



Guidance Note on UN Country Team Conduct and Working Arrangements¹

1. Purpose

The purpose of this guidance note is to establish the guiding principles that governed the conduct and working arrangements among UNCT members². UNCT members are accountable to the Regional undg Teams for implementing and complying with this Guidance Note, in accordance with the undg Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System including the functional firewall for the RC System³.

This note gives direction to UNCTs on how to implement the UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements. In implementing this guidance note, UNCTs may wish to develop a Code of Conduct⁴ customized to their particular country context.

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with:

- The RC Job Description (February 2014);
- The undg Dispute Resolution Mechanism (2009);
- The undg Explanatory note on the RC/HC/DO and UNCT performance appraisal including the One80 degree competency assessment and development tool (2013);

2. Guiding Principles

The guiding principles governing the conduct of UNCT members are spelled out in the UN Charter and the Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service⁵.

In addition, the Resident Coordinator (RC) and UNCT roles and accountabilities are set out in the following agreed documents, among others:

- The undg Management and Accountability System of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System including the “functional firewall” for the RC System (M&A System) included in the framework (27 August 2008) and implementation plan (29 January 2009);
- RC Job Description (updated in 2014);
- General Assembly Resolution A/Res/67/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) (December 2012);
- undg Standard Operating Procedures for Delivering as One (August 2013);
- RC ad interim Procedures (April 2013);
- The UN Secretary-General’s Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions (2006)
- The UN Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP 2013)
- Rule of Law Note (Secretary-General’s Decision 2012/13)
- Human Rights in Development (Secretary-General’s Decision 2008/18)
- Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (Secretary-General’s Decision 2011/18)
- Rights Up Front: A Plan of Action to strengthen the UN’s role to protect people. Follow-up to the report of the Internal Review Panel on UN action in Sri Lanka (July 2013)

3. Standards of Conduct

As international civil servants, all UN staff, and thus all UNCT members, are expected to comply with the UN Charter and Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service⁶. This includes an expected set of qualities and

¹ Approved by the undg, 6 February 2014.

² UNCT members refer to the Resident Coordinator and the agency country representatives in a country.

³ The undg Management and Accountability System (Framework/Vision) states the RC and UNCT Members accountabilities include “Implement RC/UNCT Code of Conduct” and its implementation plan states that the RC and UNCT Members should have “full compliance with this Guidance note.”

⁴ For country examples of UNCT Code of Conducts click here

⁵ ST/SGB/2002/13, “Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members”

knowledge (such as inclusiveness, consensus-builder integrity and ethics, respect and trust, respect for diversity, non-discrimination, freedom from harassment, promotion and protection of human rights, and creativity) and also business process standards (such as teamwork, transparency and accountability, participatory management, open communications, timely dissemination of information, quality performance and oversight, and results orientation) for the UNCT. Failure to comply with UN Standards of Conduct would be reflected in performance evaluations.

4. Accountabilities

In accordance with the Management and Accountability System, the RC system, is managed by UNDP on behalf of the system. It is owned by all members of the United Nations development system and its functioning based on participation, collegiality and mutual accountability. The Management and Accountability System explains the overall vision of a Resident Coordinator, who, among others, “has an equal relationship with, and responsibility to, all UNCT member agencies”, “is empowered by clear recognition by each Agency of his / her role in strategically positioning the UN in each country”, “has immediate access to agencies’ technical resources to support the RC function and “has flexible financing for start-up/preparatory activities of the UNCT”.

Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the UNCT is accountable for developing an UNDAF or similar document (e.g. an Integrated Strategic Framework in Mission settings) as the main strategic framework of the UN system operational activities for development, through which to support national development priorities, to promote international norms and standards including human rights, as well as to respond to human rights/humanitarian/crisis/transition situations towards the achievement of sustainable development. In line with the UNDAF, the UNCT is required to continue promoting an optimal division of labour for achieving high impact results as a United Nations system at country level, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.

As per the Management and Accountability System, the RC is accountable to report on agreed UNCT work plan results (as derived from the UNDAF) to Government

Within a UNCT, there should be a clear division of labor and accountability lines between the RC/RR and UNDP CD functions, where the RC should focus on strategic positioning of the UN at country level, shared policy and programme results and operational coherence, as well as resource mobilization for the UNDAF/One Programme... When there is no CD, the RR function should, to the extent possible, leave day-to-day UNDP operational responsibility to the UNDP Deputy RR, who will also undertake UNDP resource mobilization for UNDP specific programmes. This principle also applies to the RC a.i.

All UNCT members are accountable to the RC and the rest of the UNCT for delivering on UNDAF shared results and the UNCT work plan. This is particularly so for those members that take on leadership roles in Results Groups/Theme Groups, PMT, OMT, etc., Agency representatives would retain a direct accountability line to their own organizations reporting mechanisms on agency-specific results, and a horizontal accountability line to the RC on shared results of the UNDAF/UNCT.

All agency representatives’ report to the RC on matters related to the working of the country team and implementation of the UNDAF and UNCT work plan. UNCT members will be appraised on their substantive performance in their contribution to the team by their respective Regional undg Team. As part of this appraisal process, RC/UNCT working relations will be assessed using the One80-degree assessment tool. Additionally, in accordance with the QCPR and undg-agreed mutual accountability requirements of the Management and Accountability system, the RC is to provide a formal input to the performance appraisal of all agency representatives, who are members of the UNCT on their contributions to its effective and efficient functioning.

5. Resident Coordinator

The RC, under the leadership of Governments, plays a central role in leading the UNCT in coordination of all UN System operational activities for development, to ensure alignment of UN assistance with national development priorities. This is undertaken in a manner that recognizes the distinctive mandates and roles, and enhances the effective utilization of resources and unique expertise of all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies. The RC is the primary interlocutor for the UNCT with the Head of State or Government in support of the

⁶ ST/SGB/2002/13, “Status, basic rights and duties of United Nations staff members”

UNCT, its members and UNDAF results. The detailed roles and responsibilities of the RC are spelled out in the RC Job Description⁷.

5.1 RC *ad interim*

In the case of prolonged absence of the RC, an RC *ad interim* (RC a.i) will be assigned in order to ensure continuity in the leadership at the country level. This person will carry out the duties of the RC while continuing his/her own work, and receives support from the RC Office, his/her parent agency and the rest of the UNCT. The RC a.i. should have access to all the information and other resources that the RC would have. See UNDG guidance on RC *ad interim* procedures at www.undg.org. The RC a.i would be governed by the same principles and accountabilities as outlined in section 4 above.

6. UN Country Team

The UNCT ensures interagency coordination and decision making at the country level. The main purpose of the Country Team is for individual agencies to plan and work together, as part of the RC System, to ensure the delivery of tangible results in support of the national development and humanitarian agenda.

The UNCT membership, roles and responsibilities should be laid out clearly within each UNCT (and could be further specified in their Code of Conduct). These will include accountability to each other and the RC, taking responsibility for elements of the UNCT work plan, particularly in oversight of subsidiary groups, mobilization of resources for the UNDAF and UNCT work plan, and taking part in mutual assessments. This will not prejudice their relationship with their own agency.

In humanitarian settings, the responsibility for inter-agency coordination, strategic planning and decision-making related to humanitarian action in-country does not rest with the UNCT but with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)⁸. The HCT is established by the Resident Coordinator, in consultation with relevant operational agencies and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, when a humanitarian crisis erupts or a situation of chronic vulnerability sharply deteriorates. A HCT may also be established to steer preparedness activities, if no other adequate coordination mechanism exists. The HCT and the UNCT coexist and do not replace each-other. The HC or, in the absence of an HC position, the RC is responsible for ensuring complementarity between them.

6.1 UNCT Membership

The UNCT is composed of representatives of the UN funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other UN entities in a given country, including non-resident agencies (NRAs) and representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions.⁹ These representatives must be a UN staff member¹⁰, be nominated by their agency to represent, and be empowered with sufficient decision making authority on programmatic and financial matters related to the programming activities, as called by member states in the QCPR¹¹. UN Country Team meetings will include all representatives of the UN funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other UN entities active in a given country¹².

Inclusive mechanisms should be established to ensure all agencies can fully participate per their capacities and representation, in UNCT consultations and decision making processes and are informed through regular communications and information sharing. Some UNCT engagements, topics (e.g. common services, security) and actions (e.g. One80 degree assessment) would only pertain to representatives resident in the country so those topics will only be discussed by, or have the participation of, the concerned individuals/entities.

⁷ RC JD to be hyperlink

⁸ Please refer to the IASC Guidance for Humanitarian Country Teams, endorsed by the 75th IASC Working Group on 18 November 2009.

⁹ Please refer to GA resolution 53/192, preamble 6.

¹⁰ In the case of the BWIs, these will include staff member of the World Bank or IMF.

¹¹ Please refer to A/Res/67/226 OP 124 (j).

¹² Please note that IOM is not formally part of the United Nations nor the Resident Coordinator System. Participation in inter-agency groups at the country-level, such as the thematic groups, and collaboration in relevant activities including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Country Analysis is to be determined by the UNCT.

The RC and the UNCT should ensure inclusive measures to work closely with NRAs. At the same time, NRAs will take necessary measures to engage with the RC and UNCT, ensuring that they have the requisite level of technical staff at headquarters/regional/sub-regional level as appropriate to support the work of the UNCT when called upon, and are in dialogue with the UNCT and RC, regularly informing them about country visits and other relevant matters. The functioning of the UNCT should ensure regular communications with all active NRAs, through both electronic means and face to face meetings, as appropriate.

6.2 Decision making

UNCTs should determine their own decision-making mechanisms for their UNCT. In general, decisions would be made on a consensus basis by the UNCT. Specific decision-making authorities can be delegated by the UNCT to specified inter-agency bodies (OMT, Theme Groups/Results Groups) as and when the UNCT deems it necessary to expedite the progress of UN Reform, achievement of planned development outcomes or respond to specific situations or programmatic exigencies.

6.3 UNCT Roles and Responsibilities

The UNCT together with the RC uphold and promote the UN's responsibilities with regard to preventing and responding to serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including the responsibilities of UN entities and staff in this regard. To this effect, the UNCT considers and acts upon information and analysis about human rights concerns from OHCHR as well as other sources, including by reflecting them in the CCA and UNDAF.

The UNCT assigns various leadership roles to its members on programmatic and management issues, and may wish to set out specific Terms of Reference for particular roles undertaken by or for the UNCT. The UNCT meets ideally once a month or as suits the needs of the UNCT as per their agreement.

The UNCT will help develop proposals regarding pooling country level fundraising and joint financing, based on the agreed needs and priorities of the country, as expressed in the UNDAF. UNCT members provide the RC with the necessary information on contributions upon agreement with programme countries, which will also serve to populate the Common Budgetary Framework¹³. The RC leads the development and monitoring of the Common Budgetary Framework, where it exists, based on regular information on contributions received by UNCT members. Where the UNCT has agreed to adopt a Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy, the RC is responsible for leading the development and implementation of such strategy. In instances where a One Fund has been established, the RC leads a consultative process on allocations from the Fund and, if consensus cannot be reached within the UNCT, makes final decision on allocations.

Under the leadership of the RC, UNCTs should ensure coherent messaging from the UN system in a country ensuring clear and consistent strategic positioning of the UN and its vision at the country level. To that effect UNCTs should develop common advocacy messages on key UN positions relating to national development issues and other topics in which the UN is engaged. Common messages should be consistently delivered by all members of the UNCT and/or the designated spokesperson(s) for a particular subject area, noting that Communicating as One does not mean that only one person (i.e. the Resident Coordinator) speaks or acts as the spokesperson for the UNCT. Ensuring a consistent and coherent message is a shared responsibility of all UN Country Team members. The UNCT may wish to establish a Country Communications Group (CCG) accountable to the UNCT and RC (which may be led by a member of the UNCT or the RC), and develop joint communications strategies and products.

6.4 Member roles and responsibilities

UNCT members represent and advocate the goals, norms and standards of the UN system, including the promotion, protection and advocacy of human rights standards and principles, internationally agreed treaty obligations and development goals. All members of the UNCT are expected to, and will be held accountable for, standing by the common principles and policies as articulated in the UN Charter and respective UN Conventions.

¹³ Refer to the Guidance on Common Budgetary Framework.

The UNCT plans and agrees on annual key results as a team, which are submitted to the Regional undg Team, as part of the Resident Coordinator Annual Report. UNCT members fully engage on the design and implementation of the UNDAF, develop annual UNCT work plans, oversee the work of theme groups/results groups (participating in and leading specific groups), and guide the work of functional groups such as on communication, monitoring and evaluation, and the operations management team. For these groups, the lead UNCT member reports on results to the RC and UNCT. UNCT members support the RC in his/her role as leader of the UNCT in positioning the team and coordinating the UNDAF. They are responsible for implementing and reporting on their own agency programmes to support UNDAF results. UNCT members ensure their organizations' programmes are in alignment with the UNDAF in response to national priorities, needs and challenges, including reviewing proposals by the RC, prepared in consultation with Governments and involved UN entities and partners for amendments to the UNDAF and its projects and programmes, as needed.

UNCT members also support the strengthening of the normative and operational linkages of UNS activities and promote an inclusive, equitable, participatory and accountable development process. UNCT members adhere to the M&A System agreements including mutual accountability, the functional firewall (including when RC a.i), UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements, undg Dispute Resolution Mechanism and other relevant undg policies/instruments.

UNCT members provide the RC with access to expertise and technical resources as agreed with the agency representatives balancing available resources with tasks to be performed. This could include support on cross-cutting issues such as monitoring and evaluation, gender analysis, ICT, etc., as well as ad-hoc support as resource people. All members of the UNCT strengthen coordination with all development stakeholders, including civil society, at the country level, in agreement with the national Governments, in support of national development plans and priorities.

In countries where the principle of integration applies, standing coordination bodies that bring together the Mission and the UNCT should be established in support of the UN's peace consolidation efforts (Theme/Results Groups can be leveraged to play this function). A senior leadership forum should include the key in-country decision-makers such as the S/ERSG, DSRSGs, the RC/HC, Civilian Chief of Staff, heads of mission components and heads of relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes for decision making on joint strategic and operational issues

Heads of each UN organization present in the duty station participate in the Security Management Team (SMT), chaired by the Designated Official (DO), which advises the DO on all security-related matters.

In humanitarian settings, UN system agencies that undertake humanitarian action in-country participate in a constructive and collaborative manner in the HCT and engage proactively in other humanitarian coordination mechanisms and processes such as clusters, inter-agency needs assessments, and strategic response plan, as envisaged in the IASC Transformative Agenda.

In situations of risk or actual serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, in countries where there is no UN peacekeeping or special political mission/office, UNCT members also support the RC in developing and implementing a strategy to address such risks or violations.

Where the UNCT members are responsible for the above, this should be reflected and reviewed in the performance appraisal process of the individual. In particular, UNCT members include key result/s related to their work in the UNCT in their individual personnel appraisal plans, receive input thereon from the RC and other UNCT members as relevant, participate in the One80/UNCT assessments, and provide an input to RC and UNCT member's appraisals as requested. UNCT members support each other and the team in improving competencies identified in the One80 degree assessments and appraisals of the RC and UNCT by the Regional undg Teams.

The RC is the primary interlocutor for the UNCT with the Head of State or Government in support of the UNCT, its members and its UNDAF results. He/she would be accompanied by agency representatives when agency specific matters are discussed. Government's prerogative to call on individual agency representatives is not affected, and

agency representatives retain the possibility to have direct access to Heads of State/ Government and all appropriate central and line ministries and agencies on matters within their mandate. In the case of a crisis, individual agency representatives may also work directly with top government leaders, as necessary, keeping the RC and UNCT fully informed.

6.5 Theme Groups/Results Groups and other subsidiary groups

As tasked by the UNCT, the UN Theme Groups/Results Groups carry out programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for each of the UNDAF results. The UNCT member leading a specific Theme Group/Results Group assumes responsibility and is accountable for the agreed work plan results for the group he/she leads and follows-up on results. The Chair of the UN Theme Group/Results Group should be a UNCT member (or representative of the UN Mission, in countries where the principles of integration apply) and should report on initiatives and results to the Resident Coordinator and UNCT (or the Senior Leadership Forum, in countries where the principles of integration applies) on a regular basis to brief, discuss and agree on any proposed actions and follow-up. Other groups /networks of the UNCT might cover Monitoring and Evaluation, Communication or Common Services. Refer to the Generic Terms of Reference for Results Groups.¹⁴

7. Dispute Resolution Mechanism

When there is a dispute among UNCT members, they should follow the undg dispute resolution mechanism guidance provided in the undg website www.undg.org. This guidance emphasizes that disputes associated with UNCT common processes should be solved first and foremost at country level in an amicable environment. The following principles should form the basis for the dispute resolution mechanism. 1) Any agreed upon process for dispute resolution should have UNCT ownership; 2) Disputes should be resolved as soon as possible after occurrence; 3) Regional or HQ intervention (as appropriate) will be sought only when country level mechanisms fail to resolve the dispute, at the request of any of the parties involved in the dispute; 4) Negotiation among the concerned parties to reach a mutually acceptable resolution is the preferred modality; 5) Dispute resolution processes and outcomes should engender UNCT trust.¹⁵

8. Resident Coordinator Office

To coordinate the work of the UN system at the country level, each RC/UNCT should have a RC Office (RCO) to support these roles and demands. UNCT members will actively support the RCO within the context of the UNDAF results framework, including in technical support to achieve agreed UNCT results and in analysis, planning, tracking and reporting processes, information management, communication and advocacy. The RC Office supports 10 core coordination functions performed by RCs and UNCTs as appropriate:

1. Strategic analysis and planning
2. Oversight of the UN country programming cycle
3. Representation and support of UN Secretariat and UN agencies/NRAs
4. Support to national coordination systems and processes
5. Development and management of shared operational support services
6. Crisis management and preparedness response
7. External communication and advocacy
8. Human rights and development
9. Joint resource mobilization and fund management
10. General UNCT oversight and management

In accordance with the M&A System and the undg RC cost-sharing agreement, the RCO should be cost-efficient, effective and responsive to the country needs. The RCO also serves as the secretariat of the Joint National/UN Steering Committee¹⁶.

¹⁴ Please refer to the TORs of Results Groups included in the One Programme guidance of the DaO integrated package.

¹⁵ Refer to undg Dispute Resolution Mechanism for UN Country Teams at www.undg.org

¹⁶ Refer to the Generic Terms of Reference for Joint National/UN Steering Committee.