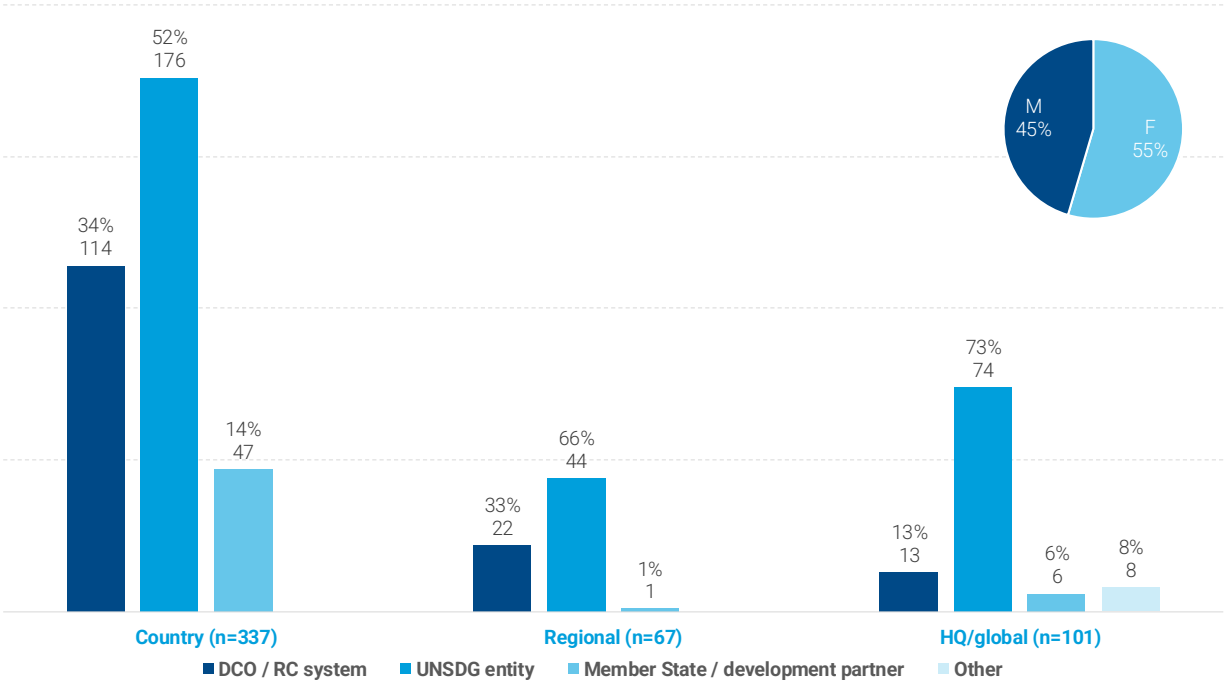
Source: SWEO

43. Primary data collection was in the form of 178 key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions. These consultations targeted stakeholders identified in the analysis conducted in the scoping and inception phases – see Annex B. Figure 10 provides a high-level breakdown of the 505 stakeholders consulted through these methods.[35] These engagements were at three levels and included the following:

- **Headquarters or global:** including UNSDG entity programme and partnerships divisions and equivalents, DCO and United Nations senior leadership, and Member State permanent missions or capitals
- **Regional:** DCO regional directors and teams, UNSDG Regional Peer Support Groups, representatives and regional directors of typically non-resident entities and the Regional Economic Commissions
- **Country:** UNCT members, Resident Coordinators, RCOs, Cooperation Framework results group or programme management team members, programme country government officials and in-country development partners.

35. Excludes stakeholders consulted through briefing and validation engagements and recommendations workshops.

Figure 10: Stakeholders consulted in key informant interviews and focus group discussions[36]



44. As Figure 10 illustrates, the largest constituency consulted through these methods was UNSDG entity staff at the country level, followed by Resident Coordinator system staff at the country level. Thirty-three of the 38 UNSDG member entities participated in key informant interviews.[37] The balance of entity participation in interviews and focus groups was broadly proportional to the entity's global presence and number of UNCT memberships.[38] Of the respondents, 55 per cent were women. A more detailed analysis of respondents and a summary of guiding questions used in the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the different stakeholder categories is provided in Annex B.

45. The evaluation draws on a very large body of secondary data and documentation, gathered from different levels and parts of the United Nations system (the country level, entity headquarters, governing bodies, etc.) and includes both self-reporting and independent analysis. This includes:

- **Documentation from global and headquarters levels:** UNSDG and entity-specific programming guidance, UNSDG entity strategic plans, UNSDG entity reporting to governing bodies on adoption and implementation of the reforms, evaluations conducted by UNSDG entity evaluation offices, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) reports, academic literature on United Nations reforms, etc. Approximately 400 global documents were collected.
- **Country-level documentation:** Cooperation Frameworks, UNCT annual results reports, Cooperation Framework evaluations, UNCT configuration concept papers, joint resource mobilization and partnership strategies, joint workplans and United Nations entity programming instruments (gathered from public sources, for example, governing body websites, RCOs and UNSDG entity headquarters). Approximately 700 country-level documents were collected.

36. In this high-level summary, Regional Economic Commissions are counted as regional rather than headquarters. Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) stakeholders are counted within DCO/RC system. UNSDG entities at the country level may include staff that are UNCT members but not UNSDG members (for example, United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) etc.). "Others" includes independent consultants, academia and oversight bodies. M/F disaggregation includes 482 participants; data missing are for 23 participants.
37. ECLAC and WIPO did not participate in interviews but provided written responses to questions. UNRWA and OCHA did not participate in interviews. UNOCT joined the UNSDG during the evaluation.
38. For example, the evaluation consulted more staff from UNDP and UNICEF than any other entity. See Annex B for further details.

- **Existing administrative and perception-based surveys:** Primarily: (a) UNSDG information management system (IMS) surveys administered by DCO;[39] and (b) annual QCPR monitoring surveys of: (i) Resident Coordinators; (ii) UNCT members; (iii) UNSDG entity headquarters; and (iv) programme country governments administered by UN DESA between 2021 and 2024.

46. Documents, survey data, identification of respondents and other forms of data collection were time-intensive and at times did not allow for the ideal use of existing sources in the sequencing of information gathering. For example, entity country programming instruments were not always immediately available to RCOs or to UNSDG entity headquarters. 2024 information management system and QCPR surveys were conducted at the same time as the evaluation's own primary data collection and only available for detailed analysis from January 2025. The core evaluation team engaged a junior and senior analyst following the inception phase to support in the gathering and analysis of secondary information as it became available.

Data analysis

47. The evaluation matrix (Annex C) was the principal framework for the organization and analysis of data relating to each evaluation question. However, the evaluation team also kept all elements of the broader reconstructed Theory of Change in view to test key relationships and assumptions that underpin the reforms and cut across evaluation questions. For each sub-question a variety of data sources and data collection methods were used. Primary data and extracted secondary data were coded against the evaluation questions and matrix. Each finding of the evaluation is based on a robust triangulation across data collection methods (primary and secondary) and across different sources and stakeholder groups (UNSDG, Resident Coordinator system, governments etc.)

48. More specific analytical approaches used to interpret subsets of data included:

- Systematic comparisons of data extracted from self-reported sources (for example, board papers and QCPR monitoring surveys) against independent evaluation and analysis (strategic evaluations, MOPAN assessments, Cooperation Framework evaluations, etc.)
- Comparative analysis of data from similar question types within the QCPR monitoring surveys and across other survey types (UNSDG information management system) answered by United Nations entity headquarters, UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and government officials to generate original insights
- Detailed and systematic qualitative review of certain key UNCT documents[40] against criteria developed from the "what success looks like" criteria of the Cooperation Framework Guidance Companion Package
- Detailed and systematic review of UNSDG country programming guidance, United Nations development system reform checklists and other relevant documentation against criteria explained in Annex F.

Limitations

49. The evaluation had a number of limitations, but all were mitigated to an extent that provides for a high degree of confidence in the evaluation's findings and conclusions:

- **Timeframe:** Compared to the expansive scope, the data collection window was relatively short and gave limited opportunities to follow up and revert, for example, when potential interviewees did not respond. This was mitigated where possible to some extent by use of remote consultations and

39. The evaluation team was also invited to advise on revision of a small number of especially relevant survey questions on the country programming instrument for the 2024 IMS data collection.
40. UNCT configuration concept papers, joint resource mobilization and partnership strategies, and joint workplans.

a large number of focus group discussions to maximize participation and promote inter-agency discussion.

- **Breadth of stakeholders:** The large number of primary stakeholders, as well as the necessary focus on all three levels of the United Nations development system (global, regional and country) meant that not every interested stakeholder could be engaged. This was mitigated by sampling and the use of focus group discussions to expand and diversify the base of informants.
- **Use of existing data:** The evaluation adhered to the system-wide evaluation principles of complementarity and subsidiarity and used existing analyses and surveys where available (for example, QCPR and UNSDG information management system surveys). The definitions and lines of questioning in these instruments did not always directly correspond to the lines of enquiry of this evaluation. However, so as not to duplicate the exercises or burden the same stakeholders with additional requests, the evaluation relied on the existing data to the extent possible – sometimes as "proxy indicators" for different areas of inquiry.

Citation of evidence

50. This report focuses on the United Nations development system as a whole. It does not seek to assess the performance of specific UNSDG entities, UNCTs or Resident Coordinator Offices. Rather, it seeks to identify helpful practices and behaviours. For the most part, this report does not therefore cite specific entities, countries, UNCTs or Resident Coordinator Offices in the findings and conclusions. This may wrongly give the impression that the data cited in this report are unsubstantiated: the evidence is substantiated and the assessment is based on analysis corroborated across multiple evidence sources. The beginning of each findings section contains an outline of the evidence used and indicates the degree of confidence. Differences of opinion among stakeholder groups are made clear. Secondary evidence that gives the names of entities or countries already in the public domain is cited. The report occasionally cites UNCTs or entities for the purposes of highlighting examples of particularly effective practice. But overall, to preserve the anonymity of sources, the report does not specify entities or countries.

Box 2: Notes on terminology

This box clarifies how some frequently used terms have been used in this report.

- **Alignment:** This is not given a specific definition in this report and is used in keeping with normal English usage to imply "in line with". "Alignment" is used in disparate ways and contexts in the UNSDG guidance and across the United Nations development system. The evaluation team therefore does not try to define a more specific meaning.[41] The meaning of **derivation** and **configuration** are spelled out in the relevant sections of the report.
- **Country programming instrument (CPI):** This is used in this report when referring to documents that describe UNSDG entity strategies, plans, projects and programmes in a given country, the report uses this term. This is to reflect that the evaluation's scope includes all UNSDG entities and UNCT members, irrespective of their approach to Country Programme Development. It includes entities that produce formal country programme documents and those that use other tools and modalities to plan their interventions.
- **United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG):** The report uses this term to refer collectively to the 37 UNSDG member entities as well as their leadership. It is used to refer to the entities in their entirety, not only to the UNSDG Principals high-level forum.
- **United Nations country team:** The report uses UNCT to refer to the full footprint of UNSDG entities working on sustainable development in programme countries, rather than a narrower understanding including only the heads of UNSDG entities at the country-level and their regular meetings. Heads of entity at the country level are generally referred to as 'UNCT members', except in cases where it is important to refer to their entity specific roles.

41. Set out in Annex B.

2. Evaluation findings

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51. This section is largely structured to mirror the sequence of Cooperation Framework development and implementation,[42] rather than the precise order of the evaluation questions (EQs). It begins with findings on the relevance and integration of guidance (2.1) and the design of Cooperation Frameworks (2.2). It then presents findings on country programme derivation (2.3), UNCT configuration (2.4) and the Cooperation Framework implementation period (2.5). Section 2.6 considers factors influencing progress towards the "new generation of United Nations country teams," complementing the earlier analysis of derivation, configuration and implementation. The final sub-section (2.7) considers the overall findings of the evaluation and reflects on the extent to which the Theory of Change (Figure 8) holds.

2.1. Relevance and integration of key instruments for a "new generation of United Nations country teams"

52. The Secretary-General's proposals and the subsequent General Assembly resolutions (A/RES/72/279, A/RES/75/233, A/RES/79/226) mandating the repositioning set out the vision for reform of the United Nations development system. The guidance and direction given to operationalize the reforms are anchored in the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System (MAF).

53. This section first examines the extent to which the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF embody the major elements of the vision and provide relevant and adequate direction in achieving the objectives of a new generation of UNCTs. It then considers how entities have internalized the guidance into their systems and processes, and what measures they have taken to ensure their staff have the knowledge and skills to engage effectively in the new generation of UNCTs. Section 2.6 reflects on the utility of the guidance as a factor influencing overall progress towards a new generation of UNCTs.

Key evidence sources	Strength: High

Evaluation findings in this section are the result of analysis and triangulation across a broad range of sources, including but not limited to the following:

- Assessment of **relevance** is based on a detailed review of the of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF against the reform proposals and mandates and in-depth interviews with UNSDG entity headquarters stakeholders, United Nations permanent mission staff and Resident Coordinator system stakeholders.
- Assessment of the **integration of the reforms by UNSDG entities** draws on analysis of 29 UNSDG entity strategic plan documents, independent evaluations of strategic plans, UNSDG entities' guidance for country level programming, the annual QCPR survey of UNSDG entity headquarters, and United Nations development system reform checklists.

42. The exception is that this evaluation addresses the issue of derivation before the UNCT configuration exercise. The guidance sets out the sequence as in Figure 7, but as in practice, the UNCT configuration exercise is undertaken after derivation and the evaluation opted to follow that sequence.

Reflection of strategic intent of the reforms

Key Finding 1: The Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework do, on the whole, reflect the intent of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General and mandated by the General Assembly. They support the ambition to further join up UNCT analysis, planning and reporting, introduce dual accountability models and focus on national priorities. However, the universality of the guidance and its unrealistic assumptions about the degree to which entities have the ability to collaborate are weaknesses.

54. The Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF do, on the whole, reflect the intent of the reforms but with significant issues. The changes represent a departure from the previous UNDAF guidance and prior management and accountability arrangements. In line with what was requested, the Cooperation Framework Guidance strengthens the requirement for the United Nations to conduct joint analysis, planning, implementation and reporting. The MAF sets out the relationships between entities and the Resident Coordinator, and introduces dual reporting lines and a strengthened system-wide accountability framework to make progress towards a new generation of UNCTs. The guidance is also clear that the Cooperation Framework should respond to national priorities and agendas and strengthen partnerships – particularly between governments and the United Nations development system. For each phase of the cycle, the Cooperation Framework Guidance identifies how government and other national stakeholders should be engaged.

55. In terms of strategic challenges, a foundational element of the reform vision is responding to country contexts and steering away from a one-size-fits-all approach. However, despite a general agreement within the system that different contexts require bespoke approaches, the guidance generally does not plan for a differentiated application depending on context. The stages of the Cooperation Framework cycle, with accountabilities as set out in the MAF architecture and tools, are, with very few exceptions, identical, regardless of country context. The same guidance is assumed to be universally applicable. Later sections expand on the consequences of this uniformity.

56. At a very broad macro level, the guidance tends to be based on an assumption that the United Nations development system has extensive experience of working collectively at the country level. It assumes a higher degree of prior experience of engaging and acting coherently and collaboratively than the "system" has in practice, leading to an assumption that entities will work effectively together to deliver the vision. The guidance does not factor in that the incentives that drive entities to collaborate are weak. Thus, certain elements of the vision embedded in the guidance do not match the reality of how the United Nations development system and most of the UNSDG entities work.

57. When the reforms of the United Nations development system were being considered, a Theory of Change was developed[43] for the systemic transformation and function "as a system". While still a simplification, this highlighted the complexity of the challenges – and identified the critical areas that required attention for transformation to take place. Many of these aspects of change and inputs that the Theory of Change identified have not been addressed in the reform design. Overall, there has been a focus on technical or administrative levers that are within the control of the entities tasked with reforming the system, with insufficient attention to critical strategic or enabling issues that sit beyond that direct control.

43. UN. 2016. A "Theory of Change" for the United Nations Development System to Function "As a System" for Relevance, Strategic Positioning and Results. Summary Paper Version 1.0. January 2016.

Key Finding 2: While the Cooperation Framework Guidance incorporates many of the overall reform ambitions, it is not consistent with the ambition on derivation, nor does it adequately factor in the current operating models of the entities.

58. The guidance emphasizes the primacy of the Cooperation Framework, stating that United Nations entity-specific country programmes should be derived from the Cooperation Framework, not *vice versa*. However, the Cooperation Framework Guidance is inconsistent in key areas. It does not take adequate account of different entities' business models, or it assumes that entities have changed them to align with the reform ambitions.

59. The guidance assumes that it is possible for a UNCT to collectively design and implement a single strategy in a linear results-based management model – akin to a single entity's country programming instrument. It assumes that entities have a track record of strong collaborative working. Evidence from an evaluation of the Delivering as One pilots published in 2012 shows that, even when there is intensive support for collaborative working, change is partial – the evaluation judged progress in the pilot countries as "intermediate".[44]

60. The guidance does not sufficiently address or acknowledge the tension that the United Nations development system entities may face between the primacy of the Cooperation Framework and delivery that is in line with their respective global strategic plans. This tension has been highlighted in several strategic evaluations.[45] A recent study on United Nations development system capacities and functions in the context of the SDGs noted that UNSDG entity representatives and staff tend to focus on their entity priorities in their day-to-day work, rather than on the common objectives and results established in Cooperation Frameworks.[46] This weak ownership of collective priorities is in part due to the quality of direction from entity governing bodies and their senior leadership: they have not sufficiently translated the aspirations for greater collaboration and cohesion into practical direction to drive behaviours and practice.

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44. UN. 2012. Independent Evaluation of Delivering As One: Main Report. p.79.
45. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; WHO. 2023. Results Report 2023; UNICEF. 2020. E/ICEF/2021/5. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Summary. December 2020; UN-Habitat. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025. April 2024; WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans. May 2023.
46. Dalberg. 2023. Updated Study of Capacities & Functions of the UN Development System to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs. December 2023. Final Draft.

Management and Accountability Framework

Key Finding 3: The Management and Accountability Framework provides a framework and identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Resident Coordinators and UNCT members. However, it has important gaps and lacks clarity in critical areas.

61. The Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) sets out accountability lines in the United Nations development system. The first iteration that set out the relations between the Resident Coordinator and the UNCTs was endorsed by UNSDG Principals in May 2019. Accountability systems at the regional and global levels were included in the MAF and endorsed by UNSDG Principals in September 2021. However, there are still a number of gaps and the MAF lacks clarity on several key issues.

62. The MAF proposes some concrete mechanisms for mutual accountability. This includes the dual accountability model for UNCT members, by which, country representatives remain fully accountable to their respective entities on individual mandates, while periodically reporting to the Resident Coordinator on their individual activities and respective contributions to the system-wide efforts towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (in other words, the Cooperation Framework). However, the way the document is presented makes the standards it seeks to establish hard to understand. The two columns listing "working relationships" and "accountabilities for results" and the differences between them are not defined or differentiated. The MAF is not explicit in setting out building blocks of transparency and mutual accountability – such as an entity's obligations on sharing workplans and funding data with the Resident Coordinator and RCO.

63. The MAF lacks clarity on the fundamental processes of "derivation" and "configuration". It is framed in a way that assumes all entities have a consolidated country programming tool, instrument or document. It does not set out the ways in which entities without an explicit country-level plan are expected to demonstrate the "derivation" of their interventions. The MAF also says very little about "configuration": discussion on UNCT configuration is limited to common services and business operations strategies, rather than the substantive mandates, expertise and technical capacities of the UNCT.

64. The MAF gives Resident Coordinators inconsistent responsibilities in relation to their role in confirming entity country programme derivation. It states in different places that the Resident Coordinator should provide "systematized and formal feedback" but also that they should not undertake a "technical review". These two statements can be understood in ways that are mutually inconsistent.

65. The duties of the Resident Coordinator are set out extensively in the terms of reference (MAF Annex 1) but omit key features of the role in relation to the Cooperation Framework. The terms of reference do not say what Resident Coordinators are accountable for in terms of Cooperation Framework delivery, how their annual objectives are developed, and how they are to be held accountable for their performance.

UNSDG entity integration of the reforms

66. This subsection looks at the extent to which UNSDG entities reflect the changes in their global strategic plans, operational guidance on country programming, and management of and support to staff, as proxy indicators of the extent to which they have mainstreamed the reforms.

Key Finding 4: There is uneven integration of the reforms in UNSDG entities' strategic plans: a half of the plans fully incorporate the United Nations development system reform agenda, providing integration and specific operational strategies; a third make partial reference, while a fifth of the plans make minimal or no reference to the reforms.

67. At the outset it should be noted that the MAF is not explicit about how entities should reflect their role in relation to the Cooperation Frameworks in their global strategic plans (or equivalents). This is an important gap for two main reasons. First, many entities rely on global or regional strategic planning frameworks to design interventions at the country level, and do not use a country strategy as their central planning and accountability framework. Second, this misses an opportunity to clarify, for all entities, the relative importance of responding to global agendas versus deriving priorities from the Cooperation Framework signed with governments.

68. This evaluation analysed how 29 funds, programmes and specialized agencies operationalize the United Nations development system reform through their strategic plans (or equivalent documents).[47] Between 2018 and 2021/2022, soon after the 2016 QCPR, many entities produced new strategic plans. However, the timing of these plans did not really allow for the Secretary-General's repositioning agenda to be fully reflected. At most, strategic plans completed during this period gave a "framework" or a "vision" of the entities' perceived objectives[48] in relation to the reforms.[49] The evaluation therefore focused on analysing the subsequent generation of strategic plans written between 2021/2022 to 2025 – on the grounds that they would have been expected to integrate the reforms to a greater extent.

69. These entities' strategic plans are categorized into three broad groups: robust, partial, or minimal treatment of the reforms. Only a few entities' strategic plans go beyond broad high-level statements; in other words, they do not provide details on how the United Nations development system reform will be operationalized.

- Nearly half of the entity strategic plans that were analysed address the reforms in a robust way (14 out of 30; 47 per cent[50]). They refer to the Cooperation Framework and the broader reform agenda, describing their role in fostering collaboration through joint initiatives and leveraging inter-agency synergies to achieve collective results. Some of these entities go further, outlining operational reforms and providing a few specific strategies for aligning with the reforms, such as adapting programming tools, enhancing inter-agency coordination and participating in joint accountability frameworks.
- Approximately a third of strategic plans make partial reference to the reforms (9 out of 30; 30 per cent[51]). These plans refer to the reform principles but do not provide any information on operationalization. Their engagement often centres on thematic contributions or sectoral priorities without fully integrating the broader system-level changes into their strategic plans.
- Finally, just over a fifth make minimal or no reference to the reforms (7 out of 30 entities, 23 per cent[52]). They focus primarily on their specific mandates and operational goals, with limited or no mention of Cooperation Frameworks or other elements of the reform agenda. While these entities may indirectly contribute to the reforms through their activities, their plans provide little evidence of alignment or implementation mechanisms.

70. Independent evaluations of UNSDG entities' strategic plans have also found that, while these documents indicate support for the reform, the evaluated entities needed to give the organization clearer guidance on how to engage with the reforms at the country level. These evaluations show that these funds, programmes and specialized entities gave little guidance on how the development system reforms and the Cooperation Framework should be operationalized in relation to their strategic plans.[53] The studies note that

47. The evaluation identified 30 UNSDG entities with multi-year global strategic planning documents – these are listed in the footnotes (52-54), including all of the UNSDG member entities with the exception of PBSO, UN DESA and the Regional Economic Commissions.
48. UNICEF. 2020. E/ICEF/2021/5. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Summary. December 2020.
49. UNCDF. 2021. Evaluation of UNCDF's Strategic Framework 2018-2021. Final Evaluation Report. August 2021; UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022.
50. UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNFPA, WHO, UN-Women, UN-Habitat, UNOPS, WFP, UNESCO, UNDRR, ITU, UNCDF, ITC.
51. FAO, ILO, UNIDO, UNAIDS, UNV, DPPA, UNODC, OHCHR, UNESCO.
52. IOM, IFAD, UNHCR, UNRWA, WMO, WIPO, UNCTAD.
53. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; WHO. 2023. Results Report 2023; UNICEF. 2020. E/ICEF/2021/5. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Summary. December 2020.

this gap extends to the annexes of the strategies: in other words, they do not provide guidance anywhere in their strategies.

71. Specialized agencies (for example, FAO, ILO, ITC, WHO and WMO) and dual mandated humanitarian and development agencies (including, for example, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP) report adoption of the reforms with caveats relating to their own unique mandates and longstanding relationships with particular government ministries, which may in some cases be formalized by that ministry or minister representing their country as a delegate to its governing body (for example, health or digital ministers).

72. Relatively few entities have created dedicated guidance detailing how the organization will use the reforms to accelerate progress toward their goals and, ultimately, the 2030 Agenda.[54] For example, one entity's strategic plan was perceived by its staff to be more "abstract" and "theoretical" at the field level. Only a quarter of its field offices were able to link the strategic plan to local needs and priorities or link it to the Cooperation Framework. Another entity's evaluation noted a tension between corporate strategic objectives and visions and the requirements of Cooperation Frameworks and the MAF, in terms of which sets of processes, timelines and priorities are preeminent.[55]

Key Finding 5: UNSDG entities that prepare country programming instruments have revised their operational guidance and, to varying degrees, have integrated aspects of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and MAF. Some entities have provided their staff with operational guidance on how to engage in UNCTs but this practice is not widespread.

73. Positively, all entities that prepare country programming instruments have revised their guidance and have integrated some aspects of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and MAF. This includes guidance on compliance-based derivation to respond to the options given in the Cooperation Framework Guidance. Entities' official documents show how they have sought to align their country-level programming processes with the Cooperation Framework. The guidance of some entities state that the Cooperation Framework is the primary framework at the country level. In others, entities spell out how to engage with and align with the ambitions of the Cooperation Framework.

74. Of the 37 UNSDG entities, 15 provide information on how they have strengthened their systems to give their staff the capabilities they need to operate effectively within the repositioned United Nations development system. These data are presented in Annex E. Few entities provide specific guidance on the UNCT configuration exercise and how their country offices should engage.

75. Some entities have provided their staff with the operational guidance they need to work effectively as part of the UNCT, but this is not widespread.[56] There is limited information on how staff capacities on Cooperation Framework processes have been strengthened to date. Entity evaluations note that, despite efforts to strengthen staff capabilities on United Nations development system reform, knowledge of reform was not universal and did not always extend beyond processes.[57]

54. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; UN-Habitat. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025. April 2024.
55. This includes agencies such as UN Habitat and UNV. For example, while UN Habitat does not have specific guidance on the MAF yet, it has been involved in 82 per cent of reviewed Cooperation Frameworks, benefiting from greater engagement as a smaller agency. UNV has aligned its Strategic Framework with United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 71/243, enhancing engagement with Resident Coordinators, improving efficiency, and speeding up volunteer deployment. This involved shifting efforts to the country level and delegating authority to representatives for more localized decision-making. UNEP has leveraged the MAF to strengthen its role in integrating environmental priorities into Cooperation Frameworks. (Source: UN-Habitat. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025. April 2024.)
56. See Annex F for a list of which entities have provided this level of guidance.
57. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.

76. A few UNSDG entities have reported holding information sessions on Cooperation Frameworks or making other significant investments in staff knowledge. While these undoubtedly inform staff, there is evidence this knowledge is not always translated into practice. For example, FAO trains its country-level representatives in a Cooperation Framework course: it developed a blended learning programme with the United Nations System Staff College to better support its country offices to contribute to the design and implementation of Cooperation Frameworks and FAO Country Programming Frameworks. IOM reports that country offices benefit from extensive resources, including virtual training, toolkits and guidance on integrating migration into the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework. These have reportedly been instrumental in positioning migration as a cross-cutting theme in development planning. However, a recent IOM evaluation also noted a lack of significant resources for adequate training on Cooperation Framework processes. As a result, IOM offices often relied on support from regional offices and headquarters to effectively engage in reporting processes. In addition, a survey result indicated that information material was often not received in time for Cooperation Framework engagement or not received at all.[58] UNFPA offers interactive toolkits through a "Cooperation Framework resources hub", coupled with regional adaptation of global training to reflect specific contexts. These measures have been found to strengthen staff readiness and improve alignment with Cooperation Framework processes. However, a recent UNFPA evaluation also highlighted that knowledge of the reforms remained mixed, based on interviews with staff.[59]

77. There are examples of entities making significant investments in seeking to inform staff. The United Nations Staff System College has provided a range of capacity development programmes for United Nations staff since the release of the Cooperation Framework Guidance in 2019. This has included open-access self-guided online courses and tailored events for certain UNCTs and regions. For example, it delivered a September 2024 workshop on "fostering a shift towards systems thinking and innovative approaches in the development of Cooperation Frameworks" for the Europe and Central Asia region, where some 15 Cooperation Frameworks were due for design in 2025. Data shared with the evaluation team by the college show some 6,469 United Nations staff enrolments in Cooperation Framework cycle-related courses between 2019 and 2024. Of these enrolments, 95 per cent were for online courses and 5 per cent (530 enrolments) for face-to-face and blended courses. A few entity headquarters representatives interviewed reported encouraging their staff to participate in United Nations Staff System College courses. The entity with the greatest number of enrolments was the "DCO/RC system" (16 per cent to the total), followed by IOM (9 per cent of the total).[60]

78. This evaluation did not systematically collect data on the extent to which entities routinely included collaboration with the UNCT in job descriptions and performance reviews. There is some anecdotal evidence that this is included in some entity staff performance assessments. However, most entities do not strongly incentivize their staff in this way. Staff turnover means that knowledge does not necessarily stay in-country and all staff need exposure to it.

58. IOM. 2022. Evaluation of IOM's Institutional Approach and Contribution the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
59. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.
60. Top 13 entities by number of course enrolments: RC system/DCO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UN-Women, OHCHR, UNHCR, WHO, UNESCO, UNEP, UNOPS (entity-level data were only shared for these 13).

2.2 Cooperation Framework design

79. The Cooperation Framework is intended to reflect United Nations development system contributions in support of nationally led efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It is not intended to address all development issues in a country. In consultation with national partners, it is expected to choose strategic priorities and related development results in which to invest its collective efforts, capacities and resources. This should be guided by an assessment of the comparative advantage of the United Nations system vis-à-vis other development actors. The Cooperation Framework Guidance sets out the steps and parameters. Before designing a new Cooperation Framework, the UNCT is expected to commission and learn from an evaluation of the existing Cooperation Framework (or legacy development assistance framework) (see section 2.5 for comments on the utility of these evaluations).

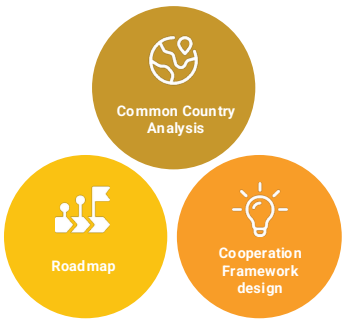
80. The UNCT then develops a Common Country Analysis. This is intended to be the United Nations independent, collective and integrated analysis of a country's context to inform the development of the Cooperation Framework. The Common Country Analysis is expected to serve as the key analytical background for the Cooperation Framework and its component parts. It is expected to examine progress, gaps, opportunities and bottlenecks vis-à-vis a country's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda. In theory, a strong Common Country Analysis leads to well-derived and aligned programmes. The Common Country Analysis should also help identify previously neglected issues related to vulnerable groups and normative issues, including human rights. The Common Country Analysis is expected to draw from external and internal data and to use expertise and resources from within the United Nations system. The Common Country Analysis is not expected to be a "one off" analysis, but is envisioned to track situational developments and inform the United Nations system's work on a continuous basis.

81. While the evaluation questions do not explicitly include a question on the design stages of the Cooperation Framework, data collection strongly suggested that the initial design stages influence the quality of Cooperation Frameworks and implementation. Consequently, this section presents findings in relation to the Common Country Analysis and the Cooperation Framework design process.

Key evidence sources	Strength: Medium-high
Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Framework design processes were not the core focus of the evaluation questions. However, these processes are important for subsequent analysis of "derivation", "alignment" "configuration". These findings are not based on a detailed technical review the of the analysis and design processes, but on important perception-based data on these phases which emerged strongly in primary data collection. They draw on interviews and focus groups discussion with Regional Peer Support Groups, UNCTs, Resident Coordinators and their offices, DCO regional teams, as well as programme country government representatives involved in Cooperation design.	

Common Country Analysis

Key Finding 6: There is a consensus that the quality of Common Country Analyses has improved, that they provide a stronger basis for planning than the pre-reform period and can bring the UNCT together around a common diagnosis of a country's priorities. There are challenges relating to their quality, scope and use. There is also tension caused by the expectation that Common Country Analyses be made public, which can lead to sensitive issues being under-represented or omitted.



82. There is a consensus that the quality of the Common Country Analyses has improved. Interviewees consider that they provide a stronger basis for planning than pre-reform equivalent analyses, and that they are valuable for bringing the UNCT together. Improvements in collaboration, joint programming, joint monitoring or reporting on indicators are often traced back to inclusive and shared Common Country Analysis processes (including aligning with a national census or demographic surveys when possible). The most useful Common Country Analyses were said to identify clear priorities or targets for United Nations cooperation. This includes the need to focus on certain geographic areas, population groups or issues that the United Nations has a comparative advantage in addressing. These priorities were then reflected in more targeted outcome statements and, in some cases, connected to UNCT configuration exercises or capacity mapping.

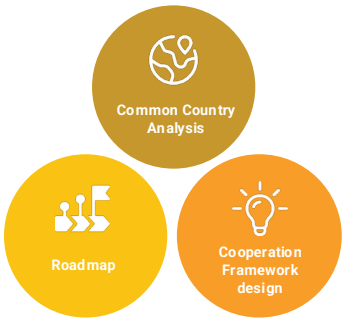
83. Almost all UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and RCOs consulted noted that the Common Country Analysis helps build up a common basic starting point and establish a stronger basis for collaborative working, an observation also reflected in a recent study.[61] Many interviewees considered that it helps encourage intersectoral analysis. Several Cooperation Framework evaluations found that the Common Country Analysis process was inclusive and engaged civil society and others in the process (although two Cooperation Framework evaluations considered there was limited stakeholder participation); some mentioned it was done with government.

84. There is generally strong engagement from within the UNCT in producing the Common Country Analysis. In many countries, entities were reported to have invested in providing inputs and participated in the analysis process. Entity evaluations also show that the Common Country Analysis was often the stage of Cooperation Framework design that entities appreciated the most. Strategic assessments of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women highlight how Common Country Analyses supported alignment between Cooperation Frameworks and entity country programmes, ensuring the prioritization of national development goals.[62] Some entities reported using the Common Country Analysis processes as their own analysis stage in their country programme development. For example, FAO has reviewed its country programming guidance to ensure it systematically provides analysis in its field of competence as inputs to the Common Country Analysis: globally it offers agrifood systems analysis as a Common Country Analysis input where it is a Cooperation Framework signatory.[63] However, it is still the case that several entities continue to produce their own analysis independently of, and sometimes in parallel with, the Common Country Analysis.

85. While the Common Country Analysis is viewed as a crucial analytical tool, interviews and the document review indicate several challenges related to its quality, scope and use. In terms of challenges, there

61. See for example: Updated Study of Capacities & Functions of the United Nations Development System to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs. December 2023, which noted that CCA development was commonly regarded as pivotal in fostering strategic coherence.
62. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women. 2021. Joint annex on the common chapter of the strategic plans, 2018-2021 of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women; UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; UNDP. n.d. UN Development System Reform – Checklist for UNSDG Entities' Governing Bodies. Internal document.
63. FAO's pilot initiative, Analytical Support Mechanism to the Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF process, was designed to strengthen FAO's technical inputs into the CCA by organizing global-, regional- and country-level capacities to provide timely, relevant, and demand-driven agrifood systems analysis.

are concerns that Common Country Analyses are too detailed and burdensome, and that even if the analysis is high quality, Cooperation Frameworks do not reflect them.



86. Common Country Analyses can be too extensive and comprehensive and absorb too much time, effort and resources when compared to the investment made in implementation. Some interviewees said that the Common Country Analysis is "a big document" that is "not widely read" and that it does "not stimulate much reflection of programmatic priorities". At the extreme end, one Resident Coordinator noted that more than 50 meetings had been held to develop the Common Country Analysis. The 2019 guidance notes that the Common Country Analysis document should be 30-40 pages plus annexes and therefore UNCTs have themselves chosen to develop more expansive documents. The ongoing review of the guidance has addressed some of these issues and now mandates a lighter and more strategic process that results in a United Nations country analysis summary report.

87. Interviews with UNCT members and Resident Coordinators indicated that entities invest heavily to ensure their priority issues are prominent in the Common Country Analysis, to ensure they subsequently appear in the Cooperation Framework. The documents can become somewhat crowded and disjointed as a result of all entities having an interest in seeing their specific mandates strongly reflected in the diagnosis. Smaller entities noted that they contribute to the Common Country Analysis to ensure their mandate is reflected, noting: "We can derive if we were able to engage in the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework design and ensure our mandate is reflected."

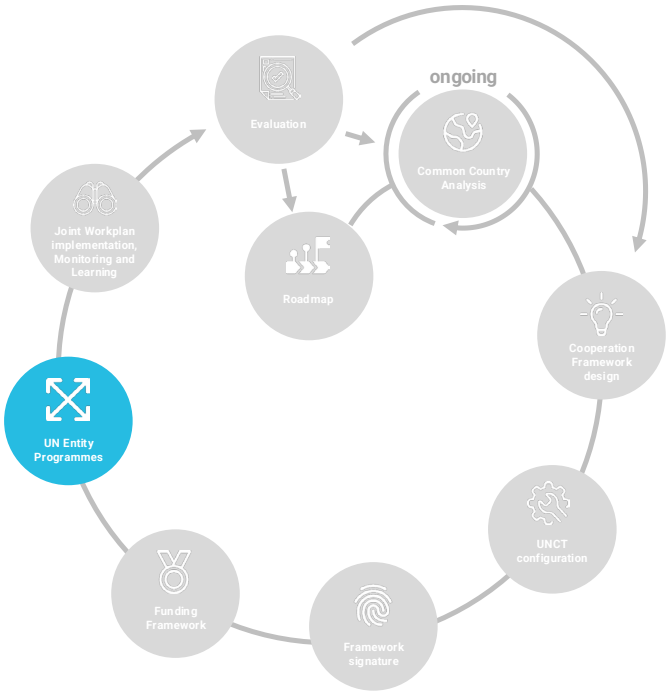
88. Some noted a disconnect between what is in the Common Country Analysis and the Cooperation Framework. They observed that the Cooperation Framework contains what entities want to do in any case, not a response to the gaps identified in the Common Country Analysis. Two evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks concluded that earlier Common Country Analyses were not used consistently to inform the Cooperation Frameworks.

89. Some perceive a tension related to the expectation that Common Country Analyses are made public by the Resident Coordinator and UNCT. This could lead to sensitive issues being under-represented or omitted in the Common Country Analysis. Some Resident Coordinators noted that the obligation to make the Common Country Analysis public could make it harder for the entities to be open and deliver on normative mandates (for example, in relation to human rights or gender equality). They also noted that when the analysis in the Common Country Analysis is "selective" the subsequent Cooperation Framework is also likely to be "partial". The update to the guidance expects the United Nations Common Country Analysis summary report to be public, however it outlines three alternate options for exceptional cases where the Resident Coordinator and UNCT can request a waiver from the DCO Directorate.

90. Despite the intention of government ownership, governments were not always fully engaged in the Cooperation Framework design process. Analysis of Cooperation Framework evaluations also indicated that, despite the required strong involvement of governments in the development of the Cooperation Framework, there was often limited awareness of its content among national interlocutors and the donor community. This raised questions about whether the Cooperation Framework is sufficiently participatory and inclusive and effectively promoted and utilized by the UNCT and national governments following its formal adoption. In some cases, governments requested that the Cooperation Frameworks be changed because the initial drafts did not reflect their priorities and new governments asked for the Cooperation Framework to be changed to reflect their priorities.

2.3 The derivation of entities' priorities from Cooperation Frameworks

91. After the priorities of the Cooperation Framework have been agreed, entities are required to adopt the Cooperation Framework priorities into their own country programming instruments in whatever form those instruments take. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/279 positions the Cooperation Framework as the "most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country". The Cooperation Framework is intended to encapsulate the United Nations response to national development priorities in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In accordance with this vision, the 2020 QCPR underscored the importance for all United Nations development system entities to prepare and finalize their entity-specific country programming instruments in accordance with the agreed priorities in Cooperation Frameworks.



92. United Nations development system entities have different types of country programming instruments and engagements at the country level, as well as different processes for the approval of associated budgets.[64] The evaluation sought to clarify whether UNSDG entities have country programming instruments, what their approval processes are, and how they are derived from Cooperation Frameworks. This information is currently not systematically collated. These variables are important because they influence how entities follow the derivation guidance. A key distinction that frames the findings in this section is between UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP,[65] which formally present Country Programme Documents for the approval of their governing bodies (Executive Boards), typically in the same year as Cooperation Framework design, and all other UNSDG entities.

93. Table 4 sets out the type of instrument and approval process each UNSDG entity uses and illustrates the variation that will be present in many UNCTs, as set out in entity-specific guidance, UN DESA QCPR surveys and United Nations reform checklists. The evaluation also found there is a lack of clarity within DCO, RCOs[66] and among some entity staff on what planning instruments entities use and how they need to show derivation from the Cooperation Framework (see Key Finding 8). This can only be partially explained by differences in presence and context.[67] Whether the entities have an instrument and the approval process required play an important role in the findings on derivation discussed in this section.

64. See Annex F for the document review cataloguing UNSDG entity practice in preparing CPIs.
65. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP formerly comprised the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group. The group of entities is still commonly referred to as "ExCom". These four entities all have governing body approval processes for country programming instruments. This report avoids the use of outdated terminology but acknowledges it here for clarity as it is still widely used. It is also worth noting that, based on United Nations System Chief Executives Board of Coordination (UNSCEB) financial data for 2022, these four entities account for 48 per cent of UN system expenditures on development activities.
66. See Annex E.
67. Each entity has a different practice and requirement for the preparation of these instruments depending on the footprint in a country. Differences identified can only partially be explained by differences in presence and context.

Table 4: UNSDG entity type of country engagement and approval process[68]

UNSDG Entity	CPI that requires governing body approval	CPI that requires internal entity approval	CPI, no approval process	No CPI, but country engagement
DPPA				X
FAO		X		
IFAD		X		
ILO		X		
IOM		X		
ITC				X
ITU				X
OCHA				X
OHCHR		X		
UN DESA				X
UN ECA				X
UN ECLAC				X
UN ESCAP				X
UN ESCWA				X
UN PBSO				X
UN Women		X		
UN-Habitat		X		
UNAIDS		X		
UNCDF				X
UNCTAD				X
UNDP	X			
UNDRR				X
UNECE				X
UNEP		Piloting		X
UNESCO			Some	X
UNFPA	X			
UNHCR		X		
UNICEF	X			
UNIDO		X		
UNODC		X		
UNOPS				X
UNRWA				X
UNV				X
WFP	X			
WHO		X		
WIPO				X
WMO				X

94. The concept of derivation, as used by the guidance, refers to the process by which UNSDG entities create their country programming instruments directly from the overarching Cooperation Frameworks. It means that the planning and design of entities' country-specific programmes are expected to stem from, and be fully integrated with, the outcomes outlined in the Cooperation Framework. One of the primary challenges in implementing the derivation guidance has been the lack of a clear and consistent definition of what this means in practice. This lack of clarity has resulted in a spectrum of approaches, some more aligned with the spirit of the reform than others.

68. Compiled through UNSDG entity review of guidance (see Annex F for full table), responses to the survey of the United Nations development system entities' headquarters and feedback from evaluation focal points in the UNSDG entities. "Country engagement" may include individual projects agreed on bilateral basis between the host government and an entity.

95. The MAF asks entities to consult the Resident Coordinator when developing entity-specific strategic planning documents and to formally solicit the Resident Coordinator's feedback on alignment with the Cooperation Framework. The Resident Coordinator's written confirmation of derivation to the respective entity's regional director (or equivalent) is required before the entity proceeds with seeking final approval, including by its governing body. This requirement was reinforced by the 2020 QCPR resolution (A/RES/75/233), which stated that UNSDG entities should prepare and finalize their Country Programme Documents in accordance with the agreed priorities of the Cooperation Framework and make the Cooperation Framework available[69] to governing bodies when the draft Country Programme Document is presented for consideration.

96. In response to the MAF, a number of entities have developed internal guidance on how staff are expected to ensure and confirm alignment and derivation (Annex F includes an overview of all UNSDG entity guidance and practices in relation to reform requirements that the evaluation was able to determine). The MAF (p.14) also states that the "Resident Coordinator's feedback is limited strictly to alignment to the United Nations Cooperation Framework priorities and should not be a technical review of the Country Programme Document". It is important to note that the MAF does not explicitly say how the Resident Coordinator should form this judgement and does not state explicitly what constitutes a "technical review".[70]

97. The formal standards that entities are expected to meet to demonstrate derivation appear clear and, taken at face value, offer limited latitude or flexibility. However, closer inspection shows that they do allow a very large degree of variation in the practice of derivation. As set out in Table 5, the 2019 Cooperation Framework Guidance and the complementary 2020 Cooperation Framework Companion Package gives entities three options for how entities demonstrate they derive their country programming instruments from the Cooperation Framework.

Table 5: Options for country programming instrument derivation

Cooperation Framework Guidance (verbatim)
Option A: United Nations development system entities adopt the Cooperation Framework as their own country development programme document; they do not prepare a separate entity document.
Option B: United Nations development system entities develop an entity-specific country development programme document with Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim.
Option C: United Nations development system entities develop an entity-specific country development programme document with Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim, plus additional outcomes that are not in the Cooperation Framework, included only on an exceptional basis to capture normative and standard-setting activities not prioritised in the Cooperation Framework. [original emphasis]

Source: Cooperation Framework Guidance (2019), Companion Package (2020)

98. Both options B and C allow entities to copy and paste the outcomes verbatim; but option C allows them to include other outcomes that have a normative or standard setting element that is not prioritized in the Cooperation Framework.

99. To illustrate how much flexibility and latitude options B and C give, a typical Cooperation Framework has three to six outcomes; these outcomes will be at an extremely high level and a single outcome potentially encompasses a very wide variety of different interventions. For example, verbatim, Outcome 1 of the Cooperation Framework of one of the evaluation's focus countries is:

> *By 2028, all people, especially those at risk of being left behind, have increased resilience to economic, climatic, disaster, and public health risk through improved, equitable, and gender-responsive access to and*

69. According to A/RES/75/233, at a minimum, an outcome-level Cooperation Framework results framework should be made available to governing bodies in the absence of the full, finalised Cooperation Framework document.
70. DCO provides Resident Coordinators with a standard template letter to confirm derivation.

utilization of quality social services, social protection, healthy habitat, enhanced good governance and peace.

There is not much that this outcome omits and, as an example, it is by no means unusual.

100. The option the entity follows varies not only by entity but also by country. Only a few of the entity guidance documents specify internal requirements regarding the derivation options.[71] There is a lack of clarity at times among DCO, RCOs and within many entities which option (A, B or C) they have "taken".

Key evidence sources	Strength: High

Evaluation findings on the current practice of "derivation", and the reasons for variation and gaps, are the result of analysis and triangulation across numerous sources of primary and secondary data at country, regional and headquarters levels, including but not limited to:
• Discussions and interviews with UNCT members and Resident Coordinators in 21 countries as well as UNSDG entity headquarters staff and DCO.
• Detailed analysis of secondary data, including:
  • **Information from UNSDG entity headquarters** including country programming guidance, responses to the headquarters QCPR survey, and United Nations development system reform checklists;
  • **Country level data** including Cooperation Framework documents, entity country programming instruments and Resident Coordinator and UNCT member responses to relevant QCPR and UNSDG IMS survey questions;
  • **Previous studies and evaluations** that have partially addressed alignment and derivation in the context of United Nations development system reform.	

The implementation of country programme derivation guidance

Key Finding 7: Entities understand that country programming instruments should derive from the Cooperation Framework and 79 per cent of UNCT members claim their country programming instruments are derived from the Cooperation Framework. However, the way the guidance allows entities to demonstrate derivation is problematic: copying high-level outcomes from a Cooperation Framework and pasting them into a country programming instrument does not indicate alignment or derivation.

101. Because Cooperation Framework outcomes are so broad and all-encompassing, assessing compliance with the strict "derivation guidance" cannot yield a meaningful indication of the extent to which country programming instruments and Cooperation Frameworks are aligned. The broad nature of Cooperation Framework outcomes allows entities to portray almost any activities or programmes as formally derived from the Cooperation Framework – including those that were planned before the Cooperation Framework was developed.

102. Based on the evaluation's document review and primary data collection, no entity has registered the choice of option A[72] or has adopted the Cooperation Framework as their country programming instruments (although, as explained below, some entity representatives consider they follow option A). Option B requires entities to "copy verbatim" the Cooperation Framework outcomes only; there is not a formal requirement to ensure that the entity's country programming instrument aligns with any of the more detailed strategic components of the Cooperation Framework, for example outputs or sub-outputs: in other words, commitments that would require more specific aligned interventions. Entities subscribing to option B, while obliged to copy

71. See Annex F.
72. No entity has formally adopted option A as a corporate policy or approach to country programming. However, some RCOs indicate that UNCT members are using option A when asked to respond to annual IMS surveys (2024 = 7 per cent).

and paste outcomes, therefore have a lot of de facto flexibility on the degree to which they align their outputs and programmes.

103. As the data from the 2024 UNSDG information management system survey show, the majority of entities, 79 per cent, report their country programming instruments are derived from the Cooperation Framework. The QCPR survey results are even more positive, with 89 per cent of UNCT members indicating their country programming instruments are derived from the Cooperation Frameworks.[73] This evaluation does not contradict these formal claims but notes that formal confirmation does not indicate how derived or aligned country programming instruments and Cooperation Frameworks are.

104. Moreover, as section 2.5 on implementation indicates, one of the most significant findings is that Cooperation Frameworks and their associated joint workplans are not "implemented" in a substantive way. Therefore, whether entities formally have or have not derived their priorities from the Cooperation Framework makes little material difference. Despite this, the section explores in more detail how derivation operates in practice.

Key Finding 8: The lack of consistency in the guidance relating to derivation and in how it is reported means that data on derivation are problematic.

105. The lack of clarity and inconsistencies in the terms used in resolutions and guidance documents is reflected in responses to surveys on the QCPR.[74] Furthermore, the surveys are inconsistent on what they ask respondents to reflect. While UNCT members are asked to confirm whether their country programmes "derive" from the Cooperation Framework, Resident Coordinators are asked to confirm entity "alignment" with the Cooperation Framework; and Member States are asked to reflect on whether the activities the United Nations development system "conduct" at the country level reflect the Cooperation Framework.

106. Since 2024, the UNSDG information management system annual survey has included a more specific set of questions for the RCOs on the nature and relationship of country programming instruments to the Cooperation Framework on behalf of each UNCT member. A majority (57 per cent) of responses for each UNCT member[75] indicated that they used a country programming instrument, albeit with different approval processes. A total of 39 per cent of entities seem to not have a country programming instrument, yet did engage at the country level, while only 4 per cent of respondents did not have activities at the country level.

107. On derivation, the same information management system survey in 2024[76] indicates that 79 per cent of country programming instruments or country engagement have been derived to some extent from the Cooperation Framework. RCOs indicated that 7 per cent of their UNCT members used the Cooperation Framework in lieu of their own country programming instrument (option A in the guidance) although, there is no evidence from interviews or secondary data that any entity does actually practice option A. This indicates a lack of clarity in the interpretation of option A. Only 13 per cent of responses report entities exclusively copying

73. QCPR survey of United Nations country team members, 2024.
74. QCPR Survey of United Nations country team members, QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators and Government Survey on United Nations operational activities for development 2021-2024.
75. UNSDG Information Management System Annual Questionnaire 2024 administered by DCO. Caveat on the data: The survey is filled in by the RCO for each UN entity that is a member of their UNCT or signatory of a Cooperation Framework. The responses are by entity, but the entity itself has not necessarily validated the response.
76. Question C.1.8.5 in the 2024 UNSDG Information Management System (IMS) Annual Questionnaire reads: "Has the Entity's country level programming instrument or country engagement been derived from the Cooperation Framework? (a) Adopted the Cooperation Framework as their country programming instrument (b) Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim (c) Adopted Cooperation Framework outcomes verbatim and added agency specific outcome(s) (d) Entity country level programming instrument/engagement derives from the Cooperation Framework, but the outcomes are formulated differently (e) Entity country level programming instrument/engagement did not derive from the Cooperation Framework". The question also includes a note: "The options below are sourced from the UNSDG Cooperation Framework guidance, except for option D which serves for HQ analyses of potentially different practices outside of the guidance. The RCO should select the option that most closely reflects entity country programming."

the Cooperation Framework outcomes verbatim (option B), while 59 per cent of responses (19 per cent using the strict definition of option C) effectively use option C. This does not always correspond with what the document review in Annex F found. It also reflects that entities use option C more than anticipated: it is supposed to be used "only on an exceptional basis".

108. Table 6 considers the same question disaggregated by UNSDG entity.[77] The differences within an individual entity can only partially be explained by differences in presence and context. The evaluation found, through interviews and document review, there to be no application of option A, despite the responses below. In addition, the evaluation was unable to gather all country programming instruments for review in the focus countries through the respective RCOs, as they did not always have them on file. Because RCOs provided the data on behalf of entities, their responses were possibly made without them having seen the documents in question.

Table 6: Derivation option used by UNSDG entity across UNCTs

UNSDG entity	UNSDCF as CPI	UNSDCF outcomes copied verbatim	UNSDCF outcomes verbatim + agency specific outcome(s)	CPI or engagement derived from UNSDCF, but outcomes different	CPI or engagement not derived from UNSDCF
	(Option A)	(Option B)	(Option C)	(Most similar to option C)	No derivation
FAO	6%	34%	30%	28%	2%
IFAD	2%	5%	14%	58%	20%
ILO	8%	8%	19%	50%	15%
IOM	8%	11%	18%	46%	18%
ITC	4%	4%	10%	48%	33%
ITU	13%	4%	9%	28%	46%
OCHA	33%	0%	17%	17%	33%
OHCHR	6%	6%	15%	50%	24%
UN DESA	25%	0%	13%	38%	25%
UN ECA	7%	3%	7%	52%	31%
UN ECLAC	0%	6%	0%	29%	65%
UN ESCAP	6%	0%	6%	44%	44%
UN ESCWA	33%	0%	0%	50%	17%
UN Women	5%	32%	25%	31%	7%
UN-Habitat	3%	7%	14%	53%	23%
UNAIDS	7%	5%	20%	47%	22%
UNCDF	12%	6%	27%	36%	18%
UNCTAD	12%	9%	7%	42%	30%
UNDP	2%	56%	33%	7%	1%
UNDRR	11%	5%	7%	31%	45%
UNECE	6%	6%	6%	29%	53%
UNEP	11%	2%	11%	46%	31%
UNESCO	7%	5%	16%	45%	28%
UNFPA	4%	35%	39%	21%	2%
UNHCR	5%	2%	19%	50%	24%
UNICEF	4%	19%	44%	31%	2%

77. One response per entity that is a member of a UNCT is possible per country. The percentage is of the total responses of that entity across all UNCTs they are a member of. Table 6 excludes DPPA and PBSO as respondents from these entities did not provide a response to this question.

UNSDG entity	UNSDCF as CPI	UNSDCF outcomes copied verbatim	UNSDCF outcomes verbatim + agency specific outcome(s)	CPI or engagement derived from UNSDCF, but outcomes different	CPI or engagement not derived from UNSDCF
	(Option A)	(Option B)	(Option C)	(Most similar to option C)	No derivation
UNIDO	9%	9%	10%	46%	25%
UNODC	8%	6%	15%	47%	24%
UNOPS	7%	6%	16%	37%	35%
UNRWA	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%
UNV	10%	0%	7%	43%	40%
WFP	3%	16%	30%	43%	8%
WHO	6%	8%	18%	52%	16%
WIPO	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
WMO	17%	0%	8%	50%	25%

Source: UN DCO. 2024. UNSDG information management system 2024 survey responses.

Understanding variation in derivation guidance implementation

109. This subsection explores the underlying factors that explain the variable implementation of the guidance.

Key Finding 9: There were examples of effective practices among UNCTs that tried to make derivation or alignment stronger. These practices were mostly developed locally and were sometimes outside the guidance.

110. The evaluation found some examples of effective practices and processes that contributed to reported stronger ownership of the Cooperation Framework within the UNCT – that is, stronger alignment. These practices sometimes involved a departure from the intended process, instead taking a flexible, collaborative and context-specific approach. The following are examples of these practices:

- An **emphasis on joint analysis**, as noted in relation to Common Country Analyses, helped drive stronger derivation and alignment in those countries where the Common Country Analysis was seen as particularly robust. In these countries, the Common Country Analysis identified specific target locations, populations and issues that became priorities in the Cooperation Framework.
- **Collaborative practices within the UNCT, such as sharing and presenting draft country programming instruments** to members for comment or review, increased transparency and aligned country programming instruments with the Cooperation Framework. Some entities shared and presented their draft country programming instruments to members of the UNCT for comment or review. Likewise, some entities involved the Resident Coordinator in the early stages of their country programming instrument design process. This gave Resident Coordinators the opportunity to give more meaningful feedback on draft country programming instruments than the confirmation letter allows.
- **Simultaneous country programming instrument and Cooperation Framework development, with integrated consultation processes**, led to stronger alignment instead of sequencing the Cooperation Framework before country programming instruments. Some UNCTs found developing them simultaneously in close collaboration led to stronger alignment.
- **Proactive guidance, provided by some Resident Coordinators**, aimed to move beyond a "copy and paste" approach, though it was not universally welcomed. Some Resident Coordinators provided more explicit guidance to the UNCT on what derivation should entail, as well as examples, while others sought to provide substantive feedback on entities' country programming instruments. Some

interviewees felt the Resident Coordinator was overstepping their authority when doing this. This illustrates divergent interpretations in the responsibilities of the Resident Coordinator on derivation, as set out in the MAF.

Key Finding 10: There is broad acknowledgement among stakeholders that the agreed Cooperation Framework is rarely the starting point for country programme design. The derivation process is often described as a "tick-box" or administrative exercise.

111. Generally, Resident Coordinators, with the support of their RCOs, and UNCTs sought to follow the Cooperation Framework Guidance, and demonstrate derivation and alignment. In practice, the design and sequencing of Cooperation Frameworks often deviated significantly from the guidance, with several common challenges.

112. There was universal agreement that entities seek to influence the strategic prioritization exercise between the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework design to ensure that the outcomes and draft results framework is broad enough to accommodate their entities' mandates, priorities and existing programmes. An illustrative and fairly typical comment from a Resident Coordinator was: "The agencies engage in Cooperation Framework design and the Common Country Analysis with the intention to make it as broad as possible so that any future programme that is wanted, needed or funded could fit in." It was also reported that many entities started or even completed drafting the substance of their country programming instruments before the Cooperation Framework was finalized.[78]

113. To some extent this is to be expected. The relationship between the priorities that UNCT members identify and the content of the Cooperation Framework are inevitably iterative. Provided that UNCT members have aligned their priorities with national priorities and those priorities have been informed by the Common Country Analysis, there should be synergy between country programming instruments and the Cooperation Framework. However, it does run counter to the ambitions of the reforms if or when UNCT members include priorities that are not based primarily on national needs. While it is impossible to quantify the extent to which this happens, several national government representatives, Resident Coordinators and RCOs observed that entities drive the content of Cooperation Frameworks so their own plans will fit within them. This is contrary to expectations of how prioritization is expected to happen.

Key Finding 11: Entities often struggle to synchronize their programming cycles with the Cooperation Framework. This misalignment of entity planning cycles with the Cooperation Framework process is often a source of significant friction. While some entities delay their timelines to align with the Cooperation Framework, entities that need to submit their country programming instruments to governing bodies sometimes exert pressure to accelerate completion.

114. Entities do not all have the same time pressure to demonstrate derivation, as they do not all submit country programming instruments to specific governing bodies' meetings. Regardless of having their country programming instrument approval processed, each entity is under an obligation to receive a letter from the Resident Coordinator confirming that their country programming instrument is aligned with the Cooperation Framework, as per the MAF. This requirement to obtain confirmation of derivation is built into some of the entities' approval processes.[79]

115. At least 15 UNSDG entities have explicitly set out to their staff, in guidance documents, how they should align their internal programming cycles with those of the Cooperation Framework (and national

78. Also confirmed in OIOS. 2021. Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System – Country Programme Coherence. Inception Paper. March 2021.
79. See Annex F for all entities that have built this into their approval processes.

processes).[80] Some entities have gone further and adjusted their country programming instrument cycles to ensure a Cooperation Framework will be completed, before they prepare their country programme instruments.[81] This is positive insofar as it demonstrates that entities have sought to ensure their systems are adapted to give the Cooperation Framework primacy.

116. However, in practice this guidance is either not followed by entities, or the Cooperation Framework ends up taking a lot longer than the 6-9 months anticipated by the guidance. This misalignment of UNSDG entity planning cycles with the Cooperation Framework process is often a significant obstacle and a source of significant friction.[82] UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP have their own tight timelines for developing the country programming instruments and submitting them to their governing bodies.

117. The evaluation received contradictory information on what the impact of delaying country programming instruments' board approval is for entities: the team was told by some that it made no operational difference, but for others it meant that their ability to implement a programme was delayed. Sometimes it seemed a matter of convenience and entity representatives wanted to avoid the extra administrative work that extending a current Country Programme Document and delaying the preparation of the next document would generate. Some of these entities stressed that a delay in the submission of their country programming instrument to a specific board meeting would have implications for budget releases and their ability to continue planning interventions.

118. The evaluation heard of many instances when the Cooperation Framework timeline was adjusted to fit entities' country programming instrument board approval timelines, rather than the other way round. This results in a "backwards" derivation process or retrofitting. Several national governments and Resident Coordinators reported being under pressure to speed up the finalization of the Cooperation Framework to meet entity deadlines. Many interlocutors considered that the timelines for Cooperation Framework development are too tight and are impractical.

119. This pressure from entities often meant that the Cooperation Framework design process was rushed, and did not allow for the degree of consultation or analysis that the government, Resident Coordinator, and, at times, other UNCT members, considered necessary. To deal with this pressure two Resident Coordinators "piggybacked" the Cooperation Framework design process with entities' country programming instrument design process – joining the consultations that the entity held with government and partners.[83]

120. The evaluation also found several examples where UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF or WFP delayed their country programming instrument preparation and approval processes to accommodate the finalization and signature of the Cooperation Framework, which is also evidenced in other evaluations.[84] But it was more common to hear that these entities had exerted pressure over the timeline. There were also cases where an agreement with DCO headquarters had been reached but the entity's regional director insisted on a tighter time frame: this contributed to friction at the country level. Other entities have more flexibility because they do not need to time their country programming instrument submission to a governing body approval deadline.

80. See Annex F for an overview of individual entity instructions. Also: UNDP. 2021. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women Information Note Country Programme Documents and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework processes. January 2021; WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans. May 2023; MOPAN. 2024. MOPAN Assessment Report: International Labour Organization (ILO).
81. See Annex F for individual entity processes. See also: WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans. May 2023; MOPAN. 2024. MOPAN Assessment Report: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).
82. As confirmed by interviewees, focus groups and previous evaluations.
83. A risk of this approach is that that the resultant Cooperation Framework is a consolidation of the entities' priorities. However, Resident Coordinators who defended this approach noted that this was not reverse or back-to-front derivation, as it was based on solid shared CCA analysis or alignment with a national census etc.
84. UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.

121. The demands on UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP and all other UNSDG entities are perceived as uneven. Some stakeholders within UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP consider that the burden of scrutiny for demonstrating derivation and broader reform implementation falls heavily on them and not on specialized agencies.

Key Finding 12: Ensuring derivation of country programming instruments from the Cooperation Framework is challenging and the mechanism is problematic. This is partly because entities are primarily guided by their mandates and global plans.

122. Overall, the requirement for Resident Coordinators to confirm that country programming instruments are derived from the Cooperation Framework does not have an impact on the extent to which derivation is meaningful. Resident Coordinators exercise their role in entity programme design and review in different ways, and UNCT members often have differing expectations of the Resident Coordinator role. Some Resident Coordinators have tried to push back against perceived weak derivation by temporarily withholding the certification letter. However, this is an exception rather than the norm.

123. In practice, some Resident Coordinators said they felt compelled to "sign off" on country programming instruments regardless of their actual alignment with the Cooperation Framework. They perceived that not doing so could potentially harm their relationships with the entities, and their ability to cultivate good working relations within the UNCT. One also noted that doing so could negatively impact on their performance assessments, which are influenced by entity regional directors.

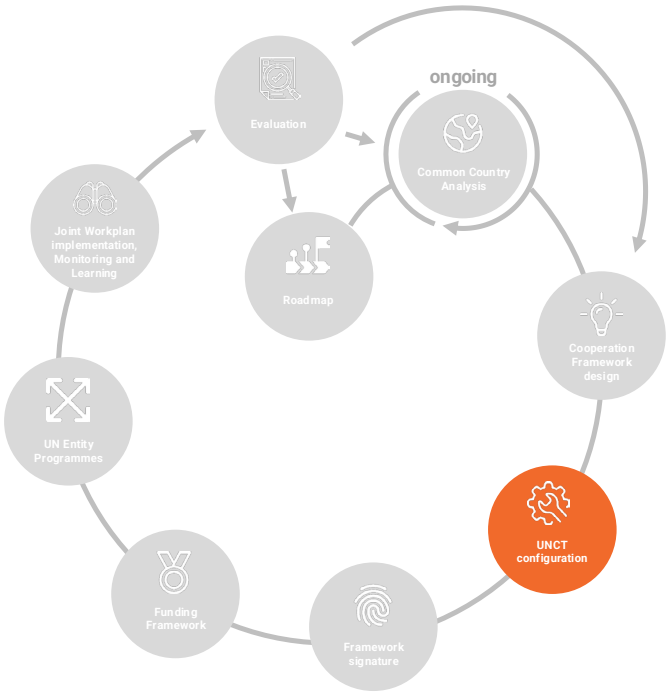
124. Some Resident Coordinators have attempted to issue more specific guidance to the UNCT on what meaningful derivation would entail. For example, they asked that derivation goes beyond verbatim copying of Cooperation Framework outcomes. They encouraged reference to the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework evaluation in country programming instruments, asked entities to include the Resident Coordinator and UNCT members in country programming instrument consultations, and keep them informed of the process. This backfired in one focus country, where entities complained of overreach and asserted that guidance on country programming should only be issued by entity headquarters and not by a Resident Coordinator. A significant number of Resident Coordinators indicated they consider the sign off requirement a blunt and counterproductive instrument. They said they prefer to sign off country programming instruments with no argument and focus their attention on facilitating joint work during implementation.

125. Entities were explicit that they are primarily guided by their mandates and global strategic plans over the content of Cooperation Frameworks. They considered it unrealistic to expect them to prioritize a national Cooperation Framework over priorities that are delegated by their regional offices or headquarters. This was particularly the case for normative mandates and priorities, which are set by intergovernmental bodies or international treaties and conventions, but also for other global or regional development programmes priorities determined by global strategic plans, donor priorities and funding availability.

126. Interviews indicate that, in general, entities tend to seek to influence the content of the Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework to ensure their mandates are reflected, allowing them to demonstrate a degree of derivation.[85] This differs somewhat from the entities with governing body-approved Country Programme Documents (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP): Resident Coordinators and RCO staff noted that these entities tended to engage more proactively to ensure that their ongoing, expected or previously planned programmes were included in the Cooperation Framework.

85. Also in IOM. 2022. Evaluation of IOM's Institutional Approach and Contribution the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. December 2022; UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP Policy on Country Strategic Plans. May 2023.

2.4 UNCT configuration



127. The Secretary-General, in his proposal to reposition the United Nations development system, determined that the approach to country presence would need to be revisited. He set out principles for how the UNCT's composition, skill sets, functions and focus should reflect the context and realities of the country. The General Assembly mandated the Secretary-General and the entities to "collaboratively implement a new generation of United Nations country teams, with needs-based tailored country presence" and to "determine appropriate criteria with regard to the presence and composition of United Nations country teams" that would be built on the Cooperation Framework and development priorities and include dialogue with governments. General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279 then requested that the Secretary-General lead the United Nations development system in realizing a more "needs-based, tailored country presence built on the [Cooperation Framework], finalized through open dialogue with the government and facilitated by the Resident Coordinator to ensure the best configuration of support on the ground".

128. A "UNCT configuration exercise" was then included as a mandatory step in the Cooperation Framework Guidance. This requires UNCTs to reflect internally and then consult with the government on how the UNCT should be optimally configured to deliver on the Cooperation Framework. The configuration exercise is to be informed by the existing capacities, skill sets and comparative advantages of the respective entities. However, it is also intended to be a significant departure from the previous default approach, which assumed that the extant United Nations presence in the country would continue. The Cooperation Framework Guidance sets out that the exercise may include a review of:

- The expertise and services required and the entities that can provide them
- Which entities should be present in-country, and which could be regionally or globally based
- New implementation modalities that may be leveraged
- Whether services should be delivered directly by the United Nations or through partners
- If the new Cooperation Framework requires a major scale-up in the capacity of any UNCT members.

129. The configuration exercise is carried out after the content of the Cooperation Framework is designed, but before the Cooperation Framework is signed by the UNCT and the government. It is an effort to ensure that the best configuration of United Nations support is available at the country level, but also on a call-down basis from the regional and headquarters levels.

Key evidence sources	Strength: High

Evaluation findings on UNCT configuration cover both "UNCT configuration exercises" and the concept of UNCT re(configuration) more broadly:

- The assessment of "**UNCT configuration exercises**" is primarily based on interviews with UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and RCOs, DCO and UNSDG entity staff at regional levels who had participated in the exercises, and a detailed desk review of the UNCT Configuration Concept Papers across the 21 focus countries against success criteria set out in the Cooperation Framework Guidance Companion Package. Many stakeholders interviewed had little familiarity or experience of a UNCT configuration exercise.
- The assessment of **UNCT (re)configuration more broadly**, including the contribution of the regional level of the system, entity business models, and broader perceptions on the relevance of UNCT composition and capacities draws on a discussions with a wider set of stakeholders and more extensive secondary information. Secondary analysis included a review of existing evaluations and Resident Coordinator, UNCT member and government responses to relevant QCPR monitoring survey questions.

Key Finding 13: There have been entity efforts to reorient human resources to respond to country-level needs outside of the specific UNCT configuration exercise.

130. It is important to acknowledge that there is a broader level – and possibly more relevant and important – "reconfiguration process" underway as foreseen by the resolutions.[86]

131. In response to the 2030 Agenda and United Nations development system repositioning,[87] many UNSDG entities have revisited their strategic priorities and resource allocation models and are reorienting their staffing and their provision of expertise to the country level. Some entities have shifted expertise to the decentralized level to better respond to increased demands from the country level, especially for analysis. Several evaluations of entities' strategic plans[88] have noted that they have made a general shift to embrace the resolutions, enhancing country presence and bringing decision-making closer to operations. Others provide evidence of similar shifts but without connection to the repositioning.[89] Several entities have or are in the process of piloting more flexible arrangements for country presence.

132. The resolutions on repositioning the United Nations development system clearly encouraged entities to make this fundamental change in their business models. It is clear, however, that the UNCT configuration exercises have not been the point at which these decisions are made. The configuration exercises have engaged country-level stakeholders, rather than focusing on the regional and headquarters levels, where broad entity structural decisions on presence are taken.

86. See IOD PARC. 2021. Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers 2018-2021 Strategic Framework. June 2021; UN-Habitat. 2024. Mid-term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025. April 2024; UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022; UNICEF. 2020. E/ICEF/2021/5. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Summary. December 2020; UNICEF. 2024. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022-2025; UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022.; UNDP. 2021. Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021. March 2021.
87. A/RES/72/279 and A/RES/75/233.
88. IOD PARC. 2021. Evaluation of the United Nations Volunteers 2018-2021 Strategic Framework. June 2021; UN-Habitat. 2024. Mid-Term Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Strategic Plan 2020-2025. April 2024; UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022.
89. UNICEF. 2020. E/ICEF/2021/5. Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. Summary. December 2020; UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system; UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022; UNDP. 2021. Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021. March 2021.

Configuration exercise conduct and outputs

133. The evaluation assessed the extent to which UNCTs have structured themselves to meet the needs identified in the Cooperation Frameworks. It considers the extent to which UNCT configuration exercises have resulted in a tailored and needs-based country presence and at how well UNCTs have matched their operational models to the specific contexts and capacities required by the Cooperation Frameworks. It also seeks to identify how UNCTs have adapted over the course of the Cooperation Framework period – and not only as a single time-bound exercise. The findings are drawn from interviews, focus groups, surveys and analysis of all the focus country configuration exercise reports. Of the 21 countries sampled, 17 had produced a configuration concept paper or, (as was the case for Iraq and Mali) a UNCT "capacity mapping" or assessment.[90]

134. While the following findings are drawn primarily from the evaluation team's analysis of the written outputs of the configuration exercises in the 21 focus countries, global- and headquarters-level data collection indicate that these observations are representative of practices in countries that were not part of the evaluation sample.

Key Finding 14: Configuration exercises do not result in actionable plans and do not function as a tool to improve the United Nations capability to deliver the Cooperation Framework.

135. With two exceptions, all configuration exercises were considered a tick-box activity by all country-level stakeholders familiar with them.[91] They met a formal requirement but did not lead to strategic improvements. Many UNSDG entity participants in interviews and focus groups had no familiarity with the UNCT configuration exercises at all.

136. The exercises generally contained very limited analysis beyond simply registering entities' presence and mandate. The majority of exercises had limited coverage of the capacities, expertise, programmatic shifts and coordination mechanisms that would be required for the UNCT to deliver the Cooperation Framework.

137. Configuration exercise documents generally do not include proposals for a revised UNCT configuration. Rather, they note changes in the number of entities that have signed the Cooperation Framework and joined the UNCT. They generally conclude that UNCT configuration is appropriate and adjustments are not required. One report did focus on opportunities for non-resident entities to engage in the new cycle – which were identified in response to either a request from the national government or engagement from an entity seeking funded "work" in the country.

138. The configuration exercise often failed to map existing capacities against the needs of the Cooperation Framework. Even when capacity gaps were identified, they rarely included recommendations on how to address them. In the majority of configuration exercises, entities simply stated their mandates, interests and intentions to contribute to a selection of Cooperation Framework outcomes and high-level outputs.

139. There is a lack of realism in how entities responded to the exercise. The evaluation found a tendency for entities to state an intention to contribute to many outcomes and outputs even when they had little or no presence in the country or had narrow mandates. Only a few configuration exercise write-ups included information on entities' technical or functional capacity to contribute to specific Cooperation Framework outcomes.

90. Some were marked as draft versions in UN-INFO. The evaluation team assessed these 17 papers against the criteria of what constitutes an effective configuration exercise - contained in the Cooperation Framework Guidance Companion Package (2020).
91. UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and RCOs.

140. Configuration exercises rarely include information on how additional capacities will be resourced and, if they do, the plans appear aspirational. The reports did not explain how capacity would be resourced beyond drawing on regional or headquarters expertise or planned resource mobilization efforts. The exceptions were two countries with changing United Nations mandates, mentioned below. Likewise, the configuration exercises generally do not give a timeline for implementing any changes and they do not set out how implementation will be monitored.

141. Notably, the exercises have not included the Resident Coordinators' Offices in their analysis. They did not consider the capacities and skills within the RCO and how they may be adjusted to best support the UNCT in its implementation of Cooperation Frameworks, either in the Cooperation Framework Guidance or actual practice.

142. The two exceptions, in terms of quality of configuration exercise, resourcing and providing a detailed timeline, were conducted to meet specific needs – the United Nations fundamental mandate was changing in these two countries. In Mali, due to the drawdown of the peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and Iraq in preparation for the end of the mandate of the special political mission, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in the context of a managed transition from humanitarian assistance to development cooperation. These capacity mapping exercises contained much more detailed analysis on all aspects of the entities' presence. They included detailed treatment of entities' capacities and skills; organizational cultures, operational processes and partnerships. They mapped capacities against the Cooperation Framework outcomes in detail (for example, staffing profiles and levels – identifying gaps against Common Country Analysis needs etc.). They also drew on multiple data sources rather than relying solely on self-reporting by entities. Both exercises concluded recently, so it is too early to determine how their recommendations will be implemented. There was one additional "partial" exception, which provided some detailed analysis of the "programmatic shifts" required for the UNCT to deliver on the promise of the Cooperation Framework for example towards upstream policy advice.

143. On a positive note, several Resident Coordinators found the basic mapping of entity staffing and geographic locations provided by the configuration exercise useful. However, data on staff numbers and profiles can generally be collated from different administrative sources – and the purpose of the configuration exercise is not to produce a stocktake. The evaluation team understands that the DCO is exploring ways to automate this data collection for use as a starting point for UNCT configuration discussions rather than an endpoint.

Reasons for the variable implementation of UNCT configuration guidance

Key Finding 15: UNCT configuration exercises have very limited impact because of a combination of factors that include: the framing of the guidance, the way the exercise is conducted, entities' operating models and their incentive systems. Consultation with the national government on the UNCT composition can make it harder for the United Nations to support the integration of normative mandates in the country.

144. The configuration exercise model assumes that relevant decisions can be taken by UNCT members. However, for most entities, substantive human resourcing decisions are not aligned, in terms of location, processes and timings, to the Cooperation Framework. For example, to prepare for their country programming instruments, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP will typically already have concluded human resourcing and resourcing decisions before the configuration exercise is carried out (typically during the third or fourth quarter of the year before Cooperation Framework is to begin).

145. It is also the case that this approach to UNCT configuration lacks appreciation of the realities of entities' operating models. The management of physical presence is not as flexible and adaptive as these exercises envisage. For example, major decisions, such as the opening or closing of country offices, are lengthy processes that are rarely responsive to changes from one cycle to the next. The deployment of staff to new positions also often requires lengthy processes and substantial lead-in time.

146. In interviews, some UNCT members associated the configuration exercise with downsizing the UNCT, in other words, as a discussion about "who should be present and who should not", rather than a strategic discussion about how to improve the impact of the United Nations. The Secretary-General's vision outlined in both 2017 reports did lay out the ambition to rationalize entities' physical presence – clearly implying that not all entities needed to be physically present in all countries. So this association is not entirely surprising.

147. The guidance assumes that entities will engage in the configuration exercise from a position of neutrality. It is not realistic to expect that UNCT members can systematically make impartial decisions about their entity's future country footprint. Furthermore, because the configuration exercise comes at the end of the process in which their entity will have already participated in Cooperation Framework design, the content of the Cooperation Framework will already be compatible with the mandates and priorities of the entities. Some interviewees considered that, because country-level staff have an understandable interest in the continued presence of their entity, it is unreasonable to expect the configuration exercise to be led by the UNCT, and indicated that an independent entity or regional or headquarters staff member should conduct the exercise. A recent UNSDG survey on the Management and Accountability Framework found UNCT configuration expectations in the document to be among the least "clear" and least "feasible" elements of the country-level section.[92]

148. There are no mechanisms to hold UNCT members accountable for implementation of any configuration-related actions. The model depends entirely on UNCT members taking action voluntarily. For example, Resident Coordinators cannot instruct UNCT members and they do not have any authority to ensure that an entity, whose expertise is needed to deliver the Cooperation Framework, will provide these services. Some Resident Coordinators expressed frustration that non-resident entities would sign up to delivering certain services in the Cooperation Framework and joint workplan but then would not be able to deploy these capabilities – noting that this is largely because they lacked the funding. Similarly, some non-resident entities at headquarters and regional levels expressed frustration that Resident Coordinators had asked them to join UNCTs and contribute to new Cooperation Frameworks without being able to connect them to resources that would make this possible.

149. Dialogue on UNCT configuration with national governments, despite the guidance, is not universal and when it does take place, it can have implications for the UNCT's ability to deliver effectively on normative mandates. In surveys, most government respondents confirm that a dialogue on a needs-based, tailored United Nations country presence has been held, facilitated by the Resident Coordinator.[93] This contrasts with the Resident Coordinator respondents, where just over half indicate that a dialogue has taken place.[94] The approach in which the government was engaged in the exercise was identified in just 6 of 17 configuration exercise reports reviewed by the evaluation.

150. Some UNCTs may be hesitant to consult the national government on the configuration exercise, especially where there are tensions or the relationship between the United Nations and the government is complex. In two countries, UNCT configuration exercises were forgone due to sensitive or strained relations. In at least two other focus countries Resident Coordinators reported that the government said that certain entities, which had normative mandates, were not needed in the UNCT.

92. Survey conducted by UNSDG Secretariat (DCO). Respondents include 104 Resident Coordinators, 97 heads of RCO and 431 UNCT members (April–May 2025).
93. QCPR Survey of programme countries 2021-2024.
94. QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators 2021-2024.

The results of UNCT configuration exercises

Key Finding 16: While configuration exercises have increased the participation of non-resident entities in UNCTs they do not appear to have led to the strategic changes envisaged by the reforms.

151. Survey data on UNCT configuration indicate that stakeholders consider UNCT presence to be broadly appropriate. In their responses to recent surveys, Resident Coordinators and UNCT members have expressed confidence that UNCT configuration is fit to meet the challenges set out in the Cooperation Framework.[95] Member States' perspectives are similarly positive and have become more so over the last few years. Almost all national governments indicate that UNCTs are adequately tailored to meet the specific challenges of their countries and they consider that UNCTs have the right mix of capacities and skills to support the countries' development.[96] Considering the limited changes configuration exercises have resulted in, and the reform recognition that there was a need to significantly revisit the status quo, these responses are somewhat at odds with the demands made with the reforms.

152. It is important to note that there is no secondary data collating analysis of how the UNCT has reconfigured in line with the actual needs and priorities identified in the Cooperation Framework. The UNSDG information management system administered by DCO only collates raw data on the entities that have joined or left the UNCT and the overall UNCT size (number of member entities). QCPR survey questions refer to UNCT configuration in the abstract rather than in direct connection to the UNCT configuration exercise. So, while both sources include data on the configuration of the UNCT, neither provides information on the effectiveness of the UNCT configuration exercise in recalibrating UNCTs in line with the needs identified in the Cooperation Framework.

153. Interviews with UNCT members, Resident Coordinators and UNSDG entity headquarters all noted a strong, post-repositioning trend of smaller and non-resident entities without physical presence in the country showing increased interest in signing Cooperation Frameworks and participating in UNCTs. For these entities, the UNCT configuration exercise is a welcome entry point. Non-resident entities indicate mandates and potential contributions in the configuration exercise and then formally co-sign the final Cooperation Framework. Some interviewees considered this expansion of UNCTs to be a "double-edged sword". It gives national governments potential access to a broader range of expertise (if funding is available). But some perceive that entities without a physical presence are motivated to join the UNCT to enable them to access funding opportunities, and the expansion of the UNCT can be a response to entity demand, rather than a direct request from the national government.

154. The influence of funding and donor behaviour on configuration is explored in section 2.6.

Key Finding 17: While, to some extent, Regional Collaborative Platforms and Issue-based Coalitions have the potential to improve access to regional expertise, flexible staff deployment systems are not widespread.

155. Previous evaluations and country- and regional-level interviews for this evaluation indicate that Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) and Issue-based Coalitions (IBCs) have not yet been able to sufficiently respond to the technical needs that cannot be met at the country level.[97]

95. QCPR Survey of UNCT members and QCPR Survey of the Resident Coordinators, 2021-2024.
96. QCPR Survey of programme countries 2021-2024.
97. UNSDG SWEO. 2024. United Nations development system reform at the regional level – slow progress. Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence.

156. Interviewees indicated that there are few effective facilities that allow countries to call down expertise from the regional level to support country needs in Cooperation Framework delivery – technical support from Issue-based Coalitions was rarely mentioned in interviews at the country level. The Secretary-General's report on the QCPR in 2024 also expressed concern that only a small majority of Resident Coordinators reported that their country teams had benefited from the technical expertise and normative and policy expertise of these platforms. While Resident Coordinators reported improvements in the support received from the platforms, a third of these improvements were considered "minimal". UNCTs overall perceive these platforms provided less support in 2023 than they did in 2022 and 2021.[98] More recently, in a survey on the Management and Accountability Framework, UNSDG entity respondents at the regional level identified the roles, purpose, function and working arrangements of the Regional Collaborative Platforms and the Issue-based Coalitions as among the least "clear" and least "feasible" elements of the regional-level MAF section.

157. Flexible systems to allow staff to be hosted and deployed on other entities' platforms appear little used. There are few examples of larger entities hosting, by mutual recognition, expert staff of smaller and non-resident entities. There are positive and valued examples of RCOs "hosting" UNEP advisors, UNDP-DPPA Peace and Development Advisors and OHCHR Human Rights Advisers. There were funding constraints in relation to the latter two categories of advisors. More broadly a review of the implementation of the mutual recognition principle found that progress has been slow due to policy inconsistencies, limited coordination and monitoring challenges.[99]

158. Despite these observations, QCPR monitoring surveys of government representatives have indicated that it is increasingly easy to access expertise from regional offices of UNSDG entities, with a significant increase in positive responses from 56 per cent in 2021 to 74 per cent in 2024.[100]

159. Although Regional Economic Commissions are more widely integrated into UNCTs and connected with Resident Coordinators, this has not led to the envisioned levels of collaboration.[101] Regional Economic Commissions are generally members of UNCTs in their regions, and they are sometimes seen by Resident Coordinators as a source of call-down expertise. However, some Regional Economic Commissions were concerned that they could not provide this flexible ongoing support without some form of cost recovery.

160. Regional Economic Commission managers noted in interviews that the Commissions have their own distinct accountability systems, which give them a direct relationship with national governments, unmediated by the Cooperation Framework. Commission representatives considered that their governance systems and operating models have a higher level of authority than Cooperation Framework-related requests from the Resident Coordinator. Commission staff noted that they can respond directly to national government requests, even if the requests are for support not envisaged in the Cooperation Framework. One Regional Economic Commission is establishing standard operating procedures that staff will follow to ensure they better engage with and inform Resident Coordinators of their engagement in a country.

161. The Regional Economic Commissions also consider that there is some confusion on where they should report their support to the SDGs and 2030 Agenda, through UNCT reporting or annual reports on the work of the Regional Economic Commissions to ECOSOC. Cooperation Framework guidance, however, indicates that all country-level results should be reported through UNCT results reporting. Some also expressed concern that joint workplans and UN-INFO reporting do not capture the added value of the support they provide to Member States.

98. A/79/72/Add.2 – E/2024/12/Add.2, based on QCPR Survey of United Nations Resident Coordinators 2021-2023.
99. Joint Inspection Unit, 2024 Review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system: Report of the Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/2024/4.
100. QCPR Survey of programme countries 2021-2024.
101. UNSDG SWEO. 2024. United Nations development system reform at the regional level – slow progress. Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence.

Key Finding 18: Configuration exercises have not advanced the distinct yet interconnected reform goal of UNCTs shifting their delivery emphasis from projects to policy advice.

162. The move from a focus on direct service delivery to providing upstream policy support is seen as necessary for the United Nations system to remain relevant and effective. It was an explicit ambition of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his reports on repositioning in 2017,[102] and is set out in the 2020 QCPR. Because it aims to match United Nations capability to country needs, in principle the configuration exercise should help facilitate this shift, although it is not an explicit goal of the exercise.

163. However, in its current form, the UNCT configuration exercise does not appear to make a contribution to this transition. There is no evidence from the evaluation's detailed document review or country-level interviews that UNCT configuration exercises have helped drive any significant transition from a project delivery to upstream policy advice. This observation is reinforced by a 2023 study on the capacities and functions of the United Nations development system, which noted that there has been no sign of a significant shift from service delivery towards integrated policy advice, normative support and technical assistance. The proportion of all United Nations system expenditure, and development-related expenditure, devoted to different functions did not change significantly between 2016 and 2022.[103]

164. The incentives for entities to make this shift depend on the country context. In some focus countries national governments want the United Nations to move in the direction of "policy-level support" rather than downstream project implementation. In other contexts, particularly in least developed countries, some governments may still want UNSDG entities to deliver direct services. Furthermore, donors are keen on supporting entities to deliver projects with "tangible" outputs and other results that they can report back to taxpayers. One government representative interviewed said the country wanted the UNCT to stop doing small projects that non-governmental organizations can do and instead focus on upstream policy advice. In another country, UNSDG entities had been running health services, while the need had evolved into providing upstream advice to the country's ministry of health – requiring fewer posts and different skill sets in the entity.

165. However, even when it is very clear that the context or the government requires entities to transition to upstream policy support, Resident Coordinators find it very challenging to identify and leverage the necessary expertise and assets from across the United Nations development system to respond. The UNSDG entities alone can respond in the ways that their business models and funding allow. Nevertheless, Resident Coordinators repeatedly reported seeking to mobilize policy advice in response to government requests – unrelated to specific configuration exercise events.

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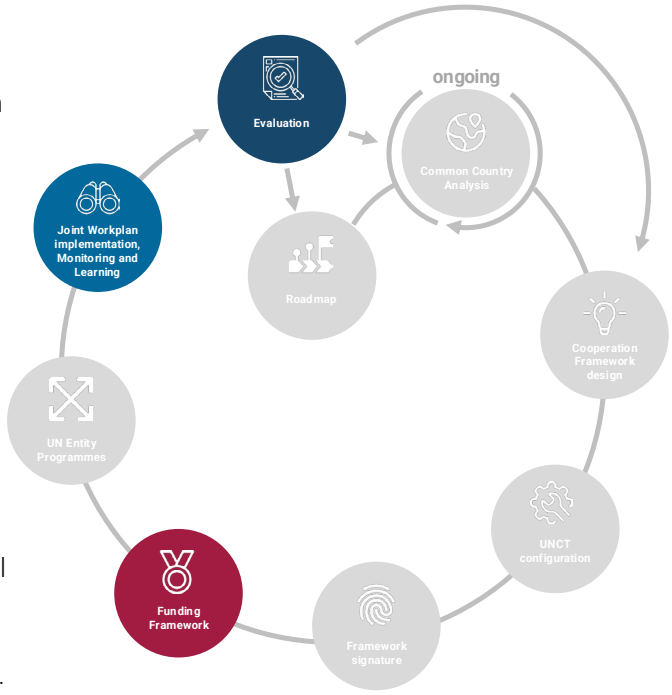
102. ECOSOC. 2018. UNDS Repositioning – Explanatory Note #1. Proposals for a New Generation of UNCTs. February 2018.
103. Dalberg. 2023. Updated Study of UN Capacities to Support Achievement of the SDGs by 2030. Presentation to UNSDG Principals. November 2023.

2.5 Cooperation Framework implementation

166. UNCT operationalization of the Cooperation Framework and implementation of the commitments made is the most challenging part of the Cooperation Framework cycle. The tools and processes used to support the implementation of Cooperation Frameworks include joint workplans, governance and coordination structures, mechanisms for monitoring, results reporting and evaluation, and joint resource mobilization.



Joint workplans

167. The joint workplan is designed as a tool for UNCTs to translate the Cooperation Framework into concrete and coordinated action aligned with national priorities.[104] It links Cooperation Framework outputs to the contributions of individual entities, whether delivered independently or through joint programmes. The joint workplan is meant to maximize synergies, reduce duplication and ensure resources are committed effectively. It also serves as the foundation for joint reporting and provides data for the annual results report produced by each UNCT.

Key evidence sources	Strength: High

The evaluations findings relating to the tools and processes used to support implementation of Cooperation Frameworks draw on a range of sources at country, regional and headquarters levels, including but not limited to:

- Analysis of joint workplans, annual UNCT results reports, and joint resource mobilization plans across 21 focus countries
- Review of all Cooperation Framework evaluations (not limited to the 21 focus countries)
- In-depth discussions with Resident Coordinators, RCOs and UNCT members
- Consultations with government officials and donors providing insights on funding considerations and Cooperation Framework governance.

Key Finding 19: Joint workplans can be a useful tool for coordination and communication. However, while they are expected to coordinate implementation of the Cooperation Framework there is a lack of consistency in their scope and purpose. They are often a collation of entity activities rather than being coherent and strategic; they rarely drive strategic coordination; and UNCT ownership is weak.

168. Some UNCT members and RCO staff interviewed valued joint workplans as useful coordination tools. They reported aiming to use the joint workplans to help identify gaps, encourage entities to work together more effectively, facilitate adaptive programming and help the UNCT adapt to national priorities and unforeseen

104. The Cooperation Framework Guidance states that (para 86): "Coordinating Cooperation Framework implementation through joint workplans. Joint workplans reflect: Cooperation Framework outputs; all related key United Nations development contributions delivered jointly or by individual entities, with a view to maximizing synergies and avoiding duplication; and resources that are required and available as well as funding gaps. Joint workplans may be annual or multi-year as appropriate to the country context."

events. Evaluations of three Cooperation Frameworks also evidenced these positive elements.[105] These evaluations report that the UNCTs adapted the joint workplans by consolidating sub-outputs, and they used the joint workplans to help them reduce overlaps and clarify which entity worked on specific initiatives. Some joint workplans were also used to align entity activities with government priorities, enhancing coherence and avoiding duplication, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bhutan.[106]

169. When joint workplans are complete and provide comprehensive data on United Nations development activities in the country, Resident Coordinators and RCOs also find them to be a useful compendium when engaging with the UNCT and the national government: that is, they value the joint workplans as a source of information for communications rather than as a planning tool. This is generally seen to represent an improvement on the practice and situation before the reforms. However, many Resident Coordinators and RCOs noted that the joint workplan data were rarely complete or up to date.

170. Overall, there is a significant disconnect between the way joint workplans are used and the intention for them to serve as a tool to coordinate implementation of the Cooperation Framework. While the concept of joint workplans was seen as valuable, their use was widely criticised. Many felt the tool needs significant improvements to become truly effective for the coordination of United Nations activities.

171. The following points illustrate some of the gaps. These observations draw on a combination of this evaluation's analysis of all the 13 available joint workplans from the 21 evaluation focus countries, 16 Cooperation Framework evaluations and interviews and focus group discussions. Interviews at the regional and global levels indicated that the sampled 13 joint workplans are representative of wider practice.

172. Joint workplans are often a collation of entity activities and do not facilitate or drive joint work. They serve as compilations of individual entity activities rather than frameworks for joint implementation and monitoring. This observation is evidenced by interviews and focus group discussions, an analysis of Cooperation Framework evaluations and focus country joint workplans. Typical illustrative comments included:

The joint workplan is not joint – it is a collation, an assembly of the parts.

It lists lots of agencies doing little things, and not talking to each other.

They are an amalgamation of each entity's work.

Joint workplans are implemented in silos as per agency-specific timelines and plans.

173. There is little clarity on the scope and purpose of joint workplans, and a great deal of inconsistency. Understanding of what a joint workplan should include – whether it should capture the whole United Nations footprint or just joint programmes – varies. The guidance says it should contain everything that the UNCT does. Virtually all UNCT respondents to the QCPR survey also indicate that joint workplans capture all their development activities at the country level.[107] However, if this is the case it is not an implementation tool of the Cooperation Framework, it is a recitation of everything the United Nations does in a country. Arguably, this reflects the lack of prioritization in Cooperation Framework documents, as much as it reflects the limitations of the joint workplan as a tool. While all 13 workplans contained at least one joint intervention, uniquely, only one of the workplans was framed in such a way that all its interventions were joint initiatives.[108]

105. North Macedonia, Kazakhstan, and Bhutan.
106. UN Bhutan. 2023. Evaluation Report of the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSDPF) 2019-2023.
107. QCPR Survey of United Nations Country Team Members, 2023 & 2024 [93 per cent in 2023 and 96 per cent in 2024].
108. The joint workplans of all the other countries listed both agency-specific contributions with joint initiatives. In the majority of cases joint workplans listed joint initiatives as one sub-output, naming them once and listing all participating agencies. In two cases, a joint initiative sub-output was listed under each agency, causing it to appear multiple times as separate agency contributions although implementation was of a single joint programme.

174. In most of the 21 focus countries, there was a lot of uncertainty over whether the joint workplans should contain everything the United Nations does or just track what the UNCT chose to prioritize in joint endeavours. In the countries where Resident Coordinators and UNCTs sought to modify joint workplans to make them more selective tools (like the one cited above), they were asked to make them comprehensive. For example, recognizing that including every United Nations intervention in the joint workplan makes it hard to operationalize, one Resident Coordinator who developed a focused joint workplan that captured only strategic joint activities was reportedly told by the DCO to include everything the United Nations did in the country. In another country a parallel joint workplan focusing on joint strategic actions was developed in addition to what was being inserted into UN-INFO.

175. There is also little consistency in the scale or significance of the interventions that are captured in joint workplans: they list interventions ranging from small single interventions to large multi-entity programmes. The 13 reviewed joint workplans appear to function primarily as an information-gathering and reporting tool for UNCT interventions in a single country. Interventions are entered onto the UN-INFO platform (and can be exported to a spreadsheet), serving to ensure that the required documentation is completed.

176. Data inconsistencies mean that the joint workplan cannot be used to meaningfully track progress and assess the contribution of interventions toward Cooperation Framework outcomes. The data entered into the joint workplan varied greatly. For example, the level of detail in sub-outputs is inconsistent: some sub-outputs appear to record activity-level actions while others are outcomes. Single-entity sub-outputs showed different levels of coherence. Some were high-level and strategic, while others were specific and operational, such as "vaccines procured" or "ICT day organized". Some sub-outputs appear to be project titles or high-level outputs, sometimes referring to the entity country programming instrument. The evaluation notes that DCO has made technical “tip sheets” available on joint workplans (and funding frameworks) since the end of 2021 specifically to help UNCTs with sub-output formulation, alignment with outcomes, and the articulation of contributions by individual and multiple entities.[109] Interviewees did not mention these “tip sheets” in discussions on joint workplans.

177. The joint workplans generally provide no information on how joint efforts will be fostered or how the UNCT intends to collaborate meaningfully beyond simply fulfilling reporting requirements. Sub-outputs are listed under outputs and categorized by Cooperation Framework outcomes. However, the way they are set out makes it hard to analyse how outcomes will be achieved with contributions from different entities. Multi-entity sub-outputs were rare, with the exception of two countries’ joint workplans. When annual data were available, there was no increase in multi-entity sub-outputs. They either stayed the same or decreased.

178. There were exceptions, but in almost every country there is very limited evidence of ownership of the joint workplans by UNCT entities or leadership by the chairs and co-chairs of the relevant results groups. Entities prioritize their own internal workplans and internal reporting. It was reported that the main incentive for entities to provide information to the joint workplan is so that their entities’ programmes are recognized in the UNCT’s annual results report. Reflecting this, RCOs reported that entities tend to input data on UN-INFO when the annual results report is being prepared – so their interventions are visible to national governments and funders after implementation, rather than in planning stages. Likewise, entities often viewed the joint workplan as an RCO-driven exercise. Several interviewees noted that nobody uses the reports it generates.

179. Joint workplans entail high transaction costs and there is a heavy emphasis on compliance; they are not used in ways that support strategic delivery. There is a perception that the effort required in creating and using the joint workplan does not lead to a corresponding improvement in results. There is concern that the joint workplan process has become too focused on compliance, rather than on the substance of joint work.

109. UN DCO. 2021. Cooperation Framework Joint Work Plan. Technical Tip Sheet.

180. All the 13 available joint workplans showed inconsistencies between the formal membership of the UNCT and the entities with activities listed in the joint workplan. Some entities, mostly non-resident entities, that were signatories to the Cooperation Framework did not have activities listed in the joint workplan. On the other hand, three joint workplans included activities implemented by entities that had not signed the Cooperation Framework.

Cooperation Framework governance structures

181. The Cooperation Framework Guidance requires UNCTs to establish results and thematic groups to drive implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Each Cooperation Framework strategic priority must have a corresponding results group, comprising the contributing UNSDG entities (resident and non-resident), chaired or co-chaired by UNCT members (heads of entities at the country level). They are expected to meet every two months at a minimum. The intentions are: to improve internal coordination and ensure a coherent United Nations system-wide approach to a strategic priority; make the United Nations development system a more effective partner; and reduce transactions costs for stakeholders. The results groups are expected to align with and feed into existing government-led working structures when possible. If equivalent government-led groups do not exist, results groups are expected to incorporate national and international partners and be co-chaired with relevant government counterparts.

182. UNCTs are also expected to establish: a monitoring and evaluation group, a communications group, and an operations management group. Additionally, UNCTs are encouraged to establish working mechanisms such as thematic groups or to add advisory capacity to mainstream Cooperation Framework guiding principles across the work of results groups.

183. The obligation to establish a results group for each Cooperation Framework pillar or outcome may stem from earlier QCPRs from 2016 and 2020, pre-dating the current revised guidance.

Key Finding 20: In some countries, Cooperation Framework governance structures serve as useful spaces to maintain focus on delivery. However, overall practice indicates that results and thematic groups have limited utility: they are seen as being focused more on data collation than strategic delivery.

184. In some countries, governance groups serve as helpful focal points that help keep entities focused, alongside government, on delivery of Cooperation Framework outcomes. They were sometimes said to serve as platforms for joint work: several entities noted that results groups have improved engagement with national governments and that they can increase ownership for Cooperation Framework outcomes – especially when they are chaired by UNCT members. In some cases, results groups led to new ways of working and partnerships between entities. Some UNCT members and Resident Coordinators noted that results groups can be useful for planning when they are co-chaired by government. Several non-resident entities and entities with mainstreaming mandates across all development activities valued them as entry points for engaging with the UNCT and the Cooperation Framework.

185. However, overall, Cooperation Framework results groups were rarely reported to add value. Groups were said to devote the majority of meeting time to compiling data for the joint workplan, dedicating little time to strategic discussions on how to drive implementation. Results groups were rarely reported to focus on strategically important issues, such as identifying and addressing gaps. They were said to focus on operational details and tracking inputs. Typical illustrative comments include:

Strategic thinking does not take place there.

The results groups are not strategic; they do M&E number counting.

They are just sharing information and they convene to meet DCO compliance requirements.

186. There was general agreement that results groups are convened mostly to meet guidance requirements. The formal structures impose heavy transaction costs and they squeeze out space to be creative. Partly because UNCTs are obliged to establish results groups, they rarely developed alternative approaches.

187. There were exceptions. Some Resident Coordinators have established parallel informal focus groups to address strategic issues and these were reported to have driven significant initiatives. These groups operated outside the mandated structures. One interviewee summed up this pragmatic approach as follows:

Results groups are presented in the guidance as obligatory so we ask, "what's the minimum that we can do – so the dashboard says we have done it". We tick the box so we look compliant but don't invest too much in it; and we invest in what is important and in what works on the ground.

188. The effectiveness of results groups was seen to be highly dependent on the quality of their leadership. Where results groups were seen to be effective, the quality of leadership and entity engagement was seen to be key. Some pointed out that entities delegated attendance to more junior staff and that this partially accounted for the lack of strategic-level discussion. For understandable reasons – entity heads rarely chaired or otherwise engaged with results groups.

189. Evidence from Cooperation Framework evaluations mirrors these general observations. Ten of the 16 evaluations noted that the results groups were insufficiently staffed, poorly attended (by the national government and in the absence of civil society in some cases) or were not sufficiently aligned to national structures. In two countries, the results groups dissolved due to weakness in the early stages of planning and coordination under the Cooperation Framework. In four countries, results groups were either not convened or dissolved because they could not maintain their relevance.

190. Results groups are seen as inward-looking and duplicating the burden on governments rather than integrating and supporting government coordination systems. Interviews with UNCT members and RCOs indicate that they are often viewed as intra-United Nations conversations, with limited meaningful government involvement or integration with existing national structures. They are expected to include government representatives but this may lack realism. Interlocutors noted that their national counterparts often had their own working groups and thematic groups that had broader membership (for example, they included bilateral development partners and international financial institutions etc.) but discussed the same issues. Government representatives did not want to repeat these discussions in United Nations-only meetings and preferred the United Nations to participate in existing government-led coordination structures.

191. Thematic groups appear to share the same challenges as results groups. Analysis of Cooperation Framework evaluations shows that thematic groups do provide platforms for addressing cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality, human rights, youth inclusion and social protection, in some settings. However, despite their operational successes, the broad mandates of thematic groups often stretched member capacities and limited their strategic focus. Limited resources and personnel further constrained their activities, particularly in contexts where entities were non-resident or had minimal local presence. Additionally, gaps in national participation and alignment with local structures were frequently cited as limiting factors.[110]

192. Many non-resident entities consider the heavy engagement and reporting responsibilities during Cooperation Framework implementation to be challenging. Some suggested combining results groups with thematic groups.

110. Evaluation analysis of Cooperation Framework evaluations.

Monitoring, results reporting and evaluation

Key Finding 21: Entities' disparate results-based management metrics mean that data submitted to UN-INFO are problematic. UNSDG entity and UN-INFO systems are not aligned, increasing transaction costs for all stakeholders.

193. UNSDG entities have diverse internal management and monitoring systems, making it challenging to align planning and reporting. This makes it difficult to integrate information into the joint workplan and to provide a unified view of United Nations activities. Disparate results-based management metrics also mean that the system generates data that are not meaningful. This undermines the integrity of all results reporting.

194. In every UNCT focus group conducted by the evaluation, some entity and RCO staff expressed frustration that the metrics for reporting results differ between UN-INFO and most entities. The consequence is that entities put widely varying data into UN-INFO and the resulting reporting is often, to quote an interviewee, "meaningless".

195. The lack of interoperability between entities' data systems and UN-INFO greatly increases transaction costs and inefficiency. The lack of interoperability means that entities must enter programme implementation results twice: first on their own entity systems and secondly on UN-INFO. Sometimes RCO staff enter it on their behalf. The logistics of capturing data for the joint workplan is thus extremely time consuming. All entities experience this double reporting requirement.[111]

196. Data systems are not wholly aligned with the reform ambitions. Some elements of the joint workplan data-capture systems mitigate against joint work: the fact that sub-outputs have to be entity-specific is a constraint against joint work. Some UNCTs have built parallel systems to the joint workplan so that they can capture and manage delivery of genuine joint work.

197. The metrics that the joint workplan prioritizes may also create unhelpful incentives. Some interviewees considered that the joint workplan gives more significance to the financial value of interventions and gives less visibility and weight to policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building. This runs counter to the reform ambition for entities to increasingly provide policy support to Member States. Some entities, such as the Regional Economic Commissions, noted that their inputs are not captured well in joint workplans – partly because of the significance given to financial value, but partly because their budgets are not disaggregated at the country level.

Key Finding 22: Annual reports on the implementation of the Cooperation Framework are considered to have limited strategic value, focusing on aggregated entity inputs and outputs rather than progress towards outcomes. They are perceived as a communication tool.

198. The Resident Coordinators, UNCT members and donors who were consulted considered that annual reports offer limited strategic value, focusing on aggregated entity inputs and outputs rather than a coherent assessment of progress toward the Cooperation Framework's main objectives. There is a consensus that entities view the annual results report as secondary to their own internal reporting requirements and collecting data for these reports was described as burdensome, with entities overwhelmed by the need to provide similar data to their own entities as well as to RCOs. It was also seen as difficult to determine joint results because most reporting is at the individual entity level. RCO staff also noted that there can be misalignment and a struggle to integrate information from various entities into a coherent picture of the collective contribution

111. FAO conducted a pilot interoperability exercise (between UN-INFO and FAO PIRES systems) to enable single rather than double reporting, with mixed results.

of the United Nations. The quality of data and the ability to capture the nuances of achievements and challenges are also concerns.

199. There was a consensus that in practice the annual report is more of a communication product and not an accountability tool. Interviewees consider that reporting is more focused on global requirements than on the actual purpose of the joint workplan. DCO gives annual awards to the UNCT that produces the most engaging results report – reinforcing the impression that it is primarily a communication tool.

Key Finding 23: Cooperation Framework evaluations have provided limited utility in driving improvements in how the reforms have been implemented at the country level. They have not generated actionable lessons and there is limited evidence that shows how findings or recommendations from evaluations are used.

200. Cooperation Framework evaluations are commissioned and managed by the Resident Coordinator in collaboration with the UNCT in the penultimate year of the Cooperation Framework cycle. Their aim is to systematically assess the contribution of the UNCT to national development results and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and to inform the design of subsequent Cooperation Framework cycles. The evaluation team analysed 16 Cooperation Framework evaluations completed since 2023.

201. While Cooperation Framework evaluations are intended to improve the design of subsequent Cooperation Frameworks, this is often not realized due to a number of practical and systemic challenges. It is important to note that these Cooperation Framework evaluations have provided valuable data points for this evaluation, and findings have been referred to at various points. However, to date, Cooperation Framework evaluations have provided limited utility in generating actionable lessons for the UNCTs themselves. Several factors underpin this and are set out in paragraphs 207-212 below.

202. There is little evidence that findings from Cooperation Framework evaluations are used to inform subsequent frameworks. Analysis by the evaluation team and key informant interviews indicate that the Cooperation Framework evaluation recommendations tend to be generic and formulaic. For example (admittedly an outlier), evaluations of two different countries contained identical findings and recommendations. Several Resident Coordinators and RCOs noted there was little discussion within UNCTs on how to adapt practices based on evaluation findings and recommendations. Moreover, even though management responses are produced, there is little accountability for implementing them in the UNCT and no systems to track implementation of them.

203. The resources allocated to evaluations are extremely limited. This results in heavy reliance on document analysis rather than interviews or field visits. There is also a poorly resourced support system. DCO does not have the capacity to provide substantive backstopping support to ensure evaluations meet the quality standards set out in the Cooperation Framework evaluation guidelines, which themselves are based on those of the United Nations Evaluation Group.[112]

204. The evaluations have limited perceived value relative to the investment made in time, effort and money. Some Resident Coordinators perceive Cooperation Framework evaluations as offering limited value relative to the investment. Criticisms include high transaction costs and a belief, in spite of the small evaluation budgets, that the funds could be better allocated towards other types of analyses.

112. The "Guidelines for the Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework" were developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG and co-led by ILO and FAO) and DCO. They provide a step-by-step approach to conducting Cooperation Framework evaluations in alignment with UNEG norms and standards and build on those established by the UN Evaluation Group more broadly (as represented in: UNEG. 2016. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System).

205. The overall evaluability of Cooperation Frameworks is also problematic. Taking a results-based approach, the evaluations presume that they can evaluate the Cooperation Framework in the same way that an entity's country programme is evaluated. In practice the Cooperation Framework is not like this. It is closer to a loose framework of proposed actions. Cooperation Frameworks are extremely broad, and the availability of useful data on results is often limited.

206. In terms of specific weaknesses, evaluations have uneven coverage of key reform objectives. Evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks generally do not provide insight into the extent of derivation or the degree of alignment between entities' country programming instruments and the Cooperation Framework. The Cooperation Framework evaluation guidelines do not include a specific question on derivation, leaving its treatment to the discretion of the evaluation manager. Just 4 of the 16 evaluations reviewed attempted to conduct a deeper analysis of derivation.[113] Only these four compared the Cooperation Framework outcomes with a sample of an entity's country programming instrument outcomes. Further, none of the evaluations referred to which derivation options (specifically, A, B, or C) were used. The evaluations' derivation and alignment analysis relied primarily on perceptions from key informants. Additionally, there appeared to be inconsistent interpretations and application of the term "derivation", with most Cooperation Framework evaluations favouring the use of the term "alignment" when writing about derivation.

207. The scheduling of Cooperation Framework evaluations often does not align with entity Country Programme Document evaluations, complicating the ability to derive meaningful insights. Ideally, Cooperation Framework evaluations would draw on evaluations of entities' country programming instruments, but this sequencing is challenging in practice. Suggestions have been made to conduct Country Programme Document evaluations a year ahead of Cooperation Framework evaluations, but this could present difficulties, especially if Country Programme Documents need to be delayed for better alignment with the Cooperation Framework, further complicating the evaluation process.

Funding the Cooperation Framework

208. Once the content of the Cooperation Framework has been agreed, the UNCT is expected to develop a multi-year funding framework and a joint resource mobilization strategy.

Key Finding 24: While joint resource mobilization strategies mostly fulfil the requirements of the guidance, there is little evidence that they contribute to financing Cooperation Framework implementation.

209. The evaluation reviewed all available partnership and joint resource mobilization strategies against the success criteria set out in the Cooperation Framework Guidance Companion Package (in 19 of 21 focus countries). Overall, most partnership and resource mobilization strategies cover the issues the Companion Package requires. But there is wide variation in the depth and degree of detail across the strategies and there is little evidence they contribute to financing Cooperation Framework implementation.

210. Most strategies present financial gaps by amount, type and source of funding. However, only a few strategies went further by defining clear funding objectives, including a situation analysis for each objective, outlining specific actions and milestones, and incorporating monitoring tools to track progress. Some strategies include a comprehensive financial and contextual analysis, examining Official Development Assistance (ODA) and donor trends to identify funding bottlenecks, funding gaps and potential opportunities.

113. Sierra Leone, Paraguay, Mali, Syria.

Others provide little to no financial analysis, offering only a minimal overview, limiting the clarity on how and where resources will be mobilized, which, in turn, limits the effectiveness of the strategy.

211. Most strategies do emphasize the need for strong coordination between the UNCT and national governments to align resource mobilization efforts with national development priorities and global funding frameworks to attract diverse funding sources. The approach to mobilizing funding and financing varies across strategies. Many strategies emphasize the need to diversify funding sources by expanding partnerships beyond traditional donors, including private sector engagement, philanthropic organizations and international financial institutions. In contrast, some strategies remain highly dependent on traditional donors, showing limited innovation in tapping into more diverse and sustainable funding streams.

212. Primary data collection for this evaluation found little evidence that the partnership and joint resource mobilization strategies are used following their completion on paper. Further to this, a recent UNSDG survey on the Management and Accountability Framework found "joint resource mobilization / joint funding / joint programmes" to be among the least "clear" and by far the least "feasible" element of the country-level chapter of the MAF.[114]

Key Finding 25: Joint or pooled funding mechanisms and joint programming modalities have the potential to promote greater coherence and collaboration within UNCTs, but constraints limit their impact.

213. Overall, while pooled funds and joint programmes face significant challenges, they are important mechanisms for promoting a more unified and effective United Nations development system at the country level. They were a key feature of all the Delivering as One pilots and were used to generate stronger collaborative approaches. It was intended that they would benefit the new generation of UNCTs in the same way.

214. There was unanimity among the UNCT members, Resident Coordinators, RCOs and donors consulted for this evaluation that joint or pooled funding incentivizes collaboration across entities. They considered that pooled funds and joint programmes encourage stronger country team working and help drive common agendas, reducing siloed approaches. Resident Coordinators considered that pooled funds and joint programmes have also provided them with some leverage to promote more collaborative working: Resident Coordinators have been able to choose which proposals to put forward for bids to the Joint SDG Fund and they can sometimes exert influence over bids to other joint funds. Joint programmes often also provide smaller or non-resident entities with an opportunity to participate in larger initiatives and access funding they might not otherwise obtain. Some donors, such as the European Union, prefer joint programmes as they simplify engagement with the United Nations system.

215. However, pooled funds are not a panacea. UNCT members and RCOs noted that the volume of funding available in pooled mechanisms is limited, reducing their transformative potential, and they are often dwarfed by the volume of funds that larger entities receive directly from other sources. Some Resident Coordinators also noted that the thematic windows in pooled funds are not always aligned with the country's priority actions and so they were sometimes viewed as driving headquarters agendas. Interviewees with experience of applying for and managing pooled or joint funds stated that they often involve complex processes and high administrative burdens, regardless of the amount of funding. Some donors interviewed noted that even within joint programmes, entities can continue to work in silos. These findings on the benefits and challenges of

114. Survey conducted by UNSDG Secretariat (DCO). Respondents include 104 Resident Coordinators, 97 heads of RCO and 431 UNCT members (April–May 2025).

pooled and joint funding mechanisms align with those of the system-wide evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls.[115]

Cooperation Frameworks in humanitarian contexts

216. The relationship between humanitarian needs and contexts and Cooperation Frameworks is complex and challenging to integrate effectively. The presence and configuration of humanitarian action, mandated by General Assembly resolution A/RES/46/182, was not within the scope of this evaluation. However, without prejudice to this mandate, the United Nations development system is mandated by the 2020 and 2024 QCPRs (A/RES/75/233 & A/RES/79/226) "to continue to enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts at the national level"[116] and 27 Resident Coordinators also perform the role of Humanitarian Coordinator or Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (as of April 2025).[117] As such, the evaluation focus countries did include UNCTs in humanitarian-development contexts.

217. Several Resident Coordinators noted that there can be a disconnect between the development-focused Cooperation Framework and Humanitarian Response Plans. This can lead to a siloed rather than an integrated approach. Interviewees working in complex settings considered that there remains a gap in how to better ensure complementarity across humanitarian, recovery and development work, especially in countries that experience protracted or recurring crises. In countries with both humanitarian and development needs, there are also often different coordination structures, such as the Humanitarian Country Team and UNCT (almost always chaired by a "double-hatted" Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator). To address this, some UNCTs included elements of resilience and disaster preparedness in their Cooperation Frameworks. This is done while acknowledging that the development and humanitarian coordination structures and planning processes have distinct mandates and memberships.

218. The interface between the humanitarian system and the United Nations development system – and the peacebuilding, peacekeeping and special political missions – particularly in areas such as analysis, "collective outcomes," planning or programming and financing, may warrant further consideration in a future system-wide evaluation. Other analysts have recently stressed the need to strengthen the focus on linkages across the humanitarian, peacebuilding and development agendas.[118]

115. UNSDG SWEO. 2024. Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative (2017-2023).
116. OP 36.
117. Latest snapshot is available at: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-leadership-strengthening-section/humanitarian-leadership-snapshot. Furthermore, all Resident Coordinators have humanitarian coordination accountabilities in accordance with A/RES/46/182 (Article 39). This includes single-hatted Resident Coordinator countries that have humanitarian needs and response plans (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador).
118. See John Hendra & Ingrid FitzGerald, 2020, Change in the UN Development System: Theory and practice in Routledge Handbook on the UN and Development, p.259, 260.

2.6 Factors influencing the evolution of a “new generation of United Nations country teams”

219. This section explores the factors that explain the extent to which the repositioning reforms facilitate the evolution of a “new generation of UNCTs” to complement the analysis of factors that explain the variable execution of the derivation guidance (EQ 2.2), the configuration guidance (EQ 3.3) and implementation (EQ 4.1). These include specific mechanisms deployed to support the reforms and broader factors and dynamics shaping UNCT operations and influencing reform progress.

Key evidence sources	Strength: High

Evaluation findings in this section draw on a wide range of data sources from country, regional, global and headquarters levels. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- In-depth discussions at the country level with Resident Coordinators and UNCT members (in 21 focus countries), complemented by the insights of external stakeholders (government officials and donors) on certain issues
- Discussions with regional- and headquarters-level stakeholders, who provided important insights in relation to broader and systemic factors that underpin the patterns observed at the country level
- Secondary evidence including:
  - Previous evaluations (for example, Cooperation Framework evaluations), studies and MOPAN assessments
  - Responses by Resident Coordinators, UNCT members and governments to QCPR surveys
  - Quantitative data on funding trends.

See Table 10 in Annex B for a more detailed illustration of key informant sources for each line of inquiry.

The contribution of specific mechanisms and support systems

220. This subsection explores the contribution of the mechanisms designed to support Cooperation Framework reforms. It examines the utility of the body of guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework, regional and headquarters support systems, the leadership contributions of Resident Coordinators and UNCT members and the significance of the extent to which entities prioritize the reforms.

The contribution of the body of guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework

Key Finding 26: The guidance for Cooperation Framework design and implementation is overly prescriptive, lacks flexibility for different country contexts and incentivizes a focus on demonstrating compliance.

221. The systems that are meant to support the guidance promote a compliance focus and there is a lack of consistency in whether guidance is optional or mandatory. The guidance for the Cooperation Framework is extremely detailed and is presented as “optional guidance”, but Resident Coordinators, RCOs and UNCTs are, invariably, told that processes must be followed. The methods developed to monitor the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on the QCPR also drive a compliance focus (see Key Finding 32 for further elaboration).

222. Written guidance that is said to be optional frequently uses the word “must”. The original UNSDG United Nations Cooperation Framework Guidance (June 2019) is 58 pages long: the document uses the word “must” 53 times. None of this guidance is explicitly described as optional.

223. Moreover, the weight of DCO headquarters' monitoring of Resident Coordinator performance incentivizes the Resident Coordinators to adhere to guidance and implement processes. Interviews indicate that Resident Coordinator's performance appraisals are informed by a traffic light system based on compliance with milestones and guidance requirements. However, the evaluation team notes that the flexibility of DCO headquarters has increased over time. For example, it is now seen as easier to extend Cooperation Frameworks to match national development plan cycles and some Resident Coordinators and UNCTs are given leeway to experiment with different structures and procedures.

224. The guidance requires UNCTs to use the same systems regardless of country context. UNCTs are required to set up and report on the same planning and implementation governance systems regardless of whether they are middle-income countries, small island developing states (SIDS) or multi-country arrangements. This is despite awareness that they require different approaches. The exception is that specific guidance has been developed and provided for planning in "exceptional circumstances".[119] The evaluation acknowledges that the Cooperation Framework Guidance is currently under review and that revised joint programming guidance has aimed to reduce the rigidity in the design and implementation of joint programmes.

Key Finding 27: The Cooperation Framework implementation guidance is inconsistent. It contains unclear definitions and incremental amendments or additions, which have made institutionalizing practices difficult for UNCTs.

225. There is a fundamental tension between the strategic intent of the reforms and how they have been supported through the creation and implementation of the guidance. The vision is for more relevant and strategic United Nations development cooperation, but the implementation of the guidance has created very broad Cooperation Frameworks. These have been framed to capture and report on the full breadth and variety of United Nations activities at the country level. This may be useful for global reporting purposes but contradicts the reform ambition to make United Nations country engagement more strategic, flexible and results- and action-oriented. The guidance on the joint workplan asks the UNCT to include all United Nations development work at the country level, which, given the broad outcomes, leads them to be long lists of outputs rather than a strategic tool for joint implementation. UNSDG entities (facilitated by DCO) did agree and issued an inter-agency technical "tip sheet" on the joint workplan in 2021. However, interviews and focus groups conducted in 2024 and 2025 for this evaluation indicated that the challenges persisted and that country-level staff continue to refer to the guidance, not the tip sheet.

226. There is a lack of clear definitions and guidance on joint workplans, including sub-outputs. This lack of clarity leads to inconsistencies in how entities interpret and implement the joint workplan. Interviews and focus groups repeatedly raised the frustration that sub-outputs were expected to be entity specific, which was contrary to the overall drive to be more collaborative. This also led to different practices to accommodate joint work in the workplans. Some consider the guidance to be unrealistic in terms of the ambition to complete Cooperation Framework design within 6-9 months.

227. RCOs and UNCTs stated in interviews that guidance has been adapted or elaborated frequently, making it hard for UNCTs to institutionalize practices. They found the constant need to adapt made it difficult to establish consistent practices. It also appears that new procedures or guidance are not rigorously piloted to ensure that they have the desired impact, or to ensure that they do not introduce excessive transaction costs at the country level. The evaluation notes that the overall Cooperation Framework Guidance has not been systematically updated since it was issued in 2019; and that a review and revision process was underway while this evaluation was being conducted. Apparently, many elements of the implementation guidance were not revised following the move from UNDAFs: guidance related to implementation also drew heavily on previous Delivering as One standard operating procedures.

119. UN. 2022. Guidance on UN Country-level Strategic Planning for development in exceptional circumstances. April 2022.

Key Finding 28: The MAF articulates accountabilities, especially for the Resident Coordinator system and United Nations entities at all levels. However, the relevance and utility of the MAF is being reduced by uneven application of its commitments, coupled with weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms.

228. The MAF articulates accountabilities, especially for the Resident Coordinator system and United Nations entities at all levels. Country teams are in principle accountable to Resident Coordinators in terms of their support for efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. However, in practice the MAF is seen to have little impact on UNCT behaviour. The fact that there is uneven commitment to, and application of, the MAF by entities has been observed elsewhere. Interviewees for this evaluation frequently noted that monitoring of MAF compliance and accountability to the MAF are both weak. There is a perception, reflected in our interviews and in surveys, that both the relevance and utility of the current version of the MAF are diminishing.[120]

229. A majority of Resident Coordinators have indicated that MAF implementation had been improving in their UNCTs over the years (84 per cent considered it was improving in 2021 and 78 per cent in 2024).[121] Fewer UNCT members consider that MAF implementation is improving, though it is trending upwards somewhat: in 2024, 56 per cent considered that it had improved, which was an increase from 51 per cent in 2023.[122] The System-Wide Evaluation of the United Nations Development System's Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 noted that an absence of a mechanism to ensure entities comply with the MAF exacerbated entities' uneven delivery of commitments.

230. The way the MAF is written allows for different interpretations in certain areas, undermining the extent to which it establishes clear governance relations between stakeholders. It lacks clarity in relation to how it sets out functional roles and the responsibilities of key stakeholders. This has also been noted in other evaluations and studies.[123]

Key Finding 29: Overall, UNSDG entities' compliance with Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF is weak and the principle of dual accountability is largely theoretical.

231. Overall, entities' compliance with Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF is weak. Those entities that demonstrate paper "compliance" with the Cooperation Framework Guidance and many of the MAF requirements (including reporting on indicators to their Executive Boards) do so without driving the behaviours at the country level that the reforms require.

232. The Cooperation Framework and joint workplan do not consistently frame what entities choose to do in a country. Entities implement programmes outside the Cooperation Framework and joint workplan, as the Cooperation Framework Guidance itself acknowledges. Some programmes are implemented because a donor commissions them. Resident Coordinators and some government officials interviewed noted that entities may continue to "parachute" into the country, programmes that were not necessarily related to the Cooperation Framework and do so without informing or consulting with the Resident Coordinator.

233. While the MAF provides specific guidance on reporting lines and performance assessments, emphasizing dual accountability, this principle is not consistently implemented. UNCT members are expected

120. Surveys monitoring QCPR implementation found a perceived decrease in MAF implementation of 9 percentage points in 2023. This aligns with key informant perceptions (Resident Coordinator system and UNSDG entity) that attention to MAF implementation by all stakeholders has been decreasing over time.
121. QCPR Survey of United Nations Resident Coordinators 2021-2024.
122. QCPR Survey of the United Nations country team members 2023 and 2024.
123. OIOS. 2022. Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office: contribution of the Resident Coordinator system to country-level programme coherence. March 2022.; Dalberg. 2023. Updated Study of Capacities & Functions of the UN Development System to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs. December 2023. Final Draft; MOPAN. 2021. MOPAN Assessment Report: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2020 Assessment Cycle. November 2021.

to be accountable to the Resident Coordinator as well as to their entity line manager. There is little evidence that the MAF principle of dual accountability carries the necessary weight to adjust behaviours.

234. While many entities have changed the job descriptions of their country heads to embed accountability to the Resident Coordinator, this has not yet translated into different practices and mindsets and UNCT members do not behave in ways that are consistent with this expectation. Between 2021 and 2024, Resident Coordinators reported that they had been asked to provide feedback on the performance of fewer than 40 per cent of UNCT entity heads.[124] The MAF expects that Resident Coordinators will feed into UNCT entity heads' job descriptions: in 2024 only 62 per cent of Resident Coordinators said they had been invited to do this.[125] Interviews with Resident Coordinators and UNCT members indicate that UNSDG entities view the MAF primarily as a tool of the DCO and Resident Coordinator system, as opposed to a jointly owned framework for mutual accountability.

235. There are divergent views regarding the status and authority of the MAF. Several Resident Coordinators and RCOs interviewed wanted entities to implement their entities' commitments, as embedded in the MAF, more rigorously and called for stronger routine assessment of MAF compliance, with consequences for non-compliance. RCO staff are the most likely to ask for greater "authority" for the Resident Coordinator and accountability for implementation of the MAF. UNCT members stated that they prefer the Resident Coordinators to serve as facilitators and convenors rather than to exert authority and "police", and most Resident Coordinators shared this view.

Key Finding 30: The guidance has prioritized country-level changes and assumed that entities' headquarters and regional levels would integrate those changes into their policies and systems. However, integration of the reforms into the way that entities operate has been slow and uneven.

236. The roll-out of the new guidance and management and accountability system focused initially on driving country-level change. Attention to the changes that entities needed to make at headquarters or regional level was only given recently. Within the Resident Coordinator system, the repositioning focused on the independence and empowerment of Resident Coordinators at the country level, less so DCO at headquarters and regional levels. The need for progress in delivery of the SDGs, and to ensure the system could better meet the needs of countries and governments, explains the initial focus. However, the guidance on country-level processes assumed that entities and governing bodies would integrate the reform into policies and systems at headquarters and regional levels as well as at the country level. This does not seem to have happened at the speed and with the degree of commitment needed to make a material difference as to how entities operate.

237. The United Nations development system Reform Checklist was introduced in December 2022[126] to possibly incentivize entity corporate headquarters to give more attention to the reforms. It is a useful initiative to strengthen the accountability of headquarters to their governing bodies in their implementation of the development system reform commitments. But it was rolled out around five years into the reform process. Some entities have also noted that the checklist, rather than streamlining reporting on reform implementation, has further fragmented and duplicated it, as it includes overlaps with the UN DESA QCPR monitoring surveys, corporate QCPR annexes to entity annual reports, and other entity-specific reports to governing bodies on reforms.

124. QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators and QCPR Survey of United Nations Country Team Members 2021-2024.
125. QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators 2021-2024.
126. UN. 2023. UN Development System Reform Checklist for UN Entities' Governing Bodies.

Key Finding 31: The Cooperation Framework Guidance has introduced a new set of planning processes that has created significant transaction costs, but, despite intentions, appears to make limited substantive difference to what entities implement in country.

238. As the above analysis of Cooperation Framework implementation argued, there is little evidence that the systems have made a material difference to what entities do in a country. It is likely that the reform systems do not have a strong influence over much of what the majority of UNCT members implement. While the intention was to streamline and join up United Nations development planning processes at the country level and strengthen the connection between national priorities and United Nations operational activities – which would be the case if many entities had adopted derivation. Option A, for example – the reforms are understood by some to have created a new additional layer of planning and bureaucracy.

The contribution of headquarters and regional support systems

Key Finding 32: The Development Coordination Office, at headquarters and regional levels, incentivizes Resident Coordinators, RCOs and UNCTs to commit resources and attention to design and planning. These support systems do not encourage attention to meaningful implementation to the same degree. Regional Peer Support Groups add limited value for the same reason. There is a need for stronger engagement between Resident Coordinators and entity regional directors to unblock country-level issues.

239. There are a number of systems and structures to support United Nations development system repositioning at the country level. The regional teams of the DCO, headed by a DCO regional director and their support offices, backstop the Resident Coordinators and the RCO. The capacity of these offices is often stretched by the breadth of their country responsibilities.

240. The guidance, and the systems created to support implementation, incentivize compliance in the analysis and planning stages with little attention to Cooperation Framework implementation. There has been insufficient focus on the creation of incentives and accountability for joint programming, joint programmes and shared results after the Cooperation Framework has been signed. For example, there has been little attention paid to ensure that key barriers are removed, such as streamlining processes to establish pooled funds.[127] The approach assumes that analysis and planning will translate into improved delivery and results.[128]

241. Attention to the analysis, planning and compliance with process has also been incentivized by the methods used to monitor and report to Member States on the implementation of QCPR resolutions. The 2021-2024 monitoring framework for the 2020 QCPR[129] includes more than 250 sub-indicators, primarily informed by DCO information management systems and annual surveys administered by UN DESA. United Nations system reporting on resolution implementation is crucial and these processes have generated useful information and insights (including as one of the data sources used by this evaluation). However, the formulation of indicators and the overall approach to monitoring them has contributed to a focus on process and tick-box compliance by DCO and UNSDG entities. This view is widely shared across United Nations system stakeholders in coordination and implementation roles as well as by Member States representatives and independent analysts.[130]

127. An assessment of country-level pooled funds offers suggestions for how to make the deployment of inter-agency pooled funds more effective (see Tiefenbacher, P. J. 2021. UN Country-Level Pooled Funding. Executive Summary).
128. Internal peer-led surveys of Resident Coordinators have perceived good progress on joint analysis and planning and much less on joint resource mobilizsation and implementation.
129. UN. 2025. Annex: QCPR Monitoring Framework (updated 30 April 2025).
130. "At the level of the General Assembly, the monitoring of reform implementation (through QCPR indicators) seems to focus more on the overall existence of changes rather than their quality" - Weinlich et al. 2022. New Rules, Same Practice? Analysing UN Development System Reform Effects at the Country Level. German Development Institute. p.19.

242. Mirroring what is evident at the headquarters level, DCO regional support is focused on the design stage of the Cooperation Framework and compliance and gives less attention to supporting implementation. The regional teams of DCO focus on the design of the Cooperation Framework in its engagement with Resident Coordinators and their offices, and in how they mobilize support at the regional level. They also organize training at the regional level on Cooperation Framework design.

243. There is demand for DCO to play a stronger convening role with entity regional directors during implementation. There is limited structured engagement between Resident Coordinators and entity regional directors. Some Resident Coordinators noted that they needed the DCO regional team to provide stronger support to help connect the country to expertise or to trouble-shoot issues at the country level. Some felt that DCO regional teams could also help better link Resident Coordinators and country teams facing similar challenges, including by collecting and sharing good practices.

244. Efforts to pool expertise at the regional level, in order to support UNCTs, do not appear to have delivered. There is limited evidence of "rosters of expertise" being compiled but Resident Coordinators and UNCTs did not indicate that they used them. There is also no evidence of strong contributions from Issue-based Coalitions at the regional level.

245. Regional Peer Support Groups largely perpetuate the focus on design rather than implementation, adding limited value to the impact of the reforms.[131] The Peer Support Group comprises staff from entities with a regional presence (including members of non-resident entities) and is designed to provide quality assurance for the Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks. Peer Support Groups noted that they tend to receive the Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks too late to influence substantive changes. Several Resident Coordinators and RCOs considered that review comments were given without adequate understanding of the country context and that entities with specialized mandates tended to seek to ensure their priorities appeared in the Common Country Analysis or Cooperation Framework.

246. With the exception of one region, the role of the Peer Support Group ends with the Cooperation Framework quality assurance and does not extend into the implementation phase. Peer Support Group members have a sense that they volunteer their time, and members said their engagement is not incentivized in their job descriptions or performance appraisals.

The role and capabilities of the Resident Coordinator and UNCT members

Key Finding 33: The delinking of the Resident Coordinator position from UNDP is widely viewed as a positive step, fostering greater trust and impartiality within the UNCT. However, Resident Coordinators lack authority and progress is heavily reliant on the mindset of Resident Coordinators and UNCT members.

247. The delinking of the Resident Coordinator position from UNDP is widely viewed as a positive step, fostering greater trust and impartiality within the UNCT. UNSDG entities said they were more comfortable with a Resident Coordinator who is not from another entity that has an implementation function. The delinked Resident Coordinator was seen to be better positioned to promote joint work and a coherent United Nations approach at the country level. The Resident Coordinator is generally recognized as the most important focal point for coordination. This sentiment has also been demonstrated in surveys of UNCT members used to monitor QCPR implementation. In 2024, 68 per cent of UNCT respondents indicated that Resident Coordinators had displayed strengthened, increased impartiality towards UNSDG entities since the delinking, while only 8 per cent saw no change.[132]

131. The exception is that one of the five Regional Peer Support Groups has chosen to support the implementation phase in its engagement with UNCTs.
132. A total of 24 per cent of respondents said they did not know. QCPR Survey of UN country team members, 2024.

248. Resident Coordinators play a pivotal role in enhancing the impact of United Nations at the country level by fostering collaboration, coordinating with donors and convening policy discussions. This was evident in the evaluation's 21 focus countries, and has also been evidenced by Cooperation Framework evaluations. Seven Cooperation Framework evaluations, undertaken in countries where there was a significant amount of joint programming and strong alignment with national programmes, considered that Resident Coordinators had a unifying impact.[133] In several focus countries, Resident Coordinators co-chair donor coordination meetings. These serve as platforms for information sharing and help improve collaboration across donors, government and UNSDG entities. Survey data show that 82 per cent of governments recognized the Resident Coordinator as a stronger entry point for access to the United Nations development offer in countries.[134] Contributing country governments also agreed that resident coordinators scaled up collective Sustainable Development Goal action and leveraged the comparative advantages of United Nations entities, contributing to more effective and efficient delivery in-country.[135] Effective Resident Coordinators have also been instrumental in shifting the focus of donor interactions from project-specific discussions to higher-level policy dialogue. They engaged with donors on strategic issues, such as aligning development efforts with national priorities and addressing systemic challenges. These Resident Coordinators have helped identify joint areas for advocacy and engagement, moving beyond traditional project-based funding conversations.

249. Some interviewees also noted that the independent Resident Coordinator has an enhanced convening role and greater access to senior levels of government. Delinking was said to have freed up the Resident Coordinator position to focus on high-level engagement and strategic coordination: giving them more time to engage with governments, donors and other partners, facilitating the UNCT's overall work, and resolving blockages between entities and governments. Some also considered that the delinking has enabled Resident Coordinators to champion sensitive issues, such as human rights and gender equality, more effectively than was the case when the positions were attached to an entity. Interviewees noted that the pre-reform Resident Representatives may have been hesitant to raise such issues to protect the entity's access and broader development programme. However, interviews also indicated that this is one of the most complex and difficult areas of work for Resident Coordinators.

250. Despite their increased visibility, Resident Coordinators lack formal authority to drive implementation of the Cooperation Framework and joint workplan by directing entities. The lack of authority of, and accountability towards, the Resident Coordinators means that they do not have the authority to drive stronger performance. As noted above, the MAF sets out that UNCT members have dual accountability, with a reporting line to both their entity regional director (or headquarters) and the Resident Coordinator. Around three quarters of UNCT members indicate that their job description includes provisions that recognize the relationship with the Resident Coordinator as per the MAF.[136] However, the evaluation found no evidence that dual accountability is meaningful in practice. Resident Coordinators consider that they should not cite the MAF as a way of asserting their authority. Illustrating this tension, one Resident Coordinator noted, "if you have to invoke the MAF you have already lost".

251. It is also the case that Resident Coordinators do not have direct control over funding, and they rely on the willingness of entities and donors to support joint initiatives. RCOs do not and cannot administer trust funds, but may chair the steering committee of joint programmes supported by pooled funding. Resident Coordinators increasingly felt that UNCTs were empowering them to substantially increase common resource mobilization (84 per cent of Resident Coordinators in 2024). The most significant improvement where Resident Coordinators felt empowered to act within the UNCTs was the distribution of common resources, which saw a 25 per cent increase over the period.[137] The evaluation notes that some interviewees cautioned against

133. This was the case in Bhutan, Colombia, Mali, Mauritius, North Macedonia, Seychelles and Turkmenistan.
134. A/79/72-E/2024/12.
135. Ibid.
136. In total, 75 per cent in 2021, 74 per cent in 2022, 72 per cent in 2023 and 78 per cent in 2024. QCPR Survey of United Nation country team members 2021-2024.
137. QCPR Survey of the Resident Coordinators 2021-2024.

Resident Coordinators overstepping their role and becoming too involved in entities' programme decisions, which could undermine the entities' autonomy and expertise.

252. The effectiveness of the reforms remains heavily dependent on the individual skills, experience and approach of the Resident Coordinator. Every UNCT consulted by this evaluation reported that the leadership qualities of the Resident Coordinator make a very significant difference to how UNCTs work. The Resident Coordinator's personal approach and ability to build trust with entities and the government are seen as key. Several Resident Coordinators themselves noted that the country team judge them by how much influence they have with the government. However, even outstanding Resident Coordinators cannot compensate for the systemic challenges outlined elsewhere in this report.

253. The effective Resident Coordinators tended to ignore the compliance parts of the MAF and focus on building a strong collaborative ethos in the UNCT. For example, some of the more effective Cooperation Framework design and derivation practices did not follow a linear approach. Several Resident Coordinators thought that DCO prioritizes measuring the compliance aspects of their role (for example, whether the requisite results groups had met) without capturing or giving priority to their more strategic but less tangible activities.

254. The individual skills, experience and approach of UNCT entity heads is an equally critical factor in how UNCTs perform. The mindset of UNCT heads is likely to be a more significant factor than the entities' formal policies on integrating the Cooperation Framework reforms. For example, in some countries an entity was cited as an excellent "team player" in the UNCT. However, in another country the same entity was said to be uncollaborative. The stance of the same entity in a single country could also change when the entity head changed. The evaluation team also heard that sometimes, even when an entity head was fully committed to collaborative working, this buy-in did not always extend deeper in the entity: operational staff who led programming sometimes did not share the same attitude and vision – leading to inconsistency in the same entity's approach.

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Entity leadership and prioritization of the reforms

Key Finding 34: UNSDG entities' commitment to the reforms is weaker at headquarters and regional levels. There is confusion in relation to UNDP's global function to support the reforms as an "integrator".

255. In June 2017, the Secretary-General's report noted that "reforms have been implemented over the years, predominantly in the field, with a lack of commensurate progress in regional and global arrangements and within individual entities".[138] This evaluation confirms that this tendency persists. In general, entities'

138. A/72/124-E/2018/3 para 12.

headquarters and regional levels have less understanding and commitment to the reforms than the country level. This weaker understanding and buy-in is a source of frustration for Resident Coordinators and other UNCT members alike. Resident Coordinators expressed a strong belief that greater engagement with UNSDG Principals and Executive Boards is required to drive alignment with the reforms.[139] The annual or biannual Regional Collaborative Platforms and UNSDG Principals meetings are not enough to drive the engagement and change necessary. When asked by UN DESA to identify the major constraints in implementing the reform agenda, a majority of UNCT members (57 per cent) in 2023 identified business models and governance arrangements. Just under a third of UNCT respondents identified insufficient awareness of new working methods needed, overambitious expectations and lack of incentives as further barriers. The same question a year later, with increased options, saw 62 per cent indicate lack of funding, 46 per cent indicate lack of human resources and 38 per cent identify business models and governance arrangements.[140]

256. The quality and clarity of direction and incentives from entities' headquarters influence the willingness of entities to implement the guidance. Interviewees considered that entity headquarters have rarely instructed their country representatives to fully support the spirit of the reforms to date. Positive examples do exist. For example, one entity's headquarters encouraged greater use of the Cooperation Framework to develop country strategic plans in two of this evaluation's countries.

257. Accountability of entities to deliver against the Cooperation Framework is too weak to change behaviours. Entities (headquarters in particular) continue to be more accountable for reporting on the implementation of their global strategic plan than their contributions to national-level Cooperation Frameworks. For example, some entities contest the authority of the MAF and see it as constituting voluntary or non-binding guidelines. The evaluation team heard from a representative of one UNSDG entity, who noted that its country programming instruments take precedence over the MAF and other comparable agreements made by UNSDG entities because those country programming instruments constitute an agreement between that entity and partner governments, and because those instruments are endorsed by its own governing body (Executive Board). A recent UNSDG survey on the MAF found a "lack of incentives (or competing incentives from entities) including on resource mobilization, visibility/branding, and performance assessments" to be the biggest impediment to MAF implementation.[141]

258. UNDP's integrator role is acknowledged in the MAF and elsewhere, but without specificity. The MAF states that UNDP, and the RCO, are to be responsible for "leveraging expertise/knowledge/assets" but without further definition. UNDP's integrator role has still not been clearly defined outside the MAF. Several strategic evaluations have confirmed a lack of clear articulation and shared understanding regarding the UNDP integrator function.[142] The evaluation's focus group members and interviewees also gave no examples of UNDP playing a broader role that drives or encourages integration within the United Nations development system.

Key Finding 35: Small and medium-sized entities generally view the reforms positively, seeing opportunities to promote mandates and access funds. However, some have concerns about value for money and the high transaction costs of engaging in UNCTs.

259. Smaller entities generally consider the reforms in a positive light and have made substantive efforts to align with them. There is evidence that several smaller and medium-sized UNSDG entities view the reforms

139. Internal Resident Coordinator peer survey.
140. QCPR Survey of United Nations Country Team Members 2023 and 2024. See Annex E for survey response tables and charts.
141. Identified as a one of the 3 biggest impediments by 64 per cent of respondents. Survey conducted by UNSDG Secretariat (DCO). Respondents include Resident Coordinators, Heads of RCO, UNCT members and UNSDG entity staff at HQ and regional levels (April-May 2025).
142. UNSDG SWEO. 2022. System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19: Final Report. October 2022; UNDP. 2021. Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021. March 2021; UNDP. 2025. Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025. Internal draft.

as an "opportunity" to promote their "mandates". These entities often engage intensively in the country-level processes – especially at the analysis and design end.

260. Some entities also see their engagement as an opportunity to position themselves to access programme funds, especially joint and pooled funds, by signing Cooperation Frameworks and joining UNCTs. As one representative of a non-resident entity noted, being part of the UNCT and signing a Cooperation Framework gives entities "a license to trade". Resident Coordinators and RCOs expressed frustration that some entities would commit to meeting a need in the Cooperation Framework and joint workplan but would not end up fulfilling their commitment.

261. Some smaller entities expressed concern about the need to be able to demonstrate "value for money" for their financial contributions to the Resident Coordinator system; they noted that governing bodies challenge them on this. Some perceived the opportunity cost of investing in the Resident Coordinator system as very significant in comparison to the scale of their operations. Several of these entities judged value for money by comparing their investment in the Resident Coordinator system to the volume of additional funds to which membership of UNCTs gave them access. While understandable, this assessment of value is not entirely consistent with the rationale for the reforms.

262. Smaller entities, particularly when they are non-resident, consider that engaging in UNCTs carries high transaction costs, and that they struggle to engage, as other studies have identified.[143] Smaller entities struggle with limited field office networks and a single regional officer may try to be a member of up to 25 UNCTs.[144] Some non-resident entities have called for differentiated UNCT membership requirements for entities without a physical presence. One Resident Coordinator had introduced such a system – with core and non-core UNCT groupings.

Broader dynamics and incentives underpinning current patterns

263. A range of broader systemic factors influence progress towards the reforms, including: incentives for collaboration and transparency within the UNCT; the impact of government engagement in Cooperation Framework design and implementation; the extent to which entity governing bodies reinforce the reforms through their oversight role; and the influence of donor behaviour and broader funding trends.

Transparency, competition, incentives and accountability

264. For the UNCT to effectively deliver the Cooperation Framework and joint workplan there needs to be transparency and collaboration among entities. Without this, entities work in silos and can compete for funding. Entities working in related areas need to be aware of each other's activities, priorities and resource allocations to ensure a degree of alignment of delivery and reduce the risk of duplication. Stronger collaboration can also support the development of joint strategies and programmes. These can leverage the expertise and resources of different entities and have greater impact. Transparency in resource mobilization enables the UNCT to present a unified front to donors, increasing the potential to attract funding that prioritizes country needs, rather than donor priorities. A cohesive and transparent UNCT is also better positioned to ensure that its work is fully aligned with national development priorities.

143. OIOS. 2022. Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office: contribution of the Resident Coordinator system to country-level programme coherence. March 2022.; Dalberg. 2023. Updated Study of Capacities & Functions of the United Nations Development System to Accelerate Progress on the SDGs. December 2023. Final Draft; OIOS. 2022. Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office: contribution of the Resident Coordinator system to country-level programme coherence. March 2022; MOPAN. 2021. MOPAN Assessment Report: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). 2020 Assessment Cycle. November 2021; MOPAN. 2024. MOPAN Assessment Report: International Labour Organization (ILO).

144. This was also observed in: UNIDO. 2022. Independent Thematic Evaluation of the UNIDO Medium-Term Programme Framework (MTPF) 2018-2021. Volume 1. May 2022; MOPAN. 2024. MOPAN Assessment Report: International Labour Organization (ILO); UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.

Key Finding 36: There is competition for funding and a lack of transparency within many UNCTs, which runs counter to the collaborative ethos envisaged by the repositioning.

265. In almost every focus group with UNCTs and Resident Coordinator interviews, respondents said there is a competition among entities over resources and funding and, to a slightly lesser extent, over mandates. It was common to hear that, after the Cooperation Framework was agreed, when the UNCT moved into the implementation phase, there was very limited information sharing on planned activities and resource mobilization efforts. Entities tend not to share their resource mobilization efforts at the country level with the Resident Coordinator and RCO or other UNCT members.

266. Transparency is also weak. Resident Coordinators and UNCT members have contradictory views on the degree to which entities are transparent about funding. In response to UN DESA QCPR surveys, 80 per cent of UNCT respondents stated that they "always" or "usually" share funding outreach information with the Resident Coordinator. However, 76 per cent of Resident Coordinators report that "only a few UNCT members" (67 per cent) or "no UNCT members" (9 per cent) share this information with them. UNCT members in the focus countries explained to the evaluation team that if they share this information other entities could compete for the same funds. Several RCOs also noted that UNCT members rarely updated them when they succeeded in raising funds from in-country donors. The Resident Coordinator, RCO and wider UNCT membership said they often only learned about new bilateral funding, even when it was to implement commitments in the Cooperation Framework or joint workplan, after it was secured. Resident Coordinators indicated that this reluctance to share information makes it extremely difficult for them to support UNCT coordination in a meaningful way.

267. There is also competition among entities for resources. Programme country governments are aware of competition for funding among UNSDG entities (60 per cent in 2023): 30 per cent perceive there has been an increase in competition over time.[145] Sometimes entities put forward competing bids to the same invitation. Two donor representatives interviewed stated that they had received competing bids from UNSDG entities and noted that that wanted bids to be "deconflicted" by the Resident Coordinator – who often had no prior knowledge of these bids. Nearly all the interviewed Resident Coordinators noted that they sought to encourage entities not to compete and tried to encourage collaboration. However, several noted that they have limited ability to influence this – as they have no authority or funds.

268. Some entity country heads explained to the evaluation team that they are incentivized and rewarded for mobilizing resources for their entity. They are not incentivized to raise resources for the system or the Cooperation Framework or joint workplan. The annual performance of the heads of at least two entities includes an assessment of their resource mobilization performance. As one interviewee put it: "People get promoted for fighting hard to get money for their entity, not for being collaborative." One of the drivers for the high degree of competition is a shortage of funds, as another interviewee noted: "There is limited funding – we are all downsizing globally – so competition for resources is real."

269. Interviews with Resident Coordinators, UNCT members and staff from UNSDG entity headquarters also indicated that there is competition among entities over mandates and project areas. A common complaint was that larger entities with broader mandates sought to implement programmes in areas in which other members of the UNCT had a specialized mandate. Some interviewees noted increased competition over mandates on topics that attract more donor support such as gender, climate change and peacebuilding, and that duplication of activities was common.

270. In countries that had previously been in Delivering as One pilots the reforms appear to have made more progress, for example Albania, Viet Nam (original pilots) and Papua New Guinea (a "self-starter"). The quality of UNCT collaboration was greater. Focus groups with UNCTs in these countries showed that there

145. QCPR survey for programme countries 2021-2024. Only 10 per cent reported a decrease in competition, while 54 per cent did not know. See Annex E for survey tables and charts.

were shared expectations of stronger transparency and collaboration. It was as though the "mindset" that emerged from working in Delivering as One countries was passed on through successive generations of UNCT members and continued to influence how the UNCT worked under the current reforms. It is also likely that donors operating in these countries have been more willing to contribute to pooled funds than countries without this legacy – further encouraging collaboration among entities.

271. In workshops to discuss the emerging evaluation findings some participants noted that a further driver of competition is the fact that entities had to cover the costs of their country footprint (ancillary costs). Many considered that this driver would diminish if more entities were able or willing to use common back offices.

National engagement in Cooperation Framework design and implementation

272. National partners and governments are expected to be actively involved in implementation of the Cooperation Framework. The Cooperation Framework is meant to align with national development priorities and be jointly owned by the government. Accordingly, government representatives are meant to be involved in results groups and to be co-chairs of Joint Steering Committees.

Key Finding 37: Generally, Cooperation Frameworks do seek to reflect governments' priorities. Stronger government interest in and ownership of the Cooperation Framework appears to increase the extent to which entities align their programmes with the Cooperation Framework.

273. There is consistent evidence from country-level interviews and other United Nations system evaluations that UNCTs seek to ensure that Cooperation Frameworks are developed to reflect government priorities, as reflected in national development plans.[146] There were also several instances of UNCTs delaying the design or finalization of a Cooperation Framework to ensure that it could take account of government strategy.

274. National governments are appreciative of the elevated partnership created through the Cooperation Framework. Some of the programme country government representatives interviewed appreciated the fact that the government signs the Cooperation Framework directly with the UNCT, often at the level of the prime minister, vice president, or finance or foreign ministry, noting the stronger relationship with the United Nations than when individual UNSDG entities make agreements with sector line ministries.

275. The degree of government engagement varies significantly. Some governments are very proactive and have strong ownership over the Cooperation Framework, while others are less engaged. This influences the extent to which entities align their programmes with the Cooperation Framework. For example, one RCO and UNCT explained that the government in their country had stated it was keen for entities to subscribe fully to the Cooperation Framework and to forgo their own country programming instruments. Seeking to comply "in spirit", entities reportedly sought to ensure their country programming instruments were much more closely aligned to the Cooperation Framework. In two countries where the host government asked the United Nations to extend or delay country programming instruments to allow time for derivation, entities that were required to present their country programming instruments to their governing bodies were able to postpone submission until after the start date of the Cooperation Framework.

146. This is evidenced in several entity strategic evaluations (IOM. 2022. Evaluation of IOM's Institutional Approach and Contribution the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. December 2022; WFP. 2023. Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans. May 2023; OIOS. 2022. Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office: contribution of the Resident Coordinator system to country-level programme coherence. March 2022; UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women. 2021. Joint annex on the common chapter of the strategic plans, 2018-2021 of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women; ECOSOC. 2023. E/AC.51/2023/2*. Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office regional support. Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. January 2023). It is also evidenced in the Cooperation Framework evaluations and entity country programme evaluations reviewed by the evaluation team.

276. In line with the guidance, government representatives co-chaired or participated in results groups and the Joint Steering Committee. This was seen as an improvement on pre-reform practice when the UNSDG entities chaired similar forums. When senior government officials engaged in higher-level Cooperation Framework governance structures, this set the tone for official engagement at other levels. For example, as the UNCT was seeking to implement its second Cooperation Framework, and learning from previous practice, one Resident Coordinator noted that strong co-leadership with the president's office was helping to ensure ministries took the process seriously.

277. However, this is not universal and government participation in joint forums, such as results groups, can be inconsistent and often at lower levels than intended, partly due to time constraints or capacity issues but also due to the fact that they are parallel systems. As noted in the section on the joint workplan, several Resident Coordinators and some government representatives noted that expecting government engagement in these Cooperation Framework governance structures is unrealistic and unproductive, as they duplicate existing coordination systems. They noted that governments sometimes have their own thematic working groups that operate separately from the UN-led forums, leading to duplication and reduced engagement.

Key Finding 38: The emphasis in the Cooperation Framework Gguidance on alignment with national/ or government priorities is perceived to make it harder for the UNCT to deliver on normative mandates in some countries.

278. The emphasis in the guidance on alignment with national or government priorities is perceived to make it harder for the UNCT to deliver on normative mandates in some countries.[147] For example, interviewees noted that it is not uncommon for government representatives to ask the UNCT not to include text on certain normative issues. As noted earlier, some governments have said that certain entities were not needed in the UNCT. In practice, this may lead to the exclusion of issues that the government does not want to appear in the Cooperation Framework. Subsequently, the relevant UNSDG entity can find it harder to engage. The evaluation found instances where certain normative issues that were included in the Common Country Analysis did not translate into Cooperation Frameworks.[148]

The role of entity governing bodies

Key Finding 39: Entity governing bodies tend to prioritize entity-specific mandates and results over system-wide reforms and reinforce the repositioning changes to a very limited extent.

279. Governing bodies play a crucial role in shaping the priorities and accountability structures of individual UNSDG entities. Entity governing bodies often execute their governance roles without fully factoring in the United Nations development system reforms. While the reforms aim to promote greater coherence and collaboration among UNSDG entities at the country level, the incentives and accountability structures that governing bodies create frequently prioritize entity-specific mandates and results. Entities are encouraged to focus on their individual programmes and meeting their reporting requirements rather than the Cooperation Framework. Most governing bodies want their entity to demonstrate their specific contributions and results, which is hard to do within a more integrated, system-wide approach. This disconnect between entity-specific governance and system-wide coordination efforts is considered by many stakeholders to impede the extent

147. "The Cooperation Framework is first and foremost a partnership with the Government. The Cooperation Framework represents a commitment to the people in a country, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable. The Cooperation Framework is a commitment to a broad range of stakeholders." UN. 2019. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance. June 2019.

148.

Also a finding of: UNFPA. 2022. Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system.

to which entities integrate the reforms. It should be noted that some entities do report specifically to their governing bodies on the reforms, and some governing bodies do wish to see that country programming instruments are submitted with the letter from the Resident Coordinator confirming derivation.

280. Despite efforts by some Member States to use their entity governing body membership to reinforce the reforms, overall progress has been slow, and the fundamental structures of entity-specific governance remain largely unchanged. It is probably accurate to say that most Member States do not prioritize the need to reinforce the reforms through their membership of governing bodies as other interests prevail. Some Member States have tried to ensure their representatives on entity governing bodies reinforce the United Nations development system reforms. For example, their representatives ask about country programming instrument derivation and alignment when country programming instruments are presented to their Executive Board. However, several interviewees noted that, even when there was high-level commitment to do this, it was difficult to achieve in practice.

281. There have been proposals and initiatives to strengthen system-wide governance of United Nations operational activities for development. The Secretary-General sought to reinvigorate the ECOSOC operational activities for development segment[149] and strengthen reporting and accountability for the implementation of the QCPR. His 2017 reports on repositioning (A/72/124–E/2018/3 and A/72/684–E/2018/7) also invited Member States to consider the creation of a joint Executive Board for the New York-based funds and programmes (with the option to progressively integrate governing bodies based outside of New York into such a new structure).[150] However, the repositioning mandated by Member States did not significantly alter the governance architecture of the United Nations development system. This architecture can still, as the 2017 reports highlighted, result in entity governing body mandates and incentives that contradict provisions by principal organs, such as those of the QCPR resolutions for strengthened system-wide strategic planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation.[151]

The country-level influence of donor behaviour and development assistance funding trends

Key Finding 40: Donor funding behaviour has a strong influence on the effectiveness of the reforms at the country level. However, there are varied degrees of understanding of the reforms and the intended status of the Cooperation Framework.

282. Donor awareness and support for the United Nations development system repositioning varies significantly. Interviews with Resident Coordinators and donor representatives themselves indicated that when in-country donor representatives had detailed knowledge of the reforms they tend to try to bolster the Resident Coordinator system. These donors were keen to reinforce the coordination role of the Resident Coordinator and saw this as a way of driving the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations in-country. For example, the European Union funded several joint thematic programmes and was keen on seeing the UNCT work in collaboration. Similarly, Canada noted, in one country, that it uses the Cooperation Framework and insists that entities consult with each other and the Resident Coordinator before submitting proposals. Ireland, Switzerland and Sweden also reported working in ways that aim to reinforce the reforms.

283. Many country-level donor representatives are not well informed about the intended status of the Cooperation Framework or the role of the Resident Coordinator. In most cases, they have not received clear information from their capitals on how to engage with the reformed United Nations development system and

149. ECOSOC. 2018. UNDS repositioning – Explanatory Note #7. A reinvigorated ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment. February 2018.
150. ECOSOC. 2018. UNDS repositioning – Explanatory Note #8. A Joint Board of NYC-based funds and programmes. February 2018.
151. A/RES/72/279 - OP.80.

they do not necessarily engage with the Resident Coordinator as coordinator of the UNCT. Many also noted a preference to fund projects as opposed to contribute to joint funds.

284. The evaluation found that the Cooperation Framework, as a document, is seen very much as an internal United Nations document and, while donors interviewed at the country level may have engaged in some of the design and dissemination meetings, none said that they used it to guide their own approaches or programming.

Key Finding 41: Funding commitments at the country level are still heavily earmarked, running counter to the commitments made in the Funding Compact. This does not reinforce the United Nations development system repositioning.

285. The United Nations development system reforms were rolled out on the assumption that the Funding Compact commitments would be met: the two were seen as mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent. However, progress towards the Funding Compact commitments has been limited. Overall global funding trends show that an increasing proportion of aid is heavily earmarked. Earmarking is increasing partly because donor governments want to be able to report tangible and attributable outcomes from their investments. Absolute volumes of Official Development Assistance are also decreasing. The overall trends in funding to the United Nations system since 2019 are, very briefly,[152] summarized in Box 3.

Box 3: United Nations development system funding trends from 2018-2023[153]

- **Overall resources:** There were increases in the overall volume of funding between 2019 and 2022 (followed by a year-on-year reduction in 2023). However, increases have largely been due to earmarked contributions and humanitarian activities – the majority of voluntary contributions are provided by a single donor for specific programmes or projects (70 per cent in 2023).
- **Core resources:** Core funding as a percentage of overall voluntary funding for operational activities has not increased and remains significantly below the Funding Compact's 30 per cent target (12.7 per cent in 2023).
- **Pooled funding:** Inter-agency pooled funding contributions for development activities increased from USD 1.0 billion in 2018 to a peak of USD 1.6 billion in 2021 but declined in both 2022 and 2023 to USD 1.0 billion. Overall, inter-agency pooled funding contributions for operational activities represent approximately the same share of non-core funding as they did in 2018, being 8 per cent, well below the Funding Compact's 30 per cent target. Annual contributions to multi-partner trust funds aligned to Cooperation Frameworks, and the global Joint SDG Fund and Peacebuilding Fund are well below targets.
- **Funding for coordination:** Since its delinking, the Resident Coordinator system has faced an annual funding gap of around 15-20 per cent.
- **Donor diversification:** While funding from programme countries, international financial institutions, the private sector and individuals is an increasingly key segment of the donor base for United Nations development activities, the system as a whole remains highly reliant on voluntary and earmarked funding from a small number of larger government donors. In 2023, the top ten donors provided three quarters of voluntary government contributions, with the top donor accounting for 30 per cent of the total.

286. This lack of progress was evident in all of the evaluation's country-level interviews and is reflected in broader analysis of the impact of current funding patterns.[154] Donor preferences for earmarked funding, sometimes including the solicitation of competing bids from different UNSDG entities, hinders joint programming and collaboration. When donors prioritized single-entity projects on specific thematic areas and did not voluntarily inform the Resident Coordinator or RCO, entities have felt able to compete for funding alone, even when funding is for a priority action in the joint workplan. Entities were said to prioritize donor-driven

152. For comprehensive analysis of United Nations system funding trends see continuing work by the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation and United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (Dag Hammarskjold Foundation. n.d. UN Financing.).
153. UN. 2024. Trends in Funding to the UN's Operational Activities. Development and Humanitarian Funding Data 2018-2022; UN. 2024. Framework for Global-Level Monitoring & Reporting on the Funding Compact for the UN's Support to the SDGs; A/80/74/Add.1-E/2025/53/Add.1.
154. UNSDG SWEO. 2024. Unlocking quality funding. Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence.

projects over collective Cooperation Framework priorities. Given their need to raise funds and cover their costs, this is to be expected. Unless donors seek to systematically share information about their funding with the Resident Coordinator and RCO, entities are likely to continue to compete and work in vertical silos.

287. The primary development-focused pooled funds available to UNCTs are the Joint SDG Fund (global) and country-specific multi-partner trust funds.[155] UNCTs, with the Resident Coordinator as the focal point, are invited to bid to the Joint SDG Fund, and UNCTs or donors establish multi-partner trust funds, often on specific themes or issues. These generally must have a value of over USD 2 million to be established.

288. While the Joint SDG Fund is considered to be a useful facility, it is relatively modest in size given the scale of the challenges it seeks to address. It is considering steps to focus on larger, more strategic investments in fewer countries.[156] The fund is also aiming to focus on countries where the United Nations has a comparative advantage and is seeking to align its investments with the six transitions outlined by the Secretary-General at the 2023 SDG Summit.[157]

289. Reflecting these new realities, many UNCTs, especially in upper middle-income countries, view other sources of finance, such as governments' own funds, as increasingly important sources of finance.

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155. The full range of pooled funds available to UNCTs can be seen on the MPTFO Gateway Portal.
156. UNSDG SWEO. 2022. System-Wide Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund: 2019-2022. October 2022.
157. UN. 2023. Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs. September 2023.

2.7 Revisiting the Theory of Change

290. The Theory of Change to deliver a "new generation of United Nations country teams" that is more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable and able to deliver better results to contribute to greater or accelerated progress towards the SDGs was set out at the start of this report (Figure 8). This section reflects on the extent to which, considering the findings of the evaluation, the Theory of Change holds true or not. These reflections are visualized in Figure 11, which is simplified but provides an overall picture of how the key elements and assumptions of the intended reforms have played out in reality.

291. Overall, the analysis highlights a significant disconnect between the strategic vision of the reforms and the operational realities on the ground. Section 2.6 sets out some of the factors that have hindered progress. Some are within the control of United Nations system actors; some can only be addressed by the United Nations system at large and others are external to the system but of fundamental importance.

292. The Theory of Change identified some important components required to translate the vision of the repositioning into the roll-out of new generation Cooperation Frameworks at the country level, including: (i) appropriate and clear system-wide guidance; (ii) strategic direction and guidance within entities; (iii) support from appropriate mechanisms and support structures; (iv) a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system with sufficient capacity; and (v) ensuring that all levels have sufficient knowledge of the elements required to be able to engage and advance these processes.

293. In its assessment of these components, the evaluation found the following:

- While the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF are broadly aligned with the reform's strategic intent, they contain some gaps and lack clarity on some key concepts. The guidance is uniform and does not fully consider the diversity in models and approaches among UNSDG entities. Overall, the instruments make some unrealistic assumptions about the experience, track record and readiness of the United Nations development system to work more coherently "as a system" (Key findings 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 26, 27).
- UNSDG entities have taken steps to integrate elements of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF. However, the adoption and application of the new guidance has been gradual and uneven both across entities and within them. Knowledge of the intentions and requirements of the repositioning was also found to be uneven (Key findings 4, 5 , 29, 30, 34, 35).
- UNSDG support systems, at headquarters and regional levels, have tilted heavily towards analysis and planning, incentivizing UNCTs to commit resources to design, with weaker attention to implementation (Key findings 30, 31, 32).
- The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system is widely appreciated. More coherent and collaborative implementation is generally associated with the leadership qualities of UNCT members and Resident Coordinators, rather than with the guidance and support systems. However, questions remain regarding the extent to which the Resident Coordinator system can and should engage in entities' country programming (Key findings 9, 32, 33).

294. The Theory of Change for the realization of a new generation of UNCTs relies heavily on the Cooperation Framework becoming the most important planning and implementation tool for the United Nations at the country level. For this to be the case it logically must provide a clear articulation of national priorities and form the basis of UNSDG entity country programmes. There is consensus that entity country programmes should derive their priorities from the Cooperation Framework, and there are some examples of good practices by UNCTs in fostering greater alignment (Key Finding 9). However, due to the very broad Cooperation Framework outcomes and the "copy and paste" mechanism for demonstrating derivation, there is little evidence that the substance of entity country programmes is substantially affected by the Cooperation Framework and its preparation process. The process of deriving from the Cooperation Framework is generally

administrative rather than substantive. Understandably, country programming instruments remain the most important planning and implementation tools (Key findings 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

295. Just as the Cooperation Framework is not yet the most important planning and implementation tool, neither is it the "point of departure" for the configuration of UNCTs. UNCT configuration exercises, intended to tailor country presence to the needs identified in the Cooperation Framework, are not found to be effective. There has been expanded engagement of non-resident entities in UNCTs, but beyond this they have done little to ensure UNCTs respond to the capability needs set out by the Cooperation Framework. The exercises have been disconnected from entities' decision points on their country-level business models and staffing. This limited reconfiguration, combined with challenges in increasing countries' access to regional-level United Nations expertise and capacities, constrains intended shifts from project delivery to integrated policy advice (Key findings 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

296. Beyond planning and configuration of the UNCT, the Theory of Change for a new generation of UNCTs also placed significant importance on a joint workplan as the instrument in which the UNCT's mobilization of assets and resources to the priorities collectively set in the Cooperation Framework is clearly articulated. The reality is that joint workplans are frequently collations of individual entity interventions rather than coherent UNCT action plans. They function primarily as an information-gathering and reporting tool for documenting UNCT interventions. Collective UNCT ownership and use of the tools to support the implementation of Cooperation Frameworks (including joint workplans, joint resource mobilization strategies and governance structures) have been weak, limiting the potential for these tools to deliver a more strategic and coherent set of interventions in response to Cooperation Framework priorities (Key findings 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24).

297. The Theory of Change identifies some broad underpinning assumptions for progress towards a new generation of UNCTs. Some of these assumptions were recognized as key obstacles at the outset and targeted by the reform agenda, others less so. Based on the findings of the evaluation, the current status of the key assumptions can be summarized as follows:

- **Member State commitment has been uneven:** The success of the reforms relies to a large degree on the commitment of Member States, both as programme country governments and as contributors. National government engagement and ownership over the reforms varies significantly. Where ownership is strong, and where national government expectations are clear UNCTs tend to be more strongly aligned. But this is not always the case. Likewise, while some donor Member States are fully engaged and supportive, others show limited awareness. Some in-country donor representatives, particularly when they had prior strong United Nations engagement, had detailed knowledge of the reforms and tended to try to bolster the Resident Coordinator system with their own behaviour. Overall, Member States have not held UNSDG entities sufficiently accountable for delivering on the vision of a new generation of UNCTs (Key findings 11, 20, 37, 39, 40, 41).
- **Funding is fragmented:** With the Funding Compact, Member States committed to taking steps to improve the quality and flexibility of their funding to the United Nations system. However, progress has been limited. High levels of earmarked funding limit the ability of the UNCTs to respond strategically to national development priorities. They also increase transaction costs, fragmentation and competition among UNSDG entities. An improved quality of funding was a major assumption underpinning the reforms, but this has not materialized (Key findings 24, 25, 36, 40, 41).
- **UNSDG entity commitment has been partial and competition persists:** While most UNSDG entities' headquarters have adjusted policies and guidance to reflect engagement in UNCTs and Cooperation Frameworks, most have not significantly altered their business models. This means that they have not yet adapted the way they operate to the reforms: the way entities structure themselves and fund operations to deliver on their mandates, including how they mobilize resources, engage partners and deliver programmes and services, have not been adapted. The reforms have not received the prominence in entities that they would require to be effective at the country level. Competition among entities for resources at the country level and weak transparency within the UNCT undermine collaboration (Key findings 4, 5, 12, 15, 28, 29, 34, 35).

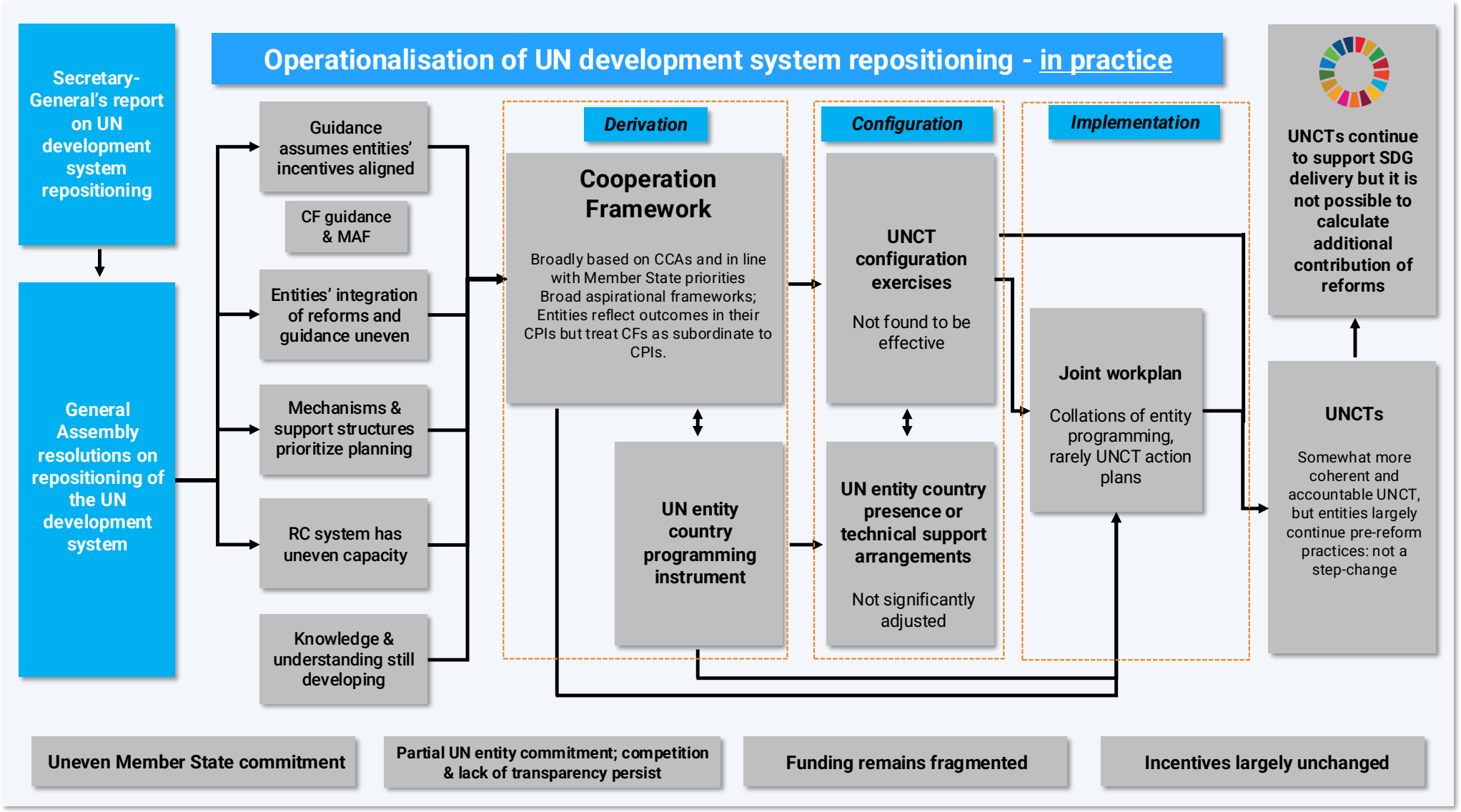
- **Incentives have not sufficiently changed:** The reforms were designed with some recognition of the changes to longstanding incentive and accountability structures that would be necessary to adjust behaviours. However, due to both internal factors within the control of the United Nations system and external factors beyond its control, incentive structures have not been fundamentally altered (Key findings 4, 12, 15, 25, 28, 29, 34, 36, 39).

298. This theory-based evaluation aimed to understand the observable results of adoption of the reforms to United Nations development cooperation planning at the country level, not only in terms of the quality of the tools and approaches employed in the ensuing implementation phase of Cooperation Frameworks, analysed in detail in Section 2.5, but also in terms of the contribution of the reforms to outcome-level development results (EQ 4.3).

299. Such a contribution is contingent on the strengthening of processes and relationships illustrated in Figure 8 and underpinned by the key assumptions. The reforms do have the potential to enhance the contribution of the United Nations to development results, and there has been progress in strengthening certain elements of the system. However, as evidenced throughout this report, progress has been modest and, perhaps more importantly, some of the most critical assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change have not held true. Because these prerequisites are not in place, the contributions of the United Nations to development results or to SDG progress at the country level cannot be plausibly attributed by this evaluation to the reform elements. While the United Nations development system undeniably contributes to the development results and achievements of its Member States, the evaluation is unable to identify the additional value stemming directly from the specific elements of the reforms evaluated – programme derivation and UNCT configuration.[158]

158. As explained in Section 2.5, existing sources such as Cooperation Framework evaluations and Annual UNCT results reports might be expected to provide an analysis of sufficient depth to connect reform efforts to development results and demonstrate added value in specific countries but, at present, they do not do so.

Figure 11: Depiction of how current operationalization of the new generation of UNCTs (presented as an update to Figure 8: Reconstructed Theory of Change)



Source: SWEO.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

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Overarching conclusions

300. The evaluation concludes that the vision for a "new generation of UNCTs" remains highly relevant. Some aspects of the reforms have improved the quality and coherence of UNCTs. There has been notable improvement in the inclusivity, cooperation and collaboration in joint analysis and Cooperation Framework design. The reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system is widely appreciated by United Nations and programme country government stakeholders. There are examples of behaviours and approaches that match the ambitions and spirit of the reforms. The repositioning has also made some important and necessary changes to how the United Nations development offer is organized at the country level, and many of the key foundations for a new generation of UNCTs have been established.

301. In the areas of programme derivation from the Cooperation Framework and UNCT configuration, however, overall progress has been incremental and is far from achieving the vision of a significantly more strategic, coherent and agile United Nations development system offer to countries. Good practices and innovative approaches do exist, and the United Nations development offer remains broadly aligned with, and relevant to, national priorities. However, the Cooperation Framework has not yet become the "most important instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities in each country" and UNCTs have not yet significantly "reconfigured" in line with Cooperation Framework priorities. These central elements of the repositioning of the United Nations development system at the country level cannot be said to have resulted in the intended fundamental shift: they do not yet ensure that the United Nations collective offer is more than the sum of its parts or that it provides an optimal contribution to SDG progress at the country level. There remains a significant gap between the highly relevant strategic intent and the operational realities. The evaluation identifies a variety of reasons for this, including systemic and structural limitations, and some of these were identified as critical in the Secretary-General's 2017 reform proposals (for example, fragmented governance arrangements and funding quality).[159]

302. The ongoing repositioning of the United Nations development system is arguably the most far-reaching and ambitious reform of the United Nations development system to date. The level of decentralization and complexity in the United Nations development system has made, and continues to make, system-wide coherence objectively challenging. The 37 entities that constitute the UNSDG have distinct mandates, varying degrees of autonomy and their own entity-specific accountability lines. The repositioning introduced new systems and structures within a very short timeframe. There was little time to pilot and test new guidance, systems and structures before they were applied globally. The application of these new systems has also been to some extent voluntary. These factors made the repositioning extraordinarily challenging, and the complexity of the change processes required to achieve the reform informs many of the evaluation's conclusions.

Key principles informing recommendations

303. While these ambitious reforms are now at a critical juncture, this assessment does not suggest that ambitions should be lowered. The response to the evaluation needs to be realistic and pragmatic, but with clear intent to further the ambitions of the development system repositioning and not erode or dilute them.

304. Several key principles underpin the evaluation recommendations and should inform the UNSDG's response:

- The focus of the United Nations development system on responding to national priorities and SDG acceleration should be maintained and sharpened.
- The alignment of entities' programming to Cooperation Frameworks should be maintained and increased.

159. A/72/124–E/2018/3 & A/72/684–E/2018/7.

- Collaboration, accountability and transparency among UNCT entities should be enhanced, not reduced.
- The normative mandates of UNSDG entities should be respected and the overall focus of the United Nations development system on leaving no one behind should be preserved.
- All future adjustments should align with the reform aim of enhancing responsiveness to each country's specific context. Mechanisms, structures and tools should be flexible and adaptable, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, so that the United Nations development system can tailor its actions to each country's needs.

305. The evaluation's analysis reaffirms that leadership from different stakeholder groups will be necessary to drive change in what is a complex system. Action by Resident Coordinators and UNCT members is necessary but not sufficient: action is needed from staff at all levels of the United Nations development system. Likewise, Member States, in their role as programme country governments, governing body members and donors, also need to take action.

306. As explained in section 1.3, without compromising its ultimate independence, the evaluation engaged in a consultative and participatory process with United Nations development system stakeholders to validate the conclusions and support the development of a holistic set of recommendations.

Specific conclusions and related recommendations

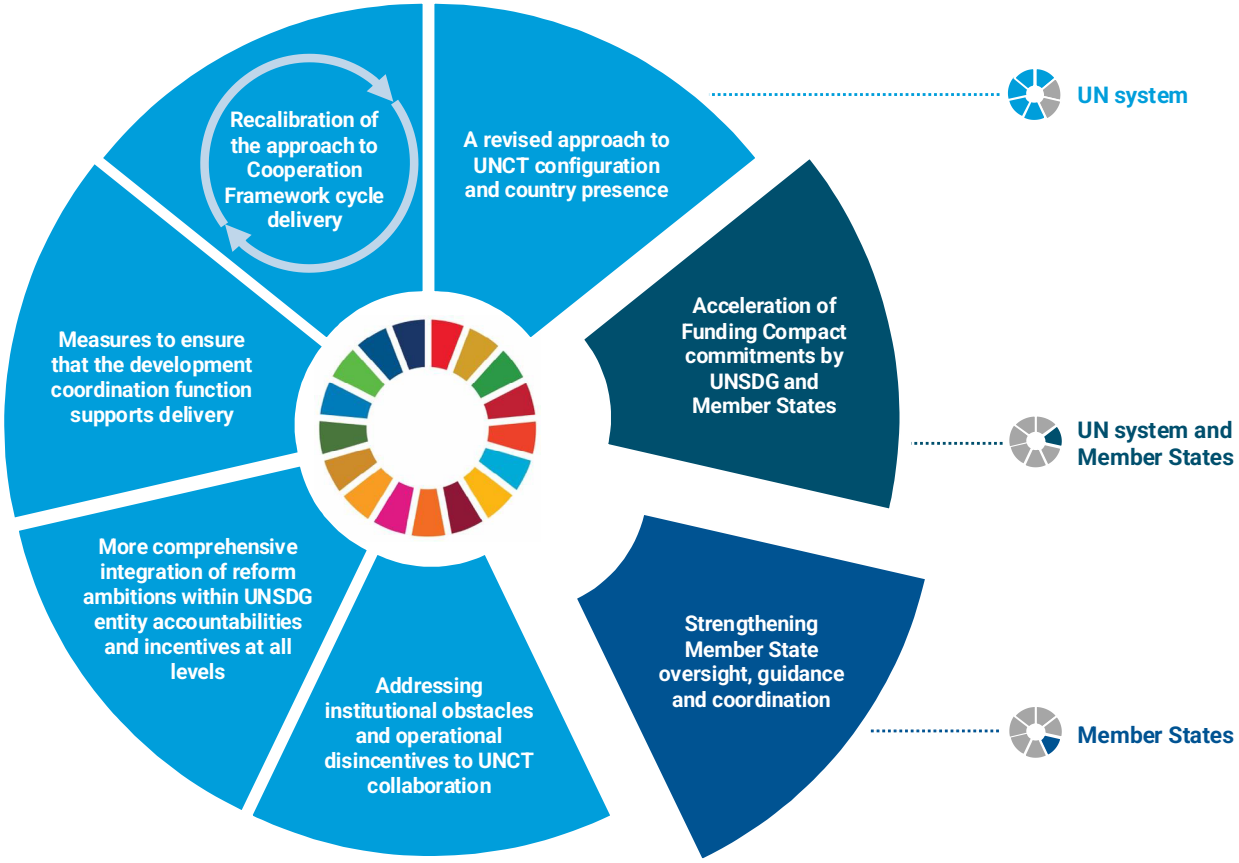
307. The evaluation reaches seven conclusions related to the key factors that explain the gap between strategic intent and operational reality. Change is needed in all these areas to better realize the vision for a new generation of UNCTs that are more coherent, effective, efficient and accountable and better able to contribute to accelerating progress towards the SDGs at the country level. Reflecting these conclusions, the evaluation makes seven recommendations (Figure 12) to the UNSDG (collectively), UNSDG entities (individually), the Development Coordination Office and Member States.[160] The evaluation team considers that maximum value will be obtained if all recommendations are addressed concurrently as a holistic set.

308. The evaluation also considers that these recommendations are highly relevant within the broader context of the ongoing UN80 Initiative. Further opportunities to accelerate progress on the repositioning of the United Nations development system may be provided by the UN80 Initiative related to efficiency, implementation of mandates or structural realignment of the United Nations system. However, the changes proposed by this evaluation will remain necessary and relevant notwithstanding any changes that may result from the UN80 Initiative.

309. Furthermore, while implementing the evaluation recommendations will require an investment in time and effort, implementation is likely to be cost neutral overall. The recommendations are therefore considered to be feasible within a constrained resource context.

160. The order in which the recommendation areas are presented in this report is not indicative of prioritization.

Figure 12: Overview of key conclusions and corresponding recommendations (Figure 4 duplicate)



1. Cooperation Framework cycle delivery

310. The evaluation concludes that country-level activities of UNSDG entities are broadly "aligned" with the Cooperation Framework. However, there is little evidence that the substance of their subsequent interventions is significantly affected by the Cooperation Framework and its preparation process; other factors are of greater significance. The ambition for UNSDG entities' country-level activities to be derived from and aligned with the Cooperation Framework is relevant, necessary and increasingly understood. However, in practice, "derivation" is largely an administrative rather than a substantive exercise and the current mechanism can cause friction within UNCTs. After Cooperation Frameworks are signed, UNCT ownership of the "toolkit" designed to facilitate coherent implementation (including joint workplans) is typically very weak: tools, processes and coordination structures generate high transaction costs and add limited value. Transparency and mutual accountability within UNCTs are limited and competition for resources persists. The evaluation recommends a recalibrated approach and different mechanisms to achieve the necessary step-change required to deliver on the reform ambitions for more substantive derivation and alignment.

Recommendation 1: The UNSDG should develop clear proposals for a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework delivery to strengthen implementation, ensure the UNCT operates transparently throughout the cycle, reduce transaction costs and increase flexibility. The proposals should be focused on ensuring Cooperation Frameworks are "revitalized, strategic, flexible and results- and action-oriented" (as reiterated in the 2024 QCPR - op 83) and should be informed by the conduct of a rapid review to identify the changes needed and define a clear way forward.

Timeline: Q4 2025–Q1 2026

The key principles and most of the basic phases of the Cooperation Framework cycle should be retained. This includes the strengthened Common Country Analyses and the strategic prioritization exercise carried out in dialogue with national stakeholders.

Several mutually reinforcing changes are needed to strengthen substantive alignment and facilitate coherent implementation and delivery of collective results. These changes should shift the balance from design, quality assurance and compliance monitoring to Cooperation Framework delivery. There is a need to improve transparency and mutual accountability among UNCT members, reduce transaction costs, and enable flexibility and adaptation to context.

Sub-recommendation 1.1: To enhance the effectiveness, accountability and collective impact of the UNCT, the UNSDG should redefine the approach to Cooperation Framework implementation.

The aim should be to progressively increase the extent to which UNCTs provide more integrated, strategic and transformative development support over time, taking account of the following points:

i. The Cooperation Framework design process should be a lighter and swifter exercise than in current practice. The Cooperation Framework should continue to provide a high-level articulation of the multi-year UNCT "offer" in response to the Common Country Analysis and national priorities; but it should no longer be required to provide a comprehensive results framework for all existing and anticipated activities.
ii. UNSDG entities should continue to demonstrate how their country programming instruments and country-level activities align with the Cooperation Framework (see sub-recommendation 4.1) and should engage the Resident Coordinator and UNCT when developing their country programming instruments. However, the formal requirement for the Resident Coordinator to confirm the derivation of Cooperation Framework outcomes should be discontinued (and replaced by measures proposed in sub-recommendation 1.2, see Figure 14).
iii. The joint workplan should be reformulated (and renamed) to become a more focused operational plan for a smaller number of more strategic UNCT responses targeted to the highest national priorities,[161] delivered through appropriate combinations of joint and coordinated programmes, integrated policy advice, investment strategies and enhanced partnerships with non-UN development partners. It should no longer encompass all United Nations activities or attempt to create a single United Nations results framework that seeks to connect every activity to the Cooperation Framework outcomes as "sub outputs". See Figure 15 for a visualisation of a reformulated joint workplan within a recalibrated Cooperation Framework cycle.
iv. The Resident Coordinator should have a leading role in facilitating the implementation of the reformulated (and renamed) joint workplan, including leading on coordination, engaging with external stakeholders and supporting the joint mobilization of quality funding and financing (see recommendation 6, ii).
v. Annual UNCT results reports should continue to provide transparency on the total United Nations contribution in the country but might also spotlight the achievements of the reframed joint workplan. The requirements for Cooperation Framework evaluations should be revised to ensure that they provide more robust assessments of UNCT performance and collective results.

Timeline: by Q4 2025 (to be applied by all UNCTs implementing new or ongoing Cooperation Frameworks from Q1 2026)

Sub-recommendation 1.2: To maximize synergies, reduce duplication and promote more substantive alignment, the UNSDG should commit to, and be accountable for, greater transparency in relation to all aspects of country-level activities, including funding streams. All UNSDG entities should share their current

161. As an example, these may be designed around the "transitions" or "transformative pathways" or other identified entry points to maximize SDG acceleration: UNSDG | Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs.

workplans, or equivalent documents, (including resource mobilization plans) with the Resident Coordinator and UNCT, allowing Resident Coordinator Offices to provide the UNCT with a mapping of active interventions. This provides transparency on the extent of entities' substantive alignment in real time and throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle, shifting the focus of accountability from programming documents and the design phase to the implementation phase. See Figure 14 for a visualization of this intended shift.

Timeline: by Q1 2026

Sub-recommendation 1.3: To ensure enhanced responsiveness to each country's specific context, United Nations country teams and Resident Coordinators should have the flexibility to adapt elements of the Cooperation Framework cycle to fit their specific context (building upon common minimum requirements). For example, there should be flexibility for the UNCT to determine what coordination mechanisms are needed to drive collective delivery.

Timeline: by Q1 2026

2. UNCT configuration

311. The evaluation concludes that the tools deployed to review and optimize the configuration of UNCTs have had limited impact. They have not been equal to the ambition for a significantly more agile and flexible approach to UNCT configuration envisaged by the Secretary-General's proposals on repositioning the development system. They have not led to significant changes in UNCT composition or capabilities, with the exception of providing improved access to UNCTs for some non-resident entities. The UNCT configuration exercises at the country level are occasionally valued for providing a mapping of the UNSDG footprint and capacities. However, they have been largely ineffective in adjusting configuration, principally because UNSDG entities do not make significant decisions on resourcing either at the country level or at the same time as the Cooperation Framework is designed.

312. There are also more fundamental and systemic issues that explain why the United Nations development system is not currently well placed to reconfigure around the priorities of a Cooperation Framework. These issues are illustrated by the lack of progress in the regional-level reforms (specifically, the intention to significantly enhance the contributions of regional assets and expertise to UNCTs through Regional Collaborative Platform structures) and by the slow progress in the overall shift anticipated from project delivery to upstream policy advice. A more agile and coherent development offer that is responsive to country-level priorities requires a move away from traditional approaches to physical presence and current business models.

Recommendation 2: The UNSDG should take action to deliver on the strategic ambition for a more agile United Nations development system with a "needs based, tailored country presence" to "ensure the best configuration of support" (A/RES/72/279) and provide capacity at the point of delivery. In doing this, the UNSDG should recommit to and deliver on the Secretary-General's proposals for "more creative models of physical presence" (A/72/684–E/2018/7).

Timeline: Q4 2025–Q4 2026

The UNSDG needs to consider, collectively, how it can provide, with greater agility and flexibility, the required capacities at the country level to respond to national priorities. The evaluation notes that UNSDG entities are already reconsidering their business models, including capacities at the country, regional and global levels. It is important that UNSDG entities use this opportunity to collaborate and take joint decisions to optimize the configuration of capacities to meet country level priorities to minimize gaps, reduce duplication and maximize synergies across the global UNSDG footprint.

Sub-recommendation 2.1: The UNCT configuration exercise, as a mandatory step in the Cooperation Framework cycle, and typically a one-off moment at the country level, should be discontinued. It should be replaced by more comprehensive mapping of the full footprint and capacities of the UNCT, which enhanced transparency standards and improved information management systems should provide (see sub-recommendations 1.2 and 3.1).

Timeline: by Q4 2025

Sub-recommendation 2.2: Decisions on UNCT configuration to respond to the Cooperation Framework should be elevated to dialogue at the relevant level of decision-making, while remaining grounded in the response to national priorities and requests of the host government. This dialogue should encompass and address the resident and non-resident capacities needed to deliver the Cooperation Framework, engaging Resident Coordinators and entity regional and headquarters directors (as appropriate) and facilitated by the Development Coordination Office. This formal dialogue should take place at the start of Cooperation Framework implementation and should be subject to regular review.

Timeline: by Q4 2025

Sub-recommendation 2.3: The UNSDG should collectively establish creative models for short-term and long-term physical presence at the country level, which may include: revision or clarification of options for hosting and representation of UNSDG entities within other entities or in Resident Coordinators Offices,, system-wide expert rosters and/or surge capacities,, or fee-for-service models. Progress in delivering system-wide efficiencies (see recommendation 5) would facilitate the introduction of these kinds of changes.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

3. Guidance and systems for development coordination

313. The evaluation concludes that the frameworks, guidance and support systems that support the repositioning of the United Nations development system do not focus sufficiently on the coherent implementation of Cooperation Frameworks. They are more focused on the design stage of the Cooperation Framework and give less attention to supporting coherent delivery or to addressing barriers to coordination and coherence. The support systems were developed at pace, retaining some legacy functions, systems and tools that were used prior to the reforms.

314. Now is the time to revisit them to better reflect evolving requirements and provide greater flexibility and responsiveness to the country context. Development coordination support systems need to focus less on guidance and process, and more on facilitating delivery, seeking to build on and expand existing good practice and addressing barriers. A recalibration of the development coordination function is necessary to ensure that it adds greater value to the work of UNCTs while minimizing transaction costs.

Recommendation 3: Support systems for development coordination should be rebalanced to facilitate implementation at the country level. The Cooperation Framework Guidance and Management and Accountability Framework should be revised to strengthen mutual accountability and transparency, to streamline systems and to reduce transaction costs for UNCTs.

Timeline: Q3 2025–Q3 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.1: The UNSDG should revise the Management and Accountability Framework and Cooperation Framework Guidance as necessary to provide greater clarity in critical areas identified by the evaluation. Most importantly, revisions should set clear expectations in relation to horizontal and collective

accountability and establish minimum standards of transparency in relation to all aspects of country-level activities, including sharing of entity work plans and resource mobilization plans (see sub-recommendation 1.2).

Timeline: by Q1 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.2: The Development Coordination Office should review its operations and staffing at all levels to shift the focus to the delivery of collective results. Further:

i. At headquarters and regional levels, the Development Coordination Office should reorient focus towards the facilitation of implementation, horizontal engagement with UNSDG entities and external partners, and away from vertical quality control, monitoring and compliance; it should prioritize sharing learning and good practice with UNCTs; and it should routinely review and adapt systems and processes to ensure they have the desired impact when applied.
ii. At the country level, a more flexible and bespoke approach to the Resident Coordinator Office composition in response to context should also be considered.
iii. The Development Coordination Office should continue to prioritize the deployment of Resident Coordinators with high quality leadership skills and ensure that performance management and support systems incentivize their outward-facing, agenda-setting and convening function.

Timeline: by Q1 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.3: To enhance the contribution of regional capacities to the implementation of Cooperation Frameworks, the UNSDG should review regional support structures and coordination mechanisms and develop clear proposals to improve responsiveness to requests for support from UNCTs and programme country governments.

Timeline: by Q2 2026

Sub-recommendation 3.4: UN DESA and the Development Coordination Office, in line with QCPR 79/226, should rationalize and streamline the monitoring frameworks for the QCPR and the Resident Coordinator system results framework and associated United Nations system-wide monitoring frameworks, ensuring that these are more strategic and focused on the achievement of results rather than the design stage and compliance with process.

Timeline: by Q3 2025 (noting ongoing work to develop 2025-2028 QCPR monitoring framework)

4. Accountability and incentives

315. The evaluation concludes that weak accountabilities and incentives for collective action are among the key factors limiting progress towards the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. While entities have demonstrated their adoption of reform elements to varying extents, these elements have generally not yet been fundamentally integrated into their internal accountability structures. Accountability mechanisms and incentives continue to encourage UNSDG entity staff to raise funds for, provide visibility to, and attribute results to, their own entity rather than working in a more effective and integrated way to deliver on collective results.

316. The Management and Accountability Framework is relevant and necessary. However, it is not enforceable and compliance remains weak in some key areas. It is also undermined by stronger countervailing entity-specific priorities, accountabilities and incentives. The collaborative and coherent ways of working intended by the reforms, are, at all levels, frequently seen as “extra work”, or “additional” to core responsibilities, and they are widely considered to impose additional transaction costs and, at times, create unnecessary friction.

Recommendation 4: UNSDG Principals should introduce and enforce changes within their entities to ensure that accountabilities and incentives at all levels are aligned with the ambitions of a new generation of UNCTs. These should drive greater transparency, mutual accountability and associated behavioural changes, including dual accountability of entity heads, within the UNCT.

Timeline: Immediate and ongoing and by Q4 2026

A combination of measures is needed to strengthen accountability and incentives to encourage entities to better integrate the spirit and the letter of the United Nations development system repositioning. This is based on the recognition that the vision of a new generation of UNCTs cannot be achieved by the actions of UNCT members alone, as acknowledged by the Secretary-General in the 2017 repositioning reports. A renewed focus on robust accountabilities and stronger incentives for a more coherent and agile United Nations development system is required at all levels. This includes at the levels of UNSDG Principals, regional directors and entity heads and staff at the country level. To be effective in changing behaviours, measures need to be integrated into existing systems and structures.

Sub-recommendation 4.1: UNSDG entities should ensure that global strategic plans, results frameworks and business models are aligned to fully integrate development system reform ambitions. They should clarify relationships between entity-specific priorities and system-wide performance (including how they will demonstrate substantive alignment with, and contribution to, Cooperation Frameworks) and create high-level accountability for joint work and collective results.

Timeline: Ongoing, to be initiated within the upcoming strategic planning cycle (for example, 2026-2029 strategic plans for the United Nations funds and programmes)

Sub-recommendation 4.2: UNSDG entities should embed reform-related accountabilities and system-wide indicators in performance management systems at all levels (specifically, including senior leadership compacts at executive head-level, as well as regional and country-level staff) and remove accountabilities and incentives that run counter to reform ambitions.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 4.3: At the country level, UNSDG entities should fully and systemically open UNCT member performance appraisal processes to input by the Resident Coordinator. More broadly, all UNSDG entities should institutionalize 360-degree appraisal for all staff to seek inputs from key United Nations colleagues to strengthen mutual and horizontal accountabilities and promote collaboration.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

5. Institutional obstacles that impede effective collaboration

317. The evaluation concludes that institutional obstacles within the United Nations system disincentivize or impede collaboration and joint work and constrain the realization of the vision for a new generation of UNCTs. While business operations and efficiencies were not a focus of the evaluation, they emerged from the analysis as a critical enabling or constraining factor.

318. Greater efforts are necessary to harmonize and simplify business operations and processes. Persistent institutional barriers to effective collaboration need to be removed. The UNSDG needs to accelerate efforts to provide a stronger enabling environment for joint programming and integrated and agile support at the country level. Ongoing processes, such as the UN80 Initiative, and existing forums, including the High-Level Committee on Management and the UNSDG Business Innovations Group, also provide opportunities to identify and drive the implementation of priority actions.

Recommendation 5: The UNSDG and its member entities should address priority efficiency and business operations initiatives to improve the enabling environment for collaboration within UNCTs and remove persistent institutional barriers and disincentives.

Timeline: Q3 2025–Q4 2026

Further integration and harmonization of services is required across functional areas including human resources, procurement, administration, information and communication technology, logistics and finance, as well as harmonization (or interoperability) of systems that support planning, implementation, management, monitoring and reporting, taking into consideration the following:

i. The UNSDG Business Innovations Group should identify and drive uptake of priority measures to remove persistent barriers for collaboration and personnel mobility for a more agile United Nations development system at the country level.
ii. Full application of the principle of mutual recognition should be made within the United Nations system through the implementation of the recommendations made by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2024/4).

6. Funding quality

319. The evaluation confirms that, as anticipated in the Secretary-General's proposals for repositioning, the quality of funding received by the United Nations development system is a critical enabler of progress towards the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. This was agreed in the 2019 Funding Compact and its 2024 update. However, progress has been limited. High levels of earmarked funding continue to limit the ability of UNCTs to respond strategically to national development priorities and increase transaction costs, fragmentation and competition among UNSDG entities. In the current context, there is a significant risk that funding pressures will exacerbate competition and fragmentation. Joint and pooled funding provide incentives for innovative joint programmes, but volumes are insufficient. Greater progress on Funding Compact commitments would alleviate some of the key challenges highlighted by the evaluation.

Recommendation 6: Member States and other funders are encouraged to improve the quality of funding available to the United Nations development system, including through flexible, core and pooled contributions. UNSDG entities are encouraged to develop more effective approaches to accelerate progress on Funding Compact commitments.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

This recommendation aligns with the 2024 QCPR (OP 65), which encourages:

> *Member States and the entities of the United Nations development system to contribute to the full and effective implementation of the Funding Compact and continue the dialogue in the governing bodies as well as at the country level with host governments and development partners to jointly make progress towards compliance with their Funding Compact commitments to help to achieve development results on the ground.*

Decisions on the provision of core, flexible, pooled and multi-year funding to the United Nations development system primarily rest with funders, and processes for funding the United Nations development system are complex and diverse. Rather than simply calling for greater volumes of quality funding, the evaluation identifies specific measures for Member States, UNSDG entities and the Resident Coordinator system to accelerate progress on relevant Funding Compact commitments.

Sub-recommendation 6.1: To better align funding decisions at the country level with Funding Compact commitments, Member States may consider reviewing their internal resource allocation processes and take

steps to ensure that all their staff who engage with the United Nations development system are fully aware of these Compact commitments.

Timeline: by Q4 2026

Sub-recommendation 6.2: Resident Coordinators should play a better recognized and supported leadership role in joint resource mobilization for the UNCT, to convene UNSDG entities, national stakeholders and funders around the priorities of the Cooperation Framework, including through better use of country-level funding dialogues as a key tool (see recommendation 1.1 ii).

Timeline: from Q1 2026

Sub-recommendation 6.3: UNSDG entities should develop more effective approaches to accelerate progress on Funding Compact commitments at the country level.

Timeline: from Q1 2026

7. Member State governance, oversight and coordination

320. The need for improved horizontal oversight of the United Nations development system is well established. It was noted in General Assembly resolutions on the QCPR (A/RES/79/226 and A/RES/75/233) and highlighted by the Secretary-General in his proposals for repositioning the system. Member States have a fundamental role in guiding operational activities for development: through their engagement as programme country governments; in their capacity as members of UNSDG entity governing bodies; and through the different types of funding they provide.

321. The evaluation concludes that, in general, Member States have not held UNSDG entities sufficiently accountable for delivering on the vision of a new generation of UNCTs. It confirms that current governance arrangements present obstacles to effective oversight of system-wide performance and collective development results. More consistent and coordinated Member State engagement is key to ensuring that UNCTs are accountable for coherent delivery of the Cooperation Frameworks in line with national priorities. Member States also need to sharpen their demand and provide stronger guidance for a more coherent and integrated UNCT offer at the country level to deliver on collective Cooperation Framework results.

Recommendation 7: The evaluation encourages Member States to provide more effective and coherent oversight and guidance with more consistent engagement on the collective performance of the United Nations development system (in accordance with A/RES/72/279 and resolutions on the QCPR); both through their engagement as programme country governments and in their roles in legislative and governing bodies, taking into consideration the following suggestions:

i. Programme country governments are encouraged to set out clear expectations and to hold UNCTs to account for the collective action and results delivered throughout the Cooperation Framework cycle.
ii. UNSDG entity legislative and governing bodies are encouraged to enhance ways of working to more clearly and consistently hold UNSDG entity leadership to account for their performance in responding to the ambition of the reforms; and for implementation of the recommendations made by this evaluation.
iii. Member States are encouraged to consider how to provide more effective and coherent oversight and guidance in legislative and governing bodies to encourage the United Nations development system to make greater progress on the reform ambitions, ensuring that there is consistency in their engagement and messaging.

Opportunities for adjustments include: responses to the 2023 report of the Joint Inspection Unit on governance and oversight provided by the New York Executive Boards (JIU/REP/2023/7), and consideration of the strengthened role for ECOSOC in oversight of the development system (A/RES/78/285).

Timeline: It is suggested that Member States initiate these actions as soon as possible and seek to implement them on an ongoing basis.

322. Figure 13 provides a visual representation of how the seven recommendations of the evaluation contribute to a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework delivery and better realization of the vision for a new generation of United Nations country teams. Figure 14 provides a visual representation of the evaluation's recommended shift from a focus on compliance points in the Cooperation Framework design phase and transparency for the purposes of reporting to real time transparency and focus on coherent delivery (recommendation 1). Figure 15 shows the positioning of the recommended reformulated joint workplan within a recalibrated Cooperation Framework cycle (recommendation 1).

Figure 13: Contribution of recommendations to a recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework cycle delivery and new generation of UNCTs (Figure 5 duplicate)

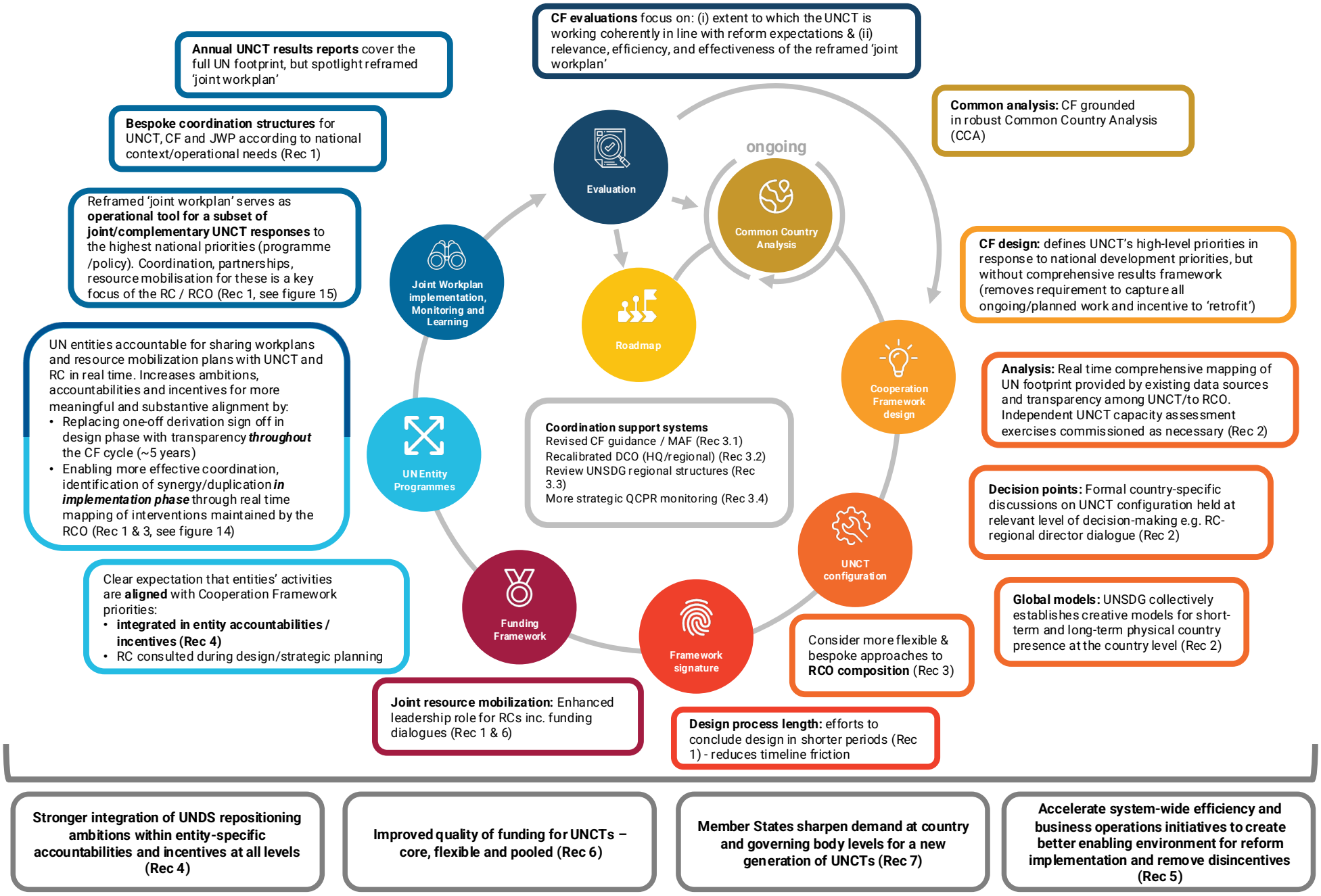
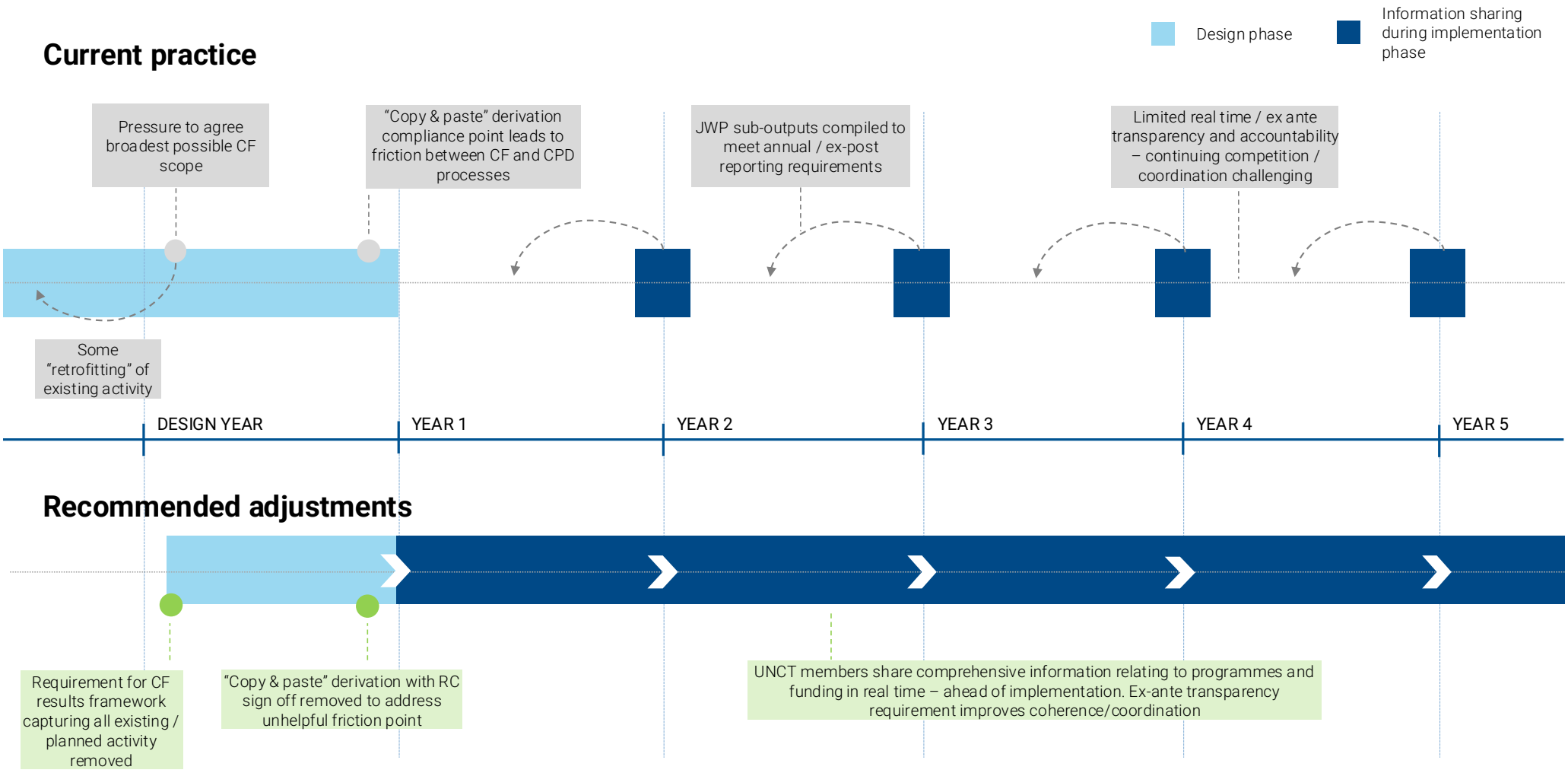
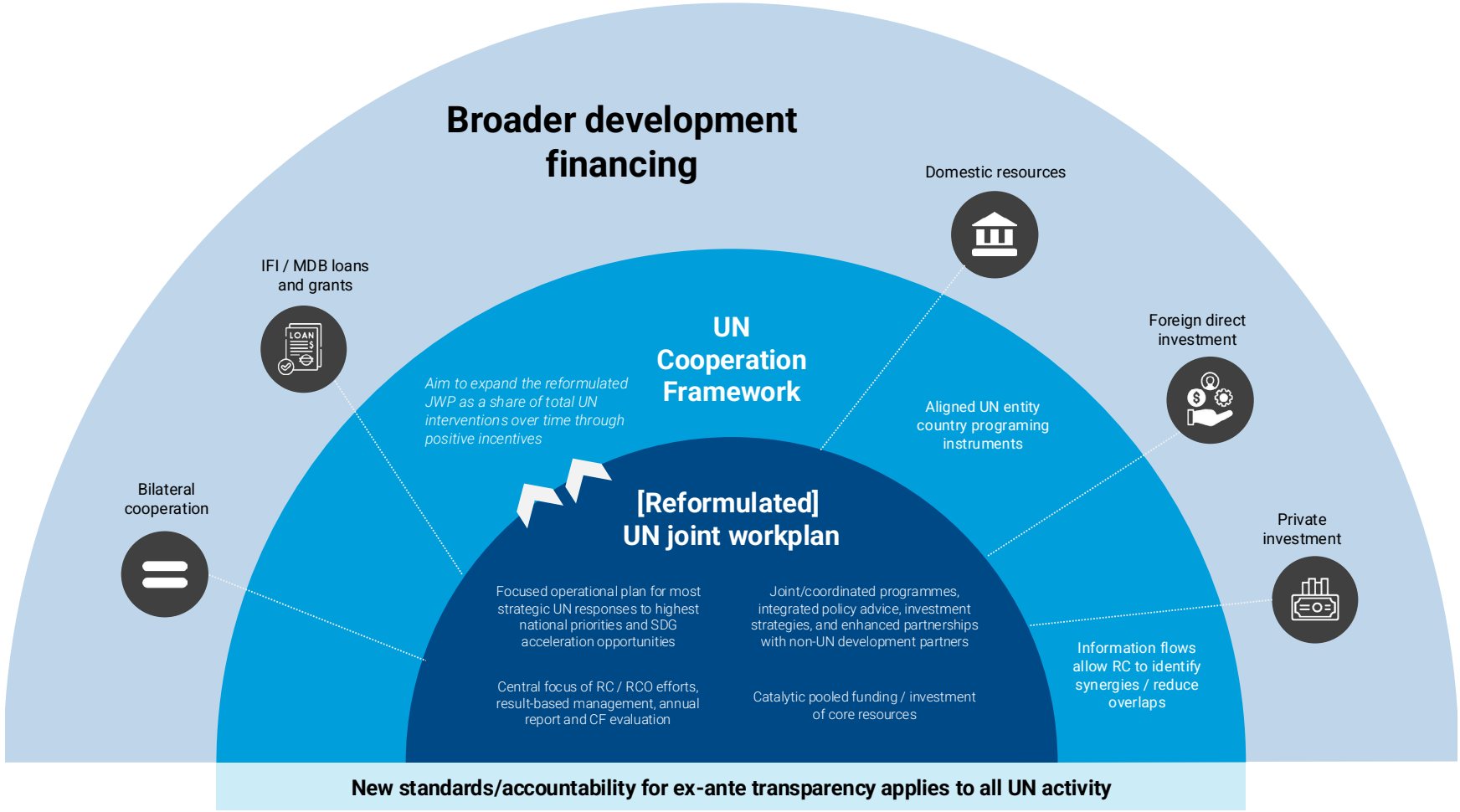


Figure 14: Visual representation of recommended adjustments to Cooperation Framework cycle delivery in timeline format (recommendation 1)



Source: SWEO

Figure 15: Visual representation of a reformulated joint workplan within a recalibrated Cooperation Framework cycle (recommendation 1)



Source: SWEO

Annexes

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Annex A: Summary Terms of Reference

Background & purpose

The **United Nations development system reform** calls for more coherent, accountable and effective support to help Member States achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Driven by the vision and proposals of the United Nations Secretary-General, the reform was mandated by the General Assembly (GA) in 2018 and includes a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system and a new generation of United Nations country teams (UNCT) delivering shared results in response to national development needs and priorities.

In this context, GA Resolutions 72/279 and 75/233 have recognized the United Nations **Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks** as the "most important instrument for the planning and implementation of UN development activities in each country". Accordingly, the Cooperation Framework Guidance (2019) emphasizes that "UN entities derive country programme outcomes from the Cooperation Framework, not vice-versa. Outcomes are hence developed in parallel to, not ahead of, the Cooperation Framework."

Measures to ensure and certify the **derivation** and **alignment** of United Nations country programmes with the Cooperation Framework are specified in the 2019 guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF). UNCT **configuration** is connected to derivation and alignment and concerns the skills and capacities of the United Nations entities to deliver on the priorities of the Cooperation Framework.

UNSDG Principals have requested "**an independent system-wide evaluation** on good practices and opportunities for improvement on country programmes' derivation from, and alignment with, Cooperation Frameworks and UN country team configuration". The proposed evaluation has also been welcomed by the Secretary-General in his reports on the implementation of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), with the 2024 report noting that "it will provide an important basis for the UN Sustainable Development Group to consider the system changes that may be required to ensure UNCT programmes and priorities are substantively derived from the priorities agreed with Member States in the Cooperation Framework."

The Cooperation Framework Guidance has now been implemented in more than 100 programme countries and many second-generation Cooperation Frameworks are due to be designed in the coming years.

Objectives and users

The evaluation has a dual purpose of accountability and learning, with a particular focus on learning lessons from the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks, identifying good practices and opportunities for improvement. It is timed to draw lessons from the implementation of the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks and make recommendations to inform the next generation. It will inform the ongoing revision of the Cooperation Framework Guidance, the revision of the MAF, and the implementation of the forthcoming 2024 QCPR resolution.

The primary users of the evaluation are the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) entities at the headquarters level, and the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO). Other key users include UNSDG entities at the regional level, United Nations country teams, Resident Coordinators, and United Nations Member States (as host governments and members of United Nations development system governing bodies).

Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions address the following broad areas:

EQ 1: Relevance and integration of guidance:
This question addresses the adequacy and clarity of the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the Management and Accountability Framework and how these tools help Resident Coordinators and UN entities deliver Cooperation Frameworks and reconfigure UNCTs.

EQ 2: Execution of guidance on derivation:
This question examines how Resident Coordinators and UNCTs have applied the guidance on derivation in different contexts and provides a more granular look at variability and execution.

EQ 3: Execution of UNCT configuration guidance:
This question assesses how effectively UNCTs are configuring themselves to meet country needs, including how the configuration exercises were executed, and explores factors influencing implementation, such as organizational stances and the role of national governments.

EQ 4: Outcomes of derivation and configuration exercises:
This question focuses on measurable outcomes, such as the extent to which entities' programmes reflect Cooperation Frameworks, structural changes in UNCTs, and contributions to development results. It also considers unanticipated results.

Key concepts and definitions
Derivation - extent to which the planning and design of UN entities' country-specific programmes stem from, and are fully integrated with, the priorities, goals and strategies outlined in the Cooperation Framework
Configuration - a time-bound exercise or ongoing process that "entails a look at capacities needed to deliver on the prioritized outcomes in the Cooperation Framework"
Cooperation Framework implementation - extent to which UN entities design, budget, raise resources and implement interventions that derive from the Cooperation Framework, and undertake these activities in line with Cooperation Framework implementation plans

Scope, methodology and ethics

The evaluand is the **United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)**, including its 37 member entities and secretariat (DCO) at country, regional and global levels. This includes funds and programmes, specialized agencies, entities working on "normative and standard setting activities", non-resident entities and entities with regional and global programmes. Humanitarian activities of UNSDG member entities (mandated by A/RES/46/182) are excluded from the evaluation scope. The evaluation is global in scope and will cover the period from the issuance of the Cooperation Framework Guidance (June 2019) to the evaluation's data collection phase (Q4 2024).

The evaluation will have both formative and summative dimensions. It will take a non-experimental, theory-based approach, assessing the implementation and outcomes of the reform against a Theory of Change. It will be conducted in a transparent and participatory manner to promote its use by key stakeholders. The central analytical framework will be an evaluation matrix, connecting an appropriate mix of data sources and collection methods to each evaluation question and sub-question and enabling triangulation and comparative analysis.

Data collection methods will include:

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs)
- Review of administrative, monitoring and survey data
- Document review
- Possible validation survey.

Data collection will be carried out at headquarters, regional and **country levels (in 21 sampled "focus countries"**[1]). The evaluation will be conducted in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

Evaluation team

The evaluation team is **independent and comprised of UNSDG-SWEO staff and consultants**. The team will work under the guidance and supervision of an inter-agency evaluation management group and the UNSDG-SWEO Executive Director. The core team includes:

- Daniel Arghiros: Team Leader
- Tom Barton: Evaluation Manager and Team Member
- Nicholas Chua: Evaluation Analyst
- Carlotta de Vivanco: Senior Technical Specialist (UN reform)
- Veronika Tywuschik-Sohlstrom: Senior Evaluation Analyst

Management and governance

The **UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office** has overall responsibility for steering the system-wide evaluation from start to completion in a credible, transparent and utilization-focused manner, in adherence with UNEG norms and standards.

An **Evaluation Management Group**, chaired by the Executive Director of the SWEO and including staff from the evaluation offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Food Programme (WFP), will provide expertise and advice on appropriate evaluation design, data collection and analysis methods, advice on secondary data sources and primary data collection opportunities, and first-level quality assurance of evaluation deliverables.

An **Evaluation Reference Group** representing the evaluation's users (UNSDG entities) will be engaged at key points in the evaluation process (including the preparation of the terms of reference (ToR)) to comment on the approach, validate findings and participate in the development of recommendations, ensuring that the evaluation is relevant and useful.

An **Evaluation Advisory Group** composed of independent experts with professional or research experience in United Nations reform issues will be engaged at various stages of the evaluation process to provide thought leadership and external viewpoints.

1. Albania, Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Viet Nam.

Timeline

- Preparation & Scoping: **Apr-Jul 2024**
- Inception: **Jul-Oct 2024**
- Data Collection/Analysis: **Oct 2024-Jan 2025**
- Reporting: **Feb-May 2025**
- Dissemination: **from May 2025 onwards**

October 2024

Annex B: Methodology

This annex provides additional detail on the evaluation's approach and methodology as referenced in Section 1.3 of the main report.

Understanding "alignment"

An important part of the evaluation's inception phase was to understand how the key terms of alignment, derivation and configuration have been used and understood across the United Nations development system. The concepts of derivation and configuration have been defined by the evaluation team and their use is explained in the body of the report. The evaluation also sought to establish a working definition of alignment, during the inception phase.

The consultation and first draft of the evaluation's inception report proposed that the evaluation would use the term "alignment" to refer to "aligned implementation" of the Cooperation Framework. A combination of feedback and further interviews indicated that the term could not, or should not, be delimited in this way. As explained in Section 1, alignment is used in too many ways for this to be viable – detailed to some extent in Table 7. To avoid confusion, the evaluation did not circumscribe its use of the term in this way. As set out in the evaluation questions (see EQ4) the evaluation examined aspects of Cooperation Framework implementation but without calling this an examination of aligned implementation.

Table 7: Uses of alignment in the Cooperation Framework Guidance (2019) with evaluation team emphasis and commentary

Category	Use
*Alignment of the content of the Cooperation Framework – to be considered in the context of **derivation** by the evaluation*	• The Cooperation Framework should be **aligned** with the national development strategy, national SDG strategies and targets (p.14-15) national accountability mechanisms (p.13), internationally and regionally agreed policy frameworks (p.14); it should be flexible to be aligned with national planning and implementation cycles (p.12). • The Cooperation Framework "should **align** its targets and indicators to the extent possible to relevant targets and indicators in national development plans, which should in turn be informed by the SDGs". • Resident Coordinators are required to comment on whether entities CPDs '**align**' with the Cooperation Framework – but this appears to be limited to assessing the extent to which entities' Country Programme Documents (CPDs) have adopted the Cooperation Framework outcomes, and is therefore shallow: • *Once a new Cooperation Framework is approved, entities will **align** specific country development programming documents…. [T]he RC coordinates implementation of the Cooperation Framework and works with UNCT members to align UN development system entity country development programmes with the Cooperation Framework and the 2030 Agenda. The Resident Coordinator will have the opportunity to review and comment on entities' country development programming documents before their submission to governing mechanisms, with a view to confirming alignment and coherence with the Cooperation Framework, identifying opportunities for synergies and complementarities, and avoiding duplication and overlap." (p.27)*

Category	Use
How entities implement their programmes in relation to the Cooperation Framework ***In the context of examining Cooperation Framework implementation, the evaluation will look at whether budgets and resource mobilization strategies are aligned with the Cooperation Framework budget as part of the review of Cooperation Framework implementation (first bullet point). The second bullet point will not be addressed.***	• Funding follows the needs-based logic underpinning the Cooperation Framework. The budgets and resource mobilisation strategies of UN development entities should be **aligned** with the Cooperation Framework budget, not vice versa. (p.24) • Where possible, results groups are **aligned** with and feed into existing government-led working structures, such as sector working groups, clusters, etc. (p.27)

Sampling strategy and criteria

Given the time and resources available to the evaluation, the team determined that it was possible for the country-level component of the evaluation's data collection to remotely cover 21 countries. This was in deliberate contrast to global or thematic evaluations in the past, which have conducted more in-depth country case studies with field visits in approximately four or five countries. A wider sample of countries was deemed appropriate to provide sufficient opportunities for the identification of good practices and lessons learned across different contexts. While the number of data collection "events" or "engagements" in each country was limited by this approach, the evaluation team maximized the number of country-level stakeholders that participated in the evaluation through reliance on focus group discussions in addition to one-to-one interviews.

The primary criteria for the selection of focus countries was the Cooperation Framework "roll out status" (specifically the Cooperation Framework implementation start date). In sampling countries by Cooperation Framework start date, three important factors were considered:

a. **Full opportunity to develop and implement a Cooperation Framework in accordance with the new guidance.** As detailed in the terms of reference (paragraph 37), UNCTs that began Cooperation Framework implementation in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were not considered to have had a full opportunity to apply the new guidance and approach. As such, only UNCTs that began the implementation of a Cooperation Framework from January 2022 onwards were considered.
b. **Implementation maturity.** The evaluation required enough time to have elapsed following the Cooperation Framework and country programme design process for possible outcomes to be observed, in terms of the substance of alignment and derivation, the effects of the UNCT configuration exercise and the potential contributions to national development results.
c. **Institutional memory stakeholder availability.** The evaluation required data from stakeholders that have most recently applied the new guidance on Cooperation Framework design, country programme derivation and UNCT configuration, given turnover of United Nations and government staff, current interest in or salience of the issues.

These considerations combined suggested that a sample of focus countries should include a balance across three categories (seven countries per cohort):

a. 2022 Cooperation Framework start dates – with the greatest implementation maturity
b. 2024 Cooperation Framework start dates – with strong institutional memory
c. 2025 Cooperation Framework start dates – with ongoing processes providing an opportunity for observation and learning in real time.

A total of 54 UNCTs began Cooperation Framework implementation in 2022 and 2024, or were preparing to begin implementation in January or July 2025. From this longlist of 54 countries, 21 were selected for inclusion in the sample using a combination of secondary criteria, as follows:

a. **Number of Cooperation Framework cycles:** UNCTs that had begun implementation of a second cycle (or are in advanced stages of preparation) were prioritized. Several 2025 Cooperation Frameworks are second cycles.
b. **Recently concluded upcoming processes:** UNCTs that had recently concluded key cooperation road map milestones (especially the UNCT configuration exercise) or had them planned during the period of evaluation data collection (October to December 2024) were prioritized.
c. **Other evaluation coverage:** Coverage of a UNCT by other evaluations (United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or Cooperation Framework evaluations, entity country programme evaluations, and previous system-wide evaluations) was used both to prioritize and de-prioritize countries. Completion of UNDAF or Cooperation Framework evaluations and a body of country programme evaluations were used as a reason to prioritize – allowing the system-wide evaluation to draw on and build upon the existing evaluation work of the United Nations system. Ongoing evaluations were used as a reason to deprioritize or exclude a country from the sample – due to risk of evaluation fatigue and overlap or duplication of data collection activities.
d. **Pooled funding:**[2] UNCTs with a country-level pooled fund (for development) aligned to the Cooperation Framework were prioritized, especially if the fund was significant in size.
e. **Member State participation in key United Nations development system governing bodies:** Countries that served in leadership roles within governing bodies (for example, as Chair, President or Bureau Member of the Executive Boards of the United Nations funds and programmes and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), especially) were prioritized, as their inclusion may have provided opportunities to understand Member State perspectives – both as a host government that has agreed a Cooperation Framework and as a member of the bodies that approve country programming instruments for certain entities.
f. **Resident Coordinator term:** Countries where the incumbent Resident Coordinator was in post throughout the Cooperation Framework design process and remained during implementation were prioritized for reasons of complete institutional memory. Countries with a new Resident Coordinator who arrived after the design process were de-prioritized
g. **Special situations:** To ensure balance across regions, special situations (least-developed countries (LDCs), landlocked -developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS)), humanitarian mission contexts, country income status were all included.

Humanitarian and mission (or multi-pillar) settings were included in the sample for the purpose of examining the different contexts in which the United Nations country teams, including their "dual-mandated" members, operate. However, the presence and configuration of humanitarian action, mandated by General Assembly resolution 46/182, was not within the scope of the evaluation.

2. A country-level pooled fund (development) is often referred to as SDG country fund; this inter-agency pooled fund is used by a United Nations country team, under Resident Coordinator leadership, to consolidate and leverage financing towards country priority SDGs as per the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. https://mptf.undp.org/page/un-pooled-funding-key-concepts-and-terms.

Table 8: Focus countries selected by the evaluation team for primary data collection

Africa	Asia-Pacific	Latin America & Caribbean	Arab States	Europe & Central Asia
Angola Botswana Ethiopia Kenya Malawi Mali Seychelles (MCO with Mauritius) Rwanda Sierra Leone	Bangladesh Bhutan Papua New Guinea Philippines Viet Nam	Colombia El Salvador (MCO with Belize) Honduras Paraguay	Iraq Jordan	Albania

Figure 16 provides full details on the countries selected and the sampling criteria. The sample included the following:

a. **Number of Cooperation Framework cycles:** Eight UNCTs that had implemented or designed more than one Cooperation Framework
b. **Recently concluded or upcoming processes:** Six UNCTs that conducted the configuration exercise in 2023, two that completed it in 2024, and several countries where the exercise was in progress or planned. UNCT configuration exercises were planned in Ethiopia and Rwanda during the evaluation's data collection period (Oct-Dec 2024)
c. **Other evaluation coverage:** Five UNCTs that had recently conducted a Cooperation Framework or UNDAF evaluation (2023 to date). Eight UNCTs where there was a body of two or more (recent–2023 to date) UN entity country programmes to draw on
d. **Pooled funding:** Five UNCTs with Cooperation Framework-aligned UN pooled funds – Albania, Colombia, Kenya, Papua New Guinea and Malawi (with committed 2019-2024 funding ranging from USD 13 million to USD 131 million)
e. **Member State participation in key UN development system governing bodies:** Four countries were serving in senior positions within UN fund and programme Executive Boards – Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Colombia
f. **Resident Coordinator term:** 16 countries where the incumbent Resident Coordinator had been in post throughout Cooperation Framework design and into Cooperation Framework implementation, three countries where the Resident Coordinator arrived shortly after Cooperation Framework implementation began, and one country where there was an acting Resident Coordinator (post vacant)
g. **Balance across regions, special situations (LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS), humanitarian or mission contexts, country income status:**
    - Regions: Nine (43 per cent) Africa, five (24 per cent) Asia-Pacific, four (19 per cent) Latin America and Caribbean, two (10 per cent) Arab states, and one (5 per cent) Eastern Europe and Central Asia
    - Special situations: 12 countries (57 per cent) with LDC, LLDC or SIDS status
    - Humanitarian or mission contexts: Eight countries (38 per cent) with an ongoing (2024) UN-coordinated humanitarian response and a United Nations peacekeeping or special political mission presence (Colombia, Iraq, Mali)
    - County income status: Five low-income countries (24 per cent), nine lower middle-income countries (43 per cent), and seven upper middle-income countries (33 per cent).
h. **Multi-country offices:** Two multi-country office settings – El Salvador-Belize and Mauritius-Seychelles were included.

Figure 16: Detailed focus country sampling criteria

UN country team	Sequencing / Group	No. of CF cycles	CF Start Date	RC EOD	UNCT configuration exercise	CF / UNDAF Evaluation Status	CPI evaluations recently complete	CF aligned Pooled Fund (commitments 2019-24)	EB Chair / Bureau member	Region	Special situation	HRP / FA / SPM / PKO (2024)	Income category
Albania	**1**	1st	Jan-22	1-Sep-20	2021			SDG Acceleration Fund (28m) & SDG Fund II (13m)		ECA			Upper Middle
Angola	**1**	2nd	Jan-24	21-Sep-20	2023					AFR	LDC		Lower Middle
Bangladesh	**1**	1st	Jan-22	8-May-22	2022				UNDP/UNFPA	AP	LDC	X	Lower Middle
Bhutan	**2**	1st	Jan-24	1-Mar-22	2023		UNICEF, WFP			AP	LLDC		Lower Middle
Botswana	**2**	1st	Jan-22	5-Jan-20	2021					AFR	LLDC		Upper Middle
Colombia	**1**	2nd	Jan-24	18-Jul-21	2024	Complete	WFP,IFAD,OIOS	Trust Fund for Peace (131m)	UNDP/UNFPA	LAC		X	Upper Middle
El Salvador	**2**	1st	Jan-22	1-Jul-23	2021		PBF			LAC		X	Upper Middle
Ethiopia	**1**	2nd	Jul-25	8-Aug-23	Planned during data collection	Ongoing	UNDP, WFP		UNDP/UNFPA	AFR	LDC, LLDC	X	Low
Honduras	**1**	1st	Jan-22	13-Jul-20	2021		UNHCR			LAC		X	Lower Middle
Iraq	**2**	2nd	Jan-25	30-Sep-22	Dates missing	Ongoing	WFP,WHO, UNHCR			ARAB		X	Upper Middle
Jordan	**1**	1st	Jan-23	22-Jan-23	2022					ARAB			Lower Middle
Kenya	**1**	1st	Jul-22	1-Mar-21	2022		WFP	SDG MPTF (16m)		AFR			Lower Middle
Malawi	**2**	2nd	Jan-24	10-Dec-22	2023		WFP	SDG Acceleration Fund (124m)		AFR	LDC, LLDC	X	Low
Mali	**2**	2nd	Jan-25	a.i	2024	Complete	UN-Women, WFP, UNHCR, FAO			AFR	LDC, LLDC	X	Low
Seychelles	**2**	1st	Jan-24	11-Nov-22	2023					AFR	SIDS		Upper Middle
Papua New Guinea	**1**	1st	Jan-24	7-Dec-22	2023			UN Country Fund (120m) & Fund II (42m)		AP	SIDS		Lower Middle
Paraguay	**1**	2nd	Jan-25	23-Sep-19	In progress	Complete	UNDP			LAC	LLDC		Upper Middle
Philippines	**1**	1st	Jan-24	11-May-20	2023		WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF			AP			Lower Middle
Rwanda	**1**	1st	Jan-25	10-Jul-22	Planned during data collection	Complete	UN-Women, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP		UNICEF	AFR	LDC, LLDC		Low
Sierra Leone	**1**	2nd	Jan-25	6-Dec-23	In progress	Complete				AFR	LDC		Low
Viet Nam	**1**	1st	Jan-22	18-Jun-22	2021					AP			Lower Middle

Source: DCO data and evaluation team desk research and analysis

Primary data collection

Primary data collection focused on consulting stakeholders in the follow categories at the country, regional and global levels.

Table 9: Stakeholders consulted

	Country	Regional	Global
United Nations system	• UN Resident Coordinators (KII) • RCO staff (FGD) • UNCT / Programme Management Team / results groups (FGD)	• Development Coordination Office (DCO) Regional Directors (KII) • DCO regional staff (FGD) • Regional Peer Support Group (FGD) • Regional directors / representatives of typically non-resident entities (KIIs) • Regional economic commissions (KII)	• UNSDG HQs – divisions with responsibility for country programming, UN partnerships etc (KIIs) • DCO HQ – primarily Policy and Programme Branch (KIIs and FGDs) • EOSG – Sustainable Development Unit and Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (KIIs) • Oversight bodies e.g. the Office of the Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) – Resident Coordinator system evaluation team, agency strategic plan evaluators (KIIs) • Pooled Fund secretariats (KIIs)
External	• Government officials from ministries responsible for development cooperation coordination (KIIs) • In country development partners – donors/IFIs (KIIs)	• Development partners	• Member States permanent missions (KIIs) • Member State capitals (KIIs) • Independent analysts (KIIs)

The evaluation's data collection tools were designed to gather the information to answer the questions outlined in the matrix and were tailored to the various sources and stakeholders who are able to provide that information (see Table 10).

Guiding questions were developed and tailored for each stakeholder group and data collection type. Table 10 provides a visual presentation of how interview guides varied by group and where a concentration of relevant qualitative data were found.

The letter X indicates that interviews in that category sought and collected information on the topic. Yellow highlights indicate that that interviews in that category provided particularly detailed information on the topic. The table is not exhaustive, most of the interview categories provided some relevant information about most of the topics of concern to the evaluation. However, it gives an indication of where evidence was concentrated and how it was triangulated across stakeholder groups.

Table 10: Information sought (X) and collected in interviews and focus groups by evaluation question or topic and stakeholder group

Stakeholder Group	UNSDG Entities				Resident Coordinator system					Member States			
Line of inquiry	Entity HQs	Regional peer support group	Regional offices / Directors / RECs	UN country teams / RGs / PMTs	DCO HQ	RCs	RCOs	DCO Regional Directors	DCO regional teams	Programme country governments	Donors in-country	NY permanent missions	Donor HQs
EQ1													
1.1 Strategic intent of the reforms	X				X	X		X				X	X
1.2 Utility of guidance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
1.3. UN entity adoption of reforms	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
EQ 2													
Common country analysis / Cooperation Framework design	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
2.1 Derivation in practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
2.2 Factors to enable or constrain derivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
EQ 3													
3.1 & 3.2 UNCT configuration exercises		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
3.3 Factors to enable or constrain configuration	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
EQ 4													
Joint workplans		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
CF governance		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
CF monitoring/reporting				X		X	X	X	X	X			
Funding the CF		X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		
Other / cross-cutting													
Regional support systems		X	X		X	X	X	X	X				
CF evaluations				X	X	X	X						
RC leadership / UNCT leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Competition/transparency				X		X	X			X	X		
Donor behaviour	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Governing bodies	X				X			X		X		X	X

Stakeholders consulted

The following tables and figures complement and unpack the summarized version in Figure 10, Section 1.3.

Table 11: Number of people consulted by level and stakeholder category[3]

	Total	UNSDG entity				DCO / Resident Coordinator system				Member States / development partners			Other		
Level		F	M	Other	Total	F	M	Other	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
Country	337	84	72	20	176	60	52	2	114	27	20	47			
HQ/global	101	35	39		74	8	5		13	6		6	4	4	8
Regional	67	24	19	1	44	15	7		22		1	1			
Total	**505**	**143**	**130**	**21**	**294**	**83**	**64**	**2**	**149**	**33**	**21**	**54**	**4**	**4**	**8**

The evaluation team sought to consult, by interview, all 37 members of the UNSDG. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) did not participate in interviews but provided written responses to questions. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) did not participate in interviews. The United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) joined the UNSDG during the evaluation, expanding the membership to 38. Table 12 presents the number of people consulted by entity.

Table 12: Number of people consulted by UNSDG entity

UNSDG Entity	F	M	Other	Total
DPPA	1	1		2
ESCAP	4	2		6
ESCWA	1	1		2
FAO	5	7	1	13
IFAD		1	1	2
ILO	6	7	1	14
IOM	5	5	1	11
ITC	1	1		2
ITU	3			3
UN DESA	1	1		2
OHCHR	9	4		13
PAHO		1		1
PBSO		1		1
UN Women	9	1	1	11
UN-Habitat		2		2
UNAIDS	6	3	1	10
UNCDF	1	1		2
UNCTAD	2	3		5
UNDP	11	12	1	24
UNDRR	3			3
UNECA	1			1
UNECE	2	2		4
UNEP	3	3	1	7
UNESCO	13	5		18

3. Note: Regional Economic Commissions are counted as regional rather than headquarters. Executive Office of the Secretary-General stakeholders are counted within DCO/RC system. UNSDG entities at the country level may include staff who are UNCT members but not UNSDG members (e.g. the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) etc.). "Others" includes independent consultants, academia and oversight bodies.

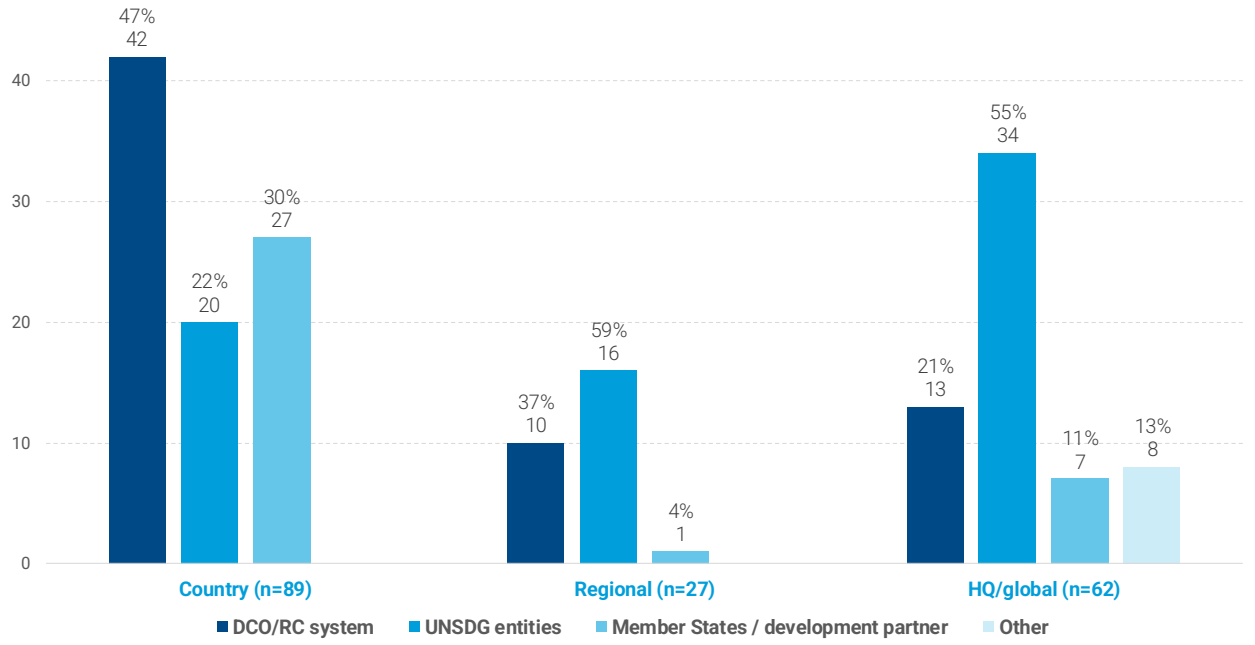
UNSDG Entity	F	M	Other	Total
UNFPA	4	9	1	14
UNHCR	6	1	1	8
UNICEF	8	10	2	20
UNIDO	7	12	2	21
UNODC	5	6		11
UNOPS	6	5	1	12
UNV	1	3		4
WFP	7	9	1	17
WHO	5	3		8
WMO	1	1		2
Entity missing / not recorded	6	7	5	18
Grand Total	143	130	21	294

Table 13 and Figure 17 break down the 178 key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted by level and category.[4]

Table 13: Number of key informant interviews and focus group discussions (combined) by level and stakeholder category

	UNSDG Entity	DCO / Resident Coordinator system	Member States / development partner	Other	Total
Country-level	20	42	27		89
Regional level	16	10	1		27
HQ/global level	34	13	7	8	62
Total	**70**	**65**	**35**	**8**	**178**

Figure 17: Number of key informant interviews and focus group discussions (combined) by level and stakeholder category



4. KIIs and FGDs cannot be distinguished in these data as many key informant interviews that intended to consult 1-2 individuals expanded to larger groups, inevitably taking on the dynamics of a focus group discussion, with participants exchanging views and reacting to each other's perceptions.

Secondary data collection

The evaluation draws on a very large body of secondary data and documentation, gathered from different levels and parts of the UN system (country level, entity headquarters, governing bodies, etc.), including both self-reporting and independent analysis. This body included the broad categories below.

Global and headquarters-level documentation: UNSDG and entity-specific programming guidance, UNSDG entity strategic plans, UNSDG entity reporting to governing bodies on adoption and implementation of the reforms, evaluations conducted by UNSDG entity evaluation offices, multilateral organization performance assessment network (MOPAN) reports, academic literature on UN reforms, etc. Approximately 400 documents were collected. Detail on how this subset of documentation was gathered and analysed is provided in Annex F (with public sources listed in Annex H).

Country level documentation: Cooperation Frameworks, UNCT annual results reports, Cooperation Framework evaluations, UNCT configuration concept papers, joint resource mobilization and partnership strategies, joint workplans, and UN entity programming instruments (gathered from public sources – for example, governing body websites, RCOs, and UNSDG entity headquarters). Approximately 700 documents were collected. This subset of the documentation is described in Annex H (for public sources) and Annex E (for internal documents).

Existing administrative and perception-based surveys: Primarily (a) UNSDG Information Management System (IMS) surveys administered by DCO and (b) annual QCPR monitoring surveys of Resident Coordinators, UNCTs, UNSDG entity headquarters, and programme country governments administered by UN DESA between 2021 and 2024. A full list of surveys examined can be found in Annex E. The evaluation team was also invited to advise on revision of a small number of especially relevant survey questions on country programming instrument for the 2024 IMS data collection. The full wording of these questions was as follows:

C.1.8 – Signature of the Cooperation Framework Document
Note: Cooperation Framework or Programming document designed in exceptional circumstances
Signature of the Cooperation Framework Document or equivalent:
Planned signature date [Date: MM/YYYY]
Actual signature date [Date: MM/YYYY]
Upload the signed Cooperation Framework Document or equivalent [Upload]

C.1.8.1 – Framework signed by Government [Yes/No]

C.1.8.2 – Framework contains legal annex [Yes/No]

The following questions are answered for each UN entity added to the Workspace:

C.1.8.3 – Based on the Cooperation Framework (or equivalent) that will be in place on 1 January of 2025, select from the below those that apply for the UN entity. This means that if you are starting a new CF at the beginning of 2025, you will need to answer the following questions for the new CF (not the one currently in place ending in Dec 2024).

Note: The data in this section is used for UNSDG cost-sharing purposes. Please ensure the Resident Coordinator signs off on the signatories data below.

- Is the Entity a signatory to the Framework? [No/UN Entity Signed/RC signed on behalf of UN Entity] [QCPR 5.2.3 and RC Results Framework 2.1.1]
- Is it a UNCT member [Yes/No]
- Is it physically present [Yes/No] [QCPR: 5.2.4]

C.1.8.4 – What type of programming instrument is the basis for Entity work in the country? [single-select for each UNCT entity]

Note: Definition of country level programming instrument: Country level programming is the framework of the United Nations development system entities, which identifies how they are derived from the Cooperation Framework. It identifies the planned support in a given country towards the achievement of the agreed outcomes and outputs in the Cooperation Framework.

- The entity has a country programming instrument that goes through a governing body approval process (e.g. agencies' country programme document such as UNDP's CPD is submitted to the Executive Board)
- The entity has a country programming instrument that goes through an approval process internal to the Entity, but not through an inter-governmental process (e.g. UN Women's Strategic Note)
- The entity has a country programming instrument that does not go through any inter-governmental or Entity-internal approval process
- The entity does not have a country programming instrument but has country engagement through country-level programmes and/or projects, advisory services, etc.
- The entity does not have a country programming instrument and is NOT operational in-country. [If this option is selected the remainder of this section is skipped]

C.1.8.5 – Has the Entity's country level programming instrument or country engagement been derived from the Cooperation Framework? [single-select for each UNCT entity]

Note: The options below are sourced from the UNSDG Cooperation Framework guidance, except for option D which serves for HQ analyses of potentially different practices outside of the guidance. The RCO should select the option that most closely reflects entity country programming. Additional explanatory information can be shared with the DCO programming unit (PPB) as required.

a. Adopted the Cooperation Framework as their country programming instrument
b. Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim
c. Adopted Cooperation Framework outcomes verbatim and added agency specific outcome(s)
d. Entity country level programming instrument/engagement derives from the Cooperation Framework, but the outcomes are formulated differently
e. Entity country level programming instrument/engagement did not derive from the Cooperation Framework
f. C.1.8.5.1 – [If selected "E. Entity country level programming instrument/engagement does not derive from the Cooperation Framework"] If not derived from the Cooperation Framework, please explain [Open text]

C.1.8.6 – [If selected a, b, c or d (but not e) in C.1.8.5] RC involvement in in the derivation of the Entity's country programming instrument and/or engagement (in line with MAF) (Select all that apply): [multi-select for each UNCT entity]

a. RC was consulted in key stages of entity specific strategic planning for the entity programming instrument/engagement
b. RC provided formal written confirmation on alignment/derivation of the programming instrument/engagement to/from the Cooperation Framework
c. No, the RC was neither consulted, nor requested to provide formal written confirmation to the entity programming instrument/engagement
d. Not applicable, as the entity did not derive their programming instrument/engagement from the Cooperation Framework
e. Other (please explain)

C.1.8.6.1 – [If selected "RC provided formal written confirmation on alignment/derivation to/from the Cooperation Framework"] Please upload the letters confirming derivation. [Upload/enter URL]

C.1.8.6.a – [If selected "Other (please explain)"] You selected "Other", please explain. [Upload]

C.1.8.7 – When the Entity started the development of its country programming instrument, what was the status of the Cooperation Framework? [single-select for each entity]

a. The Cooperation Framework was finalized and signed
b. The Cooperation Framework was in its final draft form, but not signed
c. The Cooperation Framework results framework was finalized, but not the full document
d. The Cooperation Framework had (early) draft outcome statements only
e. The Cooperation Framework draft outcome statements were not available but the process had started
f. The Cooperation Framework process had not started

UNSDG entities consulted in the validation phase

The evaluation team engaged extensively with UNSDG stakeholders to present preliminary findings and consult on recommendations.

Briefings: Emerging findings were presented to the UNSDG Programme Development and Results (PDR) group and the Resident Coordinator system in February 2025. Two briefings on emerging findings were also held for UNSDG entity regional directors across all regions (March 2025). UNSDG Principals were briefed on the evaluation results in May 2025.

Report review: A draft evaluation report including findings and conclusions was circulated to the UNSDG entities during March 2025. A total of 21 organizations provided written comments on the draft findings and recommendations.

Recommendations workshops: A total of 31 UNSDG entities, as well as representatives of the Development Coordination Office (DCO), Joint SDG Fund, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) participated in a series of three recommendations workshops held in New York, Geneva and online in April 2025. In addition, 55 Resident Coordinators participated in a separate recommendations workshop on the draft findings and conclusions.

Table 14: Entities consulted during validation phase

UNSDG Entity	Participant in recommendations workshops	Written comments
DCO	Y	Y
UN DESA	Y	Y
ECLAC	Y	
EOSG	Y	
ESCWA	Y	Y
FAO	Y	Y
IFAD	Y	Y
ILO	Y	Y
IOM	Y	
ITC	Y	Y
ITU	Y	
Joint SDG Fund	Y	
MPTFO	Y	Y
OCHA	Y	Y
OHCHR	Y	Y

UNSDG Entity	Participant in recommendations workshops	Written comments
PBSO	Y	
UN HABITAT	Y	Y
UN Women	Y	Y
UNAIDS	Y	
UNCTAD	Y	
UNDP	Y	Y
UNDRR	Y	
UNECE	Y	Y
UNEP	Y	Y
UNESCO	Y	
UNFPA	Y	Y
UNHCR	Y	Y
UNICEF	Y	Y
UNIDO	Y	Y
UNODC	Y	
UNOPS	Y	
UNV	Y	
WFP	Y	Y
WHO	Y	
WMO	Y	Y
Total	**35**	**21**

Annex C: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Lines of enquiry	Data sources and analysis
EQ1: Relevance and integration of guidance: **EQ1: To what extent is the guidance and direction provided adequate and relevant to the objectives of a new generation of UN Country Teams?**		
1.1. To what extent do the Cooperation Framework Guidance and the MAF reflect the strategic intent of the reforms, in particular in relation to derivation, configuration and aligned implementation?	• Stakeholder perception of degree to which guidelines require action that is robust enough to drive the required transformation (e.g. adequacy of mandatory elements) • Degree to which guidance is sufficiently comprehensive	• Review of key resolutions and SG reports related to UN development system reform • Review of Cooperation Framework Guidance and related materials and the MAF • Review of SG and Chair of UNSDG reports to ECOSOC/GA • KIIs with EOSG, UNSDG members and DCO at the global level • Member State feedback through KIIs and ECOSOC documentation
1.2. How useful is the guidance in providing RCs and UN entities with the tools to deliver Cooperation Frameworks, encourage meaningful derivation, aligned implementation and support the reconfiguration of UNCTs?	• Stakeholders perception of strengths/weaknesses • Levels of implementation ease in focus countries	• KIIs with DCO (global and regional), RCs and UNSDG members at the global level • FGDs with UNCTs and RCOs • FGDs with UNSDG members at the regional level • Feedback through global and entity-specific surveys • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Feedback from review exercises (UNCT workshops)
1.3. To what extent have UN entities adapted their processes and provided their staff with the necessary capabilities to support the new generation of UNCTs?	• Clarity of direction entities have given to their staff and at what levels • At what organizational levels have these principles been adopted in UN entities? • Training and capacity-building measures implemented in entities • Formal incentives and accountability mechanisms established by UN entities to drive implementation	• Global UNSDG KIIs • Review of strategic documents (e.g. strategic plans, governing body documentation) of key UN entities • Review of key UN entity internal guidance related to engagement in Cooperation Frameworks and country programming instruments • KIIs with DCO global • KIIs and FGDs UNSDG members at regional and country levels • Feedback through global and entity-specific surveys • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews
EQ2: Execution of derivation/alignment guidance **EQ2: How have Resident Coordinators and UNCTs executed the guidance on country programme derivation?**		
2.1. How have RCs and UNCTs executed the guidance on country programme derivation in different contexts?	• Variability in execution across different country contexts • Adaptation strategies employed in varying contexts • Degree to which are UNSDG entities' country programming instruments are derived from the Cooperation Frameworks • Extent to which entities derived the outcomes or their entire programme activities and timelines from the Cooperation Framework	• KIIs and FGDs in focus countries • Review of key Cooperation Framework documentation in focus countries • Review of SG and Chair of UNSDG reports to ECOSOC • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Spectrum of alignment review in focus countries

Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Lines of enquiry	Data sources and analysis
2.2. What factors explain the variable implementation of the guidance across entities and countries?	• Influence of entity internal guidelines/policies and their established practices • Relationship between entities' country programming instrument approval processes and their derivation/alignment commitments • Nature of engagement by entities with sensitive/ normative mandates • Influence of national governments on implementation (e.g. degree of influence, unified positions) • Influence of other development actors, in particular: bilateral donors, international financial institutions, civil society • Impact of other contextual factors (e.g., national, regional) on implementation	• KIIs with Resident Coordinators • FGDs with UNCTs • KIIs with representatives of national governments and other development actors (e.g., international financial institutions, bilateral donors, foundations, civil society) • KIIs and FGDs with DCO at regional and global level • FGDs with UNSDG members at the regional level • KIIs with UNSDG members (HQ) • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Review of UN entity country programming instrument approval processes • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Review of UNCT, inter-agency group minutes in focus countries
EQ3: Execution of UNCT configuration guidance: **EQ3: How effectively have resident coordinators and UNCTs executed guidance on the UNCT configuration process?**		
3.1. To what extent have UNCT configuration exercises sought to collaboratively put in place a needs-based tailored country presence?	• Degree of collaboration among UNCT members during configuration exercises • Degree to which planned country presence matches identified needs	• KIIs with RCs • FGDs with UNCTs, RCO staff and Cooperation Framework results group • KIIs with representatives of national governments and other development actors (e.g., international financial institutions, bilateral donors, foundations, civil society) • Review of configuration exercise documentation in focus countries • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Review of SG and Chair of UNSDG reports to ECOSOC
3.2 To what extent have the UNCT configuration exercises mapped existing capacities against those needed to deliver the Cooperation Framework?	• Views on the degree to which capacity mapping was strategic and forward looking • Identification of capacity gaps and duplication • Perception of stakeholders on degree to which identification of required and redundant capacities was focused primarily on delivery of Cooperation Framework commitments (degree to which it was influenced by entities' institutional considerations)? • Degree of satisfaction of national government representatives with resultant configuration	• Review of configuration exercise documentation in focus countries • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • KIIs with RCs in focus countries • KIIs with national governments in focus countries • FGDs with RCOs and UNCTs in focus countries • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Review of capacity assessments conducted
3.3. What factors explain the variable implementation of the configuration guidance across entities and countries?	• How have entity policies, guidance, internal communication, capabilities, and resources affected implementation • The engagement and influence of national governments • The influence of other development actors (bilateral donors, multilateral development banks/IFIs, civil society) • Other contextual factors affecting implementation • Degree to which entities can make in-country staffing responsive to Cooperation Framework configuration needs • Resource availability and utilization	• KIIs with RCs in focus countries • KIIs with national governments in focus countries • FGDs with RCOs and UNCTs in focus countries • KIIs and FGDs with DCO at regional and global level • FGDs with UNSDG members at the regional level • KIIs with UNSDG members (HQ) • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Review of UNCT inter-agency group minutes in focus countries

Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Lines of enquiry	Data sources and analysis
EQ4: Outcomes of derivation, configuration and Cooperation Framework implementation **EQ 4: What are the observable outcomes of UNCT derivation, re-configuration and Cooperation Framework implementation?**		
4.1. To what extent do entities' interventions derive from Cooperation Frameworks and to what extent are they implemented in alignment with joint workplans?	• Proportion of interventions derived from Cooperation Frameworks • Degree to which entities implement commitments made in the joint workplans (indicating derivation of priorities at output as well as outcome level) • Stakeholder perceptions of the relevance and strategic alignment under the Cooperation Framework approach • Extent to which entities continue to implement projects not derived from/aligned with Cooperation Framework outcomes • Relevance of the degree to which Cooperation Framework joint workplans are funded (i.e. have a small or very large funding gap) • Extent to which UNCTs and results groups jointly monitor, report on, and are accountable for delivering results outlined in the Cooperation Framework versus their own entity planning instruments	• Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • KIIs with RCs in focus countries • KIIs with national governments in focus countries • FGDs with RCOs and UNCTs in focus countries • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Review of results reporting in focus countries • Spectrum of alignment review in focus countries • Review of Cooperation Framework Steering committee minutes/reports in focus countries
4.2. To what extent have UN Country Teams been reconfigured in line with the needs identified in the Cooperation Framework/ configuration exercise?	• Evidence of implementation of configuration exercise decisions that are in line with analysis presented in the Cooperation Framework • Views of key stakeholders on how the reconfigured UNCT is better able to implement Cooperation Framework outcomes and outputs • Structural changes made to UNCTs • Evolution of roles and responsibilities within UNCTs	• KIIs with RCs in focus countries • FGDs with RCOs and UNCTs in focus countries • KIIs and FGDs with DCO at regional and global levels • FGDs with UNSDG members at the regional level • KIIs with representatives of national governments and other development actors (e.g., international financial institutions, bilateral donors, foundations, civil society) • Review of past evaluations and DCO reviews • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Review of results reporting in focus countries • Review of SG and Chair of UNSDG reports to ECOSOC
4.3. To what extent have UNCTs been able to deliver the Cooperation Framework development results?	• Extent to which derivation, reconfiguration and implementation have contributed to effective delivery of development results • Delivery of Cooperation Framework results in relation to the UN guiding principles, namely: gender equality, LNOB, and Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). • Extent to which derivation/reconfiguration/implementation facilitated partnerships that strengthen results delivery	• KIIs with representatives of national governments and other development actors (e.g., international financial institutions, bilateral donors, foundations, civil society) • Specific reporting on the implementation of guiding principle commitments • Review of past evaluations and global reviews • Review of results reporting in focus countries • Responses to administrative, monitoring and internal surveys • Review of SG and Chair of UNSDG reports to ECOSOC • Member State feedback through KIIs and ECOSOC documentation
4.4. Have derivation, and UNCT configuration exercises and Cooperation Framework implementation led to unanticipated results (positive or negative)?	• Identification of unanticipated results including with respect to UN guiding principles (e.g., gender equality, LNOB, HRBA) • Positive and negative impacts of these results (e.g. in relation to new programmes, different ways of working, new partnerships) • If negative, how have they been managed or mitigated?	• KIIs with representatives of national governments and other development actors (e.g., international financial institutions, bilateral donors, foundations, civil society) • KIIs and FGDs with DCO at regional and global levels • KIIs and FGDs with UNSDG members at regional and global levels • Review of past evaluations and global reviews

Annex D: Stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder / group	Interest in the evaluation	Engagement in the evaluation
	Internal	
	UN Secretariat	
UN Development Coordination Office including: • DCO in New York – ASG and Policy and Programming Branch • DCO regional offices (Africa, Arab States, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean)	Secretariat of the UNSDG - functions relevant to Cooperation Frameworks and UNCT configuration are at three levels and as follows: *Global*: • Management and oversight of the RC system • Issues guidance to RCs and UNCTs on country-level development planning, including the CCA and Cooperation Framework • Monitoring/reporting on Cooperation Framework implementation *Regional*: • Support to RC offices on operations, knowledge management/sharing etc. • Directorate of regional inter-agency Peer Support Groups that provide quality support/assurance to RC offices and UNCTs throughout the Cooperation Framework design process • Co-Secretariat (w/UNDP and Regional Commission) of the Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCP) *Country*: (see below) In late 2022, UNSDG Principals tasked DCO to: • [On Cooperation Framework derivation and alignment] (1) reach system-wide understanding of "derivation" and "alignment", (2) re-visit the Cooperation Framework design vis-à vis entity programme timelines, as well as standard target duration, and identify ways to reduce process, and (3) re-calibrate guidance on RC involvement in design, review and confirmation of alignment/ derivation both in the MAF and in the Cooperation Framework Guidance • [On UNCT configuration] conduct an inter-agency review of UNCT configuration guidance and methodology to: (1) clarify accountabilities between the RC system and UN entities at country, regional and global levels, anchoring the exercise in the MAF; (2) frame as an iterative process from the design start throughout the implementation period to ensure continued fitness for purpose; (3) lighten the process, while strengthening accountabilities of UN entities; and (4) enable a more tailored/modular approach for different country contexts	Primary user – will use the results of the evaluation to inform the forthcoming agreed revision of the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) and the recalibration of the Cooperation Framework Guidance DCO may be responsible for the practical implementation of some evaluation recommendations (if accepted by the wider UNSDG) DCO to participate in the evaluation as day-to-day focal points (facilitating access to key documentation, existing analysis, and sources for primary data collection), and as key informants themselves DCO will administer the annual IMS survey during the evaluation Member of the Reference Group
DCO at country-level: **~130 Resident Coordinators/Offices** (RC / RC Office / Multi-Country Office) in programme countries	RCs / RC Offices: • Lead and support UN country teams (UNCT) in developing, implementing, monitoring and reporting on the Cooperation Framework, in full consultation with the government • Provide feedback on alignment of entity-specific CPDs with Cooperation Frameworks and confirmation of derivation from the Cooperation Framework to the entity Regional Director before sign-off (as per the MAF and Cooperation Framework Guidance) • Convene and oversee the UNCT configuration exercise to support/optimize operationalization of the Cooperation Framework • Participate in the management/administration of joint/pooled funds at the country level and the approval/governance of joint programmes	RCs will be key downstream users of the evaluation. They will use and implement revised agreements (MAF) and guidance (Cooperation Framework) that may result from the evaluation's recommendations They will participate in the evaluation as some of the most important key informants during data collection, including interviews/surveys and possibly also more participatory methods (e.g., at points where RCs and/or RC Office staff come together for global/regional meetings/ workshops/retreats)

Stakeholder / group	Interest in the evaluation	Engagement in the evaluation
UNSDG		
[Global] UN Sustainable Development Group (37 entities) – global level. Chair: Deputy Secretary-General. Vice-chair: UNDP Core group: UN DESA, FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WFP, WHO and the rotating chair of the Regional Economic Commissions Other members: DPPA, IFAD, ITC, ITU, OCHA, Regional Economic Commissions, PBSO, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDRR, UNIDO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UNV, WIPO, WMO.	The UNSDG serves as a high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making. It guides, supports, tracks and oversees the coordination of development operations in programme countries. It deliberates on, agrees, and issues system-wide policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and guidance, including for development planning and coordination at country levels and UNCT configuration. The Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) for the Resident Coordinator system – the document that presents the respective roles and responsibilities of RCs/RC Offices, UNCT members, the regional level etc. in planning and delivering development cooperation at the country level – is negotiated and agreed among the UNSDG Principals. UNSDG principals are also signatories to the Funding Compact between UNSDG entities and Member States. UNSDG Principals agreed (in late 2022) to: • **Commission a system-wide evaluation of the derivation of country programming from the Cooperation Framework across all UNSDG entities** • Reconfirm the commitment to a system-wide approach of deriving entity country programmes from the Cooperation Framework • [CPD entities] to consider using the first Governing Board session of the first year of Cooperation Framework implementation (e.g., February 2023 rather than September 2022 for a 2023 start year) as the default session for approval of CPDs by Member States • Reaffirm the stated intent and spirit of the UNCT configuration exercise • Issue a coordinated message on the intent of, and support to, the UNCT configuration exercise, and ensure it is implemented systematically within their entities UNSDG priorities for 2023 (rolled over into 2024) include the following deliverables: • 2.1. The implementation of the recommendations of the independent evaluation on good practices and opportunities for improvement on derivation and alignment of UNCT configuration by the independent system-wide evaluation office are effectively driving greater integration, better alignment of skillsets and footprints, to support countries' needs and priorities for sustainable development • 2.1.2. Necessary revisions to UNCT configuration and derivation guidance are agreed by UNSDG Principals	Primary user(s) – will use the results of the evaluation to inform the forthcoming agreed revision of the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) and the recalibration of the Cooperation Framework Guidance The evaluation recommendations may be addressed to the UNSDG as whole, which will decide whether to accept them, and assign responsibilities and timeframes for their practical implementation UNSDG entities at HQ level will participate in the conduct of the evaluation as key informants and as members of the reference group UN DESA will administer surveys of UNSDG entities/Member States to report against the QCPR monitoring framework in 2024. The evaluation should take these data into account

Stakeholder / group	Interest in the evaluation	Engagement in the evaluation
[Regional] UNSDG Regional Collaborative Platforms – membership varies but generally reflects the global UNSDG. Chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and co-chaired by two Vice-Chairs, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Economic Commission, and the Regional Director UNDP **Regional level offices/ bureaux**	RCPs bring together UNSDG entities at the regional level to ensure collaboration and coordination of UN assets in addressing development issues that transcend national borders. RCPs are relevant to and have an interest in Cooperation Framework derivation and alignment and UNCT configuration insofar as: • They are the intended mechanism for bringing together and deploying regional-level resources and expertise to pursue country-level Cooperation Framework outcomes (especially for integrated policy advice/support to governments) • UNCT configuration exercises have resulted in the addition of new entities to UN country teams, both non-resident and in-country **UNSDG entity regional offices/Bureaux** develop/implement entity-specific regional organizational strategies/policies/guidance, house deployable thematic expertise/surge resources, manage/oversee country offices (possibly including review/approval of Country Programme Documents and line management of Country Directors/Reps). Regional office/bureaux locations and country groupings vary by UNSDG entity. The greatest consistency is in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) (Panama) and Asia-Pacific (Bangkok) regions with much more inconsistent alignment in Africa, Europe and the Arab States **Regional Peer Support Groups (PSG)** – anchored under the RCP, PSGs engage UNSDG staff at regional levels on a voluntary basis as "a strategic planning expert team that brings an integrated, system-wide rather than 'agency-specific' support to the CCA/Cooperation Framework processes at the country level."[5] Their responsibilities are as follows: • Provide strategic planning support to CCA/Cooperation Framework cycle to increase likelihood of high-quality roadmap, CCA and cooperation frameworks • Review drafts of UNCT roadmap, CCA and Cooperation Framework products to provide advice for increasing their quality • Promote regional-level experience exchange on good practice and examples in advancing the 2030 Agenda through the Cooperation Framework	UNSDG entities and coordination mechanisms at regional and country levels will be downstream users of the evaluation. They will use and implement revised agreements and guidance that may result from the evaluation's recommendations They will participate in the evaluation as some of the most important key informants during data collection including interviews/surveys and possibly also more participatory methods (e.g., at global meetings/workshops/retreats). They may also, at the discretion of their entity HQ, be invited to contribute to evaluation design and validation as members of the reference group
[Country] United Nations country teams (UNCT)	UNSDG entities in country are responsible (with the RC Office and the government) for the design, implementation, and monitoring/ evaluation of the Cooperation Framework. In addition to this, some UNSDG entities also develop Country Programme Documents (CPDs), country strategic plans (CSPs), strategic notes or similar to connect activities development results at the country level over multi-year periods. These may be approved by governing bodies or through processes internal to the entity. Some entities routinely commission independent evaluations of these frameworks The 2019 Cooperation Framework Guidance (and A/Res/75/233) emphasizes that "UN entities derive country programme outcomes from the Cooperation Framework, not vice-versa. Outcomes are hence developed in parallel to, not ahead of, the Cooperation Framework." DCO understands that the application of this principle varies. Some entities have developed guidance on CPD alignment and derivation from the Cooperation Framework The UNSDG Cooperation Framework Companion Package (2020) offers three options for derivation of CPDs from the Cooperation Framework: (a) Adopt the Cooperation Framework as their own Country Programme Document (the most explicit option for derivation, essentially removing the parallel process/document altogether) (b) an entity-specific CPD with the Cooperation Framework outcomes copied verbatim; and (c) Develop an entity-specific CPD with the Cooperation Framework outcomes verbatim, plus additional outcomes included only on an exceptional basis to capture normative and standard setting activities not prioritized in the Cooperation Framework DCO analysis has indicated that the so-called exceptional "Option C" is in fact the most used among UNSDG entities at the country level	

5. UNSDG, Standard Terms of Reference for Regional Peer Support Group (PSG) - May 2021.

Stakeholder / group	Interest in the evaluation	Engagement in the evaluation
Other		
UNSDG evaluation functions UN Regional Evaluation Groups – Latin America/ Caribbean and Asia-Pacific	Some UNSDG evaluation offices/units conduct entity-specific evaluations of Country Programme Documents (or similar). Many have also engaged in joint evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks, UN joint programmes and some UN development reform themes In the Asia-Pacific and Latin America/Caribbean regions, the evaluation functions of multiple UNSDG entities (regional evaluation officers/specialists/advisors) come together in regional groups/networks, through which they have overseen and supported joint evaluations of Cooperation Frameworks at country level United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP) RCP LAC - Evaluation Working Group	Interested UNSDG evaluation offices could participate in this evaluation as follows: • Members of the Evaluation Management Group • Providing funding and/or staff time to support the management of the evaluation • Providing secondary data (entity and joint evaluations) and facilitating primary data collection opportunities
UN inter-agency pooled fund secretariats: • Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF-O) (UNDP) • Peacebuilding Fund (UN-PBSO) • Joint SDG Fund (UNDP/ DCO)	MPTFO is the UN entity dedicated to the design and administration of multi-stakeholder pooled financing instruments – a "system-wide asset hosted by UNDP". It administers country, regional, global and thematic UN pooled funds The Peacebuilding Fund and the Joint SDG Fund are among the largest global-level inter-agency pooled funds managed by the UN Pooled funding is potentially a key enabler UNSDG activity/programme alignment with Cooperation Frameworks, as set out in the Funding Compact between UNSDG entities and Member States	MPTFO will be a key source of data for the evaluation on Cooperation Framework related pooled funds and their possible effect on UNSDG alignment and derivation Pooled fund staff have an important neutral, inter-agency and system-wide perspective to be considered during data collection

Stakeholder / group	Interest in the evaluation	Engagement in the evaluation
	External	
	UN Member States	
Member States – as host/ partner governments of the UN development system in "programme countries"	Governments in programme countries are primary stakeholders in UN development system planning and operations at the country level. Cooperation Frameworks are agreed and signed in full cooperation with the relevant governments, which, depending on context, may also play major roles in their implementation. As such, the extent to which country programmes of individual UN entities are derived from and aligned with the Cooperation Framework is of significant interest to governments – it is a key indicator of the extent to which UN development system activities on the ground are responding to national development priorities (as articulated in the agreed Cooperation Framework outcomes). Similarly, programme country governments are interested in the extent to which UNCTs are being optimally configured to pursue the agreed Cooperation Framework outcomes	Member States will be users of the evaluation. It may be formally presented for their consideration in the relevant committees of ECOSOC and informally presented to interested Member States. This, in turn, will inform deliberations on resolutions related to development reform (i.e. QCPR.). The evaluation may also influence the approaches that individual Member States adopt in their membership of UNSDG entity governing bodies and as donors to the UN development system Depending on evaluation design, Member States may participate in the conduct of the evaluation as key informants including: • Host/programme country governments (on alignment of UN development system with national development priorities) • Governing body members • Donor countries
Member States – as represented in intergovernmental bodies: **ECOSOC** - Operational Activities for Development Segment **General Assembly** - Second Committee (Economic and Financial) - Committee for Programme and Coordination (also a subsidiary organ of ECOSOC) **Governing bodies of UNSDG entities** **OECD DAC / MOPAN**	Through their membership and participation in key intergovernmental bodies (ECOSOC and GA committees), Member States guide and oversee the UN development system as a whole and the reform thereof (i.e., through the QCPR) A smaller number of Member States are also major donors to the UN development system, using a mix of funding modalities, ranging from tightly earmarked entity-specific non-core resources to flexible, multi-agency country/global pooled funds. It is well understood that these funding modalities (and coordination between donors) can either enable or constrain the UN development system in terms of its alignment with country priorities and UNCT collaboration. This includes the extent to which CPDs are derived from and aligned with Cooperation Frameworks Member States are signatories to the Funding Compact (with UNSDG entities), which includes commitments to better align funding behaviour (and the incentives this creates) with UN development system reform priorities Member States are also represented in the individual governance structures of many UNSDG entities. In these roles, they approve and oversee the implementation of organizational policies on country-level planning and coordination. This includes the approval and sign-off of CPDs (and similar) through EB sessions, in some entities The OECD (representing many of the major donors to the UN development system) also conducts monitoring/evaluation/research/ analysis of UN development system reform progress and effectiveness and may take interest in the findings and recommendations of this evaluation	
	Non-UN development actors	
Non-governmental implementing partners (in programme countries)	Many activities under Cooperation Frameworks and UN entity country programmes are implemented at local levels by cooperating/ implementing partners (e.g., INGOs, national NGOs, local government etc.). These organizations will have a lower level of interest in UN entity CPD derivation and alignment / UNCT configuration as a process, but a high level of interest in the intended results (a UNCT that is better equipped to respond to national development priorities and make progress against the SDGs). UNCT engagement with civil society and representatives of rights holders also often goes beyond implementing partner arrangements; these organizations also have an interest in the intended results	Non-governmental development actors at the country level may participate in the evaluation as key informants during possible country-level primary data collection. They may provide an important non-UN, non-government perspective on the extent to which policies/guidance have translated into changes on the ground
Non-UN development partners in programme countries (IFIs, private sector etc.)	International financial institutions (IFIs), bilateral development agencies etc. work on similar goals to the UN development system but outside or at greater distance from its development planning processes. They may have some indirect interest in the evaluation, particularly given UN intentions to work more closely with IFIs/the private sector and transition from UN development system "funding" to SDG "financing"	

Annex E: Other data

Cooperation Framework-related documents

Alongside publicly available documents gathered relevant to the Cooperation Framework process, the evaluation team requested internal documents in the form of configuration exercises, joint workplans and joint resource mobilization strategies from the 21 country studies. Documents received have been listed in the following table.

Configuration exercises	Joint workplans	Joint resource mobilization strategies
Albania	Albania	Albania
Bangladesh	Angola	Angola
Bhutan	Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Botswana	Bhutan	Bhutan
Colombia	Botswana	Botswana
El Salvador	Colombia	Colombia
Honduras	El Salvador	El Salvador
Jordan	Ethiopia	Honduras
Kenya	Honduras	Jordan
Malawi	Iraq	Kenya
Papua New Guinea	Jordan	Malawi
Philippines	Kenya	Mali
Seychelles	Malawi	Papua New Guinea
Sierra Leone	Mali	Paraguay
Viet Nam	Papua New Guinea	Philippines
	Paraguay	Rwanda
	Philippines	Sierra Leone
	Rwanda	Viet Nam
	Seychelles	Seychelles
	Sierra Leone	
	Viet Nam	

UNSDG entity country programming instruments (and equivalents)

The team requested and received a variety of UNSDG entity country programming instruments. Documents received have been listed in the following table.

UNSDG entity	Other documents gathered
DESA	9 country capacity development project documents
ECLAC	5 country project documents
ESCAP	Spreadsheet overview of 14 country programmes
ESCWA	2 country project descriptions
FAO	18 Country Programme Frameworks
IFAD	20 Country Strategic Opportunity Programmes / Strategic notes
ILO	15 Decent Work Country Programmes
IOM	5 Country Strategies, 1 Regional Strategy, 6 Crisis Response Plans
OHCHR	8 full Country Programmes, 4 summary Country Programmes
UN Habitat	1 country programme document
UN Women	17 Country Strategic Notes
UNAIDS	17 Joint UN Plans on AIDS
UNCDF	5 country project documents

UNSDG entity	Other documents gathered
UNCTAD	1 overview/project descriptions for 14 country projects in 8 countries
UNDP	19 Country Programme Documents
UNDRR	Spreadsheet overview of all projects in 10 countries
UNEP	Spreadsheet overview of all projects in 21 countries
UNESCO	6 Country Strategies
UNFPA	18 Country Programme Documents
UNHCR	12 Multi-Year Strategies
UNICEF	20 Country Programme Documents
UNIDO	7 Project Document Frameworks
UNODC	8 Regional Strategies
UNRWA	1 country programme document
WFP	11 Country Strategic Plans
WHO	15 Country Cooperation Strategies
WMO	Spreadsheet overview of projects in 21 countries

Survey data

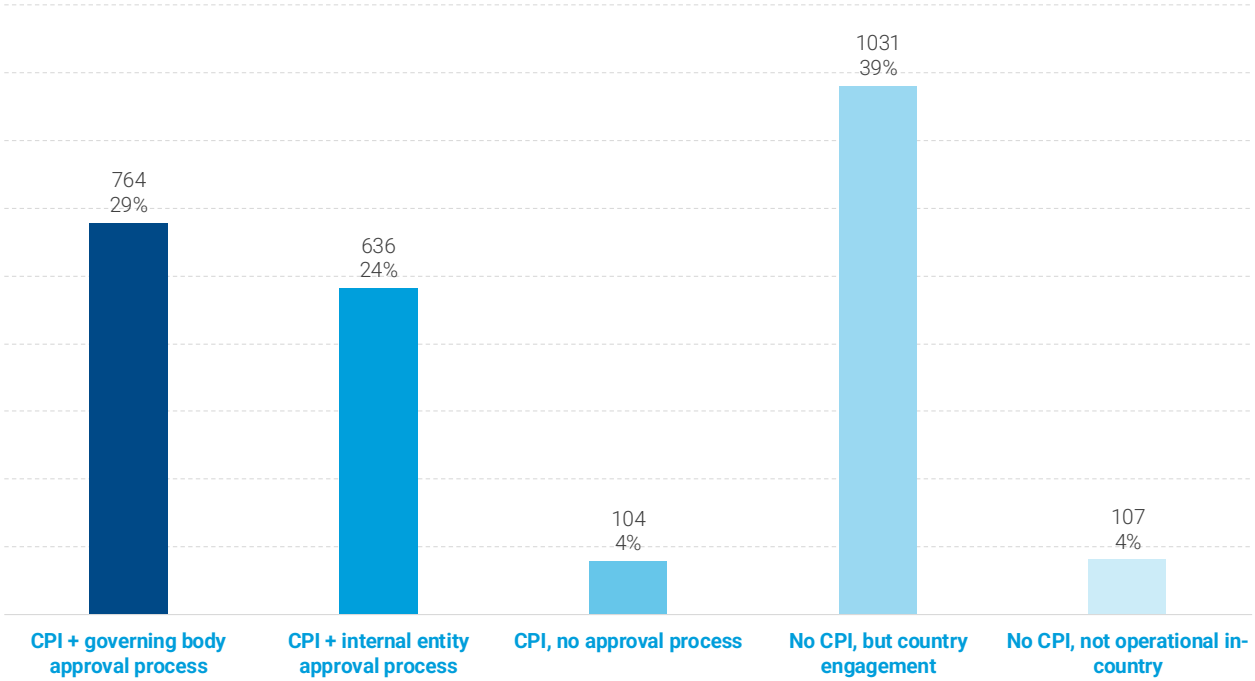
The charts and tables included in this annex are based on existing data sets from surveys administered by DCO and UN DESA over the evaluation period. The evaluation did not conduct separate surveys. Instead, it identified selected questions from these existing surveys to highlight as part of its analysis. The following table provides an overview of the surveys examined and analysed by the evaluation team.[6] [7]

Survey source	Survey	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DCO	UNSDG Information Management System Questionnaire	Information relating to all UN country teams (currently 132) and representing all UNCT memberships (approx. 3500)					
	Management Accountability Framework Review Survey						n = 775
	Resident Coordinator Peer Survey						n = 85
UN DESA	Survey of programme countries on UN operational activities for development	n = 117	n = 111	n = 118	n = 107	n = 116	n = 122
	QCPR Monitoring Survey of UN Resident Coordinators	n = 116		n = 120	n = 123	n = 129	n = 129
	Survey of UN Agencies' Headquarters	n = 30	n = 28	n = 29	n = 30	n = 30	n = 32
	QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators and United Nations country team members			n = 626	n = 1404	n = 1668	n = 1041

6. The evaluation team referenced survey results to triangulate against findings drawn from other data sources. The data tables listed in this annex do not represent the entire dataset of the surveys analysed; only key findings referenced have been included.
7. Online questionnaires for the DCO surveys, as well as the DESA QCPR monitoring surveys for 2019 and 2020 are not publicly available.

Selected survey data from UNSDG Information Management System (IMS) Annual Survey 2024

C.1.8.4 What type of programming instrument is the basis for entity work in the country?[8]



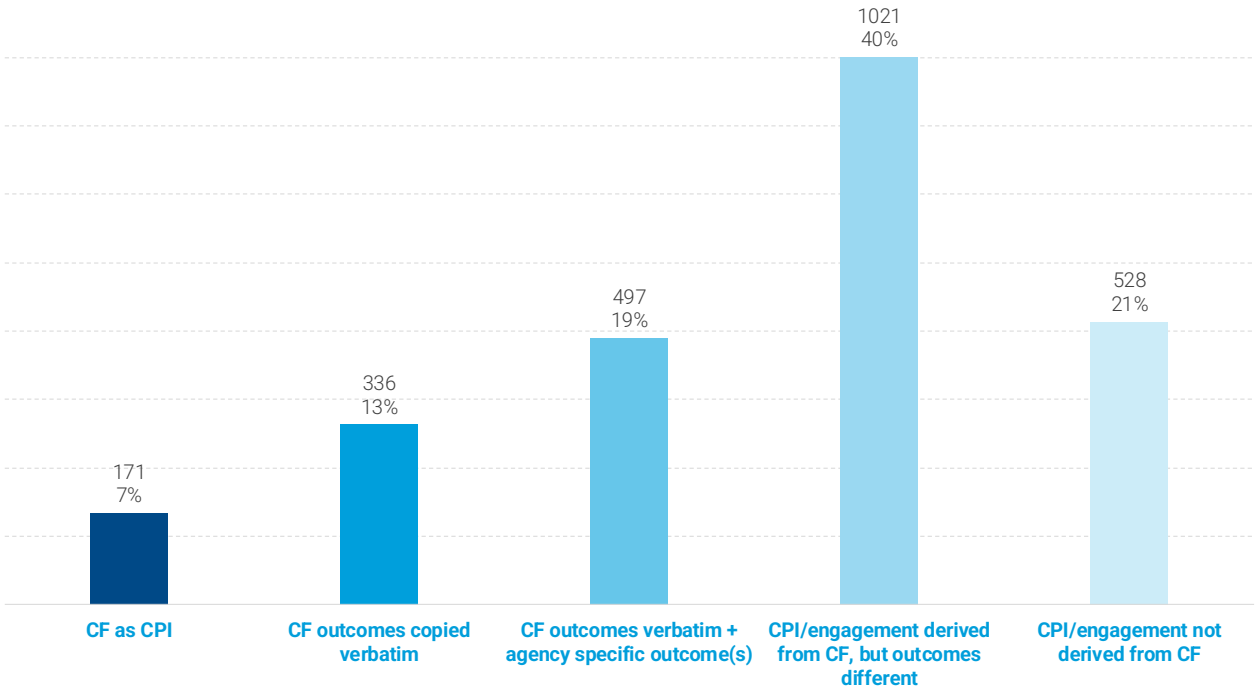
C.1.8.4 What type of programming instrument is the basis for entity work in the country? (disaggregated by UNCT member)

UN Entity	CPI + governing body approval process	CPI + internal entity approval process	CPI, no approval process	No CPI, but country engagement	No CPI, not operational in-country
FAO	52%	38%	5%	6%	0%
IFAD	39%	29%	5%	16%	11%
ILO	14%	49%	3%	33%	2%
IOM	13%	47%	8%	32%	0%
ITC	0%	11%	2%	73%	15%
ITU	9%	4%	4%	81%	2%
OCHA	8%	33%	0%	58%	0%
OHCHR	8%	32%	5%	54%	2%
UN DESA	0%	0%	0%	62%	38%
UN ECA	3%	10%	3%	77%	6%
UN ECLAC	17%	11%	0%	67%	6%
UN ESCAP	0%	5%	0%	89%	5%
UN ESCWA	0%	14%	0%	71%	14%
UN Women	5%	75%	1%	18%	1%
UNAIDS	9%	38%	9%	40%	3%
UNCDF	23%	10%	5%	45%	18%
UNCTAD	7%	4%	0%	83%	7%
UNDP	98%	2%	0%	1%	0%

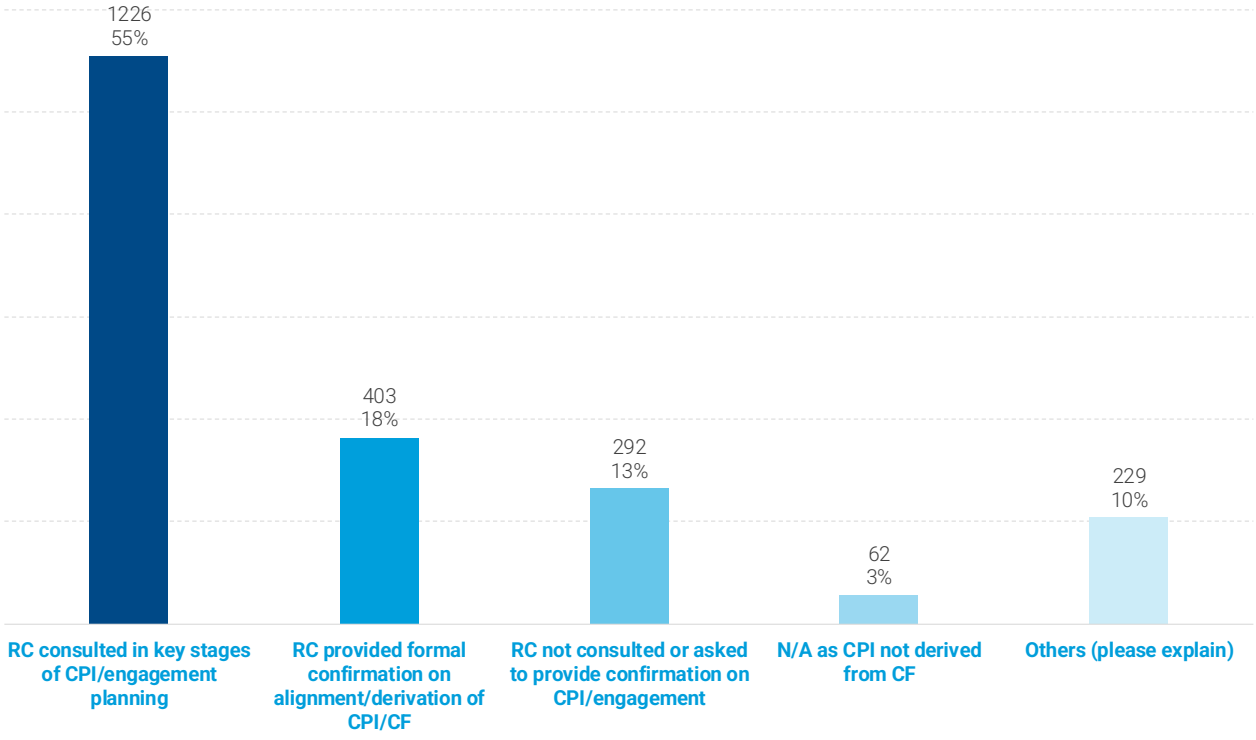
8.Answer options shortened to: A. The entity has a country programming that goes through a governing body approval process (e.g. agencies' country programme document such as UNDP's CPD is submitted to the Executive Board) - CPD + gov body approval B. The entity has a country programming instrument that goes through an approval process internal to the entity, but no inter-governmental process (e.g. UN Women's Strategic Note) - CPD + internal entity approval C. The entity has a country programming instrument does not go through any inter-governmental or entity-internal approval process - CPD, no approval process D. The entity does not have a country programming instrument but has country engagement through country-level programmes and/or projects, advisory services, etc - No CPD but country engagement.

UN Entity	CPI + governing body approval process	CPI + internal entity approval process	CPI, no approval process	No CPI, but country engagement	No CPI, not operational in-country
UNDRR	0%	5%	0%	86%	8%
UNECE	6%	6%	0%	83%	6%
UNEP	6%	7%	6%	78%	4%
UNESCO	14%	33%	8%	42%	2%
UNFPA	94%	2%	0%	3%	0%
UN-Habitat	9%	22%	5%	58%	5%
UNHCR	16%	42%	9%	32%	2%
UNICEF	96%	1%	1%	2%	1%
UNIDO	17%	20%	5%	54%	5%
UNODC	6%	22%	4%	62%	5%
UNOPS	9%	12%	2%	73%	4%
UNRWA	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%
UNV	2%	7%	2%	84%	5%
WFP	68%	18%	0%	10%	4%
WHO	43%	40%	6%	7%	3%
WIPO	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
WMO	0%	17%	0%	83%	0%

C.1.8.5 Has the entity's country-level programming instrument or country engagement been derived from the Cooperation Framework?



C.1.8.6 RC involvement in the derivation of the entity's country programming instrument and/or engagement (in line with MAF) (Select all that apply)

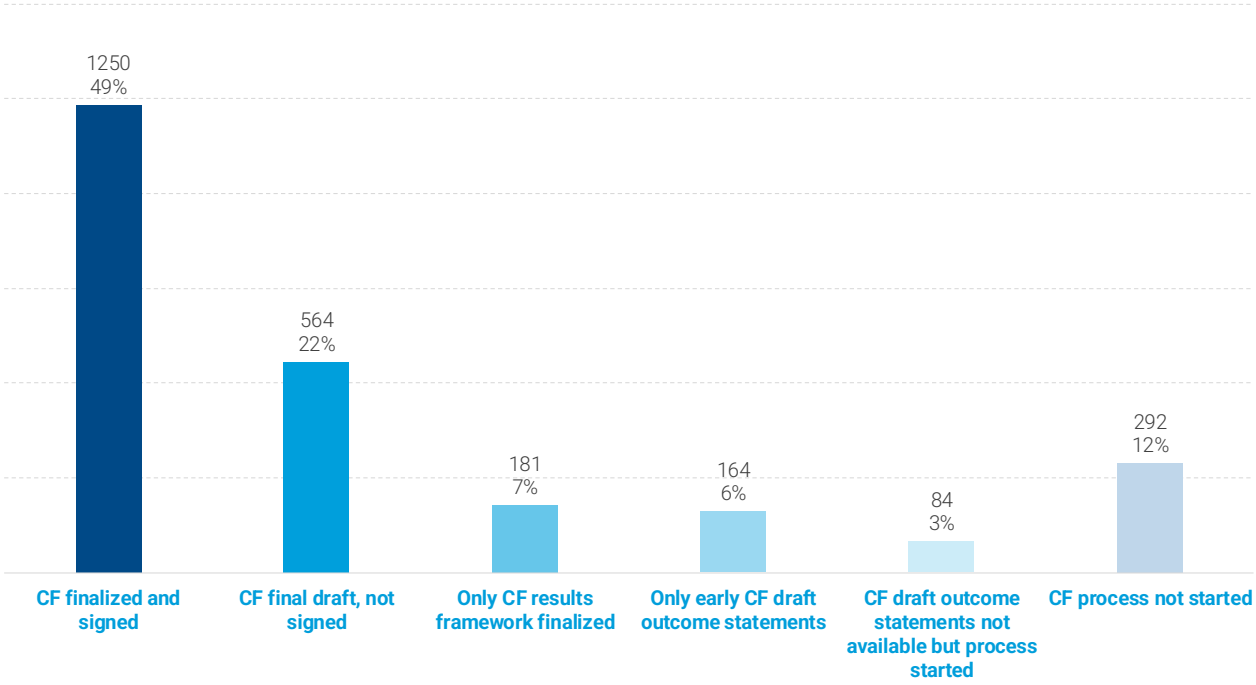


C.1.8.6 RC involvement in the derivation of the entity's country programming instrument and/or engagement (in line with MAF) (Select all that apply) – disaggregated by UNCT member

UNSDG Entity	RC consulted in key stages of CPI / engagement planning	RC provided formal confirmation on alignment / derivation of CPI / CF	RC not consulted or asked to provide confirmation on CPI / engagement	N/A as CPI not derived from CF	Others (please explain)
FAO	69%	28%	7%	1%	7%
IFAD	70%	5%	14%	3%	11%
ILO	60%	17%	18%	3%	13%
IOM	68%	6%	11%	2%	14%
ITC	44%	0%	25%	3%	25%
ITU	40%	4%	36%	0%	20%
OCHA	63%	0%	0%	25%	13%
OHCHR	64%	0%	19%	3%	14%
UN DESA	83%	0%	17%	0%	0%
UN ECA	55%	0%	20%	10%	20%
UN ECLAC	33%	0%	33%	17%	17%
UN ESCAP	40%	0%	20%	0%	40%
UN ESCWA	40%	0%	0%	20%	40%
UN Women	72%	30%	11%	1%	4%
UNAIDS	69%	1%	15%	3%	14%
UNCDF	70%	7%	22%	7%	0%
UNCTAD	47%	0%	27%	7%	20%
UNDP	62%	73%	1%	0%	0%
UNDRR	50%	0%	23%	13%	10%
UNECE	50%	0%	38%	0%	13%
UNEP	42%	1%	25%	10%	21%
UNESCO	61%	2%	24%	4%	11%
UNFPA	63%	65%	1%	1%	2%
UN-Habitat	55%	6%	13%	6%	21%

UNSDG Entity	RC consulted in key stages of CPI / engagement planning	RC provided formal confirmation on alignment / derivation of CPI / CF	RC not consulted or asked to provide confirmation on CPI / engagement	N/A as CPI not derived from CF	Others (please explain)
UNHCR	61%	1%	25%	1%	13%
UNICEF	62%	67%	0%	0%	1%
UNIDO	61%	1%	19%	5%	18%
UNODC	51%	2%	24%	5%	15%
UNOPS	53%	3%	19%	9%	14%
UNRWA	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
UNV	44%	0%	20%	8%	24%
WFP	67%	45%	4%	0%	4%
WHO	71%	4%	17%	0%	8%
WIPO	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%
WMO	11%	0%	11%	11%	67%

C.1.8.7 When the entity started the development of its country programming instrument/engagement, what was the status of the Cooperation Framework?



C.1.8.7 When the entity started the development of its country programming instrument/engagement, what was the status of the Cooperation Framework? – disaggregated by UNCT member

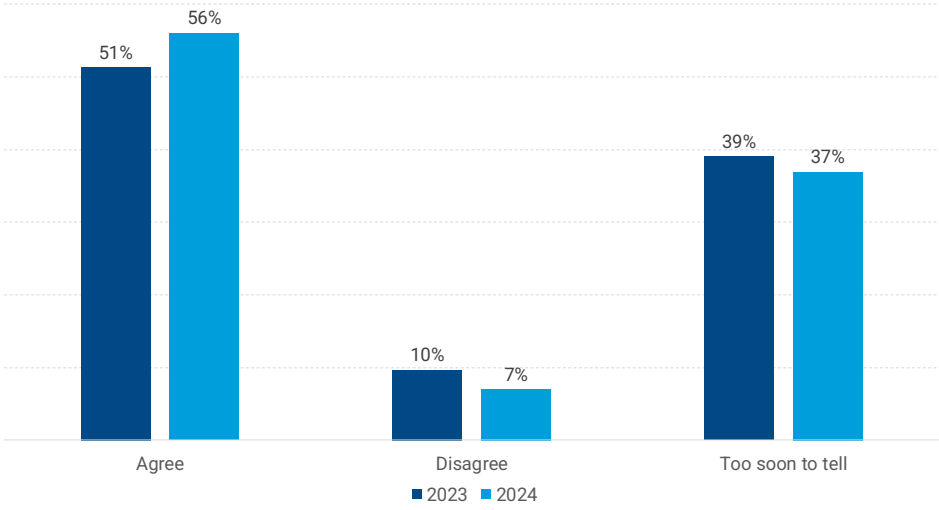
UN Entity	CF finalised and signed	CF final draft, not signed	Only CF results framework finalised	Only early CF draft outcome statements	CF draft outcome statements not available but process started	CF process not started
FAO	59%	26%	6%	4%	1%	5%
IFAD	51%	12%	5%	10%	4%	19%
ILO	56%	15%	8%	4%	3%	15%
IOM	51%	27%	8%	2%	1%	11%
ITC	47%	19%	6%	4%	4%	19%
ITU	50%	24%	7%	2%	4%	13%
OCHA	58%	17%	0%	0%	17%	8%
OHCHR	68%	14%	4%	3%	1%	11%
UN DESA	18%	14%	0%	0%	5%	64%
UN ECA	50%	11%	0%	0%	19%	19%

UN Entity	CF finalised and signed	CF final draft, not signed	Only CF results framework finalised	Only early CF draft outcome statements	CF draft outcome statements not available but process started	CF process not started
UN ECLAC	45%	15%	5%	5%	15%	15%
UN ESCAP	44%	4%	8%	4%	12%	28%
UN ESCWA	9%	9%	0%	0%	36%	45%
UN Women	42%	35%	7%	7%	2%	6%
UNAIDS	52%	24%	3%	7%	2%	12%
UNCDF	58%	9%	0%	6%	9%	18%
UNCTAD	56%	12%	0%	0%	19%	14%
UNDP	24%	35%	15%	20%	4%	2%
UNDRR	54%	22%	0%	9%	4%	11%
UNECE	61%	11%	6%	0%	17%	6%
UNEP	51%	15%	6%	5%	3%	21%
UNESCO	54%	18%	7%	3%	5%	12%
UNFPA	24%	35%	19%	15%	4%	2%
UN-Habitat	55%	20%	5%	5%	1%	15%
UNHCR	59%	21%	5%	2%	4%	10%
UNICEF	26%	31%	16%	21%	5%	2%
UNIDO	56%	19%	6%	2%	1%	17%
UNODC	51%	17%	5%	5%	5%	18%
UNOPS	53%	25%	3%	2%	5%	11%
UNRWA	33%	0%	0%	17%	0%	50%
UNV	49%	20%	5%	2%	5%	20%
WFP	48%	28%	10%	9%	3%	2%
WHO	57%	17%	10%	4%	2%	9%
WIPO	14%	14%	0%	0%	0%	71%
WMO	27%	33%	0%	7%	13%	20%

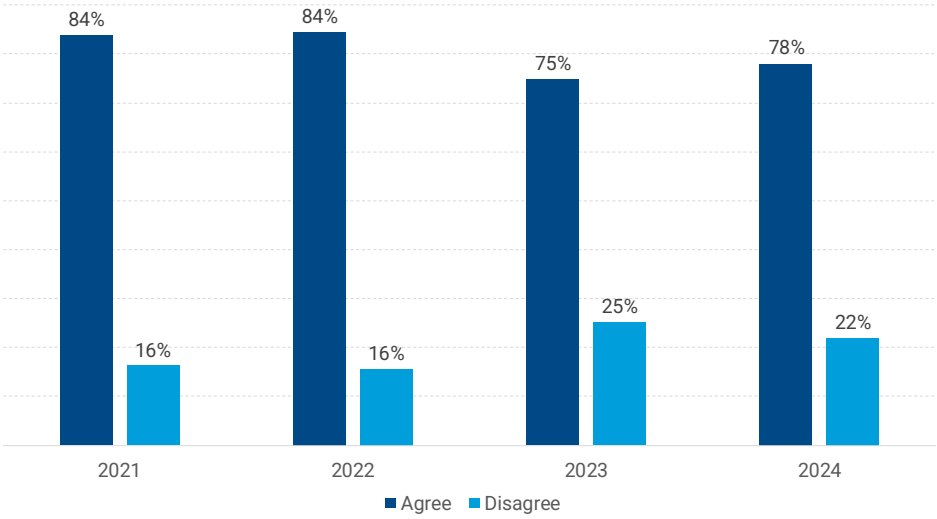
Selected survey data from DESA administered QCPR Surveys 2021-2024

Selected data in this section are based on the three following surveys: 1) QCPR Survey of United Nations Country Team Members 2021-2024; 2) QCPR Survey of UN Resident Coordinators 2021-2024; and 3) Government Survey on UN operational activities for development 2021-2024. The data below are grouped by theme and where feasible with corresponding survey questions between the surveys.

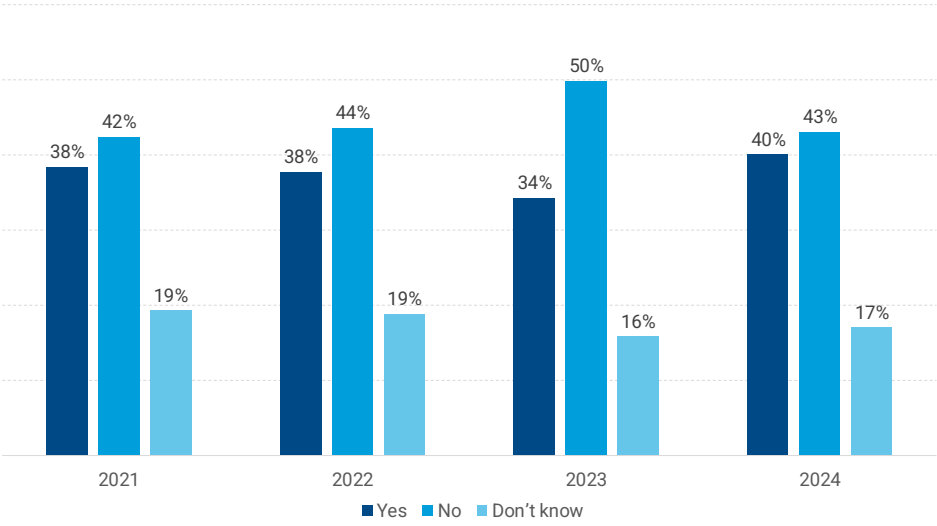
UNCT: The implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) has improved in the UNCT over the past year.



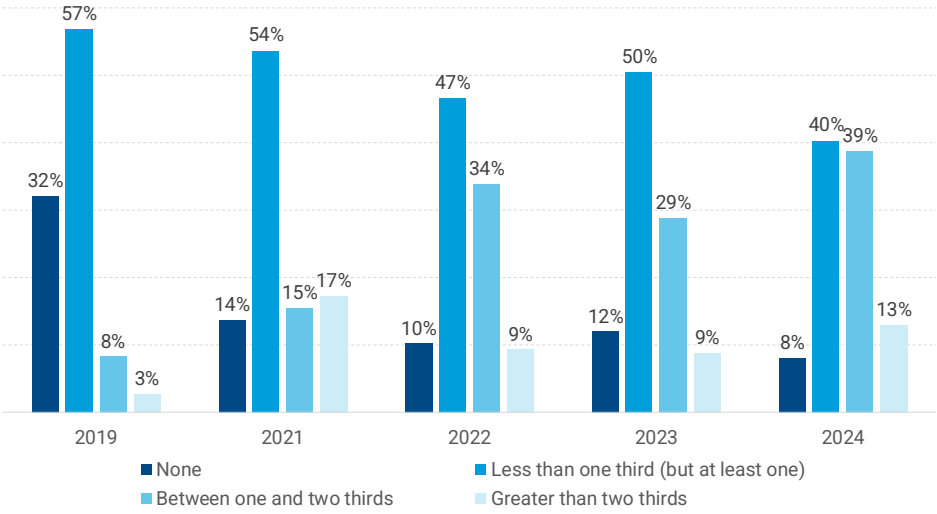
RC: The implementation of the Management and Accountability Framework has improved in the UNCT over the past year?



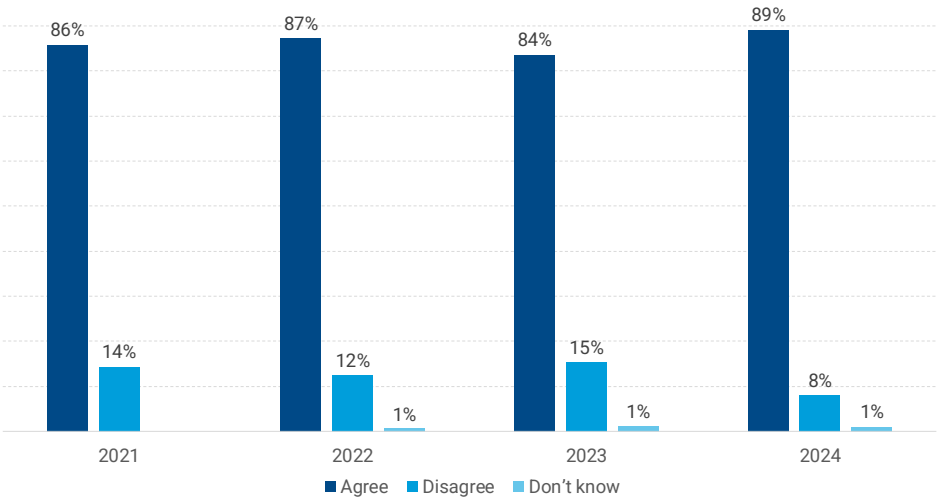
UNCT: Has the Resident Coordinator provided input to your performance appraisal?



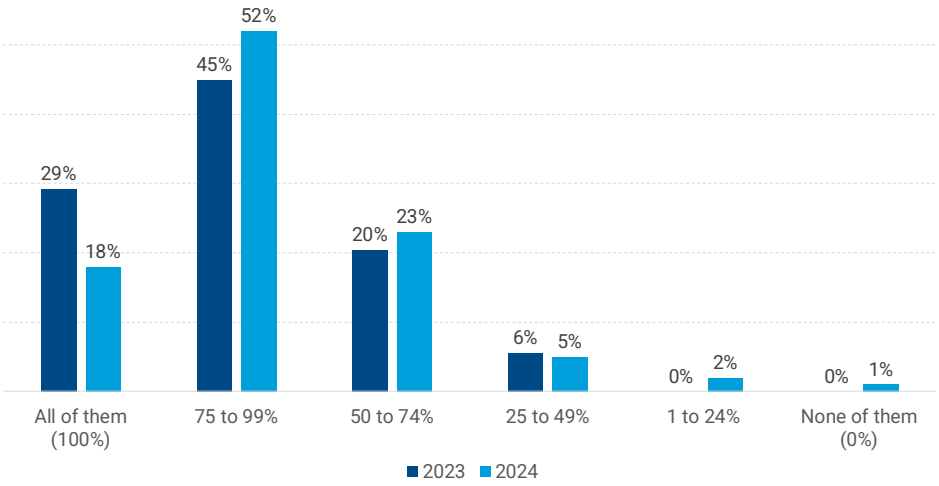
RC: Please indicate the proportion of UN country team head of agencies for whom you have provided a formal input into their performance assessments in your capacity as Resident Coordinator in the past year.



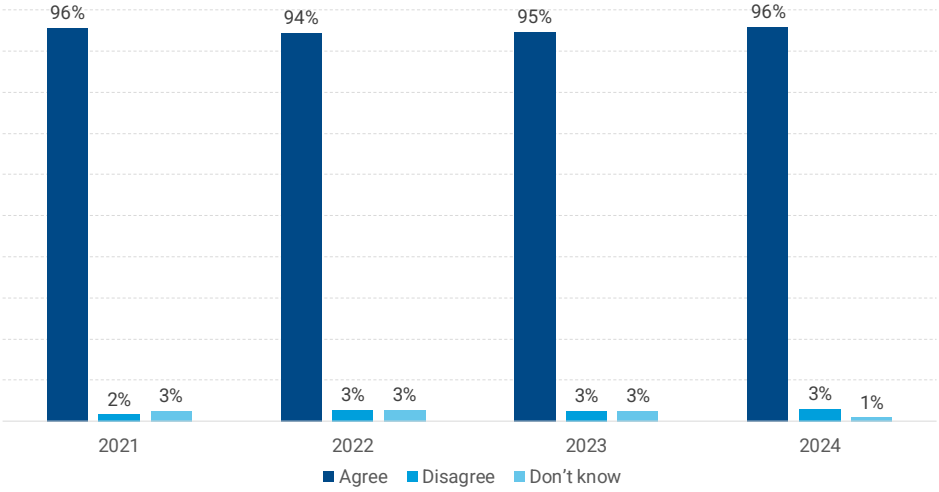
UNCT: Your entity's individual country programme document or equivalent instrument is derived from the Cooperation Framework.



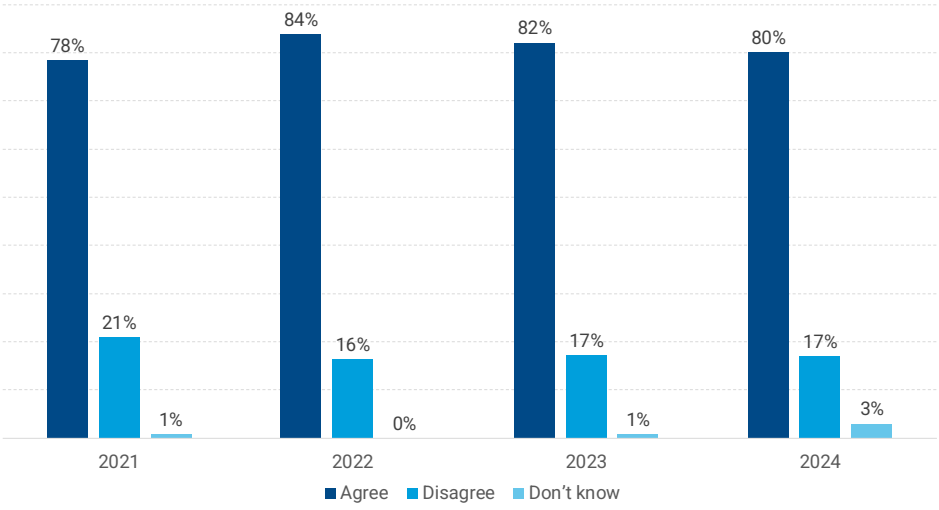
RC: What proportion of Country Programme Document (CPDs) or equivalent programming instrument would you estimate are aligned with the Cooperation Framework/UNDAF?



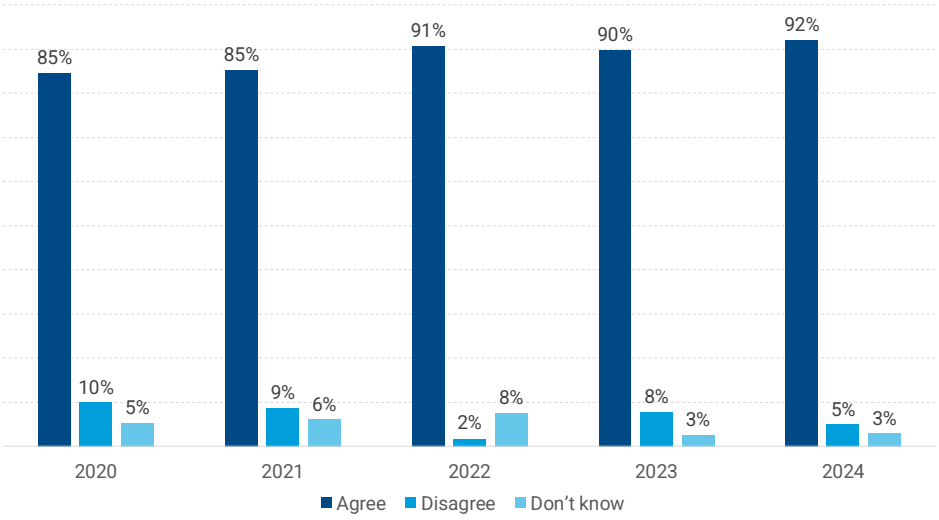
Government: UN development system's activities in the country adequately reflect the content of the Cooperation Framework/UNDAF.



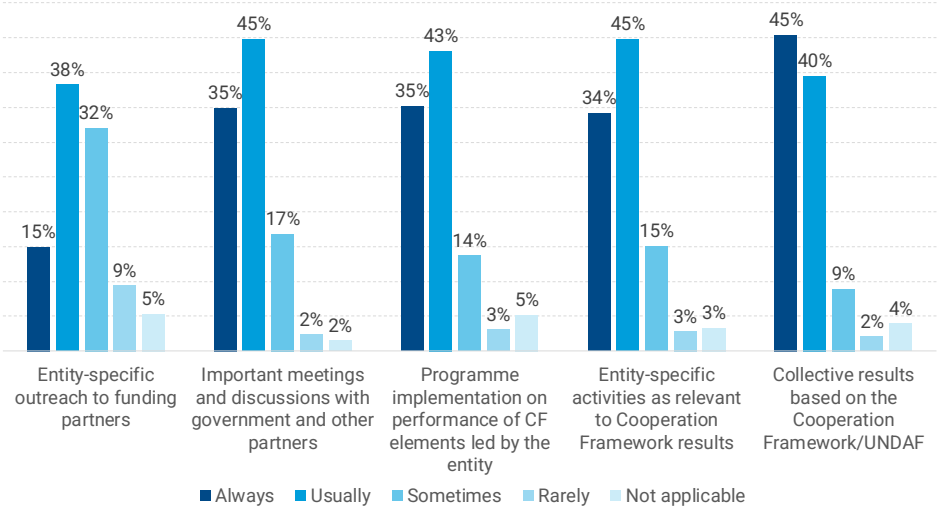
RC: The UN staff in the country team has the right mix of capacities and skills to support the country's development.



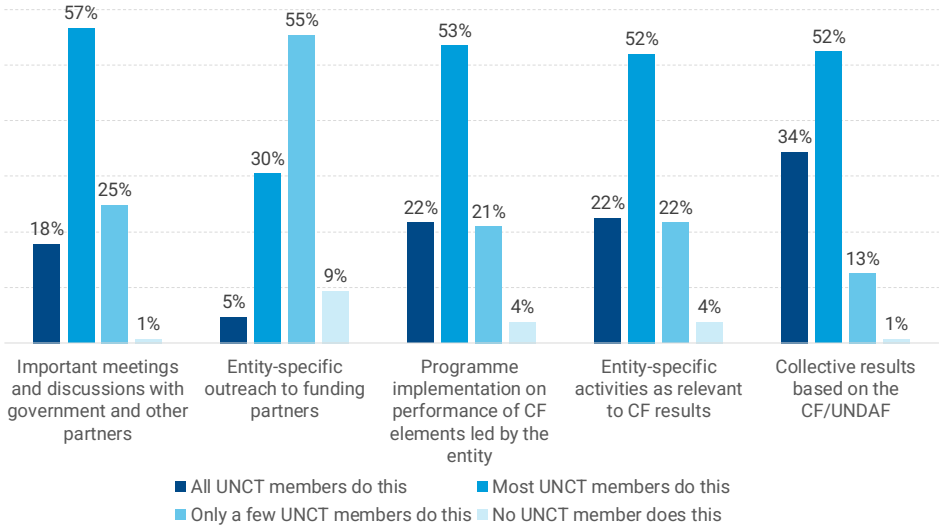
Government: The UN staff in the country team have the right mix of capacities and skills to support the country's development.



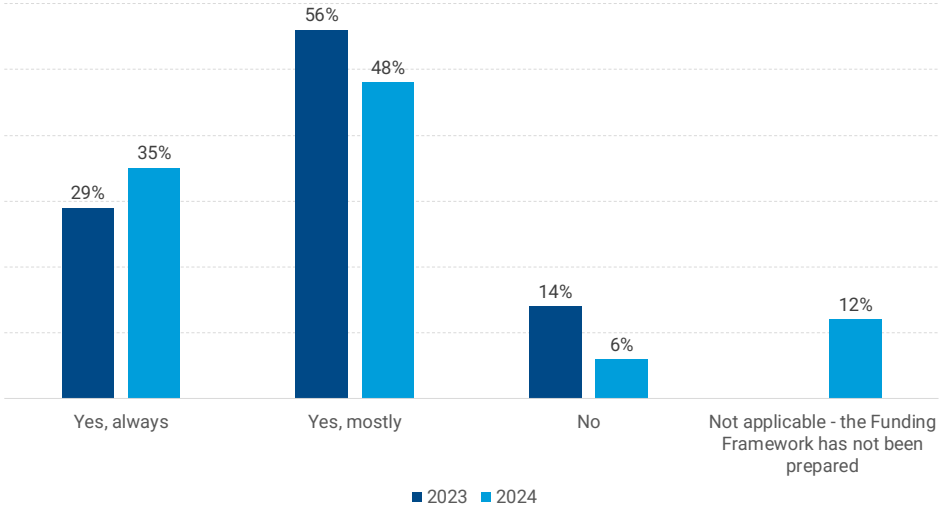
UNCT (2024): Is information shared or actions coordinated regularly with the Resident Coordinator on:



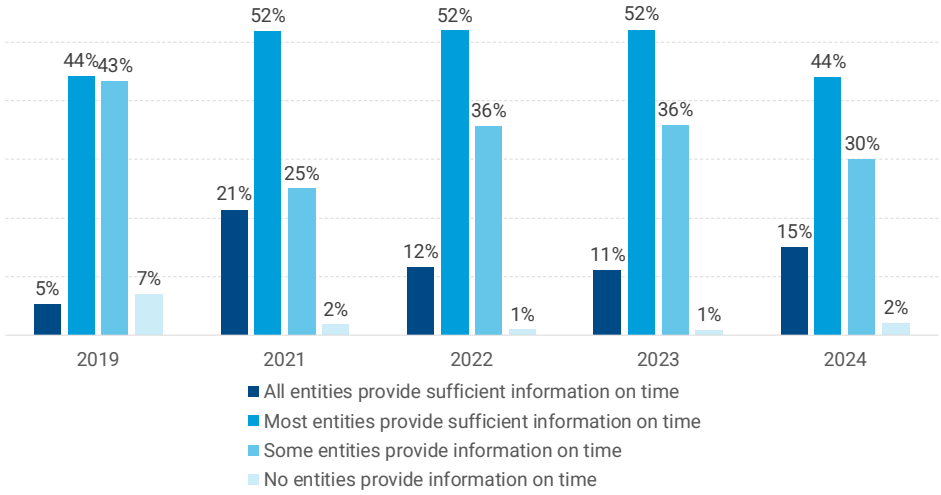
RC (2023): Do UNCT members report to the Resident Coordinator regularly to meet your coordination needs on:



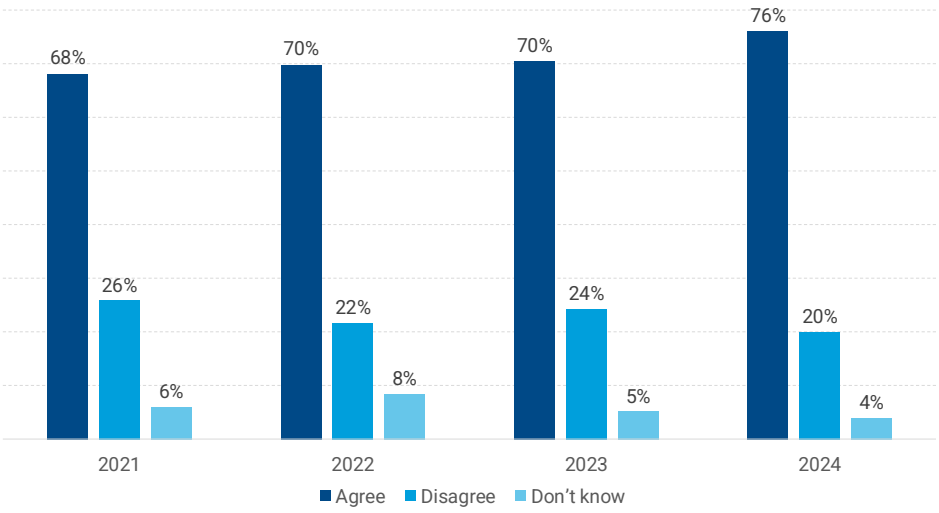
UNCT: Do you provide timely and sufficient financial data to enable the preparation of an effective Funding Framework for the Cooperation Framework?



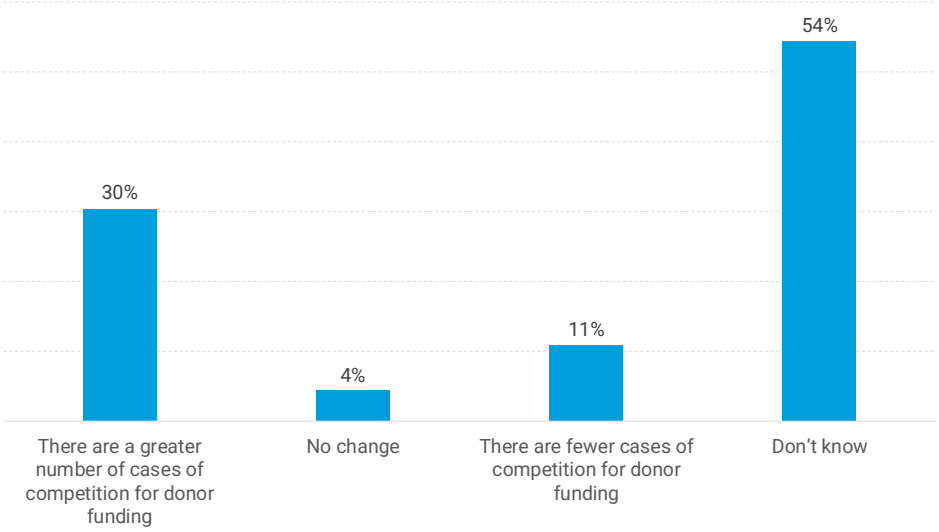
RC: Does the UNCT provide timely and sufficient financial data to enable the preparation of an effective Funding Framework for the Cooperation Framework?



Government: There is a clear division of labour (that is, no duplication or overlaps) among the acitivites of UN agencies, funds and programmes in the country:



Government: Since before the UN development system reform (2019), to what extent do you observe a change in cases of UN agencies competing for donor funding?



Annex F: Overview of UNSDG entity procedures related to country programming instruments

Over the course of the scoping, inception and data collection phases the evaluation team sought to collect from all UNSDG entities (through internet searches and direct requests):

- Country programming guidance (PG in Table 15 below) or equivalent
- Organizational reporting on adoption of, or response to, the repositioning of the UN development system
- Internal survey data (should it contain relevant information on UN development system repositioning).

Given the diversity of models and circumstances across the UNSDG membership, document gathering across these categories was uneven, and is unlikely to be fully exhaustive. Notably, none of the entities decided to share internal survey data with the evaluation team.

The evaluation team used a number of additional sources ("other" in Table 15 below) to fill the gaps in the data gathered. This included:

- The UN development system reform checklists (RCL below) introduced in December 2022 – on which some entities started reporting to their governing bodies in 2023
- The 2023 and 2024 QCPR monitoring surveys of the United Nations development system entities' headquarters administered by DESA
- Written comments provided by UN entities in response to requests for relevant documentation.

For each UNSDG entity this documentation (if available) was reviewed in order to determine:

- If the entity has a country programming instrument (CPI)
- Date of guidance, to determine when it was issued in relation to the reforms
- Type of approval process for the CPI
- Instructions on options A, B, C for derivation from the Cooperation Framework Guidance
- Involvement of Resident Coordinator or his or her Office in CPI development in design and quality assurance
- Use of Resident Coordinator derivation letter in CPI approval processes
- Requirements to align CPI timeframe to Cooperation Framework
- Engagement in CCA processes
- Instructions on UN-INFO.

Table 15 provides a high-level overview of the results of this review for each of the UNSDG entities where a sufficient body of documentation was gathered and provided.

Table 15: Overview of UNSDG entity procedures related to country programming instruments

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
ECA									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** DESA survey.	**No.** DESA survey.	**N/A**	**Yes.** DESA survey.	**N/A**	**N/A**
ECLAC									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**No.** DESA survey. No country level documents.	**No.** DESA survey.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**No.** DESA survey.
ESCWA									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
FAO									
PG	**Yes.** Country Programme Frameworks	FAO Country Programming Framework Guidelines, December 2022 Further update on Country Programming Frameworks, March 2023	**N/A**	**Yes.** 2022: The CPF is derived from the UNSDCF, not vice-versa. The CPF remains the planning document at the country level for FAO but must be duly derived from and synchronized with the UNSDCF. 2023: FAO adjusted its CPF process to ensure that the Organization's main planning and programming instrument at the country level is now fully derived from the UNSDCF. UNSDCF outcomes copied verbatim and aligning the FAO CPF cycle with the UNSDCF cycle. Three options (A/B/C) are mentioned.	**Yes.** 2022: close consultation with the Resident Coordinator, ensures that FAO-relevant line ministries, key stakeholders and development partners are part of the UNSDCF consultation process.	**Yes.** 2022: The RC reviews and comments on the CPF to confirm alignment and coherence with the UNSDCF, identifying opportunities to strengthen synergies and complementarities and to avoid duplication 2023: As part of the CPF quality control process, the FAO representative (FAOR) requests the Resident Coordinator's confirmation of the CPF's full alignment with the UNSDCF.	**Yes.** 2022: (a) if the existing CPF is still valid but a new UNSDCF is about to roll out, a new CPF needs to be formulated in line with UNSDCF provisions. (b) If the CPF is at the last year of the cycle but the new UNSDCF cycle starts later, an extension of the current CPF can be requested to the ADG/RR, following governmental approval. 2023: FAO adjusted its CPF process to ensure that the organization's main planning and programming instrument at the country level is now fully derived from the UNSDCF.	**Yes.** 2022: The CPF is grounded in the UN CCA, its ToC and the UNSDCF prioritization exercises. The most strategic and important entry point for FAO is during the UN CCA process. The pre-CCA analysis is intended to equip the FAOR in positioning FAO within the UN CCA and is a tool to facilitate the preparation of the desk work at country level, ensuring FAO targeted inputs are aligned with the UN CCA.	**Yes.** 2022: FAO country offices, with the support of the RC office and the UNCT monitoring and evaluation group, should periodically update UN INFO with quality-assured, entity-specific data and analysis.

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
Other	**Yes.** Country Programme Frameworks	**No date**	**Yes.** FAO governing bodies have a tool (CPF repository), to monitor Country Programme Frameworks formulation and derivation from UNSDCF process.	**Yes.** FAO's new Country Programme Framework Guidelines requires regional offices through the CPF quality assurance process to confirm that CPF outputs are fully derived from UNSDCF outcomes and outputs. It also requires confirming that RC has provided feedback on the CPF alignment and derivation from UNSDCF. FAO CPFs derive from UNSDCF using Option C from the UNSDCF Guidelines, plus additional outcomes that are not in the Cooperation Framework, included only on an exceptional basis to capture normative and standard-setting activities not prioritized in the Cooperation Framework.	**N/A**	**Yes.** FAO's new Country Programme Framework Guidelines require confirming that RC has provided feedback on the CPF alignment and derivation from UNSDCF.	**N/A**	**Yes.** FAO plays also a key role in the development of the Common Country Analysis and the UNSDCF including in the regional Peer Support Groups' monitoring of adherence is done by regional offices through the quality assurance process.	**Yes.** For each UNSDCF outcome and multi-agency output relevant to FAO's work, the FAOR identifies and inserts in UN-INFO the relevant information, including the sub-outputs/key activities that FAO will implement jointly or individually.
IFAD									
PG	**Yes.** Country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs), guiding investment strategies in rural development.	IFAD operational procedures and guidelines for Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (no date, document extension says 2024).	The final version of the COSOP is presented to the Operation Strategy and Policy Guidance Committee (OSC) for final review and approval. The final COSOP and the government's endorsement letter will be submitted to Scriptoria for approval by the President.	**Yes.** The COSOP will also be aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which ensures that IFAD is part of the concerted UN effort to achieve the SDGs by 2030.	**Yes.** An appendix to the COSOP should provide information about consultations with government, the UN Resident Coordinator, other stakeholders and target groups.	**N/A**	**Yes.** COSOPs cover a period of six to nine years. They should seek to align with a country's specific circumstances (such as the alignment to national strategies, election cycles, the UNSCDF period, etc.).	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
ILO									
PG	**Yes.** ILO Decent Work Programme Documents (DWPC)	**Yes.** ILO DWPC Guidelines 2020; Quality Assurance Mechanism checklist, 2020, DWPC template, 2020	Once the DWCP drafting is completed, the document is subjected to a two-stream review process conducted in parallel: Step1: RC, with the purpose of ensuring that the DWCP aligns to the Cooperation Framework. Step 2: internal ILO quality assurance process to ensure that each DWCP meets common quality standards (QAM). Step 3: Submit to RC and ILO regional office Step 4: The Regional Programming Unit (RPU) coordinates feedback on the draft DWCP from the regional office and the QAM members (PROGRAM, GEDI, EVAL and PARDEV) Step 5: QAM members are responsible for reviewing the draft DWCP	**Yes.** Alignment with the Cooperation Framework: -The country diagnostic refers to decent work-related elements included in the UN CCA -The DWCP focuses on specific SDG targets included in the Cooperation Framework - The relevant strategic priorities and outcomes of the Cooperation Framework are copied verbatim in the DWCP document - The additional DWCP outcomes not included in the Cooperation Framework, if applicable, target standards-related and normative results specific to the ILO, including social dialogue and tripartism "In the case of outcomes copied verbatim from the Cooperation Framework, the DWCP results matrix includes a clear indication of the decent work elements in each of them" **No guidance options.**	**Yes, encouraged.** The country office director also keeps the Resident Coordinator and other members of the UNCT abreast of developments in the DWCP design and should seek their participation in meetings with constituents along the process as appropriate.	**Formal feedback on the derivation.** Review carried out by the UN Resident Coordinator in the country, with the purpose of ensuring that the DWCP aligns to the Cooperation Framework. The Resident Coordinator's feedback is limited strictly to alignment of the DWCP to the Cooperation Framework priorities and is not expected to be a technical review.	**N/A**	**No.** Guidance does not give any information on CCA involvement. Self-assessment: "The ILO provided relevant, updated and timely decent work information and disaggregated data for the UN CCA, especially for SDG-related indicators including the ones that the ILO is custodian for, and comments from the ILO supervisory bodies."	**N/A**
Other	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
IOM									
PG	**Yes.** IOM country office strategies, regional strategies and the strategic results frameworks.	IOM in the UNSDCF Cycle a Step-by-Step Guide (no date).	**N/A**	**Yes.** An IOM-internal strategic planning process at the country level, framed by the IOM regional strategies and the SRF and connected to the UNSDCF is critical to position IOM's mandate and expertise within the UNCTs, with overall IOM expected outcomes aligned with joint UN outcomes in the CF that will contribute overall to collective UNCT priorities and joint results. Options are mentioned (A,B,C). IOM's documents and strategies should align to the UNSDCF as a matter of principle with IOM country offices generally recommended to follow Option B.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes. Recommended.** It is recommended to country offices to align the country strategy timelines with the UNSDCF cycle within that country.	**Yes.** IOM should seek to participate in all activities where possible. If migration considerations and the needs and rights of migrants are systematically integrated into the CCA, it will be easier to translate them into tangible joint UN action in the UNSDCF. Detailed specific guidelines on how to participate in CCA and good practices: Create a small IOM task team for the key programmatic specialists in-office to provide input throughout the CCA drafting process by the UNSDCF task team on available data sources, relevant stakeholders, priorities and gaps with regards to migration in the national development context.	**Yes.** UN-INFO is the main planning, monitoring and reporting system to track how the UN system at the country level supports governments to deliver on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Reporting on the UNSDCF is exclusively done through UN-INFO, and agencies input, including IOM's, is used by the RCO for reporting to donors in the country, and to UNDCO in New York. Use UN-INFO throughout the entire cycle of the UNSDCF planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting process.
Other	**DESA survey.** indicates that IOM does partially respond to reform checklist. There is no checklist available.	**DESA survey.** IOM is currently developing the guidelines for the new generations of strategic planning cycles.	**N/A**	**Yes. (DESA survey).**	**N/A**	**(DESA survey).** IOM staff have received guidance on the template letter to the exchanged with the RC.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
ITC									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**No. DESA survey.** Does not have country programmes.	**No. DESA survey.** Does not have country programmes.	**Yes. DESA survey.** RCs are kept informed.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

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Other	No checklist. DESA survey.	N/A	**Yes. DESA survey.** Senior management committee reviews and approves project proposal, which include sections on alignment with CF.	**Yes. DESA survey**. Requires that its country-level interventions are aligned with CF. ITC project documents include dedicated sections on the alignment of project interventions with national priorities and CF priorities.	**Yes. DESA survey.** "interact with RC"	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes. DESA survey.
ITU									
PG	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	No checklist. DESA survey.	N/A	**No. DESA survey.** ITU has a regional structures and does not have guidance or processes for country programme outcomes.	No. DESA survey.	No. DESA survey.	No. DESA survey.	N/A	N/A	No. DESA survey.
OCHA									
PG	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
OHCHR									
PG	**Yes.**	OHCHR Guidelines for country/regional programmes (no date).	**Late October**, in-country presences submit their takeaways from the "Human Rights 75" country dialogues **In early November** country programme guidelines are issued and information webinars held **In November** the SMT defines the direction for the next OMP (shifts and OEAPs focus) based on the information gathered through the Human Rights 75 and the O.E 2.0 processes **By the end of the year** Country programmes modules are opened in the PMS with the global pillar and OEAP results **By end of March** country programmes are submitted in the PMS **In April** country programmes are reviewed and approved.	**Yes.** As per the UNSDCF Guidance, UN entities derive the outcomes of their country programmes from the outcomes of the Cooperation Framework. When possible, the starting point should therefore be the CF outcomes further specified to outline their specific contribution, as necessary. Note however that exceptionally country programmes can include additional outcomes to address key normative issues which have not been prioritized in the Cooperation Framework. It would be important to discuss and coordinate the inclusion of these outcomes with the Resident Coordinator/ UNCT in the context of the UNSDCF No mentions of options.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** OHCHR is aligning its programming cycle with UNSDCF programming cycles at the country level. Regional programmes are developed together with each new OMP and for the duration of the OMP Country programmes for countries where OHCHR has a presence are developed at the time of developing the UNSDCF and for the duration of the UNSDCF. They are submitted in the PMS two months after the UNSDCF signature. The establishment of a new country presence will require the development of a country programme.	**Yes.** Ensure a human rights, gender and disability inclusion-based approach. Assess gaps identified by international human rights mechanisms and identify rights at stake. Undertake a causal analysis to understand why rights are been violated and identify who has to do something about it, and what they need to do to take action. Ensure the participation of human rights actors, including rights holders, in the analysis.	**N/A**
Other	**Yes.**	**N/A**	**No. DESA survey.** Does not review country programmes as part of the GA.	**Yes. DESA survey.** Must derive from the CF and must be developed within two months of the signature of the CF.	**Yes. DESA survey.** RCs are consulted.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
PBSO									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
UNAIDS									
PG	Joint UN plans / country envelopes	Joint Programme 2024-2025 Planning Guidance, 2023	**N/A**	**Not directly.** UNAIDS Secretariat country offices are a part of the Resident Coordinator system. As the chair of the country-level Joint UN Teams on AIDS, UNAIDS country directors lead and ensure that the joint UN effort in support to the national response on AIDS are aligned with, derived from and contribute to UNSDCF efforts. No options.	**N/A**	**No.** The final Joint Plan is then officially shared by the UCD with the Resident Coordinator and UNCT for information highlighting its alignment with and anchoring into the UNSDCF. No signature is required from the Resident Coordinator or other UNCT members.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** As they are part of UNSDCF and per the DCO guidance on Joint Programmes, all Joint Plan results and related budgets should also be included in the UNCT UN-INFO system and tagged as "joint" in UN-INFO for reporting and related external communication should highlight those are Joint Programme on HIV results.
Other	**N/A**	**No date.**	**Yes. (DESA survey).** UNAIDS programme Coordinating Board reviews and approves UNAIDS overall workplan and budget, does refer to alignment with CF.	**Yes.** As the chair of the country-level Joint UN teams on AIDS, UNAIDS country directors lead and ensure that the joint UN effort in support to the national response on AIDS are aligned with, derived from and contribute to UNSDCF efforts.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** The five-year UBRAF is synchronized as much as possible with the planning cycles of cosponsors and other UN funds, programmes and agencies, in line with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and PCB request.	**N/A**	**Yes.** Data on UNAIDS Secretariat country offices contributing to UN-INFO is annually and reported as part of the UN Funding Compact progress report to UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.
UNCDF									
PG	No. UNCDF project documents. Project guidance documents were not provided.	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**	**Project guidance documents were not provided.**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
Other	No, UNCDF project documents.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes. DESA survey.** Guidance has linkages to the UNSDCF outcomes and outputs. UNCDF covers areas related to financial inclusion, local finance development, and digital finance. These initiatives are designed to align projects with the UNSDCF outcomes and outputs, UNCDF's strategic priorities, and national development goals.	**Yes. DESA survey.** Under the new management, the Executive Secretary has emphasized the importance of discussing and involving the UN system during the design stage of any initiative that UNCDF plans to conduct, ensuring that there is system-wide collaboration from the outset.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
UNCTAD									
PG	**No.**	**Yes.** UNCTAD technical cooperation channelled within the structure set up by the UN Reform at the country level. UNCTAD Technical Cooperation Section Geneva, DRAFT 3 June 2021.	**N/A**	**Yes.** Guidance primarily on ensuring linkages to the UNSDCF outcomes and outputs.	**Yes.** Under the new management, the Executive Secretary has emphasized the importance of discussing and involving the UN system during the design stage of any initiative.	**N/A**	**Yes.** The UNSDCFs are organized around cycles with an average timeframe of 4 years. Duration is flexible to align as much as possible the UNSDCF' cycle. The UNSDCFs can be extended for a period of one year, renewable.	**N/A**	**Yes.** UNCTAD project officers, in coordination with UNCTAD TCS, are encouraged to use this platform to insert UNCTAD inputs in the overall UNSDCF planning and reporting yearly exercises.
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
UN DESA									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes. DESA survey.**	**Yes. DESA survey.** The guidelines for the formulation of the DESA capacity development projects funded by the development account and some funds explicitly required to document engagement of the RC at key stages of planning.	**N/A**	**N/A**	Described in DESA departmental policy on country-level engagement.	Reports activities in UN INFO in some countries where it is a UNCT member.

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UNDP									
PG	Yes.	**PG were not provided.** Only document "QA assessment" of CPDs. February 2023 Version. Applicable to CPDs planned for 2023 onwards.	**PG were not provided.**	**PG were not provided.** QA assessment of CPDs document mentions UNSDCF and if CPD outcomes are matched or if not. Check box "The outcomes are copied verbatim from the UNSDCF/equivalent" (Y/N) in QA assessment No information on Option A, B,C	**PG were not provided.**	**PG were not provided.**	**PG were not provided.**	**PG were not provided.**	**PG were not provided.**
Other	Yes.	**No date.**	**Governing Board Approval.** Draft CPDs are submitted for the approval of the EB along with the available draft UNSDCF, thus ensuring the Executive Board has the opportunity to review the derivation of country. programmes from UNSDCF.	**N/A.** Through the Theory of Change guidance, UNDP ensures that its country programmes are derived from the UNSDCF's ToC and are developed in close collaboration with the UNCT and the RC.	**Required**. in the development of UNDP CPDs all UNDP regional representatives (RR) are required to consult with the RC and UNCT in key stages of the strategic planning.	**Yes**. UNDP mandates that the UN RC formally confirm that the outcomes of UNDP CPD are derived from and aligned to the UNSDCF. The template for securing such certification has been shared with all UNDP RRs.	**Yes**. CPD is fully aligned with the UNSDCF and is sequenced to be developed after the agreement on UNCF priorities and outcomes.	**N/A**	**No instructions**. RCL stipulates that UNDP country offices participate in reporting exercises in UN-INFO.
UNDRR									
PG	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	**No checklist. DESA survey.**	N/A	**DESA survey.** UNDRR is an entity of the UN Secretariat and governed by the GA.	**Yes. DESA survey**. While UNDRR does not have country programming, country-level activities are aligned with CF. In selected countries UNDRR engages in the design and implementation of CF to ensure alignment.	**DESA survey**. Internal guidance for regional offices provides direction for engagement with RC, process of developing CF and CCA.	N/A	N/A	**DESA survey**. Internal guidance for regional offices provides direction for engagement with RC, process of developing CF and CCA.	**DESA survey**. Reports progress in UN-INFO as part of the UNCT.
UN DPPA									
PG	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	No.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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UNECE									
PG	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A.** ECE is guided by its Technical Cooperation Strategy, approved by ECE Executive Committee in May 2021. The strategy was updated after the UNDS reform and has guided ECE efforts to enhance collaboration with the RC system and UNCTs in the programme countries in the ECE region.	**Not applicable.** DESA survey. ECE does not have CPDs. However, activities are aligned with CF outcomes.	**Not applicable.** DESA survey. Consult and engage with RC system for regional, subregional and transboundary projects or activities funded from the Development Account (UNDA) and the regular programme for technical cooperation (RPTC).	**Not applicable. DESA survey.**	N/A	**N/A.** Engaged in the preparation and implementation of the UNSDCF in the 17 countries being involved from the common country assessment stage through the final signature of the frameworks and their implementation.	**Yes. DESA survey.**
UNEP									
PG	**No**. Project based organization.	**No**. Single corporate guidance. UNEP delivery model, September 2022.	**N/A**	Email: In terms of alignment with the Cooperation Framework, UNEP is currently piloting country engagement plans. **UNEP delivery model, September 2022** No mention of UNSDCFs, alignment or derivation or guidance option.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A.** ToR of focal points/April 2023: Represent UNEP in UNCT meetings – where relevant and feasible this may include Common Country Analysis and Cooperation Framework design. Coordinate UNEP inputs into the development of CCAs and UNSDCFs and related reports.	**N/A**

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Other	**No.** UNEP, while developing country engagement plans, does not have "country programmes" in the same manner as other UN entities.	**9 November 2023**	UNEP's governing body provides strategic guidance, approval of biennial programme of works and budgets and reviews UNEP's programmatic performance. As UNEP's country engagement is largely funded from extrabudgetary resources, these funds are raised and programmed in accordance with the strategic guidance of UNEP and as and when funds are available.	**To some extent.** Based on this dialogue, and with the regional offices' understanding of the sociopolitical and economic context, the regional offices identify priorities for UNEP support at the regional and country levels, in particular as derived from the Cooperation Frameworks.	**Yes.** UNEP has established a network of focal points to UN Country Teams (UNCTs). The terms of reference for these UNCT focal points include engaging and consulting with the Resident Coordinator at critical stages to ensure that UNEP interventions at the country level are aligned with the UNCT priorities.	**N/A**	**To some extent.** Where the development of UNEP's country-level activities is not synchronized with the Cooperation Framework timeline, UNEP works in parallel towards strategic programmatic alignment.	**N/A**	**Yes.** UNEP is increasingly reporting results of country-level activities on the UN-INFO platform. UNEP is working towards a more systematic approach to reporting in UN-INFO and is part of an ongoing pilot along with other UN Secretariat entities to explore the interoperability of Umoja-IPMR and UN-INFO with a view to streamlining country-level reporting requirements.
ESCAP									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
UNESCO									
PG	**No.** UNESCO does not have a formal country programming instrument.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.	**No.** Relies on the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Internal Guidance.
Other	**No.** UNESCO does not have a formal country programming instrument.	**16 February 2024**	**No.** The Executive Board does not approve UNESCO Country Programme Documents. As a specialized agency, UNESCO is not a CPD entity, i.e. does not have Executive Board-approved Country Programme Documents.	**Yes.** UNESCO standard work plan template for field offices contains information on alignment with/ derivation of with the UNSDCF results framework. Relevant guidance on the preparation of UNESCO country formats highlights this requirement.	**DESA survey.** "certain level of consultations with the RC"	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**No.** UNESCO is committed to system-wide reporting through UN-INFO but is not yet able at this stage to ensure this systematically. A future version of Core Manager aims to interface with UN-INFO.

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UNFPA									
PG	**Yes.**	**Yes.** Policy and Procedures for Development and Approval of CPD. 15 July 2022.	**Yes.** Regional office submits draft CPD to EBB/OED for editing. EBB/OED edits all CPDs, preparing and posting the edited draft CPD for review and comments by the EB. Edited CPDs are shared with the regional office for feedback prior to the review. EB members review edited draft CPD for three weeks and provide comments, if any.	**Yes. Preference for Option B.** Guidance names all options for derivation. Option must be duly discussed and agreed upon by the UNCT facilitated by the head of unit and cleared internally by the Deputy ED for programmes. Guidance states that there is prevalence of Option B among UNFPA country programmes, and this is the standard approach in nearly all countries.	**No direct reference to RC.** Mentions that the CPD development must be consultative involving government and relevant stakeholders including the UN.	**Yes.** "Confirmed by the Resident Coordinator in writing" The United Nations resident coordinator must also review the CPD to ensure the proposed programme derives from – and aligns with – the CF as per MAF.	**Yes.** Although country programme ideation and preparation starts before the CCA process, a country office should formulate the CPD only after the Cooperation Framework strategic priorities are agreed.	**Yes.** Strategic dialogue is aligned with CCA process. CPD should draw on the CCA and other critical evidence Step 1 of CPD design "Analytical Evidence Gathering" asks for several analytical evidence-gathering exercises and initial consultations with the government and partners. Step 1 should inform CCA.	**No.** UNFPA is committed to system-wide reporting through UN-INFO but is not yet able at this stage to ensure this systematically. A future version of Quantum Plus aims at interfacing with UN-INFO.
Other	**Yes.**	**June 2024**	The draft CPDs are submitted for the approval of the EB along with the relevant UNSDCF, to ensure that the Board is enabled to ensure that UNFPA country programmes are derived from and aligned with the Cooperation Frameworks.	**Yes.** UNFPA internal policies require that all its country programmes are derived from and aligned with nationally agreed and nationally owned Cooperation Frameworks.	**No direct reference to CPI involvement.** UNFPA consults RCs at key stages of country-level entry-specific planning processes, while ensuring that UNFPA programming documents and strategies align with corporate priorities articulated in its strategic plan.	**Yes.** Resident Coordinators sign off on the derivation and alignment of UNFPA Country Programme Documents (CPDs) with the Cooperation Framework before UNFPA country programmes are submitted for the consideration of the Executive Board.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** UNFPA continues to contribute to system-wide reporting on the UN system's contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. In 2022, 77 per cent of UNFPA country offices responded that they systematically report results in UN-INFO.

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UNHCR									
PG	**Yes.** Multi-year strategic plans and operational plans. (3-5 years).	UNHCR Policy on Planning for, Getting and Showing Results (2023) (only certain paragraphs made available) New internal guidance planned in early 2025.	**N/A**	**Yes.** Bureau director is responsible for ensuring that country plans/ strategies are well integrated in inter-agency planning frameworks and aligned with the UNSDCF "…ensuring that country plans/strategies are well integrated in inter-agency planning frameworks and aligned with the UNSDCF." No mentions of options (A/B/C).	**Yes.** The representative informs the relevant stakeholders and involves them in the process. This includes informing and discussing opportunities for engagement with the government, the UN Resident Coordinator, UN country teams, forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and other priority stakeholders In line with the requirements of UNHCR's membership in the UNSDG and the MAF, a country operation is required to inform the UN RC in the country about the development of a new UNHCR strategy.	**N/A**	**Yes.** When possible, strategies align with other relevant planning frameworks, such as refugee response plans, humanitarian response plans, national development plans, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework. The UNHCR RR determines the duration of the multi-year strategy. The duration of the strategy considers: alignment to country-level processes such as UNSDCF.	**Yes.** UNHCR operations engage in the development of the UNSDCF by contributing to the Common Country Analysis and the formulation of the UNSDCF priorities and outcomes UNHCR operations engage in the development of the UNSDCF by contributing to the Common Country Analysis and the formulation of the UNSDCF priorities and outcomes.	**Yes.** Engage in relevant UNSDCF results groups and report to UNINFO and on the UNSDG data portal.
Other	**Yes.** Multi-year strategic plans and operational plans. (3-5 years).	**N/A**	**N/A**	**No. DESA survey.** But provides guidance to its country operations to ensure that development related activities are aligned with CF.	**Yes. DESA survey.** "…keep the RC informed on the development of the country operations multiyear strategy".	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
UN Habitat									
PG	**Yes.** Country programme documents or strategic plans, supporting urbanization and sustainable housing.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

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Other	**Yes.** Country programme documents or strategic plans, supporting urbanization and sustainable housing.	**July 2024**	The review of UN Habitat's country projects and programmes follows an internal process managed by the programme review committee (PRC), coordinated both at the headquarters and country (regional PRC) levels. So far there has been no direct derivation of UN-Habitat's programmes/projects from UNSDCFs, which necessitated review by the Governing Bodies. Governing Bodies are of course aware of the overall strategic orientations as they approve UN-Habitat's work programme, but the day-to-day implementation at programme and project development level follows different processed. Note: The Executive Board may advise and decide to mandate for a systematic review of the current practice for full compliance. In that case, questions of format and nature of the review shall be clarified.	**Yes.** UN-Habitat's country programme development aligns with priorities of the UNSDCF as well as national development plans.	**Yes.** UN-Habitat relies on regional representatives (RRs) and senior staff in the regions to interact actively with Resident Coordinators (RCs) as appropriate, bringing country-level urban knowhow into regional/ country strategic planning. UN-Habitat also has institutionalized the practice of inviting RCs to several recent World Urban Forums Sessions to engage in a strategic dialogue for future programming. "Communicate directly with RCs for feedback on UN-Habitat country Programming."	**No.** UN-Habitat will include in its next strategic plan in 2025, a special guidance under the means of its implementation ensuring that both UN-Habitat's country managers confirm by means of reporting verified by RC offices on progress made in achieving this requirement.	**No.** In 2025, UN-Habitat plans to update the existing policy guidance to fully align UN-Habitat country programming with CCA and UNSDCF processes.	**Yes.** In countries where a CCA process was developed, UN Habitat was involved and provided substantive input. RRs in ROAS and ROAP give directions and provide guidance to country managers to ensure they contribute to the CCA and UNSDCF in a timely manner.	**Limited.** Due to limited country presence and capacity, inputs in UNINFO are only provided in specific relevant countries, e.g. Afghanistan, Indonesia and some Arab States as well as in selected countries in Eastern Europe, and Southern Caucasus and Central Asia.

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
UNICEF									
PG	**Yes.**	UNICEF Country Programme Planning, **August 2022.**	**N/A**	**Yes.** UNICEF Country Programme Documents are derived from the UNSDCF. No mentioning of guidance options. Outcome and output table of CPD: "Cite only the number and copy verbatim from UNSDCF." Utilizing common UNSDCF / UNICEF indicators at the outcome level where possible, and crafting complementary sets of indicators at the output and outcome levels with other UN agencies.	**No directly referencing RC.** Speaks of a participatory process involving the UN system without directly mentioning the RC.	**N/A**	**Yes.** Country offices develop country programmes in sync with and in parallel to the development of the UNSDCF. Linkages to the UNSDCF go well beyond aligning with planning timelines (which do not always perfectly dovetail), and should focus on milestones that UNICEF can use to create synergies and opportunities for leveraging the UNSDCF to advance the country programme's desired change.	**Yes.** Making use of the process of developing the CCA by providing information on deprivations and risks to influence the agenda for children and young people and define the UNSDCF. Where possible, utilizing the process of developing the UNSDCF theories of change to establish and draw on synergies with other UN agencies.	**N/A**
Other	**Yes.**	Executive Board Annual Session **2024**	UNICEF is mandated to make draft CPDs available to its Executive Board 12 weeks prior to the session in which the CPDs will be considered for endorsement. This process is meant to enable Member States to review and provide comments to the documents, including their derivation from the respective CFs.	**Yes.** The country programme planning guidance provides instructions on both outcome derivation from the UNSDCF and on country programme development, in parallel with or after the finalization of the Cooperation Framework. The annual quality review of CPDs conducted by UNICEF ensures adherence to the guidance, including Cooperation Framework derivation.	**Yes.** UNICEF has embedded in its country programme procedure and country programme planning guidance the requirement to consult with the RC at key stages of strategic planning.	**Yes.** The confirmation letter from the Resident Coordinator on the derivation of CPDs from the UNSDCF is a requirement for CPD submission to the Executive Board.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** UNICEF country offices systematically report their results on the UN-INFO platform.

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
UNIDO									
PG	**Yes.** Country programmes or programme for country partnerships (PCP).	General Guidance on UNIDO's Participation within the Context of the Implementation of The United Nations Development System Reform at the Field Level, 2022 UNIDO Manual on the Programme for Country Partnership Edition: October 2021.	**Yes.** UNIDO CP/PCP to the Executive Board for approval: Step 1: The entity responsible for the document obtains the internal approvals in line with administrative issuances regulating the internal review and clearance process Step 2: Prior to the submission of the internally cleared UNIDO CP/PCP document, the entity responsible for the document obtains the written confirmation and clearance of the RC Step 3: Includes the UNRC's final confirmation and/or comments to the submission to the Executive Board.	**Yes.** 2022: Ensure that CPs/PCPs derive from UNSDCFs No mentions of options (A/B/C). 2021: Links and synergies are established with the UNSDCF from the onset to ensure that the PCP derives from the Cooperation Framework.	**Yes.** 2021: The formulation of the PCP and the ancillary resource mobilization efforts should be closely aligned with those of the UN development system, as articulated in the UNSDCF agreed upon with the government and involves the respective United Nations Resident Coordinator and UN country team. UNIDO (country) representative provides regular updates to the UNRC and the UNCT on the progress and results achieved throughout PCP implementation.	**Yes.** 2021: obtains written confirmation that the PCP document derives from the UN Cooperation Framework as per the revised MAF of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator system. The RC's feedback is limited strictly to the alignment of the PCP to the priorities of the UN Cooperation Framework and should not be a technical review. 2022: Prior to the submission of the internally cleared UNIDO CP/PCP document, the entity responsible for the document obtains the written confirmation and clearance of the UNRC.	**Yes.** 2022: Ensure alignment of new CP/PCP in the formulation phase with the UNSDCF as well as alignment of ongoing CP/PCP with the UNSDCF during the mid-term review.	**Yes.** 2022: UNIDO's active participation in CCA/UNSDCF should focus on priority countries, including special consideration being given to countries where UNIDO has no physical presence, being a non-resident agency (NRA). Has a clear guidance on participation in CCA, participation, formulation, internal clearance for UNIDO's engagement in the CCA. The use of UNIDO data, statistics, analysis, reviews, research, capacities and resources.	**Yes.** 2022: Utilizes the common UN INFO reporting platform to support the analysis and reporting of system-wide results.
Other	**N/A**	**Checklist not mandated.**	**N/A**	**Yes. DESA survey.**	**Yes. DESA survey.** Consult RC.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
UNODC									
PG	**Yes.** Regional and national strategic programmes or integrated country strategies.	United Nations Development System (UNDS) Reform UNODC Field Office Engagement - Info Note 2.0 (DRAFT 2/2023)	N/A	**Yes.** UNDS Reform promotes entities' specific Country Programme Documents derived from the Cooperation Framework. As referenced above three options are available in the UNSDCF Guidance. UNODC field offices have mostly chosen a "modified" Option C, which is maintained by regional and/or country offices with UNSDCF (or UNDAF) outcomes copied verbatim, plus additional outcomes that are not in the Cooperation Framework, included only on an exceptional basis to capture normative and standard-setting activities not prioritized in the Cooperation Framework.	To some extent. Field office colleagues to share reporting lines, share and coordinate UNODC's work with the Resident Coordinators and keep the arrangements simple, constructive and workable.	**Yes.** In the derivation of country programmes, field offices are encouraged to continue the close cooperation with the RCO and to use the template (RC confirmation letter) that has been disseminated across the RC system and is in active use. Based on CF Guidance, this letter provides scope for the RC to review with a view to confirming alignment and coherence with the CF, identifying opportunities for synergies and complementarities, and avoiding duplication and overlap.	N/A	**Yes.** The RC and UNCT established an inter-agency team that leads the CCA process and is the penholder for analytical products and reports. Field offices are encouraged to share existing sources of evidence and research from UNODC's rich sources of data.	**Yes.** Ensure UNODC's contribution to respective UNCT work, including planning (e.g. CFs and joint workplans), monitoring (incl. funding needs) and reporting, adequately reflected onto the UN-INFO portal.
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UNOPS									
PG	**No.** UNOPS does not develop country programmes.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
Other	**No.** UNOPS does not develop country programmes.	Annual Session 2024	**N/A**	**N/A**	No overall formal guidance in UNOPS on MAF implementation. For 2024, more specific guidance on the MAF requirement to "consult with the Resident Coordinator at key stages of entity-specific strategic planning" has been included in the UNCT objective in relation to the individual performance assessments of UNOPS UNCT members.	**N/A**	To further enhance alignment with country-level CFs, UNOPS is currently augmenting its system, enabling early-stage project development to prompt review and consideration of CFs and national plans for the country of implementation.	**N/A**	In the expanded results framework behind the restated strategic plan, 2022-2025 UNOPS included a performance indicator to drive compliance with the requirement for systematic reporting via UN-INFO. While the requirement for systematic reporting is being reinforced, full compliance is still to be achieved. A supplementary measure to drive compliance is the piloting of country-level contribution reports derived from UN INFO reporting.
UNRWA									
PG	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**No. DESA survey.**	**No. DESA survey.**	**No. DESA survey.**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
UNV									
PG	**No.**	Guidance Notes Integrating Volunteerism into United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (no date).	As such UNV reports through the UNDP Executive Board, as UNV is administered by UNDP.	Guidance note on how country and regional offices can participate in UNSDCF processes more effectively promoting volunteerism.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes.** Engage with the UNRCO focal point to include consultation sessions with volunteer groups in the ToR of the consultant who is preparing CCA. Provide UNRCO/UNCT with the national situation analysis of volunteering's contribution to SDGs.	**N/A**
Other	**No.**	Checklist administered by UNDP.	**Yes. DESA survey.** Same as UNDP.	**Yes. DESA survey.** Same as UNDP.	**Yes. DESA survey.** Same as UNDP.	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
UN Women									
PG	**Yes.** Strategic note (SN).	Country Programme Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Procedure, 2024.	Step 1: Quality assurance by the regional office Step 2: Formal solicitation to the Resident Coordinator Step 3: Endorsement by the Regional Director Step 4: Final review by headquarters.	**Yes.** Country offices must adopt relevant UNSDCF Outcomes verbatim as the SN outcomes. In exceptional cases, where UNSDCFs do not capture normative and United Nations coordination priorities, country offices may propose an additional outcomes to address these priorities. Pre-approval from the respective regional office is required. No mention of options.	**Yes.** Under the overall leadership of the regional strategic planning specialist/focal point and in coordination with SPU/SPRED, regional offices shall coordinate and schedule internal strategic dialogue(s) among country offices. The strategic dialogue(s) shall include country offices and relevant regional office and headquarters divisions units and shall prioritize discussions on strengthening UN Women's strategic positioning in the country. Country representatives/ heads of office shall share initial thinking and clearly identify the support required from the regional office and headquarters before the development of the UNSDCF.	**Yes.** RC's proof of agreement with the draft strategic note. Once the RC agrees that the SN derives from the UNSDCF, the RC sends written confirmation to the respective RD. Proof of the RC's agreement (letter or email) is mandatory for the approval of the SN.	**Yes.** The duration of the SN must be harmonised with the UNSDCF cycle. May to early August of the final year of the ongoing UNSDCF; SN preparation and development will most often occur concurrently with the finalisation of the UNSDCF; however, this shall begin as soon as draft UNSDCF outcomes are available.	**Yes.** Country offices are also expected to strategically contribute to joint consultation processes with external stakeholders led by the UNCT to develop the CCA and UNSDCF. To effectively contribute to UNSDCF development, country offices should aim to mainstream GEWE across the UNSDCF, including but not limited to UNSDCF outcomes, outputs and indicators.	**N/A**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
Other	**Yes.**	Annual Session 2024	**DESA survey.** UN Women does not submit country office strategic notes to EB. But available on the transparency portal and available for Member States to review for derivation.	**Yes.** UN-Women needs to take relevant outcomes of Cooperation Framework verbatim as outcomes of strategic notes.	**Yes.** The entity has guidance and processes in place to ensure the implementation of the MAF requirement to "consult with the RC at key stages of the entity-specific strategic planning". In line with UNSDCF, each UN-Women country office develops a strategic note.	**Yes.** As one of the mandatory supporting documents to the strategic note, a proof of RC's endorsement needs to be submitted to UN-Women headquarters to facilitate approval of the strategic note. Submission of RC endorsement is described in the strategic note guidance.	**Yes.** As specified in the guidance and in the UN-Women's planning, monitoring and reporting policy, strategic notes of UN-Women country offices need to be developed after the Cooperation Framework since UN-Women needs to take relevant outcomes of Cooperation Framework verbatim as outcomes of strategic notes.	**Yes.** UN-Women offices continue to assist UNCTs in prioritizing gender equality in the CCA and United Nations System Development Cooperation Frameworks, using country gender equality profiles (CGEP) as a key resource to support integration of gender equality in the CCA/ UNSDCF development.	**Yes.** 88 per cent of UN-Women country offices surveyed in 2023 responded positively to using UN-INFO.
WHO									
PG	**Yes.** Country cooperation strategies (CCS), aligning with national health priorities.	WHO Country Cooperation Strategy GUIDE 2020 WHO Country Cooperation Strategy Guide 2023	**N/A = 2022, 2023**	**Yes. Recommended.** 2022. It is recommended that each CCS should be aligned with the GPW13 and UNSDCF. "remain aligned with National Strategic and Development Plans and the UNSDCF, being updated as and when required to reflect changes at the national and global levels." "Bring the CCS into line with the UNSDCF, wherever possible." 2023: "Alignment" with existing government mandates, legislative obligations, plans including the UNSDCF. UNSDCF also provides an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with UN agencies on cooperation challenges and opportunities in the country.	**Yes.** 2022: Discuss informally with the health ministry and other relevant ministries for input and prepare other key stakeholders including relevant UN agencies/ Resident Coordinator and other health and development partners for active involvement in the process. 2023: The CCS development process should commence with a discussion with the MOH and other relevant ministries, including relevant UN agencies/ Resident Coordinator, other health and development partners, humanitarian partners and non-state actors (if applicable), to ensure that they are meaningfully involved in deliberations.	**N/A = 2022, 2023**	**Yes.** 2022: The timing of the CCS is ideally aligned to the UNSDCF. If the new UNSCDCF is not yet developed and the CCS is up for renewal, timeframes should be matched, when possible. 2023: The usual timeframe for the CCS is four to five years. Whenever possible, its timing should be closely aligned with WHO's GPW, UNSDCF and national health sector plans.	**Yes.** 2022: direct input to the CCA of the UNSDCF, enabling the WHO representative in the country office (WR) to take a leading role in the health section of UNSDCF. The CCA can serve as a basis for prioritization exercises for both CCS and UNSDCF on health issues, under WR leadership. "Ideally, the CCA/UNSDCF would inform the CCS." 2023: Country-level situation analyses can build on existing assessments and reports such as health sector reviews, UN CCA and SDG reports.	**N/A = 2022, 2023**

	CPI (Y/N)	Date of guidance	Type of approval process	Relationship to UNSDCF (Options A/B/C)	Involvement of RC/RCO in CPI development (design/QA)	RC derivation letter	CPI in line with CF timeframe	Engagement on CCA	UN INFO reporting
Other	Country cooperation strategy (CCS) is WHO's medium-term strategic framework to guide the organization's work in and with a country.	**N/A**	**Yes. (DESA survey).**	**Yes. (DESA survey).**	**Yes. (DESA survey).**	**No. (DESA survey).**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Yes. (DESA survey).**
WFP									
PG	**Yes.**	Policy on Country Strategic Plans, 2016 (UNDAF)	**CSPs submitted to EB for approval at any session.**	WFP outcomes are coherent with both national and UNDAF outcomes and complement the outcomes of other United Nations agencies.	**N/A**	**N/A**	Country strategic planning cycles will be aligned with national and – consequently – UNDAF planning cycles.	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**Yes.**	24–28 June 2024	**Yes.** The UNSDCF document (or an advanced draft of it, if formal approval of the UNSDCF has been delayed) is shared with WFP's Executive Board for information prior to the Board session at which approval of a given CSP is sought, providing transparency on the relationship between WFP's CSP development outcomes and the UNSDCF.	**Yes.** WFP's internal UNSDCF guidance stresses the importance of deriving CSP development outcomes from UNSDCFs and aligning CSPs with the results and cycle of UNSDCFs. As a result, all the development components of CSP frameworks are directly derived from the strategic priorities and outcomes of the UNSDCF.	**Yes.** WFP's internal guidance on the United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework includes a recommendation that the resident coordinator be consulted at key stages of the formulation of a country strategic plan.	**Yes.** Mandatory requirement that, using the official United Nations system-wide template, RC's signature be sought to confirm the alignment of the CSP with the UNSDCF. Obtaining formal letters from RCs confirming that the development components of CSPs are aligned with UNSDCFs. The confirmation from RCs of such alignment is collected as part of the CSP development process.	**Yes.** "Aligning CSPs with the results and cycle of UNSDCFs."	**N/A**	**Yes.** WFP systematically reports its country-level results on the UN-INFO platform.
WIPO									
PG	**No**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
WMO									
PG	**No**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Other	**No**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**

Annex G: Mapping of findings, conclusions and recommendations

Key conclusion and corresponding recommendation	Key finding(s)
1 Recalibrated approach to Cooperation Framework cycle delivery	2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 28, 33
1.1 Proposals for recalibration	7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 22, 33
1.2 Importance of transparency standards	10, 14, 19, 21, 28, 36
1.3 Flexibility to adapt	2, 19, 20, 21, 26, 33
2 Meeting UNCT configuration ambitions	13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 35
2.1 UNCT configuration analysis	14, 15
2.2 UNCT configuration decision-making	13, 15, 16, 17
2.3 New global models for presence and deployment	15, 17, 18, 35
3 Support systems for coordination	1, 2, 3, 8, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36
3.1 Revised MAF & CF guidance	1, 2, 3, 8, 22, 23, 26, 27, 36
3.2 DCO staffing and operations	21, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33
3.3 UNSDG regional mechanisms	17, 32
3.4 More strategic QCPR monitoring	32
4 Accountabilities and incentives within UNSDG entities	4, 12, 15, 28, 29, 34, 36
4.1 Strategic planning, business models, results frameworks	4, 5, 12, 15, 34
4.2 Performance management at all levels	5, 34, 36
4.3 UNCT and RC appraisals	28, 29
5 Removing institutional obstacles	15, 17, 21, 25, 35
6 Funding quality	24, 25, 40, 41
6.1 Member State Funding Compact commitments	24, 25, 40, 41
6.2 RC role in joint resource mobilization	24, 25, 40, 41
6.3 UNCT joint resource mobilization	24, 25, 40, 41
7 Member state oversight and engagement	11, 20, 37, 39

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