



## **An Evidence-based Review of MDG-F Experiences to Date:**

### **A Contribution to the QCPR Process**



**April 2012**

## "The universe is made up of stories, not atoms"<sup>1</sup>



In the department of Totonicapán in Guatemala, chronic malnutrition affects 3 out of 4 youngsters, particularly indigenous children. An integrated approach to nutrition and food security teaching families the importance of good eating habits, monitors children's growth and advises pregnant and lactating women on maternal health is benefiting almost 7,000 children. Cecilia Morales, a village health worker says that attitudes about nutrition have slowly been changing and "now women are buying vegetables and healthy drink instead of soda".



Thanks to support from an MDG-F financed "Access to Justice Center", 17-year-old Luisa Sambu is no longer being forced into marrying a much older man. In Guinea Bissau, Government and the UN are collaborating to address the issue of early marriage. As Luisa says, "I do not want to marry, and I'm feeling stronger with the support of the Centre".



Against a backdrop of conflict, political tensions and limited economic opportunities, a group of West Bank women are revitalizing traditional Palestinian hospitality and building livelihoods for themselves. Nala Awwad, a 40-year-old single mother of 3 received MDG-F training courses and says, "I am now working as coordinator for the tourists spending a night in the area and I deeply wish to soon be able to restore my house and welcome guests."



Passers-by stopped and peered in through the windows of the center in Bujanovac, a multi-ethnic town in southern Serbia, drawn by the laughter and songs of children. Inside, 50 youngsters from 1st to 8th grade were gathered for a workshop funded by the MDG-F to improve understandings between the region's many ethnic groups. Children of Roma, Albanian and Serbian ethnicities had an opportunity to express themselves through song, dance, theatre etc.



In 2011, the Embera Women's movement (an indigenous group in Colombia) worked to have the Congress of the Embera People ratify the community's decision to ban female genital mutilation (FGM) throughout the western department of Risaralda. Solany Zapata, an Embera Chami woman who said "No to FGM", says "We have awakened many women and talked about what was not discussed before. Now women have a say in their lives, we are no longer afraid to speak."



For decades, Mr. Ma and the farmers in Jinyuan, an impoverished area in China, planted spring rapeseed. The climate in the hilly region was perfect for this plant but in the last 15 years, the area has become drier and temperatures are unreliable so Mr. Ma was obliged to give up planting rapeseed. Climate change was forcing Mr. Ma to change and with the support of the MDG-F he now plants a winter variety with 30% higher yield and the residue can be used to feed his cattle.

<sup>1</sup> Muriel Rukeyser, American writer 1913-1980.

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## ***List of Acronyms***

C&A	Communication and advocacy
DaO	Delivering as One
FGM	Female genital mutilation
HQ	Head quarters
ILO	International Labor Organization
JP	Joint programme
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG-F	Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PMC	Programme Management Committee
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SARC	Special Assistant to the Resident Coordinator
SSC	South-south cooperation
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

## **1. Executive Summary**

The MDG-F is an international cooperation mechanism established in December 2006 by the Government of Spain and the United Nations System with a contribution of €528 million. The MDG-F aims to support national MDGs achievement, national ownership, and the UN Reform, taking the Millennium Declaration and its call for freedom, equity, peace and solidarity as a guiding framework. After five years of implementation, the MDG-F (the Fund) has generated considerable experience joint programming and implementation through its 130 joint programmes in 50 countries across five regions in eight thematic areas. The MDG-F Secretariat (the Secretariat) has developed evidence based lessons and good practices on issues closely related to those that will be discussed during the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), with the goal of contributing to this QCPR process. These issues include:

1. The coherence, effectiveness, relevance, and efficiency of development programmes;
2. National ownership of development processes and results;
3. Capacity development and sustainability of development results; and
4. Mutual accountability.

### *Coherence*

The issue of coherence was explored by the Fund by analyzing to what extent, in MDG-F Joint Programmes UN Agency contributions were mutually reinforcing; reduced overlaps and duplications in their work supporting national initiatives; and how added value of programme partners was emphasized in partner selection.

The buy in of the UN Resident Coordinator, Heads of UN agencies, and high level government representatives is a critical factor in the level of coherence of joint programmes. Their involvement throughout the design and implementation process plays an important role in ensuring that participation of entities in a joint programme is not resource driven, is based on comparative advantages, responds coherently to identified development needs and is implemented in a coordinated manner, avoiding duplications and finding synergies and complementarities among implementing partners.

### *Relevance*

Relevance was looked at in terms of alignment with national priorities and linkages with the MDGs. The advantage of building on existing national initiatives to enhance the potential for scale up and sustainability has proven to be a key success factor. The alignment of joint programmes with existing national priorities resulted in higher engagement of government institutions. In depth consultations at central and local level, has also emerged as a success factor to enhance relevance, and to ensure an accurate analysis of the challenges to be addressed. Regarding the linkages to MDGs, while the joint

programmes were designed with the achievement of the MDGs in mind, direct linkages are not always clear and measurement has been difficult given issues related to sectoral and localized baselines.

### *Efficiency*

Efficiency has been assessed in terms of UN harmonization, joint programme management and coordination to achieve results.

Joint programme inefficiencies can be mainly attributed to a lack of harmonized UN procedures resulting in increased transaction costs. Regular financial reporting has also rendered programme management more complicated. Some UN teams have developed local solutions though ideally the use of national systems should be the first choice.

Joint programme development interventions are designed along complex multi-dimensional issues and with multiple partners and consequently require a strong level of coordination, sound planning and fluid communication. Having a Programme Coordinator/Manager contributes to improving coordination and avoiding duplication.

### *Effectiveness*

Development programmes are more likely to have an impact when they are integrated into national programmes. A favorable factor for effectiveness of these programmes is having clear joint advocacy strategies in place that leverage on the experience of the programme to engage in a substantive dialogue with government to influence legislative processes, plans or strategies.

Joint programmes often combined community level interventions with policy level support, which has been a good model. Coherence, in the areas of intervention and the communities that the joint programmes work with, is important in ensuring better results and reflecting the different development dimensions of the joint programme. Clearly, results-based management is a crucial aspect, which, as evidenced by the joint programmes, needs strengthening within the UN system.

By targeting multi-dimensional development challenges the joint programmes have contributed to increased government cross-sectoral interventions.

Based on the Fund's experience, there are a number of factors that would enable greater coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness – some of which are already operational within the MDG-F:

- Spending more time during the design phase of the programme to ensure participatory local consultations. During the last thematic windows, the Fund allowed five months for the development of the concept note and the joint programme formulation.
- Ensuring that programmes are not only aligned with national priorities but are closely linked with existing national policies, programmes or initiatives where relevant. Where policies are not

in place or need further support, such as with innovative initiatives, the programme should include policy support in the programme design.

- The number of programme partners should be limited, and their inclusion should be based on their bringing an added value to the programme. Operational capacity should not be neglected in this assessment.
- Programmes should not only be nationally owned and led, but national/local partners must also have the time to be fully engaged if results are to be achieved and be sustainable. Preference should be for nationally/locally led coordination platforms ensuring synergies between national and local levels as promoted by the MDG-F.
- The UN Resident Coordinator as well as UN Agency Representatives must be committed and engaged in programme oversight for the former and programme management for the latter.
- UN oversight responsibilities for inter-agency programmes require additional support for the UN Coordination Offices most particularly in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, and communication and advocacy. The Fund's experience with its focus countries has been quite positive.
- As harmonized procedures are not feasible at this time, preference should be given to using national systems and if not possible, then one agency<sup>2</sup> should be requested to undertake all administrative type activities such as procurement, recruitment etc. Another alternative would be some kind of mechanism under the UN Resident Coordinator.

More detailed operational recommendations, taken from the Fund's paper presented to the IV High Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 2011 are found in Annex 3.

### *National Ownership of Development Processes and Results*

National ownership and leadership has been a priority for the fund. Results have been positive (see Annex 1 for a signed declaration by Latin American government representatives) albeit uneven. Where successful, it has been proven that sustainable development results are more likely when joint programmes are owned and led by national and local partners and this must begin during the design of the programme. National counterparts are unanimous in their opinion that national ownership would substantially increase by having the ability to make decisions on the allocation of resources and to consequently be given access to up to date financial data on joint programme implementation. The greater use of national systems is often at odds with capacity issues. Local authorities and civil society are increasingly included in coordination mechanisms though progress in this area is still needed.

Based on the Fund's lessons learned, many of which are currently in practice, and with national leadership and ownership of development initiatives in mind, future programmes need to:

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<sup>2</sup> However, as noted by one evaluator, this agency must be familiar with the needs and procedures of other UN agencies.

- Allow sufficient time<sup>3</sup> to ensure a comprehensive consultative process at both national and local levels;
- In order to put decision-making in national/local hands, there should be a good flow of communication between the UN and national partners; national/local partners with decision-making abilities<sup>4</sup> should be involved in the programme; and governance mechanisms need to be inclusive and led by national partners.
- Ownership should not stop at the national level but where relevant, continue to the regional or provincial level and the local/municipal/village level.
- Preference should be given to using national systems and a single implementation modality such as national implementation.
- Funding partners need to remain flexible enough to allow for changes during the course of programme implementation.
- Where pilot initiatives are implemented, there needs to be a clear process for feeding the lessons and recommendations into the larger policy or programme as demonstrated by many MDG-F joint programmes.

### *Capacity development and Sustainability of Development Results*

Capacity development is a deciding element for sustainability of development results. All programmes include capacity development components; however it is rarely conceived as a strategy, and is usually addressed as inputs rather than outputs. The challenge for many programmes has also been the ability to ensure adequate follow up activities to capacity development activities, as well as systematically assessing these interventions.

In looking forward, the following elements should be factored into joint programme design and implementation:

- The programme should be designed with capacity development goals in mind as well as a clear strategy for their implementation and measurement;
- Specific and targeted capacity needs assessment including institutional capacities;
- The capacity of implementing partners whether from the UN system or national partners should be assessed against expected results; and
- Programmes should be designed with clear yet flexible advocacy plans that are oriented towards the achievement, scaling up and sustainability of results.

### *Accountability*

The governance mechanisms promoted by the MDG-F are useful platforms for information sharing, engagement, coordination and dialogue. When these bodies are co-chaired by a government

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<sup>3</sup> The exact amount of time differs from programme to programme but the Fund's five months (12 weeks for concept note formulation and eight for programme document formulation) were assessed as insufficient.

<sup>4</sup> If capacities need to be developed then this should be done within the programme.

representative and a UN representative, it is also an enabling factor to promote mutual accountability. Civil society participation in the design and implementation of joint programmes is also an enabling factor for greater accountability.

However, fund disbursement, financial reporting challenges, and programme documents without clear targets, indicators and results to be achieved, do not encourage accountability among joint programme partners.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been proven to be favorable to mutual accountability, promoting an opportunity to open dialogue among partners, and an opportunity to address challenges jointly to improve programme implementation. See Annex 2 for joint programme mid-term evaluation best practice.

In looking forward and strengthening mutual accountability between all partners, the following needs to be continued and/or further developed:

- M&E capacities in both the UN agencies as well as national counterparts. Development programmes should include funds for developing appropriate M&E systems within government.
- The quality of programme documents must be higher including on results orientation, M&E frameworks and indicators.
- Roles and responsibilities of all partners must be clarified from the start ensuring that all are included in the monitoring processes for management purposes.
- Governance mechanisms, if used appropriately and include decision-makers, will increase mutual accountability but they need to receive the necessary information (including financial) to do so. Experience shows that it's also positive to complement these more high level central forums with similar forums at the local levels and if appropriate, technical level meetings.
- Accountability to citizens is tied to the flow of information and decision-making ability and as such should be addressed in joint programmes.

The MDG-F, together with UN partners, has experimented and tested various strategies, techniques and tools for improving UN coherence and efficiency (one of the weakest elements) and on that basis has made several recommendations in this report. The ideal UN business model that has emerged is one where (i) the UN Resident Coordinator has authority and can be decisive on issues of coherence and performance; (ii) UN Coordination Offices are properly staffed to support the UNRC, the UN Country Team and joint programme partners; (iii) if UN agency procedures cannot be harmonized, then they work through one UN agency; (iv) national implementation is the preferred modality; and (v) a representative governance mechanism is led by national partners.

As indicated in the beginning of this report, the Fund has paused to look at its experience and lessons learned to date. With more than three quarters of its joint programmes coming to an end within the next 15 months, even more evidence will come to light most particularly on the effectiveness and

impact of the joint programmes. Upcoming thematic and global evaluations<sup>5</sup> of the Fund as well as final joint programme evaluations will add to the body of evidence to be shared by the MDG-F.

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<sup>5</sup> The MDG-F will commission an evaluation of the eight thematic windows as well as of the MDG-f as a whole in 2012/2013.

## 2. Introduction

In 2012, the member states of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly will undertake the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) which looks at the UN system's operational activities for development. The points identified by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2011/7<sup>6</sup>, which will form the basis for discussion, include:

- The identification of specific measures, actions and decisions required to further improve the relevance and impact of operational activities for development of the United Nations system at the country, regional and global levels as well as their effectiveness, efficiency and coherence.
- A review of progress made by the United Nations development system to ensure national ownership and leadership of United Nations operation activities.
- An assessment of the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including its ability to represent and support the entire United Nations system at the country level, in alignment with national development priorities.
- A review of progress made by the United Nations development system to improve results-based strategic planning and management in order to improve accountability and transparency.

The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) has now been active for over five years, working with a wide variety of partners including the UN system, Government representatives (national and local), local communities and civil society. With the approval, implementation and monitoring of 130 joint programmes<sup>7</sup> in 50 countries across five regions in eight thematic areas the MDG-F Secretariat has developed lessons learned and best practices on issues such as:

1. The coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of development programmes;
2. National ownership of development processes and results;
3. Capacity development and sustainability of development results; and
4. Mutual accountability.

These lessons are fed back into joint programmes and the MDG-F has shared them at an international level in such fora as IV High Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One, the Busan High Level Conference on Aid Effectiveness and more recently, discussions on Post 2015. With the implementation of joint programmes having passed the midway mark and some having come to an end, the MDG-F Secretariat has paused once again to review the wealth of information and present its analytical evidence based conclusions with the goal of contributing to the QCPR process.

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<sup>6</sup> Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

<sup>7</sup> According to UNDG's *Guidance Note on Joint Programmes* (2003), a joint programme involves two or more UN organizations and (sub-) national partners. The objectives, strategy, work plan and related budget form part of a joint programme document, which will also detail roles and responsibilities of partners in coordinating and managing the joint activities. The joint programme document is signed by all participating organizations and (sub-) national partners. The fund management modality options for joint programmes are pooled, pass-through, parallel or a combination of two or all of these options.

This report looks at the Funds' lessons to date in the areas mentioned above which have been developed within the overall framework of the MDG-F Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy. The latter follows evaluation best practice and abides by the norms and standards of the UN Evaluation Group<sup>8</sup>. Direct sources include joint programme mid-term evaluations<sup>9</sup> and several final evaluations<sup>10</sup>; the June 2011 regional workshop reports prepared by an outside evaluator (see Annex 1 for a Government Declaration); a survey of the latter workshops' participants<sup>11</sup> and MDG-F Secretariat mission reports. Other sources include reports to the MDG-F Steering Committee, and joint programme monitoring reports.

This report concentrates on lessons learned and evidence from its joint programmes. However the Fund<sup>12</sup> endeavors to reach beyond these programmes to influence wider debates related to the global development agenda.

The report presents a brief overview of the MDG Achievement Fund and for each of the four issues mentioned above, offers evidence collected from various sources; describes success stories; and recommends optimal changes for future programming.

### **3. Brief Overview of the MDG Achievement Fund**

The MDG-F is an international cooperation mechanism established in December 2006 by the Government of Spain and the United Nations System. The MDG-F aims to support national MDGs achievement, national ownership, and the UN Reform, taking the Millennium Declaration and its call for freedom, equity, peace and solidarity as a guiding framework. It initially amounted to €528 million, and in September 2008, in response to the food crisis, Spain contributed another €90 million which increased the funding to some thematic areas supported by the MDG-F, particularly of children, food security and nutrition. The MDG-F supports eight thematic windows as shown in Box 1. The MDG-F currently represents the largest fund created within the UN for the purposes stated above.

Most of the MDG-F's funding (US\$ 700 million) has been directed to joint programmes encouraging partnerships among UN Agencies and national/local actors using innovative approaches to development. In so doing, it strives to strengthen inter-agency coherence and the development effectiveness of the

#### **Box 1: MDG-F Thematic Areas**

*Children, Food Security and Nutrition: Tackling child hunger and under nutrition*

*Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Increasing women's access to equality and opportunity*

*Environment and Climate Change: Reducing vulnerabilities and helping adapt to climate change*

*Youth, Employment and Migration: Promoting productive and decent work for young people*

*Democratic Economic Governance: Democratizing access to services and utilities*

*Development and the Private Sector: Inclusive markets and pro-poor development*

*Conflict Prevention and Peace building: Fostering an enabling environment for development*

*Culture and Development: Protecting and enhancing cultural rights and political participation*

<sup>8</sup> The MDG-F Secretariat currently has Observer status in the UN Evaluation Group.

<sup>9</sup> The MDG-F requested a group of six consultants, who together evaluated 33 MDG-F joint programmes to respond to a number statements and questions with evidence to back up their conclusions. The terms of reference for this exercise can be found at [http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/pdf/terms\\_of\\_reference\\_for\\_systematization\\_of\\_evidence.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/pdf/terms_of_reference_for_systematization_of_evidence.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> MDG-F evaluations can be found online at [www.mdgf.org](http://www.mdgf.org).

<sup>11</sup> 117 respondents from the June 2011 Regional Workshop in Morocco which included government and UN representatives.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the Fund, refer to [www.mdgf.org](http://www.mdgf.org).

UN system at the country level. At the same time, national ownership and leadership is a guiding and operating principle of the MDG-F. MDG-F joint programmes are meant to be led by national and local partners including national and local governments, as well as civil society organizations, and supported by UN Agencies.

The existence of inequalities and social exclusion as well as limited access to basic needs and opportunities are some of the criteria for MDG-F initiatives. With 130 joint programmes in 50 countries spread across five regions of the world, the Fund focuses on multi-dimensional development challenges and the preservation of global public goods such as peace, security and culture that are necessary basics for development.

Through these programmes the Fund is accelerating progress towards: strengthening public policies and making them more responsive to the needs of women, youth, minority groups and children; financing the testing and scaling-up of successful pilot programmes; and catalyzing innovations in development practices. These programmes have an average number of five UN agencies, an average budget of US\$ 5 million and a maximum duration of four years.

Early on, the Fund established three key strategies: (a) monitoring and evaluation; (b) knowledge management; and (c) communication and advocacy. These are linked to the intention of delivering measurable results that positively impact citizens and institutions, assist in the collection and sharing of lessons, best practices and experiences related to aid effectiveness and UN reform, strengthening transparency and mutual accountability<sup>13</sup> and supporting the integration of citizens and civil society in their own development.

The communication and advocacy (C&A) strategy has been conceptualized with the explicit aim of helping the MDG-F achieve its objectives on MDGs, national ownership and UN reform. Over the past three years it has increasingly been adopted as a part of joint programmes that have incorporated elements of active citizen participation, policy advocacy, transparency, accountability and strategic partnership building. In select countries, national C&A strategies have also fostered joint UN advocacy on MDGs.

The Governance of the MDG-F is reflected in a fairly light structure at the global level with a two-member Steering Committee<sup>14</sup>, and a Secretariat. The role of the MDG-F Secretariat, in addition to supporting the Steering Committee, has been essential in ensuring the operationalization of the MDG-F Framework and its joint programmes. The Secretariat has played an important role in instilling improved monitoring and evaluation as well as advocacy and communication practices in joint programmes which is part of an “innovative” approach within the UN system. The Secretariat represents the link between the Steering Committee and participating countries, providing guidance and day to day support.

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<sup>13</sup> Understood as accountability within programme partners (Government and UN Agencies, and to citizens)

<sup>14</sup> UNDP Administrator/UNDG Chair and Spain’s Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### **4. Coherence, Relevance, Efficiency and Effectiveness**

In resolution 62/208<sup>15</sup>, the General Assembly underscored that “the ownership, leadership and full participation of national authorities in the preparation and development of all planning and programming documents of the United Nations development system,... are key to guaranteeing that they respond to the national development plans and strategies ...” The Delivering as One, Going Beyond Pilot Phase Outcome Document<sup>16</sup> emphasizes that “it is necessary to continue promoting enhanced coherence, effectiveness and efficiency among UN agencies”. In the Busan High Level Conference on Aid Effectiveness, the participants indicated that “Aid is only part of the solution to development. It is now time to broaden our focus and attention from aid effectiveness to the challenges of effective development.”

##### **4.1 Coherence**

In analyzing the level of coherence in MDG-F joint programmes, the Fund looked at whether UN Agency contributions were mutually reinforcing; reduced overlaps and duplications in their work supporting national initiatives; and whether the added value of programme partners was emphasized in partner selection.

Within the UN system, joint initiatives come under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC). With MDG-F joint programmes bringing together between two and 12 UN agencies, it was imperative for the UNRC to be able to recommend changes related to the participation of UN agencies based on their added value to the achievement of the development outcomes. Joint programme evaluations point to a predominantly coordination role played by the UNRC during the design phase. A stronger role in oversight was hindered by a lack of authority over UN agencies leading the UNRC to rely more on a moral authority and goodwill as well as the commitment of UN agencies. As such, many UNRCs showed a definite preference for a pooled fund which would give them greater authority over the release of funds. The buy in of the UN Resident Coordinator is a critical factor in the success of joint programmes and evaluators point to a correlation between the level of integration and coherence of the programmes and the active engagement of the UNRC and Heads of UN agencies.

The majority of joint programmes in post-conflict settings have struggled to ensure the coherence and relevance of their interventions and have been negatively affected over the course of their implementation due to changing priorities in such volatile environments.

Evidence also shows that for the first thematic windows<sup>17</sup>, UN Agencies were often more concerned with “getting a piece of the pie” than responding to national needs and priorities in a coordinated

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<sup>15</sup> A/RES/62/208. Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. 14 March 2008.

<sup>16</sup> IV High Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One, Montevideo, Uruguay, 8-10 November 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Thematic windows were launched in a phased approach.

manner that would also avoid overlaps and duplications. The stitching together of agency interventions to form one joint programme effectively created silos that resulted in similar activities being repeated by the same UN agencies within a joint programme. With a few notable exceptions, joint programmes with more than five UN agencies were difficult to coordinate and often lacked coherence. The silo effect translated into a disincentive for joint work and in some instances a lack of coherence at the government level as well with UN agencies having their preferred partners in certain line ministries; consequently rendering coordination of national partners more difficult outside of MDG-F governance mechanisms<sup>18</sup>. Such lessons learned were shared with national partners by the MDG-F Secretariat which then witnessed an improvement in the culture of working together not only among UN agencies but with and between other partners.

When the governance structures in place were functioning properly, duplication was reduced showing that coherence can still be developed during programme implementation, though coherence should start during programme formulation. In addition to the UN Resident Coordinator, Heads of UN agencies also play an important role in programme coherence and strategic coordination. Coherence was negatively affected by (a) the short timeframe given for programme design and formulation relative to a participatory consultative process encouraged by the Fund; (b) partners with different programme cycles and instruments; and (c) inexperience with designing and implementing joint programmes.

Feedback from the MDG-F's partners who participated in the June 2011 regional workshops was more favorable in thinking that the MDG-F joint programmes contributed to reducing duplication<sup>19</sup>, strengthened public policies and increased capacity for coordination and cooperation amongst national partners and the UN at both national and local levels. For greater coherence and relevance, however, participants felt that the capacity, and not only the mandate, of UN agencies should determine their participation in joint programmes. Another issue raised was the importance of country presence for UN agencies allowing for decentralized and quicker decision-making as well as available expertise to engage with programme partners. UN Resident Coordinators have stated that UNDAFs formulated following an MDG-F experience benefitted greatly from the improved coordination amongst UN agencies.

## **4.2 Relevance**

MDG-F joint programmes were assessed as relevant with respect to their alignment with national priorities and with the MDGs<sup>20</sup>. When built on existing national initiatives and policies, programmes were often better articulated and implemented and more likely to be scaled up and sustainable. This was further enhanced when national counterparts played an active leadership role in aligning partners. Programme partners consider that their joint programmes were designed with the achievement of the MDGs in mind though evaluators found that direct linkages were not always evident including means for

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<sup>18</sup> MDG-F national governance structures include a National Steering Committee (oversight) and a Programme Management Committee (operational management).

<sup>19</sup> There is some evidence to show that in countries with several joint programmes, that coherence did improve over time.

<sup>20</sup> A few exceptions are linked to crisis countries and pre-determined thematic windows did not always coincide with the top country priorities as regards MDGs.

measuring the programme's contribution to the MDGs. While this may be correct, the Fund is looking at alternative methodologies for assessing this contribution including through participatory country evaluations<sup>21</sup>, work being done in knowledge management initiatives and final joint programme evaluations.

The lack of in depth causal analyses and insufficient consultations, most particularly at the local level, often required adjustments during the inception period<sup>22</sup> at the beginning of programme implementation. The MDG-F joint programme governance system, inception period, Secretariat missions and mid-term evaluation processes were catalysts for bringing stakeholders around the table not only improving coordination among all partners but the relevance of the programmes.

The Fund's insistence on inception phases, and its flexibility in accepting justified changes, was critical to the continued relevance of a joint programme. The mid-term evaluation process (see Annex 2) was another opportunity where partners could review their programmes to maintain relevance despite changing circumstances or priorities.

### **4.3 Efficiency**

The Fund considered issues related to UN harmonization, joint programme management and coordination to assess whether MDG-F joint programmes are efficient in converting inputs into results,

Joint programme inefficiencies can be mainly attributed to a lack of harmonized UN procedures resulting in increased transaction costs. While this does not imply that results will not be achieved, the effects include duplicate contracts and reporting for national partners, programme delays, and reduced UN credibility. The sometimes inconsistent flow of funds from UN agency headquarters to their country offices as well as the lack of transparency in providing up to date financial data, often led to inefficiencies in programme management<sup>23</sup>. In some cases, these issues have been overcome either by strong national leadership of joint programmes and/or UN agencies coming up with innovative local solutions for joint programme operations. Examples include the development of shared formats for financial reporting; shared protocols for goods procurement; agreements for rescheduling shared expenses; joint calls for tenders for purchasing equipment and coordinated recruitment procedures; country-level process guides; start-up workshops and workshops for the standardizing criteria; joint observations made to draft bills and review of product-related drafts; inter-Agency joint working groups on specific products; and joint missions with governmental partners.

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<sup>21</sup> The MDG-F supports nine countries for undertaking participatory evaluations.

<sup>22</sup> The inception period refers to the initial months of programme implementation during which an inception workshop may be held with programme partners and beneficiaries to reconfirm programme strategies, enhance the M&E system including indicators and determine the roles and responsibilities of all the actors.

<sup>23</sup> Without access to financial data, it was much more difficult for Programme Coordinators to plan activities in a strategic manner.

Greater efficiencies were also achieved through consensual discussion and coordination in National Steering Committees (NSC) and Programme Management Committees (PMC) with strong national ownership and participation of UN agencies.

Joint programme development interventions are designed along complex multi-dimensional issues and with multiple partners and consequently require a strong level of coordination, sound planning and fluid communication. There is clear agreement that for joint programmes with many partners, having a Programme Coordinator/Manager contributes to improving coordination and avoiding duplication. This key factor to programme success was often challenged by UN agency unwillingness to delegate authority over the management of the joint programme.

General coordination among UN agencies did improve during joint programme formulation, most particularly at the technical level. When MDG-F local governance systems were functional, coordination also increased within Government. In some cases Government representatives felt that coordination support would also be of benefit to them for managing joint programmes.

#### ***4.4 Effectiveness***

A complete response to the question of whether MDG-F joint programmes are effective or not cannot be given at this time as few programmes have ended and many won't until 2013. Mid-term evaluations were more likely to assess the potential of joint programmes to achieve expected results and evidence to date demonstrates that many joint programmes as originally designed were overly ambitious. During the course of implementation these programmes were reformulated, renegotiating a set of more realistic development results.

Development programmes are far more likely to have an impact when they were integrated into national programmes and/or strategies as was often the case for the joint programmes in the children, nutrition and food security thematic window. Many joint programmes support national and local partners to develop, modify and/or strengthen public policies, legislation and planning. The latter were most likely to be successful when programme documents included a strategy for influencing these processes.

As demonstrated by evidence, most joint programmes are reaching the right populations though targeting could be further improved. In order for pilot initiatives to be more successful and sustainable, they need to feed into policy development. Joint programmes often provide financing to existing initiatives rather than creating new ones and the combination of policy advocacy combined with downstream community interventions is a good model. In several programmes, the UN system has had the political leverage to strengthen the human rights perspectives linked to national multi-sector programmes. Joint programmes address issues of inequality in distinct ways such as targeting areas where the MDGs are lagging working with vulnerable and/or excluded groups and regions within

countries to increase access to opportunities. This often includes working with racial and ethnic groups, youth, migrants, women, rural populations and marginalized urban areas.

Monitoring and evaluation were the weakest elements of the design and formulation process and continue to be during the implementation (with the exception of the mid-term evaluation process) though the Secretariat has noted many improvements. Baseline data was often collected during the first two years while programme implementation continued on. None the less, evaluators assessed that the programmes have contributed to increasing the available data and strengthened capacities in statistics through the MDG-F joint programmes. Despite the Fund's insistence on results-based management, joint programmes have largely pursued activity-based management with weak indicators. Capacity gaps both within the UN agencies and national partners are cited.

Despite some of the above-mentioned difficulties, the perception of programme partners is that the MDG-F joint programmes have an added value to responding to their country's multi-dimensional development challenges.

The role of the UN Resident Coordinator goes beyond that of ensuring greater coherence of partners in joint programmes. As has been said, the direct involvement of the UNRC and Heads of Agencies favorably impacts the success of joint programmes. The experience of the MDG-F Secretariat is that joint programmes do constitute an additional burden on the UNRC and UN Country Team members and as such, additional support in the way of human resources for monitoring and evaluation as well as communication and advocacy seem to make a difference<sup>24</sup>.

***MDG-F Joint Programme Examples:***

***Coherence:*** When the formulation of the Albania economic governance programme did not sufficiently involve national stakeholders, this was overcome through the PMC which was chaired by a Deputy Minister. With all key partners involved in the PMC, programme, activities were realigned with national needs establishing the groundwork for greater sustainability.

***Relevance:*** In Ecuador, the culture and development joint programme is fully embedded in the development vision outlined in the new constitution and its new institutional architecture, directly feeding into national policies and programmes. In Cuba, the two joint programmes are well aligned to national priorities and are conceived as integral parts of national programmes including the National Programme to Fight Anemia and the Municipal Initiative for Local Development.

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<sup>24</sup> The MDG-F agreed to programme funds being used to support the UNRC's role for joint programme oversight and also supported several UN country teams with JPOs and SARCs. In nine focus countries, the MDG-F provided additional funding to the UNRC and the UN Country Team for C&A and M&E.

**MDG-F Joint Programme Examples:**

**Efficiency:** In the Brazil gender joint programme, a strong and empowered group was able to come up with creative solutions to process-related challenges such as the joint recruitment between UN Women and UN Habitat through UNDP to avoid having different recruitment requirements. The job terms of reference were developed jointly but the procurement was undertaken by one UN agency.

**Effectiveness:** In the Philippines, the ILO is partnering with UNICEF and other UN agencies to address issues of exclusive breastfeeding in the workplace. This engagement has enabled national counterparts such as the Ministry of Labor, Employers' Organizations and Labor Unions to focus jointly on nutrition issues, which are traditionally outside their areas of interest. Resulting from these initiatives, government was able to develop policies for the establishment of lactation stations in the workplace.

Based on the Fund's experience, there are a number of factors that would enable greater coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness – some of which are already operational within the MDG-F:

- Spending more time during the design phase of the programme to ensure participatory local consultations. During the last thematic windows, the Fund allowed five months for the development of the concept note and the joint programme formulation.
- Ensuring that programmes are not only aligned with national priorities but are closely linked with existing national policies, programmes or initiatives where relevant. Where policies are not in place or need further support, such as with innovative initiatives, the programme should include policy support in the programme design.
- The number of programme partners should be limited, and their inclusion should be based on their bringing an added value to the programme. Operational capacity should not be neglected in this assessment.
- Programmes should not only be nationally owned and led, but national/local partners must also have the time to be fully engaged if results are to be achieved and be sustainable. Preference should be for nationally/locally led coordination platforms ensuring synergies between national and local levels as promoted by the MDG-F.
- The UN Resident Coordinator as well as UN Agency Representatives must be committed and present in programme oversight for the former and programme management for the latter.
- UN oversight responsibilities for inter-agency programmes require additional support for the UN Coordination Offices most particularly in the areas of monitoring and evaluation, and communication and advocacy. The Fund's experience with its focus countries has been quite positive.
- As harmonized procedures are not feasible at this time, preference should be given to using national systems and if not possible, then one agency<sup>25</sup> should be requested to undertake all administrative type activities such as procurement, recruitment etc. Another alternative would be some kind of mechanism under the UN Resident Coordinator.

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<sup>25</sup> However, as noted by one evaluator, this agency must be familiar with the needs and procedures of other UN agencies.

More detailed operational recommendations, taken from the Fund's paper presented to the IV High Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 2011 are found in Annex 3.

### ***5. National Ownership of Development Processes and Results***

The OECD/DAC defines the notion of national ownership as the effective exercise of a government's authority over development policies and activities, including those that rely – entirely or partially – on external resources. For governments, this means articulating a national development agenda and establishing authoritative policies and strategies. Working within the frameworks of the Millennium Declaration and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the MDG-F places great importance on national ownership as a critical component to alignment, relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives. The MDG-F adopts a wider understanding of national ownership and leadership, involving not only national governments but local governments, civil society and the private sector as well.

MDG-F joint programmes with strong national leadership and ownership of the programme strategy and interventions showed a higher level of coherence and potential for achieving development results. However, MDG-F joint programmes have unevenly promoted national ownership through the joint programme design, implementation and monitoring of programme interventions. From a different perspective, many joint programmes have empowered local authorities and/or local communities through for example capacity development; information and advocacy including sensitization on their rights; and increased revenues.

Joint programmes in line with national priorities, and which are supportive of in-country stakeholder leadership, tended to yield more positive results. Innovative programmes have also in some cases resulted in Governments taking on new approaches and considering new policies. A key element to national ownership lies in the level and quality of participation in the design and formulation of the programmes. Participatory inception processes have made up for weak design processes and the evolution towards greater national leadership of the joint programme governance mechanisms has contributed to improving national ownership. A caveat is that when national ownership and capacity do not coincide, this can work against achieving sustainable results<sup>26</sup>.

Joint programme teams are often embedded in national structures reinforcing national ownership and capacity development. When this is the case, national counterparts are more active in strategic and operational decision-making.

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<sup>26</sup> Reference is made to joint programmes where commitment is high at the ministerial level but technical capacity to implement is very weak.

Certain aspects of programme management and implementation have undermined national leadership and ownership including direct funding to UN agencies, implementation modalities such as direct execution, and a lack of transparency in financial reporting by UN agencies. Governance mechanisms set up by the Fund have promoted good national ownership and open discussions. National partners would feel even more empowered if the financial resource allocation decisions in programme management were theirs to make.<sup>27</sup>

National partners were often faced with a multiplicity of implementation arrangements within a given joint programme. While national implementation is the modality of choice of national partners, there is a tendency to shy away from it for some of the following reasons including UN agency regulations, can take longer due to weak national and/or local capacities, and lack of government capacity in crisis countries. The attempt to use national systems (Ex: M&E systems) is very limited mainly due to UN agency procedures while in other cases is a result of inadequate systems and/or capacity issues.

In-kind contributions and government co-financing are good indicators of greater national ownership however these contributions are not sufficiently accounted for or tracked for reporting purposes.

Regional workshop participants and evaluators agree that local level ownership can be improved and that civil society needs to be more involved as decision-makers and not just implementers of programme activities. In several cases, the decentralization of joint programme governance mechanisms and increased access to information improved local ownership.

Access to information on joint programme interventions and the tangible possibility to actively participate in these is one of the strategy lines of the communication and advocacy work that the Fund has promoted in joint programmes and this has been critical for the creation of relationships of trust working with communities, particularly indigenous communities.

***MDG-F Joint Programme Examples:***

*In Guatemala, the MDG-F joint programme supported national authorities in the establishment of specialized units on gender and ethnicity with the Ministries of Public Health and Education which in turn developed protocols of assistance to victims of violence.*

*In Paraguay, the youth employment programme successfully supported government efforts to improve the working conditions of young domestic workers. In line with this commitment, the government has recently agreed to expand health insurance to all domestic workers in the country and the programme is helping to further improve this and other aspects of the legal framework.*

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<sup>27</sup> These decisions are most often taken by UN agencies.

**MDG-F Joint Programme Examples:**

*In Senegal, the joint programme on environment and climate change faced some difficulties at start up as it was not clearly aligned with national strategies and programmes and included a set of planned activities that had limited connection with national needs. However, after a period of consultations, the partners of the joint programme agreed to change some aspects of the programme strategy to better align it with the poverty reduction strategy in Senegal. As a result, the focus of the programme changed from one of calculating the total economic value of forestry ecosystems with the goal of establishing a new fiscal scheme for the forestry sector in Senegal to a focus on calculating this same value – which could be used for macro-economic policy development – to better identify the socio-economic potential of these ecosystems at the community level and contribute to poverty reduction in these communities. This approach, now nationally owned and led is fully aligned and built on the national programme for local development and on the sector policy on environment and natural resources that is seeking to strengthen institutional capacities at the local level to manage natural resources within the context of government decentralization.*

Based on the Fund's lessons learned, many of which are currently in practice, and with national leadership and ownership of development initiatives in mind, future programmes need to:

- Allow sufficient time<sup>28</sup> to ensure a comprehensive consultative process at both national and local levels;
- In order to put decision-making in national/local hands, there should be a good flow of communication between the UN and national partners; national/local partners with decision-making abilities<sup>29</sup> should be involved in the programme; and governance mechanisms need to be inclusive and led by national partners.
- Ownership should not stop at the national level but where relevant, continue to the regional or provincial level and the local/municipal/village level.
- Preference should be given to using national systems and a single implementation modality such as national implementation.
- Funding partners need to remain flexible enough to allow for changes during the course of programme implementation.
- Where pilot initiatives are implemented, there needs to be a clear process for feeding the lessons and recommendations into the larger policy or programme as demonstrated by many MDG-F joint programmes.

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<sup>28</sup> The exact amount of time differs from programme to programme but the Fund's five months (12 weeks for concept note formulation and eight for programme document formulation) were assessed as insufficient.

<sup>29</sup> If capacities need to be developed then this should be done within the programme.

## **6. Capacity Development and Sustainability of Development Results**

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, signed by more than 100 multilateral and bilateral donors and developing countries, states that the —capacity to plan, manage, implement, and account for results ... is critical for achieving development objectives. In its 2009 report on Capacity Development Results Frameworks, the World Bank defines capacity development as a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that brings about changes in sociopolitical, policy-related, and organizational factors to enhance local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal.<sup>30</sup> In its Framework Document<sup>31</sup>, the MDG-F described a number of principles which guided the Fund including the importance of building national capacities and sustaining these beyond the life of a grant.

While capacity development is a deciding element for sustainability of development results and all MDG-F joint programmes include capacity development activities, the lack of a strategic view to capacity development reduces their effectiveness.

Developing and/or strengthening capacities of targeted beneficiaries and institutions are a corner stone of all MDG-F joint programmes and in many cases, evidence shows that capacities are being developed. However, evaluators found that programmes often suffered from dispersed short-term training, and a lack of a capacity development strategy with clear goals and indicators to measure its impact. Specific and targeted capacity needs assessments are a common gap. The challenge for many programmes is the ability to ensure adequate follow up activities to training and studies as well as systematically measuring and monitoring these actions. Additionally, the relative short timeframe of MDG-F joint programmes (three to four years) is not conducive to long term capacity development.

Participants in the regional workshops emphasized the strong linkage between national ownership and capacity development.

Engaging in advocacy to build political will and keep MDG issues on the public agenda is also key to the achievement and sustainability of development results and has been adopted by several joint programmes throughout their implementation. Additionally, working with citizen groups and civil society to strengthen their participation and dialogue with government institutions in relation to the adoption and implementation of sector policies is an important element and promising for achievement of results and sustainability.

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<sup>30</sup> The Capacity Development Results Framework: A strategic and results oriented approach to learning for capacity development. World Bank Institute, Samuel Otoo, Natalia Agapitova, and Joy Behrens, June 2009.

<sup>31</sup> MDG-F Framework Document dated 1 August 2007.

**MDG-F Joint Programme Example:**

*In China, the environment and climate change joint programme developed the capacity of stakeholders and will certainly contribute to the long-term sustainability of the programme's achievements. This contribution was made despite the fact that no capacity development approach or strategy was explicitly stated in the document. However, the need to develop capacities was recognized at the outset of the programme and was part of a learning process from past experiences, including the review of key over-arching lessons - from UN agencies experiences - that were particularly pertinent for the programme. Furthermore, specific lessons related to policy on mitigation and adaptation from the UN experience worldwide were used as guidelines during the formulation process of the programme, which emphasized the development of national capacities for the long-term sustainability of joint programme achievements.*

In looking forward, the following elements should be factored into joint programme design and implementation:

- The programme should be designed with capacity development goals in mind as well as a clear strategy for their implementation and measurement;
- Specific and targeted capacity needs assessment including institutional capacities;
- The capacity of implementing partners whether from the UN system or national partners should be assessed against expected results; and
- Programmes should be designed with clear yet flexible advocacy plans that are oriented towards the achievement, scaling up and sustainability of results.

## **7. Accountability**

“Transparency and accountability to each other” is one of the common principles which form the foundation of cooperation for effective development, as per the outcome document of the 4<sup>th</sup> High level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan in 2011. The document goes on to indicate that “mutual accountability and accountability to the intended beneficiaries of our cooperation, as well as to our respective citizens, organizations, constituents and shareholders, is critical to delivering results.”

The MDG-F proposed a set of governance mechanisms at country level, complemented by an M&E strategy that promotes participation, transparency and joint decision making, and encouraged all programmes to develop communication and advocacy strategies<sup>32</sup>. A National Steering Committee is the body responsible for guidance, oversight and coordination of all MDG-F joint programmes in a given country.<sup>33</sup> The Programme Management Committee oversees programme implementation and makes

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<sup>32</sup> Joint programme C&A strategies were not initially required but thanks to the Secretariat's insistence, compliance increased to close to 100%.

<sup>33</sup> The NSC members include the Government counterpart to the UN system, the UN Resident Coordinator and a local representative of the Government of Spain.

the technical/operational decisions required to manage the joint programmes appropriately.<sup>34</sup> All joint programme documents included a clause to allow the implementation team some flexibility to adapt the programme strategy to unexpected challenges and opportunities (most particularly delivery issues) so that the UN Resident Coordinator, in consultation with participating UN organizations and the agreement of the NSC, could transfer funds from one UN agency to another or rephase funds between years.<sup>35</sup>

MDG-F joint programmes have many tools for promoting mutual accountability and were successful on several fronts (such as governance) but also fell short in others due to issues such as capacities, UN procedures, and an inability to enforce decisions.

Evidence shows that the governance mechanisms promoted by the MDG-F are useful platforms for information sharing, engagement, coordination and dialogue. When these bodies are co-chaired, it is also an enabling factor to promote mutual accountability. By the same token, civil society participation in the design and implementation of joint programmes implies some form of accountability of the UN and partner Governments to citizens of recipient countries. Nevertheless, these measures only tackle the dimension of answerability. Once a programme is signed and implementation has begun, national partners feel that there are few avenues open to them in those instances when UN organizations are performing poorly or in some cases, not sharing financial and substantive information on their activities. They can exercise political pressure, but cannot enforce any concrete penalty. This is even more challenging when joint programmes operate under direct execution modalities.

Respondents to a survey during the 2011 regional workshop in Morocco in 2011 were very positive regarding the effectiveness of the NSC and the PMC and extremely so for the Programme Management Team. A majority thought that the joint programme governance structure provides an enabling environment for mutual accountability. Nevertheless, many programmes teams found that the PMC was not fulfilling its function of involving representatives of all stakeholders and consequently established similar mechanisms at the local level.

There is a clear demand by national counterparts to play a greater role in resource allocation and to have access to financial information affecting programme implementation. The lack of readily available financial data by UN agencies on the status of implementation of the joint programmes hinders mutual accountability – an issue brought up by national partners.

The NSC appears to be highly functional in Latin America and the Caribbean countries. Outside of this region, selected mid-term evaluations indicate that the NSC is not functioning as originally designed. Members are not provided with sufficient information so as to be able to take strategic decisions

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<sup>34</sup> The PMC members should include the UNRC or his/her representative, the lead Government representative, implementing national and local government counterparts, participating UN agency representatives and non-state representatives from citizens' groups, NGOs, civil society and/or the private sector.

<sup>35</sup> The maximum amount for transfers or rephasing was US\$1,000,000 or 20% of the total value of the programme budget (whichever was lower).

rendering the Committee to a more cordial and formal meeting to present the joint programme achievements. With the support of the Secretariat, the role of the NSC is now better understood particularly in countries with several joint programmes.

Evidence shows that there is need for greater mutual accountability between UN agencies themselves and between UN agencies and the UNRC. As programme funds are transferred through UN agency headquarters (HQ), there is greater incentive for UN agencies to report to their HQs than to each other or the members of the National Steering Committee.

In addition the methodology for distributing funds<sup>36</sup> has not contributed to principles of mutual accountability given that each participating organization is individually responsible for the administration of its portion of the budget and the implementation of related activities, in accordance with its norms and procedures. On the other hand, the mechanism established by the MDG-F Secretariat to review requests for the transfer of yearly funds has proven effective by establishing criteria which not only looks at the commitment of funds but more importantly, the progress on results. It should be stated that the MDG-F has assured predictable funding over the three to four year programmes.

Monitoring and evaluation systems are a key element to promoting mutual accountability. Evidence identifies poor capacities of the UN and government counterparts in M&E as a constraint to performance and accountability of joint programmes. The often poor quality of M&E frameworks and systems has adversely affected by the ability of stakeholders to track progress at the results level. The guidance for the joint programme teams to set up M&E systems was limited when the Fund was established and the first programmes were formulated. There is also some feedback that reporting formats do not capture qualitative progress very well. While evaluations do paint a picture of weak M&E, small but important changes, that show progress in this area, are insufficiently highlighted including, *inter alia*, increased joint collection of baseline data; the inclusion of end of programme surveys; joint missions; joint programme evaluations; and in focus countries, participatory country-level evaluations with innovative techniques.

A positive contribution to mutual accountability was the participatory and transparent nature of the mid-term evaluations which promoted an open dialogue amongst joint programme partners as well as the opportunity to jointly work on changes to the joint programme to improve its effectiveness so as to achieve results.

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<sup>36</sup> The joint programme document format allocates funding to UN agencies based on their leadership of the programme outputs. The MDG-F then transfers the funds to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund which, upon receipt of the appropriate documentation, transfers funds to UN Agency headquarters which are then responsible for transferring the funds to their local office.

By focalizing on marginalized populations and areas as well as working with local institutions, some communities were able to bring greater attention to their plight so as to attract a better distribution of resources while others were able to spotlight specific local issues at the national level. In focus countries such as the Philippines, mechanisms are put in place to allow for citizens to report back to local authorities on MDG progress.

**MDG-F Joint Programme Examples:**

*The National Steering Committee in Costa Rica covers four joint programmes and has a committed membership. In the case of a joint programme in culture and development for which the lead ministry had fallen behind on infrastructure construction that risked the programme moving forward, the NSC was able to mobilize the relevant ministries and get guarantees to meet deadlines. The programme has since moved forward.*

*Following the mid-term evaluation, the culture and development joint programme in Cambodia made a number of important revisions to its strategy. The programme became a far more cohesive response to the initial challenges noted in the programme document. The mid-term evaluation highlighted, for example, that the quality of the crafts needed enhancing and therefore the programme focused more on grassroots marketing rather than export promotion.*

*In Colombia, the MDG-F provided additional funds for communication and advocacy. A strategic alliance was created in 2009 with the Regional Indigenous Council of the Cauca to tailor the MDG platform to the indigenous vision, reality and political agenda in a way that can allow them to advocate for their rights. After 18 months, this initiative has grasped the attention of the Vice-President's office that is looking at it as a potential model for indigenous engagement with MDGs and governments.*

In looking forward and strengthening mutual accountability between all partners, the following needs to be continued and/or further developed:

- M&E capacities in both the UN agencies as well as national counterparts. Development programmes should include funds for developing appropriate M&E systems within government.
- The quality of programme documents must be higher including on results orientation, M&E frameworks and indicators.
- Roles and responsibilities of all partners must be clarified from the start ensuring that all are included in the monitoring processes for management purposes.
- Governance mechanisms, if used appropriately and include decision-makers, will increase mutual accountability but they need to receive the necessary information (including financial) to do so. Experience shows that it's also positive to complement these more high level central forums with similar forums at the local levels and if appropriate, technical level meetings.
- Accountability to citizens is tied to the flow of information and decision-making ability and as such should be addressed in joint programmes.

## **8. Conclusions**

The analysis undertaken in this report reflects the considerable experience generated by the 130 joint programmes in the MDG Achievement Fund backed up by evidence from a number of independent sources. The four issues explored are closely linked to the questions that will be reviewed in the QCPR and consequently provide another perspective on Delivering as One (DaO) while emphasizing national ownership and leadership as exemplified in the Paris Declaration and Accra.

While the MDG-F has many success stories, what has made the Fund an interesting mechanism is its ability to tackle the challenges that arose over the past years, improving its strategy and approach as well as its guidance and guidelines, and re-inject these lessons into the joint programmes with mostly positive results<sup>37</sup> relative to coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Fund set out to promote each of the issues covered by this report in its joint programmes. Evidence shows that in many cases it is successful though there are still plenty of challenges. The joint programme methodology as implemented by the Fund depends on UN agencies being able to deliver as one in support of national priorities. The MDG-F body of work demonstrates that in addressing multi-dimensional and multi-sector development issues, joint programmes bringing together the UN system and national partners including government, civil society and the private sector, can be very effective. Programmes that are in line with national priorities and based on a causal analysis with consultations at all levels to which UN agencies bring their added value and expert knowledge are coherent and relevant.

It is the inexperience and in some instances the lack of commitment of UN agencies to truly deliver in a joint manner that can weaken these efforts. The MDG-F, together with UN partners, has experimented and tested various strategies, techniques and tools for improving UN coherence and efficiency (one of the weakest elements) and on that basis has made several recommendations in this report. The ideal UN business model that has emerged is one where (i) the UN Resident Coordinator has authority and can be decisive on issues of coherence and performance; (ii) UN Coordination Offices are properly staffed to support the UNRC, the UN Country Team and joint programme partners; (iii) if UN agency procedures cannot be harmonized, then they work through one UN agency; (iv) national implementation is the preferred modality; and (v) a representative governance mechanism is led by national partners.

The Fund's development model of combining support to public policies with downstream community action is favored by national partners and assessed as positive by evaluators. The increasingly clear results in the development and implementation of public policies, legislation and planning are supportive of this conclusion. The most effective joint programmes are in line with national priorities, respond to stakeholder needs and are owned and led by national and local partners. Having inclusive governance mechanisms such as those promoted by the Fund, contribute to improved coordination not only among the UN partners but also among ministries and other implementing partners.

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<sup>37</sup> Poor performing programmes which cannot be improved are closed as required.

Are MDG-F joint programmes increasing national ownership and leadership? The answer to this question is yes though more needs to be done. Government partners appreciate the MDG-F as a funding instrument that strengthens their role in the sustainable development of their countries. Weak national and local capacities can impede this goal. To encourage national implementation and the use of national systems, capacity gaps must be identified during programme design and programmes should be formulated in a strategic manner so that capacities will be developed and/or strengthened with a view to ensuring sustainable development results.

The Fund's governance system, mid-term evaluation process and emphasis on communication and advocacy have substantially added to mutual accountability amongst joint programme partners. When these elements are highly functional, inclusive decisions are made based on comprehensive information (including financial data); programme revisions can be put into effect that increase programme coherence and relevance; and local stakeholders can feel that they are responsible for their own development and can hold partners accountable.

As indicated in the beginning of this report, the Fund has paused to look at its experience and lessons learned to date. With more than three quarters of its joint programmes coming to an end within the next 15 months, even more evidence will come to light most particularly on the effectiveness and impact of the joint programmes. Upcoming thematic and global evaluations<sup>38</sup> of the Fund as well as final joint programme evaluations will add to the body of evidence to be shared by the MDG-F.

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<sup>38</sup> The MDG-F will commission an evaluation of the eight thematic windows as well as of the MDG-f as a whole in 2012/2013.

## **Annex 1: Government Declaration**

The following declaration was signed by the participating Governments to the MDG-F regional workshop in Cartagena, Colombia in June 2011.

### **SECOND REGIONAL MEETING IN LATIN AMERICA OF THE MDG-F**

#### **MEETING OF GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ON MDG-F NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEES**

Firstly, the government representatives of the National Steering Committees (NSC) would like to make **special mention of the Government of Spain** for its positive initiative in creating a Millennium Development Goals Fund (MDG-F) jointly with the United Nations System (UNS) as an innovative programme for meeting the Millennium Goals in a manner that encourages inter-agency work and the promotion of spaces for the coordination and formulation of organizations and national partners.

Based on the processes developed by the MDG-F in Latin America, government representatives in the NSCs underlined the following:

1. **State Leadership** is considered key to Joint Programme success as well as to ensuring their alignment with the priorities and development plans of the respective countries. Progress in the MDG-F programmes suggests that the greater the appropriation by countries, the greater the probability of reaching programme objectives.
2. **Institutional strengthening** generated by the MDG-F initiatives in the areas and sectors associated with the programmes as well as in some organizations guiding cooperation is a relevant factor that contributes to the sustainability of the initiatives.
3. Recognition was made of the **added value** of the MDG-F with respect to other modalities of cooperation. In this sense, certain aspects were emphasized including its contribution to strengthening public policies, innovation in management mechanisms (the inclusive Programme Management Committees are good examples of this), and the capacity for coordination and cooperation among national partners and UN agencies at both national and local levels.
4. However, there was widespread consensus that **the lack of unification in inter-agency procedures** represents a significant difficulty in implementing the process. It was also pointed out that the UN must make greater efforts toward simplifying and harmonizing these procedures. Another of the weaknesses indicated in many cases was the **issue of communication and visibility** both internally (as in programs matching state organizations and cooperation agencies) and externally (as regards populations in general).
5. The reform initiative **Delivering as One** currently undergoing independent evaluation for the case developed in Uruguay is an experience in which synergies were positively formulated in relation to the MDG-F. The multiple chains of command and ties to agencies in bilateral relations with national organizations are common problems that both processes aim to improve.
6. Participants agreed on a critical view of the **concept of middle income** given that it does not reflect the multi-dimensionality of the concept of sustainable human development or the

significant levels of vulnerability and inequality within the countries of the region. They agreed that the average income level should not be used as an indicator for establishing gradations that define whether or not a country receives aid in the global system.

7. With respect to **South-South Cooperation (SSC)**, the government representatives agreed that up to now, at least in Latin America, the role of the UN in this regard has not been very effective. It was emphasized that the dynamics generated by the MDG-F enable the strengthening of the fruitful interchange of experiences and may therefore be a useful tool in assisting the UN overall in improving its role in the SSC. It was suggested that the MDG-F Secretariat consider fostering this type of initiative. This process should be carried out in conjunction with the national authorities overseeing cooperation.
8. It was emphasized that in the evaluations of the impact and relevance of the MDG-F, the **national specificities** of each of the countries hosting Joint Programmes should be taken into account. Among other aspects, the **relative significance of international cooperation** should be considered with respect to the GDP or the national budget of a given country since there are important regional differences within Latin America. Significant differences were recorded in the quantity and absolute value of MDG-F projects between countries and therefore in the marginal impact of these projects on overall aid.
9. It was proposed that the importance of **continued financing of the MDG-F** be discussed in the different spheres of international cooperation based on specific preliminary results, innovative characteristics, and relevance within the UN framework of cooperation in Latin America.
10. Finally, it was suggested that the good practices generated by the MDG-F represent an opportunity for enriching the **cooperation agenda** at the Iberian-American level. The representatives of the countries in the MDG-F NSCs see the experience of the MDG-F as good practice that is worth considering in the process of building a **Latin American vision** within the framework of the **global debate** on aid effectiveness leading up to the global conference in Busan.

## **Annex 2: MDG-F Mid-term Evaluation Process**

The design of the MDG-F's M&E system was conceived to respond to the information needs of a wide array of actors (donors, partner governments, UN agencies, citizens, etc.). These stakeholders have different interests and preferences in using the information captured and analyzed by the system that can be summarized in three categories: accountability, learning and knowledge creation.

In consultation with the main stakeholders, the MDG-F Secretariat proceeded to unfold several tools to capture the information and evidence produced within the Fund including biannual monitoring reports; thematic indicators as well as mid-term, final, thematic and global evaluations. From all the M&E instruments used to date, the mid-term evaluations have emerged as a best practice with several unexpected results that have improved the culture of accountability among joint programme partners.

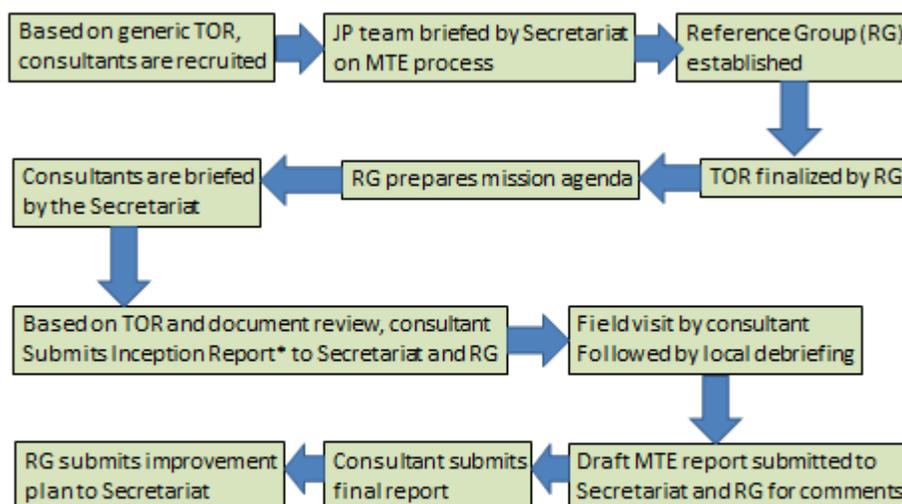
MDG-F mid-term evaluations were designed as swift processes (three months on average) with a double focus: to improve joint programme coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness as well as to collect information to measure progress towards results. The MDG-F Secretariat has completed 101 mid-term evaluations to date (March 31, 2012) and this in turn has created a wealth of information and evidence that is being exploited and analysed to fulfil the M&E objectives.

A Reference Group, composed of representatives of the programme partners, is established in the country and is given ownership over the evaluation process. The overall methodology and choice of consultants is determined by the Secretariat but the Reference Group (RG) is responsible for the following:

- Facilitating the participation of those involved in the evaluation design;
- Identifying information needs, defining objectives and delimiting the scope of the evaluation;
- Leading on certain evaluation planning documents (Work Plan and Communication, Dissemination and Improvement Plan);
- Providing input and finalizing the drafting of the Terms of Reference;
- Facilitating the evaluation team's access to all the joint programme information and documentation, as well as to key actors and informants who should participate in interviews, focus groups or other information-gathering methods;
- Monitoring the quality of the process, documents and reports that are generated, so as to enrich these with their inputs, and ensure that they address their interests and needs; and
- Disseminating the results of the evaluation.

The MDG-F secretariat finances the mid-term evaluations and plays the role of commissioner and task manager, providing advice and quality assurance services throughout the process.

The Secretariat found that by establishing an evaluation reference group (key intended users of the evaluations) with extensive functions from design to dissemination of the evaluation, there was an increase in programme coordination and inter agency work. The group also created the basis for a solid mutual accountability system between the national government and the United Nations system.



\* Inception reports present consultants view of issues and proposed methodology

The above conceptual evaluation framework was accepted and adapted to 130 different joint programme contexts across eight different thematic windows and 50 countries. Mid-term evaluation processes have created capacity on basic evaluation concepts and the practice of the evaluation itself.

The evaluations were used as incentives to improve management at the national level and created a solid body of evidence to support decision making for accountability at national and international levels.

The design, inception, implementation and dissemination phases of the evaluations worked as planned with some exceptions in the limited duration of the inception phase and the dissemination plans at national level were not always as inclusive as expected.

The improvement plans have been key instruments to ensure and track the progress on joint programmes and the follow up of the recommendations provided by the evaluations. However the effectiveness of these instruments has varied, depending on the quality of the evaluation and the recommendations included in the report, as well as the degree of engagement of partners in the evaluation exercise.

In conclusion, the mid-term evaluations have been not only useful for stakeholders and increased the interagency work but have been key to manage the Fund as a whole. The structure, functions and roles of the inter agency and inter governmental evaluation reference group were key to achieving the evaluation objectives. Capacity building and strengthening of the evaluation culture has had a widespread effect on systematically supporting mutual accountability, learning and improvement of decision making and management.

***Annex 3: Excerpt from the paper entitled: MDG Achievement Fund, Lessons Learned<sup>39</sup>***

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
Thematic windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of reference (TOR) prepared by UN agencies and MDG-F Secretariat</li> <li>• Windows launched in a phased approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>The contribution of UN agencies with mandates in the relevant thematic windows was very positive for the development of the terms of reference.</i></b></li> <li>• UN Country Teams (UNCT) were unable to prioritize the windows on which to focus so that all TORs should have been ready up front while still using a phased approach.</li> <li>• Thematic windows did not always match the top UNDAF priorities and some initial feedback showed a preference for a lump sum to the country<sup>40</sup>.</li> <li>• <b><i>The thematic window approach allowed the Fund to promote joint programming in areas of the Millennium Declaration that were possibly under-served such as culture and peace.</i></b></li> </ul>
Concept notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNCTs submitted short concept notes in a bid for getting funding (competitive process)</li> <li>• The Review Committee was composed of UN agency representatives, as well as Spanish and independent experts all related to the thematic window</li> <li>• The initial timeframe was 8 weeks and was subsequently expanded to 12</li> <li>• Recommended concept notes were approved by the MDG-F Steering Committee and UNCTs were requested to prepare programme documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of the 60 eligible countries, 50 countries got at least one joint concept note approved. Some countries questioned the effort required to submit the concept notes if none or just one were approved. Additionally, there was some concern regarding raised expectations.</li> <li>• <b><i>The Review Committee added transparency to the process as well as expertise from the independent experts and UN agencies, one of which was selected as the Convenor for the window.</i></b></li> <li>• Feedback was clear that 8 weeks was insufficient time to prepare concept notes but even after the increase, many countries felt that 12 weeks was insufficient to have a good consultative process beyond centrally located partners. The fund did conclude that providing more time did not improve the quality of the concept notes.</li> <li>• As approval by national authorities was not mandatory at this stage prior to submission, the concept notes tended to be prepared by UN Country Teams with a minimum of national/local consultation.</li> <li>• An approved concept note did not imply an approved joint programme and this was a mistake as partners could have used the interim periods to pursue consultations.</li> <li>• Many approved concept notes had their budgets reduced and mid-term evaluations found that in finalizing the programme documents, partners had not always taken this into account leading to overly ambitious programmes.</li> <li>• <b><i>UN Resident Coordinators had very positive feedback on the increase in UN coordination as a result of the formulation process.</i></b></li> </ul>
Joint programme document design and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners were given 8 weeks to formulate the joint programme</li> <li>• The programme document format came from UNDG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally speaking the consultative process was greater during this timeframe but again more limited to partners in capitals with less consultation at the local level. Time and distance were mentioned as the major constraints.</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> Paper presented to the IV High Level Intergovernmental Conference on Delivering as One in Montevideo, Uruguay in November 2011

<sup>40</sup> Coherence funds (to which the MDG-F contributed US\$65.9 million) reporting indicates that MDG-F priority areas and strategies were not necessarily well represented.

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the request of UNCTs, the Secretariat prepared a guideline for gender mainstreaming in programme design</li> <li>• A minimum of 3% was recommended to budget for monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Joint programmes could also include allocations to support the Resident Coordinator's Coordination Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of programme documents was not very high and most had to be returned for improvements. The weakest elements of the programme documents included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>○ Situation analysis insufficiently based on socio economic indicators</li> <li>○ Unclear targets for geographic locations and beneficiaries</li> <li>○ Partnerships</li> <li>○ Overly ambitious (this was determined during the mid-term evaluations)</li> <li>○ Fragmented design leading to fragmented results</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Initially all UN Agencies were eager to participate which led to high numbers of agencies per programme, little attention to their comparative advantage and no assessment of their capacity to lead and/or deliver.</li> <li>• <b>Key to higher quality documents:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Involving national and local partners in the design and formulation and increasing formulation timeframe</i></li> <li>○ <i>Programme documents can be improved by providing substantive and expert feedback (which was done by the Secretariat)</i></li> <li>○ <i>There is a need to harmonize on RBM and build up capacity at the country office level to develop results, indicators etc.</i></li> <li>○ <i>Programme design must follow a needs assessment process as opposed to starting from agency mandates</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Joint programme approval and signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MDG-F Secretariat reviewed and recommended for approval the joint programme documents and this process took approximately one month for final approval if the document was sound.</li> <li>• The agreed start up date was the date of funds were transferred to UN agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signature of programme documents took anywhere from 1 month to 2 years with an average of 3 – 4 months.</li> <li>• Once joint programmes were approved, programme teams waited for the receipt of funds before undertaking activities. This should have been the ideal time to begin planning and review the roles and responsibilities of the partners as well as undertaking further consultation.</li> <li>• <b>Key actions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Some national approval processes could be reviewed to reduce signature timeframes</i></li> <li>○ <i>Begin planning for the inception phase as well as operational tasks immediately after the programme is approved</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Joint programme implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the request of programme teams and due to a gap in manuals, the MDG-F Secretariat developed joint programme implementation guidelines that were updated based on lessons learned after 18 months.</li> <li>• Funds were transferred through the Multi Partner Trust Fund to the UN agency headquarters.</li> <li>• Mid-term evaluations were funded and managed by the MDG-F Secretariat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inexperience with joint programmes and poor planning for three year programmes caused numerous delays to programme start ups. The inception workshop was necessary to get agreement from all partners on the results, indicators and targets while also clarifying roles and responsibilities. The inception period generally takes up to six months and few programmes planned for this.</li> <li>• As the funds were transferred to UN agency headquarters (and not to a pooled fund) based on agency specific outputs in the programme document, this led to agencies reverting to individual implementation in the early stages.</li> <li>• Mid-term evaluations also pointed to programmes that were either a combination of UN agency interventions or extensions of ongoing programmes that were not conducive to joint programming.</li> <li>• Most countries went through an election during programme</li> </ul>

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
		<p>implementation but this was not taken account of in planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the programmes were delayed, the Fund considered postponing mid-term evaluations but decided against this and instead used the process to get the joint programmes back on track.</li> <li>• <b>Key elements for joint programming:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Plan for consultation and inception phases to clarify roles and increase national/local ownership and maintain the latter throughout the programme</i></li> <li>○ <i>Coordination takes time when there isn't this history of working together and agencies need to commit to the concept</i></li> <li>○ <i>UN Agency partners must have the capacity to either lead and/or deliver and if not, other better options for including their expertise could be considered</i></li> <li>○ <i>Some type of common pool under the Resident Coordinator's authority is more conducive to joint implementation than transferring funds to agencies</i></li> <li>○ <i>Implementation partners should be represented in the geographic locations of the programmes</i></li> <li>○ <i>Involvement of senior UN Agency and Ministry Representatives as well as the UN Resident Coordinator are important elements of oversight and impact on the success of a programme</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Capacity development and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All thematic windows emphasized the importance of capacity development</li> <li>• The programme document included a section on sustainability and the monitoring reports also require programme teams to report back on this issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development activities make up a large part of the MDG-F joint programmes though this is often equated to training and few included capacity development strategies to better measure progress.</li> <li>• The confusion between activities and results plays out with training where the training gets done but the quality and impact of that training are not often assessed. This is improving.</li> <li>• Despite the emphasis on sustainability in the documentation and reporting, programme teams often wait until the end of the programme to consider exit strategies.</li> <li>• National implementation takes longer but builds capacity and programmes are consequently more likely to be sustainable.</li> <li>• <b>Key elements for sustainability:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Develop a sustainability strategy during the inception phase and revisit it frequently</i></li> <li>○ <i>Training is a means to an end, not an end in itself so that training must be planned with a result in mind and assessed accordingly</i></li> <li>○ <i>Three year programmes are too short to build capacities and ensure sustainability</i></li> <li>○ <i>Concentrate efforts geographically instead of spreading out</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fund emphasized the importance of the M&amp;E plan with indicators and targets and programmes were asked to have baselines for all targets. For three year programmes, mid-term and final evaluations are mandatory.</li> <li>• The evaluation process is very</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation were weak from the formulation process through implementation. While baseline information has improved it often came more than 12 months after the start of a programme and indicators could be better. There is still a gap in partner capacity to monitor programmes locally.</li> <li>• Many monitoring systems focus more on compliance with delivery targets than on the analysis of the continued relevance and potential effectiveness of activities and outputs vis a vis the expected outcomes.</li> </ul>

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
	<p>participative with local reference groups who finalize the terms of reference, prepare the consultant agendas, review and comment on the report and for mid-term evaluations prepare improvement plans to determine follow up actions for all recommendations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fund held regional workshops in the early stages of implementation and a second set in 2011. All programme countries have been visited by the Fund and where relevant, the Secretariat undertakes regular monitoring missions to the field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mid-term evaluation (MTE) process has proven to be crucial in realigning joint programmes (over 110 MTEs completed to date) . Flexibility was key in this process so as to allow the programme partners to revise their results and strategies to be more realistic given the time constraints. The Fund also agreed to accepting exceptional requests for no cost extensions of up to one year.</li> <li>• Finding good evaluators is extremely challenging. They are few and far between.</li> <li>• The participatory process for the mid-term and final evaluations when done properly has been a great success as programmes felt this was less an exercise of fault finding and more one to assist the team in moving forward.</li> <li>• The regional workshops were greatly appreciated by programme teams as it conveyed guidelines on how to move forward with joint implementation and more recently allowed partners to share their lessons learned.</li> <li>• <b>Key to improved M&amp;E:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Harmonized understanding on RBM among UN agencies and joint programme monitoring systems that produce strategic information on a regular basis and highlight early warning signals for risks and opportunities</i></li> <li>○ <i>Build UN and national capacities in M&amp;E and ensure the participation of beneficiaries and local partners</i></li> <li>○ <i>Use tools to improve programmes and get better results</i></li> <li>○ <i>In short programmes, it is important to monitor both substantive and financial progress frequently (biannually) in order to quickly rectify problems that come up and still end in a timely manner</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially the Fund requested the following reporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quarterly financial reports</li> <li>○ Quarterly color-coded work plans</li> <li>○ Quarterly short narratives on progress</li> <li>○ Yearly financial and narrative reports</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Currently the Funds requests the following reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Biannual monitoring reports including annual work plans and updated M&amp;E plans with financial estimates as well as thematic window indicators</li> <li>○ Agencies provide certified financial reports yearly</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Secretariat provides detailed feedback on all biannual monitoring reports which is appreciated by the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on reporting is that it is very demanding and time consuming. The Fund was unable to get all UN agencies to estimate quarterly financial progress so this request was dropped and replaced with biannual estimates from the programme teams. The biannual report format took too long to put in place and had several issues with the online process. It includes thematic window indicators that while interesting were not available initially for joint programmes and consequently have not been a great success. However, the purpose of requesting biannual reporting was to ensure that programme teams reviewed progress at least twice a year given the very short nature of these programmes (this included updating the M&amp;E plans). They also allow for close monitoring by the Secretariat. This has resulted in better M&amp;E plans and baseline information.</li> <li>• The weaknesses in the reporting include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Confusing activities with results</li> <li>○ Activity based reporting instead of results based reporting</li> <li>○ Difficulties in reporting on progress related to outcomes</li> <li>○ Generally weak report writing skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Secretariat recruited support for programme teams in story telling and writing about their successes which has been much appreciated and provides stories for its website.</li> <li>• <b>Key to better reporting:</b></li> </ul>

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
	teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Improved understanding of RBM</b></li> <li>○ <b>Use of results-based reporting</b></li> <li>○ <b>Improved format from MDG-F Secretariat</b></li> <li>○ <b>When M&amp;E provides data and information on indicators and progress, reporting improves</b></li> </ul>
Communication and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communication and advocacy within joint programmes was not focussed on initially</li> <li>● The Fund quickly concluded that there was a gap and encouraged all joint programmes to allocate funds to communication and advocacy and to have a C&amp;A plan</li> <li>● The Fund came up with a logo that incorporated the UN logo with the name of the Fund that also recognized its donor Spain.</li> <li>● The Secretariat requested programme teams to only use the MDG-F logo together with a national logo and not individual agency logos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The MDG-F Secretariat made an error in not insisting initially on an allocation of funds towards C&amp;A.</li> <li>● Now there is greater buy in from the teams and most have a C&amp;A plan though the challenge continues to be the conceptualization and capacity regarding advocacy<sup>41</sup>.</li> <li>● When countries benefit from additional funding (such as the focus countries), then we see more innovative C&amp;A</li> <li>● Photo and video contests have also helped in bringing out more visual products from the teams.</li> <li>● While in most cases the MDG-F logo is used, there are still UN agencies that insert their own logos when implementing their activities that goes against the joint nature of the programme.</li> <li>● <b>Key to improved communication and advocacy:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Dedicated resources</b></li> <li>○ <b>Joint C&amp;A strategy</b></li> <li>○ <b>Capacity development to go beyond simple programme communication to advocacy</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Knowledge management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Fund developed a knowledge management (KM) strategy that had several pillars including KM at the thematic window level to be led by UN Agency Convenors and a digital platform to exchange between programmes through Teamworks (a UNDP based system)</li> <li>● Regional workshops were also an opportunity to exchange on lessons learned.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Agency led KM initiatives took time to get started but most are being effective through workshops that bring programme partners together to exchange; support in generating lessons; further research etc.</li> <li>● It is still too early to say how impactful this strategy will have been.</li> <li>● <b>Joint programme partners greatly appreciate the face to face exchanges given that many elements are new – most particularly in coordinating between many partners.</b></li> <li>● As Teamworks was not available at the start of the joint programmes, it has not been taken on by the partners to any great extent.</li> </ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The MDG-F Secretariat closely monitors all joint programmes and reports biannually to a global MDG-F Steering Committee.</li> <li>● A National Steering Committee (NSC) composed of government and Spanish representatives as well as the UN Resident Coordinator should meet biannually to review programme progress, approve annual work plans and provide oversight.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When the National Steering Committee plays its role, it increases national ownership and is the second line of assessing progress (after the PMC). The Fund has seen examples of excellent NSCs as well as those don't have any added value or simply don't meet. In the latter, the joint programmes appear to be less successful.</li> <li>● The NSC is often felt to duplicate other coordination mechanisms including that for the UNDAF. To a certain extent this is true, though it is not clear that UNDAF review mechanisms go into sufficient detail to ensure that programmes that are lagging behind can be put on the right track or even possibly shut down.</li> <li>● It is important that senior representatives participate in the PMCs. This shows greater ownership by the implementing partners and ensures that key decision makers are present. In some instances,</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> A combination of citizen/civil society participation in policy and practices at local and national levels.

Item	MDG-F approach	Summary findings, lessons and recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Programme Management Committee (PMC) is composed of representatives of all the implementing partners and it is recommended to be chaired by the lead national counterpart. This committee should meet quarterly to review programme progress, the implementation of the M&amp;E plan etc.</li> <li>• The Fund recommends that a Programme Implementation Unit be based in national government offices and include a Programme Coordinator. The latter should be responsible for the day to day running of the joint programme as well as reporting.</li> </ul>	<p>the PMCs are reduced to technical meetings that cannot look at the overall programme progress and get bogged down in activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some joint programme teams replicate the PMC process at the local to ensure greater local participation in decision-making forums. Others have formed advisory boards to benefit from expertise outside the joint programme’s governance mechanisms.</li> <li>• The Programme Coordinator has turned out to be an important element to the success of joint programmes. This is due to the relative inexperience of agencies and ministries of working jointly. The Coordinator’s role is to facilitate this process but often is not given sufficient authority most particularly by UN agencies.</li> <li>• The UN Resident Coordinator and his or her office play an important role relative to the oversight and follow up of MDG-F joint programmes. Those offices able to take advantage of funding through joint programmes; Junior Progressional Officers and Special Assistants to the Resident Coordinator financed by the MDG-F; additional funds provided to “focus” countries for M&amp;E and C&amp;A are able to play a more proactive role.</li> <li>• <b>Key to better governance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>An entity that takes the oversight role seriously</b></li> <li>○ <b>Senior representation in the PMC and a review of results and progress including the M&amp;E plan</b></li> <li>○ <b>Delegated authority to the Programme Coordinator</b></li> <li>○ <b>Well staffed UN Coordination Offices</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>