

UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

UN Pooled Funds Stakeholder Discussion Forumⁱ

SUMMARY OF TOPICS DISCUSSED

1 December 2020

Status and update on pooled funding

According to the latest data presented in the [background paper](#) shared ahead of the discussion forum, pooled funds have been growing in recent years, triggered largely by UN Funding Compact commitments from UN entities and Member States in terms of the volume and quality of pooled funds—both are an important part of the overall UN funding mix.

Pooled funds are to the system what core is to an agency, in that they provide flexible and inter-agency funding in line with UNDS repositioning efforts. However, it is important to note the Funding Compact is not just about overall volume but *proportion*, with a target to double pooled funding proportions of unearmarked resources from 5% to 10%. Although we seem to be on target to percentages are still below 10% in the overall non-core part of the funding mix.

Updated legal framework and guidance

Important recent progress is tied to the revision of the pooled funding legal framework, which has taken place in close collaboration with Member States. Incorporated into legal texts are protections around sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment for all inter-agency pooled funds. One additional guidance and policy feature that advanced this year was specific work on updated guidelines for country-level pooled funds to help underpin country Sustainable Development Country Cooperation Frameworks. Together with DCO and UNSDG, the MPTF Office has supported UN country teams with trainings, guidance and support on how to design and revise existing or new country-level pooled funds.

New fund developments

Since the previous meeting several pooled funds that represent a new framework for collaboration were launched and developed:

- A multi-country fund for supporting the [UN Pacific Strategy](#) with support from New Zealand.
- [UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund](#) to quickly provide resources for country teams and participating organizations on the ground via the framework of development emergencies and in support of socio-economic response plans.
- The [Global Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) that came out of the Global Compact on migration and is led by IOM, serving as an instrument based on the UN migration network.
- The [Generation Unlimited Trust Fund](#), led by UNICEF and administered by the MPTF Office, is a good example of catalytic funding, multi-agency partnership, and civil society and private sector engagement in support of the global youth agenda.

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- The [Global Fund for Coral Reefs](#), currently in design phase, is a blended financing instrument led by UNDP and UNEP, and administered by the MPTF Office. Launched during UN General Assembly, the fund has bridging investment windows and private capital financing that builds in blended features of the grant as part of the instrument.

Technology investments

The MPTF Office invested in a new Gateway that will be launched in 2021 and encompass a wide set of tools for partners engaged in pooled funds:

- **Fund Administration System:** for back-end fund and trustee administration services, with more automated processes that should generated further efficiencies.
- **Fund Management System:** a platform for fund secretariats, including a grant management system (piloted with the COVID-19 MPTF), a robust digital RBM system, and marker systems in place.
- **External and public website (Partners Gateway):** has been redesigned and overhauled with new content and resources on pooled funding, and improved visibility for partners and access to results.

The new Gateway is a key instrument to ensure the implementation of the Funding Compact Commitment 14 common management features.

Flexibility in the context of COVID-19

Pooled funds have demonstrated that their inherent flexibility has allowed to quickly pivot financing and adapt in the context of COVID-19. In spite of challenging situations, representatives from several funds (Peacebuilding Fund, Joint SDG Fund, Disability Fund, Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund, Albania SDG Acceleration Fund, Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund, Colombia MPTF) presented examples through video of how they have been able to adapt within the COVID context.

Implementation of the Funding Compact commitment 14

This commitment describes the quality features expected from all pooled funds. One area of agreement was that Results Based Management is extremely important and this resulted in the enaction of a main recommendation from the 2018 evaluation. Some partners see big variations between funds in terms of these features and visibility is important for donors, including global donors at country-level. A good example of a newly operationalized approach was the social media campaign to communicate interim results of the COVID-19 MPTF. However, variance between funds may disincentivize colleagues and country offices from using pooled funds.

Perspectives from contributing partners

Representatives from Member States that contribute to pooled funds highlighted advantages of pooled funding with the primary being that **flexible financing incentivizes agencies to work together and enables multi-stakeholder and multi-sector efforts needed to move towards 2030 Agenda achievement**. However, pooled funds need to be fit for purpose, administratively

accessible, and worth the effort for fund partners at the country-level. Integrated fund implementation and follow-up are therefore as important as design and governance. Some participants asked for examples of funds that are succeeding and showed appreciation for the opportunity to get the perspective of implementing organizations responsible for delivering activities.

On a positive note: the 10% (contribution of inter-agency pooled funds as total earmarked contribution) is within reach, but there are concerns that major pooled funds are still underfunded. Also, despite the variation seen between funds some partners insisted on the added value of having well-designed pooled funds that contribute to joint financing at country-level. These issues could be topics for future forum meetings.

Perspectives from UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes

Representatives from UN Agencies presented experiences and feedback on pooled funding, including lessons learned and potential areas of future work across the UN system, how to connect existing funds, ways to internally improve guidance and webinars to increase quality and engagement of project implementation and results reporting. Also important is support to country offices during the design phase of UNSDCF's and while assessing when to use joint programming for outcome level changes. Some agencies described putting in place specific systems to ensure the visibility of contributors through pooled funds. The overarching goal for some agencies is to provide corporate level support for stronger engagement in pooled funding to fulfill Commitment 14 and benefit pooled funding standardization. Both need to be expressed through clearer narratives on the advantages of pooled funds to fully harness the benefits of the Funding Compact.

While there is agreement on the many positive sides of pooled funding (brings the UNDS together, shared expertise and program approaches lead to better coordination and integrated responses, and strengthened upstream national policies that help embed multi-stakeholder approaches and break silos) agencies highlighted several challenges in certain funds. They include imbalanced capacities and presence on the part of UN agencies to make equal contributions. UNICEF, for example, may sometimes carry a heavier load and these imbalances can negatively affect performance and the possibility to meet country needs and donor confidence. Complying with wider UN, agency, and donor requirements can result in double work.

Next forum meetings

Participants highlighted the value of the forum and suggested continuing the forum in virtual format, which allows for the participation of representatives in different locations at least twice a year.

One topic of interest for the next forum is country-level pooled funding.

Recording of the 2020 meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/DrRt3v7xhl4>.

ⁱ This document presents a brief summary of key topics discussed during the third multi-stakeholder discussion forum on UN pooled funds organized by the Multi Partner Trust Fund Office. The forum was established per recommendation of the independent evaluation of [UNDP inter-agency pooled financing services](#) (September, 2018). This summary has been prepared to support future discussions and address questions and suggestions raised during the forum. The document is for information purposes only and by no means represents the views of the UN, its Member States or its entities.

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