

CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The terms of reference for this assessment asks that it “incorporate specific dimensions concerning *gender equality, HIV/AIDS, rural development and capacity development.*” The four dimensions specified in the terms of reference correspond to the principal goals of the four non-regional participating UNDG members: IFAD, UNAIDS, UNIFEM and UNDP. Additional insights into the gender dimension came from the feedback obtained from UNFPA. The PD does not cover these issues in terms of objectives or targets, though it mentions gender and HIV/AIDS as examples.⁸² While the term capacity development does not appear in the PD, the term capacity development is used, mainly as a requirement for alignment and managing for results. No reference is made to rural or to agricultural development or to any other sector, except indirectly through mentioning the MDGs. The findings of this review are thus limited by these connections to/disconnects from the PD.

7.2 GENDER EQUALITY

There was an absence of incentives among donors, including some UNCTs, to promote the gender agenda. Development partners advocating for gender equality need to provide evidence that gender equality contributes to the PD’s goal of improved aid effectiveness. The

12 pilot countries of the EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace⁸³ will focus on gathering evidence that shows that gender equality contributes substantially to aid effectiveness.

In the six case-study countries, gender mainstreaming efforts in the context of implementing the PD remains partial and *ad-hoc*. The position of gender equality efforts within thematic or technical working groups of UNCTs (formed against the harmonization objectives of donors and other development partners), often remains unclear. The role of the Gender Focal Persons in the UNCTs and thematic working groups in advocating for gender mainstreaming is also weak. Some UN organizations have not filled the position of gender focal points and assign junior staff to represent organizations in gender-related UNCT activities.

While UNIFEM plays a key role at the global level in advocating gender equality in the context of the PD, lack of full offices in most countries limits UNIFEM’s advocacy role at the country level. True there are guidance notes⁸⁴ from headquarters for the UNCTs on strategies that they can take to advocate gender equality at country level, even in countries where UNIFEM is not resident. But their application seems to be spotty and missing the opportunity to benefit gender mainstreaming in national strategic

82 PD paragraph 4. iv. refers to HIV/AIDS as example of global programmes; paragraph 42 mentions gender equality as a cross-cutting issue.

83 Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Suriname and Ukraine.

84 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/tfccundat2005.htm>

frameworks such as PRSP processes, National HIV/AIDS Strategic Frameworks and National Budgets' gender equality efforts in sectoral or thematic working groups.

7.3 HIV/AIDS

As noted in Chapter 3, the connection between the PD and UNAIDS operations is very close. UNAIDS is an example of a joint programme by 10 co-sponsoring UNDG members.⁸⁵ HIV/AIDS is thus one area where the coordination process was initiated pre-PD together with an intervention modus that aimed at applying the PD principles of supporting national ownership, coordinated programming and M&E. Further guidance to the national responses was provided by Universal Access targets, the Three Ones and tools like CHAT—all of which are based on PD principles. The Unified Budget and Workplan, which started approximately two years ago, is a good example of coordination of programmes of the aforementioned UNDG members. The Unified Budget and Workplan will provide a vehicle for monitoring programme implementation and efficiency, much along the lines of the PD goal of increasing aid effectiveness.

Reflecting the priority the UN system places on HIV/AIDS, the UN Secretary General directed the RCs to establish a Joint Country Team comprising UNDG members in December 2005. The Joint Team is intended to improve coherence and harmonization within and among UN organizations. Heads of organizations are supposed to provide overall policy and implementation oversight on the HIV/AIDS response. The formation of the Joint Team was meant to encourage UNCTs to renew, strengthen and adapt existing structures to address shortcomings and not to create new structures and processes. UNAIDS country-level coordination efforts have included: supporting establishment of

National AIDS Councils to facilitate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder involvement; and engaging the Global Fund established Country Coordination Mechanisms for Global Fund grant application, approval and monitoring. All countries visited had National AIDS Councils. At the group level, activities have included joint programming efforts, especially involving UNFPA and UNICEF. The PD may have enhanced the emphasis on HIV/AIDS, but in most cases, agency staff had been assigned to the Joint Country Team groups before the PD and the interactions with other UNCT sectoral working groups have not changed in terms of greater HIV/AIDS mainstreaming.

Progress in promoting national ownership and enhancing the national AIDS responses is relative to country capacities. There are coordination challenges in terms of engaging all the major players in national coordination, and aligning and harmonizing interventions funded by these sources with national strategies and action plans. Increases in financial flows towards HIV/AIDS has triggered not only an enhanced need for coordination but also highlighted the need for additional technical advice. UNDP has at times played a critical role in funding such technical advice. The ability to assign technical advisory roles among agencies and establish a more distinct division of labour is challenging but appears to be initially addressed, although there is a need for further elaboration. The PD has strengthened awareness and commitment with other development partners to the need for coordination and joint programming.

7.4 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development was a significant issue in all six countries cases, though markedly more among the lowest income countries, especially in

85 UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the WB.

Ethiopia. A connect, or a disconnect, with the PD was evident mainly at two levels.

First, rural development cuts across many sectors, from social (such as health and education) to agriculture (production techniques) to natural resources (water), land registration, infrastructure (roads and electricity) and marketing (agro-industries). Because of this, a number of actors are needed in order to provide a favourable environment for rural development, including many from the private sector such as banks. This environment creates special challenges for channelling ODA to the beneficiaries. The complexity of effective development assistance to the rural poor makes it especially important that alignment and aid coordination is explored fully along the lines of the PD. While SWAPs have been developed in some countries, the opportunities for DBS has been limited.

Second, rural development on the whole has not been easy to fit into the configuration of UNCTs and their working groups. Often, there has been an absence of an IFAD local presence and thus the unique rural development perspective. IFAD's mostly Rome-based CPMs have sought to be in country during critical phases of UNCT sectoral considerations, in particular during the preparation of the UNDAF, but their impact has been limited by the lack of continuous in-country presence. Thus FAO, WFP, WB, and at times, Regional Development Banks and others, were often in the forefront of introducing the rural development perspective into the UNCT and specialized working groups. But underlying this issue is a concern held mainly at IFAD that UNCTs were more focused on social than on production concerns with it comes to rural development. Even where attention is given to social sectors and services in the rural context, a closer integration among the different UN organizations is required to impact poverty in rural areas on a sustainable basis through production and income generation. There remains an important task

for IFAD (in partnership with FAO, WFP and others) to ensure that rural development gets full attention among the UNCTs.

7.5 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

The PD has enhanced emphasis on capacity development and resulted in a change in attitude and approach to dealing with capacity development. This was to be associated with a downscaling of Project Implementation Units to focus more directly on developing the capacity of national entities that could take on the functions of the Units. This corresponds with the emphasis on development processes being owned by partner countries in order to be sustainable.

Capacity development is the *raison d'être* of development partners' presence in developing countries and is supported in most sectors at normative, operational and technical levels. Capacity development is in different stages in different sectors and particularly needed in sector diversification efforts, including enhanced emphasis on social sectors where appropriate.

At the macro level, increased attention has been given to public financial management, resulting in a need for training in financial planning tools, anti-corruption measures, and the like. At the sectoral level, capacity development is needed to help partner countries better define and formulate sector strategies and action plans.

An integrated and sector-comprehensive approach to capacity development was observed in the context of SWAPs and in relation to DBS. Some development partners, such as the EC, some UNDG members and International Finance Institutions, assigned experts to assess capacity and areas for capacity development in preparation for moving towards SWAPs and DBS. At sub-sector, programme and project levels, technical advisory functions have been directed towards national entities.

Training needs varied considerably across the countries. In some, a cadre of well trained staff exist, but are spread thinly within the overall administrative system and are thus exploited both by the partner country's system and by donors' demands. In some countries, skills development comprises fundamental skills such as language skills (for enhanced development coordination) to more sophisticated technical skills. A need to focus horizontally—for example on generic functions in areas such as budget making, audit functions, procurement systems, and sector expertise—as well as overall planning abilities are at the core of further capacity development efforts. Government capacities to plan and coordinate development partners' contributions are of particular relevance to the PD.

The renewed emphasis on capacity development and bringing it to scale will require a significant change in the allocation of resources. It also means

that the time frame for planning capacity-building activities will need to change to a longer term perspective in recognition of the fact that capacity development and the related human resources skills development require long-term commitments.

There is a strong sentiment among development partners that a significant government-led effort is necessary to develop capacity. Meanwhile a number of *ad hoc* mechanisms to align with poverty reduction strategies and harmonize among development partners are being applied. These render capacity development efforts ad hoc and pursued in a non-systematic way.

There is a large scope for UN involvement in assisting and supporting governments in identifying and defining needs, and in providing overview of the new capacity development issues that have emerged in the initial steps to adhere to PD principles.

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

- **Gender equality:** There is much room for improvement within UNCTs to fully incorporate agencies' policies on women equality. A greater permanent presence of UNIFEM at the country level and thereby in UNCTs may further gender equality in UNCT development work
- **HIV/AIDS:** Recognition of the issue and the volume of activities addressing HIV/AIDS have rapidly increased. Coordination among the many development partners requires continued effort by the Joint Teams.
- **Rural development:** While there are significant differences in the partner countries' rural poverty, this cross-cutting area would have benefited from a more extensive continued country presence by IFAD, working together with FAO and WFP representatives. The recent introduction of IFAD representatives in a limited number of countries ought to make a difference. There is room for UNCTs giving greater attention to rural development beyond the social dimensions in order to achieve sustainable development based on improved production and income.
- **Capacity development:** As part of the PD, there are new demands for capacity development. As at the macro level, increased attention is being given to public financial management, but there is still a great need for training in financial planning tools, anti-corruption measures, and the like. At the sectoral level, capacity development is needed to help partner countries better define and formulate sector strategies and action plans. The achievement of the PD—and UNDG—objective of reducing the role of Project Implementation Units under ODA depends in good part on further long-term donor support through well focused country-wide strategies and programmes for capacity development.