

ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment

“Strengthening the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator: role of accountability frameworks, resources and results reporting”

**Talking points of
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Introduction

Remarks centre on the role of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) in leading the UN development system in helping countries advance on their development agenda (MDGs, equity, sustainability and governance), with reference to my experience as RC in Egypt over the past five years under two somewhat different contexts.

- Pre – January 2011
- Post – January 2011

I will suggest how the current accountability frameworks, resources and results reporting arrangements – even with their shortcomings – produce relevant, strategic UN support in pursuit of important national, demand-driven development outcomes.

I hope to show that effective UN work in support of national priorities is not a “Mission Impossible”, although a little more help wouldn’t hurt!

Case I: Egypt 2009 – 2010 (i.e. prior to the uprising of Jan – Feb 2011)

Context

- Middle Income Country (albeit at low end of the spectrum)
- Experienced high rates of economic growth in recent years
- Government commitment to MDGs
- But:
 - Lack of vision
 - Unclear national priorities, poor alignment with donor priorities
 - A weak results culture
 - Declining international support (but EU and USA still exceptionally large)
- Significant development challenges, such as:
 - Poverty: 20% poor + 20% just above poverty line – 32 million persons
 - Disparities: geographic, gender and income
 - Food (in) security and serious malnutrition (micronutrient deficiency)
 - Poor quality of public services
 - New threats: climate change and avian influenza

Dilemma: declining international cooperation versus serious development issues + sense of “malaise”. End result: dissatisfaction and development ineffectiveness.

Response

In 2009, RC selected to chair Development Partner Group (34 international partners from north and south + 2 foundations). In consultation with Government and DPG, RC led the preparation of the “*Cairo Agenda for Action in Development Effectiveness*” with four deliverables:

1. Situation analysis: key development challenges
2. Prioritization by cabinet of development areas for international cooperation
3. Building national capacity for results-based management
4. Action plan on Aid Effectiveness

Results

1. Situation Analysis: completed by end 2010
 - Prepared by 30 Egyptian social scientists.
 - Extensive consultations with national and international partners and extensive use of existing development materials
 - Approved by Cabinet of Ministers, which also identified key areas for int’l partners
 - Widely acknowledged as an excellent contribution to the development dialogue, both in terms of content and preparation process
 - Being used by a variety of international development partners (including UN – substituted for Common Country Assessment) + continues to be used in national dialogue and current interim Government.
2. Capacity Development for RBM: UNDP support project prepared and approved for Ministry of Admin. Development to build it into a center of excellence in RBM – a service provider to other Government ministries.
3. Mutual Accountability frameworks: done by Govt + international partners for health and education.
4. UN System supported and benefited from the above:
 - Situation Analysis - foundation for UNDAF
 - Partnerships enhanced (government, civil society and international partners).
 - International partnerships reinvigorated (less “malaise”)

Case II: Egypt post January 2011 uprising

Situation

Uprising fueled by widespread sense of political, economic and social exclusion (especially youth), notorious cases of police brutality, fraudulent elections, widespread corruption and high unemployment Besides call for justice, protestors called – and continue to call – for a new Egypt, one characterized by “Dignity, Freedom and Social Justice”.

Transition to Democracy likely to be characterized by:

- Unpredictability
- Instability
- Long duration - due to significant gap between high expectations of citizenry versus limited capacities of state and non-state institutions. This capacity gap requires “development” - understood as the systematic building of institutional capacities (which again underscores the importance of continued engagement by development partners).

Response

Ensure UN addresses new challenges (particularly democratic governance) while continuing engagement on intractable, multi-sectoral development issues (e.g., poverty reduction, climate change). This is embodied in the “*UN Strategy in Support of Egypt’s Democratic Transition, 2011- 2012*”.

Building blocks:

- Analytical exercises done by a variety of UN agencies in recent years (National Human Development Reports, including one on Youth in 2010; UNICEF and UNFPA studies on children and population etc).
- Important steps taken by UN Egypt in recent years to work together: joint analytical work (e.g. food security); joint workshops; joint programmes (especially those funded by the Spanish MDG fund on climate change and productive employment) and others, including HIV/AIDS and work on results based management arrangement.
- Situation Analysis (see above – supported by all UN agencies in Egypt)
- UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012 – 2016, prepared in late 2010 and formally submitted to the government on 24 January 2011, with our commitment to work in five key areas.
 - Pro-poor growth – equity
 - Quality of basic services

- Food security and nutrition
- Environmental sustainability and climate change
- Democratic governance

(Note: this UNDAF anticipates themes central to the post 2015 development environment such as: Equity, Sustainability, Governance, and the importance of multi-stakeholder platforms for change).

- Secretary General and DPA: The Secretary General's statements and visits to Egypt have stressed the importance of the SCAF's adherence to the calls of the people for "Dignity, Freedom and Social Justice", including progress on human rights issues, combined with offers of support. (DPA has been supportive in fielding of an elections expert and policy advisor, both reporting to the RC).

In addition to addressing intractable development issues set forth in the UNDAF requiring long term engagement, the UNS has been responsive to newly emerging needs, such as:

- Humanitarian needs on the Libyan/Egyptian border: UNHCR/IOM with UNICEF, WFP, WHO and UNFPA.
- UN support programme for Upper Egypt. To help communities in this already poor region of Egypt cope with the socio-economic consequences of 200,000 Egyptians return from Libya + 500,000 displaced from domestic jobs.
- Up-scaling work on unemployment – especially amongst youth. (We are hoping to get significant funding to help upscale government programmes).
- Democratic Governance
 - International forum to share experiences from countries undergoing transition – south Africa, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia and others with Helen Clark and Michelle Bachelet.
 - Technical support for ongoing international dialogue
 - Reform of the police – recent joint mission by UNODC and UNDP, including strengthening the confidence between police and public.
 - Elections – providing crucial advice and support to help Egypt have elections seen as credible by the people of Egypt.
 - Anti-corruption – up-scaling support in this area in line with pronouncements of interim government.

And in terms of the HOW, this transition strategy will promote expanded UN engagement with Civil Society, universities, foundations, NGOs etc. not because it is politically correct, but rather because the development challenges facing Egypt during this extraordinarily important chapter of its history require "all hands on deck" – government, relevant national and international partners (from the North and South), rowing in unison towards the achievement of crucial development objectives.

Conclusion

My experience as RC in Egypt over the past 5 years has been a positive one. The UNS has demonstrated agility and flexibility – staying ahead of the curve as H.E. Ambassador Gonzalo Gutierrez Reinel urged yesterday.

Of course, this has only been possible due to support from the Government, other partners, past long-term investments by the UN in Egypt, a UNCT (heads of UN agencies, funds and programmes) that has been supportive and committed to “work as one UN”.

It also has been possible thanks to an outstanding RC support office – comprising five staff people that support me (RC), UN agency heads, UN staff in absolutely crucial functional business areas that often fall under the term “coordination”. These key functions are:

- Strategic planning
- Support to joint programming
- Results-based monitoring, evaluation and reporting
- UN communication - to advocate on key issues, build alliances/partnerships, and communicate our results/contributions to national development priorities.

In short, we have demonstrated that:

- development cooperation in support of complex, deep rooted, multi-sectoral issues is important and measurable progress can be made.
- The UNS – and broader development system – needs to remain engaged in MICs, which continue to face intractable development challenges.
- In MICs, the RC can help bring together national actors and the international development community around a common agenda.

Finally, with more progress on the issues being discussed today (including: streamlining of business processes; support from member states to reduce incoherence in the institutional setups of the UNS and agency strategic plans; more agency focus on supporting the delivery of results at the country level; and a bit more funding to encourage joint work (similar to the Spanish MDG fund) we can take the UNS performance from “Very Good” to “Great”.

Thank you.