

Information Note 5

Human rights-based approach to development programming

[Note prepared by UNDG/DOCO]

Background: *The Declaration on the Rights to Development, adopted by the General Assembly in 1986, laid the foundation of the UN's rights-based approaches to development, providing its key elements including: putting people at the centre of development; ensuring free, active and meaningful participation; securing non-discrimination; fair distribution of development benefits; and respecting self-determination and sovereignty over natural resources; and All in a process that advances other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.*

A series of UN reform efforts since 1997 have emphasized the interconnectedness between human rights, development and peace and security and accordingly, the need for coherent and integrated strategies for development. Accordingly, the 2005 World Summit, the Heads of States explicitly supported the further integration of human rights into the work of the UN system and the 2007 TCPR resolution gave recognition to the inter-linkages between development, human rights and peace and security. Significantly, Rio+20 reaffirmed the importance of a human rights based approach to sustainable development, including human rights based policy coherence.

Human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and principles and operationally directed to promoting human rights. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, labour rights and the right to development.

A human rights-based approach to programming facilitates a sharp focus on results, in line with the international human rights treaties and other internationally agreed goals, targets, norms and standards. It assists countries in translating such goals and standards into time-bound and achievable national results, and promotes participatory and inclusive processes of development.

In an effort to foster coherence at global, regional and country levels in the common programming process, the UN Statement of Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming, was developed under the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) in 2003 and is embodied in the UN's common programming guidelines as one of its five interrelated guiding principles. According to the UN Statement, human rights-based approaches use human rights principles (such as equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability) to guide UN development cooperation, and focus on capacity development of both 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and 'rights-holders' to claim their rights.

The UN development system plays a key role in supporting programme countries, *at their request*, in developing national capacity to integrate human rights in national policies and fulfilling their treaty obligations. Strong national ownership and leadership are essential foundations for developing national capacity and for achieving rights-based development results. The human rights-based approach adds value to development efforts of all stakeholders by promoting the free, active and meaningful participation of beneficiaries, accountability, non-discrimination, attention to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, support for economic and political empowerment of beneficiaries and coherence between mutually reinforcing international human rights standards and economic and development policy and programmes.