



Resident Coordinator Leadership Development and Learning Portfolio at a Glance

2019- 2022

RC Leadership Development and Learning Portfolio Overview 2019-2022

1. THE RC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING STRATEGY

Since the onset of the United Nations development system reform, the Development Coordination Office (DCO) has carried out several learning and leadership development initiatives to strengthen Resident Coordinators' (RCs) leadership skills.

The priority areas of intervention are:

- Investing in future RCs, through the RC/HC Talent Pipeline 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;
- Investing in first-time RCs, to accelerate their learning curve in this delicate transition period;
- Supporting all RCs and their UNCTs in using systems leadership approaches because understanding and working with complex systems is central to the achievement of Agenda 2030;
- Creating 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 DCO's strategy are to:

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

2. SDG PRIMER CERTIFICATION

The SDG Primer Certification provides RCs with a foundational understanding of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As of December 2022, **84 sitting RCs have obtained the final certification (74 percent).**

3. RC ORIENTATION

The orientation of first-time RCs aims to accelerate their learning curve concerning understanding the country context, building relationships with their new stakeholders, and broadening their networks within the UN system. All first-time RCs systematically benefit from the following:

- In-briefings with UN Secretariat leadership, UNSDG entities' headquarters and regional presences, and country-level stakeholders. Rotating RCs are also systematically offered country-specific in-briefings at global, regional, and country levels;
- Access to a library of reading materials;
- Arrival checklist, to help first-time RCs consider all the various tasks they need to manage in the weeks before arriving and during their first month;
- Guidance documents providing suggestions and tips from former RCs on navigating the many inter-related elements of the role;
- Mentoring by a former RC for six months. The mentors focus on helping RCs navigate the multi-faceted RC role and position the UN in the country;
- Six sessions with an Executive Coach focused on RCs' leadership skills. 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;
- A Discussion Series with former RCs: This is a series of five 90-minute virtual discussions on different aspects of the RC role. Each session has a former RC as a resource person. Since 2021, **41** first-time RCs have participated;
- A four-day workshop where first-time RCs could reflect, share experiences and build community. **Twenty-one** first-time RCs attended the 2022 session, and three former RCs served as resource persons and provided mentoring.

55 in-briefings were held for first-time RCs and 40 for rotating RCs.

41 first-time RCs benefited from mentoring, and 35 from coaching.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020, executive coaching was offered to all RCs; 16 took advantage of it.

Quotes from RCs on the Coaching and Mentoring Offer

"It proved to be very useful to have a neutral person to talk with. Someone who had similar experiences and an understanding of what it is like to be an RC. I really appreciated the opportunity."

"The most significant change was the support the coach provided me to help boost my professional confidence as a first-time RC. She provided a safe space to voice concerns, ask questions, and give feedback."

4. LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR RCs

SDG Leadership Labs

DCO has partnered with the Presencing Institute (cofounded by MIT faculty member Otto Scharmer) on a significant project to strengthen the shared capabilities of RCs, UNCTs, and RCO staff to innovate and lead transformational change. Over four years, **26** UNCTs and/or HCTs benefited from this initiative.

The Labs led to a shift in the quality of relationships among UNCT members and helped them gain systems thinking, collaborative leadership, and action-learning skills. UNCTs developed prototypes to support joint action on the SDGs and improve joint leadership of the UN in-country.

Quotes from UNCT participants in the SDG Labs

“It was inspiring. How do I use my job, use this unique position that I have to influence or achieve more and have a multiplier effect? I found it very fulfilling. Making use of this precious time that I have; this opportunity we have with the UN.”

“One of the really great things about the Labs is that it encouraged non-traditional leaders to step forward.”

“It united members of our UNCT around a vision for a new way of working, which is more closely aligned to the UN reform (collaborative, one-UN, focused on integrated solutions for SDGs) and to the Secretary-General's call to action on human rights. It was very useful having 'time out' from mandatory UNCT processes, which tend to dominate all our interactions to the detriment of strategic thinking.”

Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI) Programmes

Thanks to DCO's partnership with the Global Executive Leadership Initiative (GELI), in 2021 and 2022 **27** RCs benefited from GELI's courses on Strategic Influencing (held in conjunction with the London School of Economics) and Negotiation Skills, and **4** RCs participated in the one-year GELI Executive Leadership Programme held with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. The programme brings together executive leaders from the humanitarian and development system – from UN agencies, NGOs, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement - to learn and co-create a leadership ecosystem within the sector. From 2021, a consortium of GELI, Dalberg, and KONU have provided Leadership Labs to **two** Humanitarian Country Teams using the Adaptive Leadership tools and methodology.

Quotes from RC participants in the GELI programme

"I see that we cannot wait for an external authority to fix our problems – we in the development space must collaborate on these issues ourselves. The Lab is here to help us collaborate better in a complex system where there are no clear social hierarchies." (Leadership Lab Participant)

"Good practical examples, interesting discussions with other peers to learn best practices, and the use of tools and methodologies to facilitate a more structured approach to influencing." (Strategic Influencing Course Participant)

At DCO's request, the **Folke Bernadotte Academy** has supported **two** RCs and UN Country Teams. The support includes a tailored assessment, executive coaching, group coaching, facilitation of group development, and process design or systems leadership approaches for effective collaboration.

Peer Coaching Programme

This programme was launched in 2022 to enable Resident Coordinators to benefit from the support of their peers to address a challenge or opportunity they are facing; as well as to develop RCs' capacity to build trusting spaces for open dialogue. It consists of one-hour group sessions held once every 3-4 weeks, over nine months, with some content input on coaching skills and ample space for exchange. **Twenty-one** RCs participated in 2022.

UN Leaders Programme

Nineteen RCs have participated since 2020 in this flagship leadership development programme offered by the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) for senior leaders of the UN System. The programme allows them to reflect on emerging challenges, trends, and opportunities based on a systemic view of the UN's operations. It is also an avenue to build a peer support network.

5. RC GLOBAL MEETINGS

The annual RC Global Meeting was held in person in New York in 2019 and 2022 and virtually in 2020 and 2021. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together all UN Resident Coordinators to discuss, reflect and accelerate the implementation of the transformational 2030 Agenda.

6. LEARNING PROGRAMMES FOR RC/HC TALENT PIPELINE MEMBERS

In 2022 DCO and OCHA rolled out learning initiatives on substantive and leadership issues for RC/HC Talent Pipeline members.

The RC/HC Talent Pipeline is a joint initiative by DCO and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to identify and support potential future Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators and prepare them to take the RC Assessment Center (RCAC).

The RC/HC Talent Pipeline's Learning & Development Programme aims to support pipeline members to acquire the knowledge, competencies, and exposure to the RC and RC/HC roles required to be successful in these demanding positions. The Programme features three hubs that aim to provide Pipeline members with opportunities to develop their readiness against the RC and RC/HC profile:

- 1. Foundational Hub:** This hub includes self-paced learning activities to provide a common foundation of knowledge for all Pipeline members, including mandatory self-paced learning on crucial development and humanitarian topics. This hub also includes a 360-degree assessment and a coaching debrief. Since 2022, a total of **135** Pipeline members have received **382** hours of individual coaching to help them deepen their leadership competence.
- 2. Development Hub:** This hub includes a Self-Directed Learning Project to enable pipeline members to deepen their leadership practice and broaden their experience. A wide range of optional self-paced and instructor-led learning activities are also provided.
- 3. Mastering Hub:** This hub includes a leadership assessment preparation workshop to support Pipeline members who are ready for the RC Assessment Centre to demonstrate the competencies required for the RC role. In 2022 **42** Pipeline members attended the workshop.

Other initiatives include:

- **Monthly Webinar Series** with RCs and RC/HCs to provide Pipeline members with exposure to the realities that current RCs and RC/HCs face and to how they are navigating the complex and pressing challenges they must address in the role;
- **Systems Thinking for Sustainable Development course** delivered by the UN System Staff College to advance the systems leadership skills of Pipeline members; **32** Pipeline members completed the course in 2022;
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) Center for Transformative Leadership Mission's leadership development programme called "**Leaders Solving for Tomorrow,**" aims at supporting leaders to thrive in an ambiguous and ever-changing world. In 2022, **ten** Pipeline members benefited from the programme;
- **Actionable Conflict Analysis Training (ACAT)** organised by the Department of Political and Peace Building Affairs. The ACAT is a foundational course on conflict analysis, measures, and entry points for UN peace and security to contribute to preventing conflict and sustaining peace within a broader integrated cross-pillar UN system response. **Two** RC/HC Talent Pipeline members attended the training.

