

# Country Led Evaluation of “Delivering as One” in Uruguay

June 1, 2010

## Executive Summary

### *Introduction*

The inception of the DaO process started in the year 2004, when the General Assembly called for efforts to improve the coherence and effectiveness of the United Nations System (UNS). On the basis of this mandate, in 2006, the High Level Panel of the United Nations’ Secretary General published the report entitled “Delivering as One” (DaO), which puts forward a set of recommendations that include the establishment of a country-level pilot experience based on five pillars, One Programme, One Budgetary Framework, One Leader, One Office and One Voice.

In 2006, Uruguay volunteered to be a pilot country and, in 2007, it started the process of building the DaO pillars through the joint work of the Uruguayan Government and the UNS. The former, represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of Planning and Budget (OPP) in its role of coordinator of international cooperation, and the latter through the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC) in Uruguay and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

The relevance of the DaO experience in Uruguay relies on the fact that it is considered a so called “middle income country” (MIC); initially the only MIC among the eight countries selected for the pilot experience. The DaO experience and the improvements it generates for managing international cooperation have allowed Uruguay to address a series of borderline structural vulnerabilities characteristic of MICs that compromise the sustainability of the development achieved so far.

The DaO experience in Uruguay is particularly relevant in so far that it provides an opportunity to test new cooperation modalities that, with few resources, may have a high impact in overcoming these vulnerabilities, and also contribute to the debate on the role that the UNS should play in middle-income countries.

### *Evaluation objective and constraints*

The general objectives of this evaluation are:

1. Assess the extent to which the DaO in Uruguay is on track to achieve its target objectives as it relates to its strategic intent.
2. Assess how the DaO initiative is contributing to national development goals.

3. Identify challenges and lessons learned from the implementation of the DaO initiative in Uruguay.
4. Make specific recommendations on actions that should be undertaken by key stakeholders in order to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the DaO in Uruguay.

It should be noted that this evaluation has a number of constraints and limitations. On the one hand, there is no coherent set of reference points, that is, clear objectives and baselines, built from the inception of DaO. Moreover, it is not possible to outline any conclusive assertion in terms of quantitative efficiency gains. Finally, the evaluation period is restricted to only one programmatic cycle (2007-2010), which does not provide a proper assessment of the achieved effects.

The DaO experience in Uruguay entails a process of profound changes that are still at their inception stage. Because this process is of important significance for the UNS, further consolidation of the DaO aspects is necessary to accurately assess and observe its impacts. Nevertheless, this work intends to analyze the results that the interviews involved in the reform process perceive, supported by the formulation of quantitative indicators on the basis of the information available.

**Main outcomes:**

Below, is a summary of the results achieved in each one of the DaO pillars: "One Programme", "One Budgetary Framework", "One Leader", "One Office" and "One Voice" on the basis of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability criteria:

Categories	Pillars				
	One Programme	One Budgetary Framework	One Leader	One Office	One Voice
<b>Relevance</b>	High	High	High	High	High
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Medium-High	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-Low	Medium-Low
<b>Efficiency</b>	Medium	Medium-High	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Sustainability</b>	Likely	Likely	Likely	Likely	Likely
Scale: Low, Medium-Low, Medium, Medium-High and High					

**One Programme**

**Relevance: High**

The exercise of formulation of the UNDAF/One UN Programme is assessed positively, and highly valued by all the actors involved in the process at a national level.

**Effectiveness: Medium-High**

The One UN Programme has promoted a shift towards new ways of working jointly. It has directed actions towards policy development support and the development of institutional

capacities in defined areas in accordance with national priorities, taking into consideration the obligations stemming from the United Nations conventions, resolutions, and treaties. Moreover, it has facilitated South-South cooperation through the communication of some innovations in public policies and assets for the resolution of urgent problems in middle-income countries.

However, insufficient progress is recorded in the focalization of the intervention of each one of the UN Agencies and of the UNS as a whole on the basis of their comparative advantages, as well as, in the definition of an ex-ante framework of evaluation of outcomes and impacts to enable results-based management.

**Efficiency: Medium**

The One UN Programme, as a form to organize cooperation, has generated some reduction of overlapping within the UNS and State organizations as well.

The increased involvement of UN Agencies and national partners in the implementation of joint initiatives has produced significant positive synergies stemming from sharing lessons learned and has fostered the demand for innovations in the area of programme management. In particular, the increased participation of the NRAs has contributed to a regional perspective in the approach of problems and strategies.

As a result of the learning processes required for the design and implementation of the One UN Programme and related joint programmes, there has been an increase in transaction costs derived from the additional workload generated by additional reporting mechanisms, coordination efforts, and (to the extent possible) implementation of newly agreed procedures. These are potentially transitory increases and are dependent upon future progress in the harmonization of the UN Agencies' programmatic cycles, the continuation of efforts to generate a joint evaluation and monitoring framework, and finally, upon a more comprehensive transfer of project formulation and execution responsibilities and capacities to national partners.

**Sustainability: Likely**

In spite of the fact that there is significant interest on the part of key Government stakeholders and donors in the consolidation and sustainability of the joint programming mechanisms, sustainability of the One UN Programme achievements are dependent upon the progress made towards higher levels of commitment, inclusivity, and political interest in its formulation process.

***One Budgetary Framework***

**Relevance: High**

This represents an excellent five-year planning tool, positively valued by all interviewees.

**Effectiveness: Medium-High**

The Budgetary Framework has improved resource predictability and facilitated execution and monitoring. Therefore, it has been effective in increasing accountability by the UNS to the Government, to donors, and to the UNS itself. Also, it has at the same time driven the joint mobilization of resources. The One UN Coherence Fund is an effective tool for supporting the priorities defined within the Government's programmatic coordination spaces.

Improving the effectiveness of this pillar requires deepening UNS actions in terms of the generation of a joint monitoring and evaluation framework to guide the management of resources.

**Efficiency: Medium- High**

The specific rules and procedures established for the One UN Coherence Fund, with the consensus of the Government and the donors, facilitated high levels of execution and fulfillment of goals within the framework of the implementation of joint programmes. However, the parties involved have also incurred some learning costs stemming from the different procedures (such as new reporting formats) generated for the One UN Coherence Fund used by the UN Agencies participating in the joint projects. The additional workload generated for the UNS was not compensated with a timely and complete recovery of overhead costs.

**Sustainability: Likely (with uncertainty)**

The sustainability of the One UN Coherence Fund is dependent upon the reduction of the levels of uncertainty with regard to donors' decisions upon allocation of funds at the country level, and consequently, upon the guarantees given by the Government and the UNS in terms of the efficient use of resources. For this purpose, progress must be made towards the communication of measurable outcomes.

***One Leader***

**Relevance: High**

The RC is a clear point of reference that improves the visibility and dialogue of the UNS with the Government and donors, contributing to the coherence and alignment of development cooperation with national priorities.

**Effectiveness: Medium**

The RC was empowered within DaO as responsible for the ultimate allocation of resources within the One UN Coherence Fund. As a result, the RC proved effective in the detection of windows of opportunities and in the mobilization of resources of the international cooperation system to contribute to the achievement of national priorities, in particular in human rights and gender issues. Deepening the RC's leadership requires a consolidation of his or her legitimacy before the UNCT as the articulator and *primus inter pares*.

The key factors identified for the effectiveness of the RC's role are: 1) the ongoing search for consensus on the basis of an inclusive negotiation strategy; 2) advice on the decision-making

process supported by the RCO, UNS thematic groups and the Management Committees of the projects financed through the One UN Coherence Fund; 3) ultimate responsibility on the allocation of One UN Coherence Fund resources, as an instrument to capture the interest of UN Agencies and national partners in the progress towards the DaO objectives. **Efficiency: Medium**

There is a lack of sufficient information to evaluate the efficiency of the RC's leadership in the management of the DaO initiative. However, some perceptions indicate that the strategy assumed by the RC to lead the reform process led to an imbalance between inclusiveness and expediency, which translated into an increase in workload for the UNS personnel. On the other hand, it was established that the RC carried out a transparent management of the One UN Coherence Fund and of the Fund for the achievement of the MDGs.

**Sustainability: Likely**

The sustainability of the RC's leadership is dependent upon his or her capacity to maintain an inclusive and transparent leadership style, to generate guarantees as representative of the UNS in Uruguay by fostering the involvement of a larger number of national partners in the process of definition of programmatic lines, and to promote a more effective communication of the UNS cooperation results.

***One Office***

**Relevance: High**

The development of the One Office pillar is deemed to be very relevant by all actors in terms of increasing the efficiency of the UNS development cooperation.

**Effectiveness: Medium-Low**

Progress concentrated in the joint procurement of some goods and services, but it did not lead to major results in key areas such as harmonization of procedures, the spread of the use of HACT and the interoperability of accounting, financial and UN Agency recording systems.

**Efficiency: Medium**

Although the unification of services through the Common Services Memorandum of Understanding has resulted in efficiency gains associated to the reduction of purchasing prices for goods and services exclusively for the internal use of the UNS, as their use has not been extended to joint projects.

**Sustainability: Likely (with risks)**

The sustainability of this pillar depends on UN Agency Headquarters providing (and effectively communicating to the UNCT and the RC) greater room for innovative procedures at the local level to strengthen UN Agencies' commitment to the envisioned changes.

***One Voice***

**Relevance: High**

The relevance of this pillar relies on the fact that the sustainability and progress made by DaO depend on a good understanding by the Government, civil society, donors and the UNS at the international level of the benefits it provides as well as the challenges of cooperation in middle-income countries like Uruguay.

**Effectiveness: Medium-Low**

The formulation of a joint communication strategy, integrated to the objectives and intervention modalities of the One UN Programme and the UNS projects, has not been attained yet. There has been progress in terms of the work performed by the communications group on the generation of specific joint communication products and initiatives, mainly associated to raising awareness on human rights and providing an effective internal communication service.

**Efficiency: Medium**

The pilot experience has proved that it is possible to formulate and develop communication activities as a team (inter-agency work), but in order to further strengthen the efficiency of a common UNS voice, it is necessary to reduce the overlapping of communication actions and resources, going beyond each UN Agency's individual communication procedures and culture.

Sustainability: Likely

Sustainability will be dependent upon the support of the UNCT and Headquarters to the development of a communication strategy built into the One UN Programme, with specific objectives and earmarking of resources.

***Lessons learned stemming from the DaO experience in Uruguay as MIC***

The working model tested through the DaO experience has been successful in Uruguay, especially because it incorporates the particular features of the country's governance model in the definition of priorities, regardless of its per capita income level.

This cooperation model made good use of the country's strengths, especially in terms of the high level of institutional ownership of the DaO experience, to promote and sponsor national debates that legitimate and improve a common understanding of structural vulnerabilities and policy priorities characteristic of a MIC. Some examples are the support of social dialogue for the social security reform, citizens' security and the protection of human rights.

Moreover, the DaO strategy is focused on technical assistance for overcoming the vulnerabilities of the governance model itself. That is, it entailed efforts aimed at strengthening the State's institutional capacities and the promotion of social participation, in order to strengthen democratic governance through the efficient implementation of State policies. As the new cooperation modality resulted in the transfer of knowledge through technical assistance and its inherent ownership, new innovation processes emerged within the public institutions.

The above may result in increasing and sustainable returns of the investments made in capacity-development through the international cooperation channeled by the UNS in Uruguay. In this respect, it is worth noting that one of the roles of the UNS in a country like Uruguay should be to facilitate processes of technical-political agreement, being a bridge to connect the different State and social institutions, to generate spaces and capacities to search for national consensus by including opposition political parties, Parliament, civil society and academia.

The DaO initiative in Uruguay has strengthened cross-institutional spaces for coordinating public policy and the demand for international cooperation. To some extent, these spaces for coordination have taken ownership of cooperation for development and have become agents for change. Coupled with the opportunities generated by DaO for the participation of the country in the international arena, DaO has facilitated the identification and implementation of horizontal cooperation initiatives.

In this respect, it would be worth discussing whether the UNS, using its international networks, should provide Uruguay with knowledge on the needs faced by other MICs. This would contribute to opening windows of opportunity for South-South cooperation in areas where Uruguay has relative strengths. The regional space within the framework of MERCOSUR may become strategic in generating such opportunities to channel this cooperation.

It is observed that in a country like Uruguay, where cooperation resources are small in relation to the national budget, it is difficult to raise the interest and commitment of the Governmental actors in the construction of international cooperation policies. In this respect, the UNS, in addition to contributing to the generation of a national consensus on strategic development issues, should strengthen its communication and reaffirm its role as a source of specialized assistance for developing capacities in the country.

The DaO experience, especially through the One UN Programme and the One UN Coherence Fund, generates a greater alignment of the projects with national priorities where modalities for joint work have generated synergies. The rules established jointly by the UNS, the government, and donors in terms of the operation of the One UN Coherence Fund, resulted in efficiency gains in the execution of joint projects it financed. This shows the potential returns of national ownership of development cooperation in a middle-income country.

## **Recommendations by pillars**

### ***“One Programme”***

In order to promote national ownership of cooperation priorities without compromising the historical relationship of the UN Agencies with national partners, it would be advisable to improve the institutional design of the One UN Coherence Fund’s Steering Committee, permitting the participation of a larger number of national actors. Furthermore, the OPP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should channel cooperation demands from the inter-institutional policy coordination spaces (thematic ministerial cabinet committees) and define what institution will represent the country in international cooperation demands.

It is also suggested to continue working on the One UN Programme's strategic focus, continue promoting initiatives that support national dialogue or debates and the development of institutional capacities to facilitate the identification of, and consensus on, country priorities.

Moreover, it would be desirable to promote the incorporation of cross-cutting issues at the design stage of the initiatives that compose the One UN Programme (or for the upcoming joint programmatic mechanisms for the UNDAF/UNDAP), in particular, gender and local development approaches, along with instruments to ensure their operability and the measurement of outcomes.

In general, it is essential to complement the UNS's orientation towards the strengthening of public policies with the support to building the State's capacities for monitoring and evaluation. In this respect, it would be advisable for the State and the UNS to join efforts in order to advance the implementation of results-based management, the evaluation of cooperation models, and the communication of their benefits and impacts at the national and international level.

With the aim of increasing the efficiency of the UNS in the country, it is important to first clarify and communicate the comparative advantages of the different UN Agencies, including the NRAs, in order to analyze the relevance of their participation in joint programmes. Moreover, it is important to promote the design of a strategy for the harmonization of UN Agencies' programmatic cycles and their adjustment to the State's budgetary cycle, with a view to replacing their individual programmes by the One UN Programme (or for the upcoming joint programmatic mechanisms for the UNDAF/UNDAP).

As a good practice and lesson learned through the DaO process in Uruguay, the use of Management Committees for effective coordination, participation, and decision making, should be implemented in other inter-agency outputs and activities of UNS thematic groups. For this purpose, it is necessary to homogenize and improve the design process of joint programmes and projects, increasing capacity-development and the involvement of national counterparts.

### ***“One Budgetary Framework”***

With the aim of deepening and guaranteeing the sustainability of the results obtained within the framework of the implementation of joint projects financed through the One UN Coherence Fund, it is suggested that cooperation be oriented towards the expansion of this fund through the provision of un-earmarked resources. This requires increasing guarantees for donors, through the creation of instruments for the evaluation of resource management.

### ***“One Leader”***

In order to strengthen this pillar, it is important to improve the definition of competencies, evaluation mechanisms and accountability of the UNCT and RC's performance as well as to formulate a clear mandate for UNCT members to provide information to the RC, national actors and donors, in terms of outcomes and use of resources, within the framework of all the projects and activities carried out by the UN Agencies at the local level.

### ***“One Office”***

It is recommended to direct efforts towards identifying, measuring, and harmonizing key cost areas and to extend these benefits to joint projects, contributing to the process of articulation of their implementation plans. For this purpose, it is essential that Headquarters increase UN Agencies’ room for action at the local level, for streamlining their administrative procedures, increasing also their capacity to respond to local needs.

Additionally, in order to deepen the commitment of the UNS personnel to the reform process, it is important to incorporate their contributions to the DaO objectives into their UN Agencies’ personnel performance appraisals. Additionally, UNS Agencies could also deepen their commitment at the local level when these can recover overhead costs, within the framework of the One UN Coherence Fund.

### ***“One Voice”***

It is recommended to continue working towards the development of a common UNS communication strategy as an instrument to leverage the UNS’s and One UN Programme’s impact, and also as a tool oriented to the communication of cooperation results. To this aim, the UNCT should clearly define the role of the communication group; provide them with support, a budget, and clear guidelines to ensure their success. Moreover, Headquarters should increase the flexibility of communication regulations within the framework of joint initiatives.

### ***“MIC Debate”***

The lessons learned from the DaO experience in Uruguay should be communicated and incorporated to the debate on the role of cooperation in MICs worldwide. The Government should use the window of opportunity provided by DaO to lead this discussion along with the UNS and increase the visibility of the country abroad, facilitating the promotion of South-South cooperation initiatives.

## **Recommendations by stakeholders**

### **To the National Government:**

The OPP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should take advantage of cross-cutting areas for the coordination of policy (productive, social and innovation cabinet, the inter-ministerial foreign affairs committee) in order to determine the Government’s priority areas to which cooperation should be directed. This would foster the national ownership of cooperation and would legitimize these national organizations in their exchanges with the UNS and donors.

Likewise, the Government must determine which of the State organizations should represent the country’s cooperation requirements internationally. This decision should bear in mind the need to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the field of international cooperation and foster its communications with the OPP.

In addition, it would be advisable for the State to make joint efforts with the UNS in order to strengthen its capacity to monitor and evaluate public policies. This would make it possible to implement results-based management, the evaluation of models of cooperation and the national and international communication of their benefits and impacts.

These suggestions, added to the lessons learned from the DaO experience, would open a window of opportunity which the Government could take advantage of in order to lead discussions – together with the UNS – regarding the definition of the role of development cooperation in a MIC.

In addition to contributing to the debate, this would increase the country's visibility abroad and facilitate the promotion of South-South cooperation initiatives.

**To Donors:**

It is suggested that lessons learned from the DaO experience in Uruguay be included in the global debate on the role of cooperation with MICs.

In order to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of the outcomes obtained through the implementation of joint programmes and projects funded by the One UN Coherence Fund, it is suggested that cooperation be aimed at increasing the use of the funds through the supply of un-earmarked resources.

**To Civil Society Organizations:**

It is suggested that greater advantage be taken of the opportunities generated by DaO with regard to participation in the design of programme guidelines which govern joint projects, through the Consultative Committee.

Enhanced knowledge of the UNS and of public policies, acquired as a result of their participation in the One UN Coherence Fund Management Committee should be channeled towards the identification and demand for participation opportunities in decision-making.

**To United Nations Headquarters:**

It is recommended that the definition and communication of the successful elements of the DaO experience in Uruguay be expressed more clearly, in order to contribute to the debate on cooperation with MICs and to support the identification of possible un-earmarked resources which could extend the One UN Coherence Fund in the country.

In order to strengthen the "One Leadership" pillar, it is necessary on the one hand, to improve the definition of competencies, means of evaluation and the accountability of the management of the UNCT and of the RC, providing the UNCT with a clear mandate with regard to providing information to the RC, national counterparts and donors, in connection with outcomes and the use of resources, within the framework of all of the projects and activities carried out locally by UN Agencies.

**To the Headquarters of every Agency:**

It is recommended that UN Agencies harmonize their programmatic cycles to the State's budget cycle, thus responding to national priorities while enforcing the use of the One UN Programme (or the UNDAP in the future programmatic cycle).

In order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of UNS operations in the country, it is essential to broaden the level of independence of in-country UN Agencies and make their administrative procedures and communications regulations more flexible with regard to joint initiatives, thereby also increasing the response capacity to their requirements.

In addition, in order to encourage the commitment by UNS personnel to the DaO process, it is important to include the personnel's contributions to DaO objectives into the staff evaluations processes. In addition, it is important to allow and have transparent guidelines for the recovery of the indirect costs confronted by local UN Agencies within the framework of the One UN Coherence Fund.

**To Non-Resident Agencies:**

On the basis of lessons learned during the DaO initiative, NRAs should reflect upon the areas of intervention in which their participation would be of strategic interest. For example, given the gender inequities which exist in the country and the lessons obtained from the intervention of UNIFEM in One UN Coherence Fund projects, it has been observed that this UN Agency could play a significant role in Uruguay. It could provide support for training Government technicians in the inclusion of the gender approach in the design of policies, plans and projects.

**To the UNCT and the RC:**

It would be advisable to improve the institutional design of the Steering Committee of the One UN Coherence Fund and encourage the participation of a larger number of national counterparts, in order to foster the national ownership of cooperation priorities and avoid jeopardizing the historic relationship between UN Agencies and their national partners.

In keeping with the outcomes obtained within the framework of DaO, it would seem relevant to:

- Strengthen the focus of the One UN Programme by stimulating national debate and the generation of institutional capabilities which will facilitate identification and consensus with regard to the country's priorities.
- Focus to a greater extent on the strategic areas which have been identified by the Government in order to ensure the sustainability of its development model; particularly as regards the promotion and definition of policies linked to the construction of commercial intelligence, the promotion of direct foreign investment with the inclusion of knowledge, and the strengthening of the educational system and of the demand for innovation in production. Likewise, it would be useful to continue making efforts in support of improved social protection networks in the country.
- Strengthen the incorporation of cross-cutting focal points in the design of the initiatives which constitute the One UN Programme, in particular with regard to the

gender approach and local development, with instruments which will ensure their implementation and the measurement of outcomes.

- Generate an outcome and impact evaluation and monitoring framework for the interventions, in coordination with the Government, in order to strengthen its own capacity to evaluate policies and facilitate the communication of outcomes which will promote national debate.
- Ensure continuity and strengthen inter-agency work within the framework of the thematic groups and the Management Committees, in order to foster synergy and systemic and comprehensive thought with regard to the problems which restrict the country's development opportunities.
- Standardize and improve the design process of joint projects, increasing the training and involvement of national counterparts.
- Extend the Management Committees' work modality to the rest of the inter-agency outputs.
- Produce and disseminate a map of thematic objectives which will include the comparative advantages of acting with different UN Agencies, in order to analyze the relevance of participating in each of the joint projects.
- Hire joint project coordinators that are supervised by a neutral area (OPP-RCO).
- Clearly define the role of the group of communicators, and provide political support, a budget and clear guidelines for the production of a communications strategy.

**To the RCO:**

It is suggested that communications be improved in connection with its activities and outcomes, in order to contribute to the flow of information and the acknowledgement of its contributions within the UNS.

**To the OMT:**

It is recommended that efforts should focus on key cost areas and that common purchase and hiring services be extended to cover joint programmes and projects, thus contributing to the process of coordinating purchasing plans.

**To the Communications Area:**

It is suggested that efforts be sustained with regard to the production of a joint UNS communications strategy. In the first place, as an instrument incorporated into the design of the One UN Programme, which will strengthen its impact and, in second place, but no less important, as a tool for the dissemination of the outcomes of cooperation.