

Note to UN Resident Coordinators and Participating UN Organisations

The MDF-F Secretariat would like to thank you for your collaboration in getting the UNDP-Spain MDG Achievement Fund up and running. We have been impressed with the number of proposals submitted for each window. Additionally we have been able to provide additional funding for the UN Coherence Funds in all but two pilot countries. The selection process for the Concept Notes is transparent and involves the key UN agencies for each window. The joint programmes are also thoroughly assessed by external reviewers as well as the Secretariat in order to ensure the highest quality documents get endorsed for approval by the Steering Committee. The purpose of this note is to provide you with lessons learned from the review process; some tips for future reference; and a few words on upcoming tasks for the Secretariat. Consider visiting the website for additional information and best practices for joint programmes.

Global agenda: MDGs, UN Reform and Paris Declaration

- Too few joint programmes refer to the status of implementation of MDGs in country or link their strategy to the attainment of the MDGs. Including MDG-related indicators in the M&E plan is also encouraged.
- Innovation is an important criterion in the Fund despite occasional risks inherent with such new approaches. This issue of scalability of the programme is also a criterion when reviewing programmes and should consequently be addressed in the programme document.
- The implementation of the Paris Declaration and more specifically national ownership, national capacity development and the use of national mechanisms is one of the operating principles of the Fund. Consequently it is important to refer to these issues in the joint programme and to keep them in mind during its identification, execution and evaluation.

Narrative part of the Joint Programme

- Country teams should ensure that the narrative part of the joint programme (not the results framework) includes detailed information on the following:
 - Government (national and local) and any other counterparts in the programme.
 - Detailed information on the beneficiaries, including data on gender.
 - It is important to illustrate the added value of each UN agency in the joint programme, both in terms of expertise and implementation capacity
 - Annexes:
 - Budget broken down into categories of expenditure and per agency
 - Terms of reference for consultants or other issues

Monitoring and evaluation

The Secretariat is working with the UN Evaluation Group to establish specific guidelines for monitoring and evaluation. However pending those results, the following are some points for your consideration:

- Programme teams should ensure that enough funding is available for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes exclusive of the cost of final evaluations - a good rule of thumb is to put 4% of the budget towards M&E.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be as participatory as possible most particularly in those instances where civil society is involved in a particular component of the programme.
- Lessons learned on other issues including UN reform, Paris Declaration, etc. will also be interesting.
- Mid-term evaluations fall under the responsibility of the Secretariat and are consequently financed by the Secretariat's budget.
- Final evaluations are important and can be costly, most particularly if an international consultant is involved so enough funds should be budgeted. A suggested minimum of US\$50,000 should be considered.
- Reporting is officially required for each calendar year. The reporting must always coincide with the calendar year of January to December. Consequently, those programmes starting up after 1 January, for the calendar year must report as of 31 December even if this period is shorter than 12 months. Periodic reporting can be done anytime during the calendar year, especially to request funding of the next tranche.
- As annual work plans are presented on a quarterly basis, programmes are encouraged to report to their Programme Management Committees, and consequently to the Secretariat and MDTF¹, on a quarterly basis. The latter reporting is much lighter than the annual reporting process and is based on the work plan.
- The Secretariat will undertake monitoring missions to the countries benefitting from the Fund. If such visits are not possible, they can be replaced by video conferences but we do feel that they are important.
- When possible, audits should be conducted in a joint manner.

Programme Management

- In reviewing joint programmes we have come across many instances where there isn't a joint programme management but rather each component is managed separately by a specific UN Agency. This may run counter to UN reform and joint UN coordination. An example is one Programme Manager for each component but no overall Programme Coordinator.
- Please ensure that an inception workshop takes place and includes all partners and beneficiaries.
- We note that the programme management unit is often based in a government office or within the local beneficiary community which we applaud as opposed to the programme manager sitting in a UN agency which is not in line with the implementation of the Paris Declaration. However, keeping in mind the latter, we would hope to see more government, local authority or civil society representatives being seconded to the programme management unit in order to build capacity and ensure sustainability.
- We noted that it is taking a relatively long time for approved programme documents to get signed. We would appreciate this being done no longer than one month after the RC receiving the approval

¹The MDTF is currently developing an online reporting format.

memo. While we understand that some countries have particular obstacles in meeting this deadline, we are looking into making this a requirement otherwise; programmes take too long to start up.

- For those countries being asked to modify their joint programme, a revised version should be submitted within one month.
- The startup date of the programme will be considered the date on which the funds were disbursed to the Participating Organisations. This is particularly relevant in determining the deadline for reviewing the disbursement of the second year's tranche of funds.
- The 70% commitment will be based on the initial amount of funds disbursed and not any subsequent budget revisions that may transfer funds to another year. Should programmes not commit the minimum 70% after 12 months; the second tranche of funds will not be disbursed until the 70% commitment is reached as a whole.
- We remind RCs that in considering the transfer of up to 20% of the annual budget, with a maximum of US\$ 1 million, to another UN participating organisation, that this should be done in consultation with the Participating Organisations and approved by the National Steering Committee.

Communication and visibility

The Secretariat is working on developing its communication strategy but would like to convey a few issues at this time:

- Just a reminder that information given to the press, to the beneficiaries of the Fund, all related publicity material, official notices, reports and publications, shall acknowledge the role of the Government of Spain, the UN Agencies, and any other relevant parties.
- Whenever possible and to the extent that it does not jeopardize the privileges and immunities of UN Agencies, and the safety and security of their staff, UN Agencies will promote donor visibility on information, project materials and at project sites, in accordance with their respective regulations, rules, policies and procedures.
- While we know that most programmes have yet to start, we do feel that there are some excellent examples of success stories in the development of the concept notes and subsequent joint programmes. We would appreciate receiving one-pagers on the latter.
- We also encourage the use of the UN logo instead of every agency using its own logo as a sign of the One UN concept.
- We would appreciate lots of photos and film (if possible) to include in our reports.

MDG Secretariat

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