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Working Paper No. 5

Inter-Sectoral Approaches, National Ownership and “One UN” as Means to Achieve the MDGs:

A discussion paper based on the MDG-F multi-country experience in translating the global agenda into national action

By Gianluca Giuman, Patricia Fernandez-Pacheco, Alicia Gimenez and Deborah Sequeira

December 2013

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List of Acronyms

List of acronyms

C&A	Communication and advocacy
CPP	Conflict Prevention and Peace building
DaO	Delivering as One
DEG	Democratic Economic Governance
DPS	Development and the Private Sector
ECC	Environment and Climate Change
FSCN	Children Food Security and Nutrition
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
HQ	Headquarters
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
JP	Joint programme
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG-F	Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PMC	Programme Management Committee
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
YEM	Youth Employment and Migration
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

This discussion paper was written to contribute to the work of the *Global MDG Conference—2013: Making the MDGs Work*. The study was conducted based on the case study of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F).

The evidence we present is supported by examples from 50 countries in which the MDG-F operates as a cooperation mechanism. Its purpose is to examine the effectiveness of the mechanism designed to achieve the MDGs by: (i) promoting inter-sectoral approaches, (ii) implementing the Paris Declaration principles on a national scale (in particular, the principle of national ownership), and (iii) achieving the “One UN”.

The paper’s contents and conclusions may help: national central and territorial governments to reflect on innovative approaches and inter-sectoral programmes that can contribute to achieving the MDGs; the UN system to deepen the “One UN” process and continue to analyse the added value of coordinated interventions; and international donors to consider the appropriateness of investing in inter-sectoral and coordinated initiatives at the country level.

The paper argues that inter-sectoral approaches offer added value in many ways. Such actions can avoid overlap and duplication and increase coordination among UN sister agencies and line ministries and between the UN and national governments. Inter-sectoral approaches can also prevent competition for funds and can make positive use of the comparative advantage of each specialized development agency. Last, they can help to avoid silo behaviours and, in some cases, increase policy and aid effectiveness, simultaneously creating better conditions for long-term sustainability.

The paper argues that by targeting multi-dimensional development challenges, MDG-F programmes have helped to increase government cross-sectoral interventions. Framing complex development issues broadly has allowed people from different sectors to work toward common solutions. In several countries, evidence shows that local inter-sectoral initiatives support scaling up more coordinated national policies. According to the research, inter-sectoral actions require strong and sustained partnerships and building trust is key to developing and maintaining those connections. Furthermore, the consolidation of partnerships and platforms that the Fund promotes establishes a strong base for future collaboration among crucial development actors at the national level. Finally, inter-sectoral initiatives require strong organizational arrangements if they are to produce positive results. The governing bodies promoted by the MDG-F, the National Steering Committee and the Programme Management Committee have been essential in enabling dialogue across sectors and in redefining and refining programme implementation to ensure greater effectiveness.

The study suggests that by translating the Paris Declaration into national action, we can improve the cost-effectiveness of international cooperation. The concept of ‘national ownership’ should be applied to central government institutions and expanded to local institutions (local ownership) and civil society organizations and communities (citizen ownership). Available evidence suggests a positive trend with respect to ownership of MDG-F programmes. In many cases, national partners gradually increased their active role, shifting from passive receivers of information to active participants and leaders. At the local level, the MDG-F experience proves that the participation of local stakeholders in strategic decision-making and operational planning is critical to defining appropriate methodologies and ensuring that programmes are integrated into existing local processes.

The governance mechanisms that the MDG-F promotes are useful platforms for information sharing, engagement, coordination and dialogue. When these bodies are co-chaired by a government representative and a UN representative, they promote mutual accountability. Civil society participation in the design and implementation of joint programmes (JPs) also enables greater accountability. Participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been proven to support mutual accountability, promoting an opportunity to initiate dialogue among partners, and provide an opportunity to address challenges. Finally, citizen accountability is linked to the flow of information and decision-making ability and, as such, should be addressed in joint programmes.

The challenges that the “One UN” approach is meant to address at the country level are related to the duplication of interventions, fragmentation of UN contributions, competition for funds among UN sister agencies and uneven capacity to pursue strategic approaches. Evidence suggests that a lack of such coordination entails higher transaction costs. It undermines the efficiency of aid, decreases the possibilities of national ownership and lessens the UN contribution that supports countries in meeting their national goals.

Executive Summary

We argue that the MDG-F constitutes the first significant financial incentive to encourage interagency work on MDGs and move the “One UN” process forward at the country level. The Fund contributes to “One UN” in two key ways: (i) programmes demonstrate the shortcomings of administrative harmonization in contrast to innovative methods at the country level; and (ii) it strengthens leadership and coherence of the UN system at the country level, particularly in regards to the role of the UN Resident Coordinator.

The Colombia, Nicaragua and Philippines cases, which are presented in detail, suggest that the MDG-F provides a concrete opportunity to experiment with implementing coordinated UN interventions on the ground. It represents an important contribution to creating a practice and culture of joint intervention.

Creating this culture and practice of joint intervention among sister UN agencies will take time. The MDG-F has provided an opportunity to begin building more integrated UN Country Teams. Together with UN partners, the MDG-F has experimented with and tested various strategies, techniques and tools for improving UN coherence and efficiency and has made several recommendations on that basis. The ideal UN business model that has emerged is one in which: (i) the UN Resident Coordinator has the authority to make decisions on issues of coherence and performance; (ii) UN Coordination Offices are properly staffed to support the UNRC, the UN Country Team and joint programme partners; (iii) national implementation is the preferred modality; and (iv) national partners lead a representative governance mechanism.

Keywords:

MDG-F, inter-sectoral approaches, Paris Declaration Principles, One UN.

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1. Background

The Millennium Declaration was signed by 189 world leaders in 2000. It is a milestone in international cooperation, inspiring development efforts that have improved the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. A year later, the Declaration was translated into eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to provide a development framework and a set of development priorities serving as a focus for nations and the international community. These included halving extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, reducing child and maternal mortality, and improving education, health and sustainable development (United Nations, 2010, 2012; Kabeer, 2011).

The **United Nations MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F)**¹ is an international cooperation mechanism that aims to accelerate progress on the MDGs. The MDG-F supports national governments, local authorities and citizen organizations in their efforts to target vulnerable groups and tackle multidimensional poverty and inequalities.

The MDG-Fund was established in 2007 through a landmark agreement signed between the Government of Spain and the UN system. With a total contribution of approximately USD900 million, the MDG-Fund has financed 130 joint programmes² in eight programmatic areas (see Box 1) in **50 countries around the world**. The map on the next page shows the countries (shaded) where the MDG-F operates (see Figure 1).

Box 1: MDG-F Programmatic Areas

Children, Food Security and Nutrition: Tackling child hunger and undernutrition

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Increasing women's access to equality and opportunity

Environment and Climate Change: Reducing vulnerabilities and helping to adapt to climate change

Youth, Employment and Migration: Promoting productive and decent work for young people

Democratic Economic Governance: Democratizing access to services and utilities

Development and the Private Sector: Inclusive markets and pro-poor development

Conflict Prevention and Peace building: Fostering an enabling environment for development

Culture and Development: Protecting and enhancing cultural rights and political participation

1.1. What distinguishes the MDG-F from other international cooperation mechanisms?

The Fund has three main objectives: (i) achieving the MDGs through the use of inter-sectoral approaches; (ii) increasing aid effectiveness by enhancing national leadership and ownership of development programmes; and, (iii) promoting the "One UN"³ through joint programmes that address multi-dimensional issues.

The Fund is one of the largest time-limited international cooperation mechanisms established to help countries advance the principles embedded in the Millennium Declaration and MDGs while simultaneously encouraging the "One UN".

The Fund operates through the UN development system at the country level and finances collaborative UN activities that leverage the UN's added value in the sector and country concerned, particularly where the UN's collective strength is brought to bear on

1 www.mdgfund.org

2 Joint programmes are development initiatives that coherently coordinate a set of activities in a work plan involving two or more UN organizations and (sub)national partners. The work plan and budget forms part of a joint programme document, which also details roles and responsibilities of partners in coordinating and managing the joint activities (UNDG, n.d.).

3 "One UN" is a United Nations Development Group (UNDG) initiative launched in 2007 to allow the UN family to deliver at the country level in more coordinated fashion. The objective is to ensure faster and more effective development operations by establishing a consolidated UN presence—with a single programme, a single budget framework and an enhanced role for the UN Resident Coordinator—while building on the strengths and comparative advantages of the members of the UN family. This will reduce duplication and transaction costs so that the UN can use resources more effectively to support partner countries in achieving their development goals.

Background

multi-dimensional development challenges. The design of the MDG-F Thematic Windows responds to this rationale and draws on key expertise at selected UN agencies to identify major, inter-sectoral policy outcomes that illustrate the added value of the UN system in supporting national development priorities. The call for proposals for each thematic window is part of a competitive process in which the most relevant and highest quality proposals that include an explicit commitment from national partners receive financing.

The MDG-F supports the national and subnational implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda on Aid Effectiveness. Programmes financed by the Fund are country-led, aligned with government development strategies and policies, and include strong capacity-building components to increase national leadership.

The MDG-F promotes the “One UN” via joint programmes (JP). The Fund operates through the UN Country Teams by financing joint programmes that involve different UN organizations and national government institutions. In so doing, it seeks to strengthen inter-agency coherence and the effectiveness of the UN system at the country level (Lenci, 2011, p. 3). The MDG-F’s work builds on the expertise of over 25 UN agencies, bringing them together to make the best use of their comparative advantage.

The structure of the JPs financed by the MDG-F is based on a National Steering Committee (NSC) and a Programme Management Committee (PMC).

In most cases, they are operated by a Programme Management Unit (see Figure 2). The programmes are led by national and local partners, including national and local governments, civil society organizations, and private sector entities and are supported by UN agencies.

Another element that distinguishes the Fund’s approach is the way in which it addresses development issues at multiple levels. As described below, the Fund has successfully combined the capacity to influence national-level policies with pilot projects on the ground in most programmes. This approach has produced interesting advances by supporting the development of inclusive policies, while targeting the most vulnerable groups with ad hoc and culturally sensitive initiatives.

To promote gender equality, the Fund has established a dual strategy that involves joint programmes seeking gender equality and women’s empowerment while simultaneously mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting priority within all programmatic areas (UNDP, 2012a; UN-Women, 2013; MDG-F, UNDP and UN-Women, 2013).

This discussion paper is based on the MDG-F’s extensive field experience. The following sections focus on the three aforementioned aspects that characterize how the MDG-F works in the field. Section III addresses the development of inter-sectoral programmes to achieve the MDGs. The national and local implementation of the Paris Declaration and the promotion of alignment and ownership are discussed in Section IV. Section V focuses on the promotion of “One UN” to increase UN effectiveness on the ground. Sections VI, VII and VIII showcase the experiences of MDG-F in Colombia, Nicaragua and in the Philippines: (i) promoting inter-sectoral approaches; (ii) increasing aid effectiveness by enhancing national ownership; and, (iii) advancing the “One UN”.

Figure 1: Countries where the MDG-F operates

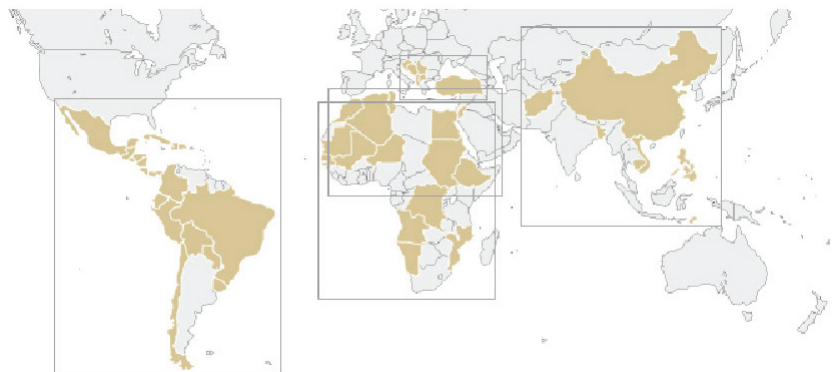


Figure 2: Joint Programme Governance Body



2. Inter-sectoral Approaches to Achieve the MDGs

Much has been written about the linkages among the MDGs. Development literature emphasizes that investments in a specific MDG reinforce the achievements of the others. Take education, for example. World Bank studies show that an extra year of secondary schooling for girls can increase their future wages by 10 percent to 20 percent, thus reducing their vulnerability to poverty. Similarly, investing in health has positive impacts on schooling and productivity. Economists believe that malaria is responsible for a growth penalty of up to 1.3 percent in some African countries, severely restraining economic growth in the region. Based on this argument, we can conclude that investing in MDG-6 will boost economic growth in the middle term (WB, 2012).

However, fewer comprehensive studies on implementing inter-sectoral approaches to achieve or accelerate the MDGs have been conducted. This section seeks to contribute to this debate, arguing that inter-sectoral approaches, such as those promoted by the MDG-F, offer different types of added value. Inter-sectoral approaches can avoid overlap and duplication among development programmes. They can increase coordination among donors and line ministries. Inter-sectoral approaches can also prevent competition for funds and make positive use of the comparative advantage of each specialized development agency. They can help to avoid silo behaviours and, in some cases, can increase policy and aid effectiveness while creating better conditions for sustainability.

The added value of inter-sectoral approaches does not presuppose that inter-sectoral action is necessarily superior to single-sector action. “The question of which approach is appropriate in a given set of circumstances is not a straightforward one. One key factor for consideration is the degree of control or influence over an intended target or outcome. If a single sector exercises complete or near-complete control over an issue, single-sectoral action may be appropriate. When multiple sectors share control over an issue, or when a sector wishes to influence a target over which it has less control, inter-sectoral action may be more appropriate” (WHO, 2008, p. III).

2.1 MDG-F inter-sectoral approaches: clues from the field

Unlike the Fund’s worldwide contributions to national ownership and the “One UN”, the added value of inter-sectoral approaches promoted by the MDG-F has not been thoroughly analysed. The conclusions that follow are based on the review of 126 mid-term evaluations, 50 final evaluations, several knowledge management products and a series of eight thematic studies commissioned by the Fund to review the work conducted in connection with its programmatic areas. The final overall MDG-F evaluation, to be carried out by an independent firm in 2013, may provide additional insights that can contribute to and improve this analysis.

1. By targeting multi-dimensional development challenges, the MDG-F’s JPs have helped to increase cross-sectoral government interventions. UN and government partners participating in the MDG-F have indicated that the Fund has successfully promoted coordination within the UN system and within governments. A remarkable finding to date has been the recognition by national counterparts, including national and local governments, ministries and local institutions, that joint programmes contribute to improved inter-sectoral dialogue among national institutions, thus increasing the possibility of taking an interdisciplinary approach to the design and implementation of development policies and programmes (MDG-F, 2011, p. 16).

The MDG-Fund [Environment and Climate Change](#) programmatic area provides an example of how increased government cross-sectoral interventions took shape in the field. It includes 17 JPs that contributed to environmental sustainability and the integration of sustainable development into country policies and programmes. JPs sought to take integrated approaches, both in dealing with the environment and development in a cohesive manner and in addressing issues at multiple policy and action levels with the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Government buy-in locally and nationally has played a pivotal role across the programmes. The programmes have improved governments’ capacity to establish and implement inter-sectoral policies that create links between natural resource management and development. In [Peru](#), local governments have mainstreamed environmental and climate change issues into community development plans and budget operational plans in participatory fashion. In [China](#), the JP supported the

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development of the Basic Energy Law⁴ and, in [Colombia](#), the National Policy on Integrated Hydrological Resources Management included strategies that the JP proposed to address climate change vulnerability and adaptation issues. Programmes also supported the development of local actions plans ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Afghanistan](#)), resulting in more efficient tools for advancing the local administration of environmental resources (MDG-F, 2013c; Onestini, 2013).

A recent study covering all the JPs falling within the programmatic area of Youth, Employment and Migration finds that “the involvement of different institutional actors and inter-sectoral dialogue also foster national ownership and motivation, at the same time strengthening policy coordination and coherence” (Salzano, 2013).

2. Approaching and addressing complex development issues by identifying the dimensions that define them allow institutions and stakeholders to work toward common solutions. In the context of the MDG-F’s programmatic areas and development challenges, an inter-sectoral frame is an appropriate platform to promote multiple stakeholders programmes, creating incentives for participation and proposing holistic responses to complex development problems.

The formulation and management of integrated youth employment, social and migration policies is an innovative area that receives MDG-F support at the country level. Many countries have had little experience with it until recently. The [Youth Employment and Migration \(YEM\)](#) programmatic area includes 15 JPs designed to work with national and local governments to improve the policy coherence of interventions targeting at-risk population groups, reduce the risks of poverty and vulnerability, and, in parallel, empower young people to achieve economic and social mobility. Since its inception, the programmatic area has called for inter-sectoral actions to address youth challenges (Salzano, 2013).

The MDG-F has achieved remarkable results by approaching the obstacles that young people face from different perspectives. We have found that increasing awareness of youth and employment issues is important to improving the understanding among institutional stakeholders, social partners and the private sector and build a consensus around integrated policies benefiting youth. Expanding the knowledge base about the challenges and difficulties facing young people can help to untangle complex phenomena and learn how to tackle them. To succeed, interventions must strengthen policies and institutional environments that embed youth employment targets within national or local development policies and planning frameworks. These broader approaches should be reinforced by tailored and multi-sectoral measures for young people such as education, vocational skills training and entrepreneurship training. Creating localized youth support services, such as One-Stop-Shops in [Costa Rica](#), Youth Employment Service Centres and Resource Centres (in [Turkey](#), the [Philippines](#) and [China](#)), has increased local capacities to provide a holistic and comprehensive response to youth needs (MDG-F, 2013b).

These YEM examples offer conclusions similar to those in reports addressing other funds’ programmatic areas. They prove the effectiveness of framing development issues broadly to promote the participation of different sectors in efforts that seek common solutions.

3. Local inter-sectoral initiatives provide evidence that supports scaling up better-coordinated national policies.

In several cases, local inter-sectoral pilot initiatives financed by the Fund have influenced national agendas. The vast majority of joint programmes combine upstream support for public policies, legislation and/or planning processes at national and local levels with downstream concrete actions involving local communities. The programmes provided valuable evidence supporting the mainstreaming of multi-dimensional local interventions intended to achieve the MDGs, promote ownership, and increase aid effectiveness and coherence.

4 The approval of the Basic Energy Law involved many sectors. Natural resources and environmental entities are necessarily included in energy-related efforts. The private sector participated in the process, as did the communities where several rural energy development strategies have been planned. An inter-sectoral approach was needed to convene different stakeholders during the discussions of the law, which was subsequently approved by the Congress.

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Building on the effort of the Government of Mauritania, the MDG-F has financed a Joint Programme that is scaling up the fight against child hunger and malnutrition in south-eastern [Mauritania](#). It is based on an inter-sectoral approach that tackles malnutrition at different levels with a wide range of interventions, from medical treatment to the promoting food security. The programme expanded a REACH⁵ initiative and approach into two regions, with an emphasis on sustainable actions for improving food security, changing feeding behaviours and strengthening the management of malnutrition. The programme involves a regional mechanism for coordination and supervision incorporated into an integrated multi-partner and inter-sector approach (Hashem, 2011; MDG-F, 2010).

In 2010, based on the programme's positive results and leveraging the REACH approach, the Government of Mauritania approved the Inter-sectoral Action Plan on Nutrition 2010-2015, which was incorporated into the four key strategies defined by the government and supported by donors including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (Fanjul, 2012, p. 6).

Cases such as this one, where a regional action promoted by the MDG-F influenced national high-level policy plans, are common and can be found in each programmatic area. In Section VII, the paper showcases how a regional experience can have a powerful impact on the national debate. The [Nicaragua](#) example demonstrates the implementation of an inter-sectoral model in the Caribbean Coast region, reducing equality gaps in the human, social and economic development of indigenous and Afro-descendant villages, increasing access to water and sanitation, and reducing chronic malnutrition among children.

4. Inter-sectoral programmes at the local level produce more visible results more quickly. Given their complexity, greater efforts and more dialogue are required to reach consensus at the national level but they may produce broader long-term impacts.

Achieving equality and empowerment for women is a challenge that requires the synergistic intervention of multiple actors. Gender equality and empowerment can be achieved through education, employment and political representation, as well as by ensuring women's access to reproductive health services. The MDG-F's [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#) programmatic area has worked at the national and local levels. "The MDG-F gender-targeted joint programmes have broken new ground at the national level," states a recent inter-agency study conducted to evaluate the Fund's dual gender strategy (MDG-F, UNDP and UN-Women, 2013). The gender programmes have conceptualized, developed and supported the first national strategy to combat gender-based violence in the [Occupied Palestinian territories](#), the first national action plan for preventing domestic and gender-based violence in [Guatemala](#), [Timor-Leste](#) and [Viet Nam](#), the first law against domestic violence in Timor-Leste, and the first action plan for coordinated implementation of existing gender-based violence laws and policies in [Namibia](#).

In [Guatemala](#), the programme supported the implementation of the National Policy for the Promotion and Development of Women (PNPDIM) and the Policy for Equal Opportunity (PEO) 2008-2023. To achieve this, the programme strengthened the capacity of the Presidential Secretary for Women (SEPREM) and the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (DEMI). These efforts enabled eight Ministries and Secretariats (including Education, Health, Economy, Labour, Agriculture and Finance) to incorporate the national policy and led to a significant increase in the SEPREM's national budget, which is expected to ensure its continuity and sustainability (MDG-F, 2013d; Rios-Kohn, 2013).

Localized programmes have also proved to be effective. A UNDP study notes, "Through the joint programmes in [Bolivia](#), [Bangladesh](#), Ethiopia and [Morocco](#), local level governments were linked more closely with communities to mobilize community groups, create safe spaces for dialogue on women's empowerment, and bring forward the issue of civil society responsibility for protection/security,

5 REACH was established in 2008 by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO) to assist governments in countries with a high burden of child and maternal undernutrition to accelerate the scaling up of food and nutrition actions. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) joined REACH later in an advisory capacity. REACH operates at the country level as a facilitating mechanism to coordinate the efforts of the UN and other partners to support national nutrition scale-up plans. REACH was originally established to strengthen UN efforts to end poverty and hunger by 2015, the first of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals.

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women's health, literacy and micro-enterprise. In some cases, community mobilization initiatives also aimed to raise awareness about the role that men and boys can play in creating more gender equal relationships at the household and local level" (UNDP, 2013, p. 18).

A programme entitled "[Leave No Woman Behind](#)" was implemented in two northern Ethiopian provinces. A mid-term evaluation (Kabuchu, 2010) found that, thanks to the carefully defined nature of the programme, beneficiaries had access, or were exposed, to most of the programme's inputs. This created a stronger sense of ownership and a deeper commitment in a shorter time. As in the Ethiopia example, the [Bolivia Gender Equality programme](#) involved a small number of UN partners and similar subnational aims. Activities in both programmes were linked to control of economic resources and raised awareness about women's human rights and improving the status of women in the family and community. Both cases showed considerable buy-in at the local level. Both programmes used community-level pilot projects as a modality. Evaluations showed that the programme faced increased challenges to maintaining subnational initiatives that depend on strong national government ownership for continued financial and political support (Ibid, 2013, p.7).

We will return to this interesting national/local debate in Section VI when we deal with the case of [Colombia](#).

5. Inter-sectoral actions require strong and sustained partnerships. Building trust is key to developing and maintaining inter-sector partnerships (Waddell and Brown, 1997; Kalegaonkar and Brown, 2000).

Partnership has been considered a crucial enabling factor since the international community's first steps toward implementing an agenda to achieve the MDGs. MDG-8 reflects this spirit and calls for mutual responsibility. A UNDP study (Jahan, 2003) seeks to explain why partnership is so important to achieve the MDGs and suggests the following: (i) partnership is required to achieve the MDGs because the task is too complex for a single development actor; (ii) partnership creates the conditions allowing partners with diverse expertise and experience to bring different added value to the processes; and (iii) partnerships provide forums for improving intra- and inter-sectoral coherence and coordination toward attaining the MDGs (ibid., 2003, p. 13-14).

Building trust and consolidating strong partnerships can be particularly challenging in fragile states in conflict or post-conflict situations. The MDG-F has financed 20 [Conflict Prevention and Peace Building](#) (CPPB) programmes, supporting interventions that focus on conflict prevention and violence reduction, mitigation of youth violence, and fostering dialogue and equity. In the case of programmes promoting citizen security, building strong partnerships among the state, local governments, civil society and the private sector has been crucial. This approach has improved national citizen security policies in [Costa Rica](#), [El Salvador](#) and [Guatemala](#). A key finding of the CPPB work is that "ensuring that programmes create mechanisms to bring local actors together for dialogue and co-operation helps build trust and social cohesion as well as the resilience of communities" (MDG-F, 2013e).

6. Consultative processes to create buy-in from national actors are critical. Inclusive governing bodies that guarantee mutual accountability and shared responsibility during implementation must be created to manage inter-sectoral programmes.

Multiple actors must be brought together to build a strong case for joint action. To build consensus, public concern must be raised around an issue. Spaces and gatherings must be created so that relevant national actors can participate in an open dialogue. The governing bodies promoted by the MDG-F—the National Steering Committee and the Programme Management Committee—have been essential to creating a space for cross-sector dialogue and redefine and fine-tune programme implementation for greater effectiveness.

A recent study that reviewed the Joint Programme mechanism established by the undg notes, "JPs are particularly relevant to deal with important horizontal issues (gender based violence, youth social and economic integration, climate change, governance, environment, others)" (Downs, 2013). Based on the MDG-F experience, citizens and local governments should be included in programmes' governing bodies. This strengthens ownership and accountability and will be examined further in the next section.

7. National monitoring and evaluation systems must be strengthened to monitor the process and outcomes of inter-sectoral programmes. Stronger M&E national systems increase national actors' capacity to successfully implement inter-sectoral

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programmes and use the lessons learned to influence national policy processes.

The MDG-F's M&E system was designed to respond to the information needs of a wide array of actors, including donors, partner governments, UN agencies, and citizens. These stakeholders have different interests and preferences for using the information that the system captures and analyses. That information can be grouped into the following categories: sound management, mutual accountability, learning and knowledge creation (MDG-F, 2012a).

In consultation with the main stakeholders, the MDG-F Secretariat developed several tools to capture the information and evidence produced by the Fund, including biannual monitoring reports, thematic indicators and mid-term, final, thematic and global evaluations. MDG-F mid-term evaluations were designed as rapid processes (three months on average) with a dual focus: to improve joint programme coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness and to collect information to measure progress toward results. The MDG-F Secretariat has completed 126 mid-term evaluations that have been used to develop an equal number of improvement plans for each JP. This mechanism provided programmes the opportunity to reflect on strategies that deliver positively on commitments and adjust their work plan for the second phase of implementation.

Box 2: The Principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

- **Ownership:** Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and coordinate development actions.
- **Alignment:** Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures.
- **Harmonization:** Donors' actions are more harmonized, transparent and collectively effective.
- **Managing for results:** Donors and partners manage and implement aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision making.
- **Mutual accountability:** Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

3. Alignment, Ownership and Leadership: Increasing Aid Effectiveness and Sustainability

The MDG-F has sought to translate the Paris Declaration⁶ into national programmes and actions in the 50 countries where the mechanism operates, thereby increasing the alignment of interventions with countries' national development strategies and helping to strengthen their capacities.

3.1 Increasing alignment

In two regional workshops held in 2011,⁷ the MDG-F Secretariat discussed with governments and UN partners the conceptualization of national ownership as the fundamental component of national capacity development and sustainability of results and its practical application in programme design and implementation.

6 The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) is based on principles of ownership, harmonization, alignment, results and mutual accountability (see Box 2). The High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness considers these principles as key to improving the effectiveness of international cooperation. The MDG-F adopted the directions established in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) as the foundations of its development work.

7 The MDG-F Secretariat organized two regional workshops in June 2011. The first was held in Cartagena, Colombia, for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The second was held in Casablanca, Morocco, for Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Arab States. The two workshops drew nearly 400 participants, including high-level government representatives, UN Resident Coordinators, UN coordination officers, monitoring and communications specialists and joint programme coordinators.

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The systematization of the knowledge shared during the workshops indicates that the MDG-F has established interesting mechanisms to ensure alignment in the programme design stage that other cooperation initiatives⁸ could use. The lessons learned have relevant policy implications: (i) MDG-F procedures require wide-ranging consultation at the country level and the official endorsement of the lead national institution before the JP is approved. This has proven critical to ensuring that JPs align with national government policies, while enhancing the relevance of activities at the local level; (ii) To ensure continued relevance, the MDG-F has adopted flexible procedures for substantive and financial revisions during implementation. Several JPs have made such revisions in response to design shortcomings or to shifting priorities resulting from changes in government or other contextual factors. The available evidence suggests that it is important to strengthen monitoring systems, which should ensure that activities and results are relevant and can achieve the expected outcomes throughout the programme implementation phases.

3.2 MDG-F contribution to national ownership

The UN considers that promoting ownership involves the appropriation of development processes by the entire society and not exclusively by duty-bearers. “We can identify two other components — beside central government ownership — that are critical for greater countrywide legitimacy and commitment: (a) local government ownership and (b) civil society ownership”⁹ (Lenci, 2011, p. 4).

The guiding principles of the MDG-F are based on this broader understanding of national ownership. The MDG-F supports national governments and local institutions, while creating strong incentives for civil society engagement and private sector participation. The MDG-F has focused on ensuring national ownership, respecting country leadership and supporting capacity building for such leadership. To ensure that policies truly respond to nationally shared necessities, in most countries the Fund has promoted the formulation of plans, laws and policies based on broad consultative processes. The Fund was also involved in creating mechanisms allowing citizens to discuss, participate in decision-making processes and hold the government accountable.

“Through the setting-up of councils and committees involving public authorities and non-profit stakeholders, JPs have contributed to increased accountability and distributed leadership and responsibilities among different actors. This is shown in examples such as [Namibia’s National Steering Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage](#), involving cultural and educational institutions, private sector actors and civil society organizations, which should contribute to inventorying and safeguarding intangible heritage assets and promoting long-term partnerships; and [Ethiopia’s Steering Committee on Shared Cultural and Religious Values](#), including policy-makers and academics, who were selected following a participatory workshop, and which was seen to contribute to a common understanding and language among different cultural and religious groups and to identify weaknesses. These developments should provide the basis for sustainability beyond the JP’s lifetime” (Baltà Portolés, 2013).

The MDG-F experience provides critical lessons for ensuring ownership during programme implementation. It represents a platform for political and technical dialogue among different national stakeholders and the UN system at the country level. The available evidence suggests that programme ownership has become stronger among national partners. In many cases, they gradually assumed an increasingly active role, shifting from passive receivers of information to active participants and leaders. In addition, as anticipated in Section III, national counterparts recognize that programmes are contributing to improved inter-sectoral dialogue among national institutions, thus fostering an interdisciplinary approach to the design and implementation of development policies and programmes.

8 The following findings are drawn from the discussion paper: “The MDG-F Contribution to National Ownership and UN Reform: Some key Issues and Challenges”. Lenci Sergio (2011).

9 Lenci proposes several indicators to measure national ownership that are inspired by this broader approach: (i) leadership of national and local counterparts, expressed in strategic, administrative and operational decision making; (ii) engagement of national and local stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes; (iii) citizen demands for continuity of processes launched or supported through the JP; (iv) the amount of co-financing from national and local governments, cash or in-kind; (v) government replication or scaling up of pilot initiatives launched under the JP; and (vi) engagement of national institutions in inter-sectoral dialogue around MDG-related issues that the JP addresses.

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Different degrees of national ownership are seen in the area of implementation. In [El Salvador](#), a [Development and the Private Sector](#) programme “succeeded in capturing the attention of senior policymakers with a carefully targeted set of reforms in land tenure and banking. In [Serbia](#), the government has taken ownership of the rural tourism sector. The programme developed a National Rural Tourism Master Plan and submitted it to the government; in doing so, the JP managed to get the subject of rural tourism firmly on the policy agenda, in terms of economic diversification. The Ethiopian oil seed programme’s objectives and implementation modality fit the Ministry of Industry’s agro-industry strategy so well that the programme has been seen as an opportunity for the Ministry to turn several of the key recommendations of its agro-industry master plan into concrete interventions” (MDG-F, 2013f).

[China’s Youth Migration and Employment](#)’s JP is a remarkable example of how scaling up pilot interventions allows national ownership to expand programme impact. The final programme evaluation suggests “a high degree of ownership of the YEM programme’s achievements by national and local level partners, while the majority of stakeholders had been involved in consultations on the various activities. Some interventions, for example, life skills training and one-stop community service centres have already been extended beyond the pilot areas to other regions with government support and resources. The China Employment Training Technical Instruction Centre has introduced Life Skills training to 200 rural labour model counties” (Meng, 2012, p. 44). The prospects for policy-level sustainability are very positive. The formation of the policy recommendations on social inclusion, female domestic workers and the Young Volunteers Caring for Migrant Children should have a positive long-term impact, particularly as the Chinese government anticipates policy reforms in these areas. Similarly, the Young Volunteers Caring for Migrant Children action has already been expanded and the entrepreneurship training proved to be a successful capacity-building process for local government departments. The training enabled Cangzhou to submit a successful application to become one of the first three Building Up an Entrepreneurial City pilot projects in Hebei Province. Financial support from the provincial government will be available in the future to further promote entrepreneurship training (ibid., 2012).

3.3 MDG-F contribution to local and citizen ownership

The actual participation of local stakeholders in strategic decision making and operational planning has proved critical to better defining the most appropriate methodologies for implementing activities and ensuring that they are integrated into existing local processes. Various solutions have been adopted to address this challenge. Some JPs created Local Working Groups to complement the Programme Management Committee. Other Programmes decentralized the PMC meetings in the intervention areas to establish stronger links between the national and the local levels. It is important in this regard to ensure a regular flow of information among the different Programme governance levels.

A recent independent study commissioned to review the results and the lessons learned from the Youth, Employment and Migration programmatic area states:

“The Joint Programmes have shown that national and local leadership is of the essence for realizing outputs and improving the sustainability of results. Governments at national, regional and municipal levels more readily assume ownership and responsibility when they feel that initiatives build on their existing visions, strategies and institutional frameworks. In these cases, there was a significant increase national commitment to programme outcomes and the ownership of the policy, procedural and legislative changes initiated” (Salzano, 2013).

The improvement of local ownership and citizen ownership has been developed specifically in the [Democratic Economic Governance \(DEG\)](#) programmatic area. The 11 JPs in this area have been planned and implemented to enhance access to, and provision of, services by utilities, increasing their efficiency and affordability. The Joint Programmes have achieved positive results in terms of enhancing the capacity and ability of the poor to participate in and influence reform and policy development processes. Most Joint Programmes focused on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, resulting in: increased women’s participation and leadership in water projects ([Angola](#)); active participation of women and community youth groups in Municipal Management Boards ([Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)); priority to the participation of ethnic minorities, indigenous and Afro-descendant groups ([Nicaragua](#)); and increased

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leadership by women ([Guatemala](#)). Valuing and incorporating cultural diversity has also facilitated the participation and inclusion of beneficiaries and their knowledge in development processes (Indij, 2013).

“Local development and decentralized models evidence show that operations implemented at local level may be particularly well-placed to be replicated in other local areas within the country. This appears to be the case mainly where competences have been decentralized at local or regional level, as this enables local authorities to recognize relevant models in other cities or villages and consider adapting them, whereas national authorities and international agencies can also facilitate the replication of approaches once they have been tested. Examples taken from [Turkey](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and Morocco, among others, appear to indicate this” (Baltà Portolés, 2013).

The Fund’s [Culture and Development](#) programmatic area has carried out a very relevant work on decentralization as a means to increase local ownership. An analysis financed by the Fund (Baltà Portolés, 2013) estimates that the decentralization of cultural competences can facilitate opportunities for participation in cultural life, integration of cultural activities in broader local development strategies and enhancement of local ownership for new programmes and facilities. The author states:

“Several JPs facilitated the setting-up of regional and local cultural councils and working groups, as well as the design of local cultural agendas. It is also worth noting that often this was linked to a more holistic understanding of local development, wherein culture, gender, human rights and other issues promoted in the context of the JP can play an important role. This is visible, among others, in [Morocco](#), where, in the context of 2009’s National Strategy for Economic and Social Decentralization and 2011’s subsequent Decree, the JP contributed to the integration of cultural heritage preservation, gender and tourism promotion in the design of new Local Development Plans in 6 communities, through a participatory approach. The new model, which following its successful implementation in 6 towns was due to be replicated in a total of 54 municipalities, allowed for elected decision makers, staff of public authorities and civil society to strengthen their dialogue and design plans jointly, based on the recognition of cultural assets and the strengthening of participation and social inclusion.”

Similarly, [Honduras](#) received support to decentralize cultural policy development in the context of a broader trend toward decentralization, which also served to affirm internal cultural diversity. Measures included the formation of nine Regional Cultural Councils as mechanisms providing for public debate and policy design. In addition, 41 Local Cultural Agendas were drafted to highlight the links between culture and local development. Local Cultural Councils submitted these Agendas to their respective mayors (Rojas Muñoz, 2012).

3.4 Alignment and ownership are enhanced when JPs are executed nationally

The JP execution modality is a fundamental question for national ownership and alignment during implementation. Experience to-date suggests that alignment and ownership are enhanced when JPs are executed nationally and their Coordination Unit is located within the lead national counterpart. However, although almost all of the UN development system’s agencies, funds and programmes have endorsed the principle of “national execution”,¹⁰ in practice, several JPs, or some components within the same programme, still operate under the “direct execution”¹¹ modality. The latter excludes national counterparts from controlling budget administration and may create a power imbalance between national authorities and UN organizations. The comparative analysis

¹⁰ “National execution” refers to programmes that are managed and executed by national government institutions. This modality is suitable whenever national authorities are capable of undertaking the project activities. The “national execution modality” contributes to enhanced sustainability of development projects by increasing national ownership and commitment to programme/project activities and objectives. The national institution that manages the project must be the one most closely involved in the project activities.

¹¹ “Direct execution” refers to programmes where UN agencies take full responsibility for project execution. In this case, a UN agency’s country office must play many roles, including formulating, appraising, approving, executing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating and overseeing its own performance. In these cases, local or central governments are partners but do not direct the execution process.

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of different JPs operating through direct execution suggests that the latter naturally leads to a dominant role for the UN, limiting national partners' participation in decision-making (Lenci, 2012).

Governments need to be directly involved and visible in implementation on the ground so that citizens do not identify the JPs as exclusively UN initiatives. This could have political consequences affecting the JPs' capacity-building intentions. Implementing partners should report to national institution or governance bodies, including national government institutions, to promote national and local governments as the legitimate leaders responsible for overseeing development processes (ibid., 2012).

3.5 *Mutual accountability*¹²

The governance mechanisms promoted by the MDG-F are useful platforms for information sharing, engagement, coordination and dialogue. When these bodies are co-chaired by a government representative and a UN representative, they can help to promote mutual accountability. Civil society participation in the design and implementation of joint programmes also enables greater accountability.

Based on the Fund's experience in strengthening mutual accountability among all partners, M&E capacities in both the UN agencies as well as national counterparts should be increased. Ownership is strengthened by engaging national and local stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation processes, as previously mentioned. The national partners should own the programmes' M&E function. For this reason, development programmes should include funds for developing appropriate M&E systems within government. The quality of programme documents must be improved, including in the area of results orientation, M&E frameworks and indicators, so that investing resources and time in an inclusive and comprehensive formulation process is a cost-efficient strategy.

Roles and responsibilities of all partners must be clarified from the outset to ensure that all are included in the monitoring processes for management purposes. If governance mechanisms are used appropriately and include decision makers, they will increase mutual accountability. Positive outcomes also result when forums at the local level and, if appropriate, technical-level meetings are held to complement these more high-level central forums. Finally, citizen accountability is linked to the flow of information and decision-making ability and, as such, should be addressed in joint programmes (ibid., 2012a).

4. Promoting UN Collaboration and Effectiveness Through the "One UN"

The "One UN" approach emerged from intergovernmental decision-making on the operational activities of the United Nations system. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (see General Assembly resolution 60/1) included suggestions on improving the coherence, effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations development system.

The reform of UN development activities is a work in progress. The "One UN" is a tool for implementation of the Paris Declaration. An independent study based on the results of a broad consultative process finds that the MDG-F has been the first significant financial incentive for interagency work on MDG and for making progress in the "One UN" process at the country level (Lenci, 2011, p. 6). The experience of jointly formulating programmes has contributed to the preparation of new UNDAF's in many countries where MDG-F JPs are being implemented (MDG-F, 2011, p.11). For example, the Fund created incentives for El Salvador, Ethiopia and Nicaragua to become a DaO Self-Starter country and has prompted the UN system in Bosnia and Herzegovina to make the transition to "One Office".

¹² "Transparency and accountability to each other" is one of the common principles that form the foundation of cooperation for effective development, in accordance with the outcome document of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan in 2011. The document indicates that "mutual accountability and accountability to the intended beneficiaries of our cooperation, as well as to our respective citizens, organizations, constituents and shareholders, is critical to delivering results" (Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2011).

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The Fund contributes to “One UN” in two key ways: (i) programmes demonstrate the shortcomings of administrative harmonization in contrast to innovative methods at the country level; and, (ii) it strengthens leadership and coherence of the UN system at the country level, particularly in regards to the role of the UN Resident Coordinator.

The MDG-F discussed the “One UN” process with government representatives and UN partners during two participatory regional workshops held in Colombia and Morocco in 2011. Debate was generated around harmonization at country level, the UN system-wide leadership, and coherence among UN agencies. The main findings of these two knowledge-generating events are summarized below.

4.1 Programmes demonstrate the shortcomings of administrative harmonization in contrast to innovative methods at the country level

The MDG-F JPs provide incentives for greater coordination, synergy and efficiency on the ground. The available evidence suggests that the MDG-F offers a concrete opportunity to experiment with implementation of coordinated UN interventions on the ground. In so doing, it represents an important contribution to creating a practice and culture of joint intervention.

The potential of joint programmes to increase UN efficiency and effectiveness was limited by a number of constraining factors related to the UN system’s internal structures and politics (ibid., 2011, p. 7). Administrative norms and procedures and implementation modalities may differ sharply from one organization to the other. These differences represent constraints on achieving greater efficiency and synergy in implementing JPs and may increase transaction costs significantly.

Some JPs adopted creative solutions to overcome the administrative bottlenecks, including the development of shared formats for financial reporting and shared protocols for goods procurement. Many evaluations, study recommendations and statements by government representatives on the MDG-F National Steering Committees participating in regional workshops emphasize that the UN must reach consensus on innovative solutions to addressing the lack of unification in inter-agency procedures and make greater efforts to simplify and harmonize them (MDG-F, 2012a).

The new UN Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) will be responsible for further paving the way for a more in-depth administrative harmonization among sister agencies to promote smoother coordination of UN operations at country level. The MDG-F experience has been a valuable input for the [QCPR review](#).

4.2 Leadership and coherence of the UN System

Leadership and coherence of the UN system at the country level is relevant to address multi-dimensional challenges and benefit from the added value of different agencies.

Under the MDG-F management model, the UN Resident Coordinator (UN RC) co-chairs the NSC together with the lead national counterpart. The UN RC’s role is complemented by the Lead Agency, which is assigned technical leadership of the JP. The MDG-F thus supports the empowerment of the UN RC and the coherence of the UN system at the country level. By working through the Resident Coordinator (RC) system for coordination and oversight and using the joint programme modality for implementation, the MDG-F provides a unique opportunity for RCs to strengthen their vital role as leaders of United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). A key structural limitation to the UN RC’s effective leadership relates to the discussion on administrative harmonization. In fact, heads of agencies, funds and programmes report directly to their respective headquarters. Because the UN RC does not have a supervisory role, it can exercise only moral authority or influence over the UNCTs. Another factor that seems to influence the opportunity for the MDG-F to actually contribute to the “One UN” is the relative weight of the JP budgets relative to the overall resources managed by the different organizations at the country level. Available evidence suggests that the more significant the budget, the stronger the representational and oversight role of the UN RC.

The discussion of the critical factors influencing the leadership and coherence of the UN system and the MDG-F contribution to it cannot be separated from the discussion of national ownership. In fact, government leadership in promoting “One UN” is proving to

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be a critical success factor. The national government can best empower the RC to lead coordination and harmonization within the UNCT. In this respect, the JPs are good entry points for the government to exercise this pressure. However, some ministries are more comfortable and invest more heavily in establishing a bilateral partnership with a UN organization with a similar sectoral mandate than in engaging in a more holistic approach to partnering with the UN through the lead national counterpart and the UN RC. This involves a higher level of inter-institutional dialogue and coordination on the part of the government. In this respect, the national government representatives who participated in the regional workshops acknowledged that the challenge is to achieve both “One UN” and “One Country”, which refers to this stronger coordination mechanism among line ministries.

4.3 *Making ONE UN work for national development*

In 2012, the MDG-F reviewed its experience to make an evidence-based contribution to the UN Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR). Based on the Fund’s experience, some of the recommendations in this document were formulated to encourage greater coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness within the UN system. Some of them are already operational within the MDG-F:

1. Participatory local consultations are critical during the joint programme design phase.
2. Programmes should be aligned with national priorities and should also be closely linked, where appropriate, with existing national policies, programmes and initiatives. If policies are not in place or require further support, such as with innovative initiatives, policy support should be included in the programme design.
3. The number of JP programme partners should be limited and based on their ability to contribute added value to the programme. Operational capacity should also be assessed.
4. Programmes should be nationally owned and led and national/local partners must also have the time to be fully engaged if results are to be achieved and sustained. Preference should be given to nationally/locally led coordination platforms, ensuring synergies between national and local levels as promoted by the MDG-F.
5. The UN Resident Coordinator and UN Agency Representatives must be committed and engaged in programme oversight (the former) and programme management (the latter).
6. UN oversight responsibilities for inter-agency programmes require additional support for the UN Coordination Offices, specifically in the areas of monitoring and evaluation and communication and advocacy. The Fund’s experience with its focus countries has been quite positive (MDG-F, 2012a).

[El Salvador](#) and [Timor-Leste](#) have recently conducted evaluation exercises covering all Joint Programmes financed by the MDG-F (three in El Salvador and two in Timor-Leste). The evaluations have examined the impact of the MDG-F mechanism on the “One UN” and report mixed results. In Timor-Leste, the participatory country evaluation states that, “according to the majority of UN partners, the JPs have strongly encouraged them to attempt to ‘Deliver as One’. One funding source brought people together to discuss and plan what they were going to do to achieve the common goals, taking into account that each UN agency has its own expertise so that they could avoid duplication. Most people (UN, Government and NGOs) recognized that the PMC meetings have been one of the most relevant mechanisms to strengthen UN agencies to deliver as one” (Fernandes, 2013, p. 69).

In El Salvador, the impact of the MDG-F extends well beyond the outcomes of the three Joint Programmes funded. Based on the positive results that the UNCT obtained through the JPs and considering the experiences of other DaO pilot countries, the UN system and the government decided together that El Salvador would become a self-starter DaO country. An independent study stressed that implementation of three JPs in El Salvador “has provided the country with relevant lessons on coordination, harmonization and increasing the effectiveness of UN system actions” (Fernández de Velasco, 2013). The study “highlights the effective management of Joint Programmes and the possible replicability of the institutional governance structure in other UN joint interventions” (ibid., 2013).

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Together with UN partners, the MDG-F has experimented with and tested various strategies, techniques and tools to improve UN coherence and efficiency and has made several recommendations on that basis. The ideal UN business model that has emerged is one in which: (i) the UN Resident Coordinator has authority and can make decisions on issues of coherence and performance; (ii) UN Coordination Offices are properly staffed to support the UNRC, the UN Country Team and joint programme partners; (iii) if UN agency procedures cannot be harmonized, they work through one UN agency; (iv) national implementation is the preferred modality; and (v) a representative governance mechanism is led by national partners (ibid., 2012a).

5. Colombia Case Study: Translating A Global Agenda Into National Action

With four programme proposals and an overall budget of USD25.7 million, a group of national institutions and United Nations agencies in Colombia embarked upon an ambitious project about five years ago: to work together to enable progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They envisaged citizens—men and women and their children—living better lives as a result of these programmes.

The programmes tackled various themes (such as adaptation to climate change, the eradication of gender violence, and the promotion of food security and nutrition), which were linked directly with one or more of the MDGs (1, 3, 4, 5 and 7) along with a programme that, with its focus on the theme of peace-building, corresponded to the principles of the Millennium Declaration. In addition to the relevant government institutions led by the Colombian Presidential Agency for International Cooperation, nine of

Table 1: Mdg-F Joint Programmes In Colombia

<i>Gender equality and women's empowerment</i>	<i>Environment and climate change</i>	<i>Peace-building</i>	<i>Children, food security and nutrition</i>
Integral strategy for the prevention and awareness of all forms of gender-based violence	Integration of ecosystems and adaptation to climate change in the Colombian Massif	Strengthening local capacities for peace-building in the Department of Nariño	Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Communities in the Chocó Department promote their Food Security and Nutrition
IOM, UNFPA, UN WOMEN	FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNDP , UNICEF	UNHCR, FAO, UNDP , UNICEF, UN WOMEN	FAO, PAHO/WHO, WFP , UNDP, UNICEF
Presidential Council for Women's Equality, National Department of Planning, National Administrative Department of Statistics, Ministry of the Interior and Justice, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of National Defence, Armed Forces, Supreme Council of the Judiciary, Supreme Court Gender Committee, National Institute for Legal Medicine and Forensic Science, Family Commissioners, Citizens' Council, Attorney-General of the Nation	Regional Autonomous Corporation of the Cauca (CRC), Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), Ministry of the Environment, Housing and Territorial Development (MAVDT)	Municipal Mayoralties, Indigenous Councils of Pastos and Eperara-Siapidaara, Afro-Colombian Community Councils of ASOCOETNAR, Government of Nariño	Government of Chocó, Colombian Institute of Family Wellbeing, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of the Interior and Justice
USD 7.2 million	USD 4 million	USD 7 million	USD 7.5 million

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the 23 agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations in Colombia participated in its formulation, with the active leadership of the office of the Resident Coordinator.

Colombia was also selected as one of the nine focus countries supported by the MDG-Fund Secretariat with technical assistance and additional financial resources (USD500,000) for the Office of the Resident Coordinator to develop initiatives for the monitoring, evaluation, communication and impact that link efforts in every joint programme by driving actions on a national scale. Reflection on the MDGs from the perspective of indigenous populations is also supported via a strategic alliance with the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC, *Indigenous Regional Council of the Cauca*) and a study on the indigenous populations of Colombia and the MDGs (USD260,000).

This country case study aims to summarize concisely the aspects that have made the work of the teams in Colombia a regional and global reference in terms of creativity and commitment with what the MDGs represent in every thematic area of focus. By making use of its rich stock of 'lessons learned' and 'good practices', this study reflects how the MDG-F has been applied to the Colombian context as a mechanism for joint inter-agency and inter-sectoral cooperation. It is a definitive account that connects efforts on a global scale for a better world with a multilateral donor's support and a country's desire to work alongside the United Nations to transform reality from the national level to the community.

This case was based on the document entitled 'Systematisation of Experiences of Inter-Agency Joint Programmes of the MDG-Fund, the Human Security Fund and the Multi-Donor Canasta Funds of the United Nations in Colombia' (Suarez, forthcoming), as well as the documentation produced for each of the four programmes.

5.1 *Inter-sectoral approaches to achieve the MDGs*

The '[Integral Strategy for the Prevention and Awareness of All Forms of Gender-Based Violence](#)' in Colombia (Gender Joint Programme) supported an integral approach to the topic by strengthening and merging a number of processes led by the state as well as social and women's organizations. Noteworthy results include expanding and improving the national standard on violence against women, which culminated in the implementation of Law 1257/08 on violence against women and the development of national policy guidelines on gender equality.

Similarly, the joint programme '[Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Communities in the Chocó Department promote their Food Security and Nutrition](#)' in the area of Children, Food Security and Nutrition (CFSN Joint Programme) was designed as an integral proposal to provide simultaneous indices using various indicators of food security and nutrition, including basic sanitation, water quality and production for self-consumption. The joint programme achieved an impact on six of the eight MDGs in communities selected by the programme. It reduced the prevalence of overall and acute malnutrition in children under 6 and reduced food and nutritional insecurity. It also had several unquantifiable achievements, such as involving and empowering community authorities, increasing the number of women who participate in training processes and increasing the participation of men in activities to care for the family.

The '[Integration of Ecosystems and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Colombian Massif](#)' joint programme (Climate Change Joint Programme) also applied a multisectoral approach, as evidenced by the work linking health and climate change by strengthening mechanisms and coordination platforms, such as the Inter-Institutional Board of Climate Change and Health, and encouraged national debate, on an institutional level and with social organizations, on the relationship between poverty and climate change.

The inter-sectoral interventions have also made it possible to: (i) generate baseline information, (ii) promote inter-sectoral dialogue; and (iii) support inter-sectoral experiences and models with the potential to influence national public policies and/or be replicated.

5.1.1 *Generating baseline information*

A common problem highlighted by most joint programmes supported by the MDG-F is the lack of current baseline information. One of the programmes' first activities is usually to update (and in many cases, to gather) information that they can use later to assess the

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impact of inter-institutional action. In the case of Colombia, some programmes, such as the Climate Change and CFSN programmes, generate baseline information that incorporates the territory as a relevant variable for understanding the progress of each of the eight MDGs.

The Climate Change joint programme thus supports the establishment of the MDG baseline, carried out by the University of Cauca, which created the Millennium Chair as part of its curricular structure.

The CFSN joint programme generated reports such as “Afro-Colombians and the Millennium Development Goals” and “Shock: The State of Progress of the Millennium Development Goals in 2012”, which were presented to inform the local population and government and make them aware of the theme. The joint programme also adopted the practice of sharing its monitoring and evaluation reports with departmental and municipal authorities and ethnic-territorial organisations. Local authorities praised this practice because of its ability to improve informed decision making.

The gender joint programme established a baseline for social and institutional tolerance and gender-related violence. The objective was to assess the situation in terms of social and institutional stereotypes, practices and attitudes that make such violence commonplace. Using the baseline results, and with the leadership of the Supreme Council for Women’s Equality and the Ministry of Technologies and Communication, a communications strategy was developed that reduced social and institutional tolerance of gender-related violence.

5.1.2 Promoting inter-sectoral dialogue

The analysis of various joint programmes implemented in Colombia leads to the conclusion that in addition to generating inter-sectoral coordination between government institutions and between these and civil society organisations, by adopting essential themes such as the MDGs, the programmes have functioned as “links” and “mediators” between rival sectors or those with political and ideological differences. The programmes have thus made it possible to overcome differences among these actors by building “small agreements” around methodology that, after creating trust, may lead to more extensive political agreements.

The CFSN joint programme offers a good example of how to promote inter-sectoral coordination beyond the governance mechanisms, with its emphasis on creating a programme based on dialogue among different actors in the community, organizations and institutions. The participatory focus is not limited to the design phase, but is a constant, together with implementation of the programme. One of its three objectives was to strengthen the actors, institutionally and organizationally.

5.1.3 Support for inter-sectoral experiences and models with the potential to influence national public policies and/or be replicated

A successful aspect of the MDG-F joint programmes in Colombia was its ability to use interventions in local or regional areas to test the proposed strategy, validate its relevance, make appropriate methodological and conceptual changes and draw lessons that will be incorporated to broaden or replicate the strategy in other national contexts.

This is the case of the joint programme ‘[Strengthening Local Capacities for Peace-Building in the Department of Nariño](#)’ (Peace joint programme). Although the goal is not to generate an intervention model, this proposal seeks to achieve peace and development in the department of Nariño, a region with high levels of unmet basic needs and a high level of political conflict. The CFSN joint programme, which is implemented in the department of Chocó, succeeded in generating a model to promote food and nutritional security that can be replicated in contexts marked by ethnic diversity and complexity.

Similarly, the Gender joint programme combines prevention, awareness and gender-related violence activities on a national scale with four pilot projects (in Cartagena, Pasto, Buenaventura and the Pueblo Rico and Mistrató shelters in the department of Risaralda). This programme incorporated the diversity of the country’s population and the various ways in which gender-based violence is carried out. One of the programme’s most prominent achievements was thus a ban on the practice of female circumcision in the

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Embera-Chamí community, using a method that combines a focus on human rights, gender rights and ethnic rights and that can serve as a reference for targeted interventions to fight this problem.

5.2 *National approval and alignment for greater participation, aid effectiveness and sustainability*

The document for the systematization of the experience of joint programmes in Colombia includes an explanation of the new position of Colombian institutions with respect to development aid. Joint Programmes provide an example of putting the Paris Declaration into practice by aligning it with national and local strategies for cooperation, policies and current government plans in the development phase.

However, there have been problems in applying the principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda. With experience, a series of key elements has been identified that must be taken into consideration to promote their application. They are: (i) adaptation of technical concepts to the cultural context, (ii) participation of qualified and legitimate partners and (iii) flexibility in planning and implementing complex contexts.

5.2.1 *Adapting technical concepts to the cultural context*

The technical concepts addressed under the joint programmes require social and institutional ‘acclimatization’ and a respectful and sensitive dialogue with different cultures. Ensuring that agencies, operators, authorities and those involved in programmes ‘speak the same language’ has been a challenge.

In this regard, the Climate Change joint programme established a work team on an operational level with additional ‘knowledgeable people’ and local technicians, which promoted organizations’ approval of the project. The joint programme also supported reflection on the MDG agenda from the perspective of indigenous populations in the Cauca by establishing a strategic alliance with the CRIC. This process was quite important politically and managed to continue thanks to additional support from the MDG-F and the UNDP for a study on Indigenous Populations in Colombia and the MDGs. The study gathered views and studies in coordination with national indigenous organizations. The study included a comparison of differential indicators for the indigenous population based on political-organizational, sociocultural and economic-environmental characteristics, and sought to formulate public policies that could address inequalities.

The Food Security and Nutrition joint programme prepared a series of additional good practices for promoting mutual understanding by all actors involved in a joint initiative. The programme’s title — Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Communities in the Chocó Department promote their Food Security and Nutrition — explicitly conveys the intention that programme actions should be defined based on the culture of the populations involved (in this case, Afro-Colombians and indigenous populations). The joint programme defines individuals as agents of change and social transformation. If populations are to take a prominent role, the search for understanding must be on-going, from design to implementation. For example, the notion of malnutrition and many other concepts that the programme addresses do not exist in the indigenous communities’ culture. This can be overcome through reflective dialogue. In the inception phase, the joint programme establishes a shared framework of principles and the minimum standards and commitments that all partners must accept to ensure that ethno-cultural diversity is respected.

5.2.2 *Participation of qualified and legitimate partners*

Colombia’s national institutions have gradually acknowledged the importance of participating in governance bodies (NSC and PMC). Some of those institutions initially found it difficult to modify the nature of their interaction with international cooperation agencies. The relationship had to change from instrumental (based on negotiation over funding) to more participatory (in which they were involved in decision-making at the technical and political levels). The population’s effective participation is thus acknowledged as vital to legitimizing the cooperation initiatives and avoiding damage. In some cases, discussions in community assemblies on aspects

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of programme implementation (for example, identifying community leaders and sponsors or those from participating families) were a factor for success. However, the experience shows that “the effectiveness, opportunity and relevance of participation” must be weighed by avoiding a disordered decision-making process, over-representation or the participation of partners who lack the necessary legitimacy. It is also important to anticipate and defuse potential conflicts of interest that may delegitimize the initiative or paralyse its implementation.

5.2.3 Flexibility in planning and implementing complex contexts

If the joint programme teams agree that the “planning procedures must maintain technical rigour and strategic relevance,” it should also be noted that the work is often carried out in “local scenarios of chronic and sustained governance crises”. The Peace joint programme experienced high turnover of governments in ethnic communities where it was working and needed to strengthen recognition by the government agencies carrying out the work.

Planning and implementation must thus always use flexible models, which allow for adjustments based on changing contexts and situations. Monthly schedules are an example of a good practice in this regard, as they are more sensitive and can take into account the combination of political volatility, precarious governability and high conflict found in certain contexts. The issues of security for teams in the field and protection for participating communities are also crucial factors for ensuring sustainability.

5.3 “One UN” in practice

The Colombian government has been characterized by its dedication to promoting the philosophy of “One UN” as a strategy for achieving greater impact for UN interventions. Practically all UN country teams that have implemented joint programmes with the support of the MDG-F indicate that the greatest challenge in applying this philosophy is the lack of previous experience. It has involved an intense process of ‘learning by doing’ and large doses of creativity. Thus, the key has been to gradually define the meaning of a joint programme and to find an integrated balance that promotes complementarity and ensures effective results. In its recommendations to teams, the MDG-F emphasizes three elements that are critical to creating this balance: (i) joint planning; (ii) joint monitoring and evaluation; and (iii) joint communication and impact.

5.3.1 Joint planning

The experience of programmes in Colombia confirms the importance of setting aside a minimum of six months to establish the basis that will facilitate later implementation by adjusting the “architecture of the joint programme”.

Joint planning requires investment of time and implies the active involvement of all participating United Nations agencies, national institutions and partners.

5.3.2 Joint monitoring and evaluation

A monitoring system that enables access to information on progress by all partners, as well as informed decision-making, is another basic element that promotes the coordinating work of a joint programme. In the case of Colombia, an online monitoring system called SIPRO has been used. SIPRO was first adopted by the Gender joint programme — provided by the UNFPA, one of the agencies participating in the joint programme — and was later transferred to other joint programmes in Colombia.

5.3.3 Joint communication and impact

Each of the four joint programmes in Colombia incorporates elements of communication to influence the public agenda. The inter-agency communication strategy that was developed in 2013 to mobilize civil society and the private sector to take collective action to address inequalities provides an excellent example of the initiative’s accomplishments. Using the slogan “Together we can — eight steps, one goal”, it had a national impact on MDGs. This became the impact and communications strategy of the United Nations

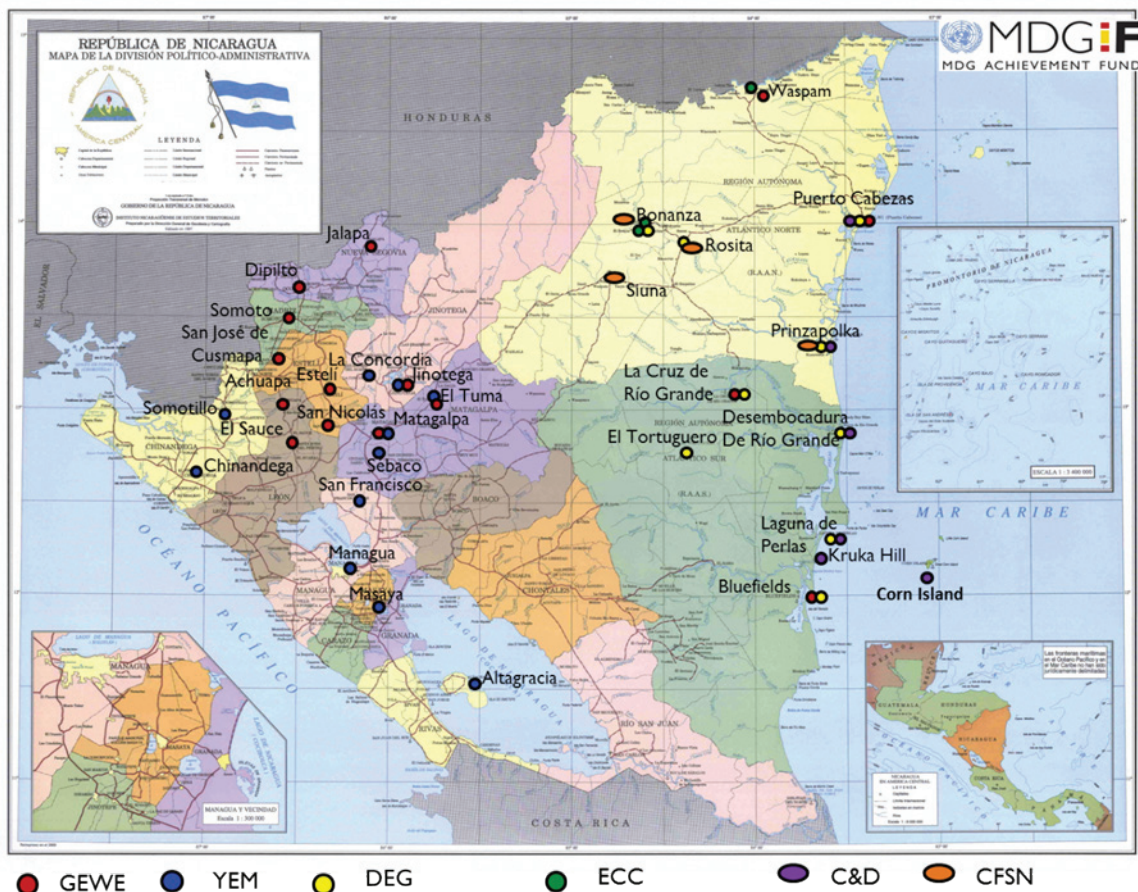
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system in the country. *Claro*, one of the main cable, internet and mobile telephone operators in Latin America and Colombia, covered most of the production and distribution costs of the information, contributing approximately USD360,000, which met 97.5 percent of the overall expenditure. The strategy has a clear focus on impact and communication for social change and its messages concentrate on highlighting the country's unequal progress toward meeting the MDGs.

6. Nicaragua Case Study: Transforming Six Joint Programmes into an Integrated Country Mechanism, the Road to Sustainability

Nicaragua has received more MDG funds—USD39.2 million—than any other country in the Latin American/Caribbean region. The funds have enabled Nicaragua to make progress in achieving the MDGs and further advance the United Nations reform process. The six joint programmes implemented fall under the following programmatic areas: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; Environment and Climate Change; Culture and Development; Democratic Economic Governance; Youth, Employment and Migration; and, and Children, Food Security and Nutrition. The six MDG-F joint programmes target the most vulnerable populations and communities, including women, children, youth and indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. The Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua has benefited the most from the MDG-F initiatives. Five of the six programmes have been implemented in this region, which has received approximately USD27.5 million (70 percent) of MDG-F total funding as a priority area because it is the country's

Figure 1: MDG-F Joint Programmes in Nicaragua



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poorest and most vulnerable region. This investment has increased the total United Nations System (UNS) cooperation in the Caribbean Coast to USD65 million during the UNDAF's 2008-2012 programme cycle. The MDG-F Joint Programmes are being implemented in nine departments, as well as in the Coast's two autonomous regions. The direct beneficiaries of the six MDG-F joint programmes total 89,164 persons (72 percent women).

Instead of adopting an individual approach to implementing the MDG-F Joint Programmes, the UNS and the Nicaraguan government agreed to establish a joint mechanism for strategic leadership and management and to undertake joint implementation by operational agencies.

6.1 *A multi-sectoral approach*

The Joint Programmes' accomplishments include helping to empower the target populations and beneficiaries to lead the development processes and promote women's, indigenous and Afro-descendant and youth rights and participation, among other accomplishments. Unlike other interventions, the joint programmes combine several elements that facilitate a multidimensional approach to development issues, allowing greater coordination among legislation, strategies, public policies, and national processes, with full involvement and initiative in activities from the community level upwards. This clear vision of the intervention by programmatic area has produced successful results and has consolidated the processes that will strengthen the sustainability of the actions.

The [Gender Equality Joint Programme](#) (intervention in 15 municipalities) is an example of a holistic approach. The programme successfully promoted citizen participation and the empowerment of approximately 13,000 women involved in economic activities (business and agriculture) and in various social and health skills trainings. Other relevant achievements include increasing women's participation in national and municipal budget planning practices and strengthening the national institution capacity (INIM) to ensure implementation of the national gender policy. The programme's implementation has contributed to achieving MDG 3 through work in two areas that are key to women's lives and empowerment: adopting a holistic approach to developing economic activities and health. At the institutional level, the programme has developed methodologies to include a gender-based focus in the budget framework of national and municipal entities.

The [Environment & Climate Change](#) Joint Programme focuses on the two municipalities in the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve and established 25 community committees to manage catchment areas and facilitate access to water and sanitary facilities using renewable energy, creating an early warning system, developing sustainable productive activities, and raising awareness on environmental issues.

The six MDG-F Joint Programmes have contributed significantly to the quality of the normative framework on legislation, policies, plans, and models/systems, with a total of 21 interventions at the national, regional and municipal levels. The most important include: the Integrated [Model on Food Security and Nutrition](#); the design and implementation of the National Plan on Employment and Decent Work for the Young People of Nicaragua 2012-2016; the proposed revision of Law 550: Public Administration and Budgetary Regime Law; the gender policy of the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic, based on an ethnic and multicultural focus; the establishment of a Water and Sanitation Investment Fund for the Caribbean Coast; and, the regional policy to revitalize and manage cultural industries on the Caribbean Coast.

The Joint Programmes have also contributed to capacity-building in the areas of investigation, training and teaching in the academic sector, particularly within the Autonomous Regions' institutions.

6.2 *Government's involvement in Joint Program initiatives*

The results of the MDG-F Joint Programmes have contributed to achieving the priority targets outlined in the 2008-2012 programme cycle of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The Government of Nicaragua has had a wide-ranging,

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participative, and leadership role in leading the planning stage and during the Joint Programmes' conception and implementation phases. At the same time, the Joint Programme results are also consistent with priorities defined by the government as part of the 2007-2011 National Human Development Plan and the Development Strategy for the Caribbean Coast. The Government of Nicaragua has also played a leading role in defining initiatives, results, and territories. Based on the government's priority to focus efforts in the Caribbean Coast, five of the six joint programmes are being carried out there.

The Secretariat for the Development for the Caribbean Coast (a presidential secretariat) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) have played an important role, via the Joint Programmes, in providing strategic leadership and supporting the capacity-building efforts of the regional governments and Councils of the North and South Autonomous Regions in terms of appropriation and leadership of the Joint Programmes.

As part of the country mechanism, a sub-joint mechanism was established for the Caribbean Coast. Through this sub-joint mechanism, a forum for strategic discussion was established, bringing together the regional authorities from the various governments and councils, the Secretariat for the Development of the Caribbean Coast, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNS.

6.3 Contribution to "One UN"

The MDG-F Joint Programmes aim to strengthen the "One UN" process. In the case of Nicaragua, this mechanism has strengthened the UN's capacity to work with a Joint Programme modality. During the UNDAF's 2008-2012 cooperation programme cycle, two other joint programmes were launched in addition to the six MDG-F Joint Programmes: HIV/AIDS and the Economic Agenda for Women. At the end of the UNDAF 2008-2012 programme cycle, the eight joint programmes represented 23 percent of all UNS cooperation activities. In preparation for the next cycle, three new joint programmes were signed, amounting to approximately USD8 million. At the same time, the UN is formulating four new joint programmes. The UNDAF's new 2013-2017 programme cycle includes a larger number of joint initiatives among UNS agencies, both in terms of programmatic areas and territorial approach.

The Resident Coordinator is responsible for the strategic leadership of the six joint programmes. The decision-making mechanism involves, and is based on, a national steering committee comprising the government representative (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MINREX), the AECID coordinator, and the Resident Coordinator, with operational support provided by government national counterparts as well as UNS agencies.

The role of both the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) has been further strengthened in regard to strategic and complementary leadership and joint programme interventions. As far as the UN Country Office Team is concerned, quarterly follow-up reports prepared for the six joint programmes ensure successful implementation, complementarity of actions and a strategic vision for the country mechanism.

Coordination among the National Steering Committee and the Joint Programmes' Coordinating Committees has proven to be an effective way to manage the joint programmes in a situation characterized by an ever-increasing and varied number of stakeholders. The role of the coordinating committees is being strengthened further in terms of strategic leadership throughout the implementation process, as is the role of leading agency and institution.

In addition, the Office of the Resident Coordinator, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Technical Secretariat, promoted forums to provide feedback and shared experiences among the joint programme coordinators.

A new element introduced into the joint programmes was the involvement of local promoters or national volunteers (UNV) from the United Nations (37 volunteers). This was a key contribution to implementation of the joint programmes, particularly in terms of territorial coordination, social participation and development coherence processes.

7. The Philippines Case Study: Contributing to the Philippines Development Agenda

7.1 Four inter-sectoral programmes

The MDG-F in the Philippines financed four joint programmes that brought together 18 national government institutions, 85 municipalities and 10 UN agencies. In addition to these programmes, as part of the [Focus Country](#) initiative, the Philippines implemented several Monitoring and Evaluation and Communication and Advocacy activities involving national partners, thus extending the MDG efforts to students, civil society organizations, academia, policy makers and influential entities.

The [Climate Change Adaptation Program](#) was the first initiative to be completed successfully. Twenty-one pilot tools were tested, standardized and prepared for sharing with other local municipalities. This programme mainstreamed climate risk reduction into national and local plans and processes, enhanced national and local capacities, and improved coping mechanisms via pilot projects. A Climate Change Adaptation Measures pilot programme was implemented at five demonstration sites, focusing on agricultural production, rural finance, local governance, urban housing and public health. These measures were tested in four provinces, one city and the Metro Manila Region. This initiative reached about 1,800 people.

The [Democratic and Economic Governance](#) joint programme enhanced access and provision of water services to the poor through water policy and governance reforms, as well as local capacity development. Five mechanisms were established, including a human-rights-based approach to water supply planning and community organizing, localized customer service code, godparent mentoring for small water service providers, and communications planning for community-based development. The programme is on-going. Thirty-six municipal water sector plans have been drafted and 36 localized customer service codes have been adopted. Thirty-six water and sanitation councils and 65 water users' organizations were established. This programme received additional funding to scale up its primary achievements and reach out to 419 more towns lacking water services.

The [Youth, Employment and Migration](#) joint programme developed nine good practices responding to the high unemployment rate and threats of exploitation — both workplace- and migration-related, inside and outside of the country — to which Filipino youth are particularly vulnerable. It improved policy coherence and programme implementation in youth employment and migration. Access to decent work in four selected provinces was addressed through entrepreneurship and technical/vocational skills trainings for disadvantaged youth. Basic education was provided through an inclusive approach, offering life skills. Migration-related risks were addressed through technology and livelihood education, employment facilitation and provision of safe migration services. Local capacities for economic development and model mechanisms to channel remittances were also offered as pilot-testing initiatives. At the national level, a national strategy paper on youth employment and migration was developed, and the National Action Plan for Youth Employment and Migration is nearing adoption by the government (Caravilla, 2013; Damiani, 2011).

The fourth Joint Programme, [Children, Food Security and Nutrition](#), complemented government efforts to improve infant and young child feeding practices based exclusively on breastfeeding and the introduction of complementary feeding through six initiatives that can now be replicated nationwide. The programme trained 3,750 peer counsellors and completed a national-level advocacy plan based on the Expanded Breastfeeding Act and the Milk Code. A recent survey showed that more Filipino municipalities are now familiar with this campaign. Training manuals addressing community mobilization for infant and young child feeding and recipe preparation were produced and an early warning system on food security and nutrition was established in Camarines Sur. Eight national and 35 local institutions are benefiting from this programme.

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7.2 National ownership, leadership and participation

7.2.1 Government ownership

The Government of the Philippines is a key MDG Fund partner. Eighteen national government agencies and more than 85 municipalities are working together to accomplish the MDGs. The four programmes in the Philippines were co-chaired by Filipino governmental bodies and the United Nations system to achieve national ownership, aid alignment and effectiveness to move forward toward achieving the MDGs.

JPs are aligned with Philippine government (GOP) priorities: Water Governance supports the President's Priority Program on Water and the Philippine Water Supply Sector Roadmap; Children, Food Security and Nutrition supports the government's renewed focus on children of 0-24 months of age through exclusively breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices; Youth Employment and Migration complements the GOP's vision of productive and competitive youth by 2010; and Climate Change Adaptation supports the 2004-2010 MTPDP and the National Framework for Physical Planning (NFPP), which provides for the mitigation of natural disasters.

7.2.2 Local government ownership

Acknowledging the need to intensify all efforts at the local level as the 2015 deadline approaches and the crucial role of the Department of the Interior and Local Government of the Philippines (DILG) and the Local Government Academy (LGA) in meeting this deadline, the MDG-F is preparing to leverage the knowledge and results generated by the joint programmes and support the DILG in localizing the MDGs, especially in municipalities where development is most needed.

The forum and marketplace will involve local chief executives from many of the country's municipalities. The event will bring together MDG-F's partners, both national and local, government agencies, academia, private sector, the development community and other interested stakeholders.

The MDG-F implementers (18 national government agencies led by the National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Labour and Employment, and the National Nutrition Council) will promote linkages with future potential partners to scale up and sustain MDG-F work in other geographic areas.

7.2.3 Citizen Ownership and participation

The MDG-F supported and worked with the Millennium Campaign and the HD2010 platform along with Focus Country initiatives. The MDG-F has carried out communications and advocacy as well as monitoring and evaluation activities with several civil society organizations in the Philippines, expanding knowledge and impact and promoting advancement toward achieving the MDGs.

One of the most recent projects implemented by the Focus Country initiative highlighted the most vulnerable Filipino citizens in Filipino society. The initiative convened policy makers at the House of Representatives of the National Congress and nine groups on behalf of the 'left-behind sectors'. That day, legislators pledged to carry out the agendas presented by the marginalized and reaffirmed their commitment to achieve the MDGs and combat inequality.

Approximately 18.2 million Filipinos are between 15 and 24 years of age, representing about 20 percent of the total population. The youth sector has worked hard to make progress toward achieving the MDGs. Young people are recognized as key participants in decision-making, both in government and non-government sectors. This is reflected in the many youth organizations and committees in the country. Through joint efforts with students, activists and future leaders of the Philippines, the MDG-F provided a forum and opportunities for youth-led initiatives.

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7.3 Advancing toward “One UN”

All four JPs in the Philippines are consistent with the (extended) UNDAF of 2005-2011. UNDAF implementation strategies include a focus on the MDGs, gender equality, poor regions and specific impoverished groups and on promoting effective links and relationships among state, civil society, and the private sector. The JP on Climate Change Adaptation is aligned with the UNDAF Outcome on Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Adaptation. The DEG programme is in line with the UNDAF Outcome on Good Governance, the YEM programme with the UNDAF Outcome on Macroeconomic Stability, Broad-Based and Equitable Development and the CFSN JP accomplishment with UNDAF Outcome on Basic Social Services.

UN RCO in the Philippines recognize that the Fund has contributed to the UNCT work, paving the way toward a joint implementation plan of the UNDAF 2012-2018. The experience and lessons learned along the implementation of the four joint programmes have influenced and shaped the coordination of the UN Agencies in addressing multi-dimensional challenges leveraging specialized mandates and expertise.

8. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The paper illustrates the importance of inter-sectoral approaches and development effectiveness to accelerate MDGs achievement.

When multiple sectors exercise influence or share control of a development issue, inter-sectoral actions may be more appropriate and create better conditions for achieving the MDGs. The experience of the MDG-F across 50 countries provides interesting evidence of how to capture the added value of inter-sectoral approaches. Inter-sectoral actions have proved to be effective in addressing complex multi-dimensional development challenges, avoiding overlap and duplication across interventions, and increasing coordination among UN sister agencies, among line ministries and between the UN and national governments.

Strengthening coordination is a challenge for the UN system and national governments at the local and central levels. The implementation of inter-sectoral programmes has provided a great opportunity to increase government cross-sectoral interventions to make progress toward achieving the MDGs and pursue complementary public policies. Several field experiences highlighted in this research suggest that inter-sectoral approaches can promote the positive use of the comparative advantages of different specialized development agencies. Inter-sectoral programmes can increase aid effectiveness, simultaneously creating better conditions for long-term sustainability.

The Fund's experience shows that complex development challenges should be addressed at multiple levels and that combining upstream policy influence with pilot projects on the ground can be a successful strategy. In many cases, local pilot initiatives often provide evidence to governments in support of scaling up programmes. This suggests that financing innovative initiatives can produce broader impacts if programmes obtain buy-in from and participation of the national government. Evidence suggests that inter-sectoral programmes at the local level produce more visible results in a shorter period of time. The complexity of reaching consensus at the national level requires greater efforts and more dialogue, but may produce into broader long-term impacts.

One of the most significant challenges of inter-sectoral actions is building partnerships and creating trust among development actors. The MDG-F has created several platforms for dialogue and participation at the country level, thereby consolidating social capital. These mechanisms are creating positive conditions for pursuing additional coordinated strategies to achieve the MDGs at the local and country levels.

Establishing governing bodies that include representatives of governments, civil society, agents/beneficiaries and UN agencies guarantee mutual accountability and shared responsibility during implementation. Creating an NSC and PMC for each programme financed by the MDG-F has proved to be a strategic way to improve alignment and national ownership during the entire programme

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cycle. Strengthening national capacities to lead the M&E strategy is an important condition for guaranteeing that countries can efficiently manage the programmes and that lessons learned are used to influence public policies.

The roles and responsibilities of all partners must be clarified from the outset to increase accountability. If used appropriately, governance mechanisms can increase mutual accountability. Experience shows that complementing these bodies with forums at the local level has positive results. Citizen accountability is linked to the flow of information and decision-making mechanisms. Transparent and timely information transmitted to citizens and inclusive governing bodies are critical to guaranteeing accountability.

Promoting national ownership implies working at different levels: central government institutions; local institutions (local ownership); and civil society organizations and communities (citizen ownership). At the local level, the MDG-F experience proves that the participation of local stakeholders in strategic decision-making and operational planning is critical to defining appropriate methodologies and ensuring that programmes are integrated into existing local processes.

Advancing toward “One UN” is challenging and requires strategic decisions at many levels. The paper concludes that the MDG-F has been the first significant financial incentive for interagency work on MDGs and for moving forward in the “One UN” process at the country level. The Fund has contributed in this area in two ways: (i) programmes demonstrate the shortcomings of administrative harmonization in contrast to innovative methods at the country level; and (ii) by strengthening the leadership and coherence of the UN system at the country level, particularly as related to the role of the UN Resident Coordinator.

While some JPs adopted creative solutions at the country level, including the development of shared formats for financial reporting or shared protocols for goods procurement, the study recommends that the UN system reach consensus on solutions to the lack of unified inter-agency procedures and make greater efforts toward simplifying and harmonizing them at the HQ level.

The discussion of critical factors influencing the leadership and coherence of the UN system cannot be separated from the discussion of national ownership. Indeed, government leadership in promoting “One UN” is proving to be a critical success factor. The national government is in the best position to empower the RC to lead coordination and harmonization within the UNCT. In this respect, the JPs are good entry points for the government to exercise this pressure.

The UN should continue to work to create a culture and practice of joint action. The MDG-F has experimented and tested various strategies for improving UN coherence. The ideal UN business model that has emerged is one in which: (i) the UN Resident Coordinator has authority and can make decisions on issues of coherence and performance; (ii) UN Coordination Offices are properly staffed to support the UNRC, the UN Country Team and joint programme partners; (iii) national implementation is the preferred modality; and (iv) national partners lead a representative governance mechanism.

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