

2024 Report of the Chair of the UN Sustainable Development group on the Development Coordination Office and the Resident Coordinator system

Informal summary of key findings and recommendations

- 1. The report of the UNSDG Chair on DCO and the Resident Coordinator system details the functioning of the system and results achieved in 2023 and throughout this QCPR cycle.** Five years into the implementation of the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, there is mounting evidence that the reforms have largely delivered on these expectations and the mandates that Member States set out in General Assembly resolution 72/279 and 75/233. At the same time, the report points to areas requiring further efforts improvements by the Resident Coordinator system; it also details the impact of the prolonged funding shortfall on the ability of the system to deliver on its mandate and the expectations of the General Assembly.
- 2. Resident Coordinators are marshalling tailored UN country team support and leveraging resources of diverse partners to support national efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda.** They work closely with host Governments in delivering the commitments agreed in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, to ensure full alignment with national plans and priorities. The Resident Coordinators bring together the breadth of UN entities expertise and policy resources and working with UN country teams to better tailor responses to country contexts. For the first time in 2023, 100% of UN country teams reported participation of non-resident entities in the UN common country analyses (CCA), compared to only 70% in 2019. Non-resident entities have also increased their participation in Cooperation Frameworks, from 76% in 2022 to 85% in 2023. There was also improvement on engagement with International Financial Institutions with a doubling of participation in the vast majority of common country analysis between 2020 and 2023, while their participation in Cooperation Frameworks remained relatively constant at 55 %.
- 3. Resident Coordinators are making increased use of their convening capacity, as the senior-most representative for sustainable development of the Secretary-General. They are rallying UN entities and development partners for greater impact, advancing policy shifts, forging partnerships, building pipelines of initiatives that can be taken to scale, and building national and subnational capacities, particularly in key areas for SDG acceleration.** A 2023 OIOS evaluation on Resident Coordinator leadership for policy support concluded that Resident Coordinators have effectively leveraged the breadth of UN expertise to deliver integrated policy advice and have effectively engage with senior levels of Government and development partners to enable policymaking aligned to Member State needs. This was additionally confirmed in the 2023 DESA surveys of host Governments, contributing countries and UN country team members (see summary of key statistics and feedback below).
- 4. Resident Coordinators have been critical in advancing system-wide initiatives and priorities.** In 2023, they led UN country teams to channel investments of the Spotlight Initiative to End Violence against Women and Girls in 26 countries – contributing to national capacity building that resulted in the adoption of nearly 500 laws and policies to end violence against women and girls. Moreover, 97 UN country teams reported on the System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) for gender equality, compared to 76 in 2022; and the Gender Equality Marker was applied by 91 UN country teams in 2023, compared to 43 in 2020. In addition, 94% of Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks today include a focus on youth. And 100% of UN country teams have reported on annual implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy for the third year in a row.
- 5. Resident Coordinators are also facilitating more access to pooled funding and financing for SDG solutions.** The 2023 OIOS evaluation of the Resident Coordinator system found that pooled funds are one of the most significant enabling factors for integrated policy advice at the country level. Under the leadership of Resident Coordinators, 119 UN country

teams have accessed \$268 million from the **Joint SDG Fund** for 236 joint programmes involving 31 UN entities, piloting or implementing 325 policies for SDG financing and reaching 197 million people with social benefits, to date. In 2023, Resident Coordinators have also helped to mobilize resources for country-level **pooled funds** for sustainable development, with an increase of nearly \$200 million in capitalization globally. They have steered the design and delivery of joint programmes funded by the Peacebuilding Fund in 57 countries, including 93 new programmes for a total of \$202 million. However, capitalization of pooled funds at country level remains low, and the Joint SDG Fund remains well short of the annual Funding Compact target of \$290 million, with just \$55.9 million raised in 2023.

6. **Resident Coordinators also play a key role in strengthening synergies across the UN's work**, ensuring that the efforts by different pillars of the UN better address root causes of crises and reduce drivers of humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities as foundations for sustainable development. The satisfaction of host government remains high (79%), albeit lower than last year (88%).
7. **The Development Coordination Office (DCO) will examine the reasons for areas of weaker performance with a view to improving support provided across the system. These areas** include, but are not limited to, the small decline reported in the ability of Resident Coordinators to serve as a strengthened entry point to the UN offer (from 87% in 2022 to 82% in 2023), and in the decreased perceptions of host governments that the Resident Coordinator contributed to leveraging partnerships in support of national development efforts (from 92% in 2022 to 87% in 2023). The 2023 OIOS evaluation noted that Resident Coordinators engaged with the private sector and civil society to a lesser degree than Governments – an area which DCO intends to support for further strengthening and diversification in the partnerships in the coming year.
8. **Improving accountability and transparency for results remains a high priority for the Resident Coordinator system, as well as advancing operational efficiencies thereby enabling resources to be reinvested in programmatic support to countries.**
9. The clear commitment to accountability and transparency is seen in enhanced **evaluations** of Cooperation Frameworks. As the first generation of Cooperation Frameworks near completion, 11 UN country teams concluded evaluations to inform the development of new frameworks in 2023, and 7 evaluations are now nearing finalization. For the second consecutive year, all Resident Coordinator offices produced a **UN Country Results Report** in 2023, increasing visibility of UN work in country in implementing the Cooperation Framework. The focus has now shifted to ensuring consistent quality of reports across countries and regions. The percentage of UN country teams with a **Joint Communications Strategy** aligned to the Cooperation Framework has grown since the beginning of the reforms, though a small decline was registered between 2022 (91%) and 2023 (89%) – DCO will work to reinstate a positive trend.
10. Host Governments increasingly appreciate the role of Resident Coordinators in ensuring efficient use of resources: nearly 80% perceive that Resident Coordinators minimize duplication across UN entities, compared to 71% in 2021 and 77% in 2022. Resident Coordinators have also helped advance key initiatives for more agile, efficient and effective operations. Despite complexities, the first UN **common back-office** was launched in Nairobi in 2023, serviced by UNON together with UNICEF and WFP collectively offering 101 services to over 3,500 staff from more than 60 UN entities. **Common premises** were completed in 8 countries, with an additional 43 underway. UN country team savings and operational complementarity agreed in **Business Operations Strategies** have continued to increase, notably in travel, management of common premises, internet connectivity, and satellite communication services. Overall, UNSDG entities reported an unprecedented level of efficiency gains in 2023: \$553 million – mostly from entity-specific initiatives.
11. **These results have been made possible by the investments in the development coordination function – through the capacities in DCO as well as Resident Coordinators and their offices.** The Resident Coordinator system continues to maintain a country-level focus, with 90% of staff in country and the remainder in DCO teams supporting work at the country level (3% in the regions and 7% in New York).
12. **Since 2019, DCO has completely revamped the Resident Coordinator cohort:** two-thirds of the current Resident Coordinators were appointed after the reform. DCO undertakes a robust analysis of the profile needed for each country and systematically consults the host country on the necessary profile before advertising the position. As a result, the profile of Resident Coordinators has become more diverse; Resident Coordinators are selected based on their expertise in sustainable development, and more varied professional backgrounds bringing new policy and partnerships expertise

in themes relating to SDG acceleration, such as climate change, the energy transition and the green and blue economy, development financing and digital transformation. Gender balance has been largely preserved, despite transitional fluctuations, and geographic representation has improved steadily with 54% of Resident Coordinators from programme countries compared to 41% pre-reform. Host Governments increasingly appreciate strengthened Resident Coordinator leadership, authority and impartiality, along with enhanced capacity, management skills, and a focus on common results: 91% consider the Resident Coordinator profile and skillsets appropriate to support their country's development, compared to 88% in 2020.

13. **The core capacities in Resident Coordinator offices for collective strategic planning, economic analysis, partnerships, communications, and data management and results reporting continue to demonstrate their added value in supporting Resident Coordinators and UN country teams.** In 2023, these were complemented in specific countries, in line with needs and priorities identified in the Cooperation Frameworks agreed with host Governments, through 128 Peace & Development advisors, 43 Human Rights Advisers, 3 HIV/AIDS advisors and an advisor seconded for the first time by the UN Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. These additional, specialized advisory capacities, which are not supported by the Resident Coordinator system Special Purpose Trust Fund, help to further calibrate UN country team support to country-specific contexts and demands. Countries experiencing development emergencies were also supported through rapid deployment of senior development coordination officers from DCO.
14. **Resident Coordinators and their offices continued to benefit from strategic guidance and support by DCO teams in regions and in New York.** Over the course of 2023, in support of the Chair of the UNSDG and in close partnership with UNSDG entities, DCO has been developing key analytical and programming tools to help Resident Coordinators and UN country teams to work with host countries to translate intergovernmental outcomes and UN system-wide strategies into action on the ground. DCO also provided advice and support to Resident Coordinators and Resident Coordinator offices in their efforts to broker partnerships with civil society, IFIs, the private sector, and academic institutions in support of SDG acceleration, working closely with all relevant UN entities. In 2023, DCO assumed leadership of the Joint SDG Fund Operational Steering Committee and, in 2024, will begin hosting the secretariat of the Spotlight Initiative. DCO has also been developing more innovative tools and techniques to help disseminate information on the results of the Resident Coordinator system and of UN country teams, including through the system-wide UN INFO platform. DCO has also continued to strengthen the overall Resident Coordinator system staffing, through improved geographic diversity, and building capacities through communities of practice: in 2023, it established communities focused on as the specific needs of SIDS, LDCs, and LLDCs.
15. **These overall results have been constrained by hurdles faced by the Resident Coordinator system that require attention from Member States and the UN development system.** In 2023, significant and continued resource constraints led to recruitment freezes for core positions in Resident Coordinator offices in 52 countries, with concomitant reductions in allocations from the Coordination Fund. Moreover, effective Resident Coordinator leadership also depends on consistent adherence to the respective principles, roles and responsibilities, and relationships between Resident Coordinators and UN country team members outlined in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF). However, both Resident Coordinators and UN country teams reported a decline in MAF compliance and implementation in 2023 relative to 2022 with 75% of RCs noting improvements vs. 84% in the previous year, and only 51% of UNCTs saying so (and 39% indicating it was too soon to tell) vs. 80% in 2022. In addition, system-wide commitments made through Cooperation Frameworks do not consistently translate to coordinated programming by all UN country team members in country. This requires more commitment to collective agreements particularly through better alignment and configuration of entity-specific capacities with national priorities and needs, as agreed in Cooperation Frameworks. Continuing decline in availability of sufficient and quality funding for UN development system entities and fragmented governance hamper these institutional, cultural and behavioral shifts still needed across the UN development system.

Some of these challenges can be addressed globally through improved guidance and close alignment to the Cooperation Frameworks, but others require support by Member States, including reviewing funding arrangements with the UN system to ensure they are complementary to broader reform efforts. The focus on resolving the chronic funding shortfall for the Resident Coordinator system, the new Funding Compact and the new QCPR cycle (2025-2028) all present unique opportunities to address these longstanding concerns.

Summary of key statistics and feedback

The Resident Coordinator system cohort today

- The Resident Coordinator system has 90% of staff in country, 3% in the regions and 7% in New York.
- 50% of Resident Coordinators were women by end of 2023.
- 54% of Resident Coordinators are from programme countries, compared to 49% in March 2022 and 41% pre-reform.
- The share of programme country candidates in the Resident Coordinator pool also jumped from 36% pre-reform to 46% in March 2023 and 49% in March 2024.
- Resident Coordinators hail from a wider range of UN entities (24, compared to 17 pre-reform) and an increasing number of non-UN entities (9, compared to 4 pre-reform).
- 53% of Resident Coordinator office staff (national and international) are female. Gender parity was reached at P-3, P-4 and P-5 levels; women also represent 49% of the total 334 National Professional Officers workforce today.
- 52% of international Resident Coordinator office professionals are nationals from programme countries, though the nationalities represented among them slightly decreased from 116 to 113 from 2022 to 2023.

Feedback to date

Host countries surveyed by DESA:

- 91% agree that RCs have the needed **profile and skillsets**.
- 92% say RCs effectively lead the UNCT **delivery of strategic support** for national plans and priorities, compared to 79% in 2019.
- 82% say the RC serves as a strengthened **entry point to the UN offer** – a 20% increase from perceptions in 2019.
- 85% note that RCs provided strengthened **leadership** compared to before the reform – a 23% jump from 2019.
- 84% agree that RCs displayed strengthened/increased **impartiality** vis-a-vis UN entities since 2019 – a 25% increase since 2019.
- 86% say RCs have strengthened **capacity** – an increase of 20% since 2019.
- 86% say RCs have strengthened **management skills**, compared to 79% in 2022 and 75% in 2021.
- 84% say that RC have strengthened **authority**, compared to 59% in 2019 (a 25% increase).
- 88% point out that RCs have increased focus on **common results**, compared to 60% in 2019 (a 28% jump).
- 84% report that RCs have **reduced duplications**, compared to 56% in 2019 (another 28% increase).
- 87% said RCs contributed to leveraging **partnerships** in support to national efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda and achieve the SDGs (compared to 92% in 2022 and 85% in 2020).
- 79% say RCs contributed to building stronger **synergies across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding** interventions (compared to 88% in 2022 and 77% in 2021).
- 79% note that the RC and the UNCT have **built the capacity of public institutions** for SDG acceleration.
- 94% agree that **Cooperation Frameworks** enabled them to ensure that UN activities effectively respond to national priorities (and increase from 89% since the reforms).
- 90% say **UNCTs have the right mix of capacities** to support national development efforts (from 76% since the reforms).
- 94% vs. 92% in 2022 and 88% in 2021 agreed that the UN adequately provided **evidence-based policy advice**.

Contributing countries surveyed by DESA:

- 91% in 2023 (vs. 87% in 2021) note that the RC system has scaled up collective action for the SDGs.
- 71% agree that RCs convened multi-stakeholder dialogues for policy coherence and SDG policy making.

UNCT members surveyed by DESA:

- 84% agree that RC leadership provides support for needed changes in national policies and regulatory frameworks to advance the SDGs.
- 91% agree that RCs foster coherent and strategic engagement with Government on the UN's normative agenda (compared to 89% in 2021).
- 82% confirm that RCs contributed to building stronger synergies across development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding interventions.
- 90% consider effective the support for strategic planning by the RC office – a constant figure since 2021.
- 89% consider effective the support for communications and advocacy by the RC office (an increase from 87% since 2021).
- 84% consider effective the support for data management and results reporting by the RC office (as reported in 2021, but a slight decrease from 86% in 2022).
- 79% consider effective the support for economic analysis by the RC office, compared to 62% in 2022 and a 13% jump since 2021.
- 71% consider effective the support for partnerships and resource mobilization by the RC office (as reported in 2021, but a decrease from 77% in 2022).

Independent evaluations:

2023

- The evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of **the RC system support to enabling coherent UN policy advice** found a 10% increase in the number of UNCT members who reported that RCs led on high quality integrated policy advice and enabled joint advocacy in 2023 compared to 2021.

2022

- The evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on **DCO regional teams** relevance and effectiveness attested to their importance in enabling RCs to fulfil their leadership and coordination role.
- The system-wide evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund noted the RCs' strategic role in enabling UNCTs to access the Fund's resources.
- The system-wide evaluation of the UNDS socio-economic response to COVID-19 acknowledged the role of RCs in fostering an effective UNDS response to the pandemic.
- An independent evaluation of UNFPA's engagement in UNDS reform – a first of its kind among UNSDG entities – noted that the reformed UNDS, including independent RCs, have enabled UNFPA to position its strategic priorities and leverage joint programming for results.

2021

- The evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of the **RC system contribution to country-level programme coherence**.