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Resident Coordinator Leadership Development and Learning Activity Report – 2024

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THE RC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING STRATEGY

The Development Coordination Office's (DCO) learning and leadership development initiatives for current Resident Coordinator (RCs) and members of the RC/HC Talent Pipeline aim to:

- Bring learning "close to work," ensuring it is relevant, timely, and tailored to each RC's needs;
- Work with the entire team (RC and UNCT members) so that they drive change together;
- Provide learning support over time to anchor learning and drive behavioural change.

The priority areas of intervention are:

- Strengthening the RC/HC Talent Pipeline to equip future RCs with foundational skills and knowledge for deployment.
- Fast-tracking first-time RCs' growth during their critical transition.
- Empowering RCs and UNCTs with systems leadership strategies essential for the 2030 Agenda.
- Offering tailored knowledge and learning tools to support RCs across diverse contexts and career stages.

FIRST-TIME RC ORIENTATION

The orientation programme for first-time RCs is designed to help them understand the country context, build relationships with key stakeholders, and expand their networks within the UN system. In 2024, 20 first-time RCs benefited from the programme, which is broken down into three stages:

- Upon selection, individual conversations were held with the RC designates to understand their learning needs and identify potential learning interventions. RCs designates were encouraged to attend webinars hosted by sitting RCs for RC/HC Talent Pipeline and RC Pool members, offering valuable exposure to the real-world experiences of active RCs. For those joining the RC role from outside the UN, mentoring tutorials were conducted, with a former RC holding four to five individual sessions to familiarize the RC designate with the RC role.
- Upon clearance, incoming RCs received briefings from the outgoing RC, the RC Office, and the DCO Regional Director, ensuring that the knowledge and experiences of the predecessor were passed on to preserve institutional memory. RCs were also paired with a mentor to help accelerate their learning curve and ensure a smooth transition.
- Upon deployment, the RCs received a comprehensive suite of in-briefings, including a 5-day in-person session in New York, virtual sessions with agencies based in Rome, Geneva, Vienna, Paris and Nairobi, as well as in-person or virtual briefings by agencies' regional directors. In addition, RCs from outside the UN had the opportunity to shadow a sitting RC to acquire hands-on experience.

"This [shadowing] was the most useful part of the whole induction process, as I was able to see up close an RC in action."

In addition, an annual induction workshop, paired with the RC Global Meeting, supported experience sharing and community building, with mentoring from former RCs. In the 2024 session, fourteen first-time RCs attended.

LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR RCs

Connect & Reflect

For current RCs, DCO curates virtual 'safe spaces' for peer exchange. One such initiative is "Connect & Reflect", a monthly one-hour session, where RCs discuss topics of their own choice. In 2024, topics included operationalizing the six SDG transitions, supporting government engagement in the Summit of the Future, developing a new Cooperation Framework, and managing United Nations country team (UNCT) dynamics, with 48 RCs participating in at least one session. Feedback from regular attendees emphasized the value of these sessions for connecting with fellow RCs from different regions.

"I truly look forward to these... it is so refreshing to have that one hour with fellow RCs from different regions... to talk shop."

Fireside Chats

"As a first-time RC, these have been very informative and useful... The space is also immensely valuable for cross-pollination of practices as I have learnt from what others are doing (and NOT doing)."

Additionally, in 2024 DCO introduced "Fireside Chats", a monthly one-hour session where RCs freely discuss with DCO senior managers issues relating to policy and programming, communications, and the Joint SDG Fund. Approximately 50 RCs attended one or more of the sessions, with positive feedback highlighting the value of the space for cross-fertilisation of experiences.

UN Leaders Programme

In 2024 thirteen RCs participated in the UN Leaders Programme, the flagship leadership development programme offered by the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) for senior leaders of the UN Secretariat. The programme allows them to reflect on emerging challenges, trends, and opportunities based on a systemic view of the UN's operations. It is also an avenue to build a peer support network.

Gender-Responsive Leadership Boost

In partnership with the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), DCO offered RCs a "Gender-Responsive Leadership Boost" – a series of eight monthly webinars focused on gender analysis, addressing stereotypes, and managing resistance to gender equality initiatives. A total of 32 RCs participated in these sessions, seventeen of whom were male RCs.

"Facilitate more conversations on this. We are not all in the same place and 'moving beyond parity', we are only scratching at the surface of conceptualising equality. This is a journey so it cannot stop - yet!"

Retreat on Leadership, Negotiation and Dialogue Facilitation

In partnership with FBA, in April 2024 DCO organized a retreat on Leadership, Negotiation and Dialogue Facilitation, supporting 15 RCs, to foster sustainable development and conflict prevention in collaboration with national counterparts, as well as more cohesive and effective collaboration within their UNCTs. At DCO's request, FBA also provided facilitation, team development and leadership development support to RCs, RCOs and UNCTs in Libya, Bosnia and Kosovo.

RC Seminar on Climate and the Environment

DCO collaborated with Yale University to equip 15 RCs with advanced insights and practical skills to address the complex challenges of climate change. This seminar brought together experts and leaders to understand global and international policy and regulatory instruments, effective communication on this issue and good practices. Sessions covered climate regulation, trade, litigation, investment strategies, and global partnerships, equipping participants with tools to drive impactful action on climate and sustainability challenges.

Global Executive Leadership Initiative Trainings:

In 2024 DCO facilitated the participation of four RCs in the “Responsible Negotiation for Senior Leaders” course. Developed with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), the training is designed to help senior humanitarian and development leaders hone their negotiation skills. Additionally, three RCs were able to take part in the course “Influencing for Senior Leaders: Analysis, Strategy, and Practice.” This course focuses on analysing contexts and stakeholder networks. It covers strategic communication approaches that integrate risk assessment, humanitarian diplomacy, media engagement, and agile response techniques.

LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR RCs AND UNCTs

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Leadership Labs

DCO continued to enhance the capacity of RCs and UNCTs to work collaboratively and to innovate through the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Leadership Labs. This project targets RCs, RCOs and UNCTs and focuses on building capacity in systems leadership, collaboration and innovation to lead transformational change across the UN system. These four-month labs have been rolled out in 30 countries since 2019.

LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR RC/HC TALENT PIPELINE MEMBERS

The RC/HC Talent Pipeline's Learning & Development Programme aims to support pipeline members in acquiring the knowledge, competencies, and exposure to the RC and RC/HC roles required to be successful in these demanding positions. In 2024 the programme featured the following initiatives:

- **Monthly Webinar Series** with RCs and RC/HCs to provide RC Pool and RC/HC Talent Pipeline members with exposure to the realities that current RCs and RC/HCs face and to how they are navigating the complex and pressing challenges they must address in the role.

- **Peer Action Learning** groups for 23 Pipeline members, which met virtually six times for 90 minutes. In the words of one participant, "I particularly appreciated the open, frank and deepened exchange about a real-life case, the possibility to contribute to a discussion in a small group and become more aware of the complexity of the RC/HC role."
- **RCAC preparation workshop:** 24 Pipeline members participated in a dedicated workshop to prepare for the RC Assessment Centre. Of these, 15 successfully passed the assessment and have joined the RC Pool, making them eligible to apply for RC posts.

In addition, 2023-24 DCO facilitated the participation of two RC Pool members in the **Tandem Leadership Learning Journey**, an intensive six-month programme managed by the Overseas Development Institute. Designed for senior development and humanitarian leaders, the programme focuses on self-reflection to address interpersonal and organizational challenges while also understanding sector-wide dynamics. In 2024-25, two more RC Pool members and three Pipeline members are set to participate.

"This has been a great programme that not just trained us but also connected us with incredible leaders from across the globe...I couldn't be better prepared for my new role."

DCO also facilitated the participation of 19 Pipeline members in "**Leaders Solving for Tomorrow**", a 6-week virtual programme by PricewaterhouseCoopers focusing on global megatrends, systems thinking and transformational leadership.

