



**Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS,
UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP
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**Operationalizing the decisions of the QCPR, specifically taking into
consideration climate change and building resilience**

Background paper prepared jointly by UNDP (co-coordinator), UNFPA, UNOPS,
UNICEF (co-coordinator), UN-Women and WFP

I. Overview

What is expected?

1. The new quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243) clearly outlines the collective resolve of Member States to reposition the United Nations development system to be “more strategic, accountable, transparent, collaborative, efficient, effective and results-oriented” (preamble). The QCPR calls for the system to work in an increasingly flexible, timely, coherent, coordinated and integrated manner to respond to national development needs and priorities and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also recognizes “the positive role that sustainable development can play in mitigating drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises and complex emergencies, and that a comprehensive whole-of-system response, including greater cooperation and complementarity among development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace, is fundamental to most efficiently and effectively addressing needs and attaining the Sustainable Development Goals” (operative para. 14).

2. There is no question that today’s global challenges, as captured in the 2030 Agenda and other relevant global frameworks, are increasingly multidimensional and complex, and that such challenges require new thinking, new approaches and new ways of working by the United Nations development system and its partners, both current and future. The QCPR therefore calls for various types of reform – structural, conceptual, programmatic and operational – to be undertaken collectively by the system as a whole and by each agency, fund and programme, on an individual and collaborative basis. Increased collaboration and the effective leveraging of the combined strengths of the system must cut across the various functions that the United Nations development system performs and must be undertaken at the global, regional, national and subnational levels.

What has been achieved thus far?

3. At both the country and global levels, important progress has already been made through various reform efforts and can be built upon further. Each of the six entities associated with the joint meeting of the Executive Boards are committed to the common principles¹ of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), developed to guide the United Nations system’s support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One,² which have contributed to improved inter-agency collaboration and alignment with national priorities and plans. New guidance regarding the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has been developed to drive planning frameworks that are more strategic in order to respond to the 2030 Agenda, and there has been an increase in the number of United Nations country teams organized around issue-based results groups, with many bringing their policy and implementation capacities to bear upon joint products and programmes. At the global level, there are a number of good-practice examples of joint initiatives around key areas of “collaborative advantage” between two or more agencies with complementary strengths, or across the development system as a whole. These initiatives serve as the baseline from which we must strengthen our collective approaches over the coming years.

4. In addition to system-wide actions being undertaken by the UNDG at the headquarters level and by country teams on the ground, funds and programmes, including the United Nations

¹ <http://www.unsystem.org/content/ceb-common-principles-on-2030-agenda-sustainable>.

² <https://undg.org/standard-operating-procedures-for-delivering-as-one>.

Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP), are considering what can be done individually and, in many cases, collaboratively, to implement the mandates of the QCPR. For UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, this includes efforts to take consistent approaches across new strategic plans, including through the preparation of a common chapter, agreement on a harmonized structure and the development of complementary and, in some cases, common indicators in results frameworks.

5. Two key areas of collaborative advantage in which the United Nations will need to work in an increasingly coordinated and integrated fashion are addressing climate change and building resilience. Interrelated but distinct, they are among a handful of key cross-cutting topics that require deep engagement through a truly system-wide approach in order to accelerate progress and drive the expected results. Each requires holistic and decisive investment in individuals, households, communities, cities, institutions, systems and societies across sectors and in ways that identify and address a wide range of risks.

6. In addition to individual United Nations agency initiatives, country teams have been implementing a large number of joint programmes that cover climate change and disaster risk reduction. The United Nations plan of action on disaster risk reduction for resilience, and the forthcoming United Nations system strategic approach on climate change action and the CEB United Nations common core principles for climate action also provide clear guiding frameworks to facilitate and generate momentum to galvanize joint United Nations action in these areas at the global level, in terms of policy, and at the country level, in terms of implementation. Taking climate and resilience work as an example, we can examine the ways in which the funds and programmes, together with a broader set of partners, can build on best practices, lessons and results, while further analysing theories of change and innovative approaches to effectively assist countries and the global system to implement the 2030 Agenda and achieve sustainable development.

Where do we want to go?

7. The six entities associated with the joint meeting of the Executive Boards are committed to further contributing, collectively and individually, towards policy and programming approaches that are truly cross-cutting and able to address complex, multidimensional issues. This means securing a complementary “fit” across all areas of our work that addresses overlap and the duplication of efforts; pooling our expertise where this can yield the best results; working together to build stronger partnerships within and outside the United Nations development system; and achieving greater harmonization and efficiencies in both programmes and operations. Through the development of their new strategic plans, the six entities are contributing to the alignment of the priorities and resources of the United Nations development system, a harmonization that will enable it to implement reforms that strengthen results on the ground, increase transparency and accountability, improve intersectoral approaches across the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that no one is left behind.

II. Key Issues

A. Global-level interagency collaboration

Working together to formulate system-wide policies and strategies

8. An important element for strengthening integrated and collaborative approaches in line with the QCPR is ensuring a common vision across United Nations entities on key topics of collaborative advantage. On such substantive topics as inequality, urbanization, the data revolution, gender equality and youth employment, the High-level Committee on Programmes helps to develop common definitions and concepts, agree on shared priorities, build consensus on policy initiatives, clarify respective responsibilities and areas of focus, and develop joint initiatives or action plans across the United Nations system. The resulting documents then feed into agency-specific strategies and approaches, and can form a basis for collaborative action at the regional or national levels.

9. For example, on climate change and resilience, a High-level Committee on Programmes scoping report on the gaps and benefits of joint United Nations approaches to climate change led to the development, in 2016 and 2017, of the CEB common core principles for a United Nations system-wide approach to climate action,³ and the United Nations system strategic approach on climate change action (forthcoming). These are complemented by the United Nations plan of action on disaster risk reduction for resilience.⁴ Taken together, these serve as guiding frameworks to facilitate and generate momentum to galvanize joint action across the United Nations in this critical area.

10. As the Secretary-General, in consultation with the entities of the United Nations development system, undertakes to fulfil the request made by the General Assembly in the QCPR to develop a system-wide strategic document for collective support to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (operative para. 20), it will be important to draw on and refer to the existing system-wide strategies on specific multidimensional and cross-cutting issues, including those on climate change and resilience, and to identify priority areas in which further collaborative policy work may be required.

Developing joint initiatives at the global level

11. In addition to system-wide policies and strategies at the global level, there is a need for funds and programmes and other United Nations entities to build upon existing joint global programmes and initiatives and to develop new ones that can drive results that cannot be achieved by individual agencies acting alone. Global joint initiatives (e.g., the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting or the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence) provide examples of the leveraging by the funds and programmes of each other's global strengths and comparative advantages.

³ <http://www.unsystem.org/content/common-core-principles-un-system-wide-approach-climate-action>.

⁴ http://www.preventionweb.net/files/49076_unplanofaction.pdf.

Case Study: Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative

The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) is a global partnership of 13 organizations, including both United Nations (UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNOPS) and non-United Nations entities. The partnership supports the identification of critical capacity gaps at the country level in view of prevailing risks, and the articulation of coherent interventions by the United Nations system and other stakeholders to address those capacity gaps.

Drawing upon the diversity of expertise of its members, CADRI offers a unique combination of knowledge, experience and resources to support countries to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. CADRI uses the convening power of United Nations country teams to facilitate a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to increase investment in disaster risk reduction across sectors.

Case Study: Index for Risk Management

The Index for Risk Management (InfoRM) provides disaster risk profiles for 191 countries, using 50 different indicators relating to the conditions that lead to crises and disasters. It includes data on an area's human and natural hazard risks, the vulnerability of communities faced with hazards and the coping capacity of local infrastructure and institutions. Its methodology is common, rigorous and science-based, and it can be implemented globally and updated collaboratively, allowing organizations in different sectors to contribute and to coordinate their efforts. It is the first global, objective and transparent tool for understanding the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters.

InfoRM is a collaborative effort of a number of organizations, including UNFPA, UNDP, UN-Women, UNICEF and WFP, and is led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience and the European Commission.

B. Working together at the country level

Planning together as a United Nations country team

12. The QCPR calls for country teams to strengthen the use of UNDAFs. Through the undg, the funds and programmes are committed to simplifying the UNDAFs, making them more strategic and outcome-focused in order to bring together the collective knowledge, mandates, convening power and expertise of the country teams in support of nationally owned and interlinked, transformative results. This new generation of UNDAFs will be fully aligned with national strategies and plans and will, in turn, feed into entity-specific country programme documents, following a clear results logic.

13. In February 2017, undg agreed on guidance to support a new generation of UNDAFs based on a significantly different approach for integrated analysis, planning and programming. Up to 18 country teams are commencing their UNDAF process in 2017; they will be the first to design the next generation of strategic UNDAFs based on new minimum requirements in support of the 2030 Agenda.

14. In order to enable the system to more effectively contribute to building resilience, addressing climate change, reducing risk and preventing crises, the UNDAFs will need to be informed by

comprehensive risk and hazard analysis. Country teams will pilot new UNDAF approaches based on joint multi-stakeholder engagement and risk analysis, needs assessments and practice responses, in line with the QCPR, aimed at enhancing the linkages between development, humanitarian response, human rights and sustaining peace, all in support of the larger vision of inclusive prevention, resilience and long-term sustainability.

Case Study: Philippines UNDAF

The current UNDAF for the Philippines (2012-2018) sets out a coordinated multi-risk framework under a single outcome: “Resilience towards disasters and climate change: adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities and ecosystems will have been strengthened to be resilient towards threats, shocks, disasters and climate change”.

The terms of reference for the development of the new common country assessment, which will shape the 2019-2023 UNDAF, includes a continued explicit focus on multiple shocks. The assessment will consider the main risks to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, including the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, epidemics, disasters and other hazardous events, and will outline the mechanisms and existing capacities for managing these multi-hazard risks. It will also identify root causes and potential triggers of conflict, and potential early warning signs for such triggers.

Programming together for integrated results

15. In implementing the new QCPR, agencies, funds and programmes will need to work collaboratively at the regional and country levels to develop joint programming approaches in support of specific results that cut across sectors or across entity mandates. There have been some good examples of initiatives developed by two or more United Nations entities, or, collectively by all members of a country team or regional UNDG that leverage the comparative strengths of all partners and better articulate and capture the mutual benefits of each agency’s respective and collective efforts. More can be done to deepen and strengthen such models of joint planning and programming, particularly around such key areas of collaborative advantage as resilience and climate change.

16. One key vehicle for driving integrated planning and programming on specific UNDAF results areas are country team results groups. Such groups provide a mechanism for United Nations agencies to come together and map out approaches for defining roles and responsibilities, developing shared strategies for action and ensuring the meaningful integration of such cross-cutting issues as climate change. This could include common activities, such as joint initiatives in training, risk analysis, programmes, pooled funding and resource mobilization. In rolling out the QCPR, country team results groups could be improved further by increasing the involvement of non-United Nations partners, including, where appropriate, representatives from national Governments.

Case Study: Uganda and Madagascar

In Uganda, resilience programming coalesced around the Government's Karamoja Integrated Development Plan. In support of this plan, WFP, UNICEF and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations developed a joint multi-year resilience strategy under which they will systematically empower households, communities and government systems to transform the lives of the most vulnerable in Karamoja. While their traditional focus is on food security and livelihoods, the three agencies have also included as key pillars the improvement of safety nets, social protection and access to basic services.

In Madagascar, the economic sectors most affected by climate change are agriculture, livestock, forestry, water resources, fishing and health. In order to strengthen the adaptation and resilience capacities of rural communities, an initiative jointly funded by the Global Environment Facility and the Least Developed Countries Fund, with the participation of UNDP and UNICEF, is aimed at (a) increasing awareness and strengthening the capacities of decision makers, technicians and vulnerable communities for climate change adaptation; (b) ensuring the collection and production of reliable climate and meteorological information; and (c) transferring adaptation measures, options and technologies to vulnerable communities in the selected regions, using a participatory approach and building on the strengthened capacities achieved through the first component and agro-meteorological information and forecasts.

Case Study: Integrated Water Resources Management Atlantic and Indian Oceans small island developing States project

The six small island developing States involved in the project, all located in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, differ profoundly in size and in the level of economic development, but all six share problems relating to the scarcity and contamination of freshwater supplies, the over-exploitation and poor management of groundwater, increasing pressure on agricultural production and rapidly disappearing biodiversity. To a lesser or greater degree, the countries also face serious difficulties in providing clean drinking water and waste-management facilities to their residents. In response to these challenges, the Global Environment Facility has funded a full-sized project that recognizes and addresses the urgent need for comprehensive integrated water resources management and improved water use efficiency. This project, involving UNDP, UNOPS and the United Nations Environment Programme, is designed to strengthen the commitment and capacity of the six participating countries to implement an integrated approach to the management of freshwater resources, with the long-term goal of enhancing their capacity to plan and manage their aquatic resources and ecosystems on a sustainable basis.

Case Study: Working across the humanitarian-development continuum in Nepal

Following the humanitarian response to the Nepal earthquakes in 2015, the Humanitarian Inter-Cluster Gender Working Group, working across the humanitarian-development continuum and co-chaired by UN-Women and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, prepared a gender equality resource guide for emergency response preparedness that bridge a the humanitarian-development continuum. The guide was validated through an inclusive process incorporating feedback from the Gender Working Group's multi-stakeholder forum of gender equality advocates and experts from civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the Nepal Red Cross Society, development partners and the United Nations. The endorsement of the gender equality resource guide and its incorporation into the Nepal Contingency Plan were of critical importance for ensuring gender-responsive disaster preparedness and resilience-building in Nepal. The roll-out of the gender equality resource guide is ongoing at the national and district levels in Nepal, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

Case Study: Africa Regional United Nations Development Group Teams

The Africa Regional UNDG Teams have developed a strategic framework to support country teams to better adapt their programmes, tools and staff capacity to be “fit for context”, in order to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of the African Union's Agenda 2063 through resilient development. The framework does not intend to impose the standardization of resilience initiatives or to serve as a blueprint for action. Instead it provides a conceptual framework, guidance and a compilation of tools and approaches to resilient development for country teams throughout the region, based on experiences within and beyond Africa.

III. Conclusion

17. Recent progress in advancing efforts to deliver results across agencies or collectively as a system has been acknowledged in the QCPR. But the QCPR also presents a challenge to United Nations entities: to move towards more integrated, cross-sectoral approaches that clearly and effectively harness the collaborative strengths of the United Nations in support of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly at the country level. It is imperative that the United Nations development system devise comprehensive strategies to address such issues as climate change and resilience, recognizing the multidimensional nature of the interventions required, overcoming such persistent barriers as diverse financial procedures and reporting requirements and improving common risk analysis and planning and the division of responsibilities.

18. Some key ways to help to achieve this include:

(a) Using United Nations-wide policies, guidance and strategies and ensuring that agency-specific policies and plans align with them at the global and country levels to support national Governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Putting prevention, emergency preparedness and early warning, resilience and sustainability at the heart of the United Nations development system's work, including by undertaking pilot projects in joint risk analysis, needs assessments and scenario planning and by strengthening theories of change in UNDAFs;

(c) Building staff capacity and supporting the roll-out of guidance and policies at the country and regional levels;

(d) Ensuring that joint programmes and pooled funds are designed to effectively support common results that complement – not duplicate – agency-specific results;

(e) Strengthening results groups to build inter-agency consensus on specific results, clarifying the division of responsibilities and expertise and finding areas for joint approaches, where beneficial.

Guiding questions for discussion

19. (a) In addition to climate change and resilience, what are some other key areas of collaborative advantage in which the United Nations development system should come together in support of integrated and collaborative approaches, in line with the QCPR? How can we best capture the shared results of these common areas of work that truly cut across the system?

(b) What new operational approaches could be developed at the country, regional or global levels to strengthen results in key cross-cutting areas of work and improve integrated support to national Governments?

(c) How can the United Nations collectively ensure that resilience-building and climate change adaptation efforts contribute to achieving global commitments to gender equality and women's leadership, given the disproportionate burden of disaster and climate change impact shouldered by women and girls?

(d) What are the key priorities in further scaling up the collective results of the United Nations on climate change and building resilience in the period of the current QCPR, and in what ways can strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus support such efforts?

(e) How can agencies increase the capacity of and support from their staff for integrated and collaborative approaches, and how can such approaches be incentivized?
