

Chapter 5

Strengthening the Resident Coordinator System

Governance and Accountability

The Resident Coordinator (RC) system provides the structure, processes, and resources for coordinating UN development activities at the country level. As representative of the Secretary-General for development operations, the RC acts on behalf of the other agencies in advocating for international and national priorities, instruments, and standards. The RC coordinates the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), including resident and non-resident agencies (NRAs), so that the UN acts in an efficient and coherent manner. This is done through various means, including the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and, where possible, joint programming and joint operations/common services. As the RC is given greater responsibilities in the UN system, it is important to have a clear accountability framework for the RC and UNCT supported by a performance appraisal system, sufficient financial and human resources, updated tools, and improved capacity.

As a trusted development partner, UNCTs helped countries put HIV and gender at the centre of national development plans and strategies; built national capacity to mobilize all levels of government and civil society for a coordinated and effective response; and promoted the rights of women and of people living with HIV.

Resident Coordinator appraisal systems

The key achievement of 2006 was the global pilot of an inter-agency performance appraisal system for RCs. The new system includes an appraisal of RCs based on: (1) key results achieved against planned goals, and (2) country team assessment of leadership behaviors. The two areas are appraised by inter-agency Regional Directors Teams (RDTs) that review inputs on RC performance from various agencies, including the UNCT members. This is a major step in holding RCs and UNCT members accountable for his/her performance vis-à-vis the UNCT and individual agencies. RC key results in support of the UNCT are established at the beginning of the year and appraised at year-end by the Regional Directors. Leadership is appraised by the RDT, using the web-based 180 Degree Competency Assessment instrument completed by the RC and members of the UNCT. The 180 tool was piloted in 2006 in two groups: first in 20 UNCTs in Latin America and Asia Pacific; later, 100 UNCTs and some 800 individuals participated globally. The 180 offers RCs, agency representatives, and their supervisors feedback on individual and team leadership competencies. These results represent a key input in the appraisal of RCs and, progressively, agency representatives. The outcomes also help guide individual and team development plans.



Cambodia – Addressing Stress Management

The Cambodia UNCT considers stress management an important issue to be addressed collectively. Stress management must be viewed within the context of stress in the workplace, ongoing UN reform, procedural changes, and the psycho-social considerations of an influenza pandemic or natural disaster preparedness and recovery.

The UNCT therefore instigated dialogue with the UN Department of Safety and Security, given its leadership in facilitating skills development in stress management within country teams. In addition, an integrated approach to this issue was developed through dialogue with the Security Management Team as an ongoing staff health concern. With the assistance of the UN Dispensary, the UNCT has been examining the root causes of the majority of medical consultations (increasingly stress-related) and will in 2007 establish a learning strategy to (a) enable staff to identify and manage stress, and (b) enable managers to implement stress-reducing management practices and support a healthy work/life balance.

Challenges and way forward for RC Appraisal

The RC appraisal system highlighted the importance of team roles for both RCs and UNCTs. It also underlined the need to continue and expand inter-agency RDT appraisal processes, whether through 180 feedback or other agency input. A follow-up to the 180 should be developed to address weak-performing/assessed RCs and UNCTs and draw on the skills and experience of high-performing RCs.

“You are all our RCs, the agencies are involved in your selection and your appraisals.

RCs should realize that if they work well with the agencies, they will get good results, recognized by the RDT.”

(Agency RDs LAC)

Moving forward, agencies will need to continue integrating the 180 assessment into their own representatives' assessments. Key results for other UNCT members should be introduced into individual personnel appraisals, holding them accountable for their contribution to the team.

Accountability Framework

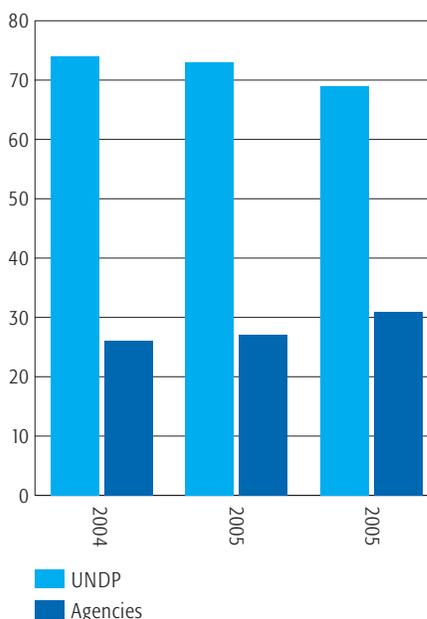
A series of discussions among agencies in 2006 resulted in an agreement on RC principles of accountability. The discussions were based on key decisions of the UN system⁶ and challenges to UN system-wide coherence in meeting international development goals as recognized by Members States and reflected in the 2005 Summit Outcome document. This RC Accountability Framework recognizes RC system management by UNDP on behalf of the UN system, and RC system ownership by all agencies in the UN system. This reaffirms UNDAF as the agreed strategic framework for most in-country UN operational development activities in response to national plans, priorities, and strategies. This also emphasizes the RCs role in developing, monitoring, and mobilizing resources for the UNDAF. UNDP has started to introduce Country Directors to manage the UNDP programme, so resident coordinators are fully available for their tasks. In 2006, UNDP deployed 28 country directors to allow the RC to devote more attention to UN system responsibilities and to strengthen UNDP operations.

While there is still need for more highly qualified RC candidates from agencies other than UNDP, the percentage of RCs from UNDP fell from 74 percent in 2004 to 69 percent in 2006. However, there are still only 26 percent of RCs who are female.

Challenges in RC selection and accountability

Agency Affiliation of Resident Coordinators 2004-2006

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⁶ 1999 ACC Guidelines on the Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System, the 2004 TCPR (Res. 59/250), the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, the Framework for Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System, and 2005 and 2006 CEB decisions.

RCO Capacity, Resources, and Training

To efficiently support UNCT activities, RCs need coordination capacity in terms of both human and financial resources. They use the annual RC fund allocation (average \$100,000) for the most basic capacity, and then raise funds from other agencies or local donors for larger operations.

In that sense, 2006 once again proved challenging given that demands on UN coordination staff kept increasing while RC support funds did not go up. Mirroring the statements of many UNCTs, the Cuba Team reported that: “The implementation of reforms at the national level demands more in terms of coordination. Attending to the growing list of responsibilities requires human and financial resources. While it is true that we should avoid the growth of coordination industries, the current growing workload for RCs is not commensurate with the human and financial resources available to undertake the job.”

In response to this situation and to expand the RC office (RCO) capacity, UNCTs strengthened their efforts for (1) mobilization of additional resources at the country level, and (2) cost-sharing arrangements of UNCT members or staff secondments. Efforts to strengthen capacity were reported mainly in the areas of M&E, human rights, and strategic planning. Apart from expanding RCO capacity, resource mobilization strategies were implemented to fund UN system advocacy activities, inter-agency program activities, disaster response, and activities in crisis and post-conflict situations.

Current RCO capacity

A recent 2006 rapid mapping of RCO human resource capacity indicated the continuous wide range of staffing scenarios and capacities across countries. According to the mapping, RCO staff varies from one or two to a maximum of 12. Current HQ efforts are focused on ensuring consistent minimum capacity in all RC offices while insisting that RCs get the technical support needed by the local UNCT from the relevant agencies, and not through building up RCO capacity.

RCO human resource capacities can be defined by three categories:

- (1) Minimum structure with one international or national officer and, sometimes, an administrative assistant.
- (2) Moderate structure with two to three coordination officers (international and national) and one assistant. This is the most common structure.
- (3) Expanded structure with a range of international and national technical advisers/specialists who have long coordination experience or expertise in fields such as human rights, economics, monitoring and evaluation, aid coordination, and communications, as well as administrative support staff.

Training, development, and knowledge sharing

As another way of strengthening RC office capacity, UNCTs have continued to build capacity through trainings, workshops, training manuals, and other forms of skills building. In 2006 staff training focused on UN reform; joint programming (including modalities, financial management elements, lessons learned, and UNDAF outcomes); joint capacity assessment; UNDAF monitoring and evaluation; human rights-based approach

Countering Resource Constraints: Cost-sharing for RC Office Capacity and UNCT Activities

In Panama the RC office continuously stresses and reminds agencies and theme groups that SRC funds are “seed money” and are meant to mobilize initiatives where more than one UN agency is participating and a strategic and/programmatic impact will be achieved. When conceiving an inter-agency initiative, agencies are encouraged to allocate funds, no matter how little, and the SRC funds are offered as complementary funds. Agencies that for some reason cannot offer funding are nonetheless welcomed.

Nepal – Providing Media Training

In collaboration with the Reuters Foundation, the Nepal UNCT organized a one-day media training in March for heads of agencies. Proposed by the OCHA media focal point, this workshop identified simple processes for performing well in a variety of media scenarios. Key elements included direct coaching on interview techniques for print and broadcast and practical exercises to polish skills. In giving participants the appropriate skills, the workshop intended to protect UNCT members against ill-informed or biased reporting, and to help them promote issues effectively. In their feedback, participants pointed out that the workshop should be held each year so that new UNCT members can sharpen their media skills.

RCs for the UN System – Stronger Focus on Agency Mandates and Priorities in RC Training

In 2006 an enhanced RC induction, orientation on agencies' mandates, and training on strategic planning was introduced. First-time resident coordinators, including Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSGs), were provided with induction training on communication and media relations, negotiation, political analysis, team building and management skills, UN reform, and RC roles and functions. Through the addition of a week of training in Europe and renewed efforts in New York, a much greater focus was placed on agency briefings. Delivered by 20 funds, programmes, departments, and specialized agencies, the briefings paid specific attention to mandates and priorities.

Barbados and Dominican Republic – Integrating NRAs

In Barbados, NRAs were fully integrated in the UN Sub-regional Team, participating in annual retreats and chairing at least one UN HoA meeting annually with presentations of strategic priorities. The involvement of NRAs proved critical to the effectiveness of the team and the successful development, implementation, and monitoring of joint programmes, building on the strengths and comparative advantages of agencies such as the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNESCO, FAO, and ILO.

In Dominican Republic efforts were made so that non-represented UN agencies could provide technical assistance. An inter-agency meeting was organized to define work and cooperation guidelines and to encourage agency presence in country. Logistics support was provided for various agency missions, and the RCO maintains a current UN system portal for shared information on joint actions.

(HRBA); gender mainstreaming and integration; memoranda of understanding; avian influenza; media; and first aid.

As in recent years, UN staff in the UNDAF roll out countries could benefit from training support on Common Country Programming Processes, HRBA, and result-based management (RBM) organized in collaboration with UNDGO and facilitated by the UN System Staff College (UNSSC).

The UN Coordination Practice Network — a global virtual discussion forum for UN coordination — continued to serve as the primary platform for knowledge sharing across the whole range of UNCT functions and responsibilities. In 2006 its membership expanded from 600 to almost 1000 UN staff from 11 agencies, funds, programmes, and the UN Secretariat. Thematically, network members focused in 2006 on issues including UNCT resource mobilization, UNDAF M&E, design and administration of Joint Programmes, and inter-agency advocacy and communications. In addition, the Coordination Practice Network (CPN) served to share valuable and practical “how to” knowledge on topics such as RBM, NRA contributions to the UNDAF Results Matrix, and strategic UNCT support to national development planning. Furthermore, as a first-time event, 15 of the most active CPN members participated in a global workshop to strengthen relationships among network members, exchange valuable experiences, and discuss and recommend ways to further strengthen the relevance and services of the CPN. Finally, 2006 saw the creation of CPN

sub-networks with a focus on specific areas, such as the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), quality support and assurance for UN system programming, and RC/UNCT performance appraisal.

Leveraging expertise of NRAs

Apart from increased efforts from both NRAs and resident agencies to contribute to the UNDAF as described in the previous section, leveraging NRA expertise focused on fostering an environment of active participation in core UNCT activities. A participatory environment includes timely UNCT notification, information sharing, and the introduction of NRA focal points. A number of UNCTs reported that periodically holding extended UNCT meetings and inviting NRAs to major UNCT events provided good opportunities to explore strengthened collaboration and joint programming.

Strengthening RDT Support to UNCTs

In December 2004 the undg Executive Committee (ExCom) Agency Principals agreed to pilot an initiative to strengthen the work of the UN in southern Africa. The Regional Directors, covering 10 countries in southern Africa, were asked to form a UN Regional Directors' Team to support UNCTs in their efforts to increase their impact on the 'Triple Threat' (HIV/AIDS, weakened governance, and food insecurity) to attain the MDGs. A detailed governance structure was implemented to guide RDT operations, and a secretariat was established to support the RDT. In addition, a Programme Support Group (PSG) was created to provide the RDT with analyses of country support needs and recommendations.

Following the RDT pilot in Johannesburg, RDTs have been established and have become increasingly active in the six global regions: Africa (two regions: Western-Central and Eastern-Southern), Asia-Pacific, Arab States/MENA (Middle East and North Africa), Europe-CIS, and Latin America-Caribbean. In 2006 various co-location and regional hubs agreements were made: Western-Central Africa: **Dakar**; Asia-Pacific: **Bangkok**; and Latin America-Caribbean: **Panama City**. Co-location feasibility studies are currently underway to determine inter-agency regional hubs for Eastern-Southern Africa, Arab States/ MENA, and Europe-CIS.

While RDTs became more active in 2006 and functioned more equally across regions, a number of challenges remain. The co-location of regional inter-agency hubs and alignment of regions is not complete, and the roles of the Regional Economic Commissions and global support providers in relation to the RDTs need to be clarified. Finally, the responsibilities of RDTs for quality support and assurance (QSA) have been expanded. RDT oversight and support responsibilities reach beyond the development of the CCA and UNDAF, demanding ongoing support to UNCT with substantive programming advice and expertise on human rights, results-based management, etc.

Conclusion

- **Appraisal:** The RC appraisal system highlighted the importance of country team roles and the need to expand inter-agency RDT appraisal processes using either 180 feedback or other agency input. Agencies need to continue integrating the 180 assessment into their own representatives' assessments.
- **Staffing and Resources:** The demands on UN coordination staff are continuously increasing, while core resources provided by UNDP have seen no corresponding increase. UNCTs are therefore pursuing innovative resource mobilization and cost-sharing arrangements at the country level.
- **Staffing and Resources:** RCO capacity ranges from understaffed and under-funded offices to large structures that have built up expertise and activities in agency-specific areas. Ensuring a balanced support structure for UN coordination at the country level is therefore a key challenge.
- **CPN:** In 2006 the UN Coordination Practice Network continued to provide a platform for knowledge sharing, whereby its membership expanded from 600 to almost 1000 UN staff.
- **NRAs:** UNCTs reported that periodic UNCT meetings with NRAs provided strong opportunities to explore strengthened collaboration and joint programming.
- **RDTs:** There is still a need to clarify the roles of the Regional Economic Commissions and global support providers in relation to RDTs. Given that support now reaches beyond CCA and UNDAF processes, RDTs require regional expertise and capacity to deliver the most up-to-date guidance and tools.



RDT Latin America-Caribbean – Co-locating a Regional Hub

The RDT Latin America-Caribbean, spearheaded by a Deputy Regional Directors Task Force on Regional Premises, undertook a comprehensive feasibility study to determine options and modalities for an inter-agency regional hub in response to the Government of Panama's offer of the Ciudad del Saber as a possible hub. A study was commissioned with private sector entities to determine whether one building or separate buildings (within the Ciudad de Saber) were most feasible. Findings revealed that one common UN regional building was ultimately the clearest choice. Legal, administrative, and financial arrangements, a cost-benefits analysis, cost recovery dimensions, and a resource mobilization strategy (including contributions from the Government of Panama and donors) were salient issues included in the study. A final recommendation will be submitted to ExCom Deputy Executive Directors.

Involvement of Non-ExCom & Specialized Agencies in Regional Director's Teams

Until recently, RDT composition primarily involved ExCom agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP) with limited non-ExCom agency and specialized agency involvement varying by region (e.g., UNAIDS, OCHA, WHO, FAO, UNIFEM, and OHCHR in the RDT Eastern-Southern Africa; and PAHO, UNIFEM, OCHA, and CEPAL in the RDT Latin America-Caribbean). At the UNDG ExCom Global Regional Directors Meeting on 5 March 2007 in Rome, it was agreed that RDTs should seek greater engagement with non-ExCom and specialized agencies.