

QCPR IMPLEMENTATION STATUS UPDATE

The United Nations development system in country: the Resident Coordinator system and UN Country Teams

REPOSITIONING THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

The UN development system (UNDS) operates in countries to support them in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in line with national needs and priorities.

The 2018 General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the UN development system laid the grounds for a reform of the UN development system in countries “to ensure the best configuration of support on the ground, as well as enhanced coordination, transparency, efficiency and impact of United Nations development activities, in accordance with national development policies, plans, priorities and needs” (OP 2). It ushered in key tools for collective integrated planning, policy and programming at the country level, especially new common country analyses and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (the Cooperation Framework). It also decided to create a “dedicated, independent, impartial, empowered and sustainable development-focused coordination function” (OP 8) through a reinvigorated Resident Coordinator (RC) system. General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review in 2020 welcomed the progress achieved in implementing these reforms, took note of remaining challenges and further guided the system to embed the repositioning.

THE UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

UN Resident Coordinators lead UN country teams (UNCTs) to ensure that their support to countries is in full alignment with national plans and priorities, working closely with host Governments in delivering the commitments agreed in the Cooperation Frameworks. Resident Coordinators convene UN entities and development partners for greater impact, advancing policy shifts, forging partnerships, building pipelines of initiatives that can be taken to scale, and building national and subnational capacities, particularly in key areas for SDG acceleration. This is enabled by their strengthened role as the senior-most representative of the UN development system in country, and supported by core capacities in their offices for strategic planning, economic analysis, partnerships, communications, and data management and results reporting.

Resident Coordinators also coordinate tailoring the configuration of UN country teams to deliver outcomes agreed in the Cooperation Framework. They provide increased accountability and transparency on results, and advance operational efficiencies thereby enabling resources to be reinvested in programmatic support to countries. They leverage opportunities for more access to pooled funding and financing for SDG solutions, including to the Joint SDG Fund. They ensure the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in complex settings, enhancing collaboration between humanitarian and development action and stronger linkages to peace, where relevant.

RESULTS ACHIEVED AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

Over the last four years of the ongoing QCPR cycle, a more effective, cohesive, transparent and accountable UN development system has clearly emerged, offering integrated, system-wide solutions for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, in line with national priorities.

At the end of this quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycle, the building blocks of the reform are in place. 99% of UN country teams will have transitioned to the new Cooperation Frameworks by the end of 2024. The pool of Resident Coordinators today is better capacitated to tailor UN development responses to the specific needs of each country context. It is also increasingly diverse, with 54% of Resident Coordinators from developing countries in 2024, compared to 49% in March 2022 and 41% pre-reform.

Resident Coordinators have effectively leveraged the breadth of UN expertise to deliver integrated policy advice and have effectively engaged with senior levels of Government and development partners to enable policymaking aligned to Member State needs, as attested by a 2023 OIOS evaluation of Resident Coordinator leadership for policy support. The evaluation also noted that Resident Coordinators engaged with the private sector and civil society to a lesser degree than Governments – an area for further strengthening and diversification in the partnerships.

Resident Coordinators and UN country team members also showed progress in joint work-planning, improved coordinated communications, and some areas of operational efficiencies as on common premises and common administrative services (such as accommodation and travel services). Resident Coordinators have increased their support for non-resident entities. For example, they have worked with non-resident entities to significantly increased their participation in joint programming. All UN country teams reported participation of non-resident UN entities in the UN common country analyses in 2023.

Over 91% of host Governments surveyed at the end of 2023 agreed that Resident Coordinators have the right profile and skillsets, up from 88% in 2020. They perceived Resident Coordinators to be endowed with sufficient authority, able to effectively lead UN country team support, and able to leverage partnerships in support of national efforts for SDG achievement. They overwhelmingly consider Cooperation Frameworks to be closely aligned with their needs (94%) and UN country teams effective at responding to national priorities and SDG delivery (96%).

Nevertheless, despite the investments in the Resident Coordinator system and the leadership of the UN Sustainable Development Group, UN country teams continue to face challenges to deliver more integrated solutions. Joint planning and programming continues to be constrained by compartmentalization – in part driven by projectized funding, and conditionalities that limit how the UN can direct resources. Joint activities comprise less than a quarter of Cooperation Framework budgets. Only two-thirds of UN development system entities systematically recognize reporting obligations of UN country team members to the Resident Coordinator on planning and resource mobilization. These hurdles are often accompanied by limited pooled funding, disparate entity-specific incentive structures, and governance mechanisms, which encourage interagency competition for resources and positioning.

There remain challenges to ensuring that UN country teams are better able to respond to changing needs on the ground. Host Governments frequently flagged concerns about the difficulties that some Resident Coordinators face in ensuring the efficient use of resources across the UN country team and concerns about alignment between the UN entity footprint not matching the programmes and expertise sought by the government. Government and Resident Coordinator feedback also highlighted that significant resource constraints within the system also impede the ability to source and more flexibly redeploy relevant expertise from across the system. Moreover, there remains considerable variation across entities in terms of ensuring that their country programmes are truly derived from agreed priorities of UN Cooperation Frameworks – beyond

aligning the outcomes to include variables such as alignment of the programmatic budgets of agencies in country.

A detailed account of results achieved and remaining challenges can be found in the 2024 [SG's report on QCPR](#) or its [summary](#), and the [UNSDG Chair's report on the Resident Coordinator system](#) or its [summary](#).

THE PATH FORWARD

Scaling up support for the SDGs will require prioritizing collective results from UN country teams. Entities must work together towards common outcomes to encourage joint action while leveraging UN policy experts' global experience. This will require optimum support from Resident Coordinators, including in the areas of partnerships, where perception of Resident Coordinators' performance decreased (from 92% in 2022 to 87% in 2023). To be fully effective, Resident Coordinators will also need – more than ever – to be able to draw on UN expertise from across the globe to provide tailored support to countries, particularly in advancing transformation in key areas for SDG acceleration, and in brokering partnerships multilateral development banks, international financial institutions (IFI) and other public and private financing partners

The leadership throughout the system should aim for proactive collaboration, including on joint resource mobilization, joint programming and funding distribution. Effective Resident Coordinator leadership depends on consistent adherence to the respective principles, roles and responsibilities, and relationships between Resident Coordinators and UN country team members outlined in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF). Building on results achieved so far, UN development system entities should take steps to further align their country programmes with the Cooperation Frameworks. The challenge to improve the configuration of capacities across UNCTs to respond to Cooperation Framework commitments and country priorities and needs calls for sufficient and predictable funding – moving from project funding to sustainable, predictable support for policy and expertise, in line with the reenergized Funding Compact.

Member State's engagement with respective UN development system entities is necessary to help remove any bottlenecks to implementation, including through shifts in funding patterns and clear guidance by entity governing bodies. Addressing declines in core funding and increased resources for pooled funds will make or break our ability to deliver transformative support. Fulfilling the Funding Compact commitments on the part of the UN system and member states alike will be critical for an incentive structure with less conditionalities and promoting interagency collaboration rather than competition. SDG acceleration will also require much more cohesive action, with consistent asks from Member States across different governing bodies not only on entity-specific results but also system-wide results; the UNSDG reform checklist is a tool for use in this respect. Boosting UN country team capabilities to ensure they have sufficient resources and skills to deliver integrated solutions may also involve adapting UN corporate modalities, which would require governing bodies' concurrence.
