



'Delivering as One' and the UNDG Standard Operating Procedures

The UNDG Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) provide UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) with an integrated package of clear, practical and internally-consistent guidance on programming, leadership, business operations, funding and communications for the UN to work and deliver together at country-level. The objective of the SOPs is to identify and scale up good practices, which help the UN development system get its internal house in order and render it a more effective, efficient, coherent and impactful partner to governments, donors and the people the UN serves.

The UN Secretary General and 18 Heads of UN agencies¹ signed the [Standard Operating Procedures for countries adopting the 'Delivering as One' approach](#) in August 2014.² With the SOPs, the UNDG responded to the 2012 [General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review \(QCPR\)](#), which requested "the UN system to build on best practices and lessons learnt in implementing 'Delivering as One' by a number of countries and to further consolidate the process by clearly outlining the core elements of each of the "ones"³, based on lessons learned, including by formulating standard operational procedures as guidelines for the successful work of UN country teams".

By releasing the SOPs, the UNDG executive heads called for "all of the UN system to work better together" and explicitly requested to see "UNCTs taking steps towards the progressive implementation of the SOPs in their country." The SOPs were designed to be adapted to context. They strike a balance between flexibility and standardization and can be adjusted to serve a UN facing different development situations, institutional capacities, and UNCT configurations. The SOPs can be implemented progressively by all UNCTs without further approval from headquarters.

The SOPs shift the UN's focus from planning together to delivering together, with a clear focus on simplification and streamlining of processes and instruments. They enable UNCTs to make better use of shared data, policy analysis and advocacy to provide integrated solutions in support of the 2030 Agenda. The SOPs also allow the UN to better leverage its own expertise from across the system to support public policy responses by calling upon the system wide capacity of the UN. By displaying all UN resources in a country in a Common Budgetary Framework, the UNCT provides the government with clear accountability of what can be expected and planned within a given timeframe. Overseeing the UN delivering together at the country level reinforces national coordination roles and capacities to deliver results across sectors. Shared programme and business practices build on economies of scale and reduced transaction burdens or those we serve.

Bottom line – the SOPs increase transparency and efficiencies, reduce transaction costs for governments, partners and stakeholders, and organize and hold accountable the UN in-country for shared results. The [2015 Progress Report on the SOPs "Building Blocks towards 2030"](#) captures early progress of the first two years of SOPs implementation by UNCTs.

¹ In the context of this document, the term 'agencies' refers to specialized agencies as well as UN funds and programmes.

² Of the UNDG Membership to date, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, International Telecommunication Union, World Tourism Organization, and World Meteorological Organization as well as the five Regional Economic Commissions have not signed the SOPs.

³ 'Delivering as One' is based upon the four pillars of 'oneness': having *One Programme* jointly signed between the UN and the host government; *One Leader and Team* via the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team; *One Budgetary Framework* to monitor the UN expenditures and fund-raising within the country; and *One Office*, sharing the same premises to cut on costs and foster inter-agency cooperation.

The pillars of the Standard Operating Procedures

The standard operating procedures for ‘Delivering as One’, consist of five pillars that bring the UN at country level together in a more organized and structured way:

- **One Programme** unifies the UN system under a single national development strategy, underpinned by integrated policy approaches and services, and real-time monitoring through joint work plans.
- The **Common Budgetary Framework/One Fund**, with all planned and costed UN programme activities transparently presented in one place, provides a shared overview of the entire UN’s contribution to a country. The optional One UN Fund provides performance-based support to the UN’s integrated policy approaches.
- Under the **One Leader**, the RC oversees the shared results and joint activities of the UN, together with the UNCT.
- **Operating as One** provides options for more cost-effective common operations and service support.
- **Communicating as One** facilitates common messaging and advocacy in areas of UN engagement and results.

Each pillar has a set of core elements that enable focused actions, tracking and measurable change. The SOPs Core Elements establish minimum criteria for quality control which can be tracked in the public domain.

PILLAR	#	SOPs CORE ELEMENT
Overarching / Government Ownership	1	Joint oversight and ownership agreed between Government and the UN and outlined in agreed terms of reference for a Joint National/ UN Steering Committee
	2	Annual reporting on joint UN results in the UN Country Results Report
One Programme	3	Signed UNDAF at the outcome level with legal text as appropriate
	4	Joint Work Plans (of Results Groups) aligned with the UNDAF and signed by involved UN entities
	5	Results Groups (chaired by Heads of Agencies) focused on strategic policy and programme content established and aligned with national coordination mechanisms
Common Budgetary Framework (and One Fund)	6	A medium-term Common Budgetary Framework aligned to the UNDAF/One Programme as a results oriented resourcing framework for UN resources
	7	Annual Common Budgetary Frameworks (as a part of the Joint Work Plans) updated annually with transparent data on financial resources required, available, expected, and to be mobilized
	8	A Joint Resource Mobilization strategy as appropriate to the country context (with the option of a One Fund duly considered) approved by the UNCT and monitored and reported against in the UN Country Results Report
One Leader	9	Strong commitment and incentives of the UNCT to work towards common results and accountability through full implementation of the Management and Accountability System and the UNCT Conduct and Working Arrangements
	10	Empowered UNCT to make joint decisions relating to programming activities and financial matters
Operating as One	11	Business Operations Strategy endorsed by UNCT is highly recommended, adapted to local needs and capacities, to enhance operational oneness processes through eliminating duplication of common processes to leverage efficiencies and maximize economies of scale
	12	Empowered Operations Management Team (chaired by a Head of Agency)
	13	Operations costs and budgets integrated in the overall medium-term Common Budgetary Framework
Communicating as One	14	A joint communication strategy appropriate to the country context approved by the UNCT and monitored and reported against in the UN Country Results Report
	15	Country Communications Group (chaired by a Head of Agency) and supported by regional and HQ levels, as necessary

Data on the implementation of the SOPs

Governments formally request the UN to *deliver as one*. These requests embody the political commitment of governments to utilize ‘Delivering as One’ as their preferred business model for the UN operating in their countries.⁴ 94 percent of ‘Delivering as One’ countries state that ‘Delivering as One’ helps the UN better align with

⁴ As of November 2016, 56 Governments formally requested the UN System adopt the ‘Delivering as One’ approach in their countries. [A regularly updated list of countries can be found on the UNDG website.](#)

country development needs and priorities. 56 percent of governments reported that the introduction of ‘Delivering as One’ made it “much easier” or “somewhat easier” to deal with the UN system in their country.⁵ This growing demand demonstrates the need for the UN to deliver together in more countries. Countries that have officially requested the UN to “deliver as one” also show higher levels of SOP implementation.

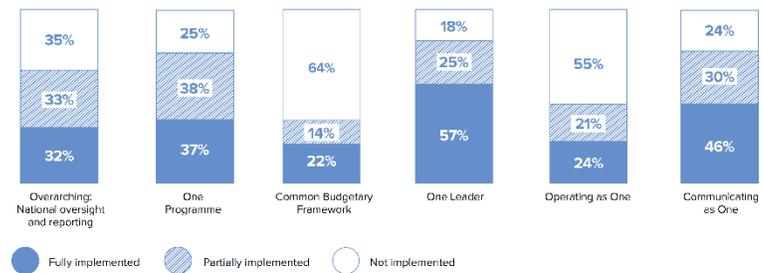
As of December 2015, 893 inter-agency groups (over half of which are results groups as defined by the SOPs), are in place that focus the UN’s work around national development results. The number of joint programmes rose by 14 percent in 2015, reaching a total of 365 globally – a signal of increasing efforts to harness the diversity across UN entities for integrated policy and programme response.

One third of UNCTs are implementing, or are in the process of preparing, Business Operations Strategies that improve the efficacy of their joint operations and common services.

Sixty-five percent of programme governments strongly agree or somewhat agree that joint funding mechanisms (e.g. Multi-Donor Trust Funds, One UN Funds) have led to greater UN coherence while 62 percent strongly agree or somewhat agree that joint funding has led to greater UN efficiency.⁶

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR COUNTRIES ADOPTING THE ‘DELIVERING AS ONE’ APPROACH: THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION SEEN VIA THE ‘ONE LEADER’, ‘COMMUNICATING AS ONE’ AND ‘ONE PROGRAMME’ PILLARS.

PERCENTAGE OF UN COUNTRY TEAMS



Accelerating progress in the implementation of the SOPs

Delivering the 2030 Agenda will require much closer coordination, collaboration and programmatic integration between headquarters, regional and country levels. This is valid/important across all country contexts, adapted to specific country needs. A number of measures can accelerate progress in the implementation of the SOPs:

- At the country level, increased government ownership of the ‘Delivering as One’ approach is key to accelerate UNCT actions to implement the SOPs;
- As per the [UN Secretary-General’s recommendation](#), Member States could call for the full implementation of the SOPs in all countries;⁷
- The respective governing boards of UN organizations can deepen discussions around the agency contributions to the SOPs, to follow through on removing corporate bottlenecks to the SOPs and fully implement the measures defined by the UNDG and HLCM in the [UNDG HQ Plan of Action](#);
- The SOPs provide a clear framework for harmonizing business practices across UN entities in the spirit of ‘Operating as One’. Further harmonization and simplification of business operations can take place through the mutual recognition of entity’s best business practices and leveraging access to Agencies’ institutional infrastructure⁸; and
- Additional considerations building on insights and feedback from the field are captured in the [SOPs Progress Report](#).

⁵ See [UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(UN DESA\) Report on the QCPR Monitoring Survey of Programme Country Governments in 2015](#) (January 2016).

⁶ See [UN DESA Report on the QCPR Monitoring Survey of Programme Country Governments in 2015](#) (January 2016).

⁷ [UN SG Report on the QCPR](#), July 2016

⁸ [UNDG Position Paper on the role of business operations](#), May 2016