



ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment

Dialogue with the Executive Heads of the United Nations Funds and Programmes

**Partnership with UN organizations and other development actors:
strategies, mechanisms,
value-added and sustainability**

Presentation of

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Distinguished delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today and to participate in this important dialogue because the global challenges are too many and too complex for any one actor to tackle alone. It is only by working together in partnerships that we can accelerate progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development objectives.

United Nations' engagement with multiple partners has increased in recent years upon recognition that working in partnership indeed is the most effective way to achieve results. All actors have something to bring to the table and the UN needs to work with all partners, governments, civil society and the private sector, to achieve defined national results.

One important strategy for forging cooperation among developing countries is South-South cooperation. It is based on the premise that countries that face common challenges and seek to achieve common goals can be better positioned to achieve the goals through shared learning, management of knowledge and expertise and mutual support. It is thus increasingly recognized by both developing and developed countries as a realistic way to promote national and regional expertise. Building on triangular cooperation would move implementation even further and expand new opportunities.

Partnership with Governments

As an intergovernmental organization, the United Nations partnership with governments at global, regional and national levels is a natural expression of shared mutual responsibility for human progress and development.

At the global level our partnership with governments is about having a constant dialogue with all member states to agree on developmental priorities, norms and standards as well as advocating for both financial and technical support for their delivery.

At the regional level, the UN system is coalescing resources together to respond to critical needs at the country level, and also to collaborate with regional organizations and fora in formulating policies, supporting and implementing regional programmes to respond to challenges with regional dynamics, knowing well that the direct impact will also be at the country level. For all of us, the capacity to forge regional partnerships is critical, as regional organizations are increasingly active in the entire spectrum of development. This is why UNFPA is focused on boosting regional capacity and establishing regional networks of knowledge and expertise to strengthen support to country programmes.

At the national level, it is clear that governments lead and own their development objectives and plans. It is governments that set the priorities and own the achievement of their nationally defined results.

Partnership with civil society

National ownership does not only mean government ownership and in our collective work to reach the MDGs, including MDG 8 on partnership for development, engagement with civil society, or the third sector as it is now called, plays a vital role in ensuring ownership of development by communities. Collaboration with civil society as an important non-state actor has been important for the United Nations since its establishment, because the first words of its Charter are “we the people.” Now more than ever, the value-added of partnerships across different sectors of society, leveraging each other’s comparative advantages, is recognized by all development actors.

A good example of UNFPA’s commitment to strategic partnership with NGOs is “Global Partners in Action: NGO Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development” It brought together over 400 NGO representatives and resulted in the Berlin call to action for the accelerated implementation of the ICPD agenda, as well as an action plan for NGOs.

This NGO Forum is a good example of how the UN can support creating a continuum among civil society organizations from different parts of the world. This includes creating opportunities for triangular cooperation to share successful experiences and to seek mutually beneficial partnerships. UNFPA has gone further and established its NGOs Advisory Panel in order to listen to the voices of civil society.

A special area where partnerships with civil society are extremely valuable for UNFPA, and others, is the engagement of faith-based organizations which provide community-based services. They along with religious leaders are important cultural agents of change, especially when they are well versed on issues of development and the changing social environment. Through genuine dialogue and partnership, we can advance our collective mission to protect and promote human rights and ensure the dignity of all human beings, without distinction. The Global Network for Faith-Based Organizations has been established in order for us at UNFPA to listen to voices of yet another civil society expression.

A third network that is relevant to UNFPA’s mandate is that of young people. With the leadership of the young people themselves, Y-Peer was established to create cooperative dynamics among the various regions and countries in areas that touch the lives of the young people- from HIV to issues of human rights in general. UNFPA also established the Youth Advisory Panel so that it can listen to the voices of young people as they provide guidance on issues that impact on their lives.

In working with civil society organizations, a balanced inclusion is needed to ensure that the diverse opinions they represent are heard. To ensure sustainability, it is vital to institutionalize the relationship so that it is not only built on personal interactions and *ad hoc* consultations.

A further challenge is that global messages do not always reach regional and national levels and vice-versa. Programmes and advocacy strategies have to be adjusted to their respective realities and this disconnect sometimes creates operational inefficiency and limits the impact of partnerships.

An ongoing concern also remains how to ensure that the partnership is mutually beneficial and sustainable. The only way to mitigate these concerns is by establishing through open dialogue clarity on the expectations of the partnership and results to be achieved.

Partnership with the private sector

In today's development work the most effective partnerships are often formed across all sectors of society and the private sector plays an increasingly important role in global development. It is becoming evident that it also makes business sense to support governments, the UN and civil society in the efforts to fight poverty and achieve the MDGs as a way of growing healthy markets that ensure equity.

Partnerships with the business sector can take many forms and corporate responsibility is seen both by the UN and the private sector as an important venue for partnership. The diverse mandates of UN entities naturally translate into differing levels and depth of engagement with the business sector.

UNFPA's experience with the business sector includes financial, programmatic and advocacy support. A good example of this is the collaboration with the international fashion retailer H&M on its Fashion Against AIDS Campaign that is providing needed financial support to Y-Peer awareness and education programmes in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

The UN Global Compact has also emerged as a valuable voluntary network for companies to enact a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and good governance. It is an example of practical partnerships between the business sector, governments, UN entities and other civil society actors. Its voluntary character sets it as an arrangement for overcoming the challenges of bureaucracy and for forging innovative and mutually beneficial relationship.

However, there remain major questions of value and standards: for example when does the UN disengage when the practices and values of its private partners are in question? How do you reconcile public interest for instance to access vital medicines and the private interest to compete and make profits? These questions must continue to be explored within a context of shared values, transparency and openness.

Partnership with other UN organizations and other actors

Partnerships among UN agencies are becoming the norm in our work because collaboration and coordination are needed to tackle intertwined development challenges. Perhaps the best known manifestation of our joint work together is the "Delivering as One" initiative but there are also many other examples of successful partnerships such as the H4+1 partnership to tackle health related MDGs and the Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign to End Violence against Women.

One should also highlight that the UN is now forging global and national partnerships across different sectors of society. One good example of a strategic partnership for development is the H8, or Health 8, partnership where four UN organizations and the Gates Foundation have joined with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and the GAVI Alliance both of which are

partnerships of the public, private and civil society. As similar example is the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

Challenges of Working Differently

Planning and delivering programmes jointly is driven by the quest for more cohesion, collaboration and enhanced effectiveness in supporting countries to achieve their development targets. The new options within the UN Development Assistance Framework have allowed governments to exercise their national choice in developing their country programmes. It further facilitated better coherence and team work, significantly better alignment with national priorities, reduction of transaction costs for governments and the UN, transparency, and better and more effective integration of cross cutting issues.

The new way of doing business has many benefits but it also poses new challenges, the most serious being the question of accountability. The current accountability and attribution system of the organizations are still agency specific and yet we have to increasingly contribute jointly towards the achievement of development results that are owned nationally. This clearly calls for more innovative results chains and attribution and review of the reporting systems to meet the emerging trends on attribution.

In funding, the key issue is the value-added of a more transparent approach to funding and budgeting as a way of keeping track of all the activities of the parts of the system. This notwithstanding, the preponderance of non-core versus core funding is a clear threat to the advantages that this approach promises. Our business practices, whether in procurement, human resources or information technologies, are the foundation for effective programming.

Partnership within the UN system in forging common platforms is therefore critical but the progress is often slow because initial costs of these initiatives are high and need to be funded promptly. Also, not all development organizations operate at the country level, and where they do, operational models may be different thus rendering practical cooperation difficult. Certainly harmonizing business practices is a must if we are to support governments by lowering transaction costs.

Conclusion

Partnerships add value to our work because a holistic approach with broad based support is more likely to succeed. The mandates of UN agencies are varied and they complement each other as do the strengths and roles of governments, civil society and the private sector.

The best way to ensure sustainability is to empower and develop the capacities of all partners especially at the national and community level. Partnership reflects our global responsibility to reach the MDGs and enhance human development, security and well-being, and the right to development requires our conscious, responsible and effective collaboration.

Thank you.