

UNDG-Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism

PROGRESS REPORT

Reporting period: October 2011-May 2012

Background

The overall objective of the senior-level UNGD mechanism on human rights mainstreaming (UNDG-HRM) is to further institutionalize human rights mainstreaming efforts in the UN development system and to strengthen system-wide coherence, collaboration and support for Resident Coordinators (RCs) and the UN country teams (UNCTs) on human rights mainstreaming, so that they can better respond to rising demand from Member States for capacity building and technical assistance on human rights.

During the start-up phase of the UNGD-HRM work plan in 2010-11, a number of important activities were implemented to prepare the ground for scaling up support to UNCTs and RCs. This included a survey of all UNCTs on support needs for human rights mainstreaming; a mapping of UN agencies policies and tools on human rights mainstreaming; updating the UN interagency training material on human rights based approach (HRBA); training a new inter-agency pool of HRBA resource persons; providing HRBA training support to UNDAF roll out countries; expanding the UN HRBA Portal; developing and disseminating system-wide human rights advocacy positions on human rights; and strengthening inter-linkages with UNGD working mechanisms. These activities, specified further below, have laid important foundations for the rest of the UNGD-HRM's Operational Plan. Work is now underway to strengthen support to RCs and UNCTs in mainstreaming human rights into development work at the country level, enhance regional level support, and further build knowledge and evidence base of rights based programming.

On 27 October 2011, the High Commissioner and the UNGD Chair jointly launched the Human Rights Mainstreaming Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). The MDTF will support the implementation of the HRM's workplan, building upon the foundations already laid, and ensuring impacts on the ground. The UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office serves as the Administrative Agent of the MDTF, which ensures transparent and accountable fund management and results focused reporting of operations. The launch of the MDTF has been welcomed by a broad range of Member States, including several programme countries. Member States have reiterated the need and value of the UN development system to work together to provide coherent support to national efforts to promote and protect human rights.

Key activities and results

A number of important results have been achieved in implementing initial UNGD-HRM priorities in the work plan, within the current funding constraints. Major achievements for the period October 2011 to May 2012 include:

1. Update and re-launch of HRBA portal

On the occasion of Human Rights Day on 10 December 2011, the UNGD-HRM launched the updated and enhanced UN Practitioner's Portal on Human Rights-Based Approaches to programming (HRBA Portal): <http://hrbaportal.org>, under the leadership of UNDP. The UN HRBA portal features a broad collection of practical resources designed to support UN staff in integrating a human rights-based approach into their programming work, such as programming tools, training and learning materials, and case studies. The re-launch of the Portal followed the 2011 UNGD-HRM Mapping of UN

Agencies' Policies and Tools on Human Rights Mainstreaming, which had identified over 400 knowledge products developed by UN agencies on integrating human rights in development policies and programming.

2. UNDG Strategy for the Deployment of Human Rights Advisers

Human rights advisers (HRAs), deployed by OHCHR at the request of Resident Coordinators on behalf of UN country teams, have been one of the most effective tools for mainstreaming human rights and achieving tangible impacts on the ground. Their services have been greatly valued by UNCTs and their national partners alike. In view of the increasing demand for further support from HRAs at country level, OHCHR and UNDG were requested by the Secretary-General in his 2008 Policy Decision on human rights and development to 'further define the roles of human rights advisers as well as a strategy and parameters for their deployment'.

Accordingly, on 3 February 2012, the UNDG endorsed a strategy developed under the UNDG-HRM, led by OHCHR and UNDP, which takes into account past lessons and achievements and aims to further enhance the effectiveness and coherence of HRA deployments to UNCTs and to mobilize resources for new deployments. Some of the main features of the strategy include: (a) an updated standard TOR which further clarifies the HRA's role, status and reporting arrangements; (b) enhanced support to HRAs from the wider UNDG membership in terms of access to technical knowledge, guidance and tools; (c) key criteria for HRA deployment including ownership, an enabling national environment, strategic programming opportunities, sustainability and full commitment from RC/UNCT; and (d) additional options at regional level to complement/support in-country HRAs and UNCTs, in consultation with Regional UNDG Teams. It is expected that, resources permitting, this UNDG-endorsed strategy will facilitate future deployment of HRAs at the request of RC/UNCTs, strengthen the support given by UNDG agencies to HRAs, and expand opportunities for UNCTs and their national partners to access in-country and regional expertise on human rights.

3. Strengthening policy coherence and system-wide advocacy on human rights in upcoming global development agenda

On 17 February, 2012, the UNDG- HRM organized a full-day senior policy retreat to discuss how to strengthen policy coherence across the UN in mainstreaming human rights. Specifically, the retreat aimed to define a common vision and strategy for mainstreaming human rights into the current and emerging development agendas, including the Rio+20, QCPR (General Assembly resolution on the Quadriennial Comprehensive Policy Review of UN Operational Activities for Development) and post-2015 development agenda. Some 25 participants participated actively in the retreat, including senior officials and human rights focal points from DESA, FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNEP, UNFPA, UNDOCO, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and WHO. The RCs of Venezuela and Republic of Congo shared their views during the discussion based on their experiences in mainstreaming human rights.

Participants engaged in a frank, productive and substantive dialogue on key policy issues confronting the UNDG and developed key advocacy messages on human rights and development as a contribution to the Rio+20 and QCPR processes. The retreat provided a useful forum for senior policy dialogue as an initial step towards the development of an action plan to enhance policy and operational coherence, as well as advocate more effectively on human rights and development.

As a direct follow up to the discussion, a briefing on Human Rights and Rio+20 was organized for Member States on 21 March by the Norwegian Permanent Mission in NY, supported by OHCHR. In addition, on 27 April, as negotiations in New York on the Rio+20 draft outcome entered a critical phase, the UNDG-HRM under the leadership of OHCHR and UNICEF Co-Chairs, organized a panel discussion on a rights-based framework for sustainable development in New York on 27 April, that

brought together civil society representatives, human rights experts, UN agencies and Permanent Missions. The panel discussion emphasized the urgent need to strengthen international commitment to human rights as a foundation for sustainable development, and underlined the need for the outcome document to recognize that the UN principles of equality and non-discrimination, dignity, tolerance and respect for all human rights, including the right to development are also core principles for the sustainable development agenda.

Advocacy efforts on the Post 2015 and the QCPR have also been accelerated. The UNDG-HRM submitted on 17 April a joint contribution to the UN Task Team on Post 2015. It also held several briefings with Member States to promote the QCPR advocacy message developed by UNDG-HRM Members at the senior policy retreat, in order to develop more awareness on the relevance of human rights in the evolving development agenda.

4. Human Rights Council Panel Discussion on Human Rights Mainstreaming, Geneva, 28 February 2012

On 28 February 2012, the Human Rights Council held the first yearly panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming. After a video message by the Secretary-General which put human rights at the centre of the work of the UN system, the High Commissioner opened the discussion by outlining progress in integrating human rights in the work of the UN system, and called for greater support from Member States for the full integration of all human rights, including the right to development, in Rio+20, QCPR and post-2015 development agenda.

The senior-level panelists from six HRM agencies (OHCHR, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, ILO and FAO) and the World Bank spoke of their efforts and results achieved in mainstreaming human rights, particularly at the country level. Delegations welcomed the panel discussion as a step forward in further institutionalizing human rights mainstreaming efforts and strengthening policy coherence. They expressed appreciation for the work of UN development agencies both individually and collectively under the HRM in supporting national implementation efforts.

5. Case Studies on Human Rights Mainstreaming

On 14 March 2012, the HRM launched a call for successful examples of human rights mainstreaming at country level, which will feature in a flagship publication that will be launched in the Fall. The objective is to identify and document successful experiences and lessons learned from the large number of UNCTs that have been assisting national partners in achieving equitable and sustainable development results by applying a rights-based approach.

From an initial review of UN country examples on human rights mainstreaming, UNCTs often play a critical role in supporting governments to engage with and follow up on the recommendations of human rights mechanisms. In Azerbaijan, advocacy efforts by the UNCT played an instrumental role in the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Following the ratification of the Convention, the UNCT developed joint programmes to support major legal and policy changes in the country, in order to enable persons with disabilities to better exercise their rights. In Uruguay, following the visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the UNCT developed joint programmes on penal reform that mobilized and supported the Government to carry out a sweeping penal reform programme. In Tanzania, the UNCT played an important role in supporting the government and civil society to engage with the UPR process. It also utilized the process to raise the profile of human rights issues on the public agenda. Following the inter-governmental dialogue in Geneva, the UNCT has developed a UPR follow up assistance strategy to ensure that the recommendations inform national development policies and programmes, as well as the UNDAF (2011-2015).

In addition to engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, further examples of UNCT experience will also be collected in the following areas: applying a human rights-based approach to UN common country programming processes, including the UNDAF; mainstreaming human rights into national development processes; and joint UN programming and advocacy for human rights. The examples selected will be further developed into detailed case studies and featured in a Primer on human rights mainstreaming, to be launched at a special event in the Fall of 2012.

6. Promoting systematic engagement with UN human rights mechanisms

Several additional activities have been initiated, including consultations towards the development of a strategy to enhance support to UNCTs in their engagement with UN human rights mechanisms. As indicated from the initial review of UN country examples- outlined above- UN entities are keen on seizing the opportunities provided by engaging with the UN human rights mechanisms at the country level to further strengthen UN coherence, with human rights foremost among the UN's core programming principles. The recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms are valued as useful analytical foundations for UNCT's CCAs and UNDAFs. Many UNCTs are implementing joint programmes to support the implementation of those recommendations. By supporting national partners in engaging with the UPR, Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures, UNCTs have been better able to address key human rights challenges.

The demand from UNCTs for enhanced guidance and technical support in engaging with the UPR, the Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures mechanisms, including for follow-up actions and plans has been highlighted in the ongoing HuriTALK e-discussion on the UPR (April 23-May25). The e-discussion received a wide range of inputs from UNCTs. Their feedback has confirmed the value of supporting UN practitioners in engaging with the UPR process and other human rights mechanisms. It has also underlined the usefulness of knowledge exchange, training and information sharing in providing support for UN practitioners in this area. The UNDG-HRM specifically foresees developing guidance and tools, including an updated guidance note for Resident Coordinators, documenting good practices and providing catalytic support to a targeted number of country initiatives, including in support of national and regional initiatives to support follow-up to the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms.

Challenges

Since the launch of the UNDG-HRM in 2010, member agencies have made significant substantive contributions and dedicated necessary resources within their financial constraints to ensure the implementation of key activities. There has also been an exceptional level of positive feedback and engagement of UN country teams and regional offices with the UNDG-HRM which shows promise for further strengthening coherent and coordinated approaches to mainstreaming human rights and maximizing country level impact.

The UNDG-HRM work plan was developed and revised on the basis of the country level needs and feedback received in 2011. However, the current funding shortfall has presented significant challenges to its implementation. Scaling up mainstreaming support at country level will not be possible without additional financial resources for the MDTF, through which enhancement of HR adviser deployment, HRBA trainings and other capacity building activities will be supported. While a number of donors have expressed interest in supporting the MDTF, only one country (Finland) has made a contribution to date. As Member States enter into the second four-year cycle of UPR, further resources will need to be mobilized urgently in order to guarantee effective and coordinated support from the UN system. If such support is not available, a major opportunity for the advancement of human rights mainstreaming agenda in the UN system will be missed.