



# Resident Coordinator Leadership Development and Learning Portfolio at a Glance

2019 - 2020

# RC Leadership Development and Learning Portfolio at a Glance

## 2019-2020

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Since the reform of the United Nations Development System, the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) has carried out several leadership development initiatives aimed at strengthening the leadership of Resident Coordinators (RCs).

### 1. SDG PRIMER CERTIFICATION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Primer Certification<sup>1</sup> provides RCs with a foundational understanding of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

A total of **115 RCs** have been enrolled in the online course. As of today, **71 (62%) have obtained the final certification** by completing all the mandatory assignments of the curricula, including:

- A multiple-choice test;
- An essay on the RC's role in advancing the 2030 Agenda;
- Feedback on the essay of another RC;
- A self-recorded video on the sustainable development challenges in their country and their vision and strategy to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 2. RC ORIENTATION

The orientation of first-time RCs has been entirely revamped. The aim is to accelerate RCs' learning curve with respect to understanding the country context, building relationships with their new stakeholders, and broadening their networks within the UN system. All first-time RCs now systematically benefit from:

- in-briefings with UN Secretariat leadership, United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) entities' headquarters and regional presences, and country-level stakeholders;
- six sessions with an executive coach;
- six months of mentoring from an experienced and 'reform-oriented' former RC.

Rotating RCs are also systematically offered country-specific in-briefings at global, regional and country level.

**Individual executive coaching and mentoring** aims to provide **in-depth individual support to first-time RCs**. Through a series of one-on-one sessions, RCs are offered a safe supportive space to surface and discuss in confidence their leadership challenges and opportunities as they manage the transition to their new role.

The mentors focus on helping RCs navigate the multi-faceted RC role and position the UN in country, whereas the executive coaches focus on RCs' leadership skills.

**24 in-briefings held for first-time RCs and 19 for rotating RCs.**

**23 first-time RCs benefited from coaching and mentoring.**

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<sup>1</sup>The SDG Primer Certification was developed by the UN System Staff College, in collaboration with United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, supported by DCO.

The first cohort of beneficiaries reported high satisfaction with the programme.



*Frankly, I have not had something more useful since I became RC."*



*With the support of [my coach] I:*

- *Initiated some good introductory sessions with the Resident Coordinator Office to get to know them, learn their aspirations, and uncover some underlying tensions – they might otherwise [have] been overlooked with priorities on government and UN Country Team;*
- *Planned and delivered a first UNCT Retreat that was less structured than it might have been and gave space for agency heads to share something they were proud of and challenges of the year and keep an overall positive tone;*
- *Was confident and better prepared to focus on priorities in my new role here and hold all the key introductory meetings, hitting the road running in my first 2 months.*

*DCO investment in [this] services also made me feel valued as part of a team of RCs working in countries across the globe."*



*It was brilliant and very helpful indeed. This is exactly the kind of high-quality professional support that RCs need!"*

### 3. RC COACHING AND BUDDYING

In light of the success of the coaching programme and the demands of COVID-19, in 2020 executive coaching was offered to all RCs; 17 took advantage of it.

DCO has also brokered **informal buddying** between RCs who need support in navigating a specific aspect of their context (e.g. upcoming elections).

### 4. THE RC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING STRATEGY

In collaboration with UNSDG entities, DCO developed an RC Leadership Development and Learning Strategy. The priority areas of intervention are:

- Invest in future RCs, through the RC/HC Talent Pipeline, in order to level the scope of knowledge among members who come from a wide range of backgrounds and ensure foundational knowledge and skills before they deploy;
- Invest in first-time RCs, to accelerate their learning curve in this delicate transition period;
- Support all RCs and their United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in using systems leadership approaches, because understanding and working with complex systems is central to the achievement of Agenda 2030;
- Create a comprehensive set of knowledge and learning resources to support RCs across their lifecycle and a wide range of country contexts, so they can efficiently find what they need to support them.

The core principles underpinning the strategy are:

- Bring learning "close to the work," ensuring it is relevant, timely and tailored to each RC's needs;
- Work with the full team (RC and UNCT members), so that they drive change together;
- Provide learning support over time, in order to anchor learning and drive behavioural change.

## 5. "CONNECT & REFLECT" WEBINAR SERIES

This webinar series was created in partnership with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) in the context of COVID-19 to support RCs to take time out of action to reflect, share with and learn from peers. The sessions included brief presentations on leadership in the context of emergent, disruptive change, as well as on individual and team resilience. Central to the approach was including in each session two 20-minute small group discussions among RCs. The initiative comprised a series of **6 webinars** which were attended by a total of **35 RCs**.

RCs particularly appreciated the opportunity to have the time to reflect and exchange with peers from other regions.

*"This is an excellent way of RC engagement. We are all pragmatic and want to get things done. However, we also need a smiling face and reflections with others on their challenges - to reconfirm that we are not alone."*

At the request of some RCs, three Connect & Reflect webinar series were offered for UNCTs in Europe (Georgia, Kosovo, Serbia), and America (Colombia, Honduras) and Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia). For this series too, the feedback from RCs and UNCTs was very positive.

*"Very important to confirm that other colleagues are facing the same things. This space, listening to colleagues in a relaxed way, to their reflections, is extremely useful."*

## 6. THE 2020 VIRTUAL GLOBAL RC MEETING

In December 2020, DCO supported the design and delivery of the third Global RC Meeting convened by the Secretary-General. The virtual event brought together all RCs worldwide to discuss and reflect on how to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

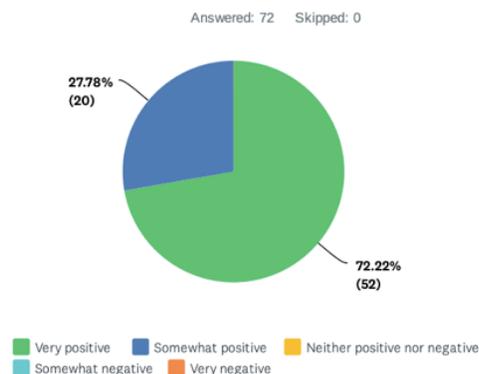
The event provided inspirational, substantive and practical sessions with a focus on the key issues relating to the challenge of turning the COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity for accelerating progress on the SDGs.

A total of **122 RCs actively participated throughout the five-day meeting.**

The 72 RCs who completed the final evaluation survey commented very positively on the **quality of the experience.**

Feedback from RCs on the meeting was overall positive, with 96% indicating that it **"renewed their ambition and commitment** to deliver UN development system support to countries for the SDGs." Further, 94% of RCs indicated that **the meeting generated actionable insights for them to apply at work.**

Q1 Overall, how would you rate the quality of your experience in this Global Meeting?



*“ An amazing virtual meeting that was both substantive and interactive. Time management was excellent which allowed us to address a good number of relevant issues in limited time. Exchanges were frank and to the point and very well moderated.”*

*“ I enjoyed the interactive nature of the week particularly between the SG/RCS, DSG/RCS, DCO/RCS and very importantly as well between the RCS - which generated a huge volume of ideas and practical actions.”*

*“ Fantastic. The selection of the speakers and panelists was excellent. The break-out groups were an excellent means to facilitate discussions and exchange of experience.”*

*“ The format was excellent. This was the first time I really felt I was heard. I had ample opportunity to bring up my views. People were extremely focused.”*

## 7. 2021 – NEW WORK IN PROGRESS

In addition to continuing the activities described above, in 2021 we will launch the following new ones:

### **SDG Leadership Labs**

DCO has partnered with the Presencing Institute (cofounded by MIT faculty member Otto Scharmer) on a major project to strengthen the shared capabilities of RCS, UNCTs and Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) staff to innovate and lead transformational change. Over a period of 6 months, 14 UNCTs will learn how to use systems change and collaborative leadership approaches. The project is funded by the Netherlands.

### **Induction Sessions for first-time RCS**

Starting 2021, DCO will systematically organize three times per year a virtual induction of cohorts of first-time RCS. This will consist of a series of reflections on the RCS role with the participation of experienced RCS.

### **Addressing the specific needs of women serving in an RCS role**

DCO is supporting an RCS-led process to understand the experience of women serving in an RCS role and identify areas where additional support is required.

### **Learning initiatives for RCS/HC Talent Pipeline members**

In 2021, DCO will roll out learning initiatives on substantive and leadership issues for members of the RCS/HC Talent Pipeline.

### **Knowledge management and guidance**

DCO is developing an RCS Handbook to provide concise guidance to first-time RCS on the core responsibilities of the role. We will also develop a knowledge management strategy and a searchable and engaging knowledge platform to ensure that RCS can easily find the information and guidance they need.

### **Partnerships**

We will continue to build partnerships with external providers in order to expand the support we provide RCS and UNCTs. At our request, the **Folke Bernadotte Academy** is providing coaching to an RCS/HC free of charge and is willing to provide advisory, training and facilitation services to other RCS and UNCTs. The **Global Executive Leadership Initiative** has committed to including select RCS and UNCTs in their leadership development activities.

DCO, 25 February 2021.

