

ASSESSING INCENTIVES

Integrating existing UN development goals with those of the PD requires a reorientation of incentives to become effective. The people who make up the UNDG organizations need to be convinced and motivated on a sustained basis about the new direction. This challenge has been approached through guidance and training as well as personnel performance assessment. The International Civil Service System that is used across the UN does not allow for direct monetary recognition to those UNDG officers who make an outstanding contribution to such an effort (only medals and other non-monetary awards are allowed).

UNDG organizations use Results and Competency Assessments for personal goal setting and recognition for managers. An RC's Results and Competency Assessment contains 5 headings to assess results and competencies as coordinator of the UNCT, 13 itemized headings that relate to other, non-UNCT related, results and competencies, as well as supplementary assessments by senior officers of organizations represented in a UNCT.⁷⁶ A new initiative like the PD that has clear implications for the role of the UNCT will be recognized as part of the RC's assessment. However, the requirement for an assessment of the specific contribution of a UNCT staff member to the implementation of the PD appears to be limited to the RC.

The interview feedback from UNDG agencies and others interviewed through their RRs was that performance assessments address the PD

agenda indirectly through the recognition of staff and managers' contributions to development effectiveness. Setting staff and managers' objectives and performance assessments against PD-related objectives has many facets. It tends to include effectiveness in the achievement of agency programme objectives, such as the development of results-based Country Strategic Opportunities Papers (at IFAD), of sector specific SWAPs (at UNFPA), or of mobilization of pool funding (at UNDP).

The interview feedback also noted that organizations may have objectives that are not always consistent with PD principles. In particular, the pressure within organizations to achieve programme results in a timely fashion is unabated. This pressure takes many forms, such as using well established and locally proven agency-specific procurement rules to achieve urgent purchases and distribution rather than waiting on interagency initiative or adhering to untested partner country rules. In other words, basic incentives to carry out an agency's own programme continue to affect agency staff behaviour, in particular those who anticipate that demand for their personal services could be affected through PD induced harmonization. It takes new incentives to change such patterns.

Therefore, the RC survey responses regarding incentives to implement the PD are of special interest. Only 25 percent of RCs in the SCs (and 20 percent in NSCs) believe that full

⁷⁶ Note that RCs are selected from a pool of candidates from all UN organizations. At present, one third of the RCs are non-UNDP persons; there is an expectation that this proportion would increase to 50 percent in the years ahead.

attention has been given to incentives for PD implementation.⁷⁷ In fact, not one noted that incentives had received ‘very high’ attention. Based on the responses, it appears that incentives have remained unchanged since the PD was introduced. Prior to the PD, performance assessments of in-country staff used core criteria that are now incorporated in the PD: effective relationships with government and other partners, and the ability to integrate agency programmes into a national strategy. However, as noted by one RC, even with the significant weight attached to the RC’s handling of the UNCT, implementation of the agency’s programme was the most important factor in his performance evaluation. As another survey respondent noted, complying

with the PD is just one of several policies that the RC and UNCT are expected to pursue, others include the promotion of peace and respect of human rights. The relative weight of these policy objectives should vary according to a country situation.

This assessment, at both headquarter and country levels, shows that incentives for implementing the PD ought to extend beyond the traditional concept of giving inducements to a person or a team. Intra- and inter-agency obstacles stand in the way of successfully implementing the PD.⁷⁸ Only strong leadership and the conviction among staff that the PD principles are in the interest of the agencies will change the behaviour of resisting necessary changes.

KEY FINDINGS REGARDING INCENTIVES

- Those who are expected to take primary responsibility in implementing the PD, the RCs, find incentives specific to this endeavour weak. However, their performance evaluation directly addresses PD-related responsibilities. For the many other UNDG member staff involved in the implementation of the PD, this dimension is assessed in their performance evaluation only indirectly, mainly through agreed work programmes.
- For incentives to implement the PD to become effective, the concept of ‘incentive’ would need to be broadened to directly address the factors that stand in the way of greater progress, especially harmonization.

77 Survey question: “To which extent are there specific incentives provided by UN agencies – e.g. for recruitment, performance assessment and training – for their management and staff to comply with the PD principles?”

78 Inter-agency obstacles are more transparent and have been identified and addressed under a variety of harmonization initiatives.