

**UNDAF Strategic Prioritization Retreat (SPR)**

24 – 25 August 2010

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Background

Building on results and findings from the recent MDG national dialogues which form a key part of Bangladesh's country analysis and several months of UNCT discussions and preparatory work, a two-day UNDAF Strategic Prioritization Retreat (SPR) was held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, 24-25 August 2010. All members of the UNCT participated in the retreat, including several Non-Resident Agencies (NRAs). The overall objective of the SPR was to develop first draft UNDAF results matrices, a key element of the UNDAF. The retreat provided an opportunity for the UN system to discuss and agree on a set of priority areas and lead UN agencies, for the next UNDAF. These areas and leads have been defined as:

1. Democratic Governance & Human Rights (UNDP)
2. Pro-poor Growth with Equity (UNDP)
3. Social Services for Human Development (UNICEF)
4. Food Security & Nutrition (WFP)
5. Climate Change, Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction & Response (UNDP)
6. Development of Urban Poor (UNDP)
7. Gender Equality & Women's Advancement (UNFPA)

Discussions & Decisions

Following presentations on the GoB's national development priorities by ERD, Ministry of Finance and GED, Planning Commission, participants reviewed the key development challenges and the UNCT's areas of comparative advantage. Eleven UNDAF priority areas were previously identified at the 24 June UNCT meeting. These were further narrowed down to the above seven priority areas and participants proceeded to develop draft UNDAF results matrices by translating these priorities into UNDAF outcomes and contributing outputs. Refresher sessions were conducted on Results-Based Management (RBM) and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) to help the UNCT move forward in the results formulation. Despite the limited time available, significant progress was made in defining outcomes, indicators and outputs for the seven priority areas. Key UNDAF road map activities for the finalization of the UNDAF were also reviewed and discussed. In addition to the seven priority areas, the following principles were also agreed upon for the new UNDAF:

- Human rights as a cross-cutting concern
- Targeting: geographic and/or groups (e.g. vulnerable, indigenous, etc.)
- Division of labour

The MDG national dialogues and rigorous country analysis linked to MDG progress reporting, where priorities were identified with careful reflection of the cross-sectoral and cross-thematic linkages were noted as a good practice among participants. However, there is a possibility that the rich analysis could be "lost" to UN agency mandates in the clustering of priorities, rather than a cross-cutting and holistic UNCT approach to development priorities in Bangladesh.

Challenges & Issues

- Division of Labour

There were extensive discussions on implementation of the principle of "division of labour" and what this means in terms of how UN agencies would contribute to shared outcomes and outputs. Efficiency gains and higher accountability were noted as positive benefits. However,

the risk of retreating into 'silos' and not leveraging collective UNCT strengths and contributions was also noted.

- National ownership of UNDAF vs. reflecting national priorities in the UNDAF

There was some debate on the relevance of the UNDAF vis-à-vis national priorities if the programming process (and resulting priorities) were not done in close consultation with government. On the one hand, the UNDAF is a UN planning tool and efforts are generally made to ensure priorities are aligned with national development plans/targets. On the other hand, parallel discussions on the UNDAF, while the Perspective Plan and sixth 5-Year Plan are still being drafted, implies that the UN system's assistance is not entirely linked or relevant to the GoB's planning processes.

- Pitching of UNDAF Outcomes/Outputs

In formulating the results matrix, the challenge of striking a balance on the number of outcomes and outputs underlines the inherent dilemma of whether UNDAF outcomes should be broad and encompassing, which would result in outputs also pitched at a higher level thus requiring more detailed elaboration in individual agency Country Programme Documents (CPDs). This would result in agencies retreating into "silos" since agencies are accountable to their agencies' governing mechanisms through their CPDs. The need to strike a balance was strongly noted and manageability and accountability were seen as the key criteria. There was overall consensus on the importance of developing 'SMART' UNDAF outcomes and outputs. Some participants expressed concern about the risk of developing an unwieldy results matrix (e.g. 7 priority areas, 11 outcomes, 20 outputs / outcome, leads to roughly 220 outputs).

- M&E and UNDAF Action Plan

Participants agreed on the importance of an effective M&E system. Further guidance and discussions on M&E issues and UNDAF Action Plan were requested, particularly the implications to individual agency programming if an UNDAF Action Plan is developed. Decisions on the UNDAF Action Plan will be taken up by the UNCT.

Next Steps

- UNDAF Thematic Groups

- Lead agencies for the seven thematic groups are requested to nominate a focal point who will lead the group.
- Participating agencies are requested to 1) identify groups where participation is planned and 2) nominate a focal point.

- UNDAF Results Matrices

- Lead agencies should review and finalize the draft results matrices with UNDAF Theme Group members and submit the finalized matrices to the RCO.

- UNDAF Steering Committee

- The RCO will arrange a meeting between the UNCT and GoB to set-up the Steering Committee.

- M&E Group

- Agencies are requested to send nominations of staff with M&E experience to the RCO.