

# **The UN at Country Level**

A practical guide  
to the United Nations  
Operational System



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## A practical guide to the United Nations Operational System

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Disclaimer: This handbook has been developed in consultation with experts from the United Nations system. It is not a legal document. Many things have been simplified to make the information accessible to a wider public. Readers are encouraged to consult official UN sources for the most up-to-date and authoritative details. The handbook does not aim to represent an official position of the Swiss Government.







IN THE 1960s, when I was a child in a small Swiss village, the UN was just an unfamiliar acronym. My world ended at the borders of my village; global affairs seemed distant. As I grew older, I realized that the acronym embodied something profound: an international organization with headquarters in New York and Geneva, a network of nations bound together by an invisible thread.

As a young adult, I began to see it as a web, a connective tissue between peoples who had chosen to unite under a common mission. But it was only later that I grasped its deeper meaning: the UN was created to promote and protect peace and to prevent the world from plunging once again into the abyss of war.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the Second World War seemed like a distant memory, although it was still a topic of conversation in many households. While it was understood that the UN existed to avert future tragedies, its workings were not immediately clear. Why were so many specialized agencies – including WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO – needed to ensure peace? Moreover, the UN system had expanded, diversified and branched out over time, establishing a presence around the world, alongside financial institutions for reconstruction and development.

A natural question arose: what was the relationship of Switzerland with the UN? In Geneva, its presence was tangible. The UN was intriguing, yet its workings raised concerns. Some spoke of a “world government”, a notion that unsettled many. Who controlled it? How much influence did ordinary citizens truly have?

For Switzerland, a neutral nation and a bastion of direct democracy, the road to membership was long. It was only on 3 March 2002, after years of debate, that 54.6% of voters chose to join this project for peace, while preserving the country’s active neutrality. The choice represented a historic shift: in 1986, Switzerland had not yet been ready to join the UN, and 75% of voters had voted against it.

Our history, culminating in the popular vote, taught us how to decipher the mechanisms of this great organization, to understand its logic and its specialized jargon. The guide you hold in your hands was created with this in mind: it is intended to help readers understand how UN entities and agencies operate at country level; what mandates they receive from Member States; and how Member States oversee, politically support and financially sustain the organization.

Understanding all of this was essential for Switzerland. Only through this knowledge, on 10 September 2002, did we cross the threshold of the UN as a full-fledged Member State. Today, our country looks to the future with hope and to its role within the UN with awareness, strengthened by a journey that has made it a key player in international diplomacy.

Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor, Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
Swiss Confederation, February 2025



WHILE WE LIVE in challenging times, we know that with the right level of political and financial commitment the world can make real progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 – and leave no one behind.

We also know that with greater political will we can address the major humanitarian crises besieging the world today. However, meeting these challenges will require a profound shift in levels of solidarity, cooperation and partnerships – and doing better with what we already have. For me, this is precisely why this UN Handbook is so important.

By helping Member States and partners better understand the unique role the UN plays at country level – not only in sustainable development and humanitarian assistance but also in human rights and peacebuilding – we can more effectively engage all of our stakeholders who can then make more informed political and funding decisions going forward.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed,  
New York, February 2025

## Introduction

It is often assumed that “the UN” is a single unified organism. Even when offices and vehicles display multiple UN logos, many take it for granted that they represent one organization working towards a common goal. Only after engaging with separate UN agencies at country level do outsiders realize that each also follows its own strategic plan, operates with its own budget and implements its own annual workplan.

The reality is that the concept of “One UN” has not yet fully materialized, and oftentimes the operational pillars of the United Nations still operate in separate “silos” instead of in close collaboration. This is why the UN operational system – which provides for the delivery of both development and humanitarian support – has been undergoing various reforms. The purpose of this handbook is to support those reforms and to help make them a success. This handbook is unabashedly “pro-UN”.

UN agencies can only deliver effective support for sustainable development and humanitarian assistance when they work together, are encouraged to do so and have the political and financial support from the Member States that give them their mandates. Member States, in their governance and oversight roles, and as in their role as funding partners, share responsibility for UN successes and challenges.

In order for the Member States and their embassies around the world to support and to hold the UN accountable for the implementation of reform processes, the work of the “operational” UN at country level needs to be demystified.

This handbook is intended to make the inner workings of the UN more transparent. It explains the work of the UN in-country, including the reforms that guide it. A comprehensive guide to the work of the UN at country level, it is the first of its kind. It presents a single reference guide, providing a clear overview of the operational role of the UN. Designed for diplomats and others working where the UN has a presence, the handbook is also tailored to those who may not deal with the Organization on a daily basis but need a solid understanding of its mandates and operations.

### **How to read the Handbook: what it does and does not do**

The handbook is not designed to be read “cover to cover”. Each chapter addresses a separate topic, including how UN agencies are organized at country level; how they are funded; and how programming processes work.

The handbook focuses on UN operational work at country level. It describes how UN agencies are meant to cooperate. In the real world there are many variations of the set-ups presented in the handbook, which uses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL) as the overarching policy framework for

UN development and humanitarian efforts. It does not however, address how individual agencies address specific policy questions.

Source notes and an index are included at the end of the handbook. The online version, [understandingtheun.org](http://understandingtheun.org), provides more information and links to relevant information. The online handbook will be regularly updated.



### **Note on word choice**

The handbook simplifies concepts and minimizes the use of UN jargon. The following terms are used:

- **UN agencies** refers to all types of UN agencies providing development and/or humanitarian support in-country. It includes the “funds and programmes”, “specialized agencies” and so-called “other bodies”.
- **UN entities** generically refers to all components of the UN system, including UN agencies and offices and departments of the UN Secretariat, such as the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding components.
- **UN intergovernmental system** refers to the bodies where Member States meet to make decisions and pass resolutions, primarily the General Assembly, the Security Council, ECOSOC and the Human Rights Council, as well as international conferences held under the auspices of the UN.
- **UN operational system** refers to the network of UN agencies and entities delivering human rights, humanitarian and development assistance in-country. This term does not generally include peacekeeping and special political missions.
- **Development partner/donor** refers to a Member State, intergovernmental or other organization that commits funds to the UN. Alternatives include “funding partner”, “contributing Member State”, “donor government”, “Member State donor” or “bilateral donor”.
- **Host country** refers to a country where the UN carries out its operational work, also known as “programme country”, “recipient country” or, in the context of the World Bank, “client country” or “borrowing country”.
- **In-country or at country level** refers to the country or context in which operations are carried out. It replaces the terms “on the ground” or “in the field”.



UNITED  
NATIONS

# 1

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## Mandates

What the UN is, what it is intended for, what its legitimacy is based on and what it is supposed to do.

THE UN STANDS as the only universal platform where countries join together to confront and find solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. With 193 Member States, it is the sole organization that includes nearly every country in the world as a member or observer. The Organization was established in 1945 after the horrors of World War II and is exclusively governed by its Member States. This, and its near universal membership, distinguishes the UN from other international actors and gives its decisions unique legitimacy.

In the founding document of the UN – the UN Charter – Member States articulate their desire to maintain peace and security, promote social progress and uphold human rights, emphasizing the paramount importance of sovereign equality, peaceful dispute resolution and collective measures against threats to peace, while encouraging cooperation and respect for international law. The UN Charter is an instrument of international law, which Member States are pledged to follow.

“The UN” does not exist as a single entity. Rather, it consists of two distinct “arms”, an intergovernmental one and an operational one, made up of a multitude of bodies, organizations and entities derived either from the Charter or created by the Member States.

The intergovernmental arm of the UN, set out in the UN Charter, includes the intergovernmental bodies, notably its principal organs,

## CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

### **WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED**

*to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and*

*to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and*

*to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and*

*to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,*

### **AND FOR THESE ENDS**

*to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and*

*to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and*

*to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and*

*to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,*

### **HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS.**

*Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.*

the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where Member States come together to set policies, address political crises and define the principles of international law and the norms and standards to which they are committed. The intergovernmental arm also includes bodies not specifically mentioned in the UN Charter, such as the World Health Assembly, the governing body of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Conference of the Parties (COP), the decision-making body of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The other arm of the UN is an operational system created by the Member States to assist countries in implementing the goals, commitments and best practices that they have agreed upon in the intergovernmental bodies. The operational system brings together a multitude of organizations, bodies and entities – some small and highly specialized, some large and highly visible.

The legitimacy of the agencies of the UN operational system to advise and delve into the internal affairs of Member States derives from the mandates assigned to them by the intergovernmental bodies, differentiating them from international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or, on a national level, civil society organizations (CSOs). The mandates derive from four separate sets of commitments that form the fundamental pillars for the actions of the UN operational system:

- Striving to ensure global peace and security.
- Developing and promoting international law, including international human rights law.
- Providing humanitarian assistance during emergencies.
- Supporting long-term sustainable development.

Operationally, the UN can only act upon what its mandates specify, host countries accept and donors finance.

---

## 1.1 Peace and security

According to the UN Charter, the Security Council holds the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. A core principle of the UN Charter is the prohibition of the use of force, except in two circumstances: legitimate self-defence; or when authorized by the Security Council. The Security Council has two main operational instruments to maintain or restore international peace and security:

- **Under Chapter VI of the UN Charter**, the Security Council can deploy special political missions, peace envoys or mediation teams to mediate and/or reach peaceful settlement of conflicts or disputes.
- **Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter**, the Security Council can authorize the use of force and deploy peacekeeping operations

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### “The UN”?

Confusion and misunderstanding occur when people refer to “the UN” and are not specific about whether they are referring to: (a) the Member States and the intergovernmental bodies; (b) UN agencies and the operational system; or (c) the Secretary-General and the UN Secretariat. UN success or failure mean very different things depending on which UN the speaker is referring to.



(“UN blue helmets”) or impose sanctions. Security Council resolutions under Chapter VII are binding.

The UN’s work on peace and security is not limited to Security Council mandates. The moral authority and the “good offices” of the Secretary-General and his/her representatives are an important diplomatic tool to try to mediate between the parties to a conflict.

In 2005, the Member States, acknowledging the importance of a more holistic approach to peacebuilding, established the Peacebuilding Commission, a dedicated body that reports to both the General Assembly and the Security Council.

## 1.2

### 1.2 International human rights law

The UN Charter affirms the importance of fundamental human rights and international human rights law (IHRL). The seminal text that guides the work of the UN is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, which affirms, in its 30 articles, the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all peoples, including the inherent rights of individuals to equality, freedom from discrimination, the right to life, liberty, security, freedom of speech and religion, as well as the right to education, work and participation in government. In the UDHR, the General Assembly declared those rights as universal, inalienable and applicable to everyone, regardless of race, nationality or other status. The UDHR serves as a global framework for human rights standards, promoting dignity, justice and peace.

Collectively, along with the UDHR, two foundational treaties make up the core of international human rights law, often called the “International Bill of Human Rights”: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both of which were adopted by the General Assembly in 1966.

Further seminal international human rights law texts agreed within the UN obligate governments to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights and freedoms of individuals or groups. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In total, there are nine core international human rights instruments.

Each instrument has an intergovernmental mechanism to promote and protect human rights, primarily “treaty bodies”, such as committees of experts, which strive to ensure that States fulfil their treaty obligations. Collectively, the UN refers to this system as the “human rights treaty system” .

## 1.3 International humanitarian law

The UN Charter mandates the UN to foster international collaboration in addressing problems “of a humanitarian character”. International humanitarian law (IHL), also known as the “law of armed conflict” or the “law of war”, aims to reduce human suffering during armed conflict. IHL restricts methods of warfare and outlines the protections to which wounded soldiers, prisoners of war and civilians in conflict zones are entitled. It protects civilians and non-combatants, as well as civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals and energy providers.

The two Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 regulate the conduct of armed forces during war and the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols provide the main treaty basis for IHL. The Geneva Conventions specifically address the protection of wounded and sick soldiers on land (First Convention) and at sea (Second Convention), the treatment of prisoners of war (Third Convention) and the protection to civilians in time of war, including those living under occupation (Fourth Convention). In addition, customary international law complements the set of rules of IHL.

Subsequent Security Council resolutions have established what is known as the “protection architecture”, which calls on Member States to protect women, as part of the women, peace and security agenda (resolution 1325 (2000)), children in armed conflict (resolution 1612 (2005)), civilians (resolution 2417 (2018)) and humanitarian personnel (resolution 2730 (2024)).

In 1991, the General Assembly, in its resolution 46/182, asserted the primary obligation of Member States to provide humanitarian assistance, and to allow the international community to provide the same, while maintaining respect for the sovereignty of the host country. To that same end, in 1992, the Secretary-General established the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which became, in 1998, as part of the Secretary-General’s programme of reform, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which functions to ensure inter-agency decision-making in response to complex emergencies.

## 1.4 Sustainable development

The fourth pillar of UN action is “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”, as mandated by the UN Charter – now referred to as “sustainable development”.

The current global sustainable development policy framework, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be met by 2030. The 2030 Agenda promotes integrated solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges for sustainable growth.

**“Leave no one behind”**  
“Leave no one behind” is the commitment made by Member States to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and end discrimination: it lies at the heart of the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda, which applies to all Member States, regardless of their development status, promotes a global partnership to achieve the SDGs. Member States translate the Goals into national commitments, which they report on through a voluntary national review (VNR) every two years.

The core principles of the 2030 Agenda are called “the five P’s”:

- **People** – ending poverty and hunger, ensuring dignity and equality.
- **Planet** – protecting the environment and combating climate change.
- **Prosperity** – ensuring fulfilling lives, in harmony with nature.
- **Peace** – fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies.
- **Partnership** – implementing the agenda through global solidarity.

The 2030 Agenda requires a holistic, coherent and integrated approach at national, regional and global levels. It calls for the participation of all countries, stakeholders and individuals working in collaborative partnership to implement this transformative plan.

The 2030 Agenda has been called the “teamwork of humanity”. The SDGs, including their 169 targets, have become the “lingua franca” of international sustainable development, providing governments, public administrations, academia and civil society around the world with a common reference framework.

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## 1.5 UN resolutions

UN resolutions are formal texts adopted by UN bodies. They express the opinion or will of Member States and play a critical role in shaping international policies and responses to global challenges.

In addition, there is a constantly evolving body of technical norms and standards developed by intergovernmental bodies. One example is the Statistical Commission whose reports on statistical standards are adopted by ECOSOC and provide guidance to the national statistical bodies of Member States. Another form of commitments by Member States are the “outcome documents” of international conferences that are eventually adopted by the General Assembly.

# Sustainable Development Goals



EMERGENCY

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

DELIVERY WARD

Pediatric Ward

- 2 EMERGENCY
- 5 ART
- 6 *ayeyta Maaqarka*  
Eye Department
- 7 Antenatal & family  
Planning
- 8 Pharmacy  
stor
- 9 TB Laboratory
- 10 TB Ward
- 11 Card Room
- 12 Administration
- 1 Delivery & pediatric  
Room
- 3 M.Dor. office  
Medical & Surgical  
Ward
- 4 OR
- 13 Meeting Room
- 14 Laundry
- 15 Ra DO
- 16 ICU
- 17 Morgue
- 18



# 2

---

## **The UN operational system**

How the UN operational system  
implements its mandates.

UN COUNTRY-BASED WORK covers all four mandates: peacekeeping and peacebuilding; human rights protection and promotion; humanitarian assistance; and sustainable development.

The four areas are interconnected: peace is not possible without development and there can be no development without peace. Humanitarian assistance cannot replace the political will for peace and development, nor ensure the protection of human rights. Thus, these elements must be considered together when shaping policies or developing programmes and projects. The operational implications of an integrated, holistic approach are referred to as the Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration.

The term “UN operational system”, as used in subsequent chapters, refers to the network of UN agencies and entities delivering development, humanitarian and human rights assistance in-country.

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## 2.1 Peacekeeping and peacebuilding

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding support mainly comes in the form of peacekeeping or special political missions mandated by the Security Council.

- **Peacekeeping missions** involve the deployment of troops, police and civilian staff under Security Council mandates to maintain peace and security, often by monitoring or enforcing ceasefires and providing protection for civilians.

Peacekeeping operations draw on troops and police forces from Member States, known as police- or troop-contributing countries (PCCs/TCCs), since the UN does not have a standing military or police capacity. These missions are overseen by Department of Peace Operations (DPO) with support from the Department of Operational Support (DOS). They often include both civilian and uniformed components and support national efforts to transition from conflict to peace by, inter alia, maintaining peace and security, protecting civilians and assisting with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants.

- **Special political missions** focus on conflict prevention, mediation and facilitating political agreements, often in pre- or post-conflict environments.

Special political missions are overseen by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and supported by DOS. They largely support political dialogue, State-building, constitutional processes, post-conflict elections and the promotion of human rights and the rule of law. Peacekeeping missions often include some of the same mandates.

Both special political missions and peacekeeping operations require at least the tacit consent of the host State in order to enable operations. In addition to having the consent of parties to a conflict,



## Entities of the UN operational system

The entities of the operational system can be divided into four groups:

- **UN funds and programmes**, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), are exclusively funded by voluntary contributions. Member States make up their executive boards, which report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and ultimately to the General Assembly. The funds and programmes are bound by the mandates provided in the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Their executive directors are appointed by and report to the Secretary-General.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UN Women operate in a similar manner to the funds and programmes and their executive boards also report to the General Assembly.

- **Specialized agencies** such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), have their own assemblies composed of representatives of Member States, for example the World Health Assembly of WHO. The heads of these agencies are elected by their governing bodies. Some specialized agencies were established before the founding of the UN and joined the UN through special agreements. They are not formally bound by decisions taken by the General Assembly but are part of the UN country teams (UNCTs) and participate fully in inter-agency platforms, such as the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which is chaired by the Secretary-General.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are technically part of the UN system although they operate independently. They have

distinct governance structures; both institutions are overseen by their member governments.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) became an official part of the UN system as a related organization in 2016.

- **The UN Secretariat**, which is led by the Secretary-General, is the central administrative entity serving and supporting the intergovernmental bodies. It analyses global trends, issues reports of the Secretary-General and advances global thinking.

Some entities of the UN Secretariat have an important operational role. The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) are tasked with the implementation of peacekeeping and special political mission mandates, respectively. The Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) manages the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and supports the work of the intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

The Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are both part of the UN Secretariat and act as the support offices for Resident Coordinators (RC) and Humanitarian Coordinators (HC) in different countries. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is also an entity of the UN Secretariat.

- **Research and training institutes** play a crucial role in advancing knowledge, developing capacities and informing decision-making processes for global challenges. Institutes such as the UN System Staff College (UNSSC), the United Nations University (UNU) and the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) serve as knowledge brokers and training hubs for Member States, UN staff and other stakeholders.



the other two core principles of peacekeeping are impartiality (the need for the UN to treat parties to a conflict equally) and the non-use of force, except in self-defence or to defend mandates given by the Security Council.

Moreover, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General can all decide to deploy peace envoys to work on peace negotiations/agreements or ceasefire initiatives in conflict areas worldwide. In-country, envoys usually rely on the logistical support of a UN presence on the ground.

The UN plays a crucial role in conflict prevention by using diplomacy, mediation and its diplomatic capabilities, often referred to as its “good offices”. Under the concept of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, in addition to their contributions to peacekeeping and special political missions, many UN agencies work to address the root causes of conflict, promote reconciliation and social cohesion, support national efforts to rebuild institutions, prevent a return to violence and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

Over the last two decades, the importance of peacebuilding has gained prominence within the UN. Political, practical and financial support for peacebuilding is provided by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), respectively.

## 2.2

---

## 2.2 Human rights protection and promotion

The role of the UN in protecting and promoting human rights is to uphold international human rights law (IHRL) and the principles derived from key human rights treaties and instruments ratified by Member States in the intergovernmental bodies. The UN operational system therefore aims to help governments meet their human rights obligations and advocates against human rights violations.

Monitoring adherence of Member States to their human rights commitments is largely the purview of the intergovernmental bodies, such as the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council (HRC) and ECOSOC. In addition to those bodies, “special procedures” of the HRC exist in the form of independent experts and special rapporteurs, who have either country-specific or thematic mandates.

Member States have also created the position of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The High Commissioner is supported by an office (OHCHR), which has representation around the world. While monitoring and reporting to the High Commissioner (and through the High Commissioner to the Secretary-General, the HRC and the General Assembly) is a key role of OHCHR country offices, they also provide technical support

in the form of assistance in drafting human rights legislation and establishing and supporting national human rights institutions (NHRI). The UN operational system integrates human rights promotion and protection in all its work at country level, taking a “human rights-based approach”.

Other UN operational entities focus on specific human rights issues. For example, UN Women promotes gender equality and women’s rights, UNICEF protects the rights of children and ILO focuses on labour rights.

### **Universal periodic review**

The universal periodic review (UPR) is a “peer review process” that provides for the regular review of the human rights records of all 193 Member States and evaluates whether countries are following human rights principles and adhering to their international human rights commitments. The review is conducted within the framework of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on the basis of each country’s national report, data from independent human rights experts, UN bodies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The process allows countries to report on their human rights efforts and share their best practices. The UPR process generates transparency and valuable human rights information that UNCTs can use for strategic planning and programming at country level.

## **2.3 Humanitarian assistance**

2.3

Governments have the primary responsibility to assist and protect populations affected by humanitarian crisis within their territories. If a government is unable or unwilling to fulfil its obligations, UN humanitarian agencies may be asked to provide assistance and protection to those in need.

Humanitarian assistance saves lives, alleviates suffering and maintains and protects human dignity, both during and after man-made crises and natural disasters. It also strengthens preparedness for and prevention of future emergencies. The UN humanitarian response follows the principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality and advocates for the protection of civilians with all relevant parties to a conflict. To ensure implementation of these principles, donors do not generally provide direct funding to governments to deliver humanitarian assistance but rather fund UN agencies and NGOs to do so.

### **Neutrality versus impartiality**

The UN operational system maintains operational impartiality in order to provide development and humanitarian assistance in

i

#### **Protection of civilians**

Protection of civilians (PoC) refers to efforts aimed at safeguarding civilians from harm during armed conflicts or crises. PoC, which is on the agenda of the Security Council and a focus of international debates, forms part of the operational guidance of UN agencies .



## Humanitarian access

Under international humanitarian law (IHL), countries must not arbitrarily withhold humanitarian assistance from civilian populations, particularly during armed conflict. The Security Council can adopt resolutions obligating governments to allow humanitarian assistance, although the implementation, enforcement and impact of such resolutions often depend on political will and specific circumstances in each conflict situation. Member States, through their embassies, can stress to all parties to a conflict that humanitarian access is a moral and legal imperative.

complex settings. There is a distinction between “impartiality” and “neutrality” in development and humanitarian contexts:

- **“Impartiality”** means that humanitarian assistance must be provided according to the urgency and severity of needs, without discrimination as to nationality, race, religion, class or political opinion.
- **“Neutrality”** means not taking military or political sides in hostilities. A neutral approach includes promoting humanitarian principles over overtly political statements.

## Types of assistance

UN agencies, together with international and national NGOs, provide a wide range of humanitarian assistance to people affected by crises, disasters and conflicts worldwide, in accordance with the above principles. The main types of humanitarian assistance provided by UN agencies include the following areas, listed below, indicating the global cluster lead agency (see chap. 3):

- **Food security** – provision of food aid, cash assistance, malnutrition treatment and longer-term replanting and protection after disasters (WFP).
- **Shelter** – provision of emergency shelter and temporary housing (including cash assistance for rent) for people who have lost their homes or have been forced to flee (IFRC and HCR).
- **Health** – provision of emergency health services, medicine, equipment and personnel (WHO).
- **Water and sanitation** – provision of access to clean water and sanitation facilities in crises (UNICEF).
- **Protection** – of refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR).

## Humanitarian Principles



### Humanity

Human suffering must be alleviated wherever it occurs. The goal is to protect life and health while ensuring respect for human beings.



### Neutrality

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.



### Impartiality

Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of needs alone, making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.



### Independence

Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold that compromises the ability to act in accordance with the core principles.

Source: OCHA

In the longer term, beyond immediate relief, UN humanitarian agencies also assist by setting up temporary schools, rebuilding essential infrastructure like roads and electricity lines and responding to reproductive health needs. This comprehensive approach allows UN agencies to address both immediate needs and longer-term recovery and to link humanitarian assistance to sustainable development.

### **The UN as a key humanitarian actor**

Over 60% of global humanitarian funding flows through UN agencies, making them central to delivering aid worldwide.

## **Cash and voucher assistance**

Cash and voucher assistance is the direct provision of cash transfers or vouchers to individuals, households, groups and community recipients, enabling them to purchase goods and to access services. It empowers people affected by crises to identify and address their most pressing needs while stimulating local economies, promoting financial inclusion and offering cost efficiencies for donors.

This type of assistance has grown significantly and now accounts for nearly 25% of all international humanitarian assistance. In some contexts, it can also be integrated into a country's social welfare system, enhancing its long-term impact.

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## **2.4 Sustainable development cooperation**

2.4

At country level, when requested by host governments, UN support for sustainable development helps them to implement their own development agendas in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The UN operational system is uniquely positioned to support the 2030 Agenda through its global reach and advocacy function, its normative work, its convening power and its ability to support governments to access and leverage financing for sustainable development. Support is provided to countries at all stages of their development, from middle-income countries to those categorized as least developed countries by the General Assembly and ECOSOC.

### **Types of support**

The types of support provided by the UN operational system include:

- **Capacity development**, which helps build, develop and strengthen critical governance capacities in national institutions, including planning, management and evaluation through tailored technical assistance.
- **Support functions** provide administrative and operational support in finance, procurement, human resources and legal services to national governments and other stakeholders.

- **Policy advice and thought leadership** provide integrated, evidence-based policy advice and strategic guidance to help implement the 2030 Agenda, including the alignment of national policies with the SDGs.
- **Normative support** assists with the implementation of and the monitoring and reporting on global norms and standards and international commitments, as outlined in international treaties and agreements.
- **Data collection and data analysis**, which enhance national capacities to collect and analyse data to track progress on the SDGs, inform policy choices and produce voluntary national reviews (VNRs).
- **Service delivery and direct support** provide technical assistance in service delivery, particularly in contexts affected by crises, such as conflict, displacement or natural disasters.
- **Mobilizing funds for the implementation of the SDGs** supports the efforts of governments to access funding for sustainable development.
- **Convening partnerships/knowledge-sharing** facilitates partnerships and knowledge-sharing across global, regional and national levels, supporting cooperation through North-South, South-South and “triangular cooperation”.

## **Accelerating the SDGs**

In 2023, UN agencies acted on the calls to accelerate progress on the SDGs. They identified six pathways and four main actions to focus on in the remainder of the 2030 Agenda time frame.

- **Six pathways:** food systems; energy access; jobs and social protection; digital connectivity; education; climate change.
- **Four main actions:** updating policy frameworks; identifying investment opportunities; forming partnerships for financing; developing institutional capacities.

### **Development effectiveness**

In delivering sustainable development support, the work of the UN agencies is guided by four principles endorsed in 2011 by over 160 countries and more than 50 organizations as part of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation:

- Country ownership.
- Focus on results.
- Inclusive partnerships.
- Transparency and mutual accountability.

International efforts, such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), aim to strengthen the effectiveness of development cooperation by ensuring that available resources are used in ways that maximize impact.





# 3

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## **The UN set-up at country level**

How the UN operational system is organized at country level in development, humanitarian and mission settings.



THE UN OPERATES in various settings in Member States. The context and the needs of individual countries define the size and type of UN operational presence. Worldwide, the largest UN presence is found in development settings.

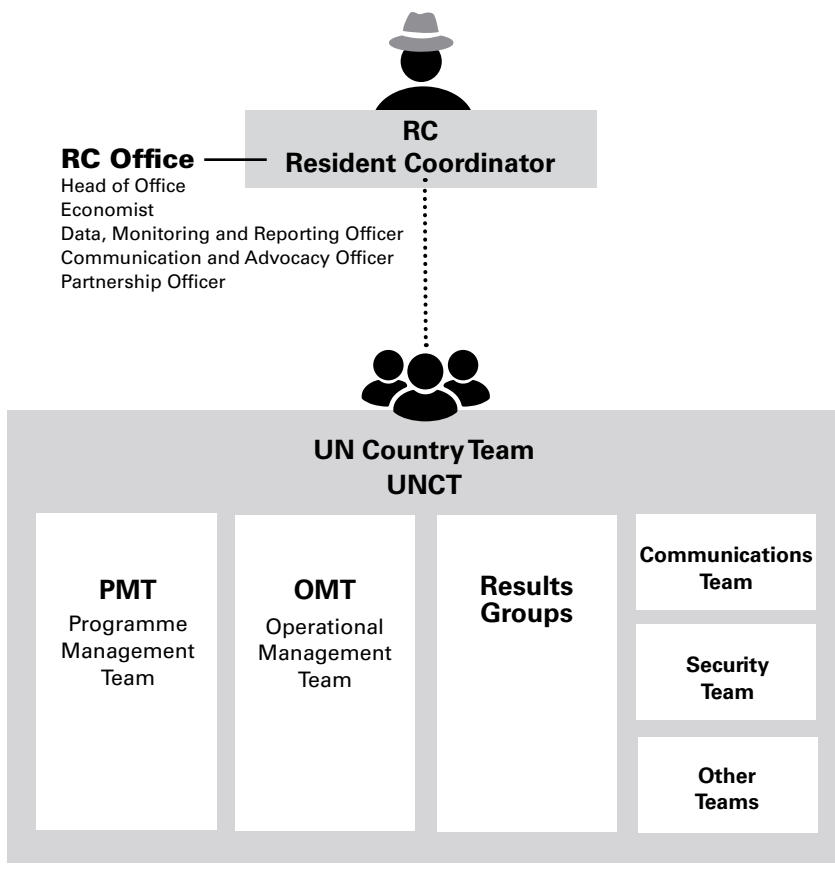
3.1

### 3.1 Development settings

In most countries, the UN focuses on sustainable development and on assisting governments in reaching the aims set out in their national development strategies and their priorities regarding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In such settings, the UN country team (UNCT) consists of UN agencies working together under an agreed UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), referred to as the “Cooperation Framework” (see chap. 5). The work of the UNCT is coordinated and led by the Resident Coordinator (RC), who is supported by a Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

#### UN in-country: development setting



## The Resident Coordinator and the Resident Coordinator Office

Resident Coordinators (RCs) are the designated representatives of the Secretary-General and are thus the highest-ranking representatives of the UN operational system for development at country level. RCs report to the Secretary-General through the head of the Development Coordination Office (DCO) at UN Headquarters (see chap. 9). The RCs represent the UN and its values, standards and principles in host countries.

The main responsibilities of RCs include coordinating UN support for the development commitments of individual countries under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that the activities of UN agencies are in line with the Cooperation Framework. The RCs serve as the key point of contact for governments and development partners and facilitate access to the full range of UN expertise, including its non-resident capacities.

In addition, RCs:

- Foster engagement with representatives of governments, civil society, bilateral and multilateral partners, academia and the private sector in efforts to achieve the SDGs.
- Are responsible for the development of key UNCT documents, including the common country analysis (CCA) and the Cooperation Framework.
- Guide and coordinate the work of UN resident and non-resident agencies implementing the Cooperation Framework.
- Advocate for and support the work of members of UNCTs in reaching their agency-specific goals.
- Facilitate the integration of the work of UNCTs with UN peacekeeping or special political missions, in particular with regard to transitioning long-term UN support from peacekeeping/peacebuilding to development.
- Manage and guide the RCOs.

In some contexts, RCs may also assume a role in larger donor coordination, including bilateral donor support, by chairing or co-chairing donor groups.

RCs lead UNCTs and provide input to the performance assessments of the heads of agencies. This relationship is articulated in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) (see chap. 7).

A position of Deputy RC does not exist. When an RC travels out of the country, a senior member of the UNCT, typically a head of agency, will serve as “RC ad interim” until the return of the RC to the duty station.

### UN development system

The “UN development system” refers to all the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies that support the efforts of countries to meet their national development targets and to achieve the SDGs.

## **Integrating human rights into development**

RCs and UNCTs take a human rights-based approach to the CCA and the formulation of the Cooperation Framework (see chap. 5). Increasingly, UNCT members also engage with national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and try to address human rights violations, with support provided by human rights officers and advisers from OHCHR.



RCs are supported by RC Offices (RCOs) in facilitating, convening and assisting UNCTs. RCOs ensure that all resident or non-resident members of UNCTs can fully participate in UNCT consultations and decision-making processes and that they are regularly updated.

RCOs support the work of UNCTs in five core capacities:

- Economic analysis and solutions.
- Strategic planning.
- Partnerships and resource mobilization.
- Communication and advocacy.
- Data and results reporting.

Depending on the needs and priorities of a given host country, gender advisers and/or Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) collaboration advisers may be included in RCOs. UN agencies without a formal office in-country may also be hosted by RCOs.

RCOs are not operational agencies and do not implement projects or administer funding directly. RCs/RCOs do, however, coordinate the submission of joint proposals from UNCTs for global thematic funds, for example the Joint SDG Fund, and coordinate the implementation of such proposals in cases where allocations from such funds are successful.

## **UN country team (UNCT)**

UNCT is the collective term for all UN agencies present and active, both resident and non-resident, which work together to develop and implement the Cooperation Framework in-country. UNCTs are led by RCs, who also chair the meetings of UNCTs.

UNCT membership is confirmed or adjusted at the outset of each Cooperation Framework cycle to ensure that its composition reflects the needs and priorities outlined in the Cooperation Framework. The members of the UNCT contribute to shared services through cost-sharing agreements.

UNCT members are signatories to the Cooperation Framework and:

- Actively participate in the development of the CCA and in planning, implementing, advocating for and monitoring of the Cooperation Framework results.
- Meet at least once a month and include the representation of agencies that are not physically present in a country, which participate remotely.
- Agree on the specific parameters of their working arrangements, such as establishing technical working groups or results groups under the Cooperation Framework.

## UN reform

The 2030 Agenda and the scale and ambition of the SDGs necessitated a comprehensive repositioning of the UN development system. In 2018, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/279, launched an ambitious reform agenda, which focused on an upgrading of the RC system, independent of any one agency, supported by an in-country RCO, with RCs and RCOs overseen by a new Development Coordination Office (DCO) in the UN Secretariat. The establishment of joint planning tools, pooled funds and increased interoperability aims at facilitating collaboration and mutual accountability. Other key measures include improved reporting, accountability and transparency.

This clearer new leadership structure at country level enabled the UN to respond more quickly and coherently during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, fragmented funding streams, differing mandates and operational inefficiencies remain significant challenges and the full implementation of the reform of the UN development system is still a work in progress.

The reform of the UN development system is part of the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the UN system. The QCPR process helps Member States to follow up on and guide the implementation of the reform and to decide on adjustments and additional measures.

- Proactively and transparently share information and programmatic details with the RC and the other members of the UNCT.

All UNCT members contribute jointly to the annual report on the results of the team's work.

The work of UNCTs is organized in different subteams that serve distinct roles:

- **Results groups** are at the core of the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. They are constituted around individual outcomes and ensure coordination across UN agencies. Results groups include all UN agencies that contribute to a specific outcome, as well as government partners and other stakeholders. They are led by co-chairs from contributing UN agencies and deal with joint planning, monitoring, advocacy, resource mobilization and reporting on progress towards that outcome.
- **Programme Management Teams (PMT)** ensure coherence and alignment across the membership of UNCTs in areas such as quality assurance, monitoring and reporting and cross-cutting issues. They work closely with the results groups.

- **Operations Management Teams (OMT)** are responsible for streamlining administrative and operational support functions across UNCTs. Their work includes the coordination of common services and common back-offices, which allow UN agencies to join forces on issues such as logistics, procurement and ICT.

Representatives of entities that are not signatories to the Cooperation Framework, such as international financial institutions (IFIs), the Department of Safety and Security (DSS) and UN information centres (UNICs), as well as UN peace and political entities, can participate in meetings of the UNCT but are not part of formal decision-making related to the implementation of the Cooperation Framework.

## **Agency offices in-country and their representatives**

Resident agencies maintain offices in-country, while “non-resident agencies” operate either from a regional office or from their respective headquarters. “Non-resident agencies” usually partner with RCOs or resident agencies to implement activities outlined in the Cooperation Framework.

Most UN agencies in-country are headed by Country Directors, sometimes called Representatives or Resident Representatives. They are senior officials accredited to represent their agencies in a country and assume overall accountability for the agencies’ programmatic, operational, partnership, advocacy and communication activities. They are responsible for ensuring that the agency fully participates in the design and implementation of the Cooperation Framework, in the work of the UNCT and the humanitarian country team (HCT).

Agency representatives in the UNCT have a dual reporting line: to their respective headquarters on individual mandates; and to the RC for their contribution on agreed results as defined in the UN Cooperation Framework and other inter-agency development agreements such as the MAF.

### **Standard Basic Assistance Agreement**

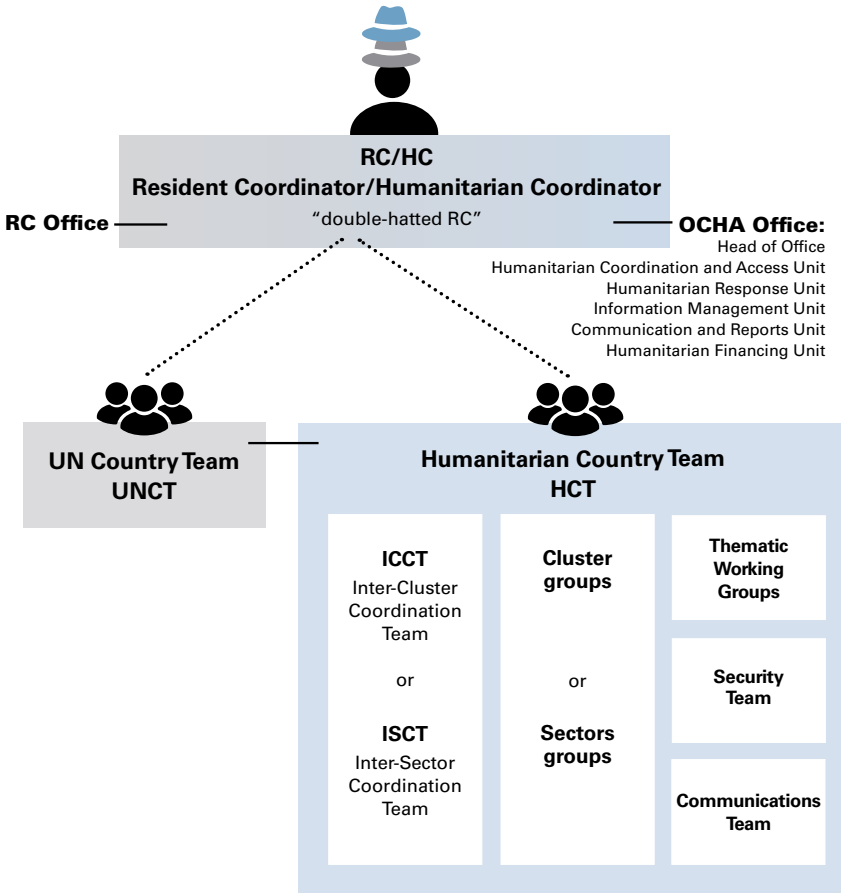
All UN agencies present in-country are supposed to sign a host country agreement (HCA) or Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) with the host government, outlining the terms and conditions for their operations in-country.

Legal matters, operational and logistical frameworks, such as customs exemptions and freedom of movement issues, are addressed in SBAA, including provisions for resolving disputes related to the conduct of UN personnel in a country and/or during programme implementation.

## 3.2 Humanitarian settings

In approximately 30 countries that require international humanitarian assistance and development support due to conflicts, crises or natural disasters, RCs assume the additional role of Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). The RC/HC heads the humanitarian country team (HCT) that develops and implements the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP).

### UN in-country: humanitarian setting



### The Humanitarian Coordinator and the OCHA office

In countries where international humanitarian assistance is required in response to large-scale and/or protracted humanitarian crises, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) appoints an HC to lead the HCT. In almost all contexts, the HC is the existing RC. The RC/HC is referred to as being "double-hatted".

## No HC

When international humanitarian assistance is required but no HC function is assigned, the RC acts as coordinator, working with the members of the UNCT and national and international humanitarian organizations to support national humanitarian efforts. In this role, the RC is still accountable to the ERC.



The function of HC adds authority and decision-making powers to the role of the RC in leading the HCT and humanitarian efforts at country level.

As the representative of the Secretary-General, the RC/HC facilitates inter-agency preparedness, coordinates the humanitarian response, advocates for humanitarian principles, mobilizes funding and promotes links between humanitarian and development actors.

The role of the RC/HC in the HCT is to make strategic decisions, facilitate coordination among different actors and ensure that the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) is aligned with the needs of affected populations and humanitarian principles.

The RC/HC leads the HCT, which includes not only UN humanitarian agencies but also other humanitarian actors, including both national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The RC/HC represents the HCT in interactions with affected populations, government authorities, donors and external stakeholders.

The RC/HC facilitates coordination among different actors and ensures system-wide accountability by working closely with national authorities and local actors by:

- Aligning humanitarian efforts with the governmental response plan and humanitarian principles.
- Sharing information and data on needs, gaps and available resources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the situation.
- Upholding and advocating for humanitarian principles and access to affected populations.
- Identifying priorities and avoiding duplication.

The RC/HC is supported by the local OCHA office, which coordinates aid delivery by UN agencies with humanitarian mandates, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), and with major international and national NGOs.

The OCHA office manages the drafting and finalization of the HNRP (see chap. 5). It also assists the HCT with resource mobilization, managing humanitarian financing and country-based pooled funds, advocacy, information management and policy-setting.

## Humanitarian country team (HCT)

HCTs are set up at the start of humanitarian crises to assess the situation, direct the HNRP and ensure that humanitarian actors deliver assistance in a principled, effective and complementary manner. Every HCT has specific terms of reference, established at the start of a crisis, which can be adjusted as needed. In countries undergoing protracted crises, HCTs may be kept in place for years, or even decades. They usually meet once a month, and more frequently during emergencies.

## Humanitarian system-wide scale-up

A system-wide scale-up, also known as "IASC Scale-Up activation", can be declared by the ERC when sudden or rapidly deteriorating humanitarian crises require the urgent mobilization of additional resources. It allows for UN assets, including staff, to be quickly deployed to support HCTs in crisis. The activation is time-bound for up to six months.



## RC/HC is a tough job

The RC/HC, who is the face of the UN response, needs to manage expectations of funding partners, governments, UN agencies, international and local actors and the Security Council.

It is not an easy job; its challenges include:

- The RC/HC is expected to coordinate myriad actors, often with competing agendas, through the exercise of strong leadership and personal authority; achieving inter-agency coordination alone can be complex.
- The RC/HC needs to uphold humanitarian principles in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to remain impartial while maintaining trust and credibility with the host government regarding UN sustainable development work in-country.
- Operating in conflict-affected areas involves security risks that can endanger affected populations, UN personnel and aid workers. In non-mission settings, the RC/HC is the UN Designated Official for Security (DO) responsible for the safety and security of UN staff members.
- Political tensions and armed conflict can hinder access to people in need; even where access is possible, humanitarian needs often exceed available resources.
- Although the UN Charter gives the Secretary-General the authority to appoint UN staff, RC/HCs have occasionally been expelled by host governments if perceived as being too critical or overly political. Such actions underscore the delicate role of RC/HCs, who must balance their mandates while respecting national sensitivities. The diplomatic engagement of other Member States in the host country can be critical in supporting the continued engagement of the UN.
- In mission settings, RC/HCs are often assigned the role of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG), which adds to the complexity of their work.

HCTs, which are chaired by RC/HCs, are composed of key local and international actors, such as representatives of UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and international and national NGOs, including national Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) takes part in HCTs solely as an observer. RC/HCs and HCTs are responsible for deciding whether additional coordination structures, such as sector-based clusters (including logistical support), are required for the UN humanitarian response.

The OCHA office acts as the HCT secretariat and assists RC/HCs in all coordination efforts. The mirror structure of the HCT at the global level is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (see chap. 9).

UNCTs and HCTs coexist; they do not replace one another. RC/HCs, together with the heads of agencies, ensure complementarity between the two coordination bodies.

Although Member States are not members of HCTs, their embassies can assist the international humanitarian response through advocacy for international humanitarian law (IHL) in areas such as protection and access and in securing humanitarian funding.





### International Committee of the Red Cross

The Geneva-based ICRC, founded in 1863, is not part of the UN. It has official observer status at the UN, in the IASC at the global level and in HCTs in-country. The ICRC usually enjoys privileges and immunities similar to those accorded to intergovernmental organizations, including diplomatic privileges for its staff and freedom of movement.

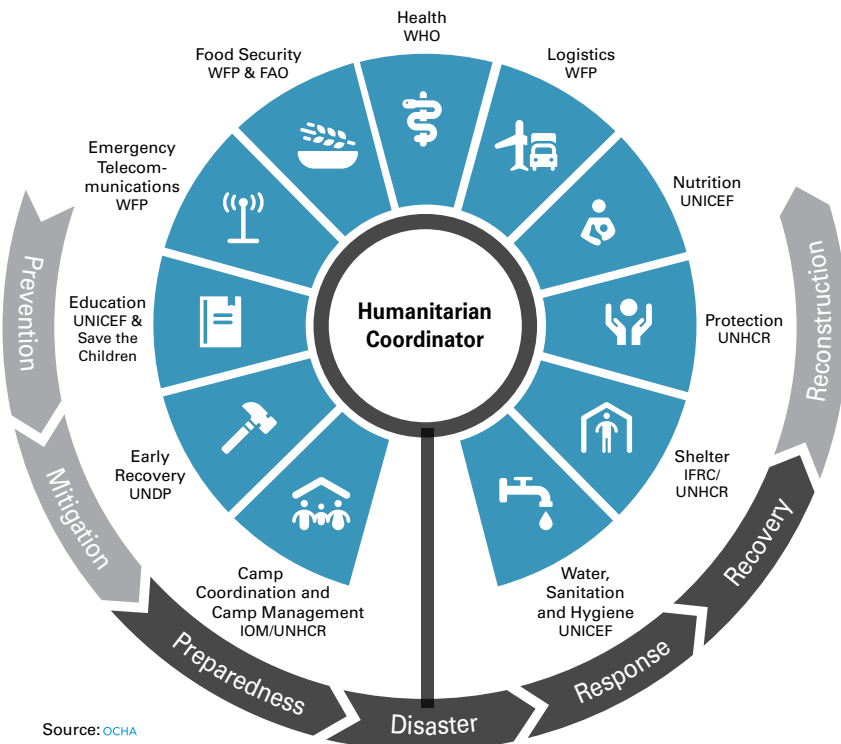
Depending on the context, donors, government representatives, private sector partners and local partners can be invited to join in the meetings of HCTs as observers. RC/HCs can also establish a separate forum to share information with the humanitarian community or donors.

### Humanitarian cluster system

The humanitarian cluster system, comprising 11 separate humanitarian clusters, is a coordination mechanism that helps the UN and other organizations working in the humanitarian field to respond effectively to large-scale crises. Clusters are groups of UN humanitarian agencies and partners working together on specific sectors of humanitarian assistance. The clusters are led or co-led by a UN agency at the global level (for example, UNICEF and Save the Children are the global cluster co-leads for education).

In humanitarian emergencies, the initial clusters are formally activated by the IASC after consultation with RC/HCs. Subsequently, additional clusters can be activated by HCTs. Activation is carried out in coordination with host governments, where appropriate. If a natural disaster has caused significant damage to infrastructure, for example, the shelter cluster may be activated to address housing needs, while the health cluster may focus on providing medical care.

## Humanitarian Cluster System



Each cluster is led by a cluster lead agency (CLA) that follows standardized actions that are reviewed annually. The heads of CLAs are accountable to both the global cluster lead (often, but not always, their own agency) and to RC/HCs for the performance of their individual cluster. Clusters are sometimes co-chaired by representatives of host governments.

Clusters assess needs, identify gaps, prioritize assistance and bring together UN humanitarian agencies and partners involved in humanitarian efforts. The global cluster lead agency is responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources, including funding, are provided to support the work of the individual clusters.

The clusters coordinate the comprehensive planning of the HNRP, monitor its implementation and ensure aid delivery within the specific sectors. They also ensure that the activities of UN partners are coordinated and harmonized. Whenever possible, the clusters build on national response structures and use similar terminology.

In most humanitarian settings, the cluster system is currently the preferred coordination mechanism. Global discussions are ongoing, however, as to whether the clusters are still fit for purpose. Novel initiatives like the OCHA Flagship Initiative (see chap. 5) are exploring a more holistic approach in longer-term humanitarian settings. Others are developing more agile solutions for rapidly evolving crises.

### **Refugees and internally displaced persons: whose responsibility?**

In contexts involving refugees, it is UNHCR rather than RC/HCs or OCHA that is mandated to lead the refugee response, including carrying out sectoral inter-agency coordination, contingency planning, response and resource mobilization and finding durable solutions. The needs of refugees in-country are incorporated into the HNRP under a dedicated chapter that outlines the refugee response plan (RRP), thus ensuring coordination between refugee-specific interventions and broader humanitarian efforts.

The “Joint UNHCR-OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice” details the division of responsibilities between representatives of UNHCR and RC/HCs. UNHCR also leads the Global Protection Cluster safeguarding refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and stateless persons and closely coordinates with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to find long-term solutions for IDPs.

### 3.3 Mission settings

There are typically 10 to 20 conflict or post-conflict settings worldwide where the Security Council deploys either peacekeeping or special political missions. The missions are led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), and in some cases by an Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG) or a Special Coordinator. The mandate set out by the Security Council determines the organizational set-up of every mission.

In addition to the SRSG, there are usually two Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (DSRSGs) for each mission. One DSRSG is also the RC/HC and the other is in charge of political dialogue and measures such as post-conflict elections.

Directors of Mission Support manage mission personnel on a day-to-day basis. In peacekeeping missions, Force Commanders supervise the military troop components and Police Commissioners are in charge of the activities of police support personnel.

The UN is committed to the “integration” of all aspects of its peacekeeping and special political missions with the work of UNCTs and HCTs. One manifestation of this effort is the “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration” mandate at some missions, where military, political and development components work together to rehabilitate former combatants.

#### DSRSG/RC/HC

The DSRSG/RC/HC coordinates the work of both the UNCT and the HCT, which ensures close cooperation between humanitarian, development and peace efforts. The DSRSG/RC/HC is thus known as being “triple-hatted” and has multiple reporting lines, including to the ERC. Unlike in non-mission-settings, the DSRSG/RC/HC tends to direct, rather than coordinate, the work of UN agencies.

By engaging with local communities, governments and international partners, DSRSG/RC/HCs can create conditions for lasting peace and recovery, in line with the Secretary-General’s guidance on integrated missions.



#### Black and blue UN

UN vehicles and equipment display different logos, depending on their operational context. Peacekeeping and special political missions display a black UN logo, whereas development and humanitarian components display a blue logo.

## 3.4 Safety and security

The Department of Safety and Security (DSS) provides safety and security services for the entire UN system. It manages a network of security advisers, analysts, officers and coordinators in more than 125 countries, develops and maintains UN security policies and provides comprehensive security training for UN staff.

In-country, the safety and security of UN staff is formally the responsibility of the host government. In addition, the UN has its own safety and security protocols and security risk management mechanisms.

### UN Designated Official for Security (DO)

The most senior UN official in-country (RC/HC or Head of Mission) is usually the UN Designated Official for Security (DO). The DO is responsible for the security of UN personnel, premises and assets, with the support of a team of security professionals (international and/or national staff) recruited by DSS. The team provides security advice to enable safe and secure programme delivery.

The DO chairs the country-based Security Management Teams (SMTs). If the security situation in-country escalates, the DO can advise the DSS to convene the New York-based Executive Group on Security (EGS), which consists of the executive heads of the agencies that are part of the local SMT, to decide on further measures.

### Security Management Teams (SMTs)

SMTs are composed of the heads of all UN agencies present in-country or in a designated area and are chaired by the DO. SMTs include representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In some countries, international NGOs can be invited to join, in line with the UN “Saving Lives Together” initiative.

SMTs regularly evaluate security conditions and work with host governments to ensure the safety and security of UN personnel and assets. SMTs consider security risks, develop risk mitigation measures and provide guidance and support for security training programmes to help staff stay safe.

SMTs meet at least once a month, and more frequently in evolving situations. While decisions are generally made collaboratively, the DO is the final authority on security-related issues.

SMT members ensure that activities of their own agencies adhere to the decisions of the DO and consider safety and security in conducting their programmes. Members must ensure that their staff comply with all security instructions and inform the DO about any security concerns regarding their agencies.



#### Saving Lives Together

The Saving Lives Together (SLT) initiative is a framework to improve collaboration on shared security concerns and the safe delivery of humanitarian and development assistance. It was established in response to the needs of UN agencies, international NGOs and international organizations. Areas of collaboration include information sharing, training, common guidelines and coordination.

## Security risk management (SRM) process

The UN uses a comprehensive security risk management (SRM) process to enable programme delivery within acceptable levels of risk. The process offers a structured approach to evaluate risks and to help make appropriate security decisions. It supports the UN shift towards a risk management philosophy of “staying to deliver”, which allows operations to continue, even in high-risk environments.

In the SRM process, threats are systematically assessed and combined in a risk matrix to determine a risk level. Measures are suggested to reduce both likelihood (prevention measures) and impact (mitigation measures). The SRM process is risk-based, not threat-based. While threats are assessed as part of the process, decisions are taken based on the assessment of risk.

## Security level system (SLS)

The SLS is the best-known element of the SRM process. The system uses a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being the least dangerous and 6 being the most dangerous environment.

### Minimal risk (level 1)

- Minimal threat to UN operations or personnel.
- Limited or negligible impact on safety, often due to stable governance and effective law enforcement.
- Examples are countries with low crime rates and strong security infrastructure.

### Low risk (level 2)

- Some threats are present but manageable.
- Situations may involve petty crime, localized civil unrest or sporadic security issues.
- Appropriate precautions and routine safety measures are generally sufficient.

### Moderate risk (level 3)

- Noticeable threats to safety, often due to higher crime rates, political instability or regional conflicts.
- Requires heightened security awareness and specific mitigation strategies.
- May include countries experiencing pockets of unrest or insurgent activity.

### Substantial risk (level 4)

- Significant threats from ongoing political instability, armed conflict or terrorism.
- UN operations may require dedicated security measures, such as armed escorts or restricted movement.
- Common in conflict zones or countries with volatile situations.

### High risk (level 5)

- Severe threats to UN personnel, stemming from active conflicts, widespread violence or targeted hostility against the UN.

#### States of emergency

While the UN cannot declare a state of emergency unilaterally, it may request the host government to declare a state of emergency, which can trigger a formal UN response.



- Operations often require substantial restrictions or relocation of staff.
- Typically applies to areas with large-scale military conflicts or rampant lawlessness.

### **Extreme risk (level 6)**

- Unmanageable threats where UN operations are severely limited or suspended.
- Includes areas with uncontrollable violence, targeted attacks on UN facilities or collapsed governance; staff presence is minimal, if not entirely withdrawn.
- This level is sometimes also referred to as “unacceptable”.

Most embassies are in regular contact with UN security advisers on the local security situation, sharing information on risks, travel advisories, safety measures and crisis communication. The UN maintains its own travel advisory security app for UN personnel. In many countries, the UN also provides real-time security updates through restricted-access social media groups.

#### **Evacuation**

The decision to relocate or evacuate UN staff is made by the DO in consultation with the SMT and DSS, and sometimes in consultation with the Executive Group on Security (EGS) and the Secretary-General. Emergency evacuations remain rare. The evacuation of national staff and their immediate family members is handled on a case-by-case basis.

Embassies of Member States coordinate evacuation efforts with the host government and their own capitals. The UN may provide information and advice, but the decision and responsibility to evacuate rests with the embassies. The UN may allow embassy cars to join its evacuation convoys, but it cannot guarantee transportation.

## **3.5 UN communications**

UN agencies and most UNCTs have their own outreach and communication tools, such as websites and a social media presence. All UNCT websites are managed locally, usually by the RCO, with corporate guidance and support from DCO at UN Headquarters in New York. RCs and representatives of agencies in-country may also maintain their own social media presence.

For formal statements and official positions on political matters, all UN entities defer to the Secretary-General or to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

### **Information and transparency**

A number of online platforms grant Member States, donors, the media and the public access to financial and performance data. Key

platforms include open.un.org, the International Aid Transparency Initiative, the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) and uninfo.org, as well as the OCHA Financial Tracking Service. Although such initiatives improve transparency, questions like “How much does the UN spend on X?” can be difficult to answer because UN agencies may define sectors like “governance” or “social transfers”, or outputs and results, differently, or because they use different enterprise resource planning (ERP) platforms.

### 3.6 Host government coordination

In addition to the UN, there may be many other actors supporting development and humanitarian assistance to a country, for example the World Bank, international organizations, NGOs and bilateral development partners. Coordinating the actions of the partners is the responsibility of host governments, whose leadership is essential to ensure national ownership of development and humanitarian efforts, as well as to align the strategies of various actors and to promote policy coherence.

Typically, the development partnership coordination architecture of the host government operates on the following three levels, which may have different names in different contexts:

- **Political/strategic level** refers to a high-level platform for political dialogue and policy discussions, typically chaired by representatives at the highest ministerial level in the host country (for example, the Prime Minister), sometimes co-chaired by the RC. Participants are usually ambassadors, RCs, Country Directors of the World Bank and UN agency representatives.
- **Strategic/operational level** refers to various formats for the discussion of strategic topics related to the effectiveness of development cooperation and the alignment and coordination of development programmes. These fora are usually chaired by government representatives, often at ministerial level, with RCs frequently acting as co-chairs. Participants include heads of cooperation at the embassies of Member States, agency representatives, government officials and chairs of Sector Working Groups (SWGs).

SWGs are coordination mechanisms, typically led by UN agencies, which bring together UN agencies, NGOs, government institutions and other stakeholders. Their role is to organize and streamline efforts across different sectors to ensure effective coordination, avoid duplication and enhance resource allocation. The work of UNCT results groups is closely linked to that of SWGs.

- **Operational/technical level** refers to meetings of SWGs to discuss and advance policy and implementation in different sectors. Humanitarian clusters can be considered specialized forms of SWGs. Operations at this level are typically co-chaired

by representatives of line ministries and development partners and/or UN agencies. Participants are technical experts from UN agencies, IFIs, embassies and, occasionally, implementing partners.

The role of the UN in development partner coordination varies across countries. In many contexts, the UN plays a key role and co-chairs all three levels of coordination with the host government. However, in European Union candidate and associate countries, the role of the UN tends to be less prominent as the EU may take a lead role.

In many settings, separate “donor groups” exist, consisting of all bilateral development partners who are engaged in development cooperation in-country. These groups generally meet without the participation of the host government and prepare donor inputs to government coordination mechanisms. The UN and the World Bank are occasionally invited to participate and, in some cases, to chair meetings.

Donor groups often reflect the structure of the development partnership coordination architecture: heads of mission discuss political aspects of the development agenda, while heads of cooperation meet to discuss various development-related issues.

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## **UN staff: protection, privileges and immunities**

The UN must comply with the national laws of Member States where it operates. There are limits, however, on what restrictions host governments can impose on the UN and its officials. Similar to embassy personnel, who are protected under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, UN staff are protected by the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and the 1947 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies. Under those conventions, UN staff serving in-country are considered to be “international civil servants”, giving them certain protections and access while they carry out their work.

Host governments grant quasi-diplomatic status to international UN staff through visa and accreditation processes. While UN staff are appointed by the UN,

host countries can revoke the accreditation of UN officials or refuse to issue visas to UN staff, making them de facto “persona non grata”.

Senior UN staff, such as RC/HCs and agency representatives, usually enjoy privileges and immunities similar to those of ambassadors. Most other international UN staff enjoy “functional immunity”, which protects them from prosecution under national laws for actions taken in their official capacity and safeguards their documents from seizure.

International UN staff can be arrested and detained by national authorities if suspected of a crime or of breaking national laws. The Secretary-General can decide whether to invoke or waive immunity based on specific circumstances.





# 4

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## **Funding the UN and its operational activities**

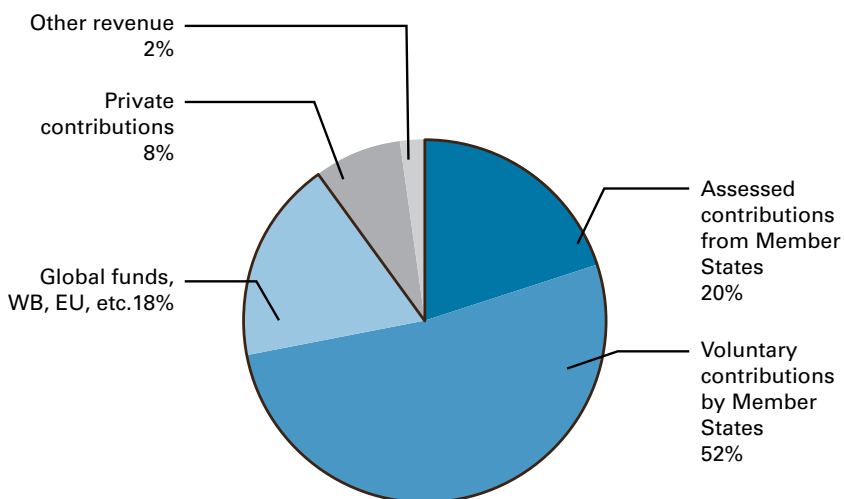
Who funds the UN and how different types of funding can impact its work.

THE UN IS FUNDED almost entirely by its Member States. Their contributions are either direct or indirect. Direct contributions include mandatory membership fees (known as “assessed contributions”) and voluntary contributions. Indirect contributions include funding channelled through mechanisms such as financial intermediary funds (FIFs) or through large multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank and the European Union. Various annual reports dissect the volume, sources and trends in UN funding.

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## Where UN funding comes from

Based on averaged data from reports of Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and MPTF office.



## 4.1

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### 4.1 Funding sources

Different funding for the activities of the UN include:

- **Assessed contributions** from Member States (UN membership fees) are primarily used to fund peace operations and the UN Secretariat and its support for UN intergovernmental bodies. Assessed contributions make up what is also referred to as the UN “regular budget”, which is approved by the General Assembly. Specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) also have a small portion of their budgets funded by assessed contributions. UN funds and programmes such as UNDP and UNICEF do not.
- **Voluntary contributions** by Member States make up the bulk of funding for UN operational activities. Most of these resources are part of official development assistance (ODA) funds. Member States, on occasion, can and do fund UN projects and programmes implemented in their own countries through cost-sharing agreements or so-called “special accounts”.

- **Global funds and multilateral channels**, such as FIFs, pool contributions from Member States, and UN agencies can apply for funding from them. They include the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. The World Bank can fund UN activities through a process known as third-party implementation. The European Union also makes significant contributions to UN operations (mostly at country level).
- **Private, non-governmental contributions**, which make up less than 10% of UN funding, include private donations, donations from philanthropic organizations and financing from the private sector. More than half of all private funding is received by UNICEF. Support from its national committees and private business partners make up 30% percent of the UNICEF budget.

The UN follows strict ethical guidelines and regulations when accepting private funds, including conducting due diligence and assessing potential conflict of interest. In addition, independent auditors can verify the appropriate use of private funds and compliance with UN regulations and ethical standards.

- **Other revenue** includes fees for services that some agencies can charge, including for certifications or procurement management, the latter being unique to the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). This source of revenue remains the exception, however, and generates minimal funds.

UN budgets and expenditures are denominated in United States dollars. Contributions can be significantly influenced by exchange rate fluctuations, both to the advantage and disadvantage of the UN. Budgets can also be significantly impacted by inflation rates in a host country, which increases the cost of doing business.

### **In-kind contributions**

In-kind contributions are non-monetary support from Member States or private donors in the form of goods, for example, food, medical supplies and vehicles; infrastructure, including office premises, sites, training and conference centres; or staff secondments. They can be donations or loans.

In-kind contributions can pose challenges. Key considerations are the suitability of donated goods, the need for storage and transportation, insurance, liability and quality control and the potential impact of free goods on local markets.

Many UN agencies have established guidelines on how to handle in-kind contributions.

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## 4.2 Quantity of funding

Funding for UN operational activities (development and humanitarian assistance) doubled between 2014 and 2024, standing at over \$50 billion per year by the end of 2024.

The hike in overall funding is largely due to a dramatic increase in humanitarian funding, which has overtaken UN development funding since 2018.



### Is it a lot?

The total amount available for UN operational activities is roughly half the annual budget of New York City.

Despite the above increases, most UN humanitarian appeals are not fully funded. Crises with significant media coverage tend to get more funding while “forgotten crises” usually receive less support. Protracted crises, where political solutions remain elusive, often experience “donor fatigue”.

Funding for UN sustainable development activities has not grown as much as funding for humanitarian assistance, despite global commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Due to the voluntary nature of UN funding for operational activities, UN agencies are in a perpetual fundraising mode. The demands and expectations resulting from intergovernmental mandates on peace and security, human rights, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development consistently exceed available funding.

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## 4.3 Quality of funding

In order for the UN to maximize the impact of the available resources, the type of funding – also known as the quality of funding – is key.

Donors contributing voluntary funds for UN operational activities can decide which agency or global fund to support, or they can further restrict the use of the funds by specifying which country or project should benefit from them. Restricting the use of funds is called earmarking.

Different types of earmarking have different implications for the effectiveness of UN operations and for the way UN agencies work together. Generally, unearmarked funds provide UN agencies with the greatest flexibility.

In addition to the levels of earmarking, the predictability of funding also impacts the way the UN plans its work. If funds for a development programme need to be mobilized annually, the quality of its implementation tends to suffer. Multi-year commitments are extremely valuable to UN agencies. The term “quality funding” refers to such flexible and predictable funding.



## Unearmarked or “core funding”

Core funding for a specific UN agency refers to contributions that are made by donors without restrictions. This allows an agency to allocate funds to global, regional or country programmes based on its mandate, strategic plan and annual workplan.

Referred to by some UN agencies as “regular resources”, core funding also supports basic institutional functions, such as core personnel, training, oversight mechanisms and security measures.

Core funding allows UN agencies to engage in preliminary work in emerging areas that can open the door to other forms of financing. It can also fund prevention activities and work on norms and standards that go beyond single projects.

Contributions to inter-agency global level funds, such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), are also considered unearmarked. Such funds are managed at UN Headquarters and allocated to UN country teams (UNCTs) solely for joint (inter-agency or multi-agency) activities or emergency responses.

## Earmarked funding

“Non-core funding” or earmarked funding includes contributions restricted to specific projects or programmes within a country or to a thematic global fund of a specific agency.

Non-core funding varies in terms of how tightly its use is restricted. The UN distinguishes between softly earmarked funding, earmarked funding and tightly earmarked funding, for single projects.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) regularly monitors the amounts and proportions of earmarked and unearmarked ODA contributed to the UN.

### How much?

To find out how much a country contributes to the UN operational system, consult the website of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

### OECD/DAC definitions

Confusingly, the OECD/DAC calls unearmarked funding to UN agencies “multilateral funding” and earmarked funding “bilateral funding”. Colloquially, bilateral funding to UN agencies is also known as “bi-multi” or “multi-bi” funding.

### From funding to financing

When the UN uses the term “from funding to financing”, it refers to support for governments to mobilize new revenue streams and prioritize funding that accelerates progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Support provided using a “from funding to financing” model can also include advice on how to blend private and public financing. Blended finance support includes the use of public or philanthropic funds to attract private investment for projects related to the SDGs through insurance guarantees or co-financing.

## Quality funding, the funding compact and the 2015 Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing

Over the last decade, core contributions have decreased to below 15% of total funding for UN operational activities, whereas tightly earmarked funding has proportionally increased. This ongoing trend presents challenges to the UN operational system for several reasons.

The independence and legitimacy of the work of the UN is at risk when too much tightly earmarked funding limits the ability of a UN agency to implement its actual mandate. The UN operational system is expected to prioritize its work according to the needs of host countries. Tightly earmarked funding can mean that there is no funding available for forgotten crises, conflict prevention or work on norms and standards.

In a situation of scarce resources, earmarked funding can force UN agencies to compete against each other for donor money in the same country instead of working together based on their respective mandates and strengths.

Tightly earmarked funding also increases transaction costs, as many small projects funded by individual donors with different reporting and administrative requirements cost more than larger well-designed programmes. Tightly earmarked funding can also lead to a fragmented and inefficient portfolio within UN agencies.

In addition, short-term funding makes it difficult for the UN to provide the necessary sustained support to countries for the development and implementation of integrated policy frameworks needed for achieving the SDGs. It is also detrimental to staff retention and thus to knowledge management. This situation, in turn, affects the trust that policymakers and host countries have in the UN.

Soft earmarking and, in particular, the use of pooled funds and multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs) have been beneficial for UN work. MPTFs, for example, incentivize UN agencies to work together towards joint outcomes. Furthermore, pooled funds that commingle funds from several donors significantly lower transactions costs.

Member States recognize the challenges posed by earmarked funding both for the development and the humanitarian sector.

- **The 2015 Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing** was endorsed by Member States, international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It aims at improved quality of humanitarian funding in return for increased transparency and visibility over how funds are spent; more harmonized reporting requirements across agencies; reduced duplication and management costs; a greater commitment to localization (including committing at least 25% of funding to local actors); the involvement of affected communities in the design and delivery of aid; and an increase in cash-based assistance.

- **The 2019 and 2024 funding compacts** have similar goals both for Member States and for UN development agencies. The revitalized 2024 funding compact has set collective targets for development funding by Member States, aiming for: at least one-third of voluntary contributions to be allocated to core funding; at least 15% to 30% to be directed through pooled inter-agency funds; aligning contributions to priorities and needs outlined in Cooperation Frameworks at country level; and harmonizing reporting requirements across donors.

In addition, the 2024 funding compact commits UN entities to: strengthen accountability and transparency of results, funding needs and expenditures; work seamlessly as one system; provide clear visibility regarding the outcomes of and impacts achieved through core and flexible funding; and enhance efficiencies within and across entities.

## 4.4 Financial resources for country-level activities

The funding needs for UN activities in-country are laid out in the Cooperation Frameworks (see chap. 5), and in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRP) (see chap. 5). Because core resources are scarce and assessed contributions are minimal and are limited to specialized agencies, UNCTs and their member agencies need to mobilize resources from different sources to secure funding.

- **In-country fundraising** – some agencies rely heavily on mobilizing resources from donor country embassies and the agencies of donor countries present in-country. This is often the most important funding source for a country's Cooperation Framework.
- **Agency-specific thematic global funds** – some UN agencies mobilize donor funding for specific purposes at headquarters level. Those funds can be allocated directly to country offices by agency headquarters or requested by the country office through an internal application process.
- **UN global funds** – there are a number of multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs) at headquarters level that are not linked to a specific UN agency but are reserved for applications by UNCTs (multi-agency) or HCTs. Examples are the Joint SDG Fund and CERF. These funds are invariably multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs) (see chap. 6).
- **Financial intermediary funds (FIFs)** – UN agencies, often in collaboration with governments, can make submissions for funding to FIFs, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. However, many of these applications are time-consuming and complex.
- **The World Bank** – funding the UN as a third-party implementer is limited to highly fragile contexts and remains an exception. The UN cannot request funding from the World Bank.

While Cooperation Frameworks rely heavily on in-country resource mobilization, HNRPs and related humanitarian appeals are often funded through a combination of funds from donor headquarters, UN emergency funds, such as CERF, and, to a lesser extent, in-country donor contributions. The annual launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview provides a comprehensive overview of funding needs for the year to come.

### The UN's "own money"

Money from global and thematic funds based at UN Headquarters is colloquially referred to in-country as the UN's "own money". This is a misnomer as global funds are mostly replenished and funded by Member States.





# 5

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## **Designing country programmes**

How the UN develops its country  
and context-specific development  
and humanitarian programmes.

IN HOST COUNTRIES, the UN operates on the basis of specific planning documents that cover a defined period or “cycle”. These documents are developed under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator (RC) or RC/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), in collaboration with the host government and other partners.

## 5.1

### 5.1 The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework cycle

The centrepiece of the UN development programming cycle is the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, Cooperation Framework).

Co-signed by the host government, the Cooperation Framework is a strategic document that outlines agreed priorities where the UN’s comparative advantage can help address gaps in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents a partnership with the government and serves as a core accountability tool between the government and the United Nations country team (UNCT), as well as among the members of the UNCT.

The Cooperation Framework guides the planning and implementation of the development activities of UN agencies at country level for a programming cycle that lasts from three to five years.

Developing a new Cooperation Framework takes place over a 9- to 12-month period towards the end of a country’s programming cycle. It usually starts with an independent evaluation of the current Cooperation Framework. This is followed by the common country analysis (CCA) and the drafting of the Cooperation Framework itself and ends with the signing of the Cooperation Framework with the host government.

#### Common country analysis (CCA)

The CCA is an evidence-based analysis of a country’s development context that serves as the basis for the development of the Cooperation Framework and includes:

- Detailed analysis of a country’s economic, social and environmental conditions.
- Root cause analysis, examining structural factors.
- Risk assessment, identifying potential threats.
- Identification of key development gaps.

#### Where to find the common country analysis

The CCA of most countries can generally be found on the UNCT website under “key documents” or be made available by the RCO.



The CCA also includes an analysis of key challenges and opportunities for UN support and identifies priority areas for UN intervention. Prepared by the UNCT under the leadership of the RC, the process of conducting the CCA is consultative and involves key stakeholders, including representatives of the host government, international financial institutions (IFIs), civil society, academia and the donor community. It is a public document, which is usually updated annually.

## Cooperation Framework

Based on the CCA, the Cooperation Framework identifies the specific areas that the UNCT member UN agencies commit themselves to address over the course of the programming cycle. It does not cover all development issues addressed in the CCA.

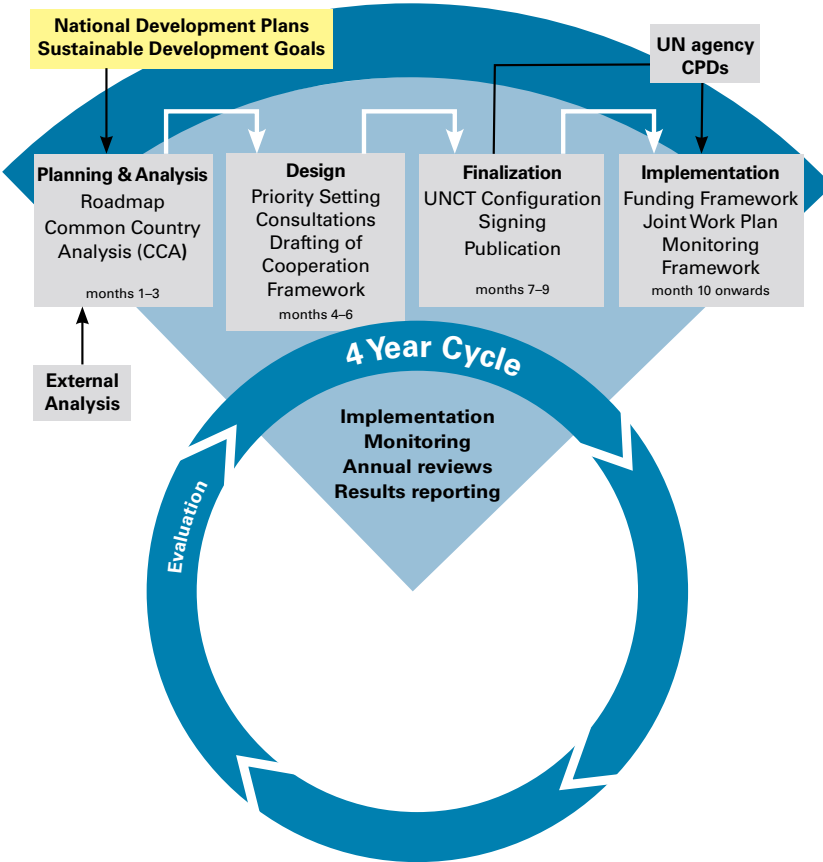
The Cooperation Framework, like the CCA, is prepared by the UNCT under the leadership of the RC, in a consultative manner with the host government and other relevant stakeholders (including donors, IFIs and civil society), which ensures that the Cooperation Framework is aligned with and complements national development plans, as well as the plans of other development partners.



### Do-no-harm principle

The UN's development and humanitarian work is guided by the "do-no-harm" principle, which emphasizes that projects must not exacerbate existing conflicts, tensions or vulnerabilities and should not leave people in a worse position than before.

## Cooperation Framework process





### **Consultations on the Cooperation Framework**

Donors are encouraged to participate in the development of both the CCA and the Cooperation Framework. The RCO can invite the donor community to participate at appropriate key moments.

Cooperation Frameworks generally include:

- **Theory of change** – an explanation of how the strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework contribute to the national development priorities and relevant SDGs.
- **Results framework** – a list of expected outcomes, outputs, indicators and results for each of the strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework, linked to the SDGs.
- **Cross-cutting principles** – how the Cooperation Framework integrates human rights, gender equality and the “leave no one behind” approach into its strategic priorities.
- **Stakeholder identification** – names of non-UN stakeholders (governments, civil society, development partners and the private sector) and their roles and responsibilities in the thematic and programmatic areas of the Cooperation Framework.
- **Partnerships** – which partnerships are needed to achieve the outcomes of the Cooperation Framework, including existing or planned partnerships for the duration of the programming period.
- **Implementation plan** – a guide on how the UN should achieve the aims set out in the Cooperation Framework, including the coordination activities among UN agencies and partners required to ensure coherence and synergy.

The implementation of the Cooperation Framework is overseen by a joint national-UN steering committee, which is co-chaired by the RC and the host government. Implementation is further supported by inter-agency coordination mechanisms, such as results groups, to ensure effective collaboration and alignment with national priorities.

While the Cooperation Framework typically covers a three to five-year period, the duration can be adjusted, as needed, to maintain alignment with national needs and changing circumstances.

## **UNCT reconfiguration**

The initiation of the Cooperation Framework programming process also triggers a review of the composition of the UNCT. This ensures that, rather than automatically renewing previous or existing arrangements, the capacity of the UNCT is aligned with the agreed priorities of the new Cooperation Framework and the needs of the host country. This could mean including new agencies in the UNCT or phasing out the country presence of agencies that will no longer be engaged in the implementation process during the upcoming cycle.

## **Joint Workplans and agency-specific country programme documents**

The UNCT develops a Joint Workplan detailing how the Cooperation Framework will be implemented over its full cycle. The Joint Workplan is also used for joint planning, budgeting, resource

### Tracking Joint Workplans

The UN tracks various indicators in Joint Workplans: gender and human rights markers are compulsory; and climate and sustainability markers reflect the commitment of the UN to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These markers are generally considered optional, even though they are strongly encouraged in many contexts.

mobilization, monitoring and learning. It helps create synergies between UN agencies and aligns the annual implementation plans of the UNCT with those of the government and other partners. Even though Joint Workplans are mandatory, not all UNCTs invest in developing one.

In addition, many UN agencies have to submit their own agency-specific country programme documents (CPDs) or “strategic notes” to their executive boards. These documents are aligned both with the Cooperation Framework and the Joint Workplans, as well as with the global strategic priorities of individual agencies.

## Resource mobilization for the Cooperation Framework

The Cooperation Framework is accompanied by a funding framework that outlines the resources needed to achieve the agreed results. It identifies both the required and available resources as well as funding gaps that need to be addressed. The funding framework is included in the annual Joint Workplan. The budgeting and resource mobilization strategies of UN agencies should be aligned with the Cooperation Framework, rather than the other way around.

While developing a joint UNCT resource mobilization strategy is not compulsory, it is instrumental in boosting collaboration and securing funding for shared development goals. Additionally, multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs) can facilitate joint resource mobilization.

UNCTs face significant challenges in pursuing this effort, however. Fundraising by single agencies tends to result in UN agencies competing against each other. Disjointed approaches to resource mobilization, especially project-based fundraising, risk further fragmenting the development system and impeding joint approaches and collective outcomes.

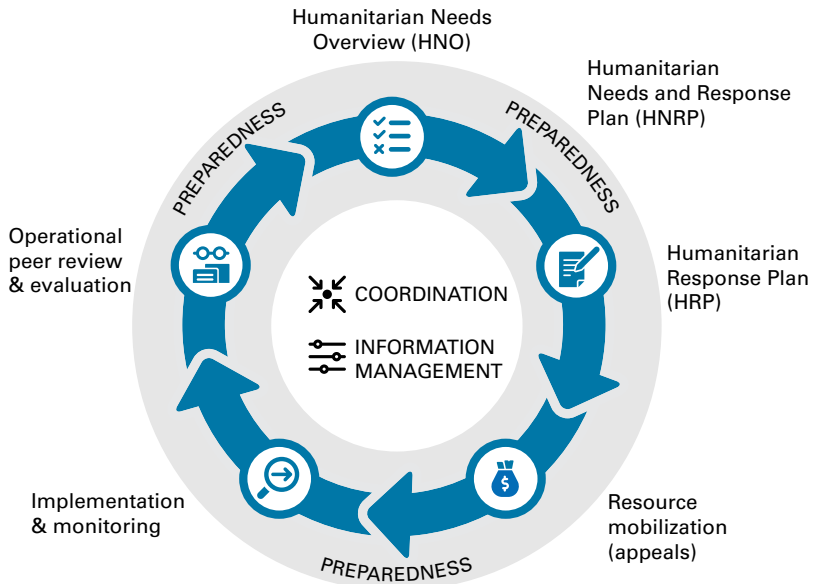
## 5.2 Humanitarian programme cycle

The humanitarian programme cycle is an operational framework that allows for the coordination of the delivery of international humanitarian assistance at country level. The main elements of the cycle are an assessment of humanitarian needs, a strategy of humanitarian response and a resource mobilization plan, all of which are combined in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP).

In-country, the RC/HC and the local presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) lead the humanitarian programme cycle, with inputs from the member agencies of the humanitarian country team (HCT) and representatives of international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, affected populations and national and local governments.

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## Humanitarian Programme Cycle



Source: OCHA

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### Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)

Applicable in both sudden onset and protracted humanitarian situations, the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) helps to ensure that the humanitarian response is needs-based, prioritized, coordinated and that it is accountable to the affected populations. The HNRP complements national efforts and promotes collaboration among humanitarian actors.

The HNRP combines the humanitarian needs overview (HNO) and the humanitarian response plan (HRP) which previously were issued as two separate documents. In some contexts, the two documents are still produced separately. The HNRP details the humanitarian response for a specific period, typically one to two years. Emergency plans, however, can be as short as a few months.

The HNRP and its resource mobilization plan usually include not only the humanitarian activities of the UN but also those of both international and national NGOs involved in the humanitarian country team (HCT).

The first part of the HNRP lays out an objective analysis of the magnitude and severity of the humanitarian needs. The analysis is based on coordinated data reviews and assessments, field visits, focus group discussions, surveys and interviews with key informants. It also includes direct consultations with members of the affected communities. Key analysis findings are typically broken

down by sector and subnational level and across various vulnerability dimensions, including gender, age and disability. The needs assessment can build on and complement needs assessments carried out by national and local governments.

The second part of the HNRP outlines the strategy for the humanitarian response. It defines the scope of the response, including the number and location of people to be assisted and the response modalities to meet overall objectives. The strategy also defines which type of intervention, such as multi-purpose cash transfers, should be prioritized and includes key indicators to monitor context and needs, the ongoing response and identified risks. The HNRP contains detailed sectoral analysis, planning and financial requirements.

The HNRP is developed by the local OCHA office under the leadership of the RC/HC, with input from members of the HCT. Even though the host government is consulted on the HNRP, in general it does not formally endorse it.

**Flagship Initiative**  
The OCHA-led Flagship Initiative aims to reform the humanitarian system by focusing on needs-based solutions and building resilience based on the needs of crisis-affected communities. With pilot projects in Colombia, the Niger, the Philippines and South Sudan, the initiative aims to improve accountability, community engagement and the way humanitarian assistance is coordinated, delivered and funded.

### **Localization**

Local actors, who are essential “first responders” during crises, often have better access to affected populations. Engaging local actors can be crucial for effective humanitarian response. In UN terminology, this is called “localization”. However, complex due diligence and reporting requirements hamper the direct financing of local responders, who still account for only 1% to 2% of overall humanitarian work. Under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, which aims to make humanitarian action as local as possible, 25% of international humanitarian funding should be directed to local and national actors and their capacity be systematically developed.

## **Resource mobilization for the HNRP**

HNRPs detail the costs for the collective humanitarian response from the UN and other humanitarian actors. Once the HNRP is issued, the UN, led by the RC/HC, initiates mobilization of the resources required to finance the assistance; in many cases, these fundraising efforts are conducted together with the host government.

Depending on the extent of the crisis, separate humanitarian funding appeals and pledging conferences are organized. They are often coordinated through OCHA public advocacy campaigns, together with key humanitarian agencies. Such efforts can not only help generate additional funds from donors but also from individuals, corporations and foundations.



### Flash appeals

Within 72 hours of a sudden onset disaster, such as an earthquake or a conflict, the UN may issue a flash appeal outlining immediate humanitarian needs and a response plan, providing a quick, initial guide for the humanitarian response. Flash appeals are intended to mobilize resources rapidly and coordinate the international response in the early stages of an emergency.



The OCHA Financial Tracking Service provides regular updates on pledges and contributions. It helps track funding needs and contributions, supports country level funding analysis and stresses the human impact of underfunding. Worldwide, humanitarian needs massively exceed available funding.

## 5.3

### 5.3 Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration

In many situations, addressing humanitarian, development and peace issues separately is counterproductive. More than half of people in need of humanitarian assistance have lived in protracted crises for many years, which makes linking humanitarian assistance with development cooperation even more essential. Long-term solutions such as sustainable development, climate adaptation and conflict resolution are key to reducing reliance on aid.

Following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the concept of Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) collaboration, was introduced to bridge humanitarian, development and peace efforts. The concept requires greater coordination among UN agencies, governments, NGOs and local communities to address the root causes of crises and to promote long-term solutions. By integrating resilience-building and sustainable development, the approach seeks to mitigate future conflicts and disasters.

The HDP collaboration focuses on promoting local ownership by empowering communities and integrating risk management and early warning systems and by fostering flexible funding mechanisms, such as pooled funds, joint programming and multi-year initiatives.

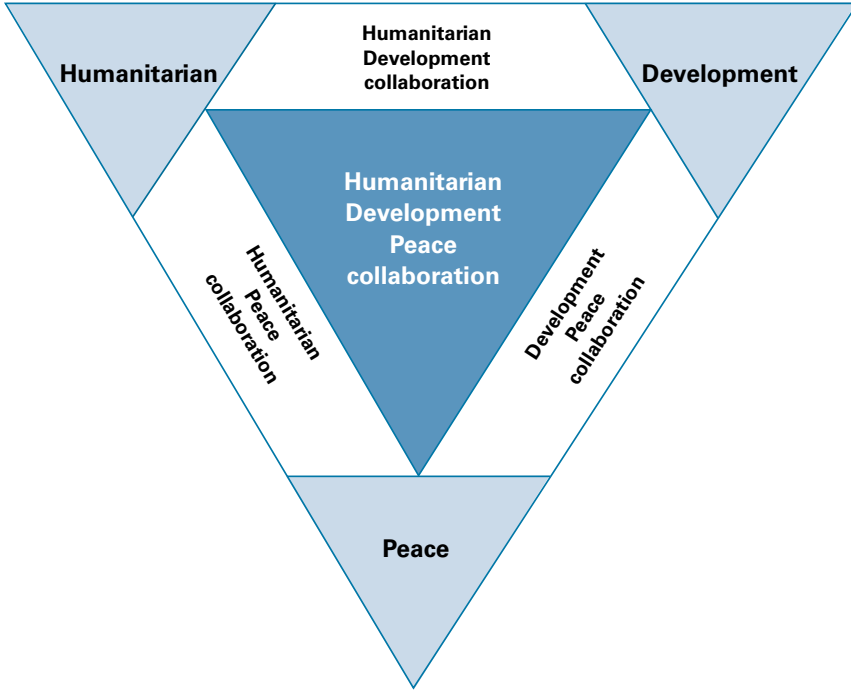
In implementing the HDP collaboration, the UN and agencies face significant challenges, such as coordination issues among actors and misaligned planning processes. Since funding mechanisms for humanitarian assistance and development cooperation are different, an “either-or” approach can lead to countries with HNRPs receiving less development aid, even when poverty levels are high.

The holistic implementation of the HDP collaboration requires strong leadership and commitment in order to effect the shift from short-term humanitarian assistance towards capacity development and peacebuilding efforts.

Some RCOs have HDP advisers, who play a crucial role in bridging gaps between humanitarian, development and peace efforts by facilitating analysis, fostering coordination and setting priorities. These advisers are not part of the regular staff of RCOs.

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## Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration





# 6

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## **Managing country projects**

The “nuts and bolts” of UN project implementation in humanitarian and development settings.

PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS are the basic building blocks of UN operational activities in the area of sustainable development and humanitarian assistance.

While there are variations in timelines, nomenclature and methods, the majority of UN development and humanitarian work in-country is guided by classic project cycle management. Both the Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) are implemented through programmes and projects carried out by one or more UN agencies in-country.

While the terms “programme” and “project” are often used interchangeably, they typically refer to different types of interventions.

- **Programmes** usually refer to larger, longer-term efforts encompassing multiple related projects working towards broader goals.
- **Projects** usually refer to more focused, shorter-term initiatives and objectives, which often contribute to a larger programme or goal.

There is no specific legal difference between a project and a programme, nor is there a common definition across the UN system. Thus, it is up to each UN agency, along with the host government and donors, to decide on how to name an intervention.

### **Project timelines**

National planning cycles, the global strategic plans of UN agencies, Cooperation Framework cycles and timelines of individual programmes or projects are never completely “in sync”.

In development settings, projects tend to be carried out over a number of years. A Cooperation Framework may contain projects that started during its previous cycle and continue into the next.

In humanitarian settings, the HNRP and the projects within it are usually formulated on an annual or biannual basis. They tend to be extended and revised according to evolving humanitarian needs.

## 6.1 Project budget and financing

In humanitarian settings, budget and project planning are based on humanitarian needs assessments. In many cases, available funds do not match needs and budgets, and projects have to be adjusted accordingly.

In development settings, a realistic assessment of potential available funds from donors and governments informs project design in order to manage host country expectations. Therefore, when designing projects, early consultations with national governments, other UN agencies and donors are crucial.

### Project costs

The implementation of a project or programme incurs both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs can be clearly linked to specific project activities. Indirect costs support overall organizational functions.

Direct project costs	Indirect project costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff and personnel costs directly involved in the project</li> <li>• Travel expenses related to project activities</li> <li>• Supplies, commodities and equipment for the project</li> <li>• Contractual services for project implementation</li> <li>• Training of counterparts</li> <li>• Project-specific communications and advocacy</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation activities for the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative and operational support activities</li> <li>• Recruitment, training and servicing of staff</li> <li>• Centralized procurement and contracting</li> <li>• Budget preparation and control</li> <li>• Financial operations, accounting and auditing</li> <li>• General management and oversight</li> </ul> <p>Indirect costs are sometimes called “project support costs” or “project overheads”</p>
> Built into the project budget	> Charged as a % of total budget cost

While there is no system-wide template for project budgets across all UN agencies, detailed financial plans are required for all projects.

Project costs for similar projects in different contexts can vary significantly, depending on the following factors:

- **Security environment** – a deteriorating security situation may require additional security measures, for example, armoured vehicles, airlifts, satellite phones and/or security personnel, which add to the cost of operations.
- **Geography** – large countries or rugged terrain, requiring the use of specialized vehicles or airlifts, contribute to increased transport costs; in addition, costly heating or cooling equipment may be needed in extreme weather conditions.

- **Infrastructure** – poor infrastructure, especially poor roads, lack of warehousing, water and sanitation or telecommunications, can increase project costs.
- **Inflation** – since the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation rates have surged, significantly increasing the cost of procuring equipment and goods for UN operations.
- **Timelines** – projects with tight timelines, like those responding to humanitarian crises or snap elections, may incur extra costs for last minute procurement and short-term staffing.

## Cost recovery

The process of recovering all costs associated with programme or project delivery is called cost recovery and includes both direct and indirect costs. Full cost recovery ensures that the implementation of individual projects does not have to be subsidized by core resources and that the implementing UN agency remains financially sustainable.

While direct costs are part of the project budget, indirect costs are calculated and charged as a percentage of the total project budget. The rates that UN agencies charge are different, depending on the nature of the project, the funding source and the agency.

All agencies have cost-recovery policies approved by their executive boards. In general, indirect cost-recovery rates cannot be renegotiated for individual projects. However, UN agencies sometimes try to compete for funding by lowering their rates, and some donors may also insist on lower rates. Both behaviours undermine the financial sustainability of UN agencies and the decisions of Member States in the General Assembly and at the executive board level.

The funds and programmes have agreed on harmonized cost-recovery policies. This is not the case for specialized agencies.

## Indirect cost recovery rates

Rule of thumb	
Project and programme contributions	8% harmonized rate Up to 13% (some specialized agencies)
Thematic contributions	7%
Cost-sharing from host countries	5%
Multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs) and joint programmes	8% fixed rate (7% for participating agencies and 1% for the administrative agent)
Country-based pooled funds (CBPF) (OCHA-administered)	7%
Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) (OCHA-administered)	2%
Large procurement projects	Less than 5%
Coordination levy	Additional 1% for tightly earmarked funding

Comparing cost-recovery rates across the UN operational system is performe an inexact science since different organizations use different methodologies. UN rates tend to be significantly lower than “for profit” consultancies and are also lower than the rates of the World Bank. Cost-recovery rates for UN multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs) are 8%, whereas World Bank executed trust funds charge 12%.

In a project implemented by a single agency, another agency can be subcontracted to deliver a particular project component. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), for example, could be subcontracted by another UN agency for environment-related activities. As a result of the fact that UNEP applies its indirect cost recovery rate to its part of the budget and the primary agency applies its recovery rate to the whole budget, donors pay indirect costs for the same activity twice: once to the primary agency; and once again to UNEP. The same applies when the World Bank works with UN agencies as a third-party implementer.

MPTFs offer a good alternative to prevent such double-dipping. They apply an indirect cost-recovery rate of 7% to the budgets of the agencies delivering activities. The MPTF Offices, or the administrative agent in the case of joint projects, charge only a 1% administration fee on overall project costs.

### **Coordination Levy**

For “single donor – single agency” projects, a 1% coordination levy is added on top of a project’s budget. The levy, which is added to cover the additional coordination work required for projects with tightly earmarked funding, becomes part of the funding of the Resident Coordinator (RC) system. Funding partners can pay the levy in two ways:

- **Donor-administered** – the funding partner pays the levy directly to the Development Coordination Office (DCO); individual agencies are not involved and DCO helps the funding partner calculate the total levy due annually in a lump sum.
- **Agency-administered** – the funding partner pays the levy directly to the implementing agency, which in turn passes it on to DCO. In such cases, a standard “levy clause” is included in the project funding agreement.

DCO has the fiduciary responsibility to use the levy to support the RC system.

There is a clear checklist for UN agencies to determine whether a project is subject to the levy, and they are obliged to inform their development partners and donors accordingly.

While the levy was adopted as part of the reform of the UN development system in 2018, it is not universally applied.





### Business Class?

UN officials generally fly in economy class. Business class flights can only be approved for travel over 9 or 12 hours; for medical reasons; when travel is deemed “mission critical”; or for staff at the ASG level and above. Business class is never approved for travel related to training, conferences, official home leave or for consultants. If a project involves travel for government officials, the same rules apply. In rare cases, government ministers may be allowed to travel business class. In such cases, approval is required from the agency representative and costs must be charged to the project budget.

## Funding mechanisms

There are several key funding mechanisms for the delivery of programmes and projects in-country. Each mechanism serves different needs.

- **Multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs)** allow multiple donors pool their funds to support a programme or a project. When these funds are implemented by a single agency, they are sometimes called “basket funds”. Joint programmes and MPTFs are a subset of MDTFs implemented by several agencies.
- **Joint programmes** involve MDTFs implemented by several agencies, where the funds are channelled through one agency and distributed to others. They are particularly suited to smaller short-term projects costing less than \$5 million.
- **Multi-partner trust funds (MPTFs)** are used to support projects involving two or more agencies and/or implementing partners. Donors contribute to a central pool, managed by an administrative agent, which is usually the specialized MPTF Office hosted by UNDP in New York. The administrative agent handles fiduciary responsibilities and charges a 1% administration fee. Participating agencies charge a flat cost-recovery rate of 7% for the activities they implement. Donors need to sign contracts only with the administrative agent, thus avoiding the need to sign separate agreements with each participating agency. The administrative agent allocates funds to UN agencies based on agreed activities. The administrative agent also monitors progress and provides regular reports on project status and results to donors and stakeholders. MPTFs are usually established for complex projects and programmes with budgets over \$5 million.

MPTFs ensure that UN agencies work towards common results. They are a key instrument for promoting greater collaboration among agencies. With only one progress and financial report for all donors, MPTFs significantly cut transaction costs. Cost recovery is transparent and applicable across the board and no coordination levy is charged. While single-donor MPTFs exist, they are rare.

- **Bilateral project funding** refers to instances where a single donor funds a project that is carried out by one UN agency. This occurs when a UN agency mobilizes funds for a project from only one donor, or when a donor chooses a single UN agency to implement a particular component of its own bilateral aid programme. While innovative projects often start with bilateral project funding, the proliferation of bilateral projects places an additional burden on UN agencies and affects the coherent implementation of the Cooperation Framework. Bilateral project funding is subject to a coordination levy.

- **Government cost-sharing**, also called “local resources”, refers to contributions made by national governments to UN activities within their own countries. Contributions can be in-kind, including the provision of premises or staff. Financial contributions are channelled through MPTFs or special accounts established with the UN. Special accounts are commonly used when national governments fund the UN directly to run large public procurement projects.

## Key multi-partner trust funds

MPTFs facilitate the efforts of UN country teams (UNCTs) and humanitarian country teams (HCTs) to work together as “One UN”. At the global level, key MPTFs include:

- **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** is a humanitarian pooled fund that supports immediate relief and recovery efforts in emergencies. Managed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and supported by the CERF secretariat (housed at OCHA headquarters in New York), it allows agencies to kick-start their responses. CERF is regularly replenished by Member States. In addition to its rapid response window, the fund also has a window for underfunded emergencies.
- **Joint SDG Fund** is a pooled fund established to help UNCTs support the efforts of countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Administratively managed by UNDP and under the strategic oversight of the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Development Coordination, it provides seed funding for joint activities at country level. RCs submit proposals to the fund on behalf of their UNCTs. The fund, which is designed to provide “muscle” to the RC system, promotes collaboration within UNCTs.
- **Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)** is a pooled fund that supports work in the field of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Managed by the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) within the UN Secretariat, it supports the aims of the intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and contributes to efforts to address the causes of conflict and promote

stability. The RC submits a joint proposal to the PBF on behalf of the UNCT.

- **Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund** is a pooled fund that aims to increase women’s participation in crisis and emergency response and in conflict prevention. Managed by a technical secretariat overseen by UN Women, project proposals from national and international NGOs are approved by country-level steering committees, which, along with UN agencies, include representatives of civil society. UN agencies can act as technical partners or intermediaries to facilitate the implementation of projects.

At the country-level, the following two country-based MPTFs are specifically designed to support joint work of the UN development system:

- **Country-based pooled funds** are MPTFs managed by OCHA, which coordinate and distribute humanitarian funds to UN agencies and vetted local actors. Unlike other MPTFs, they can be directly accessed by non-UN agencies, as well as local NGOs.
- **Local SDG funds, peace/transition funds** or inter-agency pooled funds are development-oriented MPTFs that provide direct funding for specific objectives or to achieve the results of a Cooperation Framework. These funds are established at the initiative of RCs and UNCTs and are not yet established in all countries.

## Enterprise resource planning systems

Many UN agencies use enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems software products, such as Quantum (UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women), Umoja (UN Secretariat), SAP (WFP), Oracle Cloud (UNICEF) and PeopleSoft (UNHCR), to process financial transactions, manage procurement, allow for financial reporting and data analysis and measure progress against project indicator targets.

The use of different ERP systems by UN agencies complicates the transfer of funds and diffuses responsibility for activities between agencies engaged in multi-agency initiatives. Standardizing the systems would require concerted action from the executive boards of UN agencies, as well as substantial financial investment.

## 6.2

### 6.2 Project staffing

Personnel costs are part of the direct costs in a project budget. Small, timebound projects, such as the hosting of a round table or a legal drafting workshop, may be managed by existing core staff at UN agency offices. In the majority of cases, however, staff or consultants need to be recruited, and the costs need to be fully budgeted for in the project budget.

#### **Independent recruitment panels**

Under UN recruitment procedures, Member States are not invited to participate in interview panels and cannot receive personal details of shortlisted candidates.



The budgeted “pro forma” cost of project staff posts include prorated pension contributions and other entitlements, such as education grants and health insurance. The full pro forma cost is charged to the project, regardless of whether individual entitlements are drawn down. This allows for staff costs to be balanced across multiple projects.

UN agencies can only formally hire staff for a project once they have secured the necessary funding. For that reason, many country-based project posts can only be filled after the start of a project. As there are often months-long lead-in times for recruitment, agencies will sometimes begin the hiring process prior to the formal signing of donor funding agreements, which helps expedite the implementation of a project. UN personnel are recruited in line with the rules and regulations of the implementing agencies and usually involve competitive selection processes.

When the rapid deployment of personnel is needed for humanitarian emergencies, the UN uses surge capacity mechanisms. Existing UN staff can be asked to temporarily redeploy to assist in an emergency. Surge staff retain their normal contracts and are entitled to a per diem payment or extra pay. Other mechanisms allow for exemptions from certain human resource policies, such as shorter advertisement and recruitment periods and the use of stand-by partners, which comprise external organizations providing human resources, expertise and support in emergencies.

## 6.3 Project contracts and agreements

Each UN agency project is formalized through a project document that defines its scope, objectives, timeframe, budget and implementation plan, along with various annexes tailored to the specific needs of the project and its funding partners. The nomenclature for such documents varies across UN agencies.

### UN project documents

While there is no common template for development or humanitarian projects across the UN system, all UN project documents usually include:

- **Introduction and project fundamentals** – name, timeframe, thematic area, beneficiaries and financial parameters.
- **Problem statement** – aim of the project, including an analysis of its political and socioeconomic dimensions.
- **Theory of change** – how the project aims to achieve intended results to address the development or humanitarian challenges identified.
- **Results framework** – also sometimes known as the “logframe”, lists the intended impacts, results and required inputs, each with their respective indicators and targets.
- **Governance arrangements** – describes the various committees, including levels of meetings and membership.
- **Budget** – is the detailed financial plan, usually in United States dollars, which includes full cost recovery.
- **Risk matrix** – list of potential risks and mitigation measures addressing internal and external risks.
- **Social and environmental standards** – describes the extent to which the project complies with both UN and national standards on environmental impact and social protection legislation.
- **Monitoring and evaluation plans** – methods and frequency of data collection and evaluation.
- **Gender equality dimensions** – measures to ensure gender equality by including gender in context analysis, planning for gender equality outcomes and assessing impact.
- **Legal aspects** – include the financial and output-related progress reporting requirements and other legal elements.
- **Signatures** – details on required signatures from country representatives and national partners with sufficient authority to sign.

Once the project documents have been finalized, agreements with three key interlocutors – the host government/national institution(s) being supported, donors and other UN agencies – are signed.

### Agreements with governments

Although the host government signs the Cooperation Framework and sometimes signs the HNRP, it usually does not sign every individual project document. On occasion, specific national institutions benefitting from the project, or national NGOs, may sign project documents.



#### Tracking projects

It is very difficult for the RC/HC to keep an overview of all individual and joint projects and programmes in a country. UN agencies and donors can help by systematically sharing a copy of signed funding agreements with the RCO.

## UN staff: recruitment, categories and conditions

Article 101 of the UN Charter stipulates that: “Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible”. Today this applies to all UN entities and has been expanded to include gender equality.

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), based at UN Headquarters in New York, handles the recruitment and deployment for the UN Secretariat, peacekeeping missions and special political missions, as well as RC/Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) and the staff of Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). Each UN agency manages its own recruitment and human resource processes.

The UN maintains strict adherence to minimum qualifications for recruitment, including a required number of years of work experience for each position. As a result, candidates who appear to be an ideal fit for a role but do not meet the specified experience requirements may not be considered.

Employment conditions can vary, but the UN Staff Regulations and Rules, along with administrative instructions, bulletins and circulars of the Secretary-General, provide guidelines for all UN entities.

UN staff can be hired on temporary, fixed-term or permanent contracts. Posts are categorized by different grades. Moving to a higher grade requires that staff members pass through a competitive application process once a suitable position becomes available.

All UN staff undergo performance appraisals, although each UN agency uses its own templates. While performance improvement plans tackle underperformance, contract termination for poor performance is complicated, as in most bureaucracies. For staff performance appraisal, the UN has system-wide human resource strategies approved by the General Assembly.

There are different categories of UN staff working in country settings.

### “Senior appointment” category

This category refers to the appointments of Under-Secretaries-General (USG) and Assistant Secretaries-General (ASG). The recruitment process for USGs and ASGs differs significantly from that

for other grades. USGs and ASGs are appointed directly by the Secretary-General, often based on their experience and diplomatic skills, but also on their nationality. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) in mission settings, who have USG status, are the only USGs with country-specific portfolios.

### “Professional and higher” categories

This category comprises globally recruited international civil servants. Professional and higher category staff include Director levels (D-1/D-2 and P-6/P-7) and Professional levels (P-1 to P-5). In peacekeeping and special political missions, personnel may be recruited in the “Field Service” category.

Posts in the Professional and higher categories are typically advertised publicly. Candidates apply through various agency online recruitment systems and the recruitment process includes assessments and, oftentimes, competency-based interviews.

RC/HCs are usually recruited at the D-2 level, and in very complex settings they may be ASGs. Resident Representatives/Country Directors of UN agencies in-country hold posts from the P-4 to D-2 levels, depending on the size of the country presence.

Junior Professional Officer (JPO) positions are funded directly by individual Member States for their qualified younger citizens. JPOs are recruited at the P-2 level.

### “National Professional” category

This category includes all locally recruited professionals whose duties and qualifications are similar to staff in the Professional and higher categories for international staff. National Professional Officers (NPOs) are graded from NO-A (entry level) to NO-E (highest level).

### “General Service” category

The General Service category (grades G-1 to G-7) includes various support functions ranging from administration to skilled manual labour, local security personnel and public information experts. It primarily consists of national support staff, who are recruited locally.

**Other personnel**

Consultants, UN Volunteers (UNVs), secondments (staff that are loaned from another organization) and UN interns are considered to be UN personnel but are not UN staff members.

The UN contracts consultants for various tasks, ranging from manual labour to highly specialized types of work. Consultants can be hired on a daily, monthly or annual basis to meet specific terms of reference (ToR), or on a deliverable basis, whereby payment is made upon completion of agreed tasks. There is no harmonized template for consultant recruitment and daily rates vary widely. UN agencies usually set a cap on the maximum daily rate for national and international consultants.

Consultants are essential for UN work when tailor-made expertise is needed, or a rapidly evolving situation requires more personnel on the ground. Hiring consultants has some advantages: it is faster and easier than recruiting staff, generally more cost-effective, with fewer entitlements, and allows for easier replacement, if necessary.

Filling project posts with short-term consultants can have significant disadvantages, however, including the loss of relationships, insight, data and intellectual property once consultancies are ended. Consultancies are therefore detrimental for the building of trust and sustainability of UN work in-country. Furthermore, hired consultants cannot officially speak for the UN.

The UNV programme allows professionals to volunteer in various capacities nationally, internationally or online. UNVs do not receive a salary but receive living and other allowances.

Military and police personnel seconded to the UN from troop- and police-contributing countries (TCCs/PCCs) remain members of their own national services and are not considered UN staff. Different rules and regulations are applicable to their secondments.

## **Agreements with donors**

Funding agreements with donors follow two standard templates:

- **Agency-specific standard templates** – which are agreed at the headquarters level between the UN agency and the donor.
- **UN system-wide standard templates** – which are used for joint programmes and MPTFs.

Most donors have standard funding agreement templates that are agreed upon with all major UN agencies. Any requested changes to a template made at country level should be discussed and agreed upon, at the headquarters level between the UN agency and the donor capitals.

Funding agreements signed at country level usually include details such as the payment schedule or payment tranches (for example, 30% upon signature, 50% upon completion of milestones and 20% upon final completion); reporting requirements and schedules (including financial and progress reports); stipulations regarding various forms of misconduct and communications; and donor visibility (including the use of logos).

## **Agreements between UN agencies**

Funding mechanisms, for example, joint programming arrangements and MPTFs, specify the collaboration and financial flows between UN agencies involved in the implementation of the same programmes or projects. If a UN agency subcontracts another UN agency to carry out a project, a separate agreement is required.

## **Extending or suspending a project**

Projects cannot always be implemented according to plan. Normal project governance allows for extensions. No-cost extensions are extensions of timelines without requiring additional funding, maintaining the same outputs, results and impacts originally envisaged. Cost extensions include an increase in the project budget, either to meet existing outputs and results envisaged or to add new ones. Both forms of extension need the approval of the governance mechanism for the project, which might be its steering committee.

In certain circumstances, a project may be suspended or terminated early due to factors such as unmet goals, shifting local needs, human rights concerns, negative evaluations or audits, financial impropriety or dramatic shifts in the operational context, for example during conflict or natural disasters. While donors can suspend their participation in a project individually, decisions on a project suspension or termination are taken through the governance mechanism and are based on consultation with the heads of UN agencies, the RC/HC and donors to manage risks and compliance with contractual commitments.

### **Common services and back-offices at country level**

At country level, UN agencies can share expenses for common services such as rent, maintenance, communications, procurement or fleet management. This is referred to as “common services” and “common back-offices”. In-country, these include:

- **Facility management** – shared maintenance and operation of premises, often referred to as a “UN House”, where multiple UN agencies are located.
- **IT services** – common platforms for e-mail, data management and cybersecurity.
- **Procurement** – joint purchasing of goods and services to leverage economies of scale.
- **Travel management** – centralized travel booking and coordination.
- **Human resources** – centralized local recruitment, payroll and training services.
- **Finance and accounting** – unified financial reporting, auditing and budgeting services.
- **Administrative support** – document management, logistics and protocol services.

Agencies usually sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to define their roles, responsibilities and financial arrangements. While support for the common services and back-offices is strong, many agencies still do not have mechanisms in place to allow for this type of expense-sharing.

## **6.4 Project governance arrangements**

6.4

UN development projects use steering groups, project boards or project committees to guide implementation and to take strategic and operational decisions. The composition of such groups is usually determined during the project design stage, in consultation with donors and governments. For larger development projects, a steering group includes the responsible UN agency, project donors, a government counterpart and prospective implementing partners.

In more complex, strategic projects with significant funding or high-level political profile, there may be up to three committee levels, including implementing UN agencies, donors and a number of ministries, as well as:

- **Political/strategic committee** – includes government ministers at the highest level, ambassadors and RCs.
- **Project steering committee** – includes relevant ministry representatives, bilateral heads of cooperation and representatives of UN agencies.
- **Technical committee** – includes experts from the government, the UN and sometimes donors and implementing NGOs.



While project documents include steering arrangements, the terms of reference (ToR) of the various committees are agreed upon before funding agreements are signed. Steering committees generally work by consensus and meeting minutes must be shared with all members before the next meeting is held. The chairing of meetings is often organized on a rotational or a co-chaired basis.

Humanitarian project governance arrangements can differ, depending on the duration of the crisis and on the role of the humanitarian clusters. Country-based pooled funds or the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, for example, have advisory boards to support RC/HCs in decision-making.

## 6.5 Implementation modalities

UN projects are either implemented directly by UN agencies, known as direct implementation (DIM), or by national institutions, known as national implementation (NIM). Some projects can consist of a mix of DIM and NIM components.

Neither implementation modality refers to the manner of the daily engagement between the UN and national institutions: the modalities refer to the body that retains fiduciary responsibility.

- **Under DIM**, UN agencies retain full fiduciary responsibility, conducting the contracting and the payment of all project activities. State institutions receiving support usually work closely with UN agency advisers in the implementation of activities. Most humanitarian projects, as well as some development projects that work with under-capacitated State institutions and/or NGOs, are implemented through DIM.
- **Under NIM**, national institutions manage contracts and payments and have financial and operational responsibility for projects. Such institutions can include government entities, public administration bodies, national civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs, representatives of academia and other associations. However, to access the NIM modality, an initial assessment of the capacity of any State institution wishing to manage UN funds is carried out to determine whether its financial system can manage international donor money.

### Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and national implementation

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness supports NIM, stressing the importance of strengthening and utilizing local institutions over time in order to foster sustainable development and national ownership. NIM might not always be feasible, however, particularly in fragile States or contexts with weak governance.

Various UN agencies conduct this evaluation using the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), a common operational framework using the same, consistent, standardized approach and tools.

HACT applies a risk management approach to assurance and due diligence. Measures are tailored to individual partners and contexts instead of being applied in a one-size fits all approach. After an initial evaluation, UN agencies conduct regular spot checks, audits and financial reviews of the national partner's

system while implementing capacity development plans to address identified weaknesses.

HACT aims to reduce administrative burdens for both the UN and its partners while enhancing efficiency, transparency and accountability. It requires thorough capacity assessments and regular assurance activities, and can be resource-intensive, particularly in high-risk or fragile contexts.

As UN agencies mainly work through and support public administration bodies to develop the capacity of Member States to meet the SDGs and tackle humanitarian crises, NIM is the most direct way to develop local capacities and support the development priorities of countries.

## Working with NGOs and the private sector in project implementation

Under both the DIM and NIM modalities, the UN works with different types of implementing partners, primarily civil society/NGOs and the private sector.

- **Civil society/NGOs** – UN agencies partner extensively with NGOs worldwide. NGOs tend to be more agile, are often closer to beneficiaries and are more independent of central governments. UN agencies usually work with NGOs either through partnership agreements (shared responsibility) or grant agreements, which means that NGOs implement projects while the UN provides funding and oversight. All funding agreements with NGOs, whether partnership or grant-based, define objectives, deliverables, timelines, reporting requirements and financial arrangements. NGOs are required to submit regular reports on activities, progress and the use of funds and may be audited at the conclusion of partnership or grant agreements.

When choosing NGOs to work with, UN agencies assess their operational capacity, financial management, integrity and track record and ensure that their work is in line with UN rules and values. NGOs with explicit political affiliations are screened against the UN commitment to political independence and neutrality and may sometimes be excluded.

The extensive use of NGOs for the implementation of development projects can limit the development of the capacity of national institutions and, in extreme cases, create parallel, competing bureaucracies operating outside government systems. As a consequence, contracting national NGOs, particularly for larger projects, often requires government approval.

- **Private sector** – at the global level, the UN has many corporate relationships with the private sector aimed at promoting responsible business practices and focusing on innovation, both in terms of products and financing (see chap. 8). In country-level project implementation, however, UN agencies primarily cooperate with the private business sector through

### NGOs and cost recovery

NGOs that implement UN projects cannot always charge indirect cost recovery, which would allow them to maintain or grow their organizational capacity. Sometimes UN agencies allow higher cost-recovery rates from international NGOs than local NGOs. Such practices are in contrast with commitments and in the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing to strengthen the capacity of local actors.

## UN procurement: principles, process and practices

Each year, the UN spends billions of dollars to purchase equipment, infrastructure and consultancy services. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNDP, WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF are the largest procuring agencies.

All UN agencies uphold the principles of competitiveness and neutrality in procurement. Furthermore, the UN follows strict procurement rules aligned with World Trade Organization (WTO) standards and internal guidelines on anti-money laundering, Security Council sanctions and anti-terrorist financing.

While the exact UN procurement stages can vary from agency to agency, the procurement cycle usually includes finalizing technical specifications, launching invitations to bid, conducting onsite demonstrations, awarding contracts and managing the delivery of contracts. In humanitarian crises, emergency procurement procedures are activated to accelerate the process and allow direct contracting.

The UN conducts procurement for its own operations and on behalf of Member States when specific technical expertise is needed or where the independence of the procurement process is imperative. In all cases, national procurement officials are normally involved to ensure the appropriate transfer of knowledge.

Generally, UN agencies in-country purchase low-tech items locally but may seek help from specialist procurement officers at UN agencies for the purchase of complex, high-value items that require specific technical advice. Such support incurs a service fee based on the contract value.

**UN Procurement Division** – The UN Procurement Division, based in Copenhagen, services several UN agencies and provides:

- **Centralized procurement services**, for efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- **Strategic sourcing** with long-term supplier agreements (LTAs) to leverage collective buying power and reduce lead-time.

- **Relationship management** with major suppliers, including the vetting of suppliers and ensuring compliance with ethical and environmental standards.
- **Support** for the timely delivery of goods and services, particularly for urgent projects.
- **Training** for UN and national procurement staff to strengthen local capacities and promote best practices.
- **Promotion** of environmentally friendly products and services and sustainable innovation.
- **Assurance** that UN procurement complies with UN policies and maintains transparency, accountability and integrity.

**Long-term agreements (LTAs)** – For items regularly procured from established suppliers or when procurements need to be accelerated due to emergencies or tight deadlines, long-term agreements (LTAs) are often used. LTAs are agreements between UN agencies and a preselected and vetted group of suppliers for commonly needed goods or services.

LTAs streamline procurement by allowing for the agreement on terms in advance, such as unit price and delivery, thus ensuring consistent quality, greater efficiency and quicker delivery. These agreements can be transferred between agencies, allowing them to use the same suppliers under the same terms and conditions. Such agreements usually last up to three years before the necessary due diligence steps are repeated.

procurement contracts. These contracts can involve equipment or vehicle purchases, regular service provision or training/capacity development efforts delivered by for-profit companies with development expertise.

Working with the private sector can create conflicts of interest. Partnerships with private companies involved in gross violations of social and environmental standards, human rights, corruption, misconduct, tax evasion or criminal activities can harm the reputation of the UN. Thorough due diligence processes and regular audits of contracts with the private sector can help prevent conflicts of interests and assure the fiduciary responsibility of the UN.

## 6.6 Monitoring, evaluation and audits

6.6

UN agencies follow monitoring, evaluation and audit rules and procedures for all projects.

### Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation plans are integral parts of project documents and the costs for such plans are included in project budgets. Monitoring data is extracted from each agency's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which tracks not only financial expenditure against agreed project budgets but also progress against indicators and their respective targets. This enables regular monitoring by the project governance structure and for adjustments to take place, if needed.

In addition, monitoring data provides a lot of the core data required for assessing project performance and evaluations, often supplemented by additional primary data sources, such as interviews, surveys and focus groups. Each project document sets out the timing of evaluations, usually at the mid-term or ex-post phases, or both.

Evaluations are usually conducted by external evaluation experts contracted by the country offices of UN agencies for that purpose, using evaluation guidance usually produced by the headquarters-based evaluation office of the agencies. Headquarters-based evaluation offices often conduct larger country-level evaluations.

Mid-term evaluations allow for recommendations to be implemented in time to adjust projects if they do not meet their objectives. Ex-post evaluations are carried out after the conclusion of projects, ideally allowing time for their impact — or lack thereof — to emerge.

In the case of pooled funding arrangements, donors jointly agree on the necessary evaluations and on their timing in order to avoid multiple evaluations at different stages of project implementation.

#### Measuring impact

Member States, donors and UN agencies ask for proof of results of development work, preferably in a prompt and measurable manner. Measuring the impact of development efforts — including isolating the contribution of a single project to the overall trajectory of a country — is a perennial challenge. The lasting effect may only be evaluated years after a project's completion.



### Donors and audits

Donors can request an extraordinary audit of a project, aside from or additional to the regular audit envisaged in the project document. Such requests are made through the Permanent Mission to the UN at the agency headquarters rather than through the in-country donor. All external audits are public documents. To receive a copy of a country-level external audit report, donors can contact the relevant UN agency.

## Audits

All UN development and humanitarian projects are subject to audit. The UN follows the single audit principle, which means that audits – whether scheduled or requested by donors – are conducted internally by the audit office of each UN agency. The results of these findings are presented to other stakeholders.

Scheduled audits, as well as irregular audits in response to a request by a donor or a group of donors, are usually conducted by the headquarters-based audit team of the relevant UN agency, with possible visits to the target country. This means that independent auditors based in-country are generally not involved.

More details on the various audit and oversight offices and process of the UN are provided in chapter 7.

## 6.7

### 6.7 Project closure and asset divestment

Solid project or programming planning includes a phasing-out period at the end of each project. The “financial closure” period usually extends beyond the “operational closure” period. After the close of operations, a further period, sometimes lasting up to 12 months, allows for financial payments to be made and accounts to be settled. While the contracts of project staff end during the operational closure phase, assets sales and transfers, as well as final progress reports, are produced during the financial closure phase.

The responsible handover of assets such as vehicles, water and sanitation equipment, information technology (IT) equipment, databases and software source codes is an important part of all development or humanitarian projects and should be planned for during the project design phase. Wherever possible, the UN aims to transfer the ownership of assets to national counterparts or local communities at the end of a project. Not planning adequately for asset divestment can lead to “asset dumping”.

Asset divestment includes:

- **Inventory** – list of all project assets against what was recorded at the start of the project.
- **Valuation of assets** – determination of the market value of assets, considering depreciation and future costs, such as software upgrades and vehicle maintenance.
- **Capacity development** – providing training and technical support to ensure that the transferred assets are utilized effectively.

- **Legal documentation** – ensuring that new title documents address future divestment conditions and adhere to UN financial rules, local laws and donor conditions, such as restrictions on the military use of vehicles when re-sold.

The divestment process, including details of the transferred assets, their expected lifespan and use, is documented in the final project report. The report also contains a review of how the assets have been used since the transfer to ensure they have been used as intended.

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...- ...- ...- ...- voir la vie saur...



# 7

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## **Accountability and oversight**

How the UN responds to irregularities  
and misconduct.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH between the institutional accountability of UN agencies and the personal accountability of their staff. To ensure accountability, agencies are required to comply with specific budgeting and performance/financial reporting standards, environmental policies and geographic and gender representation prerequisites in their operations and recruitment practices. The accountability of officials of UN agencies is determined by the manner in which they discharge their official duties, including their personal conduct outside their official sphere of work (see chap. 6). Such obligations are spelled out in various accountability frameworks across the UN system.

## 7.1

### 7.1 Accountability of UN agencies

There are multiple chains of accountability for UN agencies:

- **Member States** – UN agencies, through their respective executive boards and governing bodies, are accountable to the Member States for the implementation of their mandates and their adherence to international laws, standards and principles, the use of their budgets and the quality and standards of their internal operations.
- **Host countries** – UN agencies are accountable to the host country for their operational results and for coordinating and aligning their programmes with relevant national development priorities, in accordance with international standards (including international humanitarian principles).
- **Affected populations** – UN agencies are accountable to affected populations through established commitments, including the “Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Accountability to Affected People in Humanitarian Action”. The IASC statement highlights the importance of adhering to the “do-no-harm” principle and of ensuring that affected populations have a voice in decisions that directly impact their lives.
- **Donors** – UN agencies, consistent with their mandates, are accountable to their donors, mostly Member States, for operational results and for the effective, transparent and efficient management of funds.

#### **Management accountability framework (MAF)**

At country level, the management accountability framework is a key tool of UN reform and clarifies the country-level responsibilities and accountabilities between Resident Coordinators (RCs) and member agencies of the UN Country Team (UNCT) in the following five areas: leadership of UN development activities; strategic planning and programming; communication and advocacy; common services; and funding.

#### **Accountability frameworks**

UN agencies follow myriad rules, regulations and operational guidelines, ranging from accounting standards to human rights and humanitarian principles and climate change policies. Because the UN operational system has grown organically, many individual agencies have developed their own processes and have their own rules and procedures, which are not necessarily the same from one agency to another.

All UN agencies have accountability instruments, for example project and operations manuals, financial rules and regulations and independent evaluation and audit guidance. They outline their operational standards and internal monitoring mechanisms. Collectively such instruments are referred to as the “accountability framework” of an agency. There are various efforts to harmonize the numerous frameworks across the whole UN system, in particular through the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) (see chap. 9).

Common approaches across accountability frameworks include assigning clear roles and responsibilities to individuals and entities and ensuring transparency by making decisions and actions openly accessible to stakeholders. Most frameworks also include performance management tools by setting goals, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. In addition, there are risk management mechanisms, which involve identifying, assessing and mitigating risks to the UN and its programmes, as well as compliance measures to ensure adherence to regulations, procedures and ethical standards. Agencies are expected to justify their actions (“answerability”), to address errors and outstanding issues (“corrective action”) and to make use of feedback and experiences (“lessons learned”) to ensure continuous improvement of policies and practices.

### **Where to find accountability frameworks**

Accountability frameworks can be found on the websites of each individual UN agency or from the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). The frameworks are usually public or can be shared with Member States as members of the executive boards of UN agencies.

## **7.2 UN staff accountability**

7.2

With a global staff of over 100,000 across the UN system, working at approximately 467 duty stations in highly complex settings, cases of mismanagement, fraud or misconduct are almost inevitable. How transparently and effectively the UN deals with such situations affects the trust that Member States and the wider public have in the Organization. Robust oversight and compliance mechanisms, similar to those of many government agencies, define and identify instances of corruption and enable action against those held accountable.

UN staff and leadership must adhere to the highest standards of behaviour and conduct. Leadership and staff performance expectations are outlined in a number of documents, including the “Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations”, which apply to staff members throughout the UN system, and the “United Nations System Leadership Framework”, endorsed by the CEB, which supports leadership development, particularly in the RC system.

### **UN Staff Regulations and Rules**

Each UN entity sets its own employment conditions, but all entities must follow prescribed standards of conduct, as set out in the above-mentioned UN Staff Regulations and Rules and in the standards of conduct for the international civil service. Both the UN Staff Regulations and Rules and the standards of conduct, which are derived from the UN Charter itself, emphasize basic rights and obligations, including impartiality and independence in the execution



### Gifts

UN staff are not allowed to accept gifts. If cultural or diplomatic norms require the exchange or acceptance of a gift, UN staff members must report it and entrust the gift to the designated agency office.

of staff members' duties. Most importantly, it is a fundamental rule that international civil servants do not take instructions from any national government, including their own.

The performance evaluation system is a key mechanism to hold staff accountable to UN standards of conduct and their terms of reference more generally.

Incoming staff receive regular training on ethics and conduct. Ethics offices assess conflicts of interest and provide guidance on issues that may affect duty performance.

All staff report breaches of the rules and regulations and cooperate with audits and investigations (see chap. 6). They must disclose conflicts of interest, including financial interests, personal relationships and connections to UN-affiliated businesses. Staff members at the Director (D-1) level and above complete an annual financial disclosure. Within the UN Secretariat, additional staff members may be requested to disclose their private finances depending on their roles and responsibilities.

Outside employment, including volunteering, is restricted and the acceptance of gifts or favours that could influence professional conduct is not allowed.

For UN "non-staff", such as uniformed personnel in mission settings, consultants, interns, contractors or implementing partners,

## UN Values and Behaviour Framework

The United Nations Values and Behaviour Framework, promulgated by the Secretary-General in 2024, identifies the following four "UN values" that UN staff, in addition to their terms of reference, are measured against by the performance management and development system of the UN entity that employs them:

- **Inclusion** – staff should create an environment of dignity and respect for all, regardless of any aspect of identity.
- **Integrity** – staff should act ethically, demonstrating the standards of conduct of the United Nations, including impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness in daily activities and behaviour. They should also take prompt action in case of witnessing unprofessional or unethical behaviour.
- **Humility** – staff should demonstrate self-awareness and willingness to learn from others.
- **Humanity** – staff should act according to the purposes of the UN.

The four values are enabled by five behaviours:

- **Connect and collaborate** – build positive relationships.
- **Analyse and plan** – seek out and use data from a wide range of sources to propose evidence-based solutions.
- **Deliver results with positive impact** – hold oneself and others accountable for making a positive difference to the people and causes that the UN serves.
- **Learn and develop** – pursue one's own learning and development and contribute to the learning and development of others.
- **Adapt and innovate** – demonstrate flexibility, agility and the ability to think and act in novel ways.

adherence to the same UN values and standards of conduct is included either in their individual contracts or clearly set out in other rules or agreements.

## 7.3 Addressing misconduct

It is important to note that the UN can only conduct administrative investigations and impose administrative measures. Its policing and judicial authority is strictly limited to the policing of UN military and police components within mission settings. However, in cases where conduct may have breached applicable national criminal or civil laws, UN entities can refer cases to the authorities of the host country.

### Reporting of misconduct in the UN

Anyone can confidentially report waste, fraud, mismanagement or other misconduct in the UN through the website or the hotline (+1-212-963-1111) of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). OIOS will refer the case to the appropriate investigative authority

In general, UN entities follow a structured, four-stage approach to address suspected wrongdoing, such as fraud, corruption, prohibited conduct or sexual misconduct. The process begins with the presumption of innocence and concludes with findings and recommendations.

- **Reporting phase** – There are various ways that allegations of misconduct can be brought to the attention of investigating authorities, including dedicated confidential reporting mechanisms (hotlines), audits, inspections or evaluations, as well as through cooperation between different oversight offices.

All investigations are strictly confidential and anyone reporting misconduct or cooperating with an authorized investigation or on another oversight assignment is protected from retaliation. Moreover, anonymous reporting is possible.

Anyone can confidentially report suspected wrongdoing, including staff or non-staff personnel, or members of the public. UN staff members are obliged to report misconduct to the appropriate authorities. Malicious reporting, that is, knowingly reporting false information, constitutes misconduct.

- **Preliminary assessment phase** – An agency compliance officer makes an initial evaluation of the merit of a report and determines if further investigation is necessary. Depending on this assessment, cases are dismissed, investigated by the agency's compliance office or – if criminal activity is suspected – referred to national authorities. In complex cases, the investigative bodies of UN agencies can request support from OIOS, if necessary.

### Why UN investigations take time

As with most investigations into misconduct, formal UN investigations can be lengthy. Delays may arise at the reporting stage if victims are unaware of their rights and/or fear retaliation. Working with different national authorities can be time-consuming. Moreover, there are limited resources in many UN investigative offices.



Mechanisms exist between the various UN oversight entities to ensure that reports they receive are directed to the responsible authorities. UN investigative entities also cooperate and share good practices on investigations through various other mechanisms, for example the United Nations Representatives of Investigative Services (UN-RIS), the body that aims to strengthen investigation practices and professionalism within the United Nations system.

- **Investigation phase** – To ensure due process, agency investigations follow established UN investigative procedures, including document reviews, interviews, financial records inspection and other methods.

UN investigations are confidential, internal processes. To protect the integrity of investigations, the UN cannot share updates, preliminary findings or anecdotes. In general, details of investigations are not published or otherwise disclosed, except in limited circumstances, for example in cases where it is necessary to provide protection to alleged victims or other affected individuals.

All staff members under investigation are entitled to the presumption of innocence and due process. In serious cases, staff may be put on administrative leave at the start of an investigation, but in the majority of cases they can continue working while the investigation is ongoing. This includes the possibility of being moved from one duty station to another.

- **Findings and recommendations** – Once an investigation is completed, the investigating body prepares a report with findings and recommendations. If misconduct is substantiated, disciplinary action may be recommended.

Reports are not automatically made public, nor are they automatically shared with Member States. In some circumstances, depending on the rules set by the relevant governing body, investigation reports may be made available to Member States upon request (although with certain information redacted or withheld to protect the confidentiality and due process rights of individuals).

- **Action and follow-up** – After the conclusion of an investigation, in cases where misconduct by UN personnel has been confirmed, UN agencies can take disciplinary action, which may include dismissal, demotion or other administrative measures. Implementation of such decisions are monitored by OIOS or by the compliance office of the UN agency.

UN staff members have the right to appeal disciplinary decisions through established UN mechanisms, such as the UN Dispute Tribunal (for first instance appeals by staff members) and the UN Appeals Tribunal (appellate body).

In cases involving criminal activity, the UN investigative body may refer its findings to national authorities for prosecution, subject to

### Misconduct reporting options for donors

Member State donors have specific options to report a case of misconduct: they can report cases at the country level to the RC, to the country representative of the agency or through their Permanent Mission to the UN. As is the case with members of the general public, they can also report anonymously.



## Sexual misconduct

The UN distinguishes between sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of the local civilian population by UN personnel or peacekeeping troops and sexual harassment by UN staff. The UN has implemented measures to protect against and address both SEA and sexual harassment.

The UN Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment in the UN System was established in 2024 to enhance system-wide coordination in addressing sexual misconduct. At Headquarters, the UN works to strengthen prevention and accountability for sexual harassment through an executive group. Nevertheless, action plans to tackle sexual harassment tend to be agency specific.

Regarding SEA, UN standards, which apply regardless of national laws, include the following:

- SEA is considered gross misconduct and grounds for contract termination.
- Sexual activity with children under age 18 is prohibited, regardless of the age of consent in the host country.
- Hiring sex workers is prohibited even if sex work in the host country is legal, as is exchanging money, employment, goods or services for sex.
- Sexual relationships with beneficiaries are forbidden.

- UN staff must report any concerns regarding SEA; failure to do so is considered misconduct.
- UN must foster an environment that prevents SEA.

UN agencies and UNCTs are mandated to develop annual action plans on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and have designated coordinators and focal points to address the issue. The RC/HC is responsible for the implementation of action plans and must report annually to the Secretary-General on cases of SEA and on action taken, based on information provided by the agencies.

Criminal cases involving UN staff, such as rape, can be referred to host country authorities. Cases involving seconded military personnel fall under the responsibility of the troop-contributing country (TCC). SEA cases are reported publicly on the UN real-time online database.

Specialized investigative teams usually handle both sexual harassment and SEA cases. In cases involving sexual misconduct, investigations take a victim-centred approach that involves putting the rights and dignity of victims, their well-being and safety, at the forefront of all efforts to prevent and respond to sexual harassment or SEA, regardless of the affiliation of the alleged perpetrator.

the decision of the Secretary-General to waive the staff member's privileges and immunities.

UN agencies must report annually to their executive boards on all cases of misconduct. In general, mechanisms are in place for the reporting of general information and statistics on misconduct to governing bodies.

Oversight entities, which may use information gathered during an investigation to make recommendations aimed at improving internal controls or at preventing the recurrence of unsatisfactory conduct, are usually given a mandate to monitor and report on the implementation of their recommendations. The UN Secretariat regularly releases a compendium of disciplinary measures regarding matters of misconduct.

## 7.4 Oversight mechanisms

Oversight mechanisms exist at different levels. Prevention and monitoring of compliance with rules and procedures take place at country level, backed up by UN Headquarters and regional back-offices.

Investigations are often conducted by independent offices, most of which are Headquarters-based. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) maintains panels of independent investigators, auditors and evaluators at offices away from Headquarters, such as in large peace operations.



### The Role of Executive Boards

The executive boards of UN agencies ensure that appropriate oversight and risk management systems are in place and adopt summary annual reports. They are normally not involved in individual cases but can request procedural briefings and certain (redacted) case reports.

In-country, the RC and the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) coordinate UNCT activities, aiming to ensure adherence to UN policies and procedures.

Member agencies of UNCTs have their own oversight mechanisms, however, established by their governing bodies and executive boards, which play a key role in ensuring oversight and accountability. Formal oversight mechanisms typically include:

- **Independent internal oversight offices**, which conduct independent and objective inspections and audits of an agency's operations, financial statements and compliance with policies and regulations, both at country level and at agency headquarters. They investigate allegations of misconduct, fraud, corruption and other violations of rules and regulations and may, in some agencies, also have primary responsibility for evaluations.
- **Independent auditors**, usually the UN Board of Auditors (UNBoA), conduct external audits to verify the accuracy and fairness of an agency's financial statements and compliance with international bookkeeping and auditing standards. In some cases, executive boards request external audits of special entities or programmes. Unlike investigations, audits are public documents.
- **Evaluation offices** conduct evaluations of agency programmes and projects to assess their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability and impact. The primary evaluation function is sometimes assigned to an agency's independent internal oversight office.
- **Ethics offices** promote standards and integrity within the agency and address retaliation cases. They provide guidance on conduct, address complexities and concerns related to staff behaviour and advise on compliance with UN impartiality policies.

There are informal channels for staff and beneficiaries to report grievances, either directly to project managers/supervisors, to the RC or to agency representatives. While they do not have formal oversight functions, ombudsperson offices at agencies provide independent and confidential resources for addressing workplace issues and disputes through dialogue and mediation.

## System-wide oversight mechanisms

At the system-wide or Secretariat level, accountability mechanisms are:

- **UN Board of Auditors (UNBoA)**, which was established by the General Assembly in 1946, provides the main external audit function for the UN system. The General Assembly appoints Member States to nominate auditors to the Board, whose mandate covers financial compliance of the UN Secretariat and UN agencies. In addition to ensuring core auditing and financial compliance, the Board reviews financial procedures across the UN system.
- **Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)**, which was established by the General Assembly in 1968, consists of 11 inspectors, who are appointed by the General Assembly and serve independently in a personal capacity. Unlike the traditional auditing role of UNBoA, JIU focuses on value for money, aiming to improve coordination, synergy and administrative efficiency across UN agencies.
- **Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)** has the investigative mandate for the UN Secretariat, including staff at UN Headquarters, all mission personnel, staff of the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), RC/HCs and high level UN officials appointed directly by the Secretary-General. OIOS is mandated to conduct internal audits and evaluations as well as investigations of possible fraud, corruption, sexual and other workplace misconduct among personnel assigned to the above bodies. As the largest investigative body, upon request and at cost, OIOS can also work on behalf of smaller agencies that may not have their own investigative capacities. OIOS considers all reports of misconduct it receives and, if it cannot do so, refers them to the oversight entity that has jurisdiction over the matter (for example, agency audit and investigation offices).

As well as its investigative work, OIOS publishes annual reports on transparency and accountability for the General Assembly. OIOS is part of a system of UN internal control and oversight that includes other internal and external oversight bodies, as well as specific management entities and functions (such as ethics offices, ombudspersons' offices, entity legal and human resource offices).

- **UN Ethics Office** is the central ethics body for the UN system, focusing primarily on the UN Secretariat. It aims to ensure that all UN staff maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethics, as outlined in the UN Charter and the standards of conduct for the international civil service. It also chairs the UN Ethics Panel and the UN Ethics Network, which bring together ethics officers from different UN entities to harmonize policies, share best practices and address common ethical challenges. Most UN agencies have their own in-house ethics offices.

### System-wide Evaluation Office

In addition to the evaluation office of each UN agency, in 2020, the System-wide Evaluation Office was established to provide overarching evaluations of the UN development system. The Evaluation Office conducts global and regional evaluations to determine how well UN agencies collaborate to achieve the SDGs.





# 8

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## **Working with partners at country level**

How the UN collaborates with other actors on development and humanitarian efforts.

THE UN OPERATIONAL SYSTEM, in addition to engaging with the host country, works with numerous external partners. These include bilateral development and humanitarian partners, civil society, the private sector, academia, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international financial institutions (IFIs), including multilateral development banks (MDBs).

## 8.1 Working with bilateral partners

Bilateral partners include the embassies of Member States and their cooperation entities, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The UN collaborates with these partners not only as donors for UN projects or programmes but also to align priorities, coordinate activities and involve them in strategic planning. While the nature of such collaboration varies, depending on the country context, it often includes:

- **Coordination with host governments** – UN and bilateral partners both participate in and often coordinate policy priorities on government-led development coordination platforms. In humanitarian settings, the coordination of activities of the UN and bilateral partners takes place under the lead of the UN.
- **UN strategic planning** – Bilateral development partners are regularly invited to provide inputs to the development of the major UN strategic planning documents (see chap. 5) such as the common country analysis (CCAs), the Cooperation Framework, and the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). Through a participatory approach, the UN can rely on a broader analysis, better alignment and shared ownership of programmes and projects based on these core documents.
- **UN programme and project design** – UN agencies engage extensively with bilateral partners – who are also potential donors – in the design and development of programmes and projects. This stage represents the most substantive technical engagement between bilateral donors and the UN and lays the foundation for the work of the steering committees that oversee the implementation of projects and programmes.

In addition to cooperation on project design, bilateral partners and the UN coordinate on policy priorities, humanitarian needs and response plans and align technical assistance through regular consultations and policy dialogues.

### Engaging core donors

Some UN agencies regularly engage with the embassies of Member States, which are among their core donors at the global level, reinforcing the importance and recognition of core contributions.



## 8.2 Working with the World Bank Group

The UN and the World Bank Group share an overarching international mandate to promote sustainable development and eradicate extreme poverty. The main role of the World Bank is to provide loans and grants for development projects in low- and middle-income countries. Such projects are usually implemented by the borrowing country itself, with technical support and oversight from the World Bank. In some countries, the World Bank implements its own projects.

While the World Bank is more centralized than the UN, it maintains country offices and appoints Country Directors to support collaboration with borrowing country governments, embassies and international organizations. Its primary counterpart in each country is typically the finance ministry.

Technically part of the UN system, the World Bank is often perceived as the UN's "big brother" in-country, with significantly more financial means and clout. Partnerships between UN agencies and the World Bank have intensified over the past decade, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions, where the UN has a more granular understanding of the local context and a more substantive country presence. However, there is still room for improvement in systematic information-sharing, alignment of priorities and coordination. Resident Coordinators (RCs) encourage the World Bank to align priorities, coordinate and participate as members of the UN country teams (UNCTs) and as signatories to Cooperation Frameworks.

Overall, different forms of collaboration between the UN and the World Bank can be divided into non-financial and financial collaborations.

### Non-financial collaborations

Based on their mandates, their comparative advantages and their understanding of the challenges in different contexts, the World Bank and the UN can collaborate in non-financial ways:

- **Advocacy and joint messaging** – to assist countries in mobilizing financing for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Increasingly, advocacy and aligned messaging are joint efforts on multilateral and national coordination platforms.
- **Data-sharing, joint analytics and diagnostics** – the World Bank and the UN share data and analytics at a global level for their flagship reports, often drawing on each other's data sources and work practices. In-country, they also consult each other and share data to inform their respective analyses, strategic frameworks and programming, including the World Bank Group's risk and resilience assessments (RRAs) and Country Climate and Development Reports (CCDRs) as well as the UN common country analysis (CCA).

### Multilateral development banks (MDBs)

With the exception of the World Bank Group, MDBs, for example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), are independent multilateral organizations not formally affiliated with the UN system. They must, however, comply with directives such as Security Council sanctions.

- **Strategic alignment** – the World Bank and the UN often align their strategic plans around shared objectives and outcomes in key sectors. This may be formalized in their respective strategic plans, the World Bank Group’s Country Partnership Frameworks or the World Bank’s contribution to the UN Cooperation Framework.

## Financial collaborations

The World Bank and the UN also collaborate financially, with the World Bank indirectly or directly funding UN activities:

- **Indirect financing of the UN** – World Bank borrower countries can contract UN agencies directly to implement a World Bank-financed project, be it through technical assistance, procurement of supplies or delivery of outputs. Such an engagement is based on pre-negotiated standard forms of agreement between the World Bank and the UN, which facilitate the borrower’s contracting process. The contract is signed between the borrower

## The World Bank (WB) and the World Bank Group (WBG)

The World Bank Group (WBG) consists of the following five institutions:

- **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**, which provides non-concessional loans and policy advice to middle and low-income countries. It finances investments across all sectors and provides technical support. Its triple-A rating allows it to borrow at low cost and provide capital to countries at low interest rates.
- **International Development Association (IDA)**, which provides concessional loans and grants to the world’s 75 poorest countries. It supports projects and programmes that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities and improve living conditions. It is funded by regular contributions from Member States (known as IDA replenishments), loan repayments and transfers from the net income of IBRD.
- **International Finance Corporation (IFC)**, which promotes private sector growth in developing countries through investment, advisory support and asset management. It funds private companies to create jobs, improve infrastructure and foster sustainable economic growth, raising funds from both global capital markets and through the reinvestment of profits. It operates for profit and focuses solely on the private sector.
- **Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)**, which offers political risk insurance and guarantees that help governments attract private sector investments. This also mitigates risks for companies entering emerging markets.
- **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)**, which resolves investment disputes between governments and foreign investors, is a neutral and reliable platform to boost confidence in international investments.

“World Bank” and the “World Bank Group” are often used interchangeably, although they are not the same. The World Bank includes only IBRD and IDA. The distinction between the World Bank and the World Bank Group is especially important when discussing financial assistance (World Bank) versus broader private sector or investment issues (World Bank Group).

The “One World Bank approach”, which is led by the Country Director of the World Bank at country level, encourages all entities of the World Bank Group to collaborate closely in order to ensure aligned and coordinated development efforts across all sectors. In a rising number of countries, Country Directors represents all five institutions.

country and the UN agency. It allows direct contracting of UN agencies in cases where they are uniquely qualified in their area of expertise and/or in situations of urgent need or capacity constraint. The World Bank ensures due diligence of the UN with the policy requirements of the operations of the World Bank Group, including its environmental and social framework. Examples of indirect financing can be found in the health sector, where the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is mandated by governments to provide and lead vaccine campaigns.

- **Direct financing of the UN** – the World Bank can directly finance UN agencies (and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement specific projects through a recipient-executed trust fund (RETF) and, in some cases, through IDA.

Such “third party implementation” by the UN is limited to situations that include: absence of an internationally recognized government; inability of a government to provide basic services to its population due to active conflicts, high security risks and/ or violence; and legal restrictions on financing public assets and providing financing to government accounts due to their non-accrual status. Third party implementation for IFIs (mostly the World Bank) makes up around 5% of UN funding.

“Third-party monitoring” refers to a situation where the UN monitors the implementation of World Bank-funded projects. This can be the case when the World Bank has no in-country presence or no access to parts of a country.

“Fee for service” is the modality that allows the World Bank to contract UN agencies for consulting services related to World Bank-executed activities, such as carrying out a sectoral or thematic study.

- **Joint initiatives** – While institutional policies prevent the UN and the World Bank from pooling funds or co-financing a project, there are various ways to coordinate their work. Strictly speaking, joint initiatives are not financial collaborations, although they involve the joint design, planning and implementation of interventions, with each agency retaining its own budget. They work in a parallel, closely coordinated manner. A World Bank loan in the health sector of a country, for example, might be complemented by a UN capacity-development project in the same sector.

## **UN-World Bank Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations**

In 2017, the World Bank and the UN, recognizing the need for closer collaboration in fragile and crisis settings, which make up most of their joint efforts, launched their joint Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations. The framework aims to strengthen collaboration in crisis settings and focuses on resilience, poverty reduction and peacebuilding in prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, including situations experiencing inflows of refugees.

### **World Bank Executive Directors**

The World Bank has 25 Executive Directors that take operational decisions in Washington, D.C. Many of the Executive Directors represent not just one Member State, but groups of Member States in so-called “constituencies”. The most direct way to communicate with World Bank headquarters is through the offices of the Executive Directors.

The three key funding instruments supporting the framework in fragile and conflict-affected settings include:

- **State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF)** of the World Bank is the World Bank's leading global umbrella trust fund for implementing the World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence.
- **UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)**, managed by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) of the UN Secretariat, can, in certain circumstances, be accessed by RCs on behalf of UNCTs.
- **UN Partnership Facility** is a smaller instrument of the PBF, providing small grants to UN entities that support field-level collaboration with the World Bank on analytics and coordination, such as that required in the process of contributing to the RRA of the World Bank Group.

## World Bank trust funds

Trust funds, which are key financial instruments used by the World Bank to complement traditional lending and grant programmes, can channel resources towards specific issues, regions or projects. The governance structure of the trust funds, called Partnership Councils, allow different stakeholders to participate, and thus coordinate, their work, including in areas beyond the trust fund.

One or more donors can contribute to a trust fund, with the World Bank acting as trustee to manage and disburse the funds. In some cases, World Bank Group institutions, such as IDA or IFC, may also contribute to World Bank trust funds.

The World Bank manages around 70 umbrella trust funds, which are similar to global pooled funds or core funding of UN agencies. The World Bank has an explicit policy to avoid single-donor trust funds and earmarking, but allows "preferencing", whereby donors can indicate priority areas of impact.

The two basic types of trust fund are:

- **Recipient-executed trust funds** are managed by the recipient country or entity under the supervision of the World Bank. The recipient

applies for financing to the trust fund and the World Bank charges an administrative fee to cover project preparation, supervision and fund management costs. The administrative fee is calculated on a sliding scale for the cumulative value of the total amounts committed: 5% for the first \$50 million; 4% on the next \$450 million; 3% on the next \$500 million; and 2% on any further amounts.

- **Bank-executed trust funds** are managed directly by the World Bank for specific activities in areas such as research, capacity development and technical assistance. Unlike recipient-executed trust funds, bank-executed trust funds allow the World Bank to take an active role in implementing the funded activities, which is reflected in a higher administrative fee. A standard flat fee of 12% on the total amount of disbursements is charged, which covers operational costs, including staff and other resource needs. In addition, cost-recovery fees may be added to cover the full cost of delivering services such as technical assistance, research and capacity-building, which are beyond the standard administrative fees and are considered part of overall operational costs.

# UN-World Bank Group Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda

The 2018 UN-World Bank Group Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda (SPF) commits both institutions to work together on four priorities: financing the SDGs; climate action; linking the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) collaboration; and advancing data use. In recent years, addressing the drivers of conflict and peacebuilding have increasingly become a focus.

The annual UN-World Bank Group Partnership Monitoring Report gives an overview of how collaboration between the World Bank Group and the UN is evolving.

## Collaboration between the World Bank and UNHCR

The collaboration between the World Bank and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been one of the closest within the UN system for many years. Their partnership has been particularly successful in three areas:

- **Refugee policy frameworks** – UNHCR collaborates with the World Bank to assess national refugee policy frameworks to allow access to IDA financing mechanisms for low-income countries hosting refugees. These include the IDA sub-window for refugees and host communities or the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF), the World Bank-administered trust fund for middle-income countries hosting large numbers of refugees.
- **IFC/UNHCR Joint Initiative on Refugees** combines the expertise, tools and products of IFC with the access and understanding of protection of UNHCR. The initiative aims to foster private sector solutions to forced displacement and to stimulate job creation and business opportunities in affected areas.
- **The World Bank Group-UNHCR Joint Data Centre on Forced Displacement** aims to improve the availability and accessibility of high-quality socioeconomic data and evidence on affected populations for national policymaking, development activities and humanitarian operations.



## 8.3 Working with the International Monetary Fund

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides advice to countries on monetary and fiscal policy with the aim of stabilizing the global economy. It also provides loans and guarantees to the central banks of countries in financial distress, conditional on policy measures and economic reforms undertaken. While it provides technical assistance in macroeconomic, fiscal and monetary sectors, it does not finance concrete/traditional development projects. Its primary counterpart in each country is typically the central bank or the ministry of finance. The IMF does not provide funding to UN agencies.

The IMF maintains a network of small offices in countries worldwide, headed by resident representatives who are responsible for implementing its programmes. While the IMF is not a formal member of UNCTs, its work can complement the work of the UN in the following areas:

- **Policy coordination and dialogue** – the IMF advises countries on fiscal and monetary policies, taxation, social spending and labour market reforms, while the UN focuses on poverty reduction, robust social safety nets (cash transfers, food assistance and health services) and inclusive development to protect vulnerable populations.
- **Financial support and crisis management** – the IMF provides financial assistance to Member States during fiscal crises to stabilize their economies, while the UN addresses social and humanitarian consequences of crises to ensure protection for vulnerable groups.
- **Technical assistance and capacity development** – the IMF provides technical assistance to Member States in areas such as tax administration and public financial management, while the UN supports capacity development efforts in governance, including transparency and accountability.
- **Data collection and monitoring** – the IMF collects economic data to guide policy decisions to reduce disparities, while the UN monitors inequality indicators such as the Gini Index of Income Inequality to track progress.
- **Joint research initiatives** – the UN and the IMF conduct joint research to understand how macroeconomic risks intersect with political risks that contribute to fragility, conflict and violence.

The mandate of the IMF only extends to international financial stability and makes no explicit reference to sustainable development. However, technical assistance provided by the IMF increasingly covers issues such as domestic resource mobilization, anti-corruption, good governance and gender.

The financial support of the IMF and its work on policy frameworks indirectly contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IMF has recently developed a Strategy for Fragile and Conflict-Affected States. Over the last few years, there has been increased harmonization and cooperation between the IMF, other multilateral development banks (MDBs) and the UN.

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## 8.4 The UN and regional intergovernmental organizations

8.4

The UN Charter explicitly encourages work with regional organizations.

Coordination of the work of the UN with regional multilateral organizations such as the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has become increasingly important. Forms of operational cooperation involve implementing joint peacekeeping mandates with the AU; designing projects and receiving funding from the EU; and working together on shared analysis, events and training, depending on the region and context.

### The UN and the European Union

The EU-UN partnership has grown in recent years, and EU funding to the UN, both from the European Commission and EU Member States, which are also UN Member States, is at its highest historical level.

The collaboration between the EU and the UN at country level ranges across humanitarian action, sustainable development, human rights and peacebuilding. There are current efforts to move away from a “donor-implementing partner” dynamic between the two organizations towards a more strategic one that views joint advocacy and policy work as shared priorities.

“Team Europe”, which is coordinated by EU delegations and the embassies of EU Member States in-country, and UNCTs, which are coordinated by the RCs, are committed to promoting collective efforts and speeding up progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.

In addition, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, known as ECHO, works closely with the humanitarian country teams (HCTs) in funding Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRP) worldwide to ensure that assistance is delivered to those in urgent need.

As part of the shared commitment to effective multilateralism, the EU and the UN play a key role in rallying multi-stakeholder partnerships to unlock resources and investments needed by partner countries to sustain their economic, social and environmental paths towards the achievement of the SDGs.

The European Commission is a strong supporter of the UN reform and a key advocate for the role of the RC/HC as convener and coordinator of UN agencies in-country.

## 8.5 Working with the private sector

The role of private sector companies as suppliers and in philanthropy has been previously highlighted (see chap. 6). From small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to multinational corporations and social enterprises, the private sector plays a key role in achieving the SDGs and reducing humanitarian needs by adopting sustainable business practices, driving innovation, creating jobs and providing goods and services.

UN agencies therefore work with the private sector, advocating for sustainable business practices, and fostering private sector development, including through innovative financing methods. Many UN agencies have dedicated teams at headquarters and sometimes in-country to engage with the private sector.

### **Advocacy and support for responsible business conduct**

In recent years, many private companies have embraced sustainable development and have been willing to adapt their business practices, as long as they can remain profitable. The advocacy work of the UN promoting responsible business practices centres around the following policy frameworks:

- **UN Global Compact** – with over 20,000 members, the UN Global Compact is the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative. The Global Compact promotes socially and environmentally responsible globalization by asking member companies to integrate its “Ten Principles” on human rights, labour, environment, anti-corruption and other SDG priorities into their business strategies. In-country, RCs lead UNCTs in partnering with national Global Compact chapters.
- **Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights** provide a three-pillar framework that focuses on the duty of States to protect human rights, including threats from businesses; the corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and guaranteed access to remedies for human rights violations caused by economic factors.
- **Principles for Responsible Investment** are an additional mechanism promoting responsible business conduct and are closely linked to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

- **Guidelines on a Principle-Based Approach to the Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Sector**, first drafted in 2000 and revised at the request of the General Assembly in 2015, the Guidelines aim to provide a framework to facilitate the formulation and implementation of partnerships between the UN and the business sector while safeguarding the integrity, impartiality and independence of the UN.
- **OCHA-WEF Guiding Principles for Public-Private Collaboration for Humanitarian Action**, designed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2007, the 10 Principles are meant to guide collaborations between the international humanitarian community and the private sector. The principles include leveraging core competencies, distinguishing between humanitarian and commercial activity and building local capacity.

## Private sector development

UN agencies can help a country to develop its private sector in a sustainable manner. They work with governments to create an enabling environment for private sector growth, convene partners, facilitate collaborations between schools and businesses, provide guidance on best practices, advise on sound policies and offer specialized expertise.

The UN's key approaches to promote private sector development in-country are:

- **Job creation** – supporting initiatives that stimulate employment opportunities through entrepreneurship, assisting small and medium-sized enterprises and facilitating public-private partnerships that create jobs.
- **Skills development** – investing in training programmes and vocational education systems to enhance the skills of the workforce, ensuring that local talents, including women and marginalized groups, meet the needs of evolving markets and industries.
- **Capacity development and technical assistance** – providing training and resources to local businesses to help them improve operations, technology, finance, sustainability management and compliance with international environmental, social and governance standards.
- **Grants and funding** – providing grants and other forms of financial assistance to startups and businesses that align with the SDGs. These funds help enterprises overcome financial barriers, expand operations and foster innovation.

### Blue-washing

“Blue-washing” refers to private companies using their association with the UN to enhance their public image without addressing their harmful practices. This can damage the credibility of UN initiatives and create conflicts of interest, particularly when corporate goals prioritize profit over public welfare.

## Private sector solutions for the UN

In recent years, the private sector has increasingly shown willingness to work with the UN on a non-profit basis to address humanitarian challenges, offering technical expertise in areas such as logistics, data management and financial technology. Such cooperation can solve critical issues like vaccine distribution, stockpiling and the use of digital cash vouchers. The private sector can help the UN gain access to advanced technological solutions while also meeting its corporate social responsibilities by contributing to the SDGs.

## Brokering innovative financing

To help mobilize additional funding for the SDGs, UN agencies act as a broker and facilitator between the private and public sectors and funding partners. Additional funding for the SDGs can be found in, but is not limited to, the following mechanisms. Innovative financing for the SDGs includes the following:

- **Blended finance** combines public, private and, on occasion, philanthropic capital to fund projects that drive economic development while addressing social and environmental challenges. The goal is to reduce the risk of investments in areas traditionally considered too risky for private investors. This is often achieved through insurance or guarantees paid for by funding partners.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) are UN entities which provide loans and guarantees and, thus, blended finance. UNCDF assists least developed countries in the development of their economies by supplementing existing sources of capital assistance through grants, loans and guarantees. UNCDF is affiliated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It shares the same executive board, while the UNDP administrator is also the managing director of UNCDF.

- **Impact financing** is a form of financial investment that generates not only financial returns but also positive, measurable, social and environmental outcomes. The UN can help broker such investments in areas such as renewable energy, microfinance and low-cost medical technologies. The UN also works on harmonizing standards for impact measurement and reporting.

## 8.6 Working with civil society

Civil society comprises a wide range of formal and informal groups and organizations that operate independently of governments on a non-profit basis. It includes youth clubs, political parties, women's groups, professional associations, charities, churches, cultural groups and advocacy groups. Within civil society, civil society organizations (CSOs) are formalized and structured entities, which usually include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations and charities.

Local CSOs are often the first responders in case of emergencies and crisis, as well as serving as a social safety net for communities. They play a crucial role in shaping public opinion, advocating for human rights and social justice, holding governments accountable and raising awareness about global and local issues, such as climate change, gender equality and human rights.

UN agencies work extensively with CSOs and NGOs to implement specific activities in both development and humanitarian contexts (see chap. 6), taking advantage of their local knowledge and reach.

In humanitarian contexts, NGOs are often in charge of “last mile” delivery. Their staff, many of whom are volunteers, take personal risks that international NGOs or UN agencies cannot take on. Their safety and security and the ethical dilemmas surrounding risk transfer are recurring challenges for HCTs. Under the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing, most UN agencies have committed to working through equitable partnerships with local and national actors in the implementation of projects. This includes access to safety and security trainings and, where possible, forms of insurance.

### Strengthening civil society organizations

Developing the capacities of local CSOs, and ensuring their meaningful participation, is imperative if international assistance is to be phased out and eventually replaced. Some UN projects and funds are specifically focused on strengthening local CSOs by providing training, coaching and other aspects of capacity development.

Many UN agencies have dedicated grant mechanisms that provide financial support to CSOs whose programmes meet certain criteria. They issue regular calls for proposals, which enable CSOs to apply for these grants.

CSOs can also access funding through country-based pooled funds, as well as through global, system-wide mechanisms such as the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme. However, the effort required to access these funds is often beyond the capacity of smaller CSOs.

#### Partnership standards for CSOs

In addition to financial and organizational due diligence, the UN will not work with CSOs whose political affiliations, values or actions are at odds with UN standards and values.

## Consultations with CSOs

CSOs are key stakeholders for the UN in strategic planning processes. Consulting with CSOs and NGOs on the planning and development of projects ensures that the voices and needs of the people directly affected by a project are taken into account. This approach increases the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of interventions.

In addition to their role as stakeholders in UN projects, CSOs participate in multi-stakeholder consultations for UN Cooperation Frameworks. In some cases, UNCTs have established CSO advisory groups for better collaboration, while HCTs have developed localization strategies to guide their engagement with, and support for, local CSO actors.

## Joint advocacy

The UN collaborates extensively with CSOs to promote common values and to pursue internationally agreed goals. The UN often leverages CSO networks to amplify global campaigns, such as the UNITE to End Violence against Women campaign. These partnerships strengthen voices on issues of mutual interest and build both grassroots and high-level support. CSOs also engage with the UN system and its different agencies to advance key areas of shared interest. In certain instances, UN agencies may be more constrained than CSOs, and their messaging can part ways.

## 8.7

## 8.7 Working with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is the largest humanitarian network in the world. It consists of three independent components:



### Who does what?

The components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement work closely together. The ICRC takes the lead in international and non-international armed conflict situations, while the IFRC takes the lead in situations of natural disaster, post-conflict and refugee situations. National societies lead the overall response at county level. Thus, depending on the context, either the ICRC or the IFRC takes on the role of co-convenor with the respective national society.

- **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** was established in 1863. The ICRC is a neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian organization, that is at the origin of the development of the Geneva Conventions and of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The 196 signatory States of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 have provided the ICRC with a unique mandate, founded in international humanitarian law (IHL), which is to ensure protection and assistance for victims of conflicts and other situations of violence. The ICRC is also mandated to promote and develop IHL. Based in Geneva, it is not a multilateral organization as Member States are not part of its governance structure.
- **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** – founded in 1919, the IFRC is an international membership organization that unites the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and supports them through a global secretariat

based in Geneva. The Secretariat is supporting 191 National Societies, bringing together more than 16 million volunteers.

- **National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** – the 191 national societies are recognized by their governments as auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. The auxiliary role of the national societies constitutes one of the defining characteristics that distinguish them from other NGOs and other humanitarian actors, including the entities of the UN system. At the same time, the statutes of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement require that national societies maintain their neutrality, independence and impartiality to ensure that their actions are always in accordance with the fundamental principles of the movement. Sister national societies from other countries may operate in the same country in situations of humanitarian need.

At country level, the ICRC, the IFRC and the national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies cooperate with the UN in various ways, ranging from informal discussions to partnership agreements for programme implementation and logistical support.

The ICRC has unique access to conflict zones and hard-to-reach areas. It complements UN efforts, while maintaining its independence and its strict humanitarian mandate. Because the ICRC operates on a basis of confidentiality, it engages in significantly less public advocacy than the UN.

All operational collaborations are guided by the policies of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which include:

- **Adherence to principles** – the fundamental principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement must always be upheld to ensure its neutrality and independence. These principles also guide decisions on whether to collaborate with the UN in a specific context.
- **Consultation** – national societies are obliged to consult with the ICRC and the IFRC prior to signing an agreement with the UN.
- **Maintaining identity** – while the ICRC, the IFRC and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies can collaborate with the UN, no double logos or emblems can be used. The singular independence and recognition of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are important factors contributing to its security and its acceptance by all parties.

The ICRC, the IFRC and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies participate in meetings of the HCTs and relevant humanitarian clusters. The ICRC takes part in these meetings as an observer rather than a full member in order to maintain its independence and neutrality.

### International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

Taking place every four years, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent is the supreme deliberative body of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, where the high contracting parties to the Geneva Conventions and the full membership of the organization gather to discuss and make joint commitments on key matters of humanitarian concern.





# 9

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## **Headquarters coordination and support**

Regional and global structures  
that support UN operational work  
in-country.

## Where are UN Headquarters?

There are four UN Headquarters locations: UN Headquarters in New York, the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG), the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and UN Office at Vienna (UNOV). Paris and Rome host the headquarters of certain specialized agencies.



ALL MEMBER AGENCIES of the UN country team (UNCT) have their own headquarters, while the functions of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) have dedicated back offices that are part of the UN Secretariat, namely, the Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Regional offices and regional platforms provide additional decentralized coordination and support functions. Global-level inter-agency coordination and intergovernmental oversight also take place at UN Headquarters.

## 9.1

### 9.1 Coordination mechanisms

Many of the coordination mechanisms at country level have a related mechanism at UN Headquarters; many country-level functions are supported by dedicated offices and staff at UN Headquarters.

#### UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)

The UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) is the parallel coordination mechanism to the UNCT at the global level. The UNSDG comprises the executive heads of all UN funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other entities that play a role in supporting efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs in-country.

The UNSDG is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General (DSG), with the Administrator of the UNDP as vice-chair. It is supported by DCO, which serves as its secretariat.

The UNSDG provides strategic direction to ensure that UNCTs deliver coherent, effective and efficient support to countries. It endorses operational guidance for the development of the common country analysis (CCA) and the Cooperation Framework. It approves policies for effective business operations, such as joint back offices and common services. The UNSDG has various subsidiary bodies and working groups that support the work of its mandate, such as:

- **Human Rights Working Group**, which focuses on ensuring that human rights are embedded in all UNSDG actions, policies and initiatives.
- **Business Innovations Group**, which develops strategies for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of UN operations, in particular through partnerships with the private sector, as well as new technological advancements.

### **UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)**

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), which meets twice a year, is the highest-level coordination forum within the UN. The board is chaired by the Secretary-General and brings together the executive heads of the specialized agencies, the funds and programmes, the UN Secretariat and related organizations.

The CEB offers a space for the UN executive leadership to internally debate global challenges, analyse political developments, and discuss ways for the UN to respond. The work of the CEB is supported by the two high-level committees:

The High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) focuses on system-wide policy issues and is responsible for the establishment of inter-agency mechanisms, including UN-Water, UN-Oceans and UN-Energy, to increase coherence across the UN system;

The High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) identifies and analyses administrative reforms aimed at improving efficiency and simplifying and harmonizing business practices across the UN system.

### **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the highest-level humanitarian coordination forum in the UN system. It is the parallel coordination mechanism to the humanitarian country team (HCT).

The IASC is chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) on behalf of the Secretary-General. It brings together executive heads, also referred to as principals, of both UN and non-UN humanitarian entities. It is the only UN humanitarian coordination forum that includes UN humanitarian agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the World Bank.

The IASC principals formulate policy and set strategic priorities on issues such as accountability to affected populations and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). The IASC also coordinates the mobilization of resources in response to humanitarian crises through appeals and pledging conferences. The following subsidiary bodies support the IASC:

- **Emergency Directors Group** monitors and responds to emerging crises, strengthens ongoing response efforts and advises the IASC principals on key issues requiring collective action, including “scaling-up” efforts. The Emergency Directors Group advises the ERC on the designation of the Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs).

- **Deputies Group**, chaired by the Deputy ERC, drives changes on key strategic issues that require senior leadership, championship and institutional change that affect humanitarian action.
- **Operational Policy and Advocacy Group** leads system-wide efforts to develop key operational policies and tools.

## 9.2 Support structures

In addition to the headquarters of each UN agency, two offices in the UN Secretariat are dedicated to support the work of the UNCTs, HCTs and the RC/HC system.

### Development Coordination Office (DCO)

DCO, which is headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination, serves as the back office for the RC/HC system. It also acts as the UNSDG secretariat and serves as the helpline and counselling service for the RC/HC system. The activities of DCO include:

- Guiding and supporting the day-to-day work of over 130 RCs/HCs and Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) across more than 162 countries and territories.
- Developing and updating guidance for RCOs and UNCTs on the CCA and Cooperation Framework processes.
- Administering the Joint SDG Fund, which helps jumpstart complex development projects at country level.
- Facilitating the RC selection process, the RC performance assessment and conducting RC/HC training programmes.
- Engaging with OCHA and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) on Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration.

DCO, which is located at UN Headquarters in New York, operates small regional teams in Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Istanbul and Panama.

### Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who is also the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the head of OCHA, is the highest-ranking UN official responsible for humanitarian affairs. The ERG reports directly to the Secretary-General. The coordination mandate of the ERC goes beyond the UN system and includes non-UN humanitarian actors.

From its offices in both Geneva and New York, OCHA supports the work of RC/HCs, OCHA country offices and HCTs. OCHA has five key functions that apply to its offices at Headquarters as well as its offices in-country.

- **Coordination** – OCHA coordinates the humanitarian response to expand the reach of humanitarian action and reduce duplication. It publishes the annual Global Humanitarian Overview, which articulates the humanitarian needs and response efforts across the globe. The publication informs decision-making for more effective humanitarian response and emergency preparedness. OCHA also hosts the IASC secretariat and oversees the humanitarian cluster system.
- **Information management** – OCHA collects, shares and uses data and information on humanitarian issues to underpin coordination, decision-making and advocacy. Its maps, dashboard and graphics are used throughout the UN system, as well as by Member States and the media.
- **Humanitarian financing** – OCHA mobilizes global humanitarian financing. It administers the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and manages country-based pool funds (CBPFs).
- **Policy development** – OCHA leads the development and promotion of humanitarian policy. It sets the gold standard for principled humanitarian action for the UN and beyond.
- **Advocacy** – OCHA raises awareness of humanitarian crises and promotes respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and the protection of civilians. It highlights the voices of crisis-affected populations and helps them access humanitarian assistance. It regularly briefs the Security Council on humanitarian crises.

## Leadership in-country and at UN Headquarters

In-country	At UN Headquarters
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
Resident Coordinator (RC)	Secretary-General
Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)	Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC)/Head of OCHA
Designated Official for Security (DO)	Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security
<b>Leadership Support</b>	<b>Leadership Support</b>
Resident Coordinator Office (RCO)	Development Coordination Office (DCO)
OCHA Office	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Security advisers	Department of Safety and Security (DSS)
<b>Coordination mechanism</b>	<b>Coordination mechanism</b>
UN country team (UNCT)	UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG)
Humanitarian country team (HCT)	Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)
Security Management Team	Executive Group on Security (EGS)
<b>UN Agencies</b>	<b>UN Agencies</b>
Resident Representatives (RR), Country Directors (CD)	Executive Heads of UN agencies
Country Offices	Agency headquarters



## 9.3 UN regional structures

In addition to its country presence and its global and Headquarters structures, the UN operational system also relies on regional offices and mechanisms.

### Regional offices

Many UN agencies maintain regional offices that provide services for their country offices.

For UN agencies with a decentralized organizational structure, the regional offices directly oversee, manage and support the work of the country offices. The regional offices of smaller UN agencies may remotely support country-level projects in the region and participate in UNCTs as “non-resident agencies”.

Regional offices can also reinforce the country offices and deploy specialized staff such as humanitarian or gender advisers. For some UN agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), regional offices also serve as logistics hubs, in particular for humanitarian goods and transport.

### Regional hubs

UN regional hubs are a newer approach to the UN regional presence. Similar to the “One UN” approach in-country, the regional hubs bring together the regional offices of multiple UN agencies in one location.

The regional hubs focus on inter-agency collaboration and knowledge-sharing and provide advisory services. Their structure and leadership model are still a work in progress and differ across the various hubs. Most of the regional hubs that do not support peacekeeping or special political missions are hosted by UNDP.

### Regional Collaborative Platforms

Created as part of the reform of the UN development system, the Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs) focus on strengthening coordination and coherence among all relevant UN agencies in each region. They provide regional support to countries in achieving the SDGs and help address regional and transboundary issues. It is important to note that the RCPs do not exist as physical offices but are consultative platforms, where regional representatives of regional agencies come together to provide regional support for national sustainable development efforts and the respective UNCTs. They report to the UNSDG and aim to align UN work across sectors at the regional level, addressing cross-border challenges.

Meeting at least once a year at the regional level, RCPs are chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, with the Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions and the Regional Directors of UNDP as vice-chairs. The meetings also include the participation of

#### Regional service centres

UNDP refers to its regional presence as “regional service centres”. Confusingly, the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, is not a UNDP entity, but the logistical hub for UN peacekeeping in Africa.

#### Defining regions

Different UN agencies have different definitions of geographic regions: the World Health Organization (WHO), for example, defines the Middle East as part of its Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO), which includes Afghanistan and Pakistan, whereas UNDP and UNICEF group North Africa (including Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) with the Middle East under the terms “Arab States” or “Middle East and North Africa”.

## Governance of the operational system

The UN operational system is governed by the Member States. The General Assembly provides formal intergovernmental mandates that guide the entire UN operational system, including system-wide reforms. Individual agencies are governed by their own executive boards.

Every four years, the General Assembly adopts a resolution called the “Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (referred to as the QCPR). In its 2018 reform QCPR resolution, the General Assembly endorsed the new RC system. The seminal resolution on humanitarian assistance is General Assembly resolution 46/182, by which the Assembly established OCHA and the humanitarian aid architecture, which is regularly updated through its subsequent humanitarian resolutions. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with its dedicated operational and humanitarian segments, is where Member States assess progress made in the reform processes.

The executive boards of individual UN agencies are made up of representatives from Member States that are elected for a fixed term and can be re-elected or replaced. To ensure equitable geographic representation, seats on executive boards are

allocated to different geographical groups of Member States. Within each group, board memberships rotate.

Executive boards generally have a bureau, composed of a president (or chair), vice-presidents (or vice-chairs) and a rapporteur. Bureau members are members of the executive board who are elected to provide leadership and support. The bureau facilitates the work of the board, organizes meetings and acts on its behalf between sessions. Executive boards of UN agencies and their bureaux are supported by dedicated secretariats hosted by the agencies. The secretariats also conduct the briefings and the induction of new board members.

The role and responsibilities of the executive boards of UN agencies are closer to the parliamentary oversight of public administrations than to the role of a “board of directors” in the private sector. Executive boards deal with governance and oversight functions and are responsible for approving policies, budgets and strategic plans as well as the reports of their respective agencies.

Decisions are typically made by consensus, although formal votes can be taken, if necessary. Executive boards report to the full UN membership through their annual reports.

the Regional Directors of the various UN agencies. They agree on an annual workplan and delegate work to inter-agency working groups and issues-based coalitions.

## Regional commissions

The regional commissions are decentralized bodies of the UN Secretariat that focus on promoting economic and social development, regional integration and cooperation. The five commissions are: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa; the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok; the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva; the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago; and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut.

The regional commissions consist of Member State consultative platforms and secretariat structures that provide policy advice, data analysis and technical support on issues including trade, infrastructure and social development. They report to ECOSOC and are part of the UNSDG.





# 10

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## **Food for thought: Supporting UN Reform**

“The UN was not created to take  
mankind to heaven, but to save  
humanity from hell.”

– Dag Hammarskjöld

THE UN IS FAR FROM PERFECT. Its existence is an expression of the lofty aspirations of its Member States, but it struggles to live up to expectations and its operations are hampered by a convoluted and fragmented structure.

The UN runs on a basic commitment to a common purpose, common sense, a healthy dose of trust in the multilateral approach to solving global problems, and on the optimistic belief that progress is possible.

In the real world the UN faces real problems. Some are due to the complicated structure of the UN system, some to external factors. To understand how to address these challenges, and to help the UN do better, it is worthwhile to consider some uncomfortable limitations or “conundrums”.

### **Conundrum: Member States**

The 193 Member States, in different configurations, create, fund and govern the UN operational system. Moreover, these same Member States, including host governments and donor governments, largely determine the extent to which the operational system can implement its mandates and meet expectations:

- Peace first requires that States and non-State actors must cease hostilities, something the UN operational system cannot achieve.
- The provision of humanitarian assistance cannot be a substitute for a political solution to a conflict.
- The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) can only document, report and highlight human rights abuses. It does not have the power to resolve them.
- Sustainable development depends on the collective commitment of individual Member States, and on their national priorities and strategies. The UN operational system and other international development actors, such as the international financial institutions (IFIs), can only play a subsidiary role.

In summary, in its operational work, the UN is often expected to address problems that Member States, including those on the Security Council, are unable, reluctant or unwilling to take on.

### **Conundrum: Supporting Member States while holding them accountable**

While the UN is bound by its mandate to speak out when countries do not meet their international obligations and commitments, it is also tasked to support countries in meeting their development and humanitarian needs.

In the implementation of its development support and humanitarian assistance efforts, UN country teams (UNCTs) sometimes work with governments or non-State actors that fail to respect their obligations under international human rights law (IHRL) and

international humanitarian law (IHL), as well as other commitments in areas such as climate and gender equality.

When reminding countries of their international obligations and commitments, the UN uses a range of different ways to convey its message at country level. This can entail working behind the scenes with government counterparts. At other times, public advocacy is called for because failing to speak out may put the UN at risk of being accused of tacitly condoning non-compliance with international commitments or inadvertently helping governments to stay in power.

- RC/HCs speak on behalf of the UNCTs. They coordinate public statements on sensitive political, conflict- and security-related matters with UN Headquarters and the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General.
- Country operations can be protected by shifting the role of issuing public statements to the Secretary-General, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), representatives at agency headquarters or the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- Member States have a role as “peers”. Ambassadors and visiting ministers can remind the governments of host countries to adhere to their international obligations and commitments.

For RC/HCs and the UNCTs, striking a balance between building the trust necessary to support governments and speaking out can be challenging. In (rare) situations, governments may declare RC/HCs or other UN officials “persona non grata” and revoke their accreditations or visas. Such actions can result in the suspension or delay in the implementation of UN programmes.

## **Conundrum: Finding funds**

The UN operational system is currently experiencing a severe funding crisis, so much so that the operational system is at risk of being torn apart if agencies are to be pitted against each other in competition for decreasing funds.

The lack of and further decline in core funding for the UN operational system is highly problematic, as core funds ensure the viability of the agencies and their ability to adhere to their mandates.

In a context of shrinking budgets and limited core resources, UN agencies may accept funding for projects that are not fully aligned with their mandates or with the Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), or Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), fearing that if they do not, another UN agency will. This leads to fragmentation, higher management expenses, inflexibility and a short-term mindset, creating a perception that UN entities are merely project implementers for donors and host governments rather than strategic partners advancing long-term change.

Without receiving a sufficient level of flexible, predictable and unearmarked funds from Member States, the UN operational system cannot achieve meaningful results.

### **Conundrum: Institutional challenges**

The fragmented nature of the UN operational system complicates matters beyond the issue of funding. Its different, Member States-approved governance structures, funding models, human resource systems, policies and often incompatible enterprise resource planning systems make inter-agency analysis and the transfer of funds between agencies extremely difficult. At some UN agencies, authority and decision-making are decentralized, while others are more centralized, leading to challenges when planning joint activities.

### **Conundrum: Competing priorities**

While the agencies of the UN development system in-country operate at the request of the host government and align their work and their Cooperation Frameworks to national development priorities they also seek to adhere to global priorities, such as gender equality, environmental sustainability and social inclusion, and are accountable to their broader membership, in particular their governing bodies and donors. These two sets of priorities sometimes compete. In conflict settings, adherence to humanitarian principles may put continued collaboration with national governments that are party to a conflict into question.

### **Conundrum: Showing results and recognition**

Development and social progress ultimately belong to the people of a country: it is the efforts of the girl who walks to school every day and does her homework that ultimately increases a country's literacy rate.

Nevertheless, UN agencies, just as much as donors, need to report on their outcomes and achievements in a given country. Parliamentarians often want to know exactly what their taxpayers' money has been spent on. For donor countries, visibility and recognition are key to securing funding for international cooperation.

The attribution of success and results to a specific actor is not always possible, however. At its worst, the drive to quantify and attribute results disincentivizes joint programming and pooled funding and increases the use of stand-alone projects, thus impeding broader, transformative outcomes. At its best, joint results demonstrate how collective efforts can achieve significant and positive change, although this often requires more time.

While the sharing of public visibility and recognition for results may sound counterintuitive when competing for funding, it is an imperative for the achievement of substantive progress.

## Conundrum: How to solve these conundrums

Solving such conundrums is not impossible, it is merely difficult. Faced with severe funding gaps, increasing humanitarian needs and unmet global challenges, all Member States, both host countries and donors, as well as UN agencies, need to work together and consolidate the operational system, realign its activities with its core mandates, ensure that it is responsive and agile and equip it with the digital capacities to guarantee that it remains efficient and meaningful.

Suggestions on how to go about finding solutions to the above conundrums at country level include:

- Already agreed on reforms can be fully implemented, including measures defined in the funding compact of the UN development system and the Grand Bargain on humanitarian financing (“just do it”). Much thought and analysis has gone into these reforms, and Member States, host countries and donors alike, have the power to turn them into reality.
- Donors can make better use of pooled funds and multi-agency funding mechanisms. They can ensure that earmarked funds contribute to an integrated approach by consulting with RC/HCs before committing to a project.
- UNCTs and UN agencies can negotiate project design and funding terms that bring earmarked funding in line with Cooperation Frameworks and their mandates: this might mean occasionally saying “no” to funding activities outside these parameters.
- Host governments can emphasize that their goals would be better achieved through broader, integrated approaches rather than small, single-entity projects. They can also strategically use their cost-sharing in UN operations to this end.
- Increasing visibility and recognition for core donors and those contributing to pooled funds can be explicitly added to the tasks of all Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and to the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in-country. In addition, regular briefings and ensuring the involvement of such donors in the development of Cooperation Frameworks can enhance their understanding and increase their support.
- UNCTs can be honest and pragmatic when tailoring their programmes and the presence of agencies to country contexts. Not every agency needs to be in every country. Many shared services (security, air transport, communications and information technology (IT) and infrastructure (offices) can be standardized.

- UN leadership, even in-country, can recognize and reward staff that prioritize UN reform approaches and overcome working in silos. Promoting inter-agency staff exchanges and multi-agency careers can help UN staff understand how to make the components of the UN operational system work together.
- In-country, UN agencies, host governments and donors alike can further involve local stakeholders, including affected people, authorities and civil society, in the design and implementation of programmes. The key to successful sustainable development and effective humanitarian assistance is ensuring that it is nationally owned.

There are many other measures that Member States can take at the global level, such as further instructing UN agencies to work together or by rationalizing the number of mandates. Endorsing digital solutions and leveraging technology can also improve efficiency and coordination.

Ultimately, enabling the UN to live up to the promises made to the world is not simply a matter of taking one measure or another. Only if UN staff and Member States, host countries and donors alike, put mandates, proven approaches and common sense before immediate short-term self-interest will the UN be able to continue its vital work and do more than just preventing humanity from descending into hell.





# Annexes

## I. Acronyms

<b>A</b>		<b>G</b>	
ADB	Asian Development Bank	GBV	Gender-based violence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	GCCF	Global Concessional Financing Facility
AU	African Union	GEF	Global Environment Facility
		GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
<b>B</b>		GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
BoA	Board of Auditors		
<b>C</b>		<b>H</b>	
CBPF	Country-based pooled funds	HACT	Harmonized approach to cash transfers
CCA	Common country analysis	HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination	HCA	Host country agreement
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	HCT	Humanitarian country team
CLA	Cluster lead agency	HLCM	High-level Committee on Management Development-Humanitarian-Peace (collaboration)
CPD	Country programme document	HNP	High-level Committee on Programmes
CSOs	Civil society organizations	HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
<b>D</b>		HPC	Humanitarian programme cycle
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	HRC	Human Rights Council
DCO	Development Coordination Office		
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs	<b>I</b>	
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration	IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
DIM	Direct implementation	IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
DO	Designated Official for Security	IBRD	International Bank of Reconstruction and Development
DOS	Department of Operational Support	ICJ	International Court of Justice
DPO	Department of Peace Operations	ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
DSG	Deputy Secretary-General	ICSID	International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes
DSRSG	Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General	IDA	International Development Association
DSS	Department of Safety and Security	IDPs	Internally displaced persons
<b>E</b>		IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa	IFC	International Finance Corporation
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe	IFI	International financial institution
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council	IHL	International humanitarian law
EGS	Executive Group on Security	IHRL	International human rights law
EOSG	Executive Office of the Secretary-General	ILO	International Labour Organization
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator	IMF	International Monetary Fund
ERP	Enterprise resource planning	IOM	International Organization for Migration
ERSG	Executive Representative of the Secretary-General	<b>J</b>	
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
ESCSA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
EU	European Union	JPO	Junior Professional Officer
<b>F</b>		<b>L</b>	
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	LTA	Long-term agreement
FCV	Fragility, conflict and violence		
FIF	Financial intermediary fund		

<b>M</b>		<b>T</b>	
MAF	Management and accountability framework	ToR	Terms of reference
MDB	Multilateral development bank	<b>U</b>	
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
MoU	Memorandum of understanding	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network	UNCT	United Nations country team
MPTF	Multi-partner trust fund	UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
<b>N</b>		UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organization	UNDS	United Nations development system
NHRI	National human rights institutions	UNEO	United Nations Ethics Office
NIM	National implementation modality	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
NRA	Non-resident agency	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>O</b>		UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ODA	Official development assistance	UNIC	United Nations information centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services	UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
OMT	Operations Management Team	UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
<b>P</b>		UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund	UN-RIS	United Nations Representatives of Investigative Services
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office	UNSSC	United Nations System Staff College
PMT	Programme Management Team	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
PoC	Protection of civilians	UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
PRI	Principles for Responsible Investment	UNSMS	United Nations security management system
<b>Q</b>		UNU	United Nations University
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review	UPU	Universal Postal Union
<b>R</b>		UPR	Universal periodic review
RA	Resident agency	USG	Under-Secretary-General
RC	Resident Coordinator	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office	<b>V</b>	
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platforms	VNR	Voluntary national review
RETF	Recipient-executed trust fund	<b>W</b>	
RRA	Risk and resilience assessment	WEF	World Economic Forum
RRP	Refugee response plan	WFP	World Food Programme
<b>S</b>		WHO	World Health Organization
SBAA	Standard Basic Assistance Agreement	WTO	World Trade Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals		
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse		
SLS	Security level system		
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise		
SMT	Security Management Team		
SPF	State and Peacebuilding Fund		
SPF	Strategic Partnership Framework		
SPM	Special political mission		
SRM	Security risk management		
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary-General		
SWG	Sector Working Group		



## II. Source notes

### Where to look it up

The following list contains links to further information on the UN operational system.

**United Nations country teams (UNCTs) key documents:** [unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-key-documents](https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unct-key-documents)

This website provides essential documents related to UNCTs, including Cooperation Frameworks, common country analyses (CCAs) and other strategic planning and coordination documents that guide UN work at the country level.

**Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):** [unocha.org](https://unocha.org)

This website provides updates on humanitarian crises, response plans and coordination efforts. It features geodata, maps, reports and funding information, including appeals, donor contributions and pooled funds.

**Development Coordination Office (DCO):** [un-dco.org](https://un-dco.org)

This website provides information on the UN development system, Resident Coordinators and UNCTs, including reports and updates on reforms and UN work at the country, regional and global levels.

**Dag Hammarskjöld Library:** [research.un.org](https://research.un.org)

This website is the most comprehensive and simple portal for the work of the UN and its agencies. It provides key UN documents, reports, treaties, resolutions, official speeches and voting data.

**UN system:** [www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system](https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-system)

This website provides an overview of the UN system, including its main organs, specialized agencies as well as funds and programmes. It explains how different entities work together to address global challenges and promote international cooperation.

**UN terminology:** [unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/](https://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/)

This website provides official translations and definitions of UN-specific terms, acronyms, and phrases in the six official UN languages. It is a key resource for ensuring consistency in UN documents and communications.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Knowledge Platform:** [sdgs.un.org](https://sdgs.un.org)

This website provides documents on the SDGs.

**UNSDG Resources Library:** [unsdg.un.org/resources](https://unsdg.un.org/resources)

The UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Resources Library is a centralized repository that offers a wide array of publications, guidance notes, policy briefs and reports related to UN development initiatives and the SDGs.

The following source notes are organized by chapter, section and page number. Key words or key phrases are cited followed by the source reference. Sample resolutions are sometimes provided to illustrate a precedent.

## 1 MANDATES

- Page 14 “With 193 Member States ...”: UN Charter, Article 4  
“The founding document of the UN ...”: UN Charter  
“... principal organs, the General Assembly ...”: UN Charter, Article 9
- Page 15 “Security Council”: UN Charter, Articles 23–32  
“Economic and Security Council (ECOSOC)”: UN Charter, Articles 61–72  
“International Court of Justice”: UN Charter, Articles 92–96  
“World Health Assembly”: A/RES/63/33  
“Conference of the Parties”: UNFCCC, Article 7  
“... the fundamental pillars for the actions of the UN ...”: UN Charter, Article 1

### 1.1 Peace and security

- Page 15 “... is the prohibition of the use of force ...”: UN Charter, Article 2 (4)  
“... legitimate self-defence ...”: UN Charter, Article 51
- Page 16 “Peacebuilding Commission”: A/RES/60/180

### 1.2 International human rights law

- Page 16 “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”: A/RES/217(III)  
“International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” and “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”: A/RES/2200A(XXI)  
“International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”: A/RES/2106 (XX)  
“Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”: A/RES/34/180  
“Convention on the Rights of the Child”: A/RES/44/25  
“... human rights treaty system”: A/RES/68/268;

### 1.3 International humanitarian law

- Page 17 “... the four Geneva Conventions from 1949 and their additional protocols ...”: A/RES/2675 (XXV)  
“... protection architecture ...”; “...to protect women, peace and security...”: S/RES/1325  
“... children and armed conflict”: S/RES/1612  
“... civilians”: S/RES/2417  
“... humanitarian personnel”: S/RES/2730;  
“... Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs”: A/RES/46/182  
“... respect for the sovereignty of the host country”: UN Charter, Article 2

### 1.4 Sustainable development

- Page 17 “... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ...”: UN Charter, Article 55  
“2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”: A/RES/70/1
- Page 18 “Voluntary national review”: A/RES/70/1, paras. 80 – 84

## 2 THE UN OPERATIONAL SYSTEM

- Page 22 “Humanitarian-Development-Peace collaboration”: A/RES/72/279

### 2.2 Human rights protection and promotion

- Page 24 “Protection of Civilians (PoC)”: S/RES/1674  
“... key human rights treaties and instruments ...”: ohchr.org  
“In addition to those bodies, ‘special procedures’ ...”: A/HRC/RES/5/1
- Page 25 “... a “human rights-based approach””: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources>  
“The UPR process generates ...”: A/RES/60/251

### 2.3. Humanitarian assistance

- Page 26 “Humanitarian principles”: A/RES/46/182

### 2.4 Sustainable development cooperation

- Page 27 “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”:  
A/RES/66/288, A/RES/67/290, A/RES/68/1, A/RES/70/1, SDG Summit 2023 | United Nations.  
“... least developed countries ...”: [www.un.org/ohrls](http://www.un.org/ohrls)

### 3 THE UN SET-UP AT COUNTRY LEVEL

#### 3.1 Development settings

Page 33 "RCs are the designated representative of the Secretary-General": A/RES/64/289; A/RES/46/182; A/RES/72/279

#### UN country team (UNCT)

Page 33 "... common country analysis (CCA)": A/RES/72/279

Page 34 "The UN country team": A/RES/72/279

"... such as international financial institutions... ": A/RES/73/220;  
A/RES/79/199

Page 35 "Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review" (QCPR): A/RES/79/226

#### 3.2 Humanitarian settings

Page 37 "Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan": A/RES/46/182

#### Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and OCHA office

Page 37 "... the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) ... ": A/RES/46/182;  
A/RES/78/119

"... as being "double-hatted" RC/HC: A/RES/46/182

Page 38 "A system-wide scale-up ... ": A/RES/46/182

Page 39 "... the UN Charter gives the Secretary-General the authority to appoint UN staff": UN Charter, Article 101

Page 41 "... the refugee response plan": e.g., A/RES/71/1; A/79/452

#### 3.4 Safety and security

Page 43 "In-country, the safety and security of UN staff is primarily the responsibility of the host government ... ": A/RES/78/118

Page 41 "The Department of Safety and Security (DSS) ... ": A/RES/59/276

#### 3.5 UN communications

Page 46 "OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS)": fts.unocha.org

#### 3.6 Host government coordination

Page 46 "... the development partnership coordination ... ": A/RES/76/224

Page 47 "1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Privileges": A/RES/1450 (XIV)

"1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities": A/RES/2/22

"1947 Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies"  
A/RES/179 (III)

"... enjoy privileges and immunities ... ": A/RES/2/22

### 4 FUNDING THE UN AND ITS OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Page 52 Quantity and quality of funding: A/RES/79/226

### 5 DESIGNING COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

#### 5.1 The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework cycle

Page 59 "Do-no-harm principle": e.g., A/RES/46/182

"... UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework ... ": A/RES/70/1;  
A/RES/72/279; A/RES/76/224

Page 61 "Many UN agencies have to submit their own agency-specific country programme documents ... ": <https://digitallibrary.un.org>

Page 61 "The Cooperation Framework is accompanied by a funding framework ... ": A/RES/72/279

"Paris Agreement on Climate Change": FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1;  
UNEP/EA.2/RES.6

#### 5.2 Humanitarian programme cycle

Page 62 "... humanitarian response is needs-based, prioritized and coordinated ... ": A/RES/46/182

Page 63 "Localization": A/RES/70/1; A/RES/71/127; A/RES/77/281|

Page 63 "... separate humanitarian funding appeals and pledging conferences ... ": A/RES/78/119

Page 64 "The OCHA Financial Tracking Service provides regular updates ... ": A/RES/46/182;

### **5.3 Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) collaboration**

Page 64 " ... the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS)": A/RES/71/353;  
A/RES/79/1 (Pact for the Future)

## **6 MANAGING COUNTRY PROJECTS**

Page 70 " ... have agreed on harmonized cost-recovery policies": A/RES/79/226

Page 71 " ... a 1% coordination levy is added ... ": A/RES/72/279

Page 72 "There are several key funding mechanisms ... ": A/RES/72/279;  
A/RES/79/226

"Business class flights can only be approved ... ": A/RES/67/254;  
ST/AI/2013/3

Page 73 "Joint SDG Fund is a pooled fund ... ": A/RES/46/182; A/RES/71/127;  
Strategy 2023–2026

Page 74 "Enterprise resource planning (ERP) ... ": A/RES/74/263

### **UN staff: recruitment, categories and conditions**

Page 76 " ... due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff ... ":  
UN Charter, Article 101

" ... performance improvement plans tackle underperformance ... ":  
UN Charter, Article 101; ST/AI/2021/4

" ... the UN has system-wide human resource strategies ... ": A/RES/77/278

" ... there are different categories of UN staff ... ": A/RES/590 (VII);  
A/RES/70/244; careers.un.org

Page 77 " ... rules and regulations ... ": ST/SGB/2014/2; A/RES/78/275

### **6.3 Project contracts and agreements**

Page 79 " ... UN agencies can share expenses ... ": A/RES/79/226

### **6.5 Implementation modalities**

Page 81 " ... the UN works with different types of implementing partners ... ":  
A/RES/79/228

" ... their work is in line with UN rules and values ... ": A/RES/60/1

Page 82 "UN procurement: principles, process and practices":  
ST/SGB/2013/4/AMEND.1

### **6.6 Monitoring, evaluation and audits**

Page 83 "UN agencies follow monitoring, evaluation and audit rules...": ST/SGB/2018/3

Page 84 " ... projects are subject to audit": A/RES/66/209; A/RES/69/228;  
A/RES/79/231

" ... the System-wide Evaluation Office ... ": A/RES/64/289

## **7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT**

### **7.1 Accountability of UN agencies**

Page 88 " ... accountability with regard to a UN agency and personal accountability on  
the part of its staff ... ": A/RES/77/280

### **7.2 UN staff accountability**

Page 89 "UN staff regulations and rules": ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1;

"United Nations system leadership framework, endorsed ... ": CEB/2017/1

" ... in the standards of conduct for the international civil service":  
A/RES/56/244; A/RES/67/257

Page 90 " ... UN Values and Behaviour Framework": ST/SGB/2024/4

" ... report breaches of the rules and regulations ... ":  
ST/SGB/2023/1/Rev.1

" ... and entrust the gift to the designated agency office": ST/AI/2010/1

### **7.3 Addressing misconduct**

Page 92 " ... through established UN mechanisms, such as the UN Dispute Tribunal ...  
and the UN Appeals Tribunal ... ": A/RES/63/253; A/RES/69/203;  
A/RES/77/260

Page 93 "The UN Secretariat regularly releases a compendium of disciplinary ... ":  
A/RES/59/287

" ... distinguishes between sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) ... and  
sexual harassment ... ": A/RES/73/148; A/RES/71/278; A/RES/77/333;  
A/RES/78/331

## 7.4 Oversight mechanisms

- Page 95 "UN Board of Auditors (UNBoA) ... ": A/RES/74 (I)  
"Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)": A/RES/70/114  
"Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)": A/RES/31/192  
"UN Ethics Office ... ": A/RES/60/248; A/RES/60/1

## 8 WORKING WITH PARTNERS AT COUNTRY LEVEL

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- Page 110 "International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ... ": A/RES/45/6  
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- Page 115 "UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination": Information Note 4  
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- Page 118 " ... part of the reform of the UN development system ... ": A/RES/60/1  
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