



Report of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP
3 February 2014

1. Performance standard on gender mainstreaming across the Strategic Plans 2014–2017 of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (Emphasizing country experiences; and the UN System-wide Action Plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women)

The President of the UN-Women Executive Board opened the meeting welcoming all participants of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards for the year 2014, including the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator to Liberia, Mr. Aeneas Chapinga Chuma and UN-Women staff who joined the session via videoconference.

The Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women introduced this agenda item noting that no system-wide endeavour to promote peace, development or human rights can be effectively pursued without advancing women's empowerment and gender equality. She reiterated that the strategic plans' alignment with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), was the result of close collaboration among the six entities that continue to actively participate in global inter-agency initiatives at the Headquarters and field levels.

With respect to the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP), she noted some of the common trends emerging across the accountability framework's 15 performance indicators. The head of the Entity also stressed the importance of this forum's discussion benefitting from the experience and insights from the field, with a view to highlighting the steps taken within countries to strengthen collective accountability for gender equality.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance and the UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator to Liberia, speaking from a country perspective, outlined in his presentation the One Gender Framework developed and implemented by the UN Country Team, that accompanies the Delivering as One programme. He emphasized the importance of the United Nations system as a whole, working collectively on gender mainstreaming. These efforts must be informed by the fact that processes and structures are not an end in themselves but a means for delivering improved results for women and girls.

The following points were among those raised in statements delivered by over 20 Member States:

- Recognition that the UN-SWAP provides insight into the progress made in gender mainstreaming, in analyses of performance in all institutional areas.
- With regard to the implementation of measures to fulfill the performance standards, the six entities are well advanced. However, important efforts remain necessary in several areas, such as strategic planning, resource allocation, capacity development and organizational culture.
- A call for issues such as the following to be prioritized in the post-2015 development agenda:
 - Promotion of family-based solutions to global problems;
 - Strengthening of efforts to combat sexual violence against women and girls;

- Enhancing the sexual and reproductive health of women;
 - Strengthening laws that promote gender equality; and
 - Ensuring access to quality education and skills application for women and girls.
- The importance of performance standards in relation to compacts that UN entities establish with respect to their mandates and governing bodies.
- The importance of a prudent division of labor and elimination of duplication among UN entities as part of the UN-SWAP.
- Suggestion that the six UN entities in addition to the sister agencies that participate in the UN-SWAP should explore the possibility of providing, on a regular basis, information regarding their assessments, to their respective Executive Boards.
- In working towards enhancing the institutionalization of measures through the UN-SWAP, Delivering as One, and ensuring a coherent approach among UN Country Teams to develop joint policies, programmes and advocacy initiatives will be of critical importance.
- Call on UN entities to apply the UN Development Group's Guidance Note on the Gender Marker, in order to account for how they implement their commitments through their spending.
- The need for UN entities to continue raising standards of accountability on gender mainstreaming across all areas of work.
- Call for the UN to enhance partnership towards achieving transformative change that also takes into account gender stereotypes and rigid definitions of the roles of men and women in society.
- Suggestion that gender audits should become an obligatory exercise for all country offices.
- Call for Member States to step up funding of the commitments made on gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Support for the stand-alone gender equality goal together with full integration of gender equality into all other goals in the post 2015 development agenda.
- Appreciation for attention paid to the situation of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The President of the UN-Women Executive Board acknowledged with appreciation all staff from the six UN entities who worked on the development and the piloting of the UN-SWAP.

Principals of the six UN entities made the following points:

- There remains much room for improvement in spite of progress made so far. While the coordinated efforts of the UN entities have yielded notable results, limited resources could hinder UN-Women from doing more. All entities should keep advocacy in mind as an important component towards improving in a meaningful way, the lives of women, girls and entire populations.
- In working on gender mainstreaming, the specific needs of girls should be taken into account, including the protection of the rights of both boys and girls. The new Gender Action Plan of UNICEF, still under development, was aligned with the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. The final version of the Gender Action Plan would be presented to the June session of the 2014 UNICEF Executive Board.
- There is need for continued focus on the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, on gender equality; empowerment of women; and poverty, especially in relation to

universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights of women to make choices in this regard (MDGs 4, 5 and 6).

- Pursuing a coherent approach strengthens the capacity of the UN system to work on cross-cutting issues in response to national priorities. Such an approach facilitates greater focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including in joint policy, programming and advocacy activities. All entities should continue working together towards maximizing comparative advantages and overcoming common challenges.

2. Coherence of UN action against poverty and vulnerability and towards resilience (Emphasizing the Delivering As One at country level to ensure the coherence of UN action)

The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS welcomed the representatives of the six UN entities and the guest speakers from the Uruguay country office. He noted the 2012 QCPR reaffirmation that “eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development in developing countries,” calling on the funds, programmes and specialized agencies “to assign it the highest priority”.

The UNDP Administrator in her introductory remarks set the context for the meeting including by reinforcing some of the elements of the background paper prepared for the session. She stressed that poverty and vulnerability are multi-dimensional challenges caused by or contributed to by a range of factors. Therefore an integrated approach is necessary at all levels across sectors, governments and UN entities. The UN therefore needs to bring all expertise together to provide enhanced integrated and coherent advice to countries, with a view to meaningfully contributing to the reduction of poverty and vulnerability and building resilience.

Guest Speaker, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Uruguay Ms. Denise Cook, was joined by the UNICEF Representative and UNDP Resident Representative in Uruguay. Accompanied by the presentation of a short video, she shared the experience of working towards increased coherence of UN action in Uruguay, a high-income country (according to IFI indexes), where ODA flows have therefore not played a significant role in its development. Ms. Cook highlighted the advantages of joint programming and called on UN entities to continue working towards the elimination of interagency barriers in this regard.

Points raised thereafter by 14 delegations, included the following:

- The One Fund needs further support of donors in some cases. On the overarching vision of poverty reduction and the coordinated role of the UN, two prerequisites are essential in this context: 1) UN alignment with national plans to alleviate poverty, not vice-versa. In other words, new strategic plans of UN entities should not necessitate the realignment of country programmes; and 2) more clarity on the requisite policy intervention with respect to poverty eradication.
- To alleviate poverty, economic growth is essential as it creates employment and earning opportunities; and generates investible revenues. Access to basic services is also a must.
- Poverty eradication should be addressed through seeking to combat its root causes.
- Alleviating poverty, addressing vulnerabilities and building resilience require multidimensional and integrated approaches. Joint programming instruments and common

approaches such as Delivering as One are therefore important and it is necessary to strive for coherence in seeking to fulfill intergovernmental commitments with respect to the disadvantaged at all levels.

- Important to note (as outlined in the background paper of this meeting), the independent evaluation of lessons learned from Delivering as One provided evidence that through this approach, the UN Development system has been better positioned to apply the kind of integrated policy solutions and responses needed to address multidimensional and interlinked development challenges.
- For meaningful programming, a solution to the lack of disaggregated data with respect to disadvantaged populations and vulnerable groups as reported by many UN country teams, needs to be jointly sought, together with national statistical offices.
- In order to better analyze and address challenges, the role of evaluations should be emphasized.
- The implementation of the standard operating procedures of the initiatives of Delivering as One, the basis of the QCPR reform agenda, should be accelerated at the corporate and country level. 2014 should be the year of implementation.
- Need to further address common approaches to risk management and monitoring especially in vulnerable and fragile situations.
- UN entities should focus more on results rather than on process and consider joint reporting at joint Executive Board meetings.
- Delivery as One should be implemented on a voluntary basis.
- Need to prioritize and formulate actions based on the limited resources available with the aim of spending resources much more effectively.

Principals of the six UN entities made the following points:

- Reaffirmation of the commitment of UN entities to Delivering as One and UN reform.
- Call for support of donors such as, with respect to the multi-donor trust fund managed by UNDP on behalf of the UN system.
- Gender-responsive planning is crucial.
- In accordance with the strategic plan and the QCPR, there are ongoing efforts to best optimize joint alignment with the national agenda. UNFPA for example is urging country offices to optimize programme and operational resources, and technical knowledge at the county level, in collaboration with the entire UN system.
- Need for enhancing joint evaluation and monitoring. UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA are currently in the process of piloting new approaches to joint monitoring at the country level.
- The fact that the voluntary nature of Delivering as One, and that the QCPR has endorsed Delivering as One as a business model, presents a challenge in that the UN system finds itself working with two business models (Delivering as One versus non-Delivering as One). One way of overcoming this challenge is by testing various aspects of the standard operating procedures in non-Delivering as One countries.

In summarizing the meeting's discussions the UNICEF Executive Director noted that given its multi-dimensional nature, such as in causes, manifestations and impacts, there is need to define poverty beyond measurements of income and gross national product. The UN entities' diverse

mandates and skills position the UN system very well in addressing the challenges related to poverty eradication in a complementary manner.

The President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS closed the meeting by thanking delegations and the six UN entities for their active participation and rich discussion.