

# Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness and Relevance (CER): Key Messages for Programme Country Governments

*We are here to act. We are here to deliver results. We are agents of change. Our job is to change the UN, and through it, the world.*

—UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

This document is a supplement to “Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness and Relevance: Key Messages”. See “Enhanced UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Relevance: Frequently Asked Questions” for more detailed responses.

**NOTE:**

1. This tool/guidance has been developed based on the experiences of the DaO Pilot countries.
2. This guidance note is directed at UNCT/RCO to support them in their communication with stakeholders.

## **Programme country governments benefit from a more coherent, effective and relevant UN**

**Developing country governments benefit directly from a more coherent, effective and relevant UN system. Governments in the pilot countries report that a more coherent, effective and relevant UN strengthens national leadership and ownership of UN country programmes. Working together in a common strategic framework helps UN agencies provide more relevant, demand-driven support that is better aligned with national priorities and draws from a deeper pool of UN expertise.**

**Working with an empowered Resident Coordinator and a coherent team makes it easier for governments to coordinate the UN's activities, reduces the time spent in meetings with UN representatives and increases the accountability and transparency of UN operations.**

**Lowering UN country team overhead costs frees up more resources for programming that benefits the host country. And an effective UN team can help to encourage donors to provide more predictable, un-earmarked funding at the country level.**

**Increased national ownership and leadership:** CER and other efforts to make the UN more coherent, effective and relevant are putting the national government in the driver's seat to an unprecedented degree. Governments consistently report that when the UN works more coherently, they become increasingly engaged with the UN's work and feel more ownership of the UN programme, including its planning, implementation, monitoring and oversight. In some instances, higher level government leadership than before has become involved, strengthening the government's overall coordination role and mechanisms. Examples of national leadership include active government participation in joint UN-Government Steering Committees that guide and review the UNDAF/common programming tool and related expenditures.

**Better support for national development objectives:** Working together helps the UN system more fully align its programming to support national priorities, national reform processes (including the Paris Declaration), and national development plans, including the MDGs. The process of formulating UNDAF/common programming tool bases UN development priorities on national needs, as identified in the national poverty reduction strategy. UN agencies take these national priorities as a starting point and jointly determine in which areas the UN is best positioned to help the government realize its national development objectives. These areas form the primary focus for UN development assistance. Since this framework is based on and aligned with national priorities, UN support is increasingly aligned with the Government's development priorities. In the end, the Government gets a UN Country Team that can deliver more and better strategic support.

**A coherent UN is easier to work with:** Developing countries report that they feel more empowered when dealing with a coherent UN Country Team. In the past, a fragmented system

of agencies sometimes had the effect of overwhelming the State administrations. Now the Government can more easily coordinate its interactions with the UN system and ensure that the UN responds to national priorities. At the same time, line ministries are still free to interact with their UN agency counterparts when they need to.

**Clearer communications between the government and the UN system:** Communication between the UN and governments, as well as the interaction of government with donors and other stakeholders, has improved thanks to more coherent UN country teams, led by resident coordinators working in tandem with government coordination mechanisms. The UNCTs are more effectively interacting with governments, listening to national priorities and finding ways to organize themselves in a way that best responds to those priorities.

**Customized UN support – “one size does not fit all”:** Being more coherent, effective and efficient means different things in different countries. While there are some general practices on how UN agencies can work together more effectively, it is always the national government that has the final say and determines how the UN system can serve it best.

**More relevant programming:** By thinking, planning and implementing programmes together, UN organizations can provide better technical assistance and support for capacity development that draws on the full UN system. This more strategic approach is also boosting the UN’s ability to engage in the upstream policy advice and sophisticated technical assistance that governments increasingly request from the UN. It is providing a clearer focus on the UN system’s comparative advantages in supporting national priorities.

**Wider and deeper agency involvement:** A more coherent, effective and relevant UN makes more of the UN system’s expertise available to meet national plans and priorities, including through increased involvement by non-resident UN agencies. Several issues the UN system works on have seen increased emphasis, notably support to the productive sector, employment, trade, protection of the environment, and adaptation to climate change. This improvement has emerged from a process where UN agencies that aren’t physically present in the pilot countries have been able to spend more time advising their governments without having to set up costly offices.

**Clear picture of full UN system support to the country:** Bringing all of the UN Country Team’s work together in a common programme supported by a common funding framework provides Governments with a clear overview of the full range of UN operational activities, financing and funding gaps. Having a complete picture of UN system support helps the Government to evaluate the UN system’s contribution and align it with national priorities.

**Increased efficiency:** By simplifying and harmonizing business practices and using common services and premises, UN Country Teams can reduce their overhead expenses. This liberates more funding for development programming. The UN system will make every effort to plough any savings into programming in the country where the savings are realized.

**Reduced transaction costs:** While it is too soon to comprehensively assess the actual extent to which the pilots have been able to reduce transaction costs for Governments, the early impressions are positive. Some Government stocktaking reports have indicated that there are already tangible reductions in transaction costs, in terms of time spent in meetings and preparing reports, but this has yet to be thoroughly evaluated or costed. Still, it looks likely that CER can to reduce the administrative demands the UN places on government partners through lower transaction costs including more efficient use of time.

**Greater use of national systems:** As part of working more effectively, the UN system is increasingly seeking to make use of national systems and capacities wherever possible, and to develop national capacities to implement programmes.

**Potential for increased resources:** A more coherent, effective and relevant UN system should be able to raise more money and mobilize greater capacity at lower cost. This has the potential to directly benefit programme countries.

## People in programme countries benefit from CER

**People in programme countries benefit directly when UN staff and agencies work together and deliver more. A united UN team that works effectively and efficiently can provide more relevant and useful assistance in all the sectors where the UN works, including (*note areas where UN is most active in your country; ideally by giving examples of good programmes.*) Together we can help more people attain prosperity and equality, realize their rights and expand their choices.**

By working together, UN agencies can use their resources in a strategic way to support developing countries' efforts to transform themselves into prosperous societies where all human rights can be realized. By working together more efficiently we can save money and make more funds available for development programming that benefits people who need our help. By focusing on results in areas where the UN is strong, we can make more of a difference in people's lives. We can do more to promote meaningful social changes that help people to be healthier and more productive. By drawing on the expertise of the full UN system, we can also help people in new and better ways.

The engagement of civil society is vital to ensure that the UN system brings a grassroots perspective to the policy table and strengthens domestic accountability. A strong partnership with the media is important so that reform issues are clearly communicated and so that civil society has the opportunity to influence the future of the UN system.

*Note: Local examples of how the UN system can deliver more of what it's already doing in the country will be especially powerful. E.g., if it means that a school feeding programme can be expanded, that's something tangible that locals can appreciate.*

## UN Member States are calling for UN agencies to work together and deliver better

The General Assembly and other UN governing bodies have welcomed the UN family's efforts to work together more coherently and called for further progress. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which UN Member States have welcomed, expanded on this agenda with an emphasis on making agreed policies operational. The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolutions of 2004 and 2007 call for us to improve operations at the country level through more relevant and coordinated programmes, improved delivery and increased leadership and ownership by governments of country programmes.

The Member States agreed on the following in the 2005 World Summit's landmark outcome document:

*"We further reaffirm the need for the United Nations to play a fundamental role in the promotion of international cooperation for development and the coherence, coordination and implementation of development goals and actions agreed upon by the international community, and we resolve to strengthen coordination within the United Nations system in close cooperation with all other multilateral financial, trade and development institutions in order to support sustained economic growth, poverty eradication and sustainable development."*

The member states also called for increasing system-wide coherence by:

- *Strengthening linkages between the normative work of the United Nations system and its operational activities;*
- *Implementing current reforms aimed at a more effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated and better-performing United Nations country presence with a strengthened role for the senior resident official, whether special representative, resident coordinator or humanitarian coordinator, including appropriate authority, resources and accountability, and a common management, programming and monitoring framework;*
- *Inviting the Secretary-General to launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities so that they can make an even more effective contribution to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals....<sup>1</sup>*

The General Assembly's **2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development** (TCPR) specifically mandates the UN system to become more coherent, effective and efficient, and to simplify and harmonize business practices. It endorses the UN Development Assistance Framework as the common planning tool for all the funds and

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/60/1 2005 World Summit Outcome, p. 36

programmes and a framework for the full UN system, and says it should be the basis for progress in aligning the UN response to national priorities and the national planning cycle, as well as the basis for the Resident Coordinator to report to the Government on progress made against agreed results.

The 2007 TCPR states that the Resident Coordinator System has a key role to play in the effective and efficient functioning of the UN at country level, and urges the UN system to provide further financial, technical and organizational support for the RC System. It recognizes the central role of Resident Coordinators in improving the UN system's response to national development priorities, and says the RCs should report to national authorities on progress made against the results agreed in the UN Development Assistance Framework. It also says UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies should "step up" their efforts to rationalize their country presence through common premises, and where appropriate to implement the joint office model and expand common shared support services and business units in order to reduce overhead costs.

In 2008, several Member State governments told the co-chairs of the General Assembly discussions on System-wide Coherence, Effectiveness and Relevance that they are eager and impatient for the UN development system to become more coherent, more efficient, and more effective in meeting the needs of their people, and more aligned with their national strategies. The governments of the eight pilots have said very clearly and firmly that CER/"Delivering as One" is making significant progress. A large and growing number of other developing countries are coming forward to embrace these new approaches. In the Maputo Declaration of May 2008, pilot government representatives formally asked the General Assembly to encourage them on the path they have chosen.

*"The concept of One Leader (Presently called RC) needs to be strengthened. There needs to be a One Leader with actual authority and influence over the entire UN System at the country level. The UNRC needs to have a decision-making authority, over-and-above the UNCT..."*

—Akram Malik, Secretary of Economic Affairs, Pakistan

*"We call with strong voice of urgency, for change of the UN tradition of fragmentation."*

—Government of the United Republic of Tanzania

*"The Government expects the One UN initiative to move beyond coordination toward One UN and to strengthen the UN as a competent and effective partner of the Government in support of the national development for the benefit of the people of Viet Nam. We share the belief with the Country team that the UN has a vital role to play in Viet Nam's development and that it can fulfil its mission more effectively by focusing the UN support on areas of direct relevance to the UN's mandate and comparative advantages. We expect to see a transformed UN with unity of purpose, coherence in management and efficiency and effectiveness in operations to help Viet Nam address key development challenges..."*

— Cao Viet Sinh, Vice Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

*“The diverse elements of the United Nations [have] to work together in a more coherent way to deliver more effectively the services needed by the ultimate beneficiaries of the cooperation, the population.”*

—Augustine Mahiga, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the United Nations

*“The expectations are very high because what is being built, through this bottom-up approach, is a new paradigm to assure more effective cooperation for development. We need to break old ways of doing things.”*

—Augustine Mahiga, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Tanzania to the United Nations

*“Our experience so far has shown that delivering as one is possible. It improves national ownership and strengthens national leadership in the development process. It permits realignment of the UN assistance with national priorities and streamlines business transactions thus enhancing efficiency and the effectiveness of the UN’s activities. I urge this Assembly to endorse and appeal to our developing partners to support fully this reform initiative.”*

—H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Chairman of the African Union, at the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly