ACC Statement on the Role and Functioning of the Resident Coordinator System

Approved by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ)
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1. The primary objective of the operational activities for development within United Nations system is to promote the self-reliance of recipient countries through multilateral cooperation. The fundamental characteristics of these operational activities should be their universal, neutral and grant nature and their ability to respond to the needs of recipient countries in a flexible manner. They constitute a critical and unique resource in enabling recipient countries to exercise the lead role in the management of their own development processes.

2. The government has the primary responsibility for coordinating, on the basis of national strategies and priorities, all types of external assistance, including that provided by the United Nations system. The resident coordinator system seeks to facilitate and support the exercise by the government of this coordination responsibility.

3. Within an enabling environment provided by coordinated and supportive action by the United Nations system at the headquarters level, the resident coordinator system aims at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities at the field level, through a coordinated multidisciplinary approach to the needs of recipient countries under the leadership of the resident coordinator, bearing in mind the complementarity of the United Nations system and the need for a division of labour within the respective spheres of competence of funds, programmes and specialized agencies.

4. The functioning of the resident coordinator system, which aims at a better coordination of operational activities for development, does not affect relations between governments and individual organizations of the United Nations system or the direct lines of authority and communication between the representatives: of those organizations at the country level and their own executive heads. Its functioning must similarly respect the responsibility of those representatives to carry out the mandates and programming processes of the governing bodies of their organizations.

5. A growing body of social, economic and environmental goals is emerging from international meetings, endorsed both by individual governments and the United Nations system as a whole. These ‘global agendas’ have created a common ground for United Nations system cooperation with host governments on national development policies and programmes.

The resident coordinator system has a particular role to play in ensuring appropriate follow-up to these emerging global agendas, particularly through upstream policy and programme advocacy. The resident coordinator system should also take full account of the regional and interregional dimensions of development.

6. The resident coordinator system is furthermore being entrusted with responsibility emanating from resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and ECOSOC in substantive fields such as HIV/AIDS, Drug Abuse Control, and Science and Technology.

7. The resident coordinator system should foster enhanced collaboration with the World Bank, IMF and other international financial institutions, through communication with those institutions’ resident representatives or other designated officials.
8. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its subsidiary machinery are responsible for supporting the functioning of the resident coordinator system, in line with the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and in particular GA resolutions 32/197, annex para. 34, 34/213, para. 5, 44/211, para. 15, 47/199 paras. 38-41 and 48/209 paras. 3 and 4. The separate organizations of the United Nations system should continue to take the necessary measures to further strengthen the resident coordinator system.

9. The resident coordinator of the United Nations system's operational activities for development is designated by the United Nations Secretary-General after consultation with ACC members and with the consent of the host government. The resident coordinator is responsible to the Secretary-General for discharging his/her functions. Guidance and requests on behalf of the system are transmitted to resident coordinators by the Secretary- General or his/her designated representative.

Coordination

10. The purpose of coordination through the resident coordinator system is to ensure the consistency of the operational activities of the United Nations system with the plans, priorities and strategies of the country; to ensure effective, complementary and synergistic contributions of the United Nations system; and to foster a collegial, team approach to leadership.

11. The resident coordinator assumes, on behalf of the United Nations system and in consultation with the other representatives of the United Nations system, overall responsibility for, and coordination of, the system's operational activities for development carried out at the country level.

12. Coordination should be pursued in conformity with the objectives and priorities of the government. This principle reflects the right and responsibility of governments to determine the selection of areas in which to seek the cooperation of the United Nations system. The main concerns of the resident coordinator should be to support an effective dialogue and interaction of the United Nations development system with the government's policy making and coordinating mechanism, to develop a coherent frame of reference for cooperation and assistance by the system, and to promote an effective division of labour and joint reviews of major programmes and projects in relation to this frame of reference.

13. Consultation and coordination at the country level should be approached in a pragmatic and flexible way in view of: the considerable differences that exist among countries; requirements for and approaches to operational activities; and the actual modalities developed by national authorities for linkages among operational activities supported by the United Nations system and other external sources of assistance.

14. The resident coordinator system furthermore seeks to promote effective dialogue and interaction of the United Nations system with other multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organizations active in development cooperation, with a view to constituency building for national development.

Team leadership

15. The resident coordinator exercises team leadership among the organizations of the United Nations system at country level.
16. ACC has approved, from time to time, a number of arrangements to guide the functioning of the resident coordinator system at country level. The successful operation of any of these arrangements will require the full commitment and participation, in a collegial and consensual manner, of all United Nations system organizations involved in operational activities in the country.

17. Arrangements should be made for dealing with organizations of the system without field representation, including through the establishment of focal points in the resident coordinator's office for dealing with such organizations; keeping the organizations systematically informed and, as appropriate, involved in programming exercises; and notifying them of developments relevant to their specialized technical areas of work. Such measures need to be complemented by supportive action at respective headquarters, notably in the provision of briefing materials on the capacities and comparative advantage of the organizations; developing country specific situation analyses in the organizations' areas of interest with identification of multisectoral linkages; keeping resident coordinators informed of communications with the government, and identifying focal points at headquarters for the country concerned.

18. The following mechanisms should be used, in particular, to enhance consultation and teamwork within the resident coordinator system:

   (a) an appropriate field-level committee, which will comprise all United Nations system representatives for that country, and which, under the leadership of the resident coordinator, will serve as a United Nations coordinating mechanism;

   (b) regular meetings of the field-level committee and other interagency structures to review substantive issues, to enhance participation in each other’s country programming processes, including mid-term programme reviews, and collaboration in needs assessments and situation analyses;

   (c) the timely sharing of information on relevant major policy developments and programme-related exercises within individual organizations, including operational activities planned for the country in question and visits by senior officials;

   (d) close cooperation with the regional commissions and relevant regional and subregional bodies as appropriate;

   (e) joint training or sensitization programmes for field staff and national officials, both inside and outside the country, through inter-agency mechanisms or programmes, aimed at enhancing effective collaboration between organizations and with national counterparts; extension of such training to all levels of staff;

   (f) annual country review reports, prepared under the responsibility of the resident coordinator and in consultation with the representatives of all the organizations active at the country level, for distribution to the Secretary-General and all executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system;

   (g) to ensure continuity in the functioning of the system, the resident coordinator should designate, following consultations with the partners in the system, a senior representative of the United Nations system to act as resident coordinator in his/her absence from the country.
Substantive advice and support

19. The following modalities may be used, as appropriate, in the specific circumstances of the country:

(a) in countries so choosing, assistance and cooperation with the government in the formulation of a Country Strategy Note (CSN) outlining the contribution the United Nations development system could make to respond to the requirements identified by the country in its plans, strategies and priorities; utilization of the Note as a frame of reference for the project and programme preparation processes of the respective United Nations organizations, as well as for assessment and evaluation, in cooperation with the governments, of the impact and sustainability of United Nations system assistance;

(b) The resident coordinator can propose, in full consultation with the government, to the heads of the organizations of the United Nations system, the amendment of country programmes and major projects and programmes, where required, to bring them into line with the CSN;

(c) interagency thematic groups focused around priority issues to assist in facilitating a coherent and complementary approach by all organizations in support of the government's plans and priorities. Such groups should normally be chaired by the individual organization best suited to facilitate this effort;

(d) mobilization of the field level committee, in consultation with the host government, for the provision of guidance and advice on proposed programmes of funding organizations, the review of agency sector strategies and evaluations, and the investigation of specific problems and issues requiring a coordinated response;

(e) enhanced collaboration with the World Bank, IMF and other financial institutions through, inter alia, the promotion of the complementarity of the CSN with the Policy Framework Paper (PFP) and public investment programmes; development of a common system approach to the preparation of World Bank consultative group or UNDP Round Table meetings for the country in question;

(f) improved access by government to data on the United Nations system's capacities, on development experience and on socio-economic and technological change.

Humanitarian and emergency assistance

20. The resident coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level. General Assembly resolution 46/182, para. 39, describes current policy on country level coordination.

Information and Advocacy

21. Under the leadership of the resident coordinator, the system is expected to develop, in consultation with relevant partners in the system, information programmes and facilities on development issues at the national level, e.g. inter-active data bases (rosters of national experts, local supplies of equipment, etc.); development cooperation reports; country profile; newsletter on external assistance needs; public information, materials, etc.
Notes:

1. For the purposes of this note, funds, programmes and specialized agencies will be referred to as organizations of the United Nations system.

2. As of 2 November 1994 the Secretary-General has designated the Administrator of UNDP to carry out, on his behalf, consultations on the designation of resident coordinators, and on modalities to strengthen the resident coordinator system, including the widening of the pool for selection of resident coordinators, and the updating and streamlining of the guidelines for the functioning of the system.

3. For guidance on the CSN process, see the USG/DPCSD's letter of 3 May 1993 and enclosures, including the ACC Note on the CSN, as well as the USG/DPCSD's letter of 10 March 1994 transmitting further guidance elements.