

Guidance Note

PREPARING JOINT PROGRAMMES/PROJECTS

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GUIDANCE NOTE FOR PREPARING JOINT PROGRAMMES/PROJECTS¹

Introduction

- 1.0** A key feature of the Secretary General's UN reforms is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). As the planning framework for UN system development operations at the country level, the UNDAF is intended to promote greater coherence and harmonization of United Nations programmes, in close consultation with national governments. Collaborative programming among the UN agencies at country level encompasses options of individual, parallel and joint programming.
- 2.0** The objective of collaborative programming is to ensure a more effective contribution by the UN system to the development process. Where such clear added value exists, joint programmes can be evolved where UN entities join together to carry out joint assessments of problems, design interventions consisting of shared objectives, actions, timeframes, resource requirements and clear delineation of responsibilities.² Within the framework of approved agency country programmes, the joint programme is outlined in a single document, which describes the linkages among and responsibilities of all participating agencies. Joint programmes are more likely to occur where an UNDAF exists or is planned, although this is not a pre-condition for joint programming. However it is highly likely that a well developed and jointly owned CCA would be a precursor to the joint programming process.
- 3.0** The strategic aim of a joint programme is to enhance development impact through the synergistic combination of inputs from two or more UN agencies, with each contributing according to its particular expertise. Careful planning is required to ensure this results in added value. Normally, this implies a limited number of key partners who have a common focus, understand the benefits of coordinated action, and are prepared to participate intensively. At the same time, the central principle of ownership by the Government must always be maintained and respected.
- 4.0** This Guidance Note, which should be read in conjunction with its two annexes, is designed to assist UN system staff and national authorities in formulating a joint programme. Annex 1 provides an outline of the programme/project document which, when completed, will form the central basis of the joint undertaking. Annex 2 contains suggestions for the programme's budget format. Note: the programme/project document should not list all the mandates of the

¹ The term programme is used for convenience but implies programmes and projects

² "Definitions of Processes and Products for Enhancing UNDG Programme Collaboration", UNDG

participating UN agencies; it should be succinct and limited to the issues or problems being addressed.

- 5.0** While this Note is designed primarily for formulating a joint programme, it may also be useful in the formulation of a joint project. A joint programme usually encompasses a number of complementary interventions within a sector or sectors. Joint programmes are normally characterized by multiple objectives and partners, longer time frame for implementation and complex interrelationships among the various activities. Joint projects on the other hand tend to be more limited in objectives, scope and timing.

Preliminary Preparations

- 6.0** Normally, the joint project/programme should be designed by a small group of programmers and specialists, working in consultation with the national authorities. This need not be a new group; it can often be the same UN thematic group or task force, which developed relevant sections of the country's CCA/UNDAF. In any event, where a CCA/UNDAF exists, this will be an ideal starting point for its work.
- 7.0** The group's first task will be to analyze the development problem being addressed making use of the CCA/UNDAF if they exist, within the context of the country's national programme framework. This should include a review of relevant past and current activities. It will be important to integrate lessons learned from past approaches into the design of the joint project/programme, and, at the same time, to ensure that it will complement, not duplicate, other on-going activities.
- 8.0** The final product of the group's work will be the completed joint programme/project document, which will be signed by all the participating partners. It should reflect the commitment of each party to the programme, yet should be flexible enough to allow for change in response to evolving circumstances. It should be a key management tool for the programme, while at the same time, serving as an information and reference document for the participating parties.

Key Considerations

9.0 Role of UN Intervention

A process for maximizing interagency consultation should be put in place during the joint programme's formulation and implementation phases. Efforts should be made to utilize existing mechanisms employed by the UN Country Team, including thematic groups and CCA/UNDAF task forces/working groups, to facilitate consultations and provide technical backstopping.

10.0 It will be important for the joint programme/project document to demonstrate how each individual agency's focus will be combined to provide more effective assistance. There should be a clear demonstration of the "value-added" which joint UN system intervention will bring to bear in resolving the problems identified. It is therefore essential to identify the inter-relationship among the interventions of each agency. Ideally such inter-relationships should occur not only during the implementation stage but equally during the stages of conception, formulation and monitoring. The aim should be to devise a single coherent mechanism or methodology to carry out the programme rather than each agency maintaining separate instruments and then determining how these should relate to each other.

Arrangements For Financial Accountability and Programme Management

11.0 It is important for the group designing the programme or project to work closely with the national authorities in defining their respective roles and responsibilities for carrying the joint programme forward. The agreements reached must be carefully spelled out in the document committing the parties to the joint programme.

Arrangements for programme management, financial management and accountability must be included in the document committing the parties.

12.0 Policy direction and oversight

A Management Committee could as appropriate be set up for the purpose of providing overall policy direction and oversight, including monitoring and evaluation, drawing from already established mechanisms of co-ordination. Preferably, this Management Committee will be composed of high-level technical personnel from the participating national and international partners, who will have decision-making authority. In some cases, members of the working group, which designed the joint project/programme will also be part of the Management Committee.

A brief Terms of Reference for the Committee will:

- describe/name the committee structure which will perform these oversight functions;
- identify the Chair and all the members of this committee;
- outline its broad responsibilities; and indicate the anticipated frequency of its meetings;
- outline the relationship between this committee and the national authorities;

13.0 Financial Accountability

It is recognized that each agency is responsible for its own fund raising/resource mobilization and financial accountability for the programme activities it supports and implements. However, wherever joint programmes are envisaged, country teams may wish to consider various funding options, including:

- a) pooled multi-agency funding including third party sources (bilateral donors, NGOs etc)
- b) individual agency funding, or
- c) some combination of the two, in order to have maximum flexibility in the design and implementation of the programme.

Financial accountability for a joint programme can either be vested in one of the UN agencies participating in the programme, or be shared between two or more of the participating UN agencies. The three options and their modalities are described below.

14.0 In option I, where a pooling of funds is envisaged, these may come from third party donors, non-implementing UN agencies and any excess of the implementing agency's contributions over its implementing budget. In option II participating agencies would maintain custody of their implementing budget resources. Option III is a combination of options I and II.

15.0 Option I. Financial accountability vested in one of the participating UN agencies

Under this option one of the participating agencies is designated as the lead agency. This agency will be known as the **Administrative Agent (AA)**.

16.0 Under the guidance of the Management Committee, the AA is responsible for the financial and administrative management of the combined resources allocated/budgeted for a joint programme or project. In this capacity, the AA is accountable to the Management Committee for all joint programming resources, both cash and non cash items, under its management including :

- 16.1.** Funds control (receipt, disbursement, accounting, financial and substantive reporting)
- 16.2.** Centralized document retention (agreements, reports)
- 16.3.** Financial audit coordination and oversight
- 16.4.** Financial closure

The following are suggested criteria for selection of the AA:

- 16.5.** Country presence and relationship with Government
- 16.6.** Comparative advantage and expertise
- 16.7.** Ability to comply with the financial management, audit and reporting requirements established under the Guidance Note for Joint Programming.

17.0 Funding arrangements

Under option I the following should occur:

- 17.1** The Administrative Agent (AA) should establish an account for the joint project/programme. This account will be open to contributions from all participating partners.
- 17.2** Funding arrangements should be negotiated between the AA and all participating partners. These funding arrangements should then be formalized through standard agreements between the AA and the participating partners. These agreements should be approved locally.
- 17.3** Contributions to the joint programme/ joint project, in cash or in kind, may be accepted by the AA from governments, UN/multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations or private sources.

18.0 Funding

All contributions to the joint programme under this option must be deposited with the designated AA.

19.0 Budget

- 19.1.** The Management Committee will ensure that there is a consolidated budget for the joint programme or project.
- 19.2.** The major components of the consolidated budget will outline, to the extent possible, the specific activities to be performed by each managing agent.

20.0 Accounting and reporting:

- 20.1** Overall financial accountability for the funds received under the consolidated budget will be with the AA.
- 20.2** The AA will follow its established rules and procedures in financial accounting and reporting.

20.3 Participating agencies will be individually accountable for the resources they use under their own implementing budgets. However, all managing agents,³ including UN agencies, must submit a financial report to the AA, prepared in accordance with the consolidated budget.

20.4 The AA will make necessary arrangements for submission of financial reports to the Management Committee. The Management Committee will review and approve the reports and ensure their onward transmittal to the Government and the participating partners.

21.0 Option II. Financial accountability shared between participating UN agencies

In option II, the participating organizations will, under the guidance of the Management Committee, establish a Technical Group for Programme and Finance. In some cases, members of the working group, which designed the joint programme/project, will also be part of the Technical Group for Programme and Finance.

Administrative details:

21.1. The project document should specify that the participating organizations will also establish a Technical Group for Programme and Finance to draw up a joint plan and budget and to delineate the responsibilities of each participating agency;

21.2. On approval of the joint plan/budget by the Management Committee, each participating agency will be responsible for implementation of the components assigned to it, using its own established working methods, procedures, rules and regulations.

22.0 Funding arrangements

22.1. Participating agencies should establish their own funding arrangements with third party donors, but should keep the Management Committee informed of these arrangements.

22.2. Contributions to the joint programme, in cash or in kind, may be accepted by individual agencies consistent with their established working methods and procedures and regulations and rules.

³ The terms executing and implementing agencies/agents have been replaced with the term managing agent to avoid confusion between different agencies' use of the terms.

23.0 Budget

- 23.1.** The Technical Group will prepare a consolidated budget in consultation with the Management Committee, consistent with the guidance for option I on budget format. The consolidated budget will show how the different parts form a complete joint programme.
- 23.2.** Each managing agent will prepare a separate budget, consistent with their procedures, covering the mutually agreed activities/components of the programme/project they will be managing.

24.0 Accounting and Reporting

- 24.1.** Each participating agency will submit a financial report to its donors as appropriate and make a copy available to the Technical Group, prepared in accordance with the consolidated budget format, if possible.
- 24.2.** The Technical Group will coordinate the preparation of a consolidated report for submission to the Management Committee; and
- 24.3.** The Management Committee will review and approve the consolidated report and make the necessary arrangements for submission to the UN Agencies, the Government and respective third party donors.

25.0 Option III. A combination of option I and option II

In the event that teams opt for option III, which is a combination of option I and option II to allow for maximum flexibility in the design and implementation of the Joint Programme, the funding arrangements should be as follows: those funds which are pooled will be managed by the Administrative Agent and those that are contributed as individual agency funding will be managed by the individual managing agent. The Technical Group for Programme and Finance will coordinate between the individual managing agents and between the AA and the individual managing agents.

Administrative and management issues

26.0 Administrative costs

The administrative cost is here defined as the actual cost of administering a programme or project as determined locally by the participating partners. What should be charged to the consolidated

budget and what should be borne by each entity should also be agreed locally. Every attempt should be made to minimize administrative costs, to ensure maximum cost-effectiveness for the benefit of the country concerned.

27.0 Programme/Project documentation

27.1. The programme/project document should identify the management arrangements to be used and outline the roles and responsibilities of all partners.

27.2. All partners must sign a letter of agreement with the AA (for option I) and the Government managing partner (for options I and II), specifying the conditions for receipt, disbursement and reporting of programme funds.

ANNEX I

Joint Programme/Project Outline⁴

1.0 Cover Page

This should include:

- the document number as determined locally
- title
- the names of the participating partners, the amounts of their contributions, and the signatures of their representatives
- the name(s) of the organization(s) responsible for management
- estimated start and end dates
- programme/project costs, including implementation, administrative and total costs
- a quarter page summary of the programme/project

I. Background and Analysis

2.0 Framework for the National Programme

The following features of the broader national programme framework should be outlined:

- name and time-frame of the government's overall national programme, where one exists
- its relevant goals and objectives
- its relevant strategies and components

Note: if there is no national programme, which provides the framework for UN system support, this section should instead outline relevant government policies and strategies.

3.0 Analysis of the Relevant National Development Problem(s)

Drawing from the CCA/UNDAF, this section should state the national development problem(s) being addressed, outlining:

- their perceived causes
- the population groups adversely affected
- their particular effects on women and children

4.0 Related Past and Current Activities

This section should:

- outline lessons learned from past approaches to resolve the problem(s)
- list other relevant government/civil society efforts which are currently underway
- describe how the current joint project/programme will draw from, build on and complement these efforts

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II. Objectives and Strategy

5.0 Programme Objectives, Activities And Anticipated Results

This section should:

- specify the goals and objectives of the joint programme/project
- list programme/project activities
- specify its intended results, in terms of outputs, outcomes and development impact
- list the indicators to be used to measure progress at the output and outcome levels

6.0 Programme Strategy And Risks

This section should:

- outline the strategy(ies) for achieving the specified goals, objectives and anticipated results
- list and analyze the risks which may constrain achievement of anticipated results
- specify the measures required to minimize these risks

7.0 Value Added Of Joint UN Intervention

This section should:

- summarize the principal thrust of each partner's intervention
- describe how the interaction between these interventions will enhance the development impact of the programme/project

III. Programme Management

8.0 Programme/Project Management And Accountability

This section should specify:

- the management modality—i.e, national, UN agency or NGO management
- the composition of the Management committee, and a summary of its terms of reference
- the Administrative Agent and/or the composition of the Technical Group for Programme and Finance
- funding, accounting and reporting arrangements
- administrative cost charges

9.0 Budget Summary

The budget format should either:

- follow the headings outlined in Annex 2, or
- follow the headings normally used by the designated Administrative Agent

10.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

This section will contain a monitoring and evaluation plan for the joint programme/project. This plan should:

- place emphasis on results and accountability using indicators
- serve as a tool for day-to-day management
- include arrangements for full stakeholder participation
- outline a reporting schedule
- establish one common format for all monitoring and evaluation reports, agreed by all the participants
- set up a system for feeding back lessons learned into the on-going programme/project including review meetings

11.0 Annexes

The following documents should be appended as annexes to the joint programme:

- the framework for the national programme (where available)
- a list of relevant CCA indicators for the country
- detailed Terms of Reference for the Management committee

The total expected length of the Joint Programme/project document will not be expected to exceed **25 pages**, excluding the annexes.

Note: Once the joint programme/project is approved, a detailed workplan should be prepared by programme management. This workplan should:

- identify each objective and its related outputs and activities
- describe the management actions to be carried out
- indicate the timing for these actions
- designate the partner(s) responsible for carrying out each action

ANNEX 2

MAJOR BUDGET LINES UNDER JOINT PROGRAMMING

1. Salaries and Related Allowances
 - Posts (P, GS, National Officers)
 - Short Term Staff (temporary assistance)
 - International Consultants
 - National Consultants
 - UN Volunteers

2. Travel
3. Training
4. Furniture and Equipment
5. Supplies and Materials
6. Commodities
7. Transport
 - Vehicles
 - Freight, clearing and storage charges
8. Communications
9. Rental and Maintenance of Premises
10. Other Operating Expenses
11. Institutional Contracts
12. Administrative Costs