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The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

EVALUATING THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE  
FRAMEWORK (UNDAF) AS A STRATEGIC PROGRAMMING TOOL AT THE  
NATIONAL LEVEL  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Public Policy and Administration Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Public Administration

by Rasha Farouk

Under the supervision of Dr. Khaled Abdel Halim

January 2015

The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

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**ABSTRACT**

The unique character of the United Nations (UN) imposes strategic challenges on the organization's leadership and management structures at the national and the international level. In response to these challenges, the UN reform efforts, introduced in 1997, paved the way for the UN system effectiveness, efficiency and coherence. Emerging from the reform, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) engages various development stakeholders in identifying and achieving national development priorities. This review found that the UNDAF is an effective strategic instrument that well-positions the UN at the national level and it enhances national capacities and supports national governments in identifying and achieving their development priorities within the context of the internationally agreed development goals and agreements. However, this evidence-based study found that the lack of national ownership of some governments obstructs the UNDAF formulation and implementation process. Notably, despite that some evidences indicate that the UNDAF could be a challenging process when UNCTs are not Delivering as One (DaO), this interview-based study found that the DaO approach could further complicate the process if it is not carefully studied based on country-specific contexts

*“Moonlight floods the whole sky from horizon to horizon;  
How much it can fill your room depends on its windows”*  
— Rumi

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

First and foremost, I would like to express my highest and sincere gratitude to God who gave me the strength to accomplish this degree. Without His blessing or the light of His knowledge, I wouldn't have discovered the pleasure to grow and develop.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to every member of my family who encouraged me selflessly.

In addition, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and respect to my esteemed professors who shared with me their priceless knowledge and experience during the years. In particular, I am very thankful to my great supervisor Dr. Khaled Abdel Halim and my valuable two readers Dr. Ibrahim Awad and Dr. Khaled Amin whose inputs have added a great value for me at all levels.

Special thanks to all those who guided me to identify my core values and to align it with all aspects of life. I would like also to thank the many people who encouraged me to pursue this endeavor and saw me through this thesis. My heights appreciation also to all those who provided support, read, discussed, offered comments and allowed me to utilize their remarks.

Finally, I am very grateful to my organization and the great UNDP learning team at headquarters who extend all the necessary support for us to learn, develop and grow.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|                |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BCA</b>     | Basic Cooperation Agreement                             |
| <b>CAS</b>     | Country Assistance Strategy                             |
| <b>CCA</b>     | Common Country Assessment                               |
| <b>CCF</b>     | UN Country Coordination Fund                            |
| <b>CEB</b>     | Chief Executives Board                                  |
| <b>CPAP</b>    | Country Programme Action Plan                           |
| <b>CPD</b>     | Country Programme Document                              |
| <b>CSO</b>     | Civil Society Organization                              |
| <b>DaO</b>     | Delivering as One                                       |
| <b>DESA</b>    | Department of Economic and Social Affairs               |
| <b>EB</b>      | Executive Board                                         |
| <b>ECOSOC</b>  | Economic and Social Council                             |
| <b>FACE</b>    | Fund Authorization and Certificate of Expenditures      |
| <b>FAO</b>     | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| <b>FYP</b>     | Five-Year Plan                                          |
| <b>GA</b>      | General Assembly                                        |
| <b>GoE</b>     | Government of Egypt                                     |
| <b>HACT</b>    | Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer                    |
| <b>HQ</b>      | Headquarters                                            |
| <b>HRBA</b>    | Human Rights-Based Approach                             |
| <b>IBRD</b>    | International Bank for Reconstruction and Development   |
| <b>ICIC</b>    | International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation    |
| <b>IFAD</b>    | International Fund for Agricultural Development         |
| <b>IGO</b>     | Intergovernmental Organization                          |
| <b>ILO</b>     | International Labour Organization                       |
| <b>INGO</b>    | International Non-Governmental Organization             |
| <b>IO</b>      | International Organization                              |
| <b>ITU</b>     | International Telecommunications Union                  |
| <b>JOI</b>     | Joint Office Initiative                                 |
| <b>LAC</b>     | Latin American and the Caribbean                        |
| <b>M&amp;E</b> | Monitoring and Evaluation                               |
| <b>MD</b>      | Millennium Declaration                                  |
| <b>MDG</b>     | Millennium Development Goal                             |
| <b>MfDR</b>    | Managing for Development Results                        |
| <b>MTR</b>     | Mid-Term Review                                         |
| <b>NGO</b>     | Non-Governmental Organization                           |
| <b>NPM</b>     | New Public Management                                   |
| <b>OCHA</b>    | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs     |
| <b>OECD</b>    | Organization for Economic Cooperation and               |

|                  |                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | Development                                                      |
| <b>OSAA</b>      | Office of USG - Special Advisor on Africa                        |
| <b>PA</b>        | Public Administration                                            |
| <b>PCNA</b>      | Post-Conflict Needs Assessment                                   |
| <b>PP</b>        | Public Policy                                                    |
| <b>PRS</b>       | Poverty Reduction Strategies                                     |
| <b>PSG</b>       | Peer Support Groups                                              |
| <b>PWG</b>       | Priority Working Group                                           |
| <b>QSA</b>       | Quality Support and Assurance                                    |
| <b>QCPR</b>      | Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review                          |
| <b>R/UNDG</b>    | Regional United Nations Development Group                        |
| <b>RBM</b>       | Results-Based Management                                         |
| <b>RC</b>        | Resident Coordinator                                             |
| <b>RDT</b>       | Regional Directors Team                                          |
| <b>RM</b>        | Results Matrix                                                   |
| <b>SBAA</b>      | Standard Basic Assistance Agreement                              |
| <b>SDG</b>       | Sustainable Development Goals                                    |
| <b>SG</b>        | Secretary General                                                |
| <b>SOPs</b>      | Standard Operating Procedures                                    |
| <b>SP</b>        | Strategic Plan                                                   |
| <b>TCPR</b>      | Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review                            |
| <b>UN</b>        | United Nations                                                   |
| <b>UNAIDS</b>    | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS                       |
| <b>UNCT</b>      | UN Country Team                                                  |
| <b>UNCTAD</b>    | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development               |
| <b>UNDAF</b>     | United Nations Strategic Assistance Framework                    |
| <b>UNDAF AP</b>  | United Nations Development Assistance Framework Action Plan      |
| <b>UNDG</b>      | United Nations Development Group                                 |
| <b>UNDGO</b>     | United Nations Development Group Office                          |
| <b>UNDOCO</b>    | UN Development Operations Coordination Office                    |
| <b>UNDP</b>      | United Nations Development Program                               |
| <b>UNDPI</b>     | United Nations Department of Public Information                  |
| <b>UNEP</b>      | United Nations Environment Programme                             |
| <b>UNESCO</b>    | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| <b>UNFIP</b>     | United Nations Fund for International Partnerships               |
| <b>UNFPA</b>     | United Nations Population Fund                                   |
| <b>UNHABITAT</b> | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                       |
| <b>UNHCR</b>     | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights                 |
| <b>UNHCR</b>     | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                    |
| <b>UNICEF</b>    | United Nations Children's Fund                                   |

|                |                                                                           |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>UNIDO</b>   | United Nations Industrial Development Organization                        |
| <b>UNODC</b>   | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                                  |
| <b>UNOP</b>    | United Nations Office for Project Services                                |
| <b>UNWOMEN</b> | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality<br>and the Empowerment of Women |
| <b>UNWTO</b>   | United Nations World Tourism Organization                                 |
| <b>WB</b>      | World Bank                                                                |
| <b>WBG</b>     | World Bank Group                                                          |
| <b>WFP</b>     | World Food Programme                                                      |
| <b>WHO</b>     | World Health Organization                                                 |
| <b>WMO</b>     | World Meteorological Organization                                         |
| <b>XB</b>      | Extra-Budgetary                                                           |



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## **INTRODUCTION**

This evidence-based study reviews the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) which emerged from the UN reform efforts in 1997 to pave the way for professional coherence. The UNDAF is the common strategic framework for the operational activities of the United Nations (UN) funds, programmes and specialized agencies at the country level. Its programming network reflects the United Nations Development Group's strategic priorities as well as the development priorities of national governments.

The literature review covers the multilateral cooperation and the strategic management discipline for public and international organizations. This integral part of the research provides information and evidences on the key factors and measures that should be considered for designing and using a strategic planning instrument of an International Organization such as the UN.

This evaluation is highly qualitative. It utilizes primary data sources collected from interviews with a number of UN staff members at the national and the international levels. The study also utilizes a random UNDAFs sample from different countries and regions with a special emphasis on Egypt. Furthermore, the study analyzes secondary data from different sources including academic books, articles, journals, guidelines, independent evaluation reports and, importantly, relevant international treaties and agreements.

### **Statement of the problem**

Despite that the UNDAF has been subject to ongoing reforms since its inception, still, this topic is subject to extensive debate among the different UN entities and national governments. Therefore, this independent evidence-based study aims at demystifying this puzzle. It informs decision-makers about the main strengths and weaknesses of this strategic planning instrument. This interview-based study shed the light on relevant cross-cutting challenges of the UNDAF. This independent study provides a set of responsive recommendations to address the major findings of the research which is a useful contribution to the UNDAF improve in specific and aid effectiveness in general.

In addition, in light of the growing attention given by academia and development to the Strategic Management discipline, limited literature and empirical research conducted on the Strategic Programming Frameworks of leading Multilateral Organizations at the country level and its degree of effectiveness in realizing its strategic objectives. Accordingly, this study also aims at filling in this literature gap.

## Significance of the study

This study is an important contribution to the field of public administration for a number of reasons:

First, it assists governments, development professionals, and academics to assess how the UN position itself strategically at the national level, with its significant contribution to the international development agenda.

Second, the study is a significant contribution to literature on the effectiveness of the UNDAF in realizing its strategic objectives at the national level.

Third, the study provides evidence-based recommendations to the UN Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams, at the central level and the national level, governments and practitioners to apply effective and long-term reforms to the strategic programming process. This would enhance their alignment and harmonization to the internationally-agreed strategic development priorities and the effective management of resources set at their disposal for serving the public.

Finally, the study helps positively in stimulating additional research in this topic.

## Research Questions

The general question of this research is:

- **To which extent the UNDAF enhances effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of the UN system at the national level?**

The specific questions are:

1. What are the UNDAF strategic objectives?
2. To what extent is the UN system harmonized and benefiting from implementing the UNDAF at the national level?
3. To what extent the UNDAF is effective and efficient in aligning the UN system to the national development plans and needs?
4. How the UN entities effectively use their comparative advantages in identifying national priorities?
5. To what extent national governments are engaged in the UNDAF formulation and implementation?
6. What are the key operational challenges that the UN Country Teams (UNCTs) face while formulating and implementing the UNDAF?

7. What are the quality control mechanisms used to evaluate the UNDAF and ensure its effective implementation at the country level?
8. What are the findings and recommendations of previous UNDAF evaluations? Were they properly addressed in current UNDAFs?
9. What extent does the number of UN agencies in a country affect the UNDAF formulation? What are the other factors to be considered within a country context?

## **Main Findings**

Notably, the study found that the minor engagement of some national governments makes the UNDAF process very complex and lengthy. The study also found that national capacities of developing countries could be too weak to respond to the UNDAF demands and, thus, the UNDAF importance varies from one country to another. Furthermore, the study found that the UNDAF lengthy process makes its alignment to national governments in transition very challenging and hard to achieve.

In addition, the study revealed that some UNCTs are not fully engaged in the UNDAF process because of the complexity and bureaucracy of the system, as argued, and the difficulty to work together while having their own agency-specific mandates, policies and strategies. Additionally, some UNCTs find the UNDAF a process that is time and effort consuming.

This evidence-based study found that, in some cases, the funds received from UNDOCO are not enough to support the Resident Coordinators in carrying out their activities at the national level. There are inconsistencies and duplications in the UNCTs funds contributions that create confusions among agencies and affect the efficiency of the UNDAF implementation.

In terms of the UNDAF review, the study revealed that the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system of some countries is ineffective and non-responsive. The study also revealed that the M&E team members are accountable to their agency-specific needs and requirement rather than the common purpose of the organization. This indicates the UNDAF M&E system is not efficient enough to support a quality UNDAF process.

Furthermore, this interview-based study found that, in some countries, the different UN entities do not have the same agreement with the government. Some agencies, operating in the same country, might be tax exempted while others are not. This indicates that the common services system which seems to be effective, at least in theory, is not that effective in reality in some countries.

Notably, despite that some evidences indicate that the UNDAF could be a challenging process when UNCTs are not Delivering as One, the study found that this approach could further complicate the process if it is not studied carefully based on the different country contexts.

Driven from the above evidence-based data analysis and findings, this study suggests a set of recommendations that could be useful for policy makers, UNCTs, governments, donors, and development practitioners to improve the UNDAF formulation process in specific and enhance aid effectiveness in general.

A key recommendation is that organization increases its national ownership advocacy at the central through the General Assembly and that national governments get more engaged with UNCTs at the country level to identify the priorities and implement the UNDAF Action Plan. The study also recommends that the UN entities at headquarters provide UNDOCO with the projected financial support to the RCs and, consequently, UNDOCO allocates resources to RCs based on a realistic and responsive needs-analysis. The recommendations also include the creation of a unified Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) that provides national partners with external access to the UNDAF resource planning and disbursement.

Furthermore, this study recommends that RCs together with relevant HQ unit negotiate one Standard Basic Agreement at the country level that would allow all the UN entities share the same benefits and, thus, enhance the common services system.

Importantly, the study recommends that offices may consider adopting the ‘delivering as one’ and the ‘operating as one’, depending on the complexity and number of UN system. However, it recommends that UNCTs intending to Deliver as One commission independent evaluators to further study the strengths and weaknesses of this approach according to their different contexts.



## **Chapter 1 : LITERATURE REVIEW**

To assess the quality of a strategic programming framework for a leading multilateral organization such as the UN and how it is strategically positioned at the country level, it is important to, first, identify the elements of the strategic planning process and to clearly explain the key characteristics of multilateral cooperation.

In light of the above, the first section of this chapter provides an introductory overview of the strategic management discipline for non-profit and public sector organization and how it differs from that of the private sector. This is followed by an emphasis on the elements of the strategic planning process for non-profit and public sector organizations to further explore the topic and to understand what does it take for an organization to set its strategies and decides on the tools, resources and mechanisms that will lead it to its strategic vision and goals.

In addition, this chapter deliberately reviews literature on key characteristics of multilateral organization, its nature and how it functions. This is crucial for the study since the United Nations is multilateral by nature and its strategic tools and methods are different from those of the private sector. This strengthens the study by providing the reader with a clear understanding of the special features required for the UN to position itself strategically at the country level.

### **Strategic Management and Public Administration**

Studies have shown that public policy and public administration disciplines are interrelated. Though the science of public policy (PP) is as ancient as the human civilization (Birkland, 2011), Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt (2009), however, found that the public administration (PA) discipline was introduced by Woodrow Wilson's reformist essay (1886). This essay has been seen by most scholars and practitioners as the beginning of the self-conscious study of PA in the US.

According to Thomas A. Birkland (2011) there is no single definition of public policy at this point. However, among the various definitions, he defined public policy as the examination of the establishment of rules, laws, goals, and standards that determine and measures what the government does or does not do to create different types of benefits. According to Birkland (2011), the methodology and the applicability of a policy are key success factor towards a reform. On the other hand, Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt (2009) explained that the key definitions and concepts of Public Administration is based on democratic values, meaning that it is very important for governments to operate efficiently while at the same time act in consistency to democratic values towards the public.

“The science of administration is the latest fruit of that study of the science of politics which was begun some twenty-two hundred years ago. It is a birth of our own century, almost of our own generation [...] why was it so late in coming? Why did it wait till this too busy century of ours to demand attention for itself? Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government, and is of course as old as government itself” Wilson (1886: p. 1).

Interestingly, the term strategy is as historic as public policy. According to Ghemawat (2000), the historical use of the term strategy can be dated back to the ancient Greeks. At that time, this term was limited to wars and military plans. For the ancient Greeks, strategy referred to judicial or military actions. Ghemawat (2000) who was searching for the origins of using this term in business, found that the business strategy dates only to the twentieth century. He also found that the use of this term in a competitive context dates to the second half of the twentieth century.

Strategic management provides main vision and direction to an organization and it emphasizes the key objectives, the required policies and plans to achieve these objectives and, then, allocating the adequate resources for its implementation. There are several models of strategic frameworks that were developed by academics and practitioners to assist in the strategic decision-making process of organizations working within a context of complex environment (Ghemawat, 2000).

Over the last quarter of the twentieth century, there was a new wave for reforming the public sector's management. The institutional character of the public sector and that of the state have been under pressure to move towards market-orientation. It started initially in developed countries and then moved to some developing countries in the context of the World Bank structural adjustment programmes (Batley, 1999). This wave led to a new shift from traditional public administration (PA) to new public management (NPM) where the NPM practices and techniques are mainly drawn from the private sector. The key elements of NPM include different forms of management decentralization within the public services, for instance, by the devolution of budget controls and the creation of autonomous agencies, increasing emphasis of performance and client orientation, and increasing competition through out-sourcing mechanisms (Batley, 1999).

In a research conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it was found that the new public sectors practices and techniques involved market-oriented mechanisms that are associated with private sector to bring about reforms in the management of public services (OECD, 1993). Based on that, these new techniques and practices have been labeled, conventionally, the new managerialism or the NPM (Hood, 1991; Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Pollitt, 1993; Ferlie et al., 1996).

Strategic management and strategic planning are two terms that are interchangeably used. However, the general understanding of strategic management is that it is more inclusive, in that it takes account of applying and evaluating the strategic plan's results (Franklin, 2011). At this point, it is important to clarify that strategic management is more comprehensive than strategic planning. Strategic management includes environmental scans that feeds into the strategy formulation and it includes mechanisms of evaluations to the implementation process (Trainer, 2004).

Studies have shown that strategic planning should promise a stream of creative and new ideas that would allow the organization to find new sources of comparative advantage. In this respect strategic planning should be more focused on the early stages of the decision-making processes because at this stage lies the opportunity of choice. Strategic thinking, thus, must be an integral part of the organizations management and decision making (Simon, 2007).

It is crucial not to confuse strategic planning with long range plans. To illustrate, Bryson (1988) found that among the major differences between both is that the strategic planning is mainly focused on resolving issues that are strategically critical, while the long range planning is basically about integrating the goals and objectives of the organization into its current programs. He also found that the strategic planning takes into consideration the assessment of the internal and external environment which is not necessarily considered under the long range planning.

Researchers, therefore, found that strategic planning is the backbone of strategic management (Blackmon, 2008) and strategic planning is considered a key activity of applying strategic management (Robinson, 1992). Furthermore, Bryson (2011) found that the strategic planning process is a planned and controlled approach which aims at making fundamental decision and actions that defines and guides an organization's mission, vision and mandates. Strategic planning, thus, helps leaders and managers address major issues and challenges facing the organization. It includes data collection, assessments and analysis to measure its strategic significance and it puts possible choices of actions.

Importantly, strategic management is a tactful and smart management - a result based management - that is about an institutional analysis of the internal and external environment of an organization. Strategic management can help organize and manage effective organizational change process in which the best is kept while the organization figures out what to change. Additionally, strategic management improves the decision-making process because it focuses attention on the critical issues and the challenges that the organization faces and it helps key decision-makers figure out what they should do to address these issues. Moreover, strategic management enhances organizational effectiveness, responsiveness and resilience. It is about identifying major organizational

issues, responding wisely to internal and external demands and pressures and enhancing organizational legitimacy (Bryson, 2011).

The below diagram illustrates the strategic planning process through which the organization figures out where it is now, where it wants to be in the future and how to get there:



**Figure 1-1: Strategic Planning**

**Source: Strategic Management, Bryson (2011)**

As mentioned above, strategic planning and strategic thinking are interdependent where the latter is about thinking in a context of how to pursue a strategic purposes or achieve a strategic goal. This includes thinking about the context and how should or could it be changed? What the purposes are or should be? What capabilities are needed and how they might be used to achieve the purpose? (Bryson, 2011).

Indeed, there are several models of strategic planning. Among these is Bryson's model (2011) which is used for this study to review the UNDAF process. Bryson suggests that strategic planning process is composed of six key categories. These categories comprise steps of strategic planning process as indicated below:

### **Step # 1: Initiate and Agree Upon a Strategic Planning Process**

The main purpose of this step is to negotiate agreements among key decision makers, internal and external ones, about the strategic planning of the organization. By this agreement, the general good is turned into a specific process. Such agreement must cover the following:

- Purpose of the strategic exercise
- Key steps and milestones
- The outputs and its timeframe
- Key roles and responsibilities
- Resource commitment
- Commitment to apply a strategic change

It is important to identify during this step the key limitations and boundaries that could affect the strategic planning process.

### **Step # 2: Identify organization's mandates**

This step is about the identification of formal and informal mandates of the organization towards the public. It includes the must-do and the must-not-do. Clearly communicated mandates, therefore, will avoid the following:

- Employees not knowing what is expected and what should not be done;
- Employees could feel that they are more tightly constrained in their action as they actually do; and
- Not being told to do something might be understood that they should not do it.

Based on that, members should read the charters, ordinaries, legislation and articles which outlines the organizations' official mandates.

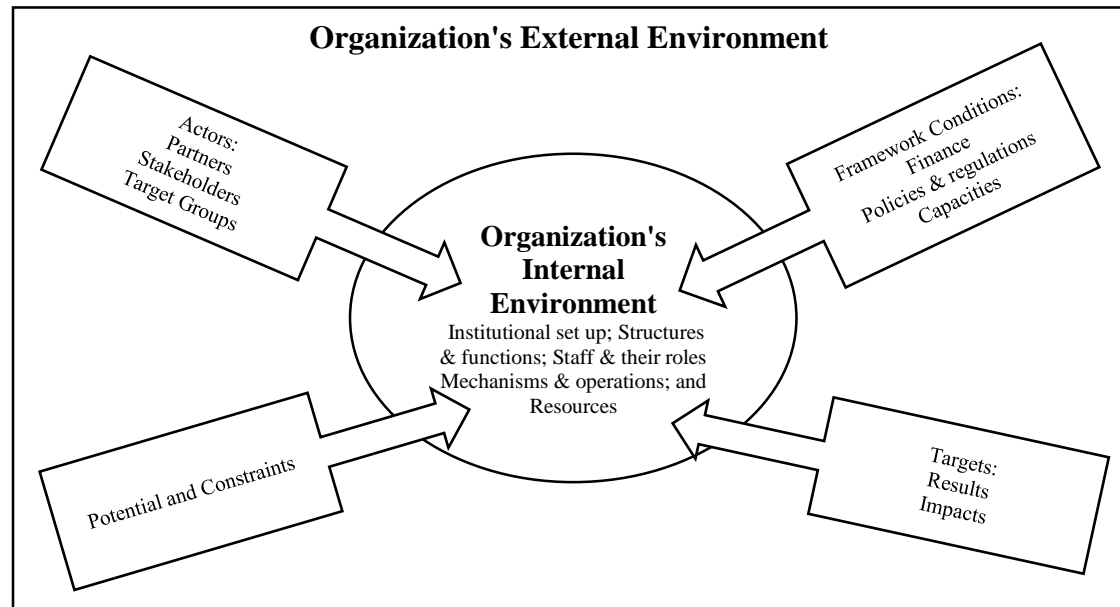
### **Step # 3: Clarify Organization's mission and values**

The mission of an organization is interlinked to its mandates. The mission statement is about an identifiable political or social need that the organization seek to fill. Development of mission statements results from a lengthy discussions about the organization's identity, purpose, core values, philosophy and desired response to the key stakeholders. Mandates, missions and values, together, they create a clearly communicated public value.

### **• Step 4: Assess the organization's external and internal environments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**

Examining the internal environment entails that the internal decision making process is assessed and the key factors that affects this process are identified. This

includes the understanding of the political and economic context and how they affect the organization. On the other hand examining the external environment should be assessed for determining the key threats and challenges facing the organization. This includes the organization's culture and the impact of the current programs and practices. Examining the internal and external environments enable the organization to identify the strategic priorities and focus on them.



**Figure 1-2: Environmental Scan**

Developed from the course notes of Strategic Planning for Public and Non-Profit Organizations (AUC, spring 2014).

### **Step 5: Identify the Strategic Issues Facing the Organization**

Identifying strategic issues is a crucial step in the strategic planning process. It aims at focusing the organization's attention on the key priorities for the effectiveness of the organization. Based on step 4 and its associated analysis, the organization identifies a list of issues that it faces. This list is further classified to operational and strategic categories. Lastly, the issue are prioritized in a logic order. This step is, therefore, the basis for setting the organization's vision and strategy for change. In other words, in this step, stakeholders determine what matters most.

### **Step 6: Formulate strategies to manage these issues**

In this step, the organization attempt to create a strategy map or a strategy statement. By this, the organization clearly decides on which aspect of current strategies should be maintained, created, improved or discontinued. Based on strategic step 5, the organization's decision makers should agree on the best strategies that they will use to deal with the identified strategic issue.

### **Step 7: Review and Adopt the Strategic Plan or Plans**

For an effective implementation of the organization vision and plan, the strategic planning coordinating committee should discuss and approve the resulting priorities and strategies. Other stakeholders should also participate in the approval of the plan or at least parts of it. For an effective planning process, the SPCC must have extensive discussions and should have achieved consensus regarding the plan. The final plan should address issues that key decision makers categorize as a priority. The plan must factor in solutions that makes it accomplishable.

### **Step 8: Establish an effective organizational vision**

In this step, the reorganization is expected to create a best picture about its future as it fulfills its mission and achieves its success. The organizational vision is the final look after implementing the strategy and mission with a link to the society at large by creating a significant public value.

### **Step 9: Develop an effective implementation plan**

Creating a strategic plan without the development of an effective implementation plan is not sufficient at all for reaching the operations priority goals. The changes required and indicated by the adopted new strategies must be incorporated into the system for real value creation to the organization and all stakeholders. An effective implementation process is, therefore, crucial for the achievement of the desirable results. Consequently, action plans should be developed to include all the required activities for the achievement of a specific outcome. Specific results and specific milestones are identified and schedules and timeframes are set in a realistic manner. Furthermore, resources should be allocated so as to facilitate the implementation of the activities.

### **Step 10: Reassess Strategies and Strategic Planning Process**

Once the strategies and priorities have been implemented, the organization should review each strategy and establish a mechanism to measure them. Monitoring and evaluations mechanisms should be clearly identified and should include correction procedures for refocusing and redirecting the plan towards its strategic vision. This includes, period, midterm and final evaluations.

As we can see from the above, Bryson's strategic planning model (2010) is reliable and it fits into the UNDAF context because it is specially designed to integrate all the strategic planning steps required for an international organization to identify and meet its strategic priorities. Researching similar models, it is found that they use variations of the same process steps, but Bryson's model is the most inclusive of all the steps. This is why it is used in this thesis.

## **The Context of Multilateral Cooperation**

*“It is impossible to imagine our globalized world without the principles and practice of multilateralism to underpin it”*  
(Kofi Annan, *We the Peoples*, 2000: p. 68)

The United Nations and its strategic programming framework is, indeed, quite different from that of any other international private sector corporation or a bilateral organization. In other words, the context which the UN works in is very unique. This work does not aim at assessing a private sector organization where the decision making and strategies are made by the shareholders and directed towards profit maximization. Rather, this work aims at assessing a strategic framework of an international organization where decision making is made by the Member States and is directed towards global strategic objectives with no aim at generating financial profits. This section, thus, explores the context of multilateral organizations, its unique character and different dimensions.

The term multilateral, which is used to describe international arrangement, is dated back to 1858. However, using the term in the form of a noun, which means using the term multilateralism, is more recent. In specific, it existed in the first quarter of the twentieth century in the aftermath of the World War I (Caporaso, 1992: p.600-6001). Having mentioned this, multilateralism is defined as “the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states” (Robert Keohane, 1990: p.731), while multilateral cooperation is simply about the governance of the many.

To elaborate, according to (Thakur, 2012) multilateral cooperation refers to the cooperative and collective action to deal with common problems and challenges. For instance, areas such as human rights, economic development, maintaining international peace and security, and the protection of the environment, require collaborative actions to reduce impact and cost. Such global problems cannot be addressed unilaterally because it involves other actors who should be engaged in solving such problems. John Ruggie (1992), however, argued that Keohane’s definition of multilateralism is nominal and described it as incomplete definition. Thus, Ruggie (1992: p.566), argued that “what is distinctive about multilateralism is not merely that it coordinates national policies in groups of three or more states, which is something that other organizational forms also do, but that it does so on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states.” Accordingly, Ruggie (1992), who formulated a more substantive definition of the term, multilateralism is about coordinating relations between three or more states according to certain principles.

In addition to the above, James Caporaso (1992) observed that using the noun form of this term, multilateralism, suggests that it is highly linked to an ideology rather than a state of affairs that is straight forward. This was supported by the definition of



multilateralism by the US foreign policy in the year 1945 as “international governance of the many, where its central principle was opposition [of] bilateral and discriminatory arrangements that were believed to enhance the leverage of the powerful over the weak and to increase international conflict” (Caporaso, 1992: p. 681). Later, in 2003, Powell noticed that developing countries, to a certain extent, lacks the required resource base – financial, technical and technological – that are readily available to developed and industrialized nations. Accordingly, policy changes that are internationally determined are more difficult to comply with in developing countries and, mostly, of a less priority for them to implement (Powell, 2003). Accordingly, as the argument goes, multilateralism could pose some risks on developing countries. This is mainly because multilateral agreements are calling upon these countries to implement some regulatory measures that are beyond their reasonable national capacity.

In addition to the above, Powell (2003) suggests that instead of establishing regulatory criteria that are applied to countries equally and at all levels of development, international agreements can be negotiated in a way that maximizes long-term benefits for all the involved parties. For instance, as the suggestion goes, in exchange of resource regulation concessions, developed countries can provide developing countries, who are less developed, with assistance in the form of technology transfer. This would be of a double benefit. Firstly, introducing and implementing cleaner technologies will encourage economic growth. Secondly, it will create a green industrial practices.

On the other hand, multilateralism has been seen by some scholars and practitioners as the most democratic form of international cooperation and decision-making. They saw that multilateral organizations are considered one of the numerous forums through which developing countries can have the right to, potentially, have an equal voice. Such nations have the opportunity to influence the global agenda – at least in theory. Thus, multilateralism, in general, and multilateral institutions, in specific, provide means of democracy in determining the global issues they should address and how the different states should address them (Powell, 2003). In this respect, Forman (2002) states in an accelerated globalization, multilateralism is the most effective means that helps realizing common goals and associated risks and threats.

At this point, it is crucial to highlight that, the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004) argued that multilateral system has to play a pivotal role in carrying forward reforms at the global level and that globalization is making multilateralism both indispensable and inevitable. Having mentioned this, according to this argument, the multilateral system of the United Nations and its related organizations provide the basis for the global policies which are needed in the areas of development, trade, finance and international peace and security, as well as in a variety of social and technical fields. Its declarations and covenants reflect universally shared values, and its universal participation gives the multilateral system a global legitimacy

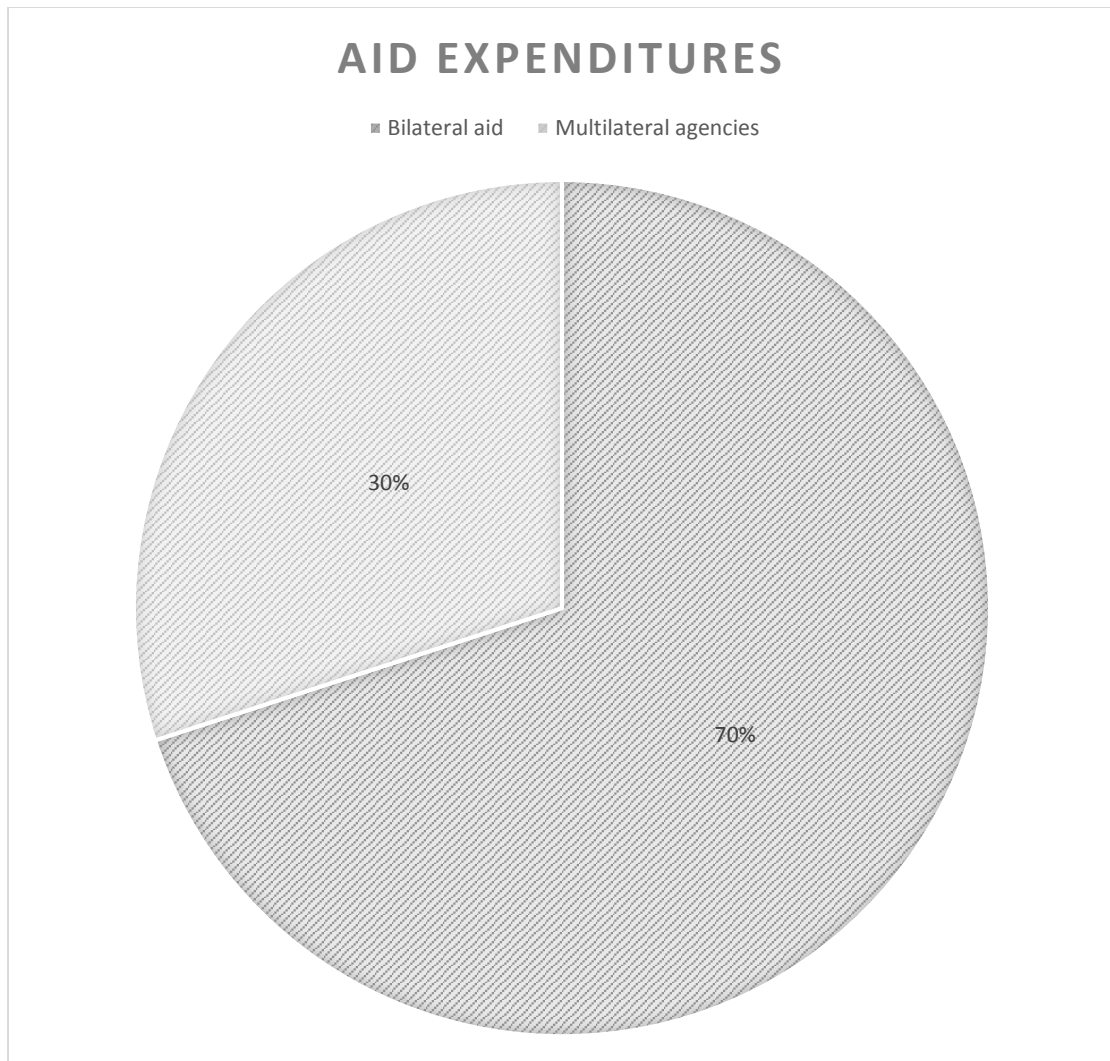
which no individual state, however powerful, can match (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004).

At this point, since we are studying the UN within the global context, it is crucial to note that there are two different types of International Organizations (IOs). These two types are, Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGO).

" Any international organization which is not established by intergovernmental agreement shall be considered as a non-governmental organization for the purpose of these arrangements, including organizations which accept members designated by governmental authorities, provided that such membership does not interfere with the free expression of views of the organization" (E/RES/1968/1296:7) .

On the other hand, an IGO is an organization composed, primarily, of sovereign states, or of other intergovernmental organizations. IGOs are established by treaty or other agreement that acts as a charter creating the group. Examples include the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union (the Yearbook of International Organizations, 2014).

It is important to distinguish between bilateral and multilateral development. Bilateral aid is centered on donor funds and the level of control. For example, core fund contributed to the United Nations are multilateral. If, however, donors' controls are able to decide what to fund, whether this is on a specific country or sector, it is counted as bilateral (Danida, 2008). It is worth mentioning that the contribution of bilateral aid is almost 70% of the total aid expended, while multilaterals agencies' contribution is 30% (ODI, 2006b). "Member States of the United Nations that provide development assistance directly to recipient countries are often referred to as bilateral donors" (UNRIL, 2014).



**Figure 1-3: Aid Expenditures**  
Developed by the researcher based on data collected from ODI, 2006).

Some argues that, multilateral assistance is less tied to self-interest than that of bilateral. Key bilateral organizations that provide international aid as the argument goes, tend to direct their aid to countries where they have strategic ties, potential markets, or economic interests. Usually, donors fund are spent on goods and services from the donor country. In this respect, some arguments see that bilateral aid weakens multilateral cooperation because multilaterals relies on the organization funding but they do not have the authority over them. Although multilateral can push through international agreements they are still lacking the authority over them. This puts constraints on multilateral who wants to push towards the global development agenda rather than the donor specific one.

Today, as the whole world around us is changing in terms of technology, economy and even behavior, the needs and demands placed at the international

organizations have changed as well. This means that, the actual practice of multilateral cooperation has already moved beyond what was known as ‘aid’ in the past. To elaborate, aid refers to the assistance provided to the poor countries. However, today, we have moved beyond that and towards dealing with issues such as the global climate change and financial volatility. These issues are poverty-related in reality but, rather, they are more concerned with a global shift towards the provision of global public goods (Kaul, Grunberg and Stern, 1999).

“International Organizations need to show their capability of evolving from a bureaucratic to a managerial model that is based on efficient use of resources, orientation towards results, accountability for performance, financial transparency, decentralization and effectiveness of operations [...] this implies recruiting, educating, and nurturing international managers with the right competencies and skills to, on one hand, effectively and efficiently implement policies decided by governing bodies (top-down flows), while on the other, identify, analyze, and understand global issue in order to properly orient to political decision-making process (bottom-up flows)” (Missoni and Alesani, 2014: p.17).

To this end, Missoni and Alesani (2014) explained that, IOs such as the United Nations, has generally three managerial models: 1) Diplomatic/Political; 2) Functional; and 3) Professional.

The Diplomatic/Political managers are directly supporting the IOs governing bodies to build political consensus around global issues, economic rules and policies, and socio economic objectives. The Diplomatic/Political management profile plays a key role in drafting substantial documents aimed at defining global standards, financial rules and regulations, or intergovernmental agreements. Furthermore, they contribute greatly in promoting global advocacy campaigns and behaviors of global suasion, for instance, against criminality, corruption and terrorism.

The Functional Managers, are those running the day-to-day operations of IOs. This entails setting-up, managing and continuously developing operating mechanisms such as programming, planning, career development systems, performance measurements, and external and internal communications. This model supports this thesis and the international nature of these organizations makes these tasks even more challenging because in IOs there is an inherent need for harmonizing the diverse professional and cultural backgrounds and building a separate international culture of public management which is, indeed, different from the international PA models.

The Professional Managers are those who implement programs, projects and field work. They have specific skills and competencies that are profession and sector relevant, such as agriculture, security, and humanitarian aid.

Missoni and Alesani (2014) found that despite IOs have been studied and investigated by a number of disciplines ranging from political sciences to international relations, the managerial approach to these organizations started very recent through an increasing number of articles in international journals. Nonetheless, there is no systematization, to date, of management practices and reforms in IOs into a comprehensive framework that is specially tailored to the operational and international specifications of these organizations.

It is crucial to highlight at this point that this paper aims at filling in this gap in international literature through the identification and exploration of the IOs strategic programming framework main features. The reader will note the cross-functional scope of this study from strategy to operations with a comprehensive understanding of the key challenges of this process. IOs have significant similarities and, thus, can be usefully compared since they share the same system of global governance.

From the above literature, we can conclude that multilateral organizations are owned by many stakeholders and they aim at serving the public in many countries by cooperating mainly with the governments of these countries. This global scope entails that these organizations well-position themselves strategically in order to respond to the current global challenges and demands.

Strategic planning for international organizations is quite different than that for the private sector. International Organizations do not aim for profit maximization but, rather, they seek to have a positive impact on the society at large that would enhance the quality of basic services provided to the public in the targeted developing countries.

Multilateral organizations could be similar in their characteristics and strategic directions. Their strategic targets and scope of work are interrelated and they complement each other.

Driven from the fact that multilateral organizations have to deal with several nations, the demands placed on these organizations are complex and challenging. It also makes the institutional structure and decision making of these organizations very complex. However, among the key strengths of multilaterals is that it ensures participation of all member states in the management of the world's affairs. Multilateral cooperation is a tool for legitimacy and democracy - although it could be seen by some as interfering and bias.

Defending multilateralism, therefore, is not meant to suggest that the multilateral cooperation system is simple. When various actors are involved and the issues negotiated are strategic and global, we cannot refer to it as simple system. Among the various complex options, Ruggie's affirmation that multilateralism is so demanding

because it necessitates that states resist the temptation of direct national interest fulfillment seems to be a valid argument.

## **The United Nations**

An international organization such as the United Nations is multilateral in nature. It involves many nations working together. It was created to assist in increasing abilities through the coordination of policies among nations (UN, 2014). The Member States of the United Nations are listed in the appended table labelled “UN Member States”.

“The strength of the United Nations in development lies in promoting a people-centered and comprehensive approach to development, upholding values such as universality, multilateralism, neutrality, objectivity, flexibility and the ability to use grant resources flexibly in the interest of partner countries” (Bertrand, 2005:v).

The United Nations was established after the World War II, specifically in 1945, with structure intended to address failures of the previous system - the League of Nations (LN) - which was founded after the Paris Peace Conference and aimed at ending World War I. At its founding, the UN had 51 Member States. Now it has 193 (UN, 2014). The UN, at that time, inherited a number of organizations founded by the LN such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the health organization [restructured as the World Health Organization (WHO)], and the International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC) (precursor to the UNESCO; UN, 2014).

Importantly, when we describe the UN, we need to be mindful of the two distinguished dimensions of the UN as an institution at large. The Organization’s six main organs, which are included in the Charter, and the UN system, which is comprised of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies (Missoni and Alesani, 2014). The UN six main bodies are appended under the title “The UN Main Bodies”.

The UN Funds and Programmes were created, initially, to meet needs not foreseen at San Francisco, such as Palestine refugees, food aid, development assistance, or the environment. UN Funds and Programmes are subordinate to the UN, but as they are directly controlled by distinctive inter-governmental bodies and originate the majority of their financial resources from different other sources than the UN budgets, they are, to a certain degree, more alike to specialized agencies than being a subsidiary organs such as UN committees and commissions. Moreover, it is important to clarify that their activities are more operational and at field level. A list of these funds and programmes are appended under the title “The UN Programmes and Funds”.

On the other hand, the specialized agencies are legally independent IOs. They have their own rules, organs, financial resources and membership that were brought into relationship with the UN through negotiated arrangements and agreements. Some of these agencies came into existence before the First World War. Particularly, some of these specialized agencies were associated with the League of Nations, while others were created simultaneously with the UN and, yet, others were created by the UN itself to meet developing needs. Specialized agencies, in general, work with the United Nations and each other through “the coordinating machinery of ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level” (The Charter of the UN, article 57 and article 63, 1945). A list of these agencies is appended under the title “The UN Specialized Agencies”.

The UN has a unique international character that empowers it to take actions on a range of issues expressed through its General Assembly (GA) by its Member States. The 193 Member States are bounded together by the Charter of the UN which was signed on 26 June 1945, in San Francisco, at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and which came into force on 24 October 1945. The statute of the International Court of Justice is an integral part of the Charter. In addition to the UN Charter, the promotion of economic and social development is one of the central mandates of the United Nations (The Charter of the UN, 1945). The UN in-country mandates is appended under the title “The UN Mission at the Country Level”

The United Nations, thus, works in every corner of the globe. The UN works on a very broad range of strategic issues, from environment and refugees protection, sustainable development, disaster relief, disarmament, counter terrorism and non-proliferation, to promoting democracy, gender equality and the advancement of women, human rights, economic and social development, governance and international health, among others. An organization’s structure of the UN is appended under the title “The United Nations system”.

## **Chapter 2 : METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Strategy**

The nature of this study is highly qualitative. This requires that the direct and indirect information collected are accurate, credible and from reliable sources. These sources were extended beyond the available scholarly writings on multilateral cooperation and the strategic management discipline for international organizations to include independent evaluation reports, interviews, and guidelines. This also entails the utilization of information in relevant international treaties and agreements.

Importantly, this interview-based research uses primary data collection and data analysis of semi-constructed in-depth interviews with UN staff members at the national and the international levels. The conversational nature of the interviews allows for more probing in order to obtain deeper insight of information.

Methods of data-collection and data-analysis integrate Bryson's strategic planning model (2010) which reliable and fits into the context of evaluating the quality and effectiveness of the UNDAF at the national level.

### **Research Design**

This study aims at being an evaluative study of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as a strategic multi-year planning instrument that aims at enhancing the UN system at the national level. This evaluation includes a desk review of random sample of UNDAFs from different regions. The evaluation includes clear indicators and provide evidences on the quality of implementing the UN strategic programming model at the national level.

### **Interviews**

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to cover the UNDAF methodology at HQ and its formulation and implementation at the country level. Interviews were conducted with fourteen UN staff members at the national and the international levels with a special emphasize on Egypt. The purposive interviewed sample covered: UN Development Operations Coordination Office at headquarters, Resident Coordinator System at the country level, UN Country Team, Aid Effectiveness, Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender and Poverty Reduction. This sample is purposively selected to cover all functions relevant to the UNDAF process at the national and the international level and also to cover all the relevant arguments with and against the UNDAF and its centralization of the development operations activities. The selected interviewees are involved in the UNDAF throughout its stages: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



The in-depth interviews were based on open-ended questions to facilitate the process and get the interviewees more engaged in the discussion by encouraging them to express their opinions and concerns based on their experience. This was found very important for the analysis which aims in the end at improving the quality UNDAF in realizing its objectives and to further improve its associated operational processes.

The process of data collection and data analysis through the semi-structured interviews was guided by a set of questions that aimed at enriching the discussion. Different sets of interview questions were used during the process depending on the context of key responsibilities and contributions of the interviewees to the UNDAF. Further, some probing questions emerged during the interview process to further explore issues and deepen the discussions. The topics and questions covered during the interviews are appended under the title “Interviews”.

As an integral part of the academic integrity, all respondents were thoroughly briefed on the purpose of the interview. Further, they all agreed to sign the informed consent form (appended). All questions were asked in English language, and all the responses received back were in the same language. To honor confidentiality, names of interviewees, their title and agency they work were kept anonymous.

### **Scope of the Evaluation**

This evidence based evaluation utilizes the theoretical strategic planning model of Bryson (2010) and provides an in-depth knowledge of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Furthermore, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the main challenges and best practices of the UN development reform. This paper covers the period from 1997 to 2014. In other words, it covers the UN reform since its inception up-to-date.

This paper brings theory into practice by linking the policies and guidelines generated at HQ to the implementation at the country level. It utilizes evidence from a randomly selected samples of current UNDAFs from different countries. This evaluation uses indicators adapted from the UN reform and its strategic objectives, the comprehensive policy reviews, the UNDG strategic priorities, UNDAF guidelines and all relevant internationally-agreed goals and treaties.

## The Selected UNDAFs' Random Sample

A set of a randomly selected UNDAF sample was chosen to further provide a solid evidence for this research. The UNDAFs were extracted from the UNDG website. The below table shows brief information of the selected sample:

**Table 2-1: Summary of the Reviewed Random UNDAFs' Sample**

| <b>Country</b> | <b>UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies participating in the UNDAF</b> | <b>Programming Cycle</b> | <b>Estimated Financial Resources Required to Aachieve the UNDAF Outcomes (in USD million)</b> | <b>Delivering as One</b> | <b>Region</b>                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Egypt          | 24                                                                              | 2013-2017                | USD 736.0                                                                                     | No                       | Arab States                   |
| Guyana         | 10                                                                              | 2012-2016                | USD 15.9                                                                                      | Yes (2006)               | Latin America & the Caribbean |
| India          | 20                                                                              | 2013-2017                | USD 1,192.7                                                                                   | No                       | Asia & Pacific                |
| Moldova        | 22                                                                              | 2013-2017                | USD 217.3                                                                                     | Yes (2011)               | Europe & CIS                  |
| Zambia         | 12                                                                              | 2011-2015                | USD 335.7                                                                                     | Yes (2011)               | Africa                        |

Note: the above data are adapted from the below sources:

1. UNDAF, Moldova, 2013-2017. Retrieved from [http://www2.un.md/news\\_room/pr/2012/undaf/United\\_Nations\\_Republic\\_of\\_Moldova\\_Partnership\\_Framework.pdf](http://www2.un.md/news_room/pr/2012/undaf/United_Nations_Republic_of_Moldova_Partnership_Framework.pdf).

Retrieved on 10 January, 2015

2. UNDAF, Egypt, 2013-2017. Retrieved from

<http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=EGY&fuseaction=UN%20Country%20Coordination%20Profile%20for%20Egypt>. Retrieved on 10 January, 2015

3. UNDAF, Zambia, 2011-2015. Retrieved from

<http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=ZAM&fuseaction=UN%20Country%20Coordination%20Profile%20for%20Zambia>. Retrieved on 10 January, 2015.

4. UNDAF, India, 2013-2017. Retrieved from

<http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=IND&fuseaction=UN%20Country%20Coordination%20Profile%20for%20India>. Retrieved on 10 January, 2015.

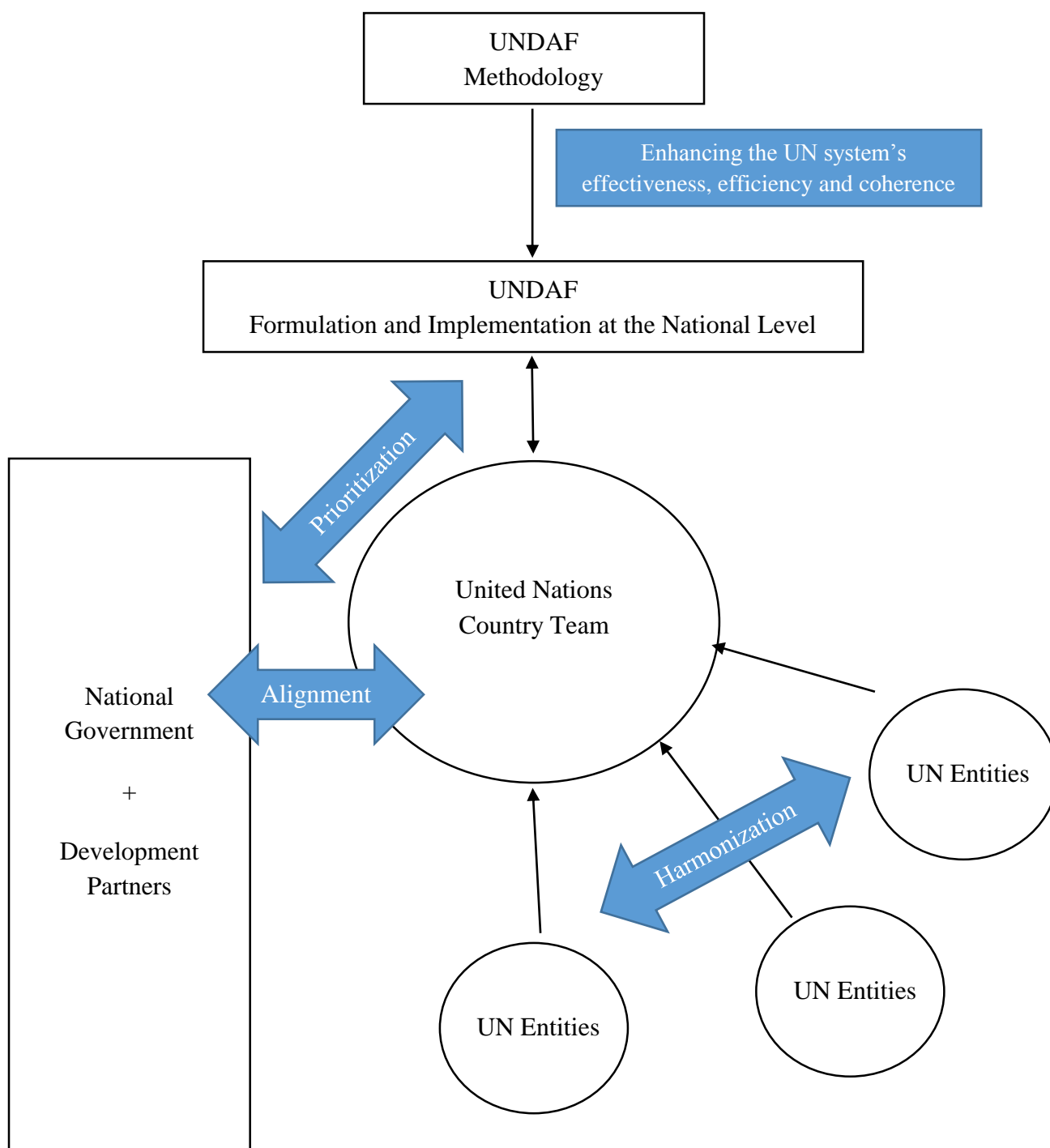
5. UNDAF, Guyana, 2011-2015. Retrieved from

<http://www.undg.org/unct.cfm?module=CoordinationProfile&page=Country&CountryID=GUY&fuseaction=UN%20Country%20Coordination%20Profile%20for%20Guyana>. Retrieved on 10 January 2015.

6. Delivering as one countries as of 5 November 2014. Retrieved from

[http://www.undg.org/docs/13628/Delivering%20as%20One%20countries\\_Nov%202014\\_DUP\\_11-05-2014\\_10-30-24-31\\_AM.pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/13628/Delivering%20as%20One%20countries_Nov%202014_DUP_11-05-2014_10-30-24-31_AM.pdf). Retrieved on 24 January 2015.

## Conceptual Framework



**Figure 2-1: Conceptual Framework**  
Developed by the researcher.

The first stage data collection and data analysis focuses on the United Nations reform and its outcomes, key decision making bodies, reporting lines, and the strategic objectives. Following that, the study focuses on the UNDAF methodology formulated at the UN headquarters and how it is designed to increase effectiveness, efficiency and coherence among the UN entities at the national level.

The research then studies how the different UN agencies are using their comparative advantage to help governments identify their national development priorities. The research also investigates how the UN entities are harmonized under the UNDAF while at the same time they are accountable to their agency specific mandates and needs. The UNDAF process is appended under the title “The Holistic Approach to the UNDAF”.

The research utilizes Bryson’s strategic planning model (2010), demonstrated below, to identify the degree of effectiveness of the UNDAF as a strategic planning instrument at the national level. The study found that this model is reliable and it fits into the UNDAF context because it is specially designed to integrate all the strategic planning steps required for an international organization to identify and meet its strategic priorities.

**Figure 2-2: Bryson’s Model (2010)**

| <b>Category</b>                       | <b>Strategic Step</b>                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>I. Preparation: Political Will</b> | 1. Initiate and Agree Upon a Strategic Planning Process     |
| <b>II. Visioning</b>                  | 2. Identify organizational mandates.                        |
|                                       | 3. Clarify organizational mission and values.               |
| <b>III. Analysis</b>                  | 4. Examining the internal environment of the organization   |
|                                       | 5. Identify the strategic issues facing the organization.   |
| <b>IV. Strategy Planning</b>          | 6. Formulate strategies to manage these issues.             |
|                                       | 7. Review and adopt the strategic plan or plans.            |
|                                       | 8. Establish an effective organizational vision.            |
| <b>V. Operational Planning</b>        | 9. Develop an effective implementation process.             |
| <b>VI. Review</b>                     | 10. Reassess strategies and the strategic planning process. |

### **Chapter 3 : THE UN REFORM AND THE UNDAF**

*“Beneath the surface of states and nations, ideas and language, lies the fate of individual human beings in need. Answering their needs will be the mission of the United Nations in the century to come”. [United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech]*

Back in the 1997, reform efforts were initiated to review the UN activities and the manner in which these activities are managed and conducted. By this, the reform aimed at identifying new mechanisms in which the UN can efficiently and effectively meet its expected challenges and demands as the UN was entering the new millennium (GA, A/51/950; 1997).

The UN reform program, was mainly about strengthening the UN operations at the national level, with a focus on improving programme and policy coherence. It resulted in the establishment of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the Resident Coordinator's System, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (Bertrand, 2005).

#### **The United Nations Development Group**

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG), emerging from the UN reform, unites the UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies. It aims at providing a more coherent, effective and efficient support to countries in order to attain internationally-agreed development goals (UNDG, 2014). The chairmanship of the UNDG always lies with the UNDP's Administrator. Since 2009 to date, Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, is the Chair of the UNDG. On the other hand, the strategic oversight and mandates of the UNDG are provided by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United Nations General Assembly (GA). The UNDG structure and membership are appended.

In order to complement these roles and further strengthen the UNDG to realize its objectives, an Advisory Group to the UNDG is formed to provide the UNDG Chair with the needed advice and guidance on managing the operational dimensions of the UNDG and the Resident Coordinator (RC) system (UNDG, 2014).

The Secretary-General created the Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) in 1997 to assist the UNDG carry out its strategic role and to promote economic and social progress by assisting UN agencies to deliver effective, coherent and relevant support to countries. DOCO supports the UNDG in uniting the UN system and improving the quality of its development assistance. Additionally, it aims at making operations more efficient, reducing transaction costs for governments, and, ultimately,

helping governments to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development objectives (UNDG, 2014).

In addition to the above, DOCO assists RCs to streamline UN coordination mechanisms at the country level. It coordinates the UN development activities and provides strategic support for national plans and priorities. Furthermore, DOCO administers the UN Country Coordination Fund (CCF), which provides the RCs with the required financial resources to improve their coordination capacity. DOCO allocates these resources and monitors it (DOCO, 2014).

### **The UN RC System and the UNCT**

RCs are senior UN officials appointed by the SG and overseen by the UNDG. They lead and coordinate the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) operational activities. RCs are guided by DOCO on the process of making country programmes, led by the various UN agencies, more effective, efficient and coherent to national priorities. The RC system, therefore, encompasses the entire UN system entities that carry-out development operational activities in programme countries.

The UNCT, headed by the RC, is comprised of all UN agencies, funds and programs in a country. UNCTs are mandated to strengthen the analytical capacities of national governments and contributes in articulating its key objectives and priorities based on international norms and standards. UNCTs provide national governments with policy advice and technical assistance, pilot projects, build institutional and human capacities, and advocate for internationally agreed standards and norms. UNCTs are committed to work with development stakeholders to achieve the comprehensive policy review's endorsed agenda; the outcomes of the 'World Summit' (2005); the Millennium Declaration (MD); the Doha Declaration (2008) on Financing for Development; and other internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs, international treaty obligations, norms and standards, such as the international labour standards and the fundamental rights and principles at work. Importantly, the key deliverable of UNCTs is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

### **The United Nations Development Assistance Framework**

The UNDAF represents the collective and strategic planning contribution of the UNCT to the development and implementation of national strategic priorities. The UNDAF programming network reflects the UNDG strategic priorities as well as the national strategic priorities of governments at the country level. It is, therefore, a multi-year planning instrument at the national level. The UNDAF aims at providing a coherent, integrated and collective United Nations system response to development strategic priorities of a country. The Results Matrix (RM) is a main component of the

UNDAF formulation process. The RM is considered the organization's business plan at the national level (Overseas Development Institute, 2006).

The 'UNDAF Guidelines' and its 'Technical Guidance for UNCTs' respond to the TCPRs and the independent evaluations of the UNDAF. The UNDAF Guidelines (2010) for instance, responding to the 2007 TCPR, simplified the process of the common country programming and provided UNCTs with the required flexibility for conducting a common country assessment (CCA) within the national context. It worth mentioning that the UNDAF is results oriented; UNCTs use a results based management (RBM) framework for the UNDAF preparation.

The UNDAF stakeholders include “governments, including line ministries; social partners, including workers and employers organizations; other development partners relevant to a country context; civil society; and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)” (UNDAF Guidance Note, 2010:p.3).

Based on the comprehensive policy reviews and the Paris Declaration (2005), the UNDAF Guidelines (2010) clearly emphasizes the following approaches to the UNDAF formulation:

1. **National Ownership:** This entails that the UNDAF formulation process is inclusive of all stakeholders in all its stages.

2. **Alignment:** The TCPR urges RCs and UNCTs to align the UNDAF with the national development priorities, systems, strategies, and programming cycles.

3. **Inclusiveness:** The approach to formulating the UNDAF has to be inclusiveness of the whole UN system, with full involvement of specialized and non-resident agencies.

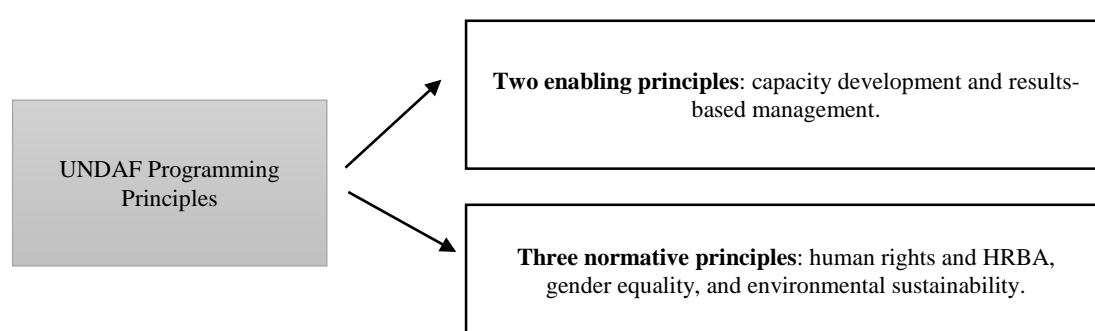
4. **Integration:** While preparing the UNDAF, it is crucial to integrate its five programming principles (the human rights-based approach, gender equality, environmental sustainability, results-based management, and capacity development) that are tailored to the country context.

5. **Accountability:** This entails that the UNDAF stakeholders have mutual accountability for the development results.

In addition to the above, it is important to clarify that the inter-linkages and coherence between the UNDAF and the agencies' Country Programme Document (CPD) and Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) are an integral part of the UNDAF formulation. To further support this, the UNDG kept the UNDAF preparation process flexible so as to improve its adaptability to various contexts, including post-crisis and middle-income countries. Furthermore, the process of the UNDAF formulation,

throughout, is underpinned by a coherent and inclusive approach within the UN Country Team (UNCT), recognizing the expertise, mandates, and various contributions that UN agencies may bring to bear in the UNDAF development and implementation, in support of countries' strategic development priorities.

The undg has identified five interrelated programming principles that the UNCT must apply at the country level through the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UNDAF formulation. These principles constitute a guide and starting point for all the UNDAF stages. It is important to distinguish between the two sets of the UNDAF programming principles, the normative and the enabling (illustrated in the below diagram).



**Figure 3-1: UNDAF Programming Principles**  
Adapted from the 'Guidance Note on the Principles Guiding the UNDAF' (2010).

The enabling principles of RBM and capacity developments offer the required means to make the three normative principles of the UNDAF operational (Guidance Note, 2010).

**1. A Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA):** The UNCT should support actions that assist Member States to fulfil the international obligations for human rights. Having mentioned this, all UNCT need to use Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in order to support country analysis, call for development priorities within the national framework and formulate an UNDAF that reflect the UNCT's strategic use of expertise, resources and comparative advantages.

**2. Gender Equality:** Achieving gender equality is at the heart of the HRBA. Eliminating all forms of gender discrimination is an integral part of the HRBA. In order to achieve gender equality, both targeted gender specific interventions and gender mainstreaming constitute the main strategies of the United Nations strategic planning and supported analysis. In this respect, country teams have to build partnerships with women's groups as well as gender-equality advocates who have influence over the development agenda and also can demand accountability for implementing gender-



equality dimensions of the national laws, strategies and policies. The gender scorecard and the gender audit are too important tools for assessing gender mainstreaming progress at the operational level.

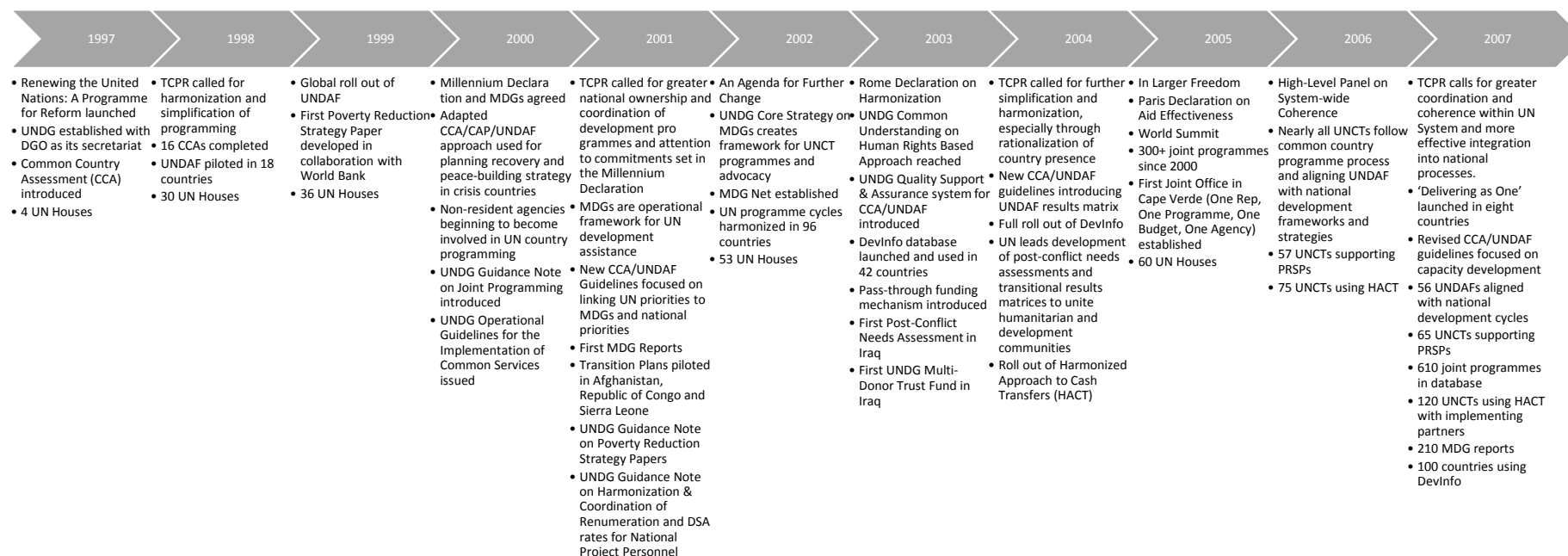
**3. Environmental Sustainability:** Environment sustainability is a central target because meeting social and economic needs are mainly based on natural resources. Sustaining these resources is, thus, a key aspect for social and economic growth.

**4. Results-Based Management (RBM):** Through the RBM, the UNCT confirms that its resources contribution are directly linked to a logical series of results which increase in their complexity level and their ambition higher-up the logical chain from output level to outcome level and then impact. These are MD/MDG related development priorities. RBM, thus, requires the proper identification of critical assumptions and norms about risk assessments and programme environment; clearly defined abilities and results' indicators; and monitoring and reporting on performance.

**5. Capacity Development:** is considered the central thrust and key purpose of UNCTs' cooperation. Capacity development is taking place within country's development framework and it responds to in-country capacity assessments and strategies for capacity development. In line with the Human Rights Based Approach, such capacities help duty-bearers to meet their responsibilities and obligations and rights-holders to claim their rights. Accordingly, coherent UNCTs are required to make use of these inter-related programming principles. However, it is worth mentioning that other cross-cutting issues could be relevant in a specific country context.

The UNDAF formulation process went through several improvement processes since its inception as illustrated in Figure 3-2.

## Timeline of UNDG reform progress



**Figure 3-2: Timeline of the UNDAF Reform**

Adapted from UNDG Brochure (2008; p.2). Retrieved from [http://www.undg.org/docs/10870/UNDG\\_UN-Coherence\\_1997-2008\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/10870/UNDG_UN-Coherence_1997-2008_brochure.pdf).

Retrieved on 5 January 2015.

In 2005, the United Nations Development Group Office (DGO), commissioned an independent evaluator, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), to review the Role and Quality of the UNDAFs. This independent evaluation revealed that: (a) UNDAFs became more focused; (b) they were following country processes; (c) they provided good opportunities for crosscutting theme; (d) government involvement was increasing; (e) UNDAFs have strengthened the collective identity of the UN and built teamwork; and (f) they were seen more as a regionally and country-owned rather than headquarters-owned process.

However, other aspects were detected, such as: “(a) the continuing burden of transaction costs which have reduced little over the last five years; (b) the lag with regards to new aid modalities which are outpacing progress in the coherence of the UNDF in some countries; and (c) the difficult problems of focus and prioritization” (Longhurst, 2006:p.v).

In addition to the above and in terms of the UNDAF’s efforts in promoting alignment and harmonization, ODI (2006a) evaluation found that considerable efforts were made by UNCTs but there is no significant pay-off yet with respect to the strategic positioning of the UN system at the national level. The report also found that the UNCT haven’t exerted their full comparative advantage in programming. It also revealed that some donors were concerned that the UNDAF is not keeping-up with the new aid modalities such as those for budget support. However, the government views were less critical and most of them saw the UN as a “counterweight to the Bretton Woods Institutions, more neutral and better at taking up sensitive issue” (Longhurst, 2006:p.vi).

Later in 2008, the UNDG report on ‘Promoting UN Coherence, Effectiveness, and Relevance: an Overview on Progress Since 1997’, revealed the below positive trends:

**A. UNDAF alignment with National priorities:** the UNDAF has realized its value as a mechanism through which UN agencies plan together and analyze the most suitable response to the development needs at the national level. UNDAFs and CCAs became more strategic, focused and better aligned with national development priorities. UN entities are working in teams through the UNCT and theme groups, using the same timetables and processes to program together.

**B. Simplified and Harmonized Procedures:** UN agencies, operationally, are working together with synergy through simplified and harmonized programming tools, cycles and procedures.

**C. UN Resident Coordinator (RC) system improved:** the UN RC system which is the heart of inter-agency coordination at the national level, has grown more accountable and much stronger.

**D. Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT):** the four agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and UNDP have agreed on a HACT to their implementing partners which is simplifying the funding channels considerably. The UNDG agreed in principle on guidelines to apply the same approach in the other UN agencies.

**E. More inclusive and coherent planning and programming:** UN programming and planning has become more coherent and inclusive, increasingly drawing on the range of UN agencies, donors, government representatives and civil society partners. Surveys, indicates that UN staff members are now more aware of the available development expertise across the different agencies and are open to new means of working together.

**F. Common UN premises:** The number of UN common premises has increased to fifty nine.

**G. Integrated post conflict and crisis support:** coordination in crisis and post conflict situations significantly improved. The UNDG works very closely with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the World Bank, the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and regional organizations to assist partner governments effectively in crisis and post crisis situations.

Despite of this progress, the annual reports of the RCs indicate that there are still some UN agencies who did not adequately harmonize to the inclusive and coherence planning and implementations mechanisms of the UN reform. Some agencies still have not simplified or sufficiently harmonized their operations and procedures for administering issues such as finance and personnel. There are still major differences in the approaches used for planning and resource allocations among the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies. Such system incompatibility and different concepts of planning remain significant obstacles to programming and reporting effectively together (UNDG, 2014).

In respect to the above, the UNDG was able to identify key obstacles that hinder the UN agencies from planning and working together in a more coherent, effective and efficient. Consequently, the UNDG developed policies to address many of them. However, in several cases, new and agreed procedures were not translated into actual progress on the ground. The reason behind that, as explained by the UNDG lies in the improper system of incentives for management and staff (UNDG, 2014).

To elaborate on the above, the UN system is still focused around what individual staff members do for their agencies individually and not for the UN system as a whole. Additionally, staff performance evaluations do not count on system-wide objectives. It

only does for the RCs. However, it is worth mentioning that such performance evaluation mechanisms are slightly changing in the past few years. For instance, UNFPA started to add recognition for staff members' work on behalf of the UN system to its performance appraisal system (UNDG, 2008).

Importantly, the financial aspect plays an equally critical role in driving change within the UN system, or in some cases impeding it. To clarify, over the past 15 years, the shift from core funding to extra-budgetary (XB) has, indeed, increased competition over resources. This is considered the main reason behind the UN agencies' tendency to raise money separately. Accordingly, this approach has encouraged staff members to work on increasing visibility of individual agencies, rather than the whole UN organization, and, thus, generate more funds for their parent-agency (UNDG, 2008).

In its efforts to overcome the above obstacles and in order to enhance the UN system coherence, effectiveness and efficiency at the national level, the One Fund and the budgetary framework in the DaO pilots, in addition to some instruments such as the multi-donor trust funds have greatly encouraged UN agencies to build closer cooperation in terms of resource mobilization, with support from the RCs.

### **Development Effectiveness**

In January 2008, the UNDG Working Group on Aid Effectiveness, in its 'Response to the Changing Aid Environment' report, stressed that the key principle of the 2005 Paris declaration has always been one of the key principles of the UN system's development operations activities. This is consistently reflected in all policies derived from the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of 2007 (GA, Resolution 62/208). From then onward, the UN focuses on initiatives and efforts necessary to enhance aid quality and impact. Furthermore, as a signatory of the declaration, the UNDG advocates for strengthening partnerships between programme countries and donors to ensure aid flows predictability, capacities of country's development to manage for results and, in particular, implementing the Paris declaration in countries party to it. Mainly, the GA resolution 62/208 (2007) called for effective, timely and concrete action for the implementation of all agreed commitments on aid effectiveness. The TCPR also urged the UN development system at the regional and country levels to strengthen the national capacities, in support of strategic national development priorities, through the CCA and the UNDAF. The TCPR, therefore, recognizes the potential of the UNDAF and the associated RM as the collective, integrated, and coherent programming framework for country level contributions. One year later, in 2008, the GA resolution 63/232 on UN operational activities for development changed the comprehensive policy review from a triennial cycle to a quadrennial one. Subsequent reviews will, thus, be held on a quadrennial basis from 2012 onwards. This is mainly to provide better policy guidance to the UN funds, programmes and

specialized agencies. Consequently, the GA decided to hold its first Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) in 2012.

The GA resolution 63/232 also called for “aligning the strategic planning cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with the comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (A/RES/63/232, 2008: p.4). Furthermore, it encouraged the UN specialized agencies and urged the UN funds and programs to carry out the necessary changes in order to align their planning cycles with the QCPRs. This includes implementation of the midterm reviews (MTRs) as necessary and reporting on the adjustments made to fit the new cycle of the comprehensive review at the ECOSOC substantive session.

Development effectiveness involves four key elements for UNCT engagement:

**Table 3-1: Elements of the Development Effectiveness**

|                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. National ownership</b>                       | UNDAFs and country analysis should be aligned with and based on national priorities strategies and priorities. This requires governments’ leadership and engagement of stakeholders to maximize the UN system’s contribution, through UNDAFs, to the development process at the country level.                                                                                  |
| <b>2. Partnership</b>                              | It is required that the UN Country Teams partner with relevant stakeholders such as all levels of national governments, including line-ministries, civil society, social partners, donors, forms of volunteerism and civic engagement, and international financial institutions, This also includes the indigenous peoples and the minorities and all other development actors. |
| <b>3. Comparative advantage</b>                    | UNCTs are required to assess their capacities at the national level and focus their efforts on national development priorities, while responding to international standards and norms, where they can make a real difference. UNCTs are required to provide leadership and support while avoiding duplications and creating synergies with the ongoing interventions.           |
| <b>4. Maximum effectiveness and accountability</b> | UNCTs’ performances have to be measurable. Additionally, accountabilities have to be clarified. By this, the system can deliver effectively.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

**Note: the above data are adapted from the UNDAF Guidelines (2010).**

## Delivering as One

Back in 2006, the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence, a group composed of policy makers and heads of states tasked to find ways to enhance the UN system's ability to respond to the emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, recommended the establishment of the Delivering as One approach. Having mentioned this, it is important to clarify that the DaO approach is based on the existing reform agenda set by UN Member States. This reform agenda asks the UN development system to accelerate its efforts to increase effectiveness and coherence of its development operations in the field through the establishment of Joint Offices.

In response to the High-level Panel's Report and consistent with the work under the TCPR, the Secretary-General requested the Chair of the UNDG to move forward with the implementation of the Delivering as One pilots. Accordingly, the DaO approach was first piloted in 8 countries: Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay, and Viet Nam.

Late in 2014, the 'Standard Operating Procedures for Countries Adopting the DaO' was developed to assist countries adopt this approach. It highlights that the DaO is basically built on six key principles:

1. **The One Programme:** this principle unifies the entire UN system under 'one' development strategy/plan at the national level, underpinned by integrated policy positions and services as well as immediate monitoring through 'joint work plans'.

2. **The Common Budgetary Framework:** This principle entails that all planned and/or costed programme activities are presented in one place transparently which provides a shared view for all stakeholders on the UNS system contribution in total at the country level.

3. **The One Fund (optional):** This principle provides stakeholders with a performance-based support to the United Nations' integrated policy approaches.

4. **The One Leader:** The UNCT leadership and the one leader principle is basically built on mutual accountability. It includes the enhanced coordination function which is led by the RC, involving the whole UNCT, to carry-out relevant responsibilities relevant for the role and results of the UN system in the country.

5. **Operating as One:** This principle provides options for a cost-effective operations through common services.

**6. Communicating as One:** this is about advocacy for operational and normative matters in addition to the facilitation of coherent messaging. This is also about consistency in terms of strategic dialogue with the host countries.

From the above, this study concludes that the undg generates synergies by assisting agencies to work together in a harmonized and aligned manner. The strategic priorities of the undg responds to the global development priorities and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (Qcpr). As part of the UN reform process in 1997 the SG charged the undg to identify new ways for increasing efficiency, effectiveness and coherence of the UN Development system at the national level.

The RC system encompasses the entire UN system entities that carry-out development operational activities in programme countries. RCs are senior UN officials. They lead and coordinates the UNCT operational activities. UNCTs provide national governments with policy advice and technical assistance, pilot projects, build institutional and human capacities, and advocate for internationally agreed standards and norms.

The UNCT is engaged in strengthening the country analysis by using an inclusive approach for UN agencies and their comparative advantages. The UNCT addresses those needs in the UNDAF which is the official UN strategic programming document at the country level. Accordingly, the UNCT plays the strategic role of unifying the UN agencies under its umbrella and coordinates the UN common programming at the national level through an inclusive and coherent approach.

The undg provides continuous guidance and extensive support to UNCTs for UNDAFs' preparation. The UNDAF guidelines and its Technical Guidance for UNCTs are regularly updated so as to respond to the TCPRs and the independent evaluations of the UNDAFs.

The undg updated the UNDAF Guidelines in 2010 in response to TCPR of 2007. It simplified the process of the common country programming by providing UNCTs with the required flexibility for conducting CCAs.

The UNDAF, therefore, is considered the key instrument for increasing UN coherence at the national level. It enhances national capacities and supports in identifying the national priorities. The UNDAF and its RM are two important instruments for monitoring and reporting on the UN programming coherence at the national level. The UNDAF formulation is based on five key concepts: national ownership; accountability; inclusiveness; integration; and alignment. The UNDAF is considered a key strategic instrument for harmonizing the UN development system at the national level and within context of the national development priorities.



In respect to the above, the UNDG was able to identify key obstacles that hinder the UN agencies from planning and working together in a more coherent, effective and efficient. Consequently, the UNDG developed policies to address many of them. This provides evidence of the continuous support and efforts made by the UNDG and UNDOCO to refine the strategic management process of the UN system at the national level.

## **Chapter 4 : FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

From the above, based on the several rounds of interviews conducted and the desk review of different sources mentioned earlier, solid evidences were collected to inform how well the UN is strategically positioned at the national level through the UNDAF. This chapter demonstrates the analysis and findings of the evaluation and, further, summarizes those findings in its last section. Based on Bryson's model (2010), the data analysis and findings is divided into six sections, where each section corresponds to a strategic planning category of the used model.

### **I. Preparation and Political Will**

From the literature review, evidence shows that the UN reform program, which was adopted through a general assembly resolution, created the political will at the global level. This means that Member States had the opportunity to share their views and to negotiate and discuss their global strategic needs through General Assembly resolutions.

The interviews informed that, at the country level, the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) are supposed to start the strategic planning process through the road map initiation. National governments and UNCTs negotiate and agree on a road map that clearly outlines the steps and milestones for the UNDAF contribution in the country assessment and the UNDAF formulation. The road map should be aligned to the national planning process.

Despite of the above initial agreements between key stakeholders of the development process, some governments are not fully engaged in the UNDAF formulation and implementation process at the national level. This is evident from the inconsistencies in the support they provide to the UNCT at the national level. This signals that these governments does not set the UNDAF process as part of its development priorities. Consequently, the study found the lack of national ownership obstruct the UNDAF formulation and implementation process. This point is explicitly analyzed in the 'Review' stage in the last section of this chapter.

The desk review revealed that the five key steps included in the UNDAF process are: 1) creating a road map; 2) conducting a country assessment; 3) prioritizing and identifying the strategic needs; 4) creating an effective implementation plan; and 4) monitoring and evaluation.

Upon finalization of the road map, RCs have to send the final document to all the national partners, headquarters of UN agencies and also the Regional Directors

Teams (RDTs) / Peer Support Groups (PSGs), and the UN Development Coordination Office (UNDOCO). Furthermore, all national stakeholders and other staff from specialized and non-resident agencies should be included in developing the road map. Moreover, during the road map formulation, UNCTs have to agree on the funding and cost-sharing mechanisms.

In the case of Egypt's, the interviews revealed that the UNCT together with the Government of Egypt started the process of preparing the road map in June 2010 in preparation for the UNDAF of 2012-2017 (was modified to 2013-2017 due to Egypt's revolution of 25 January 2011). The study found that Egypt's roadmap provides the key steps and milestones required to prepare the UNDAF. The roadmap also identifies key stakeholders, the comparative advantage of UN agencies external and internal assessment mechanisms, timeframe, dates of workshops, priority setting mechanisms, funding and cost-sharing, and structure of the UNDAF document (Egypt's Road-Map, 2011).

Accordingly, it is evident from the above that the road map is an effective tool to initiate the strategic planning process at the national level. However, it has to be complemented with a strong national ownership of governments reflected in their actions.

## **II. Visioning**

After investigating a number of UN agencies, the study found that each of the UN entities has its own mandates. Consequently, all UN staff members are accountable to their agency-specific mandates. To illustrate, below are some mandates of different UN agencies:

### **The UNICEF is mandated to:**

“Advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behavior towards children” (UNICEF, 2015).

### **The ILO is mandated to:**

“The promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights [...] the ILO formulates international labour standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations setting minimum standards of basic labour rights: freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, and other standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work related issues [...] the ILO

has a unique tripartite structure with workers and employers participating as equal partners with governments in the work of its governing organs” (ILO, 2015).

**WFP is mandated to:**

“Use food aid to support economic and social development; meet refugee and other emergency food needs, and the associated logistics support; and promote world food security in accordance with the recommendations of the United Nations and FAO. The core policies and strategies that govern WFP activities are to provide food aid: to save lives in refugee and other emergency situations; to improve the nutrition and quality of life of the most vulnerable people at critical times in their lives; and to help build assets and promote the self-reliance of poor people and communities, particularly through labor-intensive works programmes” (WFP, 2015).

The study found that the different mandates of the UN entities, in some case, makes the UNDAF implementation a challenging process. This is especially found in countries with a large number of agencies working together under this framework.

Interestingly, the interviews revealed an extensive debate about the DaO approach. Some argues that the DaO could further simplify the UNDAF process and help agencies overcome this problem. This argument suggests that the DaO will entail that there will be no more Country Programme Documents (CPDs) or Country Programme Action Plans (CPAPs) for the different agencies because they will be working under a joint work-plan. Furthermore, Vietnam, which is adopting the DaO has a similar sociopolitical context to that of Egypt, which could indicate that it could be easily adopted in Egypt, as the argument still goes, and, thus, simplify the UNDAF formulation process.

It is worth mentioning that the study found that some countries are resistant to change in general and they do not want to consider the DaO approach without providing any valid reason. However, some UNCTs found that it is too risky for large offices to adopt the DaO and preferred to wait until the approach is studied carefully and tested by other countries with similar context. Another argument in this respect is that the DaO could diminish the identity of these entities.

At this point, it is important to highlight that the study found that, currently, there are forty four countries applying the DaO, examples of these countries are Morocco, Bosnia, Mauritania and Montenegro, among others (Delivering as one countries as of 5 November 2014). These countries have success stories and some difficulties that are shared, through the different knowledge management channels of the organization, for other countries who aims at adopting this approach.

The desk review of the randomly selected UNDAFs revealed that a country like Guyana, Zambia and Moldova are Delivering as One, while Egypt and India are not. Although the number of agencies participating in the UNDAFs of Moldova, 22 agencies, is not very different from that in Egypt, 24 agencies, and India, 20 agencies, the evidence collected revealed that there are big differences in their estimated resources.

To illustrate, Moldova's estimated resources for 2013-2017 amounts to USD 217.3 million, while that for Egypt amounts to USD 736 for 2013-2017, and that for India amounts to USD 1,192.7 for 2013-2017. On the other hand, the desk review informed that Guyana has only 10 agencies participating in the UNDAF for 2012-2016 with a relatively small resource estimates amounting to USD 15.9 million. Zambia also has a relatively small number of agencies participating in their UNDAFs, when compared to India and Egypt. It has 12 agencies in their 2011-2015 UNDAF with a budget estimate of USD 335.7. This indicates that the risks imposed on India and Egypt and the associated challenges of adopting the DaO are too high when compared to that of Moldova, Zambia or Guyana. This is mainly because of the size of their UNDAF portfolios is relatively too high.

Therefore, the different UN mandates and the size of the UN system in a country are key factors affecting the visioning stage of the UNDAF. The DaO could be an option to enhance the UNDAF. However, this option should be studied carefully as it can further complicate the process, especially in the context of countries like Egypt and India.

On the other hand, at the national level, it is evident from the literature review that the mission and values are an integral part of the UNDAF. UNCTs should communicate in their UNDAFs clear missions and values. The mission of the UN is appended under the title "UN Mission at the Country Level".

The desk review revealed that the mission and values are not clearly stated in all the tested sample. Below are some illustrative examples:

**Egypt 2013-2017:** the mission and the values and principles guiding the strategic planning process are not clear.

**Guyana 2012-2016:** the mission and the core values are not included in the UNDAF

**India 2013-2017:** the mission and the core values are clearly and well-articulated. This gives a sense of accountability and reliability of the UNDAF. India's mission and values are illustrated below.

**Mission:** “We focus our work in those states where human development needs and deprivations are greatest, where inequality and exclusion persist and where social unrest and exclusion arising from civil strife exists. We provide evidence-based policy options that build on best practices globally and demonstrate innovative cross-sectoral responses and models with the potential to build lasting solutions at scale”.

**Values:** “In all that we do, we seek to advocate and promote the values of: human rights and social justice; gender-based equity and equality; low carbon, climate resilient, sustainable development; and professionalism and technical excellence”.

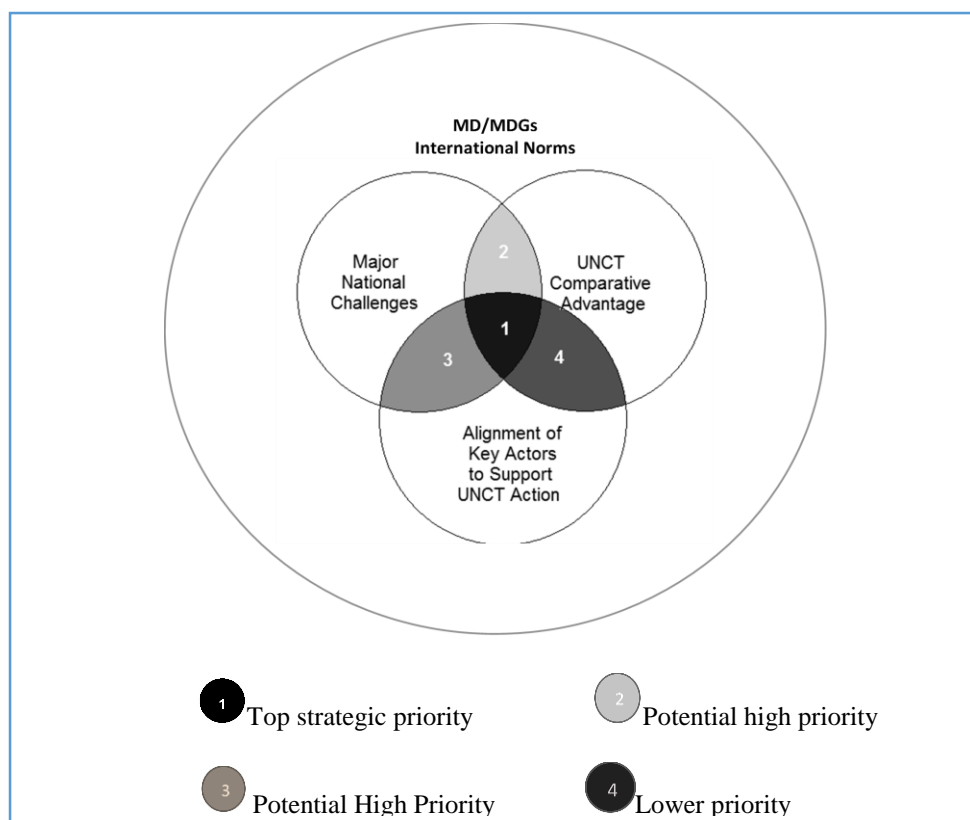
**Moldova 2013-2017:** the mission and the values and principles guiding the strategic planning process are not clear. The UNDAF refers to the UN values but this is found to be too generic.

**Zambia 2011-2015:** the mission is well articulated. However, there is no mention of the values and principles in the UNDAF.

### **III. Analysis**

The literature review informs that the internal and external environment of the UNDAF is an integral part of the strategy formulation step. This is mainly because the analysis of the reorganizational environment leads to the identification of its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. Consequently, the outcomes of this stage are analyzed and categorized in order to decide what is considered a strategic priority and what is not.

The study found that the UNDG provides the UNCTs, at the national level, with the clear guidance on the formulation of country assessments and analyses that ensure the participation of national governments and all its development stakeholders. Accordingly, in order to ensure leadership, participation and national ownership of government authorities in stages of the programming process, UNCTs are free to decide whether it is necessary to have a Common Country Assessment (CCA) or that there are other options available within the national context. This means that UNCTs are guided to use national capacities whenever possible rather than imposing a certain mechanism that might be difficult for national governments to use. Figure 4-1 provides an illustration on the identification of national priorities.



**Figure 4-1: Strategic Priorities of the UNCT**  
**Source: the 'UNDAF Technical Guidance on Strategic Planning' (2010).**

The desk review also revealed that UNCTs assist in “the articulation of high-quality development objectives and priorities within the UNDAF and the national development plan” (UNDAF Guidelines, 2010: p.9). This is mainly through the prioritization exercise that takes place after the country assessment. This exercise includes non-resident and specialized UN agencies, all stakeholders including all concerned line ministries and led by the national government. The prioritization exercise aims at relating the UN agencies’ comparative advantage to the national development priorities. Furthermore, it relates the available collective resources of the UN system to the resources available to the government from other sources such as the bilateral donors, public sector, international financial institutions, and the national budget.

In addition to the above, the study found that the country analysis and the UNDAF prioritization exercise are the basis for preparing the Results Matrix which is the basis for preparing the UNDAF document and identifying possible joint programmes.

The desk review of Egypt’s UNDAF 2013-2017 revealed that, while preparing for the current UNDAF, the UNCT prepared three strategic planning events.

Firstly, the UNCT organized a two days Orientation Retreat in February 2010 for heads of UN entities and other senior staff to “develop a common understanding of the key concepts and documents underpinning UN Reform and development effectiveness in general (including new CCA/UNDAF guidelines), and to reach an agreement on the next steps in the preparation of the UNDAF and its implementation” (UNDAF, Egypt, 2013-2017).

Secondly, the UNCT held a two-day Strategic Prioritization Retreat in September preceded by a SWOT analysis and a survey on the comparative advantages and capacities of UN staff in addition to a capacity assessment of the national and international partners. The results of these analysis along with that of the situational analysis (2010) and the orientation retreat held in February were used during the prioritization retreat to identify the next UNDAF’s priority programming areas. The prioritization exercise also included findings of UNDAF evaluations, identified regional priorities by the Regional UNDG (R/UNDG), and Egypt MDGs Progress Report, bearing in mind Egypt’s status as a Middle Income Country (MIC). At this point it is important to highlight that the sociopolitical context in Egypt after the January 2011 revolution challenged the UNCT to revisit the national development priorities identified through the prioritization retreat. Accordingly, a new filter was added to put these priorities in context of the new national demands and challenges. After the prioritization retreat a Priority Working Group (PWG) was set up to each programming priority area. The PWGs, comprised of UN and government line ministries senior staff, formulated the UNDAF Results Matrix which include the UNDAF key outcomes and indicators.

Thirdly, the UNCT conducted a workshop with senior staff in order to align and refine the initial set of outcomes with the UNDAF’s five programming principles. (UNDAF, Egypt, 2013-2017).

At this point, it is important to clarify that the study found that the sociopolitical context of a country in transition like Egypt highly affects the prioritization process. For instance, several governments have changed after the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution in 2011. The new government has different priorities and interests which required some adjustments to the UNDAF in order to respond to those needs. This had imposed a great pressure on the UNCT to align the UNDAF with the emerging priorities.

In addition to the above, by examining the random sample of UNDAFs, the study found that UNCTs and UNDAF stakeholders at the national level have a clear and well-articulated set of priority programming areas and thematic pillars, presented in their UNDAFs. These priority areas as stated in the examined sample are:



**Egypt:** “1. Poverty Alleviation through Pro-Poor Growth and Equity; 2. Quality Basic Services; 3. Democratic Governance; 4. Food Security and Nutrition; and 5. Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resource Management” (UNDAF, Egypt, 2012-2017: p.20).

**Guyana:** “1. Transforming the economy while combating climate change and enhancing the quality of life of Guyanese by utilizing the natural resources, while neither degrading nor contaminating them; 2. Expanding economic opportunities for all; 3. Enhancing an inclusive governance model based on the rule of law in which citizens and their organizations participate in the decision-making processes that affect their well-being; and 4. Enhancing human and social services, especially for key populations at higher risk” (UNDAF, 2012-2016:p.2)

**India:** 1. Inclusive Growth; 2. Food and Nutrition Security; 3. Gender Equality; 4. Basic Services; and 5. Governance; and 6. Sustainable Development (UNDAF, 2013-2017:p19-46 )

**Moldova:** “1. Democratic governance, justice, equality and human rights; 2. Human Development and Social Inclusion; and 3. Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management” (UNDAF, Moldova, 2013-2017:p.12).

**Zambia:** “(1) HIV and AIDS; (2) Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security; (3) Human Development; (4); Climate Change, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction and Response; and, (5) Good Governance and Gender Equality” (UNDAF, 2011-2013:p. ix).

From the above, it is evident that UNCTs, using their comparative advantage, support national governments to ensure a balanced understanding of the social, economic, institutional and environmental causes. They also support governments in identifying their national development priorities and understanding the capacity gaps that may prevent the achievement of these priorities.

#### **IV. Strategy Planning**

After the identification of priority areas, stakeholders agree on specific strategies designated for each of the identified priorities. For instance, the interview with a Priority Working Group (PWG) member from Egypt revealed that, after the UNCT together with the government and its development partners identify the priority programming areas, and after they agree on the areas that the UN will use its comparative advantage and provide appropriate supportive actions, the UNCT in consultation with UNDAF stakeholders must agree on a clear set of outcomes supporting each national priority area.

In addition, the interviewed sample advised that, the priority areas and the outcomes are fed into the results matrix (RM) which is considered the strategic management tool within the UNDAF formulation process. The results matrix reflects the UNCT commitment to the principles of the Results Based Management (RBM) and it is comprised of both, the results and M&E elements. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that for every UNDAF, a RM must be developed. The guidelines clearly indicates that for any UNDAF result where two agencies or more are contributing to, all the contributing agencies and their partners should be consulted before any changes are made to any relevant part in the plan pertaining to these results.

Importantly, the interviewed sample advised that the results matrix (RM) is considered the strategic management tool within the UNDAF formulation process and that, for every UNDAF, a RM must be developed. The results matrix reflects the UNCT commitment to the principles of the Results Based Management (RBM). It is comprised of both, the results and M&E elements.

The guidelines (2010) states that the UNDAF results are tracked down through a set of measurable key performance indicators (KPIs). All KPIs are accompanied by targets and baselines. Usually, in order to ensure consistency, KPIs, targets and baselines are not changed retroactively and if they are to be changed, then it should be done with the consent of all partners. UNCTs have the option two options: (a) to keep the RM at the outcome level; or (b) to extend it and include outputs. Both of the two options includes indicators, targets, baseline, risks and assumptions as well as partner roles and funding.

The two options are illustrated below. Additionally, a sample of a finalized results matrix is appended under the title “Sample Results Matrix”.

**Table 4-1: Results Matrix – Option A**

| <b>Option 1: UNDAF Results Matrix with Outcome Level</b>                                                                                                                    |                                                                  |                              |                              |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Development Priorities</b>                                                                                                                                      |                                                                  |                              |                              |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Outcomes</b>                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Indicators, baseline, target</b>                              | <b>Means of Verification</b> | <b>Risks and Assumptions</b> | <b>Role of Partners</b>                       | <b>Indicative Resources</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Outcome 1 :</b><br>Expected (planned) institutional or behavioral changes<br>(List contributing UN agencies for each of the outcomes and highlight the outcome convener) | All indicators should have baseline and target information/ data |                              |                              | Describes how non-UN partners will contribute | Estimated financial resources required by the UN system for its contribution to the achievement of the outcome and estimated financial resources each agency will contribute (both regular budget and other resources) to the achievement of the outcome. Optional: may include government's contribution or cost sharing. |
| Outcome 2:                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                  |                              |                              |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**Note: the above data are adapted from the UNDG, UNDAF Guidelines (2010)**

**Table 4-2: Results Matrix – Option B**

| Option 2: UNDAF Results Matrix with Outcome and Output Levels                                                                                                        |                                                                  |                       |                       |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National Development Priorities                                                                                                                                      |                                                                  |                       |                       |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Outcomes                                                                                                                                                             | Indicators, baseline, target                                     | Means of Verification | Risks and Assumptions | Role of Partners                              | Indicative Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Outcome 1 :<br>Expected (planned) institutional or behavioral changes<br>(List contributing UN agencies for each of the outcomes and highlight the outcome convener) | All indicators should have baseline and target information/ data |                       |                       | Describes how non-UN partners will contribute | Estimated financial resources required by the UN system for its contribution to the achievement of the outcome and estimated financial resources each agency will contribute (both regular budget and other resources) to the achievement of the outcome. Optional: may include government's contribution or cost sharing. |
| <b>Output 1.1.</b>                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                  |                       |                       |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Output 1.2.</b>                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                  |                       |                       |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Note: the above data are adapted from the UNDG, UNDAF Guidelines (2010)

The study found that after completion of the results matrix the UNCT carry-out a self-assessment exercise in order to ensure a good quality UNDAF and results matrix formulation. Importantly, the self-assessment assists the UNCT to ensure that the UN is strategically well positioned at the national level. Furthermore, the UNCT submits the draft UNDAF and results matrix to the national partners and stakeholders for their review and feedback before the document is finalized and signed. Country Teams are required to share their drafts with the regionally-based Quality Support and Assurance (QSA) Convening Agency for the final review by the Peer Support Group (PSG). Subsequently, the Convening Agency consolidates the PSG comments and send it back within 15 working days. UNCTs, in turn, modifies their UNDAFs based on the concerns received.

The desk review of the guidelines (2010) informs that, whenever possible, the UNDAF must be finalized directly after launching the national development plan. The RC, in turn, sends a signed copy of the UNDAF to all partners. Furthermore, the UNCT submits the finalized copy to the Chair of the undg at HQ for submission to the UN Secretary-General (SG). Subsequently, all the UNDAF finalized documents, including the results matrix and the country assessment, should be uploaded to the undg website.

The study found that, Country Programme Document (CPD) and Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) for an agency is developed based on the UNDAF Results Matrix. In some cases, the agencies might need to commence their CPD preparation before the UNDAF and the RM are signed to comply with and respect the agency-specific deadline lines.

At this point, while analyzing the ‘Strategy Planning Phase’ of the UNDAF, it is important to highlight that, according to Bryson’s model (2010), the national vision should be identified at the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of the model. This study agrees with Bryson that the vision should not be decided at the early stages of the strategic planning. The vision must follow and build-on the prioritization step or else it will not be a valid one.

In addition to the above, the desk review of the ‘How to Prepare an UNDAF: Guidelines for UN Country Teams’ (Guidelines Part I, 2010), the ‘Technical Guidance to UN Country Teams’ (Guideline Part II, 2010) and the ‘UNDAF Guidance Note: Applications of the Programming Principles to the UNDAF’ (2010), revealed that none of these reports provides guidelines or instructions on formulating an UNDAF vision within the national context as part of the UNDAF preparation.

This was furthered by a desk review of the random sample of UNDAFs to check whether any of these countries, voluntarily, included a vision in their UNDAF documents. The results revealed the following:

**Egypt:** there is no vision included in their UNDAF (2013-2017)

**Guyana:** there is no vision included in their UNDAF (2012-2016)

**India:** a well-articulated national vision is included, stating:

“We, the UNCT, are committed to working with national partners to realize a vision of development for India that is sustainable, inclusive, equitable and just. A vision in which vulnerable and excluded women, children, adolescents and men are empowered as active agents of change and benefit to a fair extent from the processes of growth and have greater access to economic, political and social assets and services” (UNDAF, India, 2013-2017:p.17).

**Moldova:** a precise vision statement is included, stating: “to be a prosperous and modern European country” (UNDAF, Moldova, 2013-2017:p.iii).

**Zambia:** a well-articulated national vision is included, stating:

“We the United Nations System in Zambia hereby confirm our commitment to supporting the Government and people of Zambia in their efforts to realize the long-term **national Vision 2030**, which reflects the collective understanding, aspirations and determination of the Zambian people to be a “**prosperous middle income country**” by 2030” (UNDAF of Zambia, 2011-2015:p.2).

Although the UNDAF guidelines clearly emphasize on the importance of articulating a clear set of national priorities and programming areas that are complemented by a set of outcomes reflecting agency’s commitment to achieve these national priorities, the guidelines did not encourage the UNCT to communicate a clear national vision through the UNDAF. Consequently, some UNCTs, as evident from the tested sample, did not include a clear vision in their UNDAFs. However, evidence also shows that countries, like Zambia, Moldova and India, succeeded to include this important aspect of the strategic planning process in their UNDAFs.

## **V. Operational Planning**

It is evident from the study that the Results Matrix (RM) is an important part of the UNDAF that provides national governments with the strategic direction of the UN at the country level. The RM is delivered through several tools, including the UNDAF Action Plan (AP).

The study found that the UNDAF Action Plan is an operational document that is especially designed to facilitate and coordinates the implementation of the UNDAF. For each outcome in the AP, key outputs and actions are reflected. The AP should not

replace any partnership agreements or cooperation legal frameworks or project documents between a United Nations system agency and a partner. To deliver the RM and to make its priorities and outcomes operational, the UNDG provides the UNCT with a clear and simplified 'UN Action Plan Guidance Note' (2010) that includes all the necessary instructions as well as a simplified format of a user friendly template for the UNCT to use.

At this point it is important to highlight that while the UN agencies are expected to plan together under this framework, at least in theory, they are not operating as one for instance. To clarify, an integral part of the programme planning and implementation is the procurement process that transforms these outcomes on the paper to actual deliverables on the ground. Procuring together could save money that would otherwise be directed to the development purpose and thus increase accountability to government, donors and the general public for instance.

The study found that the UN has a system of common services in place led by the Operations Management Team (OMT) who functions under the guidance of the UNCT. The study revealed that this common services system is not effective enough to provide the required support. Further investigations revealed that each UN agency has its own HQ agreement with the national government. They have different privileges and they are treated differently. For instance, the issue of tax exemption varies from one agency to another. In Egypt for instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) is tax exempted, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is not. The research found that the reason behind this lies in the fact that these agreements were initially signed at different years with different regimes at that time. The conditions negotiated varied accordingly.

## **VI. Review**

The study found that Monitoring of the UNDAF and its Evaluation are two distinct but linked processes. UNCTs, in line with the key principles of the Managing for Development Results (MDR), must ensure that they capitalize on the existing in-country Monitoring and Evaluation systems whenever feasible and that they provide the needed support to those areas where additional strengthening is required.

To elaborate, Monitoring the UNDAF aims at tracking the progress towards a set of agreed results indicated in the UNDAF Results Matrix (RM) and checks whether the risks and assumptions identified at the early stages of design are still valid or they need to be reviewed. Therefore, in theory, monitoring the UNDAF helps the UNCT as well as the implementing partners to make necessary mid-course adjustments which is an integral part of the country programme management. The expected results of the UNDAF monitoring are: 1) regular evaluations of the progress made towards the

outcomes in the RM; 2) continued capacity development needs identification, specifically for data collection, monitoring, analysis and reporting; enhanced results based reporting on achievements; and enhanced UN agencies teamwork and greater ownership among all the implementing partners. On the other hand the UNDAF evaluation is about determining whether the achieved results have made an effective contribution to national development priorities and UN system coherence or not. While the UNDAF evaluation is a key contribution to the Millennium Development Report (MDR), it is a separate and external function to the programme management.

The interviews revealed that the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an integral part of its Action Plan formulation. Additionally, the RM is considered the basis of the UNDAF review plan. Every year, the UNCT and the national government have to conduct an UNDAF review which has to be aligned with the national development plan's review if possible.

Interviews also revealed that the comprehensive policy reviews require the UNCTs to produce a progress report to the national authorities on the UNDAF progress towards the expected outcomes stated in the RM. As part of this process UNCTs should draw on the existing evidence of the UN contribution towards these expected outcomes. At this point, it is crucial to clarify that the progress reports do not discuss the UN supported activities. However, it reports on how the UNDAF outputs, whether produced by the UN or a specific project or programme, contributes to the progress towards achieving key outcomes of the UNDAF RM.

Importantly, the interviews informed that the UNCT are required to conduct an evaluation to the UNDAF to assess relevance, impact, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN system contribution explained in the UNDAF. It is crucial for the evaluation to be independent, credible, transparent, useful and impartial. The UNCT should agree with the national government on the necessary arrangement for conducting the evaluation. The interviews revealed the importance of making the UNDAF evaluations findings available by the end of the penultimate year of the cycle and that the progress reports, together with the findings of the evaluations, guide the analytical contribution of UNCTs.

It is important to highlight that the UNDAF Mid Term Review (MTR) is important for helping the UNDAF stakeholders measure the effectiveness of the strategic plan and apply improvements as needed to realize its objectives. To clarify, UNCTs should not wait until the end of current UNDAF cycle to develop an evaluation to the UNDAF. Rather, a mid-term review should be done in mid-cycle to evaluate the existing programmes so as to guide the process and find out whether the plan and its implementation are heading towards the correct direction or not (Clark, 2009).



Having mentioned the above, the interviewees informed that, in practice, the monitoring and reporting of some UNDAFs is a matter of compilation of inputs from different agencies. This leaves the Monitoring and Evaluation irrelevant and inconsistent to the context of a common strategic planning. Although the UN system seems to be coherent in their UNDAF formulation, they seem to be incoherent in their monitoring and reporting of the UNDAF.

To exemplify, the desk review of Egypt's UNDAF documents informed that, back in 2009, the UN Country Team embarked on the UNDAF's Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 2007-2011 cycle. Particularly, the MTR covered the period from January 2007 to May 2009 and it was conducted in partnership with the Government of Egypt (GoE) and its key development partners. Egypt's UNDAF MTR (2009) reported that the UNDAF outcomes were:

“In line with the internationally agreed development goals, in particular those of the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs, commitments from other conferences, and the norms and standards governing the work of UN entities, among them the human rights treaties. The UNDAF is also clearly in line with national policies and strategies spelled out in Egypt's long-term ‘Vision for Egypt's Development by 2022’, and with the country's medium-term strategy set out in the sixth ‘Five-Year Plan (FYP) for Socio-Economic Development’” (Mid Term Review, 2009:p.6).

Importantly, the review (2009) found that national ownership by the Government of Egypt (GoE) is limited, despite that the UNDAF is perceived by most development actors in Egypt as relevant. The report didn't find the GoE as strongly involved in the Implementation of the UNDAF.

In order to check whether this important finding still exists in the current programming cycle or not, a second round of interviews was conducted. The outcomes of these interviews revealed that despite the efforts made to increase national ownership, this area still resembles a weakness in the system in Egypt.

To elaborate, the study found that the GoE focal points participating in the PWGs are changing all the time. This makes the follow up and decision making inconsistent and delayed. This indicates that national ownership and engagement requires to be strengthened.

Notably, building on another finding of Egypt's MDTR (2009), the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) role was to a certain extent marginalized in the UNDAF implementation. Although CSOs and NGOs were committed to various outputs, the process of the UNDAF formulation lacked their strong involvement and engagement at

the strategic level in Egypt. In this respect, the interviews revealed that the CSOs participation in the current UNDAF (2013-2017) is greater than the previous cycle. In fact, the revolution of January 2011 created an opportunity for a greater participation of the youth and CSOs making the UNDAF more inclusive and participatory.

In addition to the above, at the corporate level, the desk review of an evaluation document prepared by Moldova office (2013) revealed that there is a global debate about the UNDAF as a strategic planning instrument. Some arguments indicate that the UNDAF formulation is too challenging and lengthy, while the counter argument indicates that it is focused and ensures that the UN is better positioned at the national level.

To illustrate, some UNCTs argues that the UNDAF formulation process is a very complex and lengthy. It keeps the UNCT very busy with so many forms and instructions to comply with. In other words, they argue that the UNDAF preparation and the compliance to the instructions and deadlines deviates the UNCTs' attention from focusing on a making a real impact in the country.

*“The formulation process has left scars on most involved; it may even have knocked a year or two off the lives of some UNCT members” [Anonymous]*

Opposite to the above, other UNCTs argue that the UNDAF formulation is very productive and leads to strategic focus on national priorities. They also argue that the UNDAF demonstrates a successful strategic planning instrument that ensures the UN is well positioned at the national level through this coherent, effective and efficient approach that best utilizes the UN agencies' comparative advantage and aligns it to the national context.

*“We are a better positioned, more coherent UN team as a result. We have a clearer sense of mission. We are now more than ever poised to tackle the right issues together, rather than apart. The Government and donors see us more as a single team with a shared task” [Anonymous]*

## **Summary of Findings**

One of the major findings of this study is that the political will of some Member States to engage with the UN system at the national level in a common strategic planning framework contradict with their actions. In other words, the study revealed that UN Member States, who had the opportunity to discuss and share their views through the General Assembly and who showed their agreement and support to the UN

system's reform, are not reflecting their will in the way they engage with UNCTs to formulate and implement the UNDAF. The study found that their lack of engagement in the UNDAF signals a lack of national ownership.

On the other hand, this study found that, in some cases, UNCTs themselves are not fully engaged in the UNDAF process. This is mainly because of the complexity and bureaucracy of the system, as the argument goes, and the difficulty to work together while each entity has its own specific mandates, policies and strategies. These entities have to respond to their specific needs while at the same time they have to respond to the UNDAF requirements and deadlines, which does not allow them to efficiently utilize their time, knowledge and financial resources. The study found that this could be a valid argument in some countries with a large number of UN entities participating in the UNDAF.

This evidence-based study found that the Charter of the United Nations and the different agency-specific mandates inform national governments exactly on the strategic goals and mission of the United Nations. In Addition, it found that the UNDAF guidelines is a good tool that stresses the importance of assisting governments in articulating clear missions and core values. However, it is evident from the study that some UNCTs did not succeed in articulating clear national mission statements or core values in their UNDAFs, which might indicate that they are not fully aligned or harmonized at the national level.

Evidences also have shown that the UNDAF constitutes a platform for environmental analysis where UNCTs, using their comparative advantages, help national governments to identify their development priorities. UNCTs also support governments to understand capacity gaps that may prevent the achievement of national priorities, building on the existing capacities whenever possible. However, national capacities of developing countries could be too weak to respond to the UNDAF demands making the UNDAF importance varying from one country to another based on their sociopolitical context, among other factors. Furthermore, the study found that the UNDAF lengthy process makes its alignment to national governments in transition very challenging and hard to achieve.

Importantly, the study found that the funds received from UNDOCO are not enough to support the Resident Coordinators in carrying out their activities at the national level. In fact UNDOCO collects the required funds at the central level but the agencies do not pay their full contribution as estimated by UNDOCO which makes the UNDAF process very challenging for RCs. Some agencies agree to pay additional financial contributions at the national level while other agencies refuse because they have already contributed through their headquarters to UNDOCO. This study found

that these inconsistencies and duplications create confusions and affect the efficiency of the UNDAF implementation.

Despite that the guidelines does not integrate the articulation of a clear vision in the UNADF Action Plan, some countries, succeeded to reflect this important dimension of the strategic planning process in their UNDAFs. This signals that those UNDAFs, which do not have clear country visions, are not strong enough to enable UNCTs to lead the development operational activities at the national level towards key goals or a clear direction.

Despite that UNCTs were guided to conduct annual reviews, capitalizing on the existing national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system whenever possible, the study revealed that the M&E process is delayed in some cases and that the UNDAF review is a matter of compilation of inputs rather than a joint M&E. This indicates that the UNDAF M&E system in these countries is ineffective and non-responsive.

In addition to the above, the study found that the competition over resources still exist among UN agencies. This is mainly because the core funds contribution are subject to continuous reductions and that the organizations' financial reliability on extra budgetary funds has been increased. This means that some UNCTs lack the accountability towards the UNDAF.

As for the common services, it was found to be an ineffective system in countries where the different UN entities doesn't have the same benefits. For instance, in one country you can find an agency like the WHO is tax exempted, while the UNDP is not. This makes the process of delivering common services ineffective because it means that either all the tax-exempted agencies will have additional work load and, for instance, procure on behalf of the non-tax exempted agencies, or that the tax-exempted agencies will lose this benefit if they rely on non-tax exempted agencies to buy on their behalf.

Importantly, the study found that the financial reporting of the UNDAF is a very challenging process. Given the fact that in some countries, the number of UN entities contributing to an outcome could reach ten or more entities, and also given the fact that these entities does not use the same Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, the financial reporting on the UNDAF is a very challenging, lengthy, inconsistent, inefficient, and non-accurate. Needless to mention that the external access to these systems, which was among the key reasons of creating them in the first place, is very limited. This indicates that the mechanisms used to monitor and report on the UNDAF resources are not efficient or reliable enough to allow for a proper strategic management process.

Significantly, the study revealed that, some UNCTs consider the Delivering as One as a good approach to further enhance their effectiveness, efficiency and coherence at the national level. On the other hand, the study also revealed that the Delivering as One could be too challenging and diminishing to the identities of the UN entities. In other words, the study found that the DaO is still a matter that is under extensive debate and it varies from one UNCT to another depending on the size and number of agencies in a country, among other factors.

Finally, from the above, it is evident that UNDAF is a key strategic instrument for enhancing the UN coherence at the national level. It builds national capacities and supports in identifying national priorities within the context of the internationally agreed development goals. However, the UNDAF process could be complex and lengthy if national governments are not fully engaged in this strategic planning process. The UNDAF could also consume the efforts and resources of UNCTs because they are accountable to their agency-specific needs and mandates. Moreover, despite that the UNDAF could be a challenging process when UNCTs are not Delivering as One, the study found that this approach could further complicate the process if it is not studied carefully based on different country contexts.

## **Chapter 5 : RECOMMENDATIONS**

Driven from the above analyses and findings, this study suggests a set of recommendations that could be useful for policy makers, UNCTs, governments, donors, and development practitioners to improve the UNDAF formulation process and enhance aid effectiveness at large. The recommendations are:

1. Advocate for national ownership at the central through the General Assembly;
2. UNCTs assist governments to articulate a clear country visions which aligns the development work towards common strategic direction;
3. HQ apply outcome-based performance assessment to UNCTs and OMTs;
4. UNCTs continue their efforts to further enhance national capacities;
5. UN agencies' headquarters provide UNDOCO with the projected financial support and, consequently, UNDOCO allocates resources to RCs based on a realistic and responsive needs-analysis;
6. UNDOCO further their efforts to simplify the UNDAF process;
7. UNDOCO creates a unified Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP);
8. UNCTs grant national partners an external access to this system;
9. UNCTs raise the capacities of the UNDAF M&E and ensure that they regularly update their risk logs rather than waiting to yearly reports;
10. All managers with supervisory role ensure that staff performance appraisal, for all those involved in the UNDAF, include relevant targets and indicators ;
11. RCs together with relevant HQ unit negotiate one Standard Basic Agreement;
12. Offices may consider adopting the 'Delivering as One' and the 'Operating as One', depending on the complexity and size of the UN system in a country; and
13. UNCTs intending to DaO commission independent evaluators to further study the strengths and weaknesses of this approach according to their different contexts.

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# APPENDICES

## IRB Approval

CASE #2014-2015-48



To: Rasha Fahmy  
Cc: Mareiz Wasfi  
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB  
Date: Dec 9, 2014  
Re: Approval of study

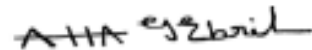
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This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Strategic Planning Framework: Between the Global Model and the National Context," and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.



Dr. Atta Gebril  
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo  
2046 HUSS Building  
T: 02-26151919  
Email: [agebril@aucegypt.edu](mailto:agebril@aucegypt.edu)



## **Interviews**

The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to cover the UNDAF methodology at HQ and its formulation and implementation at the country level. Interviews were conducted with fourteen UN staff members at the national and the international levels with a special emphasize on Egypt.

The in-depth interviews were based on open-ended questions to facilitate the process and get the interviewees more engaged in the discussion by encouraging them to express their opinions and concerns based on their experience.

### **The semi-constructed interviews covered the following topics:**

- The UN strategic programming context at the national level;
- Building partnerships with the governments and its development partners;
- The role of UNCTs and the UNDAF Working Groups;
- Country assessments and the identification of national priorities;
- Aligning and harmonizing the UNDAF to the National plan and the UN agencies' Strategic Plans (SP) and their Country Programs;
- The key challenges of the overall process of the UNDAF planning and implementation.
- The reporting mechanisms of the UNDAF; and
- Monitoring and evaluating the UNDAF.

## **The UN Mission at the Country Level**

The UN, drawing on the collective strengths of all funds, programmes and specialized agencies, is committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve the agenda endorsed by the 2007 TCPR; the 2005 World Summit and its outcome document; the Millennium Declaration (MD); the 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development; and other internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); international norms and standards as well as treaty obligations,<sup>2</sup> including international labour standards, and fundamental principles and rights at work (UNDG Action Plan on the Implementation of the Paris Declaration; 2008 Accra Agenda for Action).

The UN is required to ensure greater alignment with national priorities and country systems, harmonization among development actors, including shared analysis, simplification, transparency and accountability in aid management for development results. Supporting country capacities to manage development resources, including aid, and to deliver on development results remains one of the most important mandates of the UN system at country level. The UNCT is required to support national priorities and to advocate that those national priorities include governments' international/ global commitments to the MD/MDGs and internationally agreed development goals, and their obligations under international human rights, international norms and standards, and other instruments.

This also includes supporting countries to develop capacities to lead their development processes to pursue poverty reduction, sustained economic growth, peacebuilding, rule of law, human rights, gender equality and international standards and norms in support of global public goods. Some of these aspects are also part of the globally endorsed concept of sustainable development: meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.<sup>3</sup> At the heart of the sustainable development concept is the belief that social, institutional, economic and environmental objectives are interdependent, complementary, mutually reinforcing and coherent. UNCT-supported analysis and programming are ways to bring these concerns to the center of the national development debate and framework.

**Source: United Nations official website, retrieved from [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) (10 January, 2015)**

## **The UN Main Bodies**

| <b>UN Main Bodies</b>                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. General Assembly</b>                               |
| <b>2. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)</b>           |
| <b>3. International Court of Justice</b>                 |
| <b>4. Trusteeship Council</b>                            |
| <b>5. Secretariat</b>                                    |
| <b>6. Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs</b> |

**Note: the above data are adapted from the UN official website (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.un.org>.**

### **The UN Specialized Agencies**

|     |            |                                                                  |
|-----|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | FAO        | Food and Agriculture Organization                                |
| 2.  | ICAO       | International Civil Aviation Organization                        |
| 3.  | IFAD       | International Fund for Agricultural Development                  |
| 4.  | ILO        | International Labour Organization                                |
| 5.  | IMO        | International Maritime Organization                              |
| 6.  | IMF        | International Monetary Fund                                      |
| 7.  | ITU        | International Telecommunication Union                            |
| 8.  | UNESCO     | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| 9.  | UNIDO      | United Nations Industrial Development Organization               |
| 10. | UPU        | Universal Postal Union                                           |
| 11. | World Bank | World Bank Group                                                 |
| 12. | WHO        | World Health Organization                                        |
| 13. | WIPO       | World Intellectual Property Organization                         |
| 14. | WMO        | World Meteorological Organization                                |
| 15. | UNWTO      | World Tourism Organization                                       |

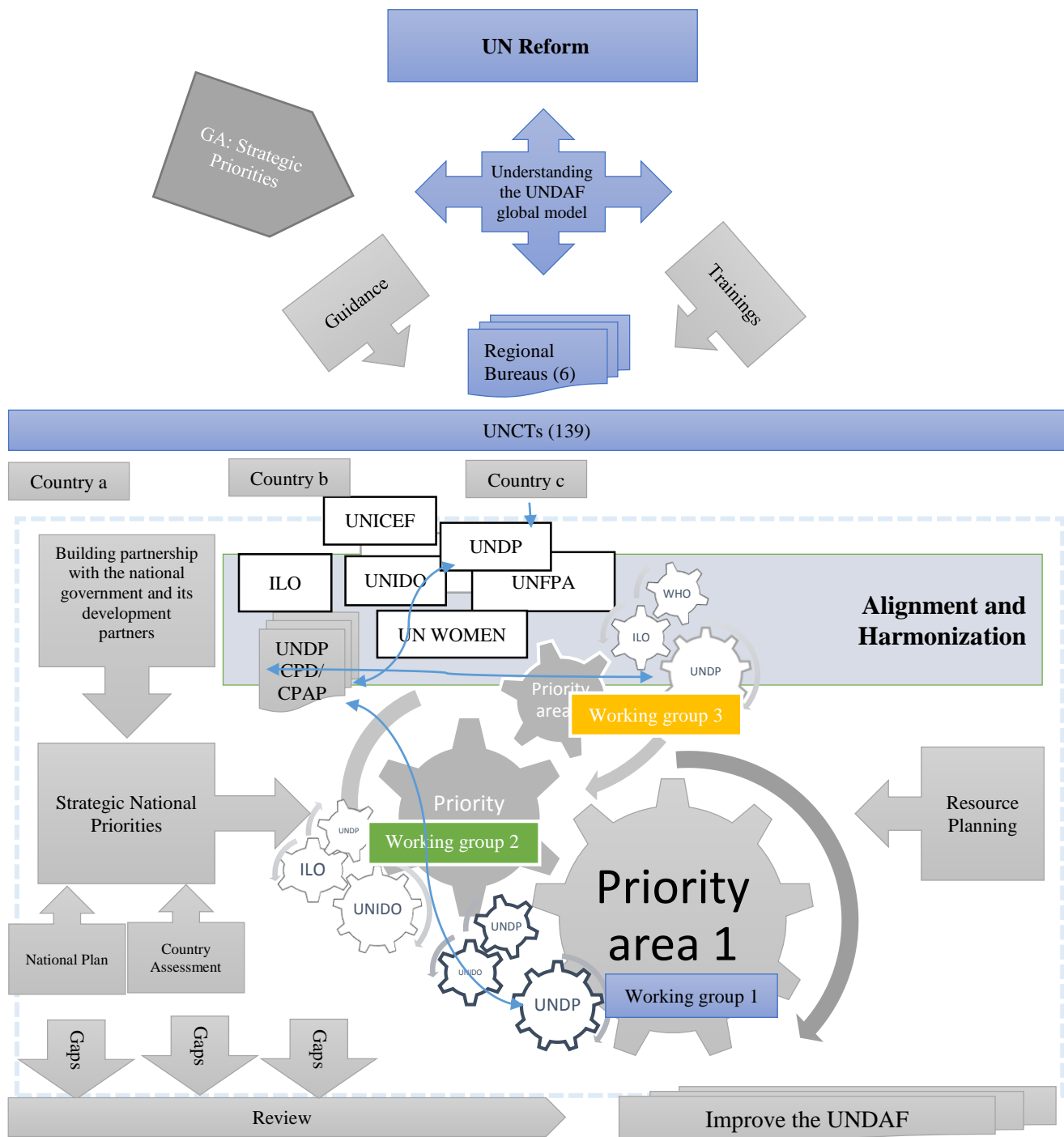
**Note: the above data are adapted from the UN official website. Data retrieved from <http://www.unsceb.org/directory> on 10 January 2015.**

### The UN Programmes and Funds

|     |                   |                                                                                |
|-----|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | <b>ITC</b>        | International Trade Centre                                                     |
| 2.  | <b>UNHCR</b>      | Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                    |
| 3.  | <b>UN Women</b>   | UN Women                                                                       |
| 4.  | <b>UNICEF</b>     | United Nations Children's Fund                                                 |
| 5.  | <b>UNCTAD</b>     | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development                             |
| 6.  | <b>UNDP</b>       | United Nations Development Programme                                           |
| 7.  | <b>UNEP</b>       | United Nations Environment Programme                                           |
| 8.  | <b>UN-Habitat</b> | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                                     |
| 9.  | <b>UNODC</b>      | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                                       |
| 10. | <b>UNFPA</b>      | United Nations Population Fund                                                 |
| 11. | <b>UNRWA</b>      | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East |
| 12. | <b>WFP</b>        | World Food Programme                                                           |

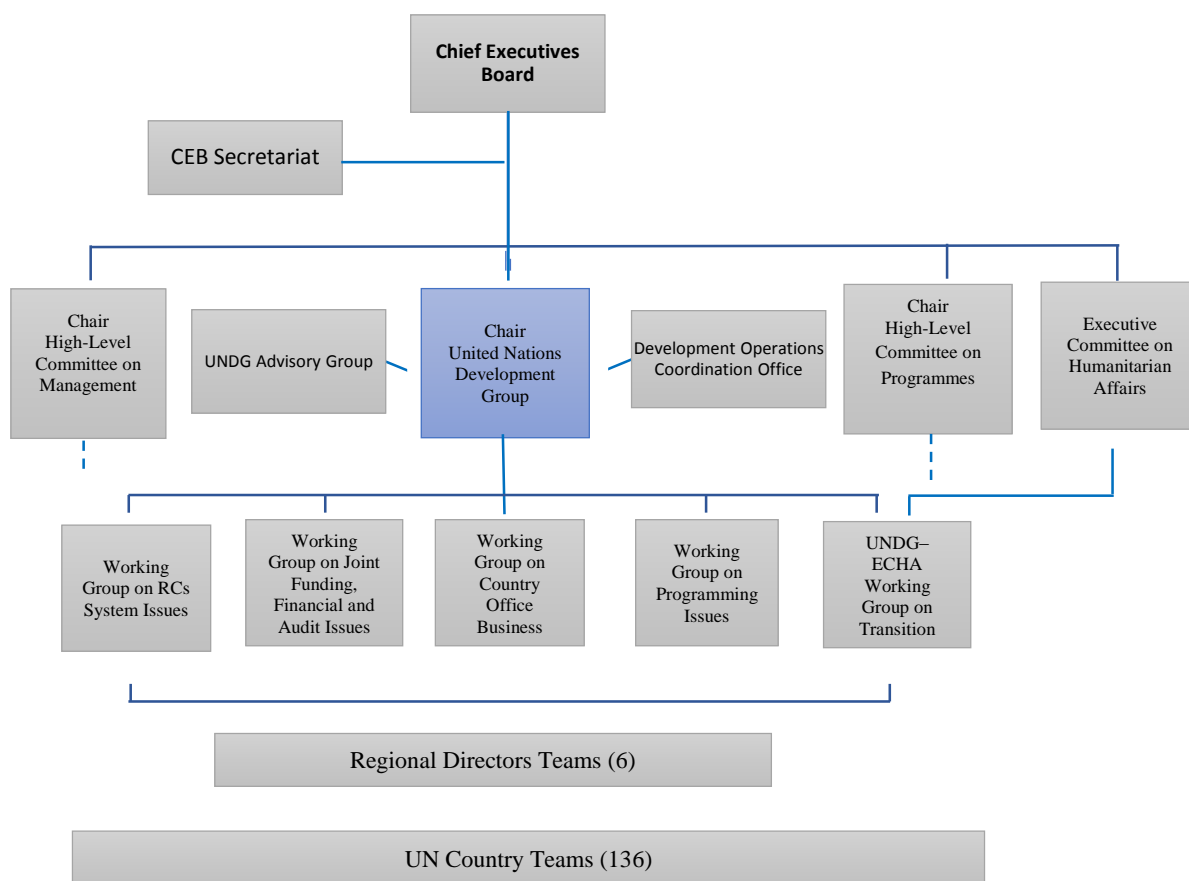
**Note: the above data are adapted from the UN official website. Data retrieved from <http://www.unsceb.org/directory> on 10 January 2015.**

## The Holistic Approach to the UNDAF



Source: Developed by the researcher.

## UNDG Structure



Source: UNDG website. Retrieved from <http://www.undg.org/docs/8954/UNDG-CEB-org-chart-Sep08.pdf> (10 January 2015).

## UNDG Membership

| <b>Agency</b>               | <b>Name</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>Membership</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>UNDP</b>                 | United Nations Development Programme                                                                                                     | member            |
| <b>UNICEF</b>               | United Nations Children's Fund                                                                                                           | member            |
| <b>UNFPA</b>                | United Nations Population Fund                                                                                                           | member            |
| <b>WFP</b>                  | World Food Programme                                                                                                                     | member            |
| <b>OHCHR</b>                | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights                                                                                         | member            |
| <b>UN WOMEN</b>             | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women                                                                   | member            |
| <b>UNOPS</b>                | United Nations Office for Project Services                                                                                               | member            |
| <b>UNAIDS</b>               | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS                                                                                               | member            |
| <b>UN Habitat</b>           | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                                                                                               | member            |
| <b>UNODC</b>                | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                                                                                                 | member            |
| <b>WHO</b>                  | World Health Organization                                                                                                                | member            |
| <b>DESA</b>                 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs                                                                                                | member            |
| <b>IFAD</b>                 | International Fund for Agricultural Development                                                                                          | member            |
| <b>UNCTAD</b>               | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development                                                                                       | member            |
| <b>UNESCO</b>               | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization                                                                         | member            |
| <b>FAO</b>                  | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations                                                                                  | member            |
| <b>UNIDO</b>                | United Nations Industrial Development Organization                                                                                       | member            |
| <b>ILO</b>                  | International Labour Organization                                                                                                        | member            |
| <b>UNDPI</b>                | United Nations Department of Public Information                                                                                          | member            |
| <b>Regional Commissions</b> | ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA - rotating annually                                                                                        | member            |
| <b>OHRLLS</b>               | Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries & Small Island Developing Countries | member            |
| <b>SRSG/CAC</b>             | Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict                                                          | member            |
| <b>UNEP</b>                 | United Nations Environment Programme                                                                                                     | member            |
| <b>UNHCR</b>                | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                                                                                            | member            |
| <b>OSAA</b>                 | Office of USG - Special Advisor on Africa                                                                                                | member            |
| <b>UNWTO</b>                | United Nations World Tourism Organization                                                                                                | member            |



|                                                         |                                                     |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>WMO</b>                                              | World Meteorological Organization                   | member     |
| <b>ITU</b>                                              | International Telecommunications Union              | member     |
| <b>World Bank</b>                                       | World Bank                                          | (observer) |
| <b>UNFIP</b>                                            | United Nations Fund for International Partnerships  | (observer) |
| <b>OCHA</b>                                             | Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs | (observer) |
| <b>Spokesman for the Secretary-General</b>              |                                                     | (observer) |
| <b>Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary General</b> |                                                     | (observer) |

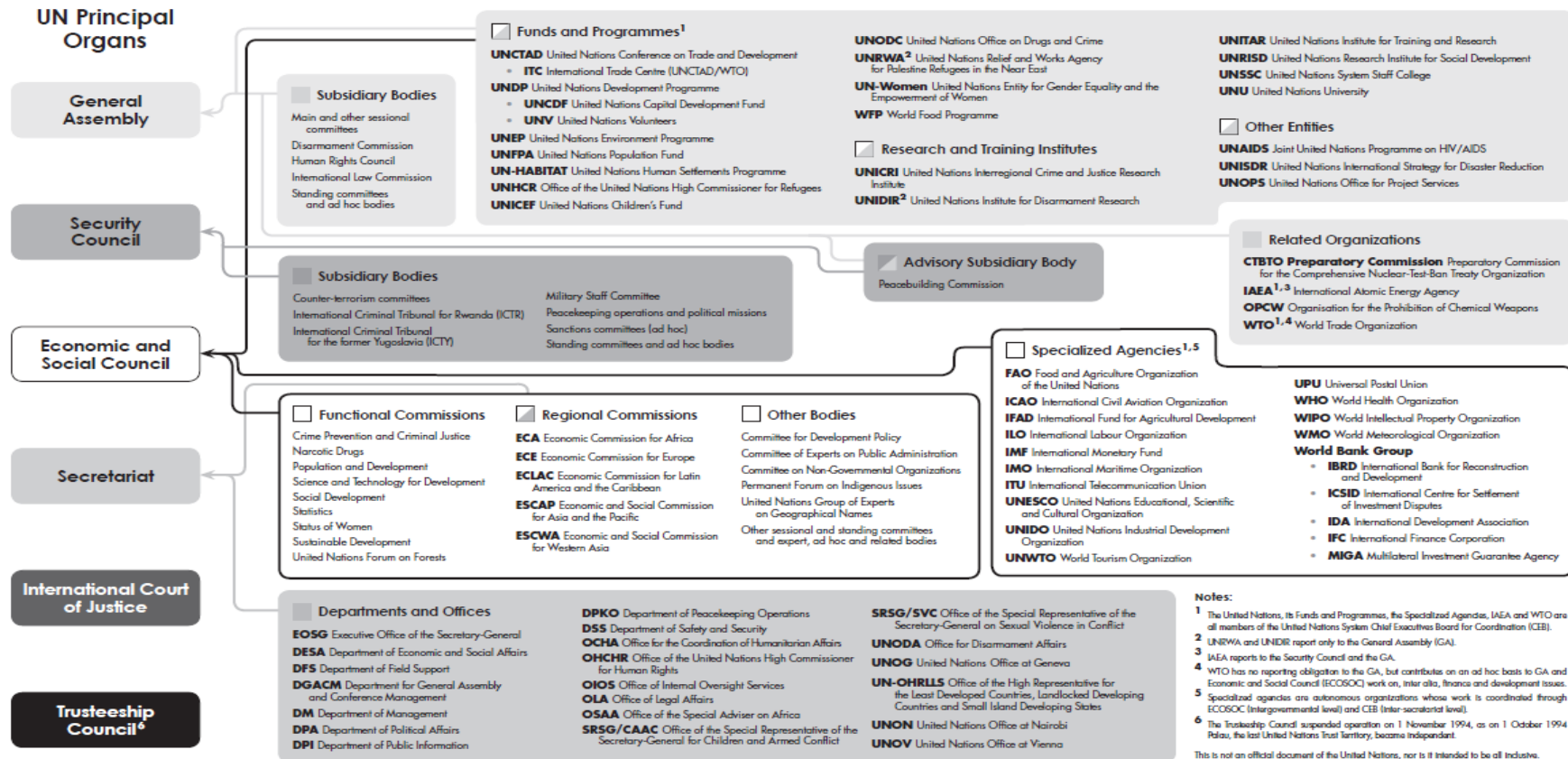
Source: the UNDG website (2014). Retrieved from  
[http://www.undg.org/content/about\\_the\\_undg/undg\\_members](http://www.undg.org/content/about_the_undg/undg_members) ( 30 December 2014).

### Sample of the UNDAF Results Matrix

| UNDAF Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Indicators, Baseline, Target                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Verification                                                | Risks and Assumptions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Role of Partners                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Indicative Resources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Poverty Alleviation through pro-poor growth and equity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>Outcome 1.1</p> <p>Government is operating with efficient and adequately resourced mechanisms of awareness creation, equitable targeting, delivering and monitoring of social protection services and access to adequate and affordable housing for children, young people, rural women, elderly and other vulnerable group</p> <p>ILO<br/>UN HABITAT<br/>UNICEF<br/>UN WOMEN<br/>FAO<br/>WFP<br/>WHO<br/>UNFPA<br/>UNDP<br/>UNAIDS</p> | <p><u>Indicator 1.1.1:</u><br/>Average annual per capita transfer value of government social protection to the poor<br/>B:<br/>For all households:<br/>LE 291 for total social protection<br/>LE 271 for food subsidies<br/>LE 18 for social assistance<br/>For benefiting households<br/>LE 300 for social protection<br/>LE 282 for food subsidies<br/>LE 151 for social assistance<br/>T (in real numbers):<br/>at least 2% increase of social protection transfers in the income of the poor</p> <p><u>Indicator 1.1.2</u><br/>Ratio of poor to non-poor for average annual per capita transfer value of government social protection<br/>B:<br/>All social protection: 0.98 (291/297)<br/>Food subsidies: 0.987 (273/277)<br/>Social Assistance: 0.947 (18/19)<br/>T:</p> | <p>HIECS 2008/09 and HIECS 2010-11</p> <p>HIECS 2008/09</p> | <p><u>Assumptions:</u><br/>- Government continues to be committed to the extension of social protection services</p> <p><u>Risks:</u><br/>- Resources<br/>- Timing<br/>- Unexpected fluctuation in international food-prices<br/>- External economic shocks</p> | <p>Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation<br/>Ministry of Local Development<br/>National Council for Childhood and Motherhood<br/>Ministry of Man Power and Migration<br/>Ministry of Social Solidarity<br/>Ministry of Health<br/>Ministry of Finance<br/>Ministry of Agriculture<br/>Ministry of Housing and Urban Communities, General Organisation for Physical Planning<br/>Civil Society Organisations</p> <p>Information and Decision Support Centre<br/>Central Agencies for Public Mobilization and Statistics<br/>Social Fund for Development<br/>Social Partners and Civil Society Actors</p> | <p>ILO<br/>RR 50,000; OR 1,450,000</p> <p>UN HABITAT<br/>RR0; OR 2,500,000</p> <p>UNICEF<br/>RR 2,000,000; OR 500,000</p> <p>UN WOMEN<br/>RR 1,000,000; OR 5,000,000</p> <p>FAO<br/>RR 100,000; OR 0</p> <p>WFP<br/>RR 0; OR 200,000</p> <p>WHO<br/>RR 200,000 OR 100,000</p> <p>UNFPA<br/>RR 2,600,000; OR 0</p> <p>UNDP<br/>RR: 750,000; OR: 2,000,000</p> |

Source: Egypt's UNDAF 2013-2017

## The United Nations system



Source: the United Nations official website. Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/org\\_chart.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/structure/org_chart.shtml) (10 January 2015)