

**UN COORDINATION OFFICERS MEETING  
SOUTHEAST ASIA SUB-REGION**

**VIENTIANE, LAOS  
4-5 NOVEMBER 2008**

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**PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Cambodia:</b>	<b>Ann Lund, Head of RC Office</b>
<b>China (Observer):</b>	<b>Yana Zhao, Coordination Assistant</b>
<b>Indonesia:</b>	<b>Marc Beckmann, Coordination Specialist</b>
<b>Lao PDR:</b>	<b>Verena Linneweber, Head of RC Office</b> <b>Frédéric Jeanjean, Donor Coordination Associate</b> <b>Mikko Kärkkäinen, Coordination Analyst</b> <b>Viengsompasong Inthavong, Coordination Associate</b>
<b>Maldives:</b>	<b>Aishath Jennifer, Coordination Analyst</b>
<b>Myanmar:</b>	<b>Kanako Mabuchi, Coordination Officer</b>
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<b>Timor-Leste:</b>	<b>Geraldine Arias, Head of RC Office</b>
<b>Viet Nam:</b>	<b>Peter Reeh, UN Reform Specialist</b> <b>Viet Lan Nguyen, UN Communications Officer</b>
<b>Asia-Pacific Region:</b>	<b>Tshering Pem, Regional Coordination Specialist</b>

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**Objective:** *To provide UN coordination teams with an opportunity for sharing experiences and good practices*

**Expected results:** *1.) Enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of UN inter-agency coordination at the country level within the sub-region; 2.) Identification of major challenges to effective and efficient UN coordination, and agreement on recommended actions how these can be overcome and coordination capacity be strengthened*

### **Introduction**

- The Resident Coordinator (RC) in Lao PDR, Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, underlined that good UN coordination is central to UN Country Teams' (UNCTs) ability to effect change. She mentioned the many demands that are placed on the UN system at the country level to bring about greater coherence of efforts and agility in responding to the needs of governments and people, with the aim of making a tangible difference to the future of each of the countries that it works in. The UN must live by the power of its ideas and knowledge rather than the depth of its pockets in the future. There is a need for new perspectives in working with government, donors and civil society, building on the work already begun. UNCTs need to ask themselves critically if their work still fits in with the larger development picture and scale up strategic responses for maximum leverage. A new approach to development partnerships is needed, where agencies learn to cooperate with each other and be team players capable of taking some issues forward on behalf of the UN based on comparative advantage and letting go of others.
- As the RC of the host country, Ms. Yangchen Rana committed to taking up issues and recommendations from the meeting with her RC colleagues at the cluster meeting in Jakarta.

### **Recap of outcomes from the 2007 meeting and follow-up**

- It was noted that a number of issues raised at last year's meeting had remained unresolved, and needed to be brought to the attention of the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO), RCs and the Regional Directors Team again. These include:
  - Common Services expert groups/focal points to be more proactive in reaching out to the country level, including better information sharing on common services management
  - Continued need for clear guidelines on UNDAF M&E, including the formulation of "good" indicators, better and more detailed guidelines on UNDAF M&E and how to link it up to agencies' annual reporting and mid-term reporting

- Guidance on what financial support from UNDP Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) can expect from UNDP (biannual allocation of funds for management of Resident Coordinator system), e.g. in-kind provision of office space and finance/administration services, etc.
- Clarification, at the level of the UNDG, of general commitment by all agencies to transferring funds to RCOs to support salaries and other expenses at the country level, including the removal of administrative barriers
- Clarification regarding the percentage of SRC funds that can be committed to salaries
- Simplification of ATLAS budget management, given the small size of SRC and UNCCF funds, through establishment of only one project with multiple activities
- Establishment of standard ToR for RCOs, update standard ToRs for posts up to P-3 level, and develop standard ToR for P-4 and P-5 level coordination specialists/advisors/strategic planners
- Suggestion that a regional Coordination Officers meeting could take place in parallel with the annual regional RC/RR meeting allowing UN coordination professionals to attend the UN Reform and RC components of the agenda as observers, then proceeding to dedicated side meetings of UN Coordination Officers

## **2008 MEETING SUMMARY**

### **Role/Mandate of the Regional Directors Team in UN Coordination & RC/UNCT performance management**

- The Regional Coordination Specialist shared information on the mandate of the Regional Directors Team (RDT) and its priorities for 2008. The RDT is responsible for implementation of UN reform initiatives at the country level and drawing lessons from implementation of Delivering as One in Pakistan and Viet Nam; takes the lead on CCA/UNDAF Quality Support and Assurance (QSA) and Peer Support Groups (PSGs); and helps with implementation at the country level of DOCO global instruments, including change management processes. Expansion of the RDT to include Regional Directors/Managers of specialised agencies was agreed at the global level. The details of the expansion are currently under discussion. It was noted that the division of roles and responsibilities between the RDT and DOCO in terms of support provided to UNCTs requires more clarification.
- There was extensive discussion about RC/UNCT performance management and appraisal. The RDT should not become an additional layer to which UNCTs report for the sake of reporting. It is recommended that all existing processes – RCAs, UNCT work plans and RC/UNCT key results – should be integrated and streamlined. Also, it was noted that it would be more appropriate to set key results at the beginning of the year, not toward its end.
- As regards the RDT's role in dispute resolution, it was mentioned that the RDT only intervenes if an issue cannot be resolved at the country level, as a final resort option.
- With regard to the RDT's role in quality support and assurance for UNDAF through the Peer Support Group (PSG), the need for clear chairing arrangements and commitment to the process by mentoring agencies was pointed out.
- Outside of UNDAF trainings as one-off events, participants expressed their wish to see the RDT level provide ongoing support to strengthening the RBM capacity of UNCTs.
- Coordination officers expressed concerns with regard to the sometimes limited dialogue between regional offices of non-resident agencies and the country level. There is the need to ensure that the work by non-resident agencies is linked to the work carried out by UNCTs: often, non-resident agencies based at the regional level have discussions with national governments about new opportunities for programming without consulting with or acknowledging the role of the RC and UNCT. This has in some cases undermined the work of the UNCT and the unified image of the UN at the country level. The RDT should take a role in ensuring that the non-resident agencies based at the regional level work with UNCTs and acknowledge unified communication channels with national governments through the RC.
- Participating RCOs asked the Regional Coordination Specialist to share information on discussions at the RDT that are of interest to the country level every two or three months. It was also felt that it would be useful if information on upcoming discussions at the level of the RDT could be shared ahead of time, to give UNCTs the opportunity to raise specific issues or concerns that they might have. The planned regional UN/RDT website could be used for communications and information-sharing to strengthen the link between the regional and country levels. It was mentioned that the capacity of the RDT to provide support to the country level is limited by budgetary factors. It currently works with a budget of USD 70,000 per year allocated by DOCO.

## **From alignment of CPAPs to full integration of agencies' programmes into one plan, including M&E: lessons learned from the sub-region and the way forward**

- Development of 'one programme – one plan' works best in the context of the planning process for a new UNDAF. Establishing 'one plan' in the mid UNDAF cycle is problematic and was generally not encouraged.
- UNCTs are being encouraged to move to annual joint UNDAF reviews and many UNCTs are proceeding with this. Support from HQ through the review and update of current guidance to UNCTs regarding annual joint UNDAF reviews is requested. Also, it is unclear whether or not UNDAF Mid-Term Reviews remain mandatory or not, especially in relation to the UNDAF final review, which is to occur in the penultimate year of the UNDAF cycle.
- Solutions to integrating specialised agencies with diverging programme cycles into a harmonised joint UNDAF review cycle are being sought by UNCTs, and guidance would be appreciated.
- The involvement of government in the process of joint CPAP validation has proved valuable and ensured a focus on results.
- It is understood that there is no high level endorsement for preparation of joint CPAPs at the country level. In this regard further definition from DOCO on 'one programme – one plan' was requested.
- It is recognised that there is support for 'self starter' countries. A clarification of this is sought from DOCO particularly with regard to the steps that countries can take and resources available.
- The group observed that the issue of lack of coordination in government structures has a direct link to difficulties with getting UNCTs working together.
- The positive benefits of the involvement of International Financial Institutions in the UN planning process along with government means more focused discussion on results. Further guidance is requested from DOCO on the expectations of the World Bank's engagement in the one plan process over and above any symbolic participation and signing.
- Increasingly a joint plan is a pre-requisite of donors for resource mobilisation. Donors are seeking evidence of levels of coordination and collaboration across the UN.
- There was real interest in more discussion and information sharing around the process of determining comparative advantages.
- Requested information sharing:
  - Examples of UNDAF annual reporting formats
  - Good practice examples of UNDAF M&E plans

### **RCO capacity and available resources**

- It was acknowledged that the demands on an RCO and the necessary human capacity and resources will differ from one country to the next. The priorities of RCOs are best built around the ToR for RCs. A clear coordination structure supports greater definition of the UNRC Office role.
- When determining human resource requirements, RCOs need to continue to clearly define their role as one of facilitating overall process and guard against developing substantive work that should be handled by agencies or inter-agency teams. RCOs are encouraged to facilitate agency chairing of UN Theme Groups rather than taking on that role themselves. RCOs have played important roles in supporting the start up of theme groups and the establishment of longer term roles.
- Continued explanation of the functional split (not structural split) between UNDP and UNRC assists with greater clarification at the country level. While management of the Resident Coordinator system by UNDP has important advantages, RCs should ensure that their offices maintain their functionally distinct role and are not pulled into UNDP business in an unproportional manner. The most important role for RCOs is that of neutral broker of UN inter-agency processes.
- It was noted that available budgets remain small for the level of expectation and increasing demands placed on RCOs. Resources made available should be sufficient to cover the base level of professional staff plus one support staff. Continued commitment to building national capacity in UN coordination is important, which should include the creation of one national professional officer post to ensure continuity. In post conflict and crisis countries, DOCO's financial support was considered adequate. Participants agreed that raising cost share contributions locally helps build ownership of UNCT work plan outputs and results. The support of DOCO to ensure a reduction of HQ administrative barriers to country level UN agency support for cost share contributions was requested. Some agencies within UN Country Teams are currently advising that HQ policy restricts their ability to provide cost share contributions at the country level.
- It is hoped that the planned RCO capacity questionnaire currently being drafted by DOCO will help build a stronger profile of UN Coordination and highlight the gaps in capacity and financial support.

- Participants felt there was overall lack of clarity in the criteria and decision making behind the annual allocation of funds from DOCO. There still appears to be no link between the appraisal of the work plan and decisions regarding levels of allocated funds. Greater clarification and explanation on how the funds are calculated and the link to appraisal of the UNCT annual workplan is requested from DOCO.
- Further clarity (perhaps through revision and further elaboration of the UNDP programme manual) of policy around UNDP support to RCOs (financial and in kind) will assist RCOs and UNDP. Currently understanding differs from one country office to the next with no clear policy guidance to draw upon.
- Greater clarification of the use of funds (percentage for salaries, activities) – either clarifying expectations or indicating levels of flexibility allowed based on the country level context -- is also requested.
- Clarity on the consistency of funding levels to RCOs over multiple years will allow for longer term planning of key UN Coordination staff and activities and establishment of a more stable contracting environment. The current situation of not knowing if there will be consistency of funding levels from one year to the next reduces efficiency and longer term planning and impacts on the security of staff contracts.

#### **Informal Round Table on the Global Financial Crisis and its Implications at the Country Level: Challenges for UNCTs**

- Mr. Robert Glofcheski, Chief Resident Economist, UNDP Laos, provided participants with a historical background and an explanation of factors that have led to the current financial crisis, including low measured inflation but a raise in consumer prices, high risk credit behaviour by banks and investment institutions, bubble burst on the housing market, etc. It is debatable, however, if the crisis could have been forecast and what its short and longer term implications will be.
- For development countries it is likely that ODA will fall as a consequence of falling GDPs in donors countries. Most countries will experience slow growth/recession and Foreign Direct Investments in development countries will also decrease. A final assessment of the crisis and its consequences for the developing countries can only be made when it is known what policies will be put in place to mitigate the impact of the situation. However, in the short run the financial crisis may present an opportunity for developing countries and there will be a shift in trade balance in favour of agriculture and manufactured goods.
- The significant insecurities surrounding the current situation also makes it difficult to assess what the financial crisis will entail for the UN. However, as ODA will be tighter, the financial maneuverability will be limited for the UN.
- On a related issue, Cambodia and Viet Nam informed the participants on what the respective UNCTs have done in the area of raising food prices, where joint UN positions have been articulated in UN Policy Papers. It was agreed that the policy papers and other relevant UN country publications should be shared.

#### **Telephone Conference with Mr Ashok Nigam, Associate Director, DOCO**

- Mr. Nigam gave an overview of implementation of Delivering as One in the eight pilot countries, and stressed that it was important not to lose sight of the strategic intent of what the UN set out to do amidst the nitty gritty of day to day implementation. An independent evaluation of Delivering as One will be carried out in 2009-2010.
- In line with the 2007 TCPR Resolution, there will be no new pilots, but where countries wish to pursue Delivering as One, they are free to do so.
- Discussion of what One Programme really means is ongoing at the global level, on the basis of lessons learned in the pilots. While the UNDG did not give the go-ahead to unified CPAPs, UNCTs can develop unified operational documents, if they also maintain separate CPAP documents to satisfy the formal requirement of the ExCom agencies' Executive Boards. Where countries pursue a Delivering as One approach, they can develop One Budgetary Framework. It was noted by the participants that there was no incentive for host governments in non pilot countries to go ahead with One Programmes if they remain largely symbolic and exist alongside CPAPs and programming documents of specialised agencies. The energies of UNCTs might be better used for agreeing on common principles of engagement at the country level instead of developing One Programmes.
- It is hoped that the revised RC job description for Delivering as One countries will be finalised soon. UNCT Codes of Conduct are useful to have in place for non-pilots, too, as they capture and formalise agencies' agreement to the authority of the RC.
- The new Management Accountability Framework is now finalised, and lays out the respective responsibilities of DOCO and the RDT. The Regional Coordination Specialist was requested to share the document with the meeting participants.

- There is the possibility of an expanded funding window for countries that embark on developing One Programme (donors are Spain, Norway and the UK), to give them some predictability of funding. DOCO is currently working on the criteria for eligibility to apply for these funds, and the criteria for funds allocation. It will rely on a bottom-up approach where national governments take leadership and ownership for this initiative, and give a clear indication of this.
- DOCO anticipates that donor interest in and support to UN coordination will continue. Subject to this, funding for RCOs will remain at the level of 2008 or be increased. A decrease is not expected.
- In reply to a question, Mr. Nigam explained that it had been accepted at the Chief Executives' Board that UNDP would manage the Resident Coordinator System, but that RCs are accountable to all agencies through UNDG and the Advisory Group.

### **Delivering as One**

- The implementation of the "Five Ones" makes good progress in Viet Nam, especially in communications (one UN team sitting in the same office and being led by a single manager), One (green) UN house and One Programme.
- The advantage of being physically in the same building is regarded as significant. In Viet Nam, considerable donor funding was mobilised for the One UN house.
- Change management was regarded as a key activity. UN Reform should not only be seen as making the UN work better together internally, but mainly to make the overall contribution of the UN system for the host country more relevant. In Viet Nam, this is particularly important in the context of shifting needs and priorities in line with the country approaching middle-income status. Overall, participants expressed their desire to receive guidance and support from DOCO on undertaking change management processes in non-pilot countries.
- In Viet Nam, it is felt that the harmonisation of business practices presents a big challenge. The UNCT decided to start this only once agencies are co-located in the One Un House. It is felt that a lot of support from and flexibility at HQ level will be needed to make progress.
- Experiences from the Philippines show that one cornerstone for Delivering as One is to get the UNDAF process right and create a strategic framework that can be operationalised.
- The example of Laos showed the key link between the UN reform and aid effectiveness agendas. In the context of aid effectiveness, Cambodia is developing a system for benchmarking by setting annual targets for the UNCT. The RCO Cambodia offered to share the outline of their benchmarking process.

### **Speaking with One Voice**

- Experiences from different countries demonstrate the benefits of having a dedicated Communication Officer within the RCO. An RCO Communication Officer can 'energise' and/or 'formalise' the UN Communication Group (UNCG) and advocate for all agencies to be represented at the UNCG, which is the first step of joint UN communication. In some countries, the RCO Communication Officer supports the communication efforts of agencies with limited communication capacity.
- UNCT buy-in and commitment to joint communication and advocacy is essential. At the same time, change does not always come from the top. Through demonstrating the benefits of joint UN communication efforts, the UNCG can advocate for speaking with one voice vis-à-vis the heads of agencies. A Joint UN Communication Strategy (with annual workplans) is an important tool to raise the profile of the UNCG. RCOs are encouraged to budget for joint UN communication activities in their annual budget.
- Good practices from the sub-region include: identification of annual joint advocacy messages that the UNCT commits to deliver each year (Cambodia); a joint co-located One UN communications team, led by a single manager (Viet Nam). RCOs at an advanced stage of joint UN communication (namely Cambodia and Vietnam) committed to share their experiences and outputs with the rest of the sub-region and agreed that their Communication Officers would welcome enquiries and requests for advice and guidance from the sub-region.
- The importance of assessing the long-term impact of advocacy events was noted.
- For a joint UN website serving as a portal for all UN agencies, the importance of dedicating a focal point within each agency responsible for regularly updating the contents related to their own agency was stressed. Also highlighted was the importance of assessing the information needs of the agencies prior to establishing the website, as well as to get customer satisfaction inputs from agencies. Regular feedback to UNCT and UNCG regarding the number of hits etc. to the website has proven to encourage the UNCT/agency

commitment. The importance of maximising the available resources and keeping the cost to the minimum was noted.

### **Disaster response preparedness, contingency and business continuity planning**

- An increasing number of countries in the sub-region have joint coordination offices for humanitarian affairs, early recovery, and development. Experience from Indonesia shows the advantage in having a senior level head of the RCO, combining humanitarian and development roles. Creative solutions are applied to finance the team, with a staff coming from a variety of sources i.e. DOCO, UNDP, OCHA, etc. It is felt that co-location is key to ensure linkages between humanitarian and development issues, and it facilitates information sharing and networking.
- It was noted that often, RCOs are in the driving seat for developing UN contingency plans, with support from DSS and OCHA. UNCTs in non-disaster prone countries off the OCHA radar have to experiment with contingency planning on their own or may be developing AHI specific plans through support from UNSIC/OCHA/PIC and are not necessarily familiar with the cluster approach. More support and guidance is required by them.
- Some countries are experimenting with integrating various specific contingency planning exercises (AHI, floods, political crisis) to reflect the all hazard approach although these processes are still considered very disjointed.. It was noted that HQ guidelines for contingency planning are not always coherent i.e. for AHI and natural disasters. This needs to be addressed quickly as UNCTs move toward in all hazard approach in contingency planning more systematically at the country level. More guidance on mainstreaming planning processes is requested by the RCOs in the sub-region including clear definition of "all hazards" planning approaches in practical terms. There is lack of clarity around the business continuity planning processes of ex-com agencies and its link to existing UN contingency planning process which to date have been advised to incorporate operational continuity planning.
- The cluster approach has the capacity to be useful for both response and preparedness. RCOs have an active role in establishing and maintaining the cluster system. As the experience in Myanmar shows, establishing a cluster system offers opportunities for broader UN engagement in politically sensitive countries in the post-crisis phase.
- Involving INGOs in planning has proven to be very important, especially for AHI preparedness.
- It was noted that in the context of pandemic preparedness, coordination structures in government are often non-existent or lack capacity and therefore in need of targeted and medium to long term capacity support. For natural disaster management overall, it is helpful if UNCTs in cooperation with other development partners put in place capacity building support programmes. It was noted based on the experience from the Maldives that government commitment is crucial for the sustainability of national disaster management entities.
- With regard to pandemic preparedness, clarification is requested about coordination structures and division of labour and responsibilities among OCHA, UNSIC and PIC, and the streamlining of contingency planning support, guidance and resourcing.
- There is increasing discussion about the role of ASEAN in building the disaster management capacity of governments. Clarification of available support is needed as is stronger definition of the role of ASEAN in the context of crisis response.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

- The RCO Indonesia offered to host the next sub-regional meeting in 2009 (August – September time frame). The importance of hosting future meetings on UN premises due to budget logistical concerns and the involvement of host office staff was reaffirmed.
- Participation of resource persons from the host country in relevant sessions was appreciated and encouraged for future meetings.
- Future meetings should be made more interactive and less presentation-heavy. Background materials should be shared by contributing offices ahead of the meeting.
- The meeting agreed to contribute to an overview of RCO staffing and office structure in the sub-region prior to each annual meeting for reference and discussion during the meeting.
- Participation of the Regional Coordination Specialist to provide inputs from the regional perspective and ensure a feedback link to the RDT was important and should be maintained in future meetings. The teleconference with DOCO added value and should feature again in next year's programme.

- The participants agreed that, after review, the record of the meeting, including its recommendations and agreed follow up actions be forwarded to Resident Coordinators in the sub region, Lao PDR RC to present and further circulate the record at the Jakarta cluster meeting. The summary will also be forwarded to UNDOCO and the RDT to support follow up action.