

Dear colleagues,

As you know, during 2013-2015, 14 countries and 1 territory in Europe and Central Asia region rolled out and developed UNDAFs, with the majority already having been finalized and approved by respective governments. This covers the vast majority of 18 countries in our region. As the Country Programme Documents of UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA are approved by their Executive Boards and country programmes of other UN entities are finalized as relevant, I would like to draw your attention to several key aspects which are critical for the UNDAF operationalization/implementation. Be it at the beginning or in the middle of the process, UNDAF implementation should be taken forward in the most practical and harmonized way, making the most effective use of the combined expertise, capacities, and funding possibilities of the UN Country Teams under your leadership.

The new 2030 sustainable development agenda and SDG implementation will be the main platform for the UN work at country level. With the adoption of SDGs at the UN Sustainable Development Summit on 25-27 September, each UNCT will be expected to support their government counterparts in prioritization, localization, implementation and monitoring/reporting of SDGs. During the last two years, clear messages were sent to UNDAF roll-out countries with regard to the importance of SDG integration in new UNDAFs – all new UNDAFs now have clear linkages with the new sustainable development agenda. UNCTs that are in the middle of their programming cycle should review their UNDAFs through SDG lenses and see what support they can provide to respective government counterparts. UNCTs that are at the beginning of their UNDAF roll-out processes should both discuss their approach to SDG localization and support in implementation, as well as make sure that their new UNDAFs are clearly linked to SDGs and national development priorities.

Governments' ownership is as important for UNDAF implementation as it is for setting priorities. It is now becoming even more critical in view of our role in SDG implementation. The establishment of **Joint National/UN Steering Committees** for UNDAF oversight and strategic direction is proven to be an effective way to ensure governments' buy-in and ownership of UN programmes.

While maintaining some common features, in different countries such an oversight body may take different shapes depending on country context and national dynamics. Steering Committees can be established as stand-alone bodies or integrated in the existing national coordination mechanisms. In both cases, it is important that linkages with existing national coordination bodies – especially with the one in charge of national sustainable development and/or SDG related national mechanisms – are established so as to avoid overlap and creating unnecessary burden for governments.

In order to ensure strong partnership with government counterparts, I encourage you – if not yet done so – to thoroughly review possibilities for establishing Joint National/UN Steering Committees and linking them to national SDG related mechanisms.

RC and UNCT leadership and accountability for UNDAF results are critical in view of SDG implementation and UN's fit for purpose. Strengthening leadership and accountability within UNDAF should be pursued through the establishment of **Results Groups** at country level. The key objective of such groups is to lead on UNDAF implementation through Joint Work Plans.

Although Results Groups are not a new concept in terms of their objectives and coverage, one important difference with previous Outcome Groups is the emphasis on increased accountability. Results Groups are seen to be chaired by Heads of Agencies, thus raising the level of responsibility for their effective functioning and attainment of intended results. In this regard, I am expecting that all of you will take this issue forward and consult with your UNCTs to ensure that respective level of accountability for results is established for your UNDAFs. The Regional undg Team is expecting active cooperation of all Heads of Agencies in this matter.

Joint workplanning, monitoring, reporting, and coordinated UNDAF implementation are the new norm for the UN development system. Thinking together is translated into delivering together through **Joint Work Plans (JWPs)** developed on an annual or biennial bases. These are prepared by the Results Groups, usually covering one or may cover more UNDAF outcomes, and are signed by participating UN agencies and respective national counterparts. It is foreseen that in some instances, agencies may pursue agency-specific work plans.

Joint Work Plans are also the basis for pursuing joint and coordinated **monitoring, reporting and evaluation**. The Results Groups are responsible for regular monitoring of progress, ensuring links between activities, outputs and UNDAF outcomes, contributing to annual joint reporting to governments and inputting into final UNDAF evaluation. While useful guidance exists on all three aspects, let me particularly stress the need to get agencies' commitment to cover UNDAF evaluation costs from the outset of the process. This will help ensure proper evaluation is undertaken at the end of the cycle. Strengthening UNCTs' monitoring and evaluation capacities is critically important, and here I would like to encourage UNCTs to explore further sharing of M&E expertise that are resident in UN agencies at the national level, and to communicate with the ECA Peer Support Group (PSG) for other possible M&E guidance and support.

Coordinated and transparent budgeting and joint/coordinated resource mobilization will facilitate greater coherence in UN approaches to both partnership building and fund raising. You are encouraged to pursue the application of a **Common Budgetary Framework (CBF)** and ensure its integration with Joint Work Plans.

Firstly, this is a good business practice that will allow UNCTs to have a clear picture of resources that are available and still to be mobilized to support the UNDAF.

Secondly, it will contribute to increased UN transparency and accountability at the national level. It should be noted that agencies' resource management remains intact – CBF provides the platform for reflecting, monitoring and reporting available UNCT-wide resources as well as funding gaps.

Thirdly, the CBF provides an important basis for **coordinated and joint Resource Mobilization**. Identified funding gaps within UNDAF outcomes may be relevant for a number of participating UN agencies. In these cases, it is a good practice if those agencies pursue joint resource mobilization with identified donors. The existing guidance on joint resource mobilization (within DaO Standard Operating Procedures) does provide good advice in terms of how this can be achieved. Together with your UNCT colleagues, please review the possibilities of applying principles of joint/ coordinated resource mobilization.

Common advocacy and messaging, and joint communications have a direct impact on the UN's ability to build partnerships, engage stakeholders and raise resources. Pooling UNCT efforts in outreach and strategic communication will help highlight results achieved by the UN coherently and strengthen UNCT's voice, especially in highly sensitive areas. While the need for the development of a **Joint Communications Strategy** should be discussed and agreed within your UNCTs, your leadership is expected in pursuing one

UN voice in the most strategic areas. For this, you may need to further enable your Communications Groups, including through empowerment.

The quality of harmonized business practices is critical for the quality of programme delivery. Empowered **Operations Management Teams** are essential to further harmonization of business practices in support of UNDAF implementation. We need to provide a cost-effective operational support to our partners, pursue reducing operational costs and increasing quality of business services. Existing guidance on business operations strategy provides a number of alternatives on how this can be achieved.

All of these aspects are critically important for the success of UNDAF implementation. They require your and all UNCT members' commitment and efforts. From the ECA R-UNDG side, I would like to assure you that all possible support will be provided. The first step has already been taken – the R-UNDG Team expanded the role of the ECA Peer Support Group to provide support to RCs/UNCTs not only in UNDAF development, but also in its implementation (see attached the revised PSG TORs). A number of our PSG members are already trained in the application of the above-described aspects. In addition, resources are available via the UNDG [web-site](#), UNDG [Toolkit](#), and expert rosters for UNDAF/country programming at [UNDG](#) and [UNDP](#).

Although this communication does not mention Delivering as One/Standard Operating Procedures (DaO/SOPs) per se, they are implicitly reflected in all key aspects described above. The importance of DaO/SOPs implementation in our region was emphasized on a regular basis, including through written communications from me. At the same time, a recent survey conducted by UN DOCO on the progress of implementation of the 15 core elements of SOPs shows that our region can and should do much more compared to other regions. With a large number of countries starting their new UNDAF cycles, we have a great opportunity to further improve the application of SOPs within specific country contexts.

Hence, with a view to support your UNCTs in SOPs implementation, we have prepared a stock-taking survey on SOP implementation in the region. Please use the following link https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qQtIuv6CX3Gc-y9uaMcaagopAXF5j1cxC6FizE3hn54/viewform?usp=send_form to complete the survey. Apart from identifying SOP implementation status in countries, the survey is an opportunity for you and your UNCTs to define gaps and agree on next steps. The deadline for completion of the survey is 25 September.

Should you have any further questions on the above or need support, please contact PSG (Robert Bernardo robert.bernardo@undp.org and Marta Diavolova diavolova@unfpa.org) and/or R-UNDG Secretariat (Liudmila Barcari liudmila.barcari@undp.org and Olena Ovchynnikova olena.ovchynnikova@undp.org).

Best regards,
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