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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: reports of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/ United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the World Food Programme

Report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and of the Executive Directors of the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services to the Economic and Social Council

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolutions 56/201, 59/250 and 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy reviews of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

The report highlights progress, achievements and challenges in the last year of the triennial comprehensive policy review cycle, and takes stock of relevant studies and reports, including the independent evaluation of Delivering as One, in advance of the 2012 quadrennial comprehensive policy review process.

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report and transmit it to the Economic and Social Council, together with the comments and guidance provided by delegations.

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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Funding for operational activities of the United Nations development system	3
III. Contribution of United Nations operational activities to national capacity development and development effectiveness	3
IV. Improved functioning of the United Nations development system	8
V. Follow-up	11
VI. Recommendation	11

I. Introduction

1. The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. It follows from previous reports to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). It may be read in conjunction with the annual reports of the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Directors of UNFPA and UNOPS to the Executive Board. Those reports provide analyses of the programme achievements against key results of the 2008-2013 strategic plans of UNDP and UNFPA, the 2010-2013 strategic plan of UNOPS, and statistical evidence of programme results, cross-sectoral strategies and performance indicators on management and operations. This document reflects consultations held among UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

II. Funding for operational activities of the United Nations development system

2. Contributions to UNDP and its associated funds and programmes totalled \$5.11 billion in 2011. Contributions to regular (core) resources reached \$975 million. This represented an increase of 1 per cent from 2010 figures. Other (non-core) contributions to UNDP reached \$4.08 billion in 2011, compared to \$4.31 billion in 2010. This decrease is attributable mainly to programmes in countries with special development situations. Contributions for such programmes dropped by 30 per cent to \$1.17 billion, from \$1.66 billion in 2010.

3. In 2011, contributions to UNFPA totalled \$929 million, representing an increase of \$52 million, or 6 per cent, from 2010. The breakdown of the total revenue (i.e., contributions, interest and other revenue) included \$484 million for regular resources and \$445 million for other (non-core) resources. UNFPA devotes the largest share of its core resources to actions that expand access to or improve the quality of reproductive health care, including maternal health. In 2011, these expenditures totalled \$159 million.

4. As a self-financing entity implementing projects on behalf of partners, UNOPS implemented \$1.06 billion in projects on behalf of its partners in 2011, down 16 per cent from the record levels achieved in 2010. While the overall volume of work of UNOPS decreased, its work in the lowest-income countries and in areas affected by conflict increased from \$490 million in 2010 to \$512 million in 2011.

III. Contribution of United Nations operational activities to national capacity development and development effectiveness

Capacity-building and development

5. Capacity development is a key strategy for the fulfilment of the UNDP and UNFPA mandates reflected in their strategic plans. In recent years, UNFPA and UNDP have worked to build the capacities of programme countries to use development aid more effectively, guided by the principles of national ownership,

harmonization, alignment, managing for results and mutual accountability. Support to national partners is aimed at strengthening their institutions and improving their ability to define their development goals and to implement development plans that respond to their country contexts. The work of UNOPS in strengthening government capacities for procurement and supply chain management supports these efforts. Where possible, UNOPS has also implemented partners' projects using local labour to help boost the capacities and economies of communities.

6. Challenges remain with regard to measuring the results of investment in capacity development. It is important that results be defined not only by the strategic priorities of the United Nations system, but also in terms of changes in institutional capacities in programme countries.

7. In addition to building the capacity of national health sectors (in particular through advice on development of national systems for sexual and reproductive health and rights, training of midwives and increasing access to maternal health care at the local level), UNFPA has focused on improving and increasing national partners' use of data on population dynamics in development strategies and plans. Capacity development of young people's networks such as Youth LEAD, the HIV Young Leaders Fund and the Youth Peer Education Network enabled youth to engage in advocacy to ensure that their rights are incorporated into public policies. Prioritizing support for national human rights protection systems, UNFPA improved the capacity of the National Human Rights Commissions of Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Sierra Leone to monitor violations of reproductive rights.

8. UNDP has in the last two years invested a significant effort in better integrating capacity development results in programmes and projects, starting with the development and roll-out of the capacity measurement framework and accompanying tools. Following the recommendations of the 2010 Evaluation of the UNDP Contribution to Strengthening National Capacities, and Executive Board decision 2011/14 on the midterm review of the strategic plan in 2011, the capacity development tracker was introduced in December 2011 to systematically assess how capacity development is integrated in the project planning of UNDP. A number of country offices reported clear improvements in capacities and/or measurable improvements in the performance of institutions and systems. In Timor-Leste, for example, UNDP supported the justice sector, the National Parliament, electoral management bodies and the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice. The latter reported 24 per cent improvement in staff knowledge of women's rights, and public access to the offices was improved by 7 per cent, to 53 per cent. The National Parliament significantly advanced its legislative agenda in 2011, including through three new electoral laws for the 2012 election.

9. In 2011, UNOPS provided Governments with a range of capacity development services, from the training of personnel in project management to establishing and strengthening the capacity of offices for programme and project management. UNOPS also supported Governments in developing and strengthening physical infrastructure at the local and national levels through capacity development, including onsite training for engineers and workers, workshops on international procurement rules for local entrepreneurs, and direct training of staff from state ministries of physical infrastructure.

South-South cooperation

10. South-South cooperation is an increasingly important driver of development, as well as of development effectiveness. In response to the welcome increase in South-South interactions, the formulation of the next UNDP strategic plan includes measures to make South-South cooperation more central to UNDP work and inter-bureau South-South cooperation exchanges increased in 2012. Engagement with emerging economies has resulted in a number of innovative partnerships seen in the establishment of Southern centres of excellence in Brazil, India, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Turkey. These centres orchestrate work on poverty reduction, public service, human development and private sector development while scaling up access to Southern knowledge and expertise across countries at varying levels of development. UNDP supported the high-level meeting held on the theme “Towards Country-led Knowledge Hubs” in Indonesia in 2012 to foster knowledge sharing at the strategic policy level. UNDP also supported the fourth annual Global South-South Development Expo in Rome in December 2011, showcasing Southern-led development solutions to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

11. In 2011, UNFPA country offices reported 184 South-South cooperation initiatives, including those on capacity development and knowledge sharing. The initiatives that take a strategic and long-term approach aim to establish and strengthen sustainable and formal partnerships among Governments, civil society, the private sector and academic institutions. In the Asia and the Pacific region, a trilateral long-term partnership between Indonesia, the Philippines and UNFPA focuses on family planning in Muslim communities and involves civil society. Another regional partnership seeks to bring the issue of sex selection onto the international agenda and policy priorities of Governments; it includes countries experienced in this area such as China, India, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam. Building on South-South cooperation, the UNFPA country office in Brazil aims at establishing a global consortium of population institutions for exchange and dissemination of knowledge and best practices and for capacity-building.

12. At the global level, UNOPS has facilitated exchanges between countries to provide beneficial assistance and expertise: in Nigeria, UNOPS is implementing a World Bank-funded project to strengthen the capacity of national energy sector professionals through a training programme delivered by the Government of India. UNOPS supported the two Governments by designing and organizing training courses, recruiting trainers, facilitating links between institutions and monitoring and reporting on training performance.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment

13. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS continue to make steady progress in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in all of their thematic areas at the country, regional and global levels, recognizing that these are major factors for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development, and that investment in women has a multiplying effect on all Millennium Development Goals, not just those that are directly gender-related.

14. Last year, UNFPA exceeded most of its targets in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment, including the proportion of countries with reproductive rights incorporated into the national human rights protection system. UNFPA placed a stronger emphasis on addressing the reproductive rights of adolescent girls,

including as a measure to prevent adolescents' exposure to sexual violence and unintended pregnancies. In Thailand, UNFPA cooperated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization to link work on teenage pregnancies to prevention of unsafe sexual behaviours and gender-based violence, particularly with reference to HIV. UNFPA has also continued efforts towards the abandonment of female genital mutilation, in particular through a joint programme with UNICEF being implemented in 15 African countries. UNFPA country offices provided support to national action plans on gender-based violence. In occupied Palestinian territories, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health to draft and pilot guidelines for health providers on how to respond to cases of gender-based violence. In Central America, comprehensive intervention models to address sexual violence have been developed and implemented.

15. UNDP mainstreams gender across its five practice areas and works closely with national Governments and with other United Nations entities in areas with complementary mandates. In 2011, it expanded its Gender and Economic Policy Management Initiative to support policymaking in Africa and in Asia and the Pacific. Advisory services were provided to a range of country offices on the design of social protection programmes, safety nets and employment generation programmes, in order to ensure that they would address the needs of both women and men. In terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in democratic governance, UNDP worked to strengthen women's legal rights and access to justice. More than 20 electoral management bodies around the world were supported to address the needs of women candidates and voters. Two initiatives were launched to support women's political empowerment: one to promote women's participation in political parties, and the other a study on gender equality in public administrations around the world.

16. In 2011, 31 per cent of UNOPS-supported projects aimed at improving gender equality and the empowerment of women. Projects included either specific "gender deliverables" in the original design or elements to empower women, including through job creation and direct training. A number of projects boosted women's access to social services and opportunities, building facilities to enable girls and women to receive justice, education and health care, such as the design of a new women and children protection unit in the Monrovia police headquarters, on the behalf of UNDP and the Government of Norway.

17. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS work closely with United Nations country teams at the national levels, often in close cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Thematic collaboration has focused on system-wide priorities such as the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. However, strengthened, accelerated and systematic efforts are needed globally and nationally for engendering national and legal development frameworks in order to tackle remaining challenges to furthering women's empowerment, such as the lack of implementation and enforcement of national policies related to women's rights and the fact that marginalized women and girls are still disproportionately discriminated against.

Transition from relief to development

18. The impact of recent events in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, along with increasing numbers of natural and conflict-related disasters, have highlighted the need for close coordination between development, security, political and humanitarian actors. UNFPA, UNDP and UNOPS have developed programmes to integrate disaster preparedness, and prioritized systems optimization as a basis for ensuring that humanitarian, early recovery and development actions are mutually reinforcing and build long-term resilience.

19. In the Sahel region, UNDP, UNFPA and other development partners have worked with regional humanitarian actors to develop a regional strategy for resilience, which seeks to strengthen advocacy, resource mobilization and support to national and regional leadership. Integration of a development approach into humanitarian action during the initial phase of response to a crisis enables disaster-affected communities to recover faster and allows Governments to rapidly restore livelihoods and resources that are critical for sustainable recovery. This integration has also been critical in the Arab region for addressing immediate humanitarian needs and advancing sustainable socio-economic progress and people-centred development under the transformation process.

20. UNDP and UNFPA country programmes recognize the importance of strengthening local and national capacities as the basis for transition. Mitigating risks to populations during transition requires that UNDP and UNFPA increase investment in sub-national and national capacities for early warning and disaster preparedness and response. UNDP and UNFPA see transition to sustainability as founded on building the resilience of communities, especially women who are the most vulnerable, and supporting institutions that enable them to cope with and recover from shocks. The continued roll-out of the second generation UNFPA humanitarian response strategy has resulted in integration of disaster preparedness into country development programmes, elevating the level of disaster preparedness in 44 country offices and increased partners' capacity-building initiatives.

21. In South Sudan, UNDP and UNFPA have worked with partners to develop an approach that envisions a graduated shift from directly providing life-saving services to working under the leadership of and in partnership with national authorities as they develop systems and capacities. While support for the National Health Training Institute in training community midwives was facilitated by UNFPA, partnership with the Police Service and the Prison Service in establishing the rule of law was facilitated by UNDP. During the acute phase of the Libya crisis, UNFPA participated in inter-agency missions to address the reproductive health and protection needs of women, including provision of psycho-social assistance.

22. UNOPS continued work in supporting United Nations entities and Governments in conflict-afflicted areas. UNOPS conducted rapid infrastructure needs assessments in post-conflict and post-disaster environments, and supported Governments and development partners in conducting efficient and transparent procurement activities in conflict-affected areas. UNOPS increased its operations delivery in conflict areas to 48 per cent in 2011, from 39 per cent in 2010.

23. To ensure more effective support of transitions from relief to development, UNDP and UNFPA continue to strengthen joint needs assessments and situation analysis, including conflict/disaster analysis, and the design of programmes that

build resilience and enhance the capacity of communities to better prepare for and recover from shocks.

IV. Improved functioning of the United Nations development system

Coherence, effectiveness and relevance: country-level processes and instruments for enhanced coherence

24. In 2011, UNDP and UNFPA provided support to United Nations country teams in Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea for defining capacity development and other results during their strategic planning exercises. UNFPA is chairing the United Nations Development Group High-level Group to improve the minimum standard operating procedures for United Nations country teams that are voluntarily adopting the Delivering as One approach by the end of 2012, focusing on: (a) One Programme; (b) One Budgetary Framework/Fund; (c) One Leader; (d) One Voice; and (e) One Office. Technical task teams have been created under each group to provide concise and systematic approaches to challenges in each area.

25. At the country level, UNDP and UNFPA continue to progressively adopt common programmatic, financial and operational processes with partner organizations. For instance, in Botswana, UNFPA led the development of a middle-income country strategic plan, which entails common programmatic engagement and resource mobilization within a country team. In Cameroon, under UNFPA leadership, the Government agreed to engage in a joint 2011 annual review and 2012 planning process with UNDP, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. In Cape Verde, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF have fully integrated their programme and financial procedures, including the harmonized approach to cash transfers and common audit and resource mobilization.

26. The 2012 independent evaluation of Delivering as One noted the contributions to coordination and coherence made by the Delivering as One pilots and suggested areas where further action was needed, such as full compliance with the Management and Accountability System of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System by all United Nations organizations and further exploration of mechanisms that showed initial positive results, such as the One Voice model. UNDP and UNFPA cooperated in the development of a management response to the recommendations contained in the independent evaluation. As part of the response, the United Nations Development Group catalogued some actions that are already part of the ongoing work of its members, while noting that others, such as the use of a common One Budgetary Framework, were systemic or legislative issues that required further action by Member States.

Resident coordinator system

27. Both the independent evaluation of Delivering as One and the report of the Secretary-General on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (E/2012/79) noted that recent reforms have strengthened the efficacy of resident coordinators, although challenges remain, such as full mutual accountability between resident coordinators and members of United Nations country teams.

28. UNFPA and UNDP have fully complied with the recommendations of the Management and Accountability System of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System. Resident coordinator annual reports have improved, focusing more fully on the achievement of results and outcomes, and on wider and more inclusive training for resident coordinators. Both UNDP and UNFPA have also participated in the review process for funding modalities for the Resident Coordinator system currently under way in the context of the United Nations Development Group. UNDP and UNFPA recognize that funding for coordination is increasingly seen as a responsibility of the United Nations system itself, and are exploring burden sharing and other internal funding modalities to support coordination, while cooperating with government partners to ensure that predictable funding is available as progress on this issue continues.

29. UNOPS and UNFPA have encouraged senior staff to undertake the resident coordinator assessment in order to qualify for assignment as resident coordinators, and UNFPA has hosted external applicants for the resident coordinator assessment. UNOPS has continued to increase its participation in United Nations country teams and, where possible, in the development of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, working closely with resident coordinators.

Regional dimensions

30. UNDP and UNFPA continue to participate in regional initiatives of the United Nations Development Group through its regional teams. In the management response to the independent evaluation of Delivering as One, UNDP and UNFPA committed to enhancing support to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams through demand-driven advisory services and input to country-level programming with regard to the regional and subregional dimensions of national development goals, in partnership with both United Nations Development Group regional teams and the Regional Coordination Mechanisms of the United Nations regional commissions.

31. UNFPA and UNDP are also continuing to expand their regional cooperation networks to include a greater number of academic and technical institutions. The UNDP southern centres of excellence have sought to expand the number of regional initiatives in which they participate or lead. The number of regional initiatives and activities has increased, particularly in middle-income countries, and UNFPA is supporting them through its regional offices. UNFPA and the Governments of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and the Plurinational State of Bolivia developed and began implementing a regional plan in 2011 to prevent adolescent pregnancies. In September 2012, UNDP and the League of Arab States signed a cooperation agreement creating a framework for joint work in support of human development across the Arab region. In 2011, UNOPS helped finalize 2 strategic action programmes and implement 65 demonstration projects as part of its international waters portfolio, including sustainable management of the Caspian Sea through strengthened regional governance.

Transaction costs and efficiency

32. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS support the harmonization of business practices in the areas of procurement, finance and budget, information and communication technology, and human resources management, including through the United

Nations High-level Committee on Management. The Joint Funding and Business Operations Network of the United Nations Development Group produced a guidance note on developing the United Nations business operations strategy in 2012; both UNDP and UNFPA participated in the preparation of the note. The business operations strategy is a voluntary framework focusing on joint business operations. It was developed in close cooperation with United Nations country teams, allowing them to take a strategic, results-oriented approach to planning, management and implementation of harmonized business operations at the country level. Its adoption is still under consideration by the United Nations Development Group, and currently being discussed by the High-level Group to improve minimum standard operating procedures led by UNFPA.

33. The agenda for organizational change launched by UNDP in 2011 calls for a number of significant reforms to business processes, particularly in human resources management and procurement. Recruitment time for international staff appointments has been reduced by at least six weeks; procurement review processes have been simplified; and the threshold for items considered “small purchases” has been raised to \$5,000, making 70 per cent of all UNDP transactions subject to informal procurement methods.

34. In the light of the effect of the global financial crisis, UNFPA is reassessing its cost structures and business model — encouraging innovation, simplified administrative processes, the use of new technologies, novel partnerships with the private sector and greater flexibility in operations. The main objective of these efforts is to ensure cost-effective performance, delivering greater value for money.

Country-level capacity of the United Nations development system

35. UNFPA and UNDP were active members of the Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre steering committee working on the revision of the Resident Coordinator competency framework, as well as on the selection of the Resident Coordinator Assessment Centre provider and the provider of the One80 Assessment of United Nations country team members. UNFPA leads the Working Group on Resident Coordinator System Issues task team on performance assessment and explores the ways to improve the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator/designated official and the United Nations country team performance appraisal system. The objective is to simplify the performance appraisal processes, as well as improve their coherence.

36. UNFPA and UNDP have established partnerships with various leading academic and specialized institutions to strengthen the capacity of staff in operational, technical and programmatic areas. UNFPA, for example, has partnered this year with the Cranfield University School of Management and the PDI Ninth House for the LEAD UNFPA leadership programme.

Evaluation of operational activities for development

37. During the reporting period 2010-2011, the Evaluation Office of UNDP emphasized coverage and enhanced methodological rigour of independent evaluations. The Evaluation Office conducted 11 assessments of development results and 4 thematic evaluations that will be finalized in 2012. The Evaluation Office has amended the *UNDP Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results* and the Programme and Operations Policy and Procedures

in partnership with the UNDP Operations Support Group and the Bureau for Development Policy.

38. UNFPA achieved 100 per cent coverage of end-of-country programme evaluations and issued a handbook on how to conduct a country programme evaluation to support improvement of the quality of evaluations. UNFPA also enhanced the use of evaluation results by establishing a programme review committee, which ensures that development of country programmes takes into consideration evidence from country programme evaluations. Furthermore, UNFPA promoted the use of the mandatory management response tracking system, which tracks the preparation and the implementation of follow-up to evaluation recommendations.

V. Follow-up

39. UNFPA, UNDP and UNOPS look forward to the new cycle of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which will be adopted in 2012 and will be launched in 2014. UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS will seek to increase the harmonization of their planning processes in 2014, responding to the stipulations of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

VI. Recommendation

40. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report and transmit it to the Economic and Social Council, together with the comments and guidance provided by delegations.
