

Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations

Piloting the One UN Country Programme in eight countries

Report by the Secretariat

1. The report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment¹ recommended that the "United Nations should deliver as one by establishing, by 2007, five One Country Programmes as pilots", on the basis of four "key features", namely: one programme, one leader, one budgetary framework, and, where appropriate, one office. Acceding to requests from individual Member States, pilot programmes have now been initiated in eight countries.²
2. At its 120th session, the Executive Board considered WHO and reform of the United Nations system. On that occasion, the Director-General reaffirmed that WHO would be an active partner in the reform process. She also undertook to report back regularly to Member States on progress made on the pilot programmes and lessons learnt.³ The present report outlines the experience gained in piloting the programmes, with particular reference to WHO.
3. WHO is one of the few agencies present in all eight of the countries in which the programmes are being piloted, and the Secretariat has sought to be proactive in each country in taking the trial forward. There is an understanding that, to the extent feasible, each of the pilot programmes should develop the best approach to country coherence in development issues in the light of local circumstances and under the leadership of national authorities. This flexibility is also seen as critical for ensuring that the pilot programmes provide guidance for best practice that can be adopted in other countries.
4. Recognizing the importance of an appropriate contribution by WHO to the One United Nations approach, during their retreat in March 2007, the Director-General, Deputy Director-General, Regional Directors and Assistant Directors-General discussed WHO's involvement in the eight pilot programmes with the relevant WHO Representatives and country office heads. The meeting reaffirmed WHO's role as a positive and active partner in all eight programmes, and established mechanisms for providing continuing guidance and support to the country offices concerned. A WHO support team and a dedicated instrument for electronic information sharing are fully operational on

¹ See document A60/39.

² Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam.

³ See document EB119/2006-EB120/2007/REC/2, summary record of the thirteenth meeting.

behalf of the eight countries piloting the programmes, thus ensuring real-time information exchange, communication and collective learning for headquarters, regional offices and the relevant country offices.

5. WHO's support for United Nations system mechanisms for coordinating work on the pilot programmes has included participation in discussions at the recent session of CEB under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, and involvement in support groups at policy and operational levels. The CEB session endorsed proposals for the United Nations Evaluation Group, which comprises evaluation offices from each agency, to establish an evaluation process for the pilot programmes.

6. Work on the pilot programmes is still in a learning phase, but it is becoming clear that certain factors contribute significantly to successful implementation.

- **National ownership and leadership.** In the context of the eight pilot programmes, national ownership provides the foundation for United Nations reform efforts, enabling them to be targeted to individual country situations. The approach needs to be anchored in a set of objectives elaborated by the country concerned. Clear articulation of the objectives being pursued on the part of Member States volunteering to pilot the One UN Country Programme is a prerequisite for appropriate United Nations system action.
- **The critical importance of having a United Nations programme at country level.** As a programme of joint United Nations operational activities, the One UN Country Programme represents the central element of the reform agenda at country level. Of the four key features mentioned above, the last three directly serve the One UN Country Programme. Addressing sector-specific and cross-cutting issues in concert in the Programme means that the collective capacity of the United Nations system can be brought to bear in support of specific country needs. This approach has also been shown to enable the United Nations system at country level to take collective responsibility for programme implementation, on the basis of a lead agency approach.
- **The Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country team working as one.** The One United Nations approach at country level has proven to be particularly effective when it is inclusive. Including, from the outset, all United Nations funds, programmes and agencies operating in a given country is essential for enabling the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations country teams to move forward expeditiously and focus on producing results.

7. Further improving the coherence of the United Nations system's country operations will require consideration to be given by intergovernmental bodies to the recommendations of the High-level Panel. Recommendations thus examined are expected to include the proposal of the High-level Panel for some reform of UNDP, including its management of the United Nations Resident Coordinator system. In addition, the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, to be conducted later this year, is expected to consider a number of the substantive issues resulting from the recommendations contained in the report of the High-level Panel.

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