



UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

Towards Sustainable Food Systems

How to feed, not deplete, the world

Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence

Food systems are fundamental for the future, not only of each individual community and nation but also, of our world. Functioning food systems ensure food security and nutrition so that the food of future generations is not compromised. Food systems encompass environmental, economic and social linkages that are shaped by the context in which the food is produced, processed, distributed, sold and consumed. When food systems do not function well, the result is hunger, malnutrition and, often, fierce competition for natural resources. When food systems operate smoothly, families have sufficient, nutritious food, food-based businesses prosper, healthier populations are more engaged and environmental resources continue to be productive and protected.

This summary draws on the extensive knowledge and evidence generated by independent evaluations conducted across the United Nations development system between 2021 and 2024. It presents key issues and learning from evaluations for consideration in the context of United Nations system-wide and intergovernmental policy discussions. Its publication is timed to provide information to stakeholders involved in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 78/166 (2023).

This summary is part of a series produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) which includes summaries of United Nations evaluation evidence on:

- I the resident coordinator system;
- II development system reform at the regional level;
- III funding quality;
- IV whole of system responses in complex settings; and
- V an interactive evidence map featuring United Nations evaluations, published between 2021 and 2024, mapped against priority areas of the 2020 QCPR¹.

The complete series is available at:
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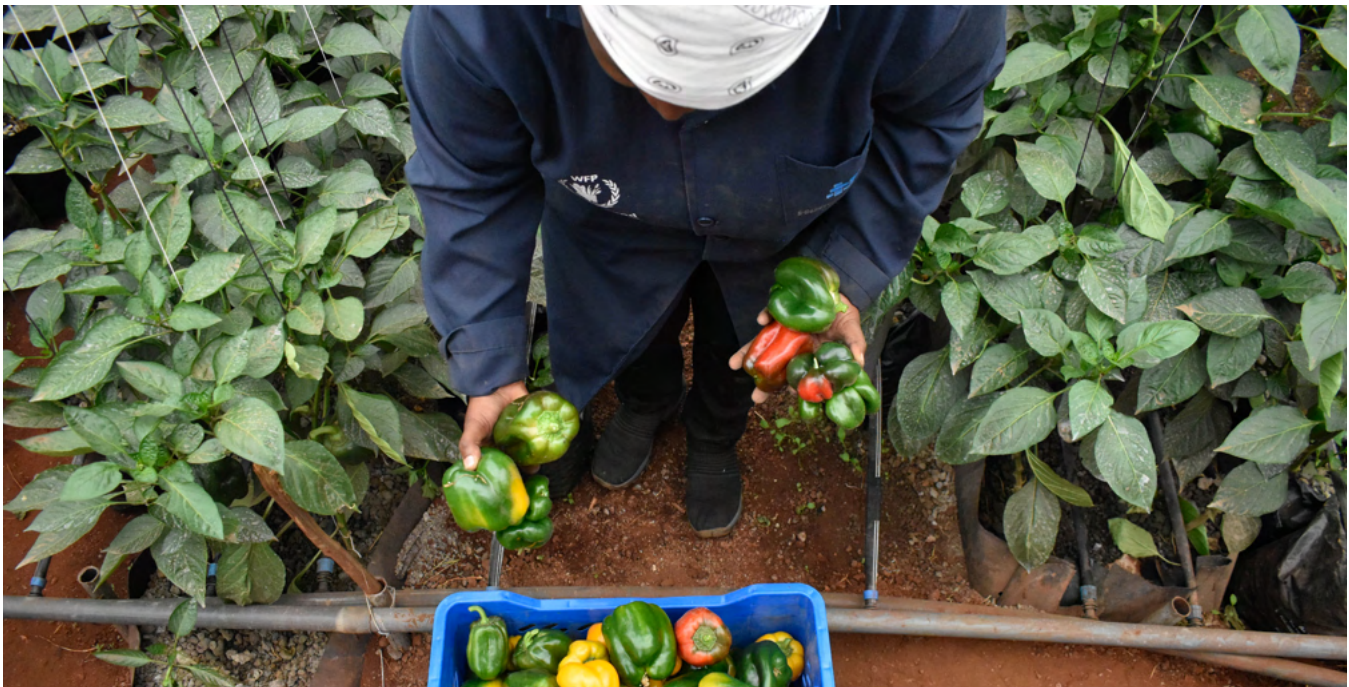
Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and Food Systems Summit

The QCPR is the primary policy instrument of the United Nations General Assembly to define the way the United Nations development system operates to support programme countries in their development efforts. It assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities for development. A QCPR resolution is adopted by the General Assembly every four years with annual follow-up and guidance from Member States provided by the Economic and Social Council at its Operational Activities Segment and the General Assembly in its Second Committee. The 2020 QCPR resolution builds on the United Nations development system reform². The next

QCPR resolution will be negotiated in late 2024 to guide efforts from 2025 to 2028.

The 2020 QCPR reaffirmed the right to food in the context of national food security and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 and recognized the relationships between climate change, biodiversity and food security and nutrition. The annual follow up resolution in 2022³ further noted the disproportionate challenge of food security (and other issues) for developing countries. Following the QCPR 2020, the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) strengthened the focus on food systems. The UNFSS was focused on SDG 2 (zero hunger) but widened to food systems to acknowledge the importance of interconnection with other Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1, 3, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 17.

Over 183 countries participated in a UNFSS pre-summit, and national food systems dialogues were held across 148 countries to chart pathways for human rights-based food systems. The summit built momentum and stimulated action to transform food systems by 2030. The Secretary-General's Chair Summary and Statement of Action from the summit emphasized the need to support nationally owned pathways for food systems transformations. It called for the establishment of a Food Systems Coordination Hub to strengthen coordination and leverage the United Nations resident coordinator system and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) to facilitate policy and technical



Kenya: Hydroponic farming in Kenya's Urban areas © WFP/Brian Wanene

support for food systems. In January 2022, the United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub was established to act as a catalyst to accelerate food systems and galvanize knowledge and expertise on food systems.

In July 2023, at UNFSS+2, the dialogue called for national pathways for food systems, enabling private sector finance in food systems, investing in research, data, innovation and technology capacities for more transparent, traceable and resilient food value chains. It promoted incorporating sustainable food systems strategies into policies and stimulating actions linked to climate change, nature loss and just transitions in local and global food systems. In September 2023, the Secretary-General presented “food systems” as one of the six transformational factors that have potential to accelerate SDG progress. In November 2023 at COP28, food systems featured prominently, noting the need to mainstream protection of food systems within consideration of climate targets.

The Secretary-General’s statements from the Food Systems Summit affirmed that food systems are fragile and that drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition – including conflict, climate extremes, and economic volatility – are further exacerbated by poverty and high levels of inequality. Yet, food systems contribute around one third of greenhouse gas emissions, cause 80 per cent of biodiversity loss and use 70 per cent of

freshwater, therefore the reform of food systems is an existential imperative. Protection of all food value chain actors and consumers to ensure an equitable and safe flow of food to where it is needed requires an enabling regulatory framework across food systems, but this is still underdeveloped and fragmented.

The Food Security Information Network Global Report on Food Crises 2024 confirmed the enormity of the challenge of achieving the goal of ending hunger by 2030. In 2023, nearly 282 million people, or 21.5 per cent of the analysed population in 59 countries and territories, faced high levels of acute food insecurity requiring urgent food and livelihood assistance. This additional 24 million people since 2022 is explained by improvements in data analysis, as well as deteriorating food security in some countries outweighing improvements in others. Malnutrition levels, particularly among children and women, are escalating, especially in conflict-affected areas, with over 36 million children under 5 acutely malnourished. The report highlighted critical challenges facing food systems, particularly conflicts, climate change and economic shocks. The report emphasized challenges in data gaps and insufficient humanitarian funding that has not kept pace with rising needs, thus exacerbating food insecurity. The interconnectedness of these crises creates a complex cycle of vulnerability that necessitates comprehensive and coordinated interventions to ensure food security and nutrition.

Insights from United Nations evaluations

The following summary of evidence on food systems draws on 50 United Nations evaluations, including 34 country programme evaluations by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and 16 thematic evaluations⁴.

“Food systems” is used across the evaluations as a broad, unifying concept increasingly referred to as a means to integrate the specific focus of each evaluation into wider global sustainable food outcomes, for instance, evaluations from countries that had actively participated in the UNFSS paid greater attention to embedding food systems aspects into national policies and strategies, and evaluations in school feeding also discussed agrifood value chains. However, only 15 of the 50 evaluations



Bolivia. A woman farmer participating in a WFP production project shows the quinoa plants for the season © WFP/Daniela Navia

provided a significant depth of food systems analysis. This underlines the importance of building lessons across evaluations related to food systems.

The evaluations provided insights into future programming strategies and challenges, as well as opportunities to align interventions with national needs and global development goals related to different dimensions of food systems. This summary outlines four fundamental factors for food systems, three key factors for transformation in food systems and two factors for strengthening food systems financing and partnerships.

Fundamental factors

1 Addressing food systems challenges requires strategic and system-based approaches that are also strongly rooted in specific contexts.

Food systems support spans a spectrum from delivery of basic food supplies to people who are at the brink of starvation, including contexts where hunger is a seasonal factor, to complex societal aspects of food production, quality or nutritional balance. Each context often incorporates multiple technical matters of agricultural, environmental, social and commercial importance. WFP evaluations emphasized: strategic responses to hunger and malnutrition through food assistance and cash-based transfers in humanitarian contexts; school feeding programmes; and supporting development pathways in transition to sustainable food systems. UNICEF evaluations focused on: strengthening food system-related policies; sustainable food distribution mechanisms; and social protection systems to address malnutrition in vulnerable populations, including women and children. FAO evaluations centred on: enhancing governance; and promoting climate resilience and nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices. IFAD evaluations aimed to reduce rural poverty through empowering small-scale farmers by improving their access to markets, resources and technologies. Yet, all of the evaluations highlighted the need to understand the interplay between national policies and local food systems contexts before designing and implementing interventions. For all evaluations, particularly in humanitarian contexts, the need for programming to be responsive and adaptable to changing circumstances was considered essential.

2 Government action in legislation, regulation and strategic intervention is essential to enable and sustain food systems.

The evaluations strongly emphasized the important role of government in legislation and strategic processes that enable interconnected food systems. The evidence across the evaluations provided many examples of positive results in contributing to improved legislation and policies in order to support improved quantity and quality of food systems and reach into vulnerable communities and households for food security. Important aspects of government intervention include: planning of infrastructure for food systems such as irrigation; processing facilities and markets; legislation on post-harvest handling and food safety; and consumer protection. Disaster risk reduction and crises are increasingly featured, including climate-related policies. Common challenges raised in the evaluations included: changing government leadership and budget priorities affecting sustainability of interventions; insufficient coordination across entities; land tenure issues (Box 1); insufficient capacity assessment and specific capacity development support; and transboundary issues in import and export of food products.

BOX 1: LAND TENURE

Thematic evaluations by FAO and IFAD identified land tenure as an important factor to protect prime agricultural land from urbanization, erosion and flooding, among other issues. Innovations for regulation were assessed as effective, for example, Kyrgyzstan (pasture and veterinary systems restructuring), Madagascar (land regulatory framework), Bangladesh (securing land rights for women on accreted coastal lands). These reforms enabled positive change in production and social capital. Government action on land use for food production and processing needs to be proactive to protect important agricultural resources, as well as create opportunities for innovation, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.

3 **Increases in food quantity and quality are critical but nutrition and health is also important.**

FAO and IFAD particularly focus on promoting sustainable agricultural practices to improve food production and food security, but increasingly implement nutrition-sensitive agriculture programmes, integrating food production with dietary needs in terms of adequacy and diversity. Reducing crop and nutrition losses through processing and distribution remain identified challenges. The delivery of WFP and UNICEF food assistance in crisis situations, their supply of specialized nutritious foods, and their support for school feeding all involve major food supply logistics. The evaluations demonstrated that a shift towards food assistance can effectively reduce short-term hunger but also build stronger systems for long-term food security including strategies for malnutrition reduction, social protection and enhanced community health services, such as engaging local farmers and food processors in school feeding programmes and building robust value chains to continue food supply (Box 2).

BOX 2: TARGETING DIVERSE NEEDS

In Egypt and Sudan, UNICEF enhanced national nutrition policies by supporting community-based management of acute malnutrition, particularly for children and pregnant women. The WFP thematic evaluation of resilience found that supporting anticipatory capacity contributes to food security outcomes at all levels but this needs to be targeted to specific needs. The FAO FIRST programme in the Pacific supported improved governance for food and nutrition security in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Solomon Islands. These evaluations highlighted the need to understand food diversity profiles for different needs and to work with partners on how food availability and quality contributes to the well-being of the most vulnerable populations.

4 **Attention to human rights, gender and diversity in plans for food systems improvements needs stronger follow-through in implementation to achieve expected impacts.**

Strengthening equity and access for vulnerable people was largely positive across the evaluations but with challenges in targeting vulnerable groups, including refugees, displaced populations and persons with disabilities. Initiatives like cash transfers and local procurement increased access to food, though challenges in ensuring long-term market impacts and inclusivity persisted. All entities incorporate gender-sensitive approaches but there were few gender-transformative approaches identified across the sample. It was found that cultural barriers still limit women's roles in leadership and in asset building. UNICEF and WFP clearly target the most vulnerable groups, with explicit processes that protect human rights and support women and girls in nutrition and health programmes. IFAD and FAO have a less explicit approach to human rights and equity but still demonstrated strong evidence of promoting women's participation and empowerment in agriculture and value chains. Gender analyses were evident in most programmes but were inadequate in detail and resourcing for effective implementation. Youth-specific programming has increased but is still assessed as insufficient. There is little attention to ethnic minorities or human rights in food sovereignty or sociocultural practices, although IFAD in the Philippines supported innovative land right "covenants" for indigenous tribes, recognizing their role as protectors and stewards of watershed lands and indigenous rice varieties. Food systems-related awareness and behaviour change advocacy is incorporated into programming to a limited extent but has been noted in evaluations across the entities for future focus.

Transformative factors

5 **Strengthening resilience in agricultural communities and value chains can transform food systems.**

Initiatives in strengthening food systems that are successful are seen as transformational when they are incorporated or transformed into self-functioning,

self-regulated systems. The evaluations highlighted that systems with robust buffers (for example, access to finance, insurance and social systems) improve resilience and adaptation in the face of change. Climate change is negatively transforming food systems. Farmers report that climate change is affecting their production cycles and productivity. There has been a strong swing across all entities to consider and integrate climate-related action into programming, including climate risk management, water resource management and disaster risk reduction. IFAD and FAO are promoting agroecology research, sustainable water management, climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy solutions like solar-powered irrigation to help food producers and processors adapt to climate change, but as yet there is limited scale of impact. A specific lesson arising during the period of this summary are evaluation findings arising from innovations as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic that are now strengthening resilience and development outcomes (Box 3).

6 The power of data analysis and application can facilitate radical shifts in food systems.

Unprecedented levels of data have opened doors for the production, processing and distribution of food. A range of evaluations indicated that a higher level of knowledge supported through data gathering, analysis and use has allowed innovation exponentially to optimize all levels of food systems. One important initiative has been the zero hunger strategic reviews promoted by WFP, which have been used by governments to identify food deficit areas and food systems bottlenecks, often as part of the common country analysis process in UNSDCF preparation. Other work that has been strongly appreciated has been FAO support for improved statistical capacity for national statistics offices for agricultural census activities. WFP and UNICEF studies in nutrition and vulnerability are heavily referenced in project designs of their own and other entity projects and contribute to government strategic processes. IFAD technical studies on, for example, specific crops or microfinance contribute to national policy processes.

BOX 3: LESSONS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the pandemic, food systems struggled. WFP adapted food distribution systems, using cash transfers and local procurement to reduce reliance on disrupted global supply chains. UNICEF provided emergency cash transfers and supported community-driven solutions to ensure that vulnerable children and families had sufficient access to food. IFAD promoted local food production and market resilience, helping farmers adapt to pandemic-induced disruptions. FAO worked with national governments to ensure continuity of agricultural inputs for food production. All entities turned more towards digital solutions for communication and monitoring. In each example, lessons learned were incorporated into programming for greater resilience for the future. availability and quality contributes to the well-being of the most vulnerable populations.

7 Innovative technical solutions are increasingly important for transformational food production, supply and nutrition.

Foundational research and science of the targeted solutions for food systems can lead to transformational results. Investment in science and research in WFP has contributed to extensive distribution of nutritious food for improved nutrition, for example fortified rice in Bhutan, date bars in Jordan and fortified pre-cooked flours and biscuits in Niger and Senegal. FAO research on crop seeds, particularly in the face of climate change, is enabling higher yields, more robust crops in harsh environment conditions and improved tools and technology for production and processing. IFAD similarly researches innovations in approaches that are particularly adapted to vulnerable households. UNICEF has introduced innovative approaches to child and maternal health and nutrition that are widely adopted, making transformational system changes. In these examples, innovations

were tested in the field and adapted over a prolonged period to facilitate consultations on specific contexts and needs, build knowledge and capacity, advocate for behaviour changes and track and record the experience so that the actual technical innovation becomes systematically applied in practice.

Financing and partnerships

8 Sustainable financing for food systems changes is scarce and rarely strategic.

Private sector engagement is critical and public financing needs to be targeted to achieve critical shifts for sustainable food systems.

- I **Private sector financing:** Financing for food systems is generally related to a specific value chain, is consumer and private sector-driven and is self-sustaining. Where food systems function in a sustainable manner, no external intervention is required. In countries with a high level of food security, basic factors of food supply and demand are largely balanced through private sector value chains and are self-determined in terms of quantity and quality. The financing of catalytic actions for food systems transformation can be achieved by facilitating private sector engagement in more effective and equitable food systems (Box 4).

BOX 4: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

In Ethiopia, WFP contracted a factory supplier for nutritious foods and this led to wider private sector interest in improved food supply. WFP supply chain activities contributed to economic growth in the Berbera port area and stimulated wider prosperity in the locality. FAO support of the African Agribusiness Leadership Dialogue in Accra in 2020 and 2022 enabled public-private partnership investments to agribusinesses and a digital marketplace for agriproducts. Such initiatives generate financially sustainable improvements in food systems.

- II **Public sector financing:** Government investment and oversight is important in matters of safety and safe food supply. Where food supply is insufficient, humanitarian food assistance swings into operation and is funded through existing emergency budgets and funding campaigns. However, the resources necessary to support long-term interventions are seldom available. There are scarce funds to address food assistance or agriculture and value chain development support, so more risky, transformational innovations are grossly underfunded.

9 United Nations collaboration on food systems is improving but with major steps still to make.

The United Nations plays a catalytic and normative role in assisting governments to consider, analyse and then support national and local food systems. The Food Systems Summit was mentioned as a determining factor in enhanced support to food systems and in improved collaboration in about a quarter of the evaluations. Preparation of national food systems strategies has been a catalyst to drawing data and partners to work together on more integrated approaches. There is increasing complementation in roles and responsibilities related to food systems but there are still major issues to be addressed. These are not often issues of overlap, given the minimal resources for such work in each country, it is more that potential multiplier effects are not seized. All four entities work on food systems in crisis contexts, endeavouring to improve and stabilize local food supplies, and are attempting to strengthen value chains and private sector engagement. Greater sharing of lessons nationally, regionally and globally could accelerate food systems outcomes. Issues that could be more proactively addressed collectively through the UNSDCF process are, for example: human rights in land and social and economic disadvantage; transboundary food chains; and linking of investments. Good examples include the support by both IFAD and FAO for roots and tubers value chains in Ghana that supply markets in many other countries. The WFP distribution hubs and transportation networks during food crises have been instrumental in bringing together entities to assist in coordinated approaches. In Bhutan, WFP and UNICEF worked together on joint advocacy for school feeding

and with FAO and IFAD on agriculture-related activities. These systems have engaged private sector actors that have in some cases (Box 4) been further supported beyond crises to build more sustainable systems.

were mainly conducted concurrently with the rise of food systems terminology, so food systems were not always explicitly mentioned. Nonetheless, dimensions of food systems were identifiable, sufficient for valid summation.

Approach and methodology

This summary, produced between July and September 2024, brings together evidence from 50 evaluations completed across the United Nations between 2019 and 2024. Of the most recent country programme evaluations (published since 2022), 34 were selected balancing across United Nations entities, regions and countries. A total of 16 thematic or strategic evaluations were selected based on the relevance of the evaluation subject to the wider concept of food systems⁵. Evidence was extracted and analysed against an analytical framework that identified key dimensions of food security based on FAO definitions, food systems summit literature plus inclusion of cross-cutting issues.

The sampling strategy, methodological approach, and draft report were reviewed by an inter-agency reference group including the evaluation offices of FAO, IFAD and WFP.

Limitations: Prevalence rates of extracted evidence against the analytical framework provided a high degree of confidence for the findings. However, as a rapid evidence scan, evidence was extracted based on keywords rather than forensic review. The evaluations

UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) has been established by the Secretary-General to provide independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency and accountability in order to incentivize joint work and collective learning and conduct and advance system-wide evaluation evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to work with United Nations evaluation offices to draw on and augment their contributions and capacities, to fill critical gaps, to promote collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluations and to improve the quality and usability of United Nations evaluation evidence in relation to the SDGs, 2030 Agenda, and United Nations reform priorities.



Burkina Faso. Daguintoega village. Photomonitoring of a resilience site - (rice-growing lowland) © WFP/Cheick Omar Bandaogo

UTILIZING UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE 2024 QCPR

This initiative is a collaboration between SWEO and evaluation offices across the United Nations. It provides user-friendly mapping and summary products of United Nations evaluation evidence to support engagement in the 2024 QCPR. The initiative is coordinated by SWEO, with substantive contributions from the following entities:

FUNDING



MANAGEMENT GROUP



Endnotes

¹ A/RES/75/233

² A/RES/72/279

³ A/RES/77/184

⁴ The sample comprised 34 CPEs, (FAO-5; IFAD-5; WFP-17; UNICEF-7) and 16 thematic evaluations (FAO-5; IFAD-4, WFP-5 and multi-agency -2). See full list in Bibliography.

⁵ Most evaluations were published between 2021 and 2024, a small number were selected from the period 2017-2020 due to their quality and high level of relevance.

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October 2024

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UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

A visible shift – the independent resident coordinator

Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence

The repositioning of the United Nations development system sought to reinvigorate the role of the resident coordinator system in supporting government efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This summary compiles evidence on elements of the United Nations development system reforms focused on the resident coordinator system. It covers analysis, findings and recommendations related to the role of the resident coordinator and the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) in improving efficiency, effectiveness, coherence and coordination of operational activities for development. It also covers implementation and compliance with the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) of the United Nations development and resident coordinator system and strengthened joint programming processes and the use of joint programmes at the country level¹.

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Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

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The 2020 QCPR resolution stresses the importance of empowered, strategic, effective and impartial leadership through the resident coordinator system to foster coordination and collaboration at the country level and facilitate integrated support to host governments. It further requests that all entities support the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including by complying with the Management and Accountability Framework and ensuring that their operational activities for development at the country level are supportive of the strategic objectives as laid out in the United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks. It also asks United Nations country teams (UNCTs) to strengthen joint programming processes and the use of joint programmes at the country level, where appropriate. Lastly, it underlines the important role of the resident coordinator system in supporting government efforts by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities for development at the country level, enhancing sustainable

development results and thus making operations more coherent and efficient, coordinated and integrated.

Since the reform, the resident coordinator system has been funded through: (i) UNSDG cost sharing; (ii) a 1 per cent levy on tightly earmarked contributions; and (iii) voluntary contributions. The 2020 QCPR emphasizes the importance of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding and stresses the need to fully operationalize these three funding sources.

The Secretary-General provides annual reports on the implementation of the QCPR to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 2019, the UNSDG Chair has also reported annually to ECOSOC on the work of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO). The main reported achievements relevant to this summary are as follows:

- The new resident coordinator system has consolidated itself as the cornerstone of United Nations development system's support for accelerated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) action.
- Resident coordinators scaled up collective SDG action and leveraged the comparative advantages of United Nations entities, contributing to more effective and efficient delivery in-country.
- Resident coordinators continue to minimize duplication in United Nations delivery.
- Throughout the 2020 QCPR cycle, information-sharing between resident coordinators and UNCTs improved.
- The strengthening and harmonization of core capacities across resident coordinators' offices has been a key feature of the new resident coordinator system.
- The resident coordinator system has advanced towards greater integration and collaboration. Resident coordinators are empowered to play their role as coordinators and conveners, enabled by governments and UNCTs that recognize and support their leadership.

However, challenges are reported by the Secretary-General and UNSDG Chair. Joint planning and programming continue to be constrained by compartmentalization. While the matrixed, dual reporting model⁵ is mandated by General Assembly resolutions 72/279 and 75/233, obstacles remain to universal application across United Nations sustainable development group entities.

Specific areas for further refinement remain, including the need to bring even greater coherence to, and avoid duplication within, UNCTs, ensure that the resident coordinator is empowered to inform country presence and leadership profiles and continue to improve skill sets in resident coordinators' offices and the UNCT as a whole. To be self-sustained in the future, the resident coordinator system cannot simply "coordinate"; it must add value, which ensures that the United Nations development system becomes greater than the sum of its parts. The reports also highlight that, since delinking, the resident coordinator system has never been fully funded hampering its ability to fully deliver on its mandates. In view of this, the Secretary-General submitted a proposal to the General Assembly for the conversion of a portion of funding from the regular budget.⁶

Insights from United Nations evaluations

The following summary of evidence on the reformed resident coordinator system draws on 33 United Nations evaluations conducted at global and country levels⁷. The evaluations in Box 1 (right), given their focus on the reform and resident coordinator system, provided the majority of the evidence for most, but not all, the findings. Evidence from other evaluations often complemented or corroborated their findings.

1 Improvements in programming coherence have not yet resulted in the fully coordinated delivery of operational activities.

Government representatives, resident coordinators and UNCT members have reported, through several OIOS evaluations, that indicators of programming coherence, including UNCT engagement in planning and the reduction of duplication, were improving. The convening role of the resident coordinator, which is providing independent leadership and a focus on strategic issues, is perceived as contributing to improved programming coherence, confirmed by country level evaluations. There is evidence that joint programming enhanced coherence across United Nations entities, ensuring United Nations entities leveraged their mandates and comparative technical advantages to achieve the cooperation framework-related results.

Nevertheless, the coherence of programme delivery remains inconsistent. There is evidence of a lack of coordination across United Nations entities on

BOX 1: EVALUATIONS INCLUDING A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR SYSTEM

- [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\), Evaluation of Resident Coordinator System Support to Enabling Coherent United Nations Policy Advice \(2023\)](#)
- [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\), Evaluation of the Resident Coordinator System Contribution to Country-Level Programme Coherence \(2021\)](#)
- [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\), Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office Regional Support \(2023\)](#)
- [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\), Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Engagement in the Reform of the United Nations Development System \(2023\)](#)

programme implementation in shared priority areas. Hindering factors identified by OIOS include delegated authorities and reporting lines that favoured entity priorities over those agreed in cooperation frameworks and incentives around funding that led to competition. There is further scope to improve the division of labour at the country level based on the comparative advantage of entities.

COVID-19 and the United Nations response to the pandemic was a first major test of the reformed resident coordinator system, which often showcased the potential of the independent resident coordinator as a facilitator of a more coherent and cohesive socioeconomic response at the country level as confirmed by several COVID-19 response evaluations.⁸ The 'reinvigorated' resident coordinators, who were largely in place at the start of the pandemic, played an important role in supporting the United Nations response at the country level. Governments expressed appreciation for their interactions with resident coordinators and the roles they saw resident coordinators playing in the pandemic response.

2 Information-sharing has improved and duplication of work is reducing, but challenges which impact coherence persist.

Information-sharing mechanisms, particularly with resident coordinators, are in place and known. Nevertheless, not all entities, particularly those not physically present at the country level, consistently make use of them. Despite evidence across the evaluations that duplication of work at the country level was diminishing within the United Nations development system, examples of duplications within the system persist, as well as with other stakeholders at the country level. Evidence remains on uneven information-sharing from United Nations entities to the resident coordinator, including on policy approaches, and advice and initiatives developed bilaterally with the government that impact on, or diverge from, joint positions or approaches that have been agreed with and by UNCTs.

The plurality of reporting requirements is also perceived by some entities to have increased and to be a significant burden. Examples of heavy reporting requirements identified by OIOS include: duplicative reporting of the same information to the DCO through the resident coordinator and to individual entity regional and global headquarters; the use of separate indicators to assess performance on common issues requested by entity headquarters and the resident coordinators; involvement in joint programmes adding

to the reporting burden; and the lack of feedback on how their reporting to the resident coordinator and their office is being used.

3 Resident coordinators have played key roles in enabling integrated United Nations policy advice and have supported UNCTs to increase government capacity.

Integrated United Nations policy advice and UNCT efforts to enhance government capacity to advance the SDGs have been enabled and supported by resident coordinators, according to OIOS evaluations. While these outcomes were the result of the collective effort of the UNCTs, the resident coordinators played a key role. Resident coordinators enabled integrated policy advice through: playing a convening role; leveraging relevant United Nations expertise; coordinating country teams to provide integrated support to governments; acting as the principal United Nations system representative and interlocutor at the country level; and supporting advocacy efforts to advance the normative agenda. Resident coordinators provided support on cross-sectoral policymaking, strategic approaches to aligning national policies and financing strategies with the SDGs, coordinating United Nations programming



and connecting the government with the relevant United Nations entity or expert. They also provided assistance with engaging and convening other development partners. Resident coordinators play an enabling, convening and connector role rather than providing direct technical policy advice.

Resident coordinators effectively support the mainstreaming of normative issues (including gender, leaving no one behind, human rights and disability inclusion) in national policymaking. Challenges remain in terms of capacity to pursue cross-cutting issues throughout the implementation of programming, both from the resident coordinator and their office and from entities at the country level. The System-Wide Evaluation of the United Nations Development System's Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 found that the role of the resident coordinators' office, to ensure consistent focus on human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind, was especially important in countries where entities with coordination mandates lacked a physical presence, elevating the importance of regular dialogue between resident coordinators' offices and key regional bodies. There were examples of the deployment of human rights advisers to resident coordinators' offices, facilitating the mainstreaming of human rights principles throughout the common planning processes of the UNCTs, supported through the UNSDG Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

4 Resident coordinators have helped entities without a physical presence and smaller UNCT entities engage more fully in analysis and planning processes, although difficulties persist.

The integration of entities without a physical presence at the country level is still evolving. Evidence showed that resident coordinators allowed for a more systematic inclusion of entities without physical presence, particularly at the analysis and planning stage of country programming processes. Examples of this included the regional economic commissions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the peer support groups. The OIOS evaluation found that the DCO's role, including at the regional level, contributed to this improvement through connecting resident coordinators and UNCTs with technical expertise at the regional and global levels, notably

supporting the mainstreaming of normative agendas, which was confirmed by other evaluations. Evidence suggested that difficulties in accessing expertise from entities without physical presence persist. Despite good efforts, their participation was limited by logistical constraints created by physical distance, a multi-country focus and weaker connections to country stakeholders.

5 Capacity and resource gaps in resident coordinators' offices affect the coherence and responsiveness of the United Nations development systems.

Evaluations confirmed that resident coordinators in tandem with appropriately staffed offices fostered coherence, enabled policy advice and effectively supported the mainstreaming of normative issues. The System-wide Evaluation of the Development System's Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 identified the empowered resident coordinator and fully staffed offices as an important factor in achieving coherence in the United Nations response and resident coordinators' offices that were not fully staffed as an impediment. The UNFPA development system reform evaluation also pointed to the fact that resident coordinators and their offices have not always been fully capacitated, which was critical for moving inter-agency processes forward. OIOS evaluations identified that the capacity of resident country offices was a determining factor for achievements in the provision or facilitation of



Secretary-General Visits New UN Country Team Building
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integrated policy advice, yet policy expertise within resident coordinators' offices was often lacking. Furthermore, UNCT members noted the significant strain on resident coordinators' offices to support the delivery of policy advice while also delivering on their coordination mandate. There was a perceived lack of capacity within the UNCTs to effectively mainstream human rights throughout their work according to the Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund evaluation. The fund has supported the deployment of human rights advisers into resident coordinators' offices, a practice potentially threatened by resource constraints in the resident coordinators' offices.

6 Joint programmes have leveraged the new generation of resident coordinators and their coordination and convenor role, yet procedures and funding remain major obstacles.

Joint programmes are vehicles to achieving collective results. Joint programmes intentionally leveraging the new generation of resident coordinators and UNCTs are being supported through funds, such as the Joint SDG Fund. Having pooled funds, such as the Joint SDG Fund, within which the resident coordinator has authority, helps strengthen efforts to convene United Nations entities to work together and establish a rapport with stakeholders, including government partners. Pooled funds are valued by

participating organizations as a mechanism for engaging in innovative programming, particularly where they envision a strong role for the resident coordinator and their office. They have also facilitated new partnerships among UNCT entities that may have lasting impacts on collaboration. The most successful programmes, according to the system-wide evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund, appeared to be those where funding windows coincided with ongoing cooperation framework-related work and aligned with national priorities. This led the evaluation to recommend a shift in the programmatic approach by providing space, time and capacities for resident coordinators and UNCTs to identify strategic opportunities that bring out the unique value of United Nations collective action, emphasizing countries' priorities, in line with the respective cooperation framework.

Significant transaction costs remain, and the plurality of agency rules and regulations pose barriers to engaging in joint programmes. Challenges recorded across evaluations include: differing agency programming, funding processes, cycles and implementing partners; the lack of internal guidance for joint programme operationalization; and the high transaction costs and reporting burden involved. Evaluations revealed the perception that joint projects and programmes are not suitable in all circumstances and other modes of collaboration may be better suited.



7 The Management and Accountability Framework provided a framework with roles and responsibilities for the resident coordinators and UNCTs but varied in its clarity.

The MAF articulates accountabilities, especially for the resident coordinator system and United Nations entities at all levels. Country teams are now accountable to resident coordinators in terms of their support for efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. Although evidence related to the MAF was scattered, it revealed weaknesses in those areas where the language lacked clarity, resulting in conflicting interpretations. There was evidence of uneven commitment to, and application of, the MAF by United Nations entities. Weaknesses and challenges regarding the clarity and complementarity of functional roles and responsibilities were noted as a source of frustration and undermined the efficient implementation of programmes. The absence of a mechanism to ensure compliance by United Nations entities at country and regional levels was highlighted in the System-Wide Evaluation of the United Nations Development System's Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19 as exacerbating the uneven entity delivery on commitments⁹.

There is lack of a shared understanding and clear articulation, including in the MAF, of UNDP's integrator role. According to the system-wide evaluation on COVID-19, this was a particular issue during the COVID-19 period and the preparation of the socio-economic response plans, to the detriment of the lead coordinating role of the resident coordinator. In addition, the UNDP strategic plan evaluation pointed out that this role has subsequently been ascribed to both resident coordinators and DCOs, contributing to the confusion and tensions within UNCTs.

Approach and methodology

This summary, produced between July and September 2024, brings together evidence from 33 evaluations completed across the United Nations between 2021 and 2024. The sample was purposively selected to include the most relevant evaluation evidence, as well as balance across geographic regions and United Nations entities. An initial longlist of 66 evaluations was screened for potential relevance, providing a sample of 39 evaluations. Subsequent in-depth review using an agreed analytical

framework resulted in the extraction and summary of relevant evidence from 33 evaluations¹⁰.

The sampling strategy, methodological approach, and draft report were reviewed by an inter-agency reference group from DCO, OIOS, and the independent evaluation offices of UNDP and UNFPA.

Limitations: The sample of evaluations provided sufficient evidence across different types of evaluations to identify common learning, issues and challenges. The four reports listed above (Box 1) explicitly addressed the subject of this summary. Across the rest of the sample the quality and depth of analysis varied. There was limited in-depth analysis of: (i) the new roles of the resident coordinators following the reform; and (ii) United Nations entity engagement with the reforms at the country level and the MAF. This limitation was most surprising in the UNDAF and cooperation framework evaluations reviewed.

Endnotes

UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEEO) has been established by the Secretary-General to provide independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency and accountability in order to incentivize joint work and collective learning and conduct and advance system-wide evaluation evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to work with United Nations evaluation offices to draw on and augment their contributions and capacities, to fill critical gaps, to promote collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluations and to improve the quality and usability of United Nations evaluation evidence in relation to the SDGs, 2030 Agenda, and United Nations reform priorities.

UTILIZING UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE 2024 QCPR

This initiative is a collaboration between SWEO and evaluation offices across the United Nations. It provides user-friendly mapping and summary products of United Nations evaluation evidence to support engagement in the 2024 QCPR. The initiative is coordinated by SWEO, with substantive contributions from the following entities:

FUNDING



MANAGEMENT GROUP



¹ The summary focuses specifically on activities and outcomes attributable to the reinvigorated RC system (the RC and RCO) at the country level, rather than broader country-level UN programme coherence and the implementation of UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and Cooperation Frameworks by UN country teams, which will be addressed by an ongoing system-wide evaluation.

² The summary of evaluation evidence on the regional architecture includes issues that relate closely to those presented in this summary. There was some overlap in the evaluation samples.

³ A/RES/75/233

⁴ A/RES/72/279

⁵ In line with the MAF, UN entity country representatives remain accountable to their respective entities on their individual mandates but report periodically to the RC on their implementation of the cooperation framework and contributions to the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

⁶ A/78/753

⁷ 5 OIOS global evaluations, 2 global system-wide evaluations, 12 UNDAF/cooperation framework evaluations, 7 entity global or strategic evaluations, and 7 evaluations of pooled funds. Full list in bibliography.

⁸ See the SWE on COVID-19, UNFPA's COVID-19 evaluation and UNDP's financing COVID-19 evaluation. Full references in Bibliography.

⁹ In 2023, UNSDG entities began reporting to their governing bodies on their implementation of the reform of the UN development system against a 'checklist' shared by the Chair of the UNSDG.

¹⁰ For full list see Bibliography. Relevant evidence on the resident coordinator system was also extracted from a sample of reports summarising evidence on the regional architecture.

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[OIOS. 2023. Evaluation of Resident Coordinator system support to enabling coherent United Nations policy advice.](#)

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October 2024

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UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

United Nations development system reform at the regional level – slow progress

Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence

The repositioning of the United Nations development system sought to revamp the regional level, to ensure that it is tailored to the individual needs of each region and supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including at the country level. This summary compiles evidence of the progress of the United Nations development system reforms at the regional level. It focuses on analysis, findings and recommendations related to the new regional architecture (including the regional collaborative platforms), the role of the regional economic commissions, and changes in the deployment of United Nations regional experts or assets to provide policy advice and technical assistance at the country level.

This summary draws on the extensive knowledge and evidence generated by independent evaluations conducted across the United Nations development system between 2021 and 2024. It presents key issues and learning from evaluations for consideration in the context of United Nations system-wide and intergovernmental policy discussions. Its publication is timed to provide information to stakeholders involved in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 78/166 (2023).

This summary is part of a series produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) which includes summaries of United Nations evaluation evidence on:

- I the resident coordinator system;
- II funding quality;
- III whole of system responses in complex settings;
- IV sustainable food systems; and
- V an interactive evidence map featuring United Nations evaluations, published between 2021 and 2024, mapped against priority areas of the 2020 QCPR¹.

The complete series is available at:

<https://ecosoc.un.org/en/what-we-do/oas-qcpr/2020-qcpr-status-reporting>.

Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

The QCPR is the primary policy instrument of the United Nations General Assembly to define the way the United Nations development system operates to support programme countries in their development efforts. It assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities for development. A QCPR resolution is adopted by the General Assembly every four years with annual follow-up and guidance from Member States provided by the Economic and Social Council at its Operational Activities Segment and the General Assembly in its Second Committee. The 2020 QCPR resolution builds on the United Nations development system reform². The next QCPR resolution will be negotiated in late 2024 to guide efforts from 2025 to 2028.

The 2020 QCPR resolution took note of the provisions on revamping the regional assets of the United Nations development system. It specified the work of regional assets of the United Nations development system in support of the 2030 Agenda with a view to enhancing transparency, accountability, efficiency, coordination and results-based management at the regional level in accordance with each region's specific needs and priorities. It also highlighted the role and contribution of the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system in addressing development challenges and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. General Assembly resolution 78/166 on the QCPR recalled and reiterated resolutions

referring to a fit for purpose regional architecture and stressed the importance of leveraging regional assets to scale up country-level impact by ensuring that expertise, including of non-resident entities, is accessible across the United Nations system.

The Secretary-General provides annual reports on the implementation of the QCPR to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 2019, the UNSDG Chair has also reported annually to ECOSOC on the work of the Development Coordination Office (DCO)³. The main reported achievements are as follows:

- Regional collaborative platforms established
- Steady increase of United Nations country teams (UNCTs) supported by the platforms
- Linkages between resident coordinators and UNCTs with regional entities in a way that had not happened before
- Regional results reports provided a comprehensive picture of the work of the United Nations development system in each region
- Exchanges between the regional and country levels, as well as collaboration among platform members, around collective priorities became more systematic and increasingly focused on ensuring regional assets were deployed in support of country teams
- Regional issue-based coalitions became one of the main vehicles of the substantive work that regional collaborative platforms can offer to country teams

Challenges are also reported by the Secretary-General and UNSDG Chair. Only a small majority of resident coordinators reported that their country teams had benefited from the technical, normative and policy expertise of the platforms. Governments and resident coordinators continue to face difficulties gaining access to expertise from United Nations entities without a physical presence. UNCT perceptions of support from the platforms has deteriorated. The picture on benefits of interactions of platform support in policy discussions is mixed. Lastly, further efforts are required to strengthen dialogue between the regional and country levels and ensure that issue-based coalitions fulfil their role in providing agile and responsive integrated support to priorities in the region.

Insights from United Nations evaluations

The following summary of evidence on progress made in reforming the United Nations development system at the regional level draws on 26 United Nations evaluations conducted at regional and global levels⁴. Four evaluations, given their focus on development system reform, provide the majority of the evidence for most, but not all, the issues for consideration presented below (Box 1). Evidence from the other evaluations sampled often complemented or corroborated their findings.

BOX 1: EVALUATIONS INCLUDING A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM REFORM AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

- [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\), Evaluation of the Development Coordination Office regional support \(2023\)](#)
- [Office of Internal Oversight Services \(OIOS\), Synthesis Review of Evaluation Results for Regional Economic Commissions – Contributions to Economic Development \(2024\)](#)
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- [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\), Formative evaluation of the UNFPA engagement in the reform of the United Nations development system \(2023\)](#)

1 Regional reforms have been slower in their implementation, suffer from unclear directives and remain a work in progress.

The evaluations showed there was a general lag between the pace of United Nations development system reforms at country and regional level. United Nations development system entity regional offices and United Nations regional economic commissions have not fully communicated the potential support they could provide to UNCTs, nor consolidated the mechanisms by which it is supplied. There was also evidence of recurring difficulties across entities at the regional level to respond in a timely and coherent way to the expressed needs and demands from the country level. Challenges identified include ensuring: (i) that the regional presence of the United Nations effectively supports both a regional response and the ongoing work of UNCTs at the country level; (ii) that the regional presences of United Nations entities fully take part in the regional mechanisms in each region and; (iii) that there is no dissonance between messaging by regional directors and United Nations entity principals at headquarters.

Regional reform elements for which the evaluation evidence is scarce include the regional results reports and the pooling of expertise at the regional level. Evidence on knowledge management hubs is also limited. Within the evaluations sampled, only the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) evaluation on United Nations development system reform included analysis of knowledge management hubs. It confirmed that all five regions have established knowledge management hubs and, although all regions were successfully sharing United Nations knowledge products with the public, there was less progress with sharing knowledge internally and inter-regionally with colleagues.

2 Regional collaborative platforms, although established, are not yet fully meeting expectations.

The regional collaborative platforms present an opportunity to further foster collaboration and information-sharing among United Nations development system entities at the regional and country levels. Evaluations signalled that they have served to bring United Nations entities and the respective regional economic commissions closer. However, full utilization of the regional collaborative platform mechanism to foster collaboration within the United Nations development system has not been achieved.

Issue-based coalitions are not well covered in evaluations. Where they are, although their opportunity for technical support is recognized, they are more likely to be described as formal structures, unevenly responsive to country needs.

Evaluations on United Nations development system reforms by UNFPA and UNECE pointed to regional collaborative platforms as potential opportunities to better position mandates. In Europe, where the issue-based coalitions emerged from previously established groups, UNECE has shown leadership in those issue-based coalitions it co-chairs and leveraged them to provide demand-driven support to the country level. The UNFPA United Nations development system reform evaluation found that some issue-based coalitions and other, less formal, coordination mechanisms appear to have been more effective at the technical level than regional collaborative platforms at the policy level.

3 Peer support groups are providing appreciated support to country level planning and programming.

While the bulk of the work undertaken to prepare a cooperation framework is undertaken by the United Nations country team under the stewardship of the resident coordinator, the peer support group⁵ provides well-defined technical support to UNCTs

for key design steps of the cooperation framework cycle. Respondents to evaluations by OIOS, UNFPA and UNECE have indicated that the peer support group was effective in providing support and quality assurance to UNCTs in the development of common country analyses and cooperation frameworks.

4 The DCO at the regional level plays an important role in supporting resident coordinators and UNCTs, including connecting them with regional assets.

Evaluations, particularly the 2022 OIOS Evaluation on the Development Coordination Office's Regional Support, confirmed that DCO regional teams enhanced the capacity of resident coordinators to coordinate United Nations programming at the country level. Support for the resident coordinator programme coordination role was provided through the peer support group mechanism and through direct support, guidance and troubleshooting for programming.

The DCO regional teams have helped to connect resident coordinators to regional United Nations expertise to some extent, although this connector role was still evolving. DCO at the regional level connected and convened resident coordinators, UNCTs and regional directors of agencies, funds and programmes to address discrete thematic issues pertinent to the



Secretary-General Attends Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga © UN Photo/Kiara Worth

region. The DCO regional teams also connected resident coordinators to the United Nations Secretariat and wider United Nations system entities and networks at the regional and global levels, including the United Nations network of economists, global task forces and various subregional platforms.

Although all DCO regional presences supported countries in transboundary issues, the main challenges identified that could hamper increased support were the complexity of transboundary issues and office capacity constraints. Some of the complexity was due to a lack of clarity on how to connect regional strategies to the country-level programmes of country team entities. There were also difficulties working across country teams and with the number of actors involved.

5 The role of DCO is not well understood with regard to regional collaborative platforms and issue-based coalitions.

The 2022 OIOS Evaluation on Development Coordination Office Regional Support found that the role of DCO with regard to the regional collaborative platforms was not consistently clear to resident coordinators and regional staff. The DCO's role regarding the regional collaborative platforms was more broadly defined in the Management and

Accountability Framework. As a result, some DCO regional teams fulfilled a more active connector role, meanwhile, for others, the role was mainly administrative. An observation corroborated by other evaluations was that they faced broader organizational and structural challenges in connecting resident coordinators to regional United Nations expertise and strategies. These challenges include: uneven responsiveness of issue-based coalitions; lack of United Nations entity incentives and accountability; and still-evolving reforms at the regional level.

The evaluation indicated that coordinating the regional collaborative platforms and peer support group meetings was a high logistical demand. Platform members across regions suggested that the DCO did not have the resources to adequately perform its platform secretariat role, including to be able to articulate resident coordinators' needs, connect resident coordinators with platform discussions and adequately promote issue-based coalition work to resident coordinators.

The 2022 OIOS Evaluation on the Development Coordination Office's Regional Support recommended DCO should continue to work under the leadership of the platform Chair to further clarify the platform connector role of regional office teams and



High Level Event to Celebrate 49 Years of ECOWAS © UN Photo/Mark Garten

communicate that clearly to both resident coordinators and platform members.

6 Regional economic commissions are increasingly integrated into the United Nations development system at regional and country levels.

Evaluations of regional economic commission programmes found that they were relevant, well-aligned with their respective mandates and responsive to requests from Member States. The strategic planning and prioritization of these requests was inhibited because most did not have a formal tracking mechanism in place to manage such requests. Within the commissions, this affected knowledge-sharing and retention, and hindered opportunities for building upon services with additional or complementary interventions. Further, this impeded the ability of other United Nations entities to identify synergies, complementarities or risks of overlap and duplication with their own country level work.

The evaluations found evidence of strong collaboration between the regional economic commissions and a diverse set of United Nations and

non-United Nations entities, especially at the regional level. However, coherence vis-à-vis the resident coordinator system was more limited. It was noted that, across regions, the commissions were members of more UNCTs than previously. However, a recurring theme in the evaluations was that participation of the commissions at the planning stage of the cooperation frameworks was followed by limited involvement in their implementation.

The OIOS evaluations made recommendations including the following measures to address current shortcomings:

- Create a formal tracking mechanism for Member State requests to enhance visibility over the range of activities carried out; assist with strategic planning and prioritization of work in the context of limited resources; and better communicate activities to external partners and other entities to avoid duplication
- Increase engagement and cooperation with the resident coordinator system to better contribute to system-wide coherence through participation in strategic planning processes such as the cooperation

frameworks and their implementation; and continue engagement and communication with United Nations country teams in a manner that removes duplication and facilitates opportunities for collaboration.

7 Entity efforts to realign regional assets and change how they are deployed to better support countries are underway, but progress is patchy.

Across entity-specific evaluations, it was evident that regional entities and offices were providing support to the country level. Entity-specific evaluations showed that entity regional offices played a potential convening role, adding value in generating and disseminating information on good practices, and had an important and valued role in the delivery of joint programmes. A number of evaluations evidenced the efforts to restructure and reorganize the deployment of regional assets to support the country level. These internal measures seemed to have contributed to improved positioning and visibility of the added that could be provided by regional level assets, yet there is more work to be done. Further effort is needed to communicate the potential added value to the country level, particularly to resident coordinators and UNCTs.

The evaluations found that currently the comparative advantage of regional and subregional offices in understanding the region and subregional contexts and their ability to prioritize demands of Member States, was not being leveraged. In addition, efforts must be focused on delivering support to where it will add the most strategic value, in collaboration with other United Nations entities working at the country level, including through the Resident Coordinator system, and leveraging the partnerships needed to ensure regional United Nations development system coherence.

Approach and methodology

This summary, produced between July and September 2024, brings together evidence from 26 evaluations completed across the United Nations between 2021 and 2024. The sample was purposively selected to include the most relevant evaluation evidence, as well as balance across geographic regions and United Nations entities. An initial longlist of 46 evaluations was screened for

potential relevance, providing a sample of 30 evaluations. Subsequent in-depth review using an analytical framework resulted in the extraction and summary of relevant evidence from the 26 evaluations listed in the bibliography.

The sampling strategy, methodological approach, and draft report were reviewed by an inter-agency reference group from DCO, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the independent evaluation offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNFPA.

Limitations: With the exception of the four reports that explicitly addressed the subject of this summary, the other 22 sampled evaluations provided more scattered evidence on the regional architecture of the United Nations development system, often with limited depth of analysis. Greater attention on United Nations entity roles and collaboration at the regional level and connections between regional assets and emerging needs at the country level may be warranted in future evaluations.

UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) has been established by the Secretary-General to provide independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency and accountability in order to incentivize joint work and collective learning and conduct and advance system-wide evaluation evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to work with United Nations evaluation offices to draw on and augment their contributions and capacities, to fill critical gaps, to promote collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluations and to improve the quality and usability of United Nations evaluation evidence in relation to the SDGs, 2030 Agenda, and United Nations reform priorities.

UTILIZING UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE 2024 QCPR

This initiative is a collaboration between SWEO and evaluation offices across the United Nations. It provides user-friendly mapping and summary products of United Nations evaluation evidence to support engagement in the 2024 QCPR. The initiative is coordinated by SWEO, with substantive contributions from the following entities:

FUNDING



MANAGEMENT GROUP



Endnotes

¹ A/RES/75/233

² A/RES/72/279

³ Formal reporting specifically on the work of the regional economic commissions in implementing reforms and supporting Member States to advance the 2030 Agenda is primarily through their “Summaries of Work” and the Secretary-General’s reports on “Regional Cooperation”, both presented annually to ECOSOC, while their contributions to system-wide results of the UN development system are included in QCPR reporting mechanisms.

⁴ There were 3 agencies, fund and programme (AFP) global strategic evaluations, 4 AFP regional strategic evaluations, 6 evaluations of global/regional programmes or pooled funds, 9 evaluations of regional economic commissions, 3 OIOS global evaluations, and 1 global system-wide evaluation. Full list in Bibliography.

⁵ Peer support groups are chaired by the DCO Regional Director (with a dotted reporting line to the Regional Collaborative Platform Chair) and are composed of voluntary UNSDG entity staff members nominated by their Regional Director or Executive Director as applicable

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October 2024

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UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

Unlocking quality funding

Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence

In the context of repositioning the United Nations development system, funding is understood to be a key enabler of the transformative, collaborative action required to help countries achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Repositioning has been accompanied by dialogue and commitments between Member States and the United Nations Sustainable

Development Group (UNSDG) to ensure predictable and flexible funding for United Nations development activities.

This summary compiles evidence on funding quality, defined as a measure of how well funding received by United Nations entities supports efficiency, effectiveness and sustainable development outcomes. Figure 1 details key features required for high-quality funding.

Figure 1: Features of high-quality funding

<p>PREDICTABILITY</p> <p>Allows UN entities to plan and implement programmes over the long term without interruptions or uncertainties. Reduces the risk of funding gaps and enhances ability to achieve sustainable results.</p>	<p>FLEXIBILITY</p> <p>Enables UN entities to allocate resources where they are most needed and adapt to changing circumstances (for example, response to emergencies, emerging priorities, or unforeseen challenges).</p>
<p>ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES</p> <p>Allows UN entities to plan and implement programmes over the long term without interruptions or uncertainties. Reduces the risk of funding gaps and enhances ability to achieve sustainable results.</p>	<p>CORE FUNDING</p> <p>Provides UN entities with the autonomy to use funds as needed across their mandate rather than being tied to specific projects or activities. Supports comprehensive programme delivery and institutional capacity.</p>
<p>LONG-TERM, MULTI-YEAR COMMITMENT</p> <p>Allows UN entities to plan and implement programmes over the long term without interruptions or uncertainties. Reduces the risk of funding gaps and enhances ability to achieve sustainable results.</p>	<p>JOINT PROGRAMMING</p> <p>Enables UN entities to allocate resources where they are most needed and adapt to changing circumstances (for example, response to emergencies, emerging priorities, or unforeseen challenges).</p>
<p>COORDINATION</p> <p>Enhances quality funding through stronger donor alignment, increased trust and greater efforts to reduce individual visibility, reporting, assessment and partnership requirements.</p>	<p>TRANSPARENCY</p> <p>Ensures full visibility of core and flexible contributions and clarity in funding needs, budgets and expenditures, allowing UN entities to allocate resources efficiently and demonstrate accountability.</p>

These key features are embedded in the Funding Compact¹, which articulates concrete actions on the part of Member States and all entities of the UNSDG to implement a radical shift in the funding environment and fully realize the United Nations’ contribution to development.

This summary draws on the extensive knowledge and evidence generated by independent evaluations conducted across the United Nations between 2020 and 2024. It presents key issues and learning from evaluations, for consideration in the context of United Nations system-wide and intergovernmental policy discussions. Its publication is timed to provide

information to stakeholders involved in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 78/166 (2023).

This summary is part of a series produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) which includes summaries of United Nations evaluation evidence on:

- I the resident coordinator system;
- II development system reform at the regional level;
- III whole of system responses in complex settings;
- IV sustainable food systems; and
- V an interactive evidence map featuring UN evaluations, published between 2021 and 2024, mapped against priority areas of the 2020 QCPR².

The complete series is available at: <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/what-we-do/oas-qcpr/2020-qcpr-status-reporting>.

Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

The QCPR is the primary policy instrument of the United Nations General Assembly to define the way the United Nations development system operates to support programme countries in their development efforts. It assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities

for development. A QCPR resolution is adopted by the General Assembly every four years with annual follow-up and guidance from Member States provided by the Economic and Social Council at its Operational Activities Segment and the General Assembly in its Second Committee. The 2020 QCPR resolution builds on the United Nations development system reform³. The next QCPR resolution will be negotiated in late 2024 to guide efforts from 2025 to 2028.

General Assembly resolution 72/279 welcomed the Secretary-General's call for a funding compact as an essential mechanism to optimize Member States' investments in the United Nations development system. The 2020 QCPR resolution welcomed the Funding Compact, noting its voluntary nature, and encouraged all Member States and entities of the United Nations development system to contribute to its full and effective implementation. The updated funding compact was also welcomed by ECOSOC in 2024⁴. The key commitments of the Funding Compact are summarized in Figure 2.

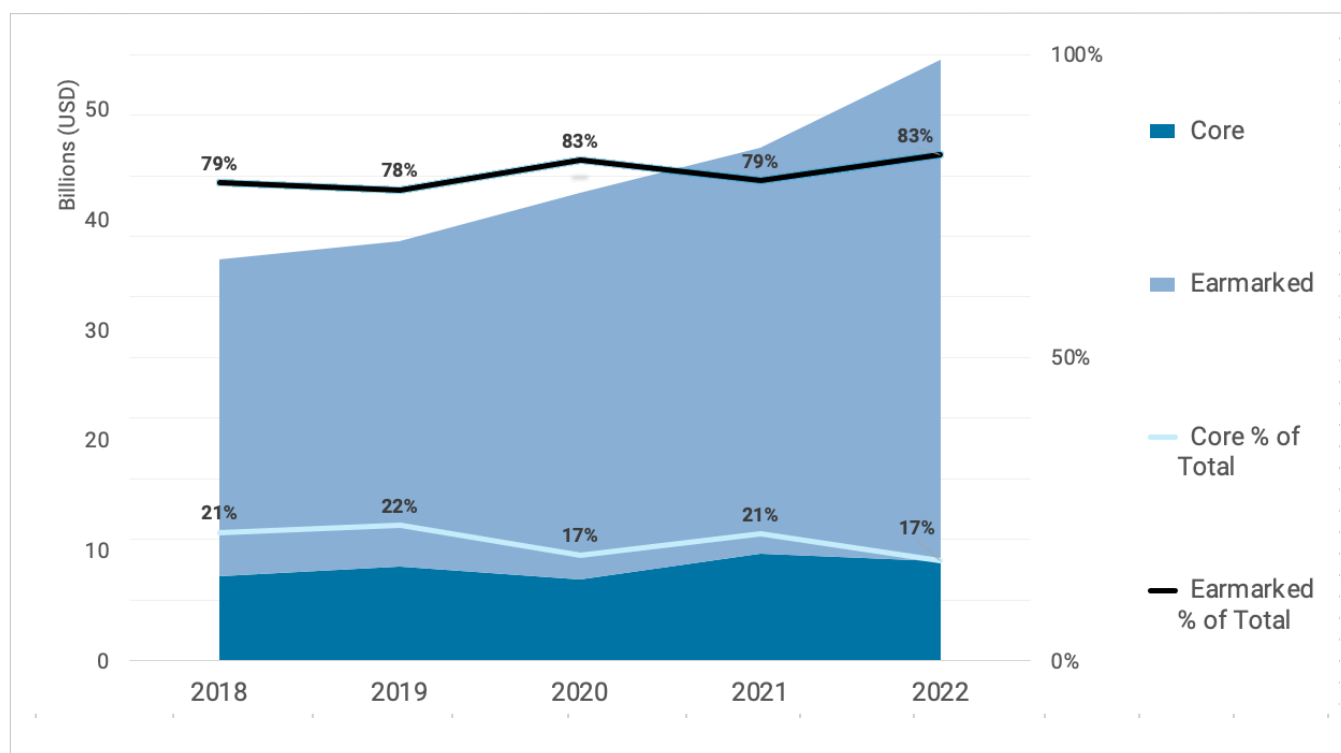
The Secretary-General provides annual reports on the implementation of the QCPR to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 2020, contributions to operational activities (humanitarian and development combined) have steadily increased, but this was largely due to increased earmarked funding for specific projects or programmes. Core funding as a share of overall funding has decreased from 29.6 per cent in 2019⁵ to 16.5 per cent in 2022⁶, (see Figure 3) far from the 30 per cent target set out in the Funding Compact

Figure 2: Summary of Funding Compact commitments (updated May 2024)



Source: Photo: © UN DCO

Figure 3: Core and earmarked funding for UN operational activities



Source: Statistical Annex on 2018-2022 UNDS funding data.

(Figure 2). Single-donor and project- and programme-specific funding accounted for 74 per cent of the earmarked funding provided in 2022; an increase from 68 per cent in 2021.

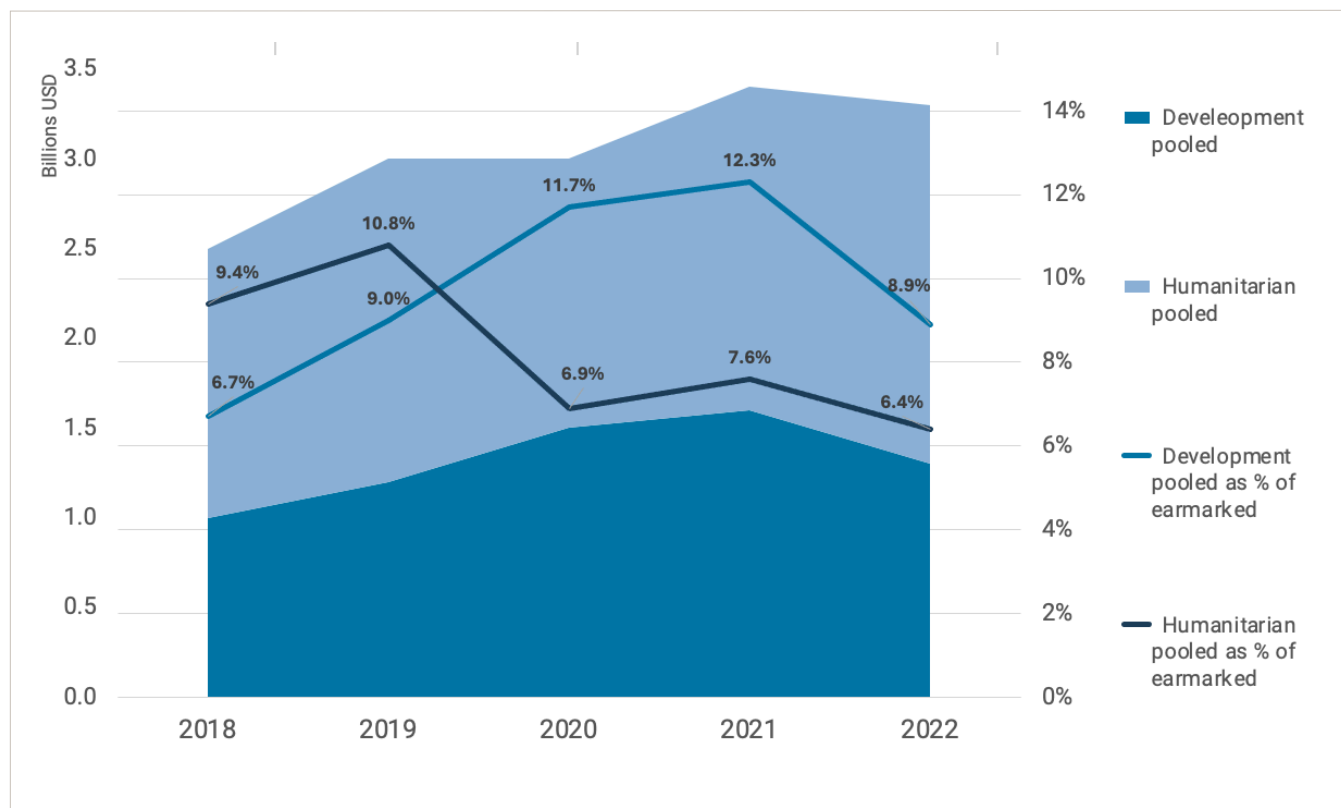
Since 2019, the United Nations development system has seen a declining trend in multi-year core funding among the four⁷ entities that receive two thirds of the voluntary core funding for development activities.

After several years of consistent growth, funding to inter-agency pooled funds⁸ decreased by 4 per cent in 2022. Contributions to inter-agency development pooled funds declined by 22 per cent, accounting only for 8.9 per cent (from 12.3 per cent) of total earmarked funding for development (see Figure 4). Funding for the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund remained well below their targets. Meanwhile, funding for single-agency thematic funds increased, reaching a record USD 2 billion, or 4.3 per cent of total earmarked funding in 2022.

Donor diversification continues to be a challenge. Between 2020 and 2022, the five largest contributing countries⁹ contributed an average of 49 per cent of all government funding. The top ten donors account for nearly three quarters of total government funding, highlighting the system's significant dependence on a small pool of donors and its vulnerability to funding fluctuations. However, funding from programme countries, the private sector and international financial institutions have seen a positive trend. Non-governmental donors now account for one third of all United Nations development system funding, representing a key segment of the donor base.

The 2024 Secretary-General's report on the QCPR noted that high dependence on a limited donor base and on earmarked resources hindered effective and strategic long-term planning, led to resource fragmentation and promoted a culture of United Nations entities competing for donor resources.

Figure 4: Contributions to inter-agency pooled funds



Source: Statistical Annex on 2018-2022 UNDS funding data.

Insights from United Nations evaluations

The following summary of evidence on the quality of funding to the United Nations development system draws on 51 United Nations evaluations (see bibliography). The majority of these evaluations (34) focused on pooled funding, joint programmes, joint programming and collaboration, coordination and coherence across entities at global, regional and country levels (they include United Nations development assistance and cooperation framework evaluations and global system-wide evaluations). The sample also includes entity-specific evaluations at the global level, evaluations of entity country programmes and emergency responses, and a small number of existing summaries and syntheses of evaluation evidence.

1 Flexible core funding fuels innovation and responsiveness.

The majority of evaluations highlighted the availability of flexible core funding as a crucial factor in the success of various interventions and an enabler of innovation. It allowed for swift reallocation to address the most pressing needs, particularly during crises or emergencies. It also facilitated the ability of the United Nations to convene, innovate and support inter-agency collaboration and strategic long-term planning.

When core resources were available, joint programmes, trust funds and interventions benefited from more catalytic ideas and innovation. This allowed entities to explore new approaches, create knowledge and corporate learning, move into areas where they had traditionally been absent and achieve broader impacts beyond their immediate objectives.

The growing number of conditions tied to donor funds and the increased reliance on earmarked contributions often resulted in reduced capacity to: plan strategically; engage with partners long term; innovate; adequately resource for cross-cutting issues; and strengthen coordinated action in line with the United Nations development system reform.

Global evaluations, both system-wide and entity-specific, as well as those focused on joint programmes and pooled funds, indicated that interventions and programmes, whether pooled or not, were subject to increased earmarking, undermining quality funding. Even within inter-agency pooled funds, donors often restricted allocations to dedicated issues, limiting the agency's flexibility to reallocate funds between programmes or pillars. This limited the ability of the United Nations to adapt to changing circumstances or shift in response to evolving national priorities or maintain critical and skilled technical staff. It also hindered effective recruitment and undermined full control of strategic planning. This inflexibility was particularly challenging for demand-driven programmes, whose legitimacy and sustainability relied heavily on national ownership. It led to a disconnect between programme activities and the evolving needs of the communities they were designed to serve, resulting in less effective outcomes (see Box 1 for an example of a successful outcome-based funding initiative).

When entities lacked predictability and flexibility, they experienced funding volatility. Global evaluations, both system-wide and entity-specific, consistently underlined that multi-year commitments were largely absent, despite continuous appeals from entities in their strategy planning documents. The typical one-to-two-year funding timeframes were insufficient to sustain results, creating significant long-term planning and sustainability challenges. This often led to planning and service delivery disruptions, ultimately reducing the programme's effectiveness and affecting results.

The evaluations recommend: ensuring that long-term goals (strategic vision) are closely matched with sustained and predictable support (multi-year commitments); improving the tracking of unearmarked funds; and increasing the visibility of core and lightly earmarked funding and its contribution to innovation.

BOX 1: SIDA-ILO PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME 2018–2021

The Swedish International Cooperation Agency and International Labour Organization (SIDA-ILO) Partnership Programme 2018–2021 (SIPP)¹⁰ was established as an outcome-based funding initiative, with specific themes receiving lightly earmarked financial support alongside a fully unearmarked, core, voluntary contribution to ILO. This outcome-based funding model contributed to strengthening the ILO's work in key areas identified in its programme and budget for a given period, allowing for resources to be grouped to achieve these outcomes. The decentralization of funds further facilitated adapting activities to the needs and contexts of each country. The flexible funding allowed programming to adjust to various needs: supporting policy discussions and studies on informality, gender, and labour market inclusion in Vietnam; developing a Youth Employment Roadmap in El Salvador; and conducting rapid labour force surveys during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia.

2 A growing disconnect is evident between donor advocacy for, and action on, quality funding.

Donor support for quality funding was found to be not as strong or coherent in practice as donor advocacy implied. Evaluations consistently highlighted that donor funding appeared to dictate strategy rather than strategy guiding the allocation of funding. Advocacy from donors for greater United Nations coherence and coordination and a demand for programmes tailored to national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) did not necessarily manifest in flexible, predictable, multi-year and core funding.

Limited evaluation evidence was found regarding the benefits and challenges of lightly earmarking, even though donors increasingly opt for this modality over core funding. The majority of evaluations, however, highlighted that overall development funding to the

United Nations remained disproportionate to the emphasis the donors placed on it, with a high portion of funding being earmarked, not flexible and short term. The evolving development landscape, including the reduction in development space, changing donor priorities and budgets, shifts in developing countries' income status, and the narrowing donor base, was emphasized as having a significant impact on the ability of entities to secure long-term, flexible and predictable donor support to deliver against the SDGs.

A growing number of interventions continue to be impacted by specific donor requirements and guidelines, such as fund disbursements, allocations, or results reporting. Prescriptive conditions made it difficult for programmes to implement necessary adjustments in response to the local context. Pooled fund evaluations and those with a focus on joint programming commonly cited that donors' support for joint programming varied. While some donors at the country level encouraged joint programming to reduce transaction costs and increase inter-agency collaboration in line with the United Nations development system reform, others preferred to maintain bilateral cooperation, hindering effective inter-agency collaboration.

Amid the evolving development landscape, entity country offices have become more affected by limited funding quality and volume and prone to competition for funds. Pooled fund, country, and programme evaluations pointed out that, despite their increased openness to coordinate and engage in joint programming and programmes, they are driven to secure funds to meet their corporate targets, confronted with little to no core funding to maintain country office operations and have a limited donor base to draw on (see Box 2). Consequently, entity responses tended to be, at times, opportunistic, resulting in small-scale projects and short-term funding cycles becoming the norm, offering little flexibility to allocate funding beyond immediate priorities.

Some evaluations recommend clearer communication and engagement strategies with donors in shifting from project- to programme-based funding approaches and encouraged a more proactive role of development partners and donors to address the undercapitalization of pooled funds, trust funds, and other joint programmes if they are to realize their full potential.

BOX 2: THE EVALUATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI AND THE UNICEF COUNTRY PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION

The evaluation noted that in Malawi, the sustainability of many results remained heavily dependent on international development funding, raising concerns due to shifting donor priorities, where bilateral donors have reduced and refocused their priorities, partly due to the impact of COVID-19. Inconsistent funding has resulted in successful pilot programmes not being scaled up or being discontinued, limiting their potential for sustainability. For UNICEF, the education sector, in particular, has faced funding shortages due to the reallocation of donor priorities, largely linked to donor funding models that are sector specific.

3 Early and targeted resource mobilization strategies secure quality funding.

Early development and strategic multipronged resource mobilization targeting diverse donors, such as private, individual, corporate and government, were crucial for securing quality funding, ensuring programme sustainability and closing funding gaps. Programmes that employed coordinated and strategic approaches to resource mobilization early in the project (design stage) increased their probability of securing the necessary funds. Entities that used innovative resource mobilization strategies to attract flexible funding have been more financially sustainable. This approach made them more adaptable, less dependent on restricted funds, and quicker to respond to new needs.

The consultative nature of strategic reviews and country strategic planning has offered increased opportunities for joint resource mobilization and joint programming, particularly where they align well with the SDGs. Joint resource mobilization initiatives enabled the leveraging of existing partnerships and programmes, especially under constrained funding environments.

While some pooled fund, programme and country evaluations pointed to success stories in resource mobilization beyond the traditional base, efforts to secure flexible, lightly earmarked, or core funding were largely shaped by donor priorities, the broader context, the thematic focus of the intervention, and the specific United Nations country offices involved. There was a clear donor preference for funding emergencies over preparedness and prevention efforts, limiting the ability to mobilize resources for development interventions. Similar to donor contributions, private sector funding varied and was largely influenced by the intervention's thematic focus, the country's existing private sector environment, staff experience with private sector resource mobilization and specific personal connections.

Furthermore, it was found that (joint) interventions developed a resource mobilization strategy late in the project timeline, or did not track or utilize it sufficiently or had no sufficient human resources to perform this responsibility due to a lack of dedicated funding for targeted resource mobilization positions. Those resource mobilization strategies in place were highly dependent on traditional donors, with few entry points for expansion to increase in-kind contributions from development partners or funding from the private sector or individual giving.



Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development
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United Nations country offices were increasingly under pressure to mobilize additional resources on top of their regular responsibilities and find innovative ways to do so without the adequate skill set. However, Box 3 provides an example of resource mobilization efforts that went beyond the traditional donor base. Some evaluations recommend: increased professionalization of the partnerships and resource mobilization function; stronger investment in early and joint resource mobilization to avoid overlaps; encouraging innovative resource mobilization campaigns; enhancing national commitments where feasible to increase ownership; greater outreach to non-traditional donors; a closer working relationship with international financial institutions; and linking resource targets to multi-year results frameworks.

BOX 3: THE COVID-19 SOLIDARITY RESPONSE FUND

The Solidarity Response Fund (SRF)¹¹ was jointly launched in March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Foundation and Swiss Philanthropy Foundation. It was intended to facilitate direct (core) financial contributions from a diverse range of donors (private, individuals, and organizations or foundations). In 2021, SRF partners raised and received pledges for over USD 256 million of flexible funding from over 675,700 donors and contributors. Alone, USD 30 million could be mobilized through digital platforms. One of the unique factors that accounted for the Fund's early achievements was the high degree of flexibility of the funds mobilized and the resource mobilization efforts that went beyond the traditional donor base. By design, the Fund was maintained as a single pooled fund with no earmarking of contributions – not even at the pillar level. This design feature allowed funds to be quickly directed to the most urgent needs identified by the dedicated allocation committee, filling gaps left by traditional donors and supporting some of the Fund's essential life-saving activities in supply chain development and procurement.

4 Committed senior leadership and sponsorship drive quality funding and impact.

Programmes with strong and committed leadership were more likely to be prioritized within their organizations and secure the necessary resources to meet their objectives. Global entity-level, pooled fund and system-wide evaluations highlighted that United Nations senior sponsorship with a clear corporate funding strategy, a dedicated governance board, and an empowered resident coordinator who actively prioritized joint programming and resource mobilization were essential for maintaining quality funding.

In the case of joint programming, the resident coordinator role was found to be particularly vital in linking upstream work with national policies and strategies, determining the required investment to implement these policies effectively, ensuring programme relevance and alignment with national priorities and pivoting joint resource mobilization. The majority of evaluations consistently highlighted that an engaged and impartial resident coordinator, who effectively mobilized joint resources for joint programming and coordinated the efforts of entities, was key in fostering joint collaboration that would not have occurred otherwise.

The impact of United Nations senior sponsorship on funding quality varied depending on the consistency and visibility of the leadership and on the existence of clear corporate funding strategy. Challenges were particularly pronounced in programmes where senior sponsorship and corporate strategy on funding was weak or inconsistent. Evaluations noted that programmes struggled to gain the visibility and resources needed to maintain their operations in such cases. The decline in leadership visibility often reduced programme momentum, making it harder to secure ongoing support and resources.

Some evaluations recommend articulating how donors can be better engaged and participate in governance structures and strategic decision-making, and establishing stronger senior sponsorship and leadership, strategic support and endorsements to enhance the credibility and visibility of United Nations interventions (see Box 4).

BOX 4: LEADERSHIP ROLES FOR QUALITY FUNDING

The evaluations of the Joint SDG Fund¹², the Cooperation Framework in the Philippines¹³, and Lesotho's UNDAF¹⁴ consistently highlighted the vital role of the resident coordinator and the resident coordinator's office (RCO) in coordinating United Nations efforts. The resident coordinator's leadership and strategic coordination were pivotal in leading joint programmes, engaging government counterparts, and supporting the technical work of participating United Nations organizations (PUNOs). Strong and proactive coordination and resource mobilization by the resident coordinator and their office led to positive outcomes, improved partnerships, and greater recognition within the United Nations country team (UNCT) and the donor community. In Lesotho, the resident coordinator's office effectively coordinated responses to emergencies like droughts, floods and COVID-19 through joint resource mobilization, work plan adjustments and collaborative implementation of humanitarian activities. In the case of the Solidarity Response Fund,¹⁵ senior sponsorship and leadership visibility from fiduciary and beneficiary partners played an essential role in the Fund's success. A strong commitment from senior managers across partner entities fostered a shared sense of accountability, urgency, ownership and visibility in the Fund's activities.

5 Enhancing joint programming requires flexible, predictable funding.

Joint programmes were regarded as highly relevant and aligned with national priorities and SDGs. They also added value in areas requiring diverse competencies, specialties and joint efforts. When backed up with adequate, predictable and flexible funding, the key niche and added value of a joint programme or trust fund lay in: its capacity for early initiation; its ability to draw on expertise from multiple partners, in order to capitalize on complementary roles and mandates; and its support for activities that might otherwise be underfunded or under prioritized.

The UNDAF and cooperation framework pooled fund and joint programme evaluations consistently found that joint programming provided significant benefits to United Nations country teams by: harnessing the strengths of multiple stakeholders; promoting multisectoral approaches; combining the resources and expertise of different entities; strengthening inter-agency coordination and advocacy; and providing more comprehensive support to countries. However, it was also observed that joint programming is more likely to be incentivized and successful when quality funding is readily available.

Despite its recognized benefits, joint programming was found to not significantly reduce transaction costs or achieve operational efficiency gains. Joint programmes were, to some degree, still associated with high transaction costs in their development, implementation and resource mobilization, coupled with conflicting reporting lines, differing operational procedures and limited human resource capacities.

BOX 5: MULTI-YEAR FUNDING AND JOINT PROGRAMMING FOR RESILIENCE BUILDING¹⁶

WFP and FAO have collaborated on an innovative, integrated approach in North and South Ubangi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to increase agricultural production, improve livelihoods, promote gender equality and support social cohesion and peacebuilding at the community level. The programme began in 2016 with multi-year funding from the Swedish Government. It was followed by multi-annual grants from Canada and Germany in 2017, which allowed the expansion of the programme to new zones, including North and South Kivu. WFP acted as the lead entity for the programme, but planning and operational coordination were done through a joint WFP-FAO team based in Kinshasa. Both organizations sought to capitalize on their complementarity where possible in order to achieve greater impact and work closely with technical departments of the Ministries of Agricultural and Rural Development and non-governmental organization partners.

These challenges were often exacerbated by the small size of available pooled funds, which were insufficient to influence broader agency resource mobilization strategies or behaviours, resulting in parallel efforts rather than truly integrated initiatives.

System-wide, pooled fund and joint programmes evaluations noted that joint programmes served as a mechanism for joint resource mobilization, although their impact on overall resource generation was not always successful. Funding allocations under pooled funds remained small in comparison to the level of effort required to propose, implement and report on joint programming. The sustainability of joint programmes was highly contingent on donor support, leadership and trust and on the ability of governments to continue the benefits that were harnessed. Challenges have also been encountered in obtaining fundraising support from participating United Nations entities for joint programmes, as these funds would go towards inter-agency work as

BOX 6: HUMAN RIGHTS MAINSTREAMING FUND¹⁷

The Human Rights Mainstreaming Fund provided significant added value to inter-agency coordination and cooperation around human rights by multiple United Nations entities agencies and facilitated a space for entities to work together to mainstream human rights. This space has facilitated synergies across entities based on their comparative advantages, which have provided added value to the UNDG and UNSDG. Over the past decade, among the most important contributions the Fund has made to strengthen national human rights protection systems has been through its support for improved human rights reporting to treaty bodies, its engagement with special procedures, and its support for the universal periodic reviews (UPRs). By operating through its current pooled funding format, the Fund is able to directly engage a variety of United Nations entities in human rights mainstreaming efforts, leverage the comparative advantages of these entities, and pursue a diversified portfolio that links global- to country-level efforts.

opposed to the dedicated interventions of entities. A number of evaluations recommend clearly defining the catalytic role of United Nations pooled funds and programmes, encouraging donors to continue channelling their funds through inter-agency pooled funds and trust fund modalities and promoting joint programming by establishing and institutionalizing incentives for entities to participate in collaborative initiatives (see boxes 5 and 6).

Approach and methodology

This summary, produced between June and September 2024, brings together evidence from 51 evaluations completed across the United Nations between 2020 and 2024. The sample was purposively selected to include the most relevant evaluation evidence, as well as balance across geographic regions and United Nations entities. An initial longlist of 184 evaluations was screened for potential relevance, providing an eventual sample of 51 evaluations¹⁸. Evidence was extracted and coded against an analytical framework (based on the objectives of the Funding Compact) in two phases: (i) manually on

31 reports with the greatest potential relevance; and (ii) with the assistance of a large language model, on a supplementary sample of 20 country-level evaluations (to expand the evidence base and identify further specific examples).

An inter-agency reference group with representatives from the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat¹⁹, the United Nations Multi Partner Trust Fund Office²⁰ and the independent evaluation offices of UNFPA and UNDP reviewed the sampling strategy, methodological approach and draft report.

Limitations: Analysis of funding quality was a common feature of the sampled evaluations. However, the quality and depth of this analysis varied, limiting the findings of this summary. There was limited in-depth analysis of: (i) the value proposition and value for money of the inter-agency pooled funding modality; (ii) donor behaviour at the country level; (iii) efforts to secure core and flexible funding; (iv) the use of and differences between light and tight earmarking; and (v) implementation of the Funding Compact. These topics may warrant greater attention in future evaluations.



Special Event on SDG Acceleration during High-level Political Forum © UN Photo/Loey Felipe

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) has been established by the Secretary-General to provide independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency and accountability in order to incentivize joint work and collective learning and conduct and advance system-wide evaluation evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs. It aims to work with United Nations evaluation offices to draw on and augment their contributions and capacities, to fill critical gaps, to promote collaboration on joint and system-wide evaluations, and to improve the quality and usability of United Nations evaluation evidence in relation to the SDGs, 2030 Agenda, and United Nations reform priorities.

Endnotes

¹ 2019: A/74/73/Add.1–E/2019/14/Add. 2024 update: A/79/72/Add.2.

² A/RES/75/233

³ A/RES/72/279

⁴ E/2024/L.12

⁵ A/78/72/Add.1-E/2023/59/Add.1.

⁶ A/79/72/Add.1-E/2024/12/Add.1.

⁷ UN-Women, United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

⁸ For definitions of key UN pooled funding concepts and terms: <https://mptf.undp.org/page/un-pooled-funding-key-concepts-and-terms>.

⁹ Germany, Japan, Sweden, UK, USA.

UTILIZING UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE 2024 QCPR

This initiative is a collaboration between SWEO and evaluation offices across the United Nations. It provides user-friendly mapping and summary products of United Nations evaluation evidence to support engagement in the 2024 QCPR. The initiative is coordinated by SWEO, with substantive contributions from the following entities:

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- ¹¹ WHO. 2021. UNF-WHO | COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund Joint Evaluation.
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October 2024

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UNSDG SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION OFFICE

Building a whole of system response to complex settings

Summary of United Nations evaluation evidence

Conflict and violence cause immense human suffering and significantly hamper sustainable development. But addressing the complex interlinkages across humanitarian need, development goals and sustainable peace requires enhanced collaboration between humanitarian action, longer-term development interventions and peacebuilding and peace-sustaining activities. Such work demands flexibility, adaptation and constant innovation. The past four years have seen considerable effort by the United Nations development system to bridge humanitarian, development and peace approaches in countries experiencing complex crises. This summary highlights the successes seen so far and the major challenges faced.

This summary draws on the extensive knowledge and evidence generated by independent evaluations conducted across the United Nations development system between 2021 and 2024. It presents key issues and learning from evaluations for consideration in the context of United Nations system-wide and intergovernmental policy discussions. Its publication is timed to provide information to stakeholders involved in the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 78/166 (2023).

This summary is part of a series produced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) which includes summaries of United Nations evaluation evidence on:

- I the resident coordinator system;
- II development system reform at the regional level;
- III funding quality;
- IV sustainable food systems; and
- V an interactive evidence map featuring United Nations evaluations, published between 2021 and 2024, mapped against priority areas of the 2020 QCPR¹.

The complete series is available at:

<https://ecosoc.un.org/en/what-we-do/oas-qcpr/2020-qcpr-status-reporting>.

Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

The QCPR is the primary policy instrument of the United Nations General Assembly to define the way the United Nations development system operates to support programme countries in their development efforts. It assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of United Nations operational activities for development. A QCPR resolution is adopted by the General Assembly every four years with annual follow-up and guidance from Member States provided by the Economic and Social Council at its Operational Activities Segment and the General Assembly in its Second Committee. The 2020 QCPR resolution builds on the United Nations development system reform². The next QCPR resolution will be negotiated in late 2024 to guide efforts from 2025 to 2028.

The 2020 QCPR resolution outlines several requests for United Nations entities to fulfil when it comes to bridging the gap between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work³. Firstly, the resolution asks United Nations development entities to “enhance cooperation, collaboration and coordination with humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding efforts” in countries facing humanitarian emergencies and conflict. Secondly, it asks United Nations entities to contribute to collective outcomes based on “jointly developed and risk-informed analysis” and joined-up planning and action. Thirdly, it asks United Nations entities operating in countries facing humanitarian emergencies to move beyond short-term assistance by engaging in multi-year efforts to reduce need, vulnerability and risk over time. Lastly, the resolution asks resident coordinators in countries experiencing humanitarian emergencies to work with humanitarian and

development actors to provide joint needs assessments and requests the Secretary-General to provide resident coordinators with adequate training and support to do so.

The Secretary-General provides annual reports on the implementation of the QCPR to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 2019, the UNSDG Chair has also reported annually to ECOSOC on the work of the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO). Recent achievements in advancing humanitarian, development and peacebuilding linkages, as reported in the annual reports of the Secretary-General and UNSDG Chair, can be summarized as follows:

- As of 2024, 93 per cent of host country governments assessed United Nations collaboration between humanitarian and development interventions as “close”
- 83 per cent of programme country governments in conflict-affected countries agreed they receive integrated policy advice from the UNDS (compared to 64 per cent in 2020)
- 93 per cent of host governments engaged in peacebuilding positively assessed United Nations efforts to ensure a continued focus on longer-term development and sustaining peace
- 82 per cent of resident coordinators agreed United Nations country teams regularly report to them in ways that ensure stronger coherence and complementarity across the nexus (compared to 72 per cent in 2021)
- Collaboration is underway between the United Nations and the World Bank in over 50 countries, including in areas such as prevention, food security and forced displacement
- In 2023, the Partnership Facility of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) supported collaboration between the United Nations and international financial institutions in over a dozen country and regional contexts.

Some significant challenges have also been reported by the Secretary-General. Joining peacebuilding interventions to development and humanitarian programming has proven the greatest challenge, according to resident coordinators and country teams. Even where joint planning and programmes are emerging, there remains a need to better fund and support sustainable development as the main tool for preventing and exiting crises. Finally, United Nations development system entity headquarters still cite

financing as the biggest challenge for bridging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities, with 80 per cent of headquarters reporting this as difficult in 2024.

Insights from United Nations evaluations

The following summary of evidence on whole of system United Nations responses in complex settings draws on 33 evaluations conducted at global and country levels by 13 United Nations entities⁴. The sample includes: (i) United Nations entity corporate and global evaluations of contributions to or engagement in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) approaches or HDP-related sub-topics; (ii) inter-agency evaluations in complex settings; (iii) country-level evaluations in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan⁵.

1 Leadership at the United Nations country-office level requires further investment.

Good leadership is essential for navigating the complex, interrelated challenges presented by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, especially in complex and conflict-affected contexts. In such contexts, strong leadership is needed to foster transformative and adaptive approaches that promote dialogue across sectors while ensuring context-sensitive, flexible and focused organizational strategies that can prioritize long-term outcomes over short-term results. This involves brokering partnerships and building consensus across actors and entities with differing mandates, as well as managing cross-sectoral collaboration while upholding the humanitarian principles.

The sampled evaluations suggested results have been mixed in this area to date. On the one hand, efforts have been made to invest in leadership capacities within United Nations country offices, and the skills and initiatives of individual country representatives have often been critical in promoting cross-sectoral collaboration. On the other hand, most evaluations pointed to a failure in consistently integrating peacebuilding considerations and conflict-analysis across agency programming in fragile contexts, while calling for more systematic approaches to leadership development in conflict-sensitive environments to overcome this challenge. Key stumbling blocks identified in the evaluations included the siloed nature

of United Nations entities and a lack of institutional backing for leaders seeking to improve HDP programming in conflict-affected contexts, which limited the ability of leaders to innovate and adapt beyond traditional approaches.

Major recommendations coming from the evaluations include: (i) empowering country-level leadership to engage in wider systems-thinking, conflict sensitive programming and “technical diplomacy”⁶ in fragile contexts; and (ii) promoting transformative and inclusive leadership that emphasizes consensus-building, partnership-brokering and the navigation of complex environments.

2 Organizational goals should be aligned with institutional capacities.

The evaluations showed a gap between ambition and capacity when it comes to bridging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. Without clear and consistent alignment between organizational objectives, technical guidance and institutional capacity, it has proven difficult to address the complexity of contributing to longer-term development in conflict-affected contexts while respecting the humanitarian principles. Several evaluations pointed to fragmentation between development and emergency-response approaches and a persistent difficulty in incorporating conflict analysis, risk management and operational capacities to deploy in hard-to-reach locations in order to ensure contributions to building and sustaining peace in fragile contexts. A critical challenge in this regard has been embedding systematic and consistent approaches to conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive programming in both development and humanitarian programmes.

The major recommendations coming from the evaluations include: institutionalizing conflict-sensitivity across all programmes; developing and enhancing leadership training in conflict sensitivity (see Box 1), systems-thinking and partnership-brokering; and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration across divisions and departments at the intra-agency level.

3 Risk-informed approaches should be embedded systematically into programmes.

Risk-informed approaches help organizations tailor their interventions to be more adaptive and resilient to future shocks. For example, integrating climate risk and food insecurity dynamics within agropastoral

BOX 1: INTEGRATING CONFLICT ANALYSIS

A clear example of success in this regard is the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) training programme in Iraq, which provided specialized training on tools for integrating local conflict analysis and peacebuilding principles into IOM's work in the country. This improved the institutional capacity to integrate humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approaches.

improvement programmes can improve resilience in settings where climate, conflict and food insecurity all interact. In such contexts, risk analysis can help identify specific vulnerabilities and proactively reduce the chances of setbacks, while enhancing the long-term sustainability of interventions.

The evaluations showed that considerable progress has been made by United Nations entities in

integrating risk-informed approaches, including "early warning early action" systems, shock-responsive social protection systems and risk-informed approaches to disasters caused by natural hazards. But several evaluations pointed to inconsistent application of the tools developed thus far. In some cases, this was attributed to a culture of treating such analyses as one-off exercises rather than ongoing processes, in others it was associated with a lack of resources to fully implement risk-informed approaches developed by specialist entities. The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis tool, for example, is, while relevant, perceived to place high technical demands on entity monitoring systems. Recommendations coming from the evaluations include promoting joint risk assessments, increasing investment in early warning systems and integrating climate risks into development programming.

4 Inclusive targeting and participation should be promoted.

Aligning development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts in complex settings increases the importance of using inclusive targeting and participation.



South Sudan. Woman measuring a customer © WFP/Eulalia Berlanga

The complex, multi-dimensional nature of the needs and rights presented by such work require a concerted effort to address community dynamics and intertwined drivers of need across social, economic and political domains. Inclusive targeting can ensure that programmes cater not only to the needs of the most vulnerable individuals but also to marginalized groups and the wider community, which can help foster social cohesion, reduce grievances and tensions and address systemic drivers of conflict, hunger and poverty.

The evaluations indicated that, while some entities have made progress in inclusive targeting, success has been inconsistent across the United Nations system. Community-based participatory programmes have been effective in many contexts, as have inclusive approaches to targeting undertaken by joint resilience programmes of WFP and UNICEF in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But here again, as with risk-informed approaches, the evaluations demonstrated that application has been inconsistent. Participatory approaches were often seen as well suited to small-scale community-based projects, but less applicable to large-scale country-wide programmes. In these cases, local communities and implementing partners were often left out of decision-making processes, leaving communities with little ownership over the programmes and the results achieved. Recommendations coming from the evaluations include: adopting contextual and area-based approaches that take into account the dynamics of different population groups (see Box 2); strengthening local participation and ownership at all stages of the programme cycle; and fostering joint approaches between United Nations entities to ensure inclusive targeting mechanisms.

5 Gender, equity and social inclusion require greater focus.

Gender inequality and social exclusion often underpin the drivers of conflict and poverty. Sustainable peace and development are hard to achieve without addressing systemic, underlying inequalities that marginalize women, young people, or particular groups and communities that are vulnerable to exclusion and harm. This is recognized by global frameworks such as the Security Council resolution 1325 on Women,

BOX 2: INCLUSIVE TARGETING

The WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) for South Sudan (2018-2022) was noted for taking an inclusive targeting approach. The ICSP used a needs-based planning exercise to identify the most vulnerable populations. By integrating a vulnerability assessment, the exercise allowed WFP to address the needs of marginalized groups through specialized access teams and door-to-door assessments, ensuring support even in hard-to-reach locations.

Peace and Security, which highlights the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding.

The evaluations demonstrated that the United Nations development system is making increased efforts to integrate gender and social inclusion in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. But many challenges remain. For example, while many entities take greater care now to consider the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and young people in conflict, very few show a consistent recognition of women and young people as active agents of peace. And, while the evaluations demonstrated considerable attention made to gender-targeted initiatives in fragile contexts, gender-transformative approaches have broadly not been implemented.

Major stumbling blocks include: (i) a lack of institutionalization of gender and social inclusion across programme areas and all entities of the United Nations development system; (ii) a reliance on isolated initiatives and short-term projects with insufficient attention to long-term transformative outcomes; and (iii) insufficient funding and resources to support inclusive programming at scale.

Key recommendations coming from the evaluations include: (i) promoting gender-transformative approaches that address the structural barriers perpetuating gender inequality; (ii) institutionalizing gender and social inclusion through the use of gender- and inclusion-sensitive theories of change

and conflict analysis frameworks; and (iii) strengthening local partnerships to increase collaboration with local women's organizations and community organizations representing marginalized groups (see Box 3). Notably, many United Nations entities have sought to make progress on these recommendations during the timeframe of the evaluations reviewed for this summary. Each entity has, however, reached a different level of progress on each area. As such, within this wider set of recommendations, each entity will demonstrate a different configuration of strengths and weaknesses. But the evaluations reviewed suggested that none have managed to fully respond to each recommendation thus far.

6 A concerted effort is required to integrate peacebuilding in development and humanitarian work.

As highlighted above, resident coordinators and country teams report the greatest difficulty in linking peacebuilding to humanitarian and development work, as compared to bridging humanitarian and development activities alone. This was echoed by the evaluation findings, which demonstrated several challenges in doing this well. The biggest stumbling block was the perceived division between “technical”

BOX 3: ADDRESSING MARGINALISATION

An example of how United Nations entities can improve in this regard is provided by UN Women in Colombia. UN Women specifically sought to include women's and marginalized groups and indigenous people in its peacebuilding work. The evaluation of UN Women's programming in Colombia over the period 2018-2021 noted how this approach helped UN Women to address the rights and empowerment of marginalized groups, including indigenous women, which underpinned some of the conflict drivers in the country.

development or humanitarian actions on the one hand, and “political” peacebuilding or peace-sustaining activities on the other. Some evaluations cited this perception as leading to a disconnect between increasing policy-level attention to peace and a continuing lack of prioritization within country offices, which are more comfortable working on technical workstreams. This in turn linked to a further barrier



Former FARC-EP Members Grow Vegetables for Schools. © UN Photo/Hector Latorre

in terms of the capacity and resources required to integrate long-term peacebuilding and peace-sustaining efforts into more immediate humanitarian and development work. Lastly, some evaluations pointed to the siloed nature of much peacebuilding and peace-sustaining institutional capacity, which reduced the potential for comprehensive conflict-sensitive approaches at the country level. The major recommendations made by the evaluations are: (i) prioritize the mainstreaming of peacebuilding across all development and humanitarian programming; (ii) encourage joint programming and partnerships that align food security, resilience-building and peace initiatives in a more coherent way; and (iii) enhance the technical capacity of entities by investing in staff training on conflict-sensitive analysis and programme implementation (see Box 4).

7 The use of multi-year flexible funding arrangements should increase.

Multi-year and flexible funding are essential for ensuring the combination of predictability and flexibility required to bridge humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, while ensuring alignment towards long-term collective outcomes. Many of the recommendations made by the evaluations pointed

BOX 4: RESTORING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

An example of success here is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which facilitated the restoration of state authority, promoted access to justice and reinforced rule-of-law institutions, such as tribunals, police stations and detention centres, in northern and central Mali. Critically, this was done in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international partners. The evaluation noted that the rehabilitation and extension of these institutions increased visibility and trust in state authorities, improving public perception of security and governance, though challenges remained in maintaining sustainability.

to the need for complex multi-party partnerships and joint programming, tied together with flexible area-based programming. Such approaches require a



Head of MINUSMA Visits Ménaka Region in Mali. © UN Photo/Harandane Dicko

funding framework that goes beyond the short-term project cycle.

The evaluations demonstrated some cases of progress made in this regard. On the donor side, the European Union has begun providing holistic funding spanning humanitarian, development and peace pillars. But these remain the exception rather than the rule. On the whole, funding remains short-term, siloed and linked to project specific programme cycles and objectives. A key stumbling block here relates to the hesitation of donors to commit to multi-year agreements in politically volatile contexts and settings. But challenges also remain within the United Nations system itself, where limited coordination across different mechanisms adds to the complexity of securing multi-year flexible funding. Key recommendations made by the evaluations include: (i) advocating more strongly for multi-year flexible funding from donors, including by showing the long-term benefits of such funding, particularly regarding resilience-building and the reduction of future humanitarian need; and (ii) improving United Nations entities' own internal systems for managing multi-year funding, including by breaking down internal entity silos between humanitarian and development operations and adopting financial systems that allow for greater flexibility in the use of funds.

8 Strategic partnerships need to be built.

The complex, multidimensional nature of bridging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work can only be met through collaboration across diverse groups of actors formed in response to the specific needs of each intervention. Strategic partnerships across the three domains are essential to harness the comparative advantages of each actor. Further, private sector actors offer the opportunity to build in innovation and scale through financial investments, technology and market access. The evaluations offered some examples of success in this regard: the partnership between FAO and InterPeace being a case in point. But more broadly the findings pointed to the need for increased attention to strategic partnerships at country and programme levels. Key recommendations made by the evaluations include: (i) developing clear partnership strategies at entity-level to enhance linkages with technical partners

and the private sector; (ii) reforming internal systems within United Nations entities to make it easier and quicker for private sector and other actors to form partnerships with United Nations entities; and (iii) increasing the use of partnerships with regional organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to foster collaboration rooted in local context and priorities.

Approach and methodology

This summary, produced between July and September 2024, brings together evidence from 33 evaluations completed across the United Nations between 2021 and 2024. The sample was purposively selected to include the most relevant evaluation evidence and balance across regions and United Nations entities. The four focus countries were selected from a longlist of complex settings, on the basis of having the greatest depth of inter-agency evaluation evidence⁷. Relevant evidence was extracted from the sampled reports according to an analytical framework and analysed to identify common issues of system-wide relevance.

The sampling strategy, methodological approach, and draft report were reviewed by an inter-agency reference group from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

Limitations: The significant attention given by a body of high-quality evaluations to this topic, provides for a high level of confidence in the summarized findings. However, some clear gaps in the evidence base did emerge. Most notably, since the focus of the evaluations was on specific programmes and interventions, there was little evidence gathered about systemic constraints on bridging humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, such as industry incentive structures or partnerships with private sector actors. Assessing evidence on such systemic topics would most likely require a review of multi-partner evaluations, or a large-scale synthesis across multiple sources and evidence categories beyond United Nations evaluations.

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Endnotes

¹ A/RES/75/233

² A/RES/72/279

³ The QCPR is situated within a context of other policy initiatives aiming to improve the linkages between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work. Most notably, the humanitarian system's commitment to a "New Way of Working" at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016; the 2016 General Assembly and Security Council "twin resolutions" on sustaining peace (A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282); and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus adopted in 2019.

⁴ FAO, IFAD, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, OIOS, PBSO, UNCTs (supported by DCO), UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN-Women, and WFP.

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⁵ Includes United Nations development assistance frameworks (UNDAF) and cooperation framework evaluations, peacekeeping and political affairs evaluations, and UN entity country programme evaluations.

⁶ “Technical diplomacy” here refers to the use of technological expertise to facilitate international cooperation, negotiations, and conflict resolution).

⁷ Countries selected provided: a completed UNDAF or cooperation framework evaluation; OIOS evaluations of UN peacekeeping or political missions; and four or more UN entity country programme evaluations.

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October 2024

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Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Visits IDP Camp in Democratic Republic of Congo © UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe