Decent Work in National Frameworks (MDGs, PRSPs, CCA, UNDAF)

Coherence, coordination issues and implications for ILO

A discussion note prepared by Christine Cornwell for the ILO Seminar on Global Goals and National Challenges (Turin, October 2004)

National Policy Group
Policy Integration Department
Decent Work in national frameworks

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Foreword

This discussion note was commissioned as a background paper for the ILO staff Seminar on “Global Goals and National Challenges: MDGs, PRSPs and Decent Work – Where are we? What Next?”, organised by INTEGRATION/NPG and held at the International Training Centre in Turin in October 2004.

The Seminar was the fourth in the series of annual ILO Decent Work Seminars bringing together some 55 participants from field and headquarters units.

The paper, prepared by Christine Cornwell, served as an introduction to the panel discussion on how ILO positions itself vis a vis multiple policy frameworks at the country level such as PRSPs, MDGs, UNDAF and CCA.

It reviews recent changes in the international development environment and aid architecture and the commitments made by the international community, the governments, the bilateral and multilateral agencies including the UN system for promoting coherence and more effective coordination across multiple policy frameworks at the country level. The paper highlights the important challenge to the ILO, especially field offices, for projecting effectively ILO’s decent work agenda in national frameworks including through the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs).

In view of the interest generated, this discussion note is reproduced in its current form. It can also be accessed through ILO’s website: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/integration/departme/national/working.htm

Feedback is welcome

Azita Berar Awad
Director
National Policy Group
Policy Integration Department
ILO, Geneva
In an international development environment experiencing many changes and developments, what are the key issues the ILO faces at the country level, as part of the UN system, to ensure policy coherence with national priorities and plans and to coordinate effectively its programmes and activities with the numerous national and donor strategies and frameworks? How important are these questions for ILO?

Introduction: a new environment

1. Ensuring that all ILO programmes, whatever the source of funding or the modalities of design and execution, are relevant to national and/or regional priorities has been a constant underlying principle and operational guideline for the Office. Efforts have been made to match the overall strategic ILO objectives, as defined by the ILC and the Governing Body, with national/regional priorities and development plans. For many years in the past, when UNDP was the major source of funding for ILO technical cooperation and before the UN Reforms establishing the Resident Coordinator System, ILO programmes at the field level were more or less systematically coordinated with the UNDP. ILO sought to have a major place in the UNDP Country Programme, which was the primary framework for development cooperation agreed between UNDP and the Government.

2. None the less several aspects of ILO country level technical cooperation set the ILO apart from the UNDP coordinated framework. For a variety of different reasons, certain ILO action was not systematically integrated into a UN country programme or coordinated between HQ and the field structure. These included advisory services (often of a sectoral nature or related to ILO standards), multi-bilateral funded projects and assistance and collaboration with employers’ and workers’ organizations.

3. As UNDP (and subsidiarily UNFPA) funding dramatically decreased in the late 1980s and early 1990s, lower priority in the ILO was accorded to coordination issues with UNDP. Strong reservations were also voiced over the implementation of the Resident Coordinator System, which was perceived as being managed by UNDP. For many years the ILO was not a member of the UN Development Group, and only joined in 2002.

4. Today’s scenario is a far cry from that recent past. In the past 10 years substantial and far-reaching changes have taken place in the international development environment. The UN system, as far as development cooperation is concerned, has witnessed a number of major developments. A few are cited here that are of particular concern to the ILO:
   - The World Summit for Social Development in 1995 pushed the issue of poverty eradication to the forefront of development efforts;
   - The UN Reform, launched in 1997, established country-level coordinating processes and frameworks (CCAs and UNDAFs). A second tier reform was launched in 2002, calling for more collaboration and coordination within the system. In 2003 and 2004, adjustments were made to UNDAFs to include results-based matrices, which provide for actual implementation coordination among the various agencies.
   - The World Bank and IMF launched the PRSP process in 1999, which in many countries has supplanted the development planning process and even development plans in many instances;
Following the 2000 United Nations Millennium Assembly and the Millenium Declaration, Millenium Development Goals have been set, with targets and indicators. These MDGs now constitute the main objectives of development assistance globally;

The International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey Consensus, 2002) called for mobilizing and increasing financing for development assistance to achieve the MDGs and stressed, inter-alia, the need to enhance coherence, consistency and coordination among all partners in development efforts. The UN system was highlighted as a key player in promoting international cooperation for development;

Following the Monterrey Consensus, the OECD/DAC established a working party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices in 2003. A major theme is the harmonization and alignment of development cooperation efforts. Pilot surveys have been carried out in 14 countries to date (October 2004).

In its 2002 resolution on the Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system, the UN General Assembly cited, inter-alia, the need for national ownership, the need to integrate country-level operations with national policies and programmes, and the need for all organizations to enhance their coordination, avoid overlap and enhance complementarities. About 15 paragraphs in the resolution referred to this last point.

The UN Triennial Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development (2004) stressed the points made in the above resolution and, in a review of the CCAs and UNDAFs, suggested increased coherence between the issues dealt with by the UN system and those addressed by the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Efforts have been made by the executive heads of the World Bank and the UNDG (United Nations Development Group, which is chaired by the UNDP Administrator) to increase collaboration, both at HQ and field levels. The World Bank now has observer status in the UNDG.

Some multi-bilateral donors are beginning to channel more funding through global funds, through the UN coordinated system, through the Bretton Woods institutions or to direct budget support to governments. This is being referred to as the “new aid architecture”. This architecture will affect the ways the ILO can access resources for its programmes.

Donors and governments are increasingly encouraging technical cooperation to be designed as programmes, preferably joint programmes with several partners, as opposed to individual projects.

The UN Secretary-General, at the October 2004 meeting of the CEB (Chief Executives Board), invited all heads of agencies and funds/programmes in the UN system to consider further steps for greater integration, collaboration and coordination among the agencies. Some of the ideas put forward are far-reaching, going beyond programme coordination, and seem to lay the foundation for a closely integrated system.\(^\text{1}\)

5. The strong concerns in development circles, as voiced by various donors as well as UN Conferences and Resolutions, for enhancing national ownership, for harmonizing programmes at the national level and aligning policies with national priorities and global goals and for better coordination among the development partners, have been advanced even further recently with agency effectiveness reviews initiated by a number of donors.

\(^\text{1}\) “Towards a more effective UN at the country level”, Discussion paper, CEB Retreat, 30 October 2004.
6. An example of criteria used in these reviews by one major donor are:
   - Resources allocated on basis of an organization’s objectives and comparative advantage.
   - Programmes aligned with national poverty reduction strategies.
   - Agency supports donor cooperation and harmonization efforts.
   - Agency has effective internal programme systems that are oriented to development outcomes.
   - Strong commitment to partnership approaches at the country level is an indication of an agency’s orientation to development outcomes.

7. A quick look at developments in the ILO, in the light of the above criteria, provides some assurance that the ILO would meet the first, second and fourth criteria. ILO objectives and comparative advantage can be highlighted with the Decent Work Agenda and recent related priority themes, such as working out of poverty and a fair globalization. The introduction of strategic programming and budgeting, results-based management systems, the on-going work on strategic management monitoring, emphasis on policy coherence and integration, directives on decent work country programming and joint programming between headquarters and the field are all positive factors.

8. Whether the ILO would meet the third criterion – supporting donor cooperation and harmonization efforts – is an open question. The issue is not simple. Many donors themselves are not in harmony with others and have divergent practices. This is now being documented in the OECD/DAC country reviews currently being carried out in 14 pilot countries. And, a few of ILO’s major donors, despite the pressures emerging from international debates and conferences, do not seem to stress this issue.

9. A crucial fact that affects this discussion for the ILO, however, is that it is a member of the UN system. As noted above there is increasing pressure from UN conferences and resolutions, as well as from donors, on UN system-wide organizations to improve coordination. Consequently the question for the ILO in terms of supporting coordination and harmonization, at the country and global levels, is whether and to what extent ILO collaborates in the UN system.

10. Collaborative and full participation in the UN system may well have other implications for the ILO in terms of its overall objective to make Decent Work a global goal:
   - Given the new environment, can the ILO continue “business as usual” and still be an effective player in international development?
   - Do the UN reform mechanisms, the CCA or common country assessment, and the UNDAF, the UN development assistance framework, offer opportunities or present disadvantages to the ILO in terms of policy coherence and programme coordination?
   - Are there opportunities and challenges to promote Decent Work by enhancing policy coherence and improved coordination within the UN system?
   - Are there coherence and coordination issues between PRSs, in which the ILO is active, and the UN frameworks?

1. ILO and the UN system at the country level

11. From an overall policy point of view, the ILO is committed to collaborating fully with the UN system-wide mechanisms and organizations. Early in the new millennium, the ILO and the UNDP undertook to forge a strategic alliance. Although concrete programmes that give effect to this effort are few, the political will remains. In addition, the Director-General has repeatedly made official statements emphasizing the importance for different development agencies to work together. Recent examples of these statements can be found in his report to the International Labour Conference (A Fair Globalization), in his address to the ILC presenting his report and in his address to the African Summit. In one of these statements he noted that working together was one of the greatest challenges facing the different organizations.

12. As part of the UN Reform, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) was formed as an overall coordination and consultative body dealing with development issues across the UN system. It consists of the UNDP and the UN funds and programmes, such as UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Food Programme (WFP) as well as most of the specialized agencies. The ILO became a member in 2002. The UNDP Administrator chairs the UNDG, and the UNDP plus the UN funds and programmes constitute the Executive Committee. Since becoming a member of the UNDG, the ILO has been active in a number of working groups and task forces, with the major participation coming from ILO Headquarters or from the New York Liaison Office.

13. At the country level, ILO collaboration with the UN system-wide mechanisms is a mixed and diverse picture. Most ILO Office and SRO directors indicate that collaboration does take place and that the ILO participates in the UN Country Team (UNCT) and its activities, which are led by the UN Resident Coordinator. This is particularly true where the ILO has an office. In countries where there is no ILO office, collaboration is much more sporadic, with a few exceptions. While collaboration with the UNCTs does take place by and large, the extent of ILO involvement appears to vary from field office to field office. Some ILO offices take a strong proactive role with the UNCT, whereas others find that the time is not worth the investment and contribute only marginally. The concerns of some ILO field staff, as voiced in the past few years in directors’ meetings, are reflected in the “weakness” column in the SWOT analysis, which is presented later in this discussion paper (see Section VII). However, it is difficult to obtain a comprehensive and accurate picture of actual ILO involvement and attitudes at the country level without addressing each individual office. There does not appear to be any tracking of involvement at HQ and it is not known whether Regional Offices closely follow these matters for offices in their regions. This lack of information makes it difficult to assess whether the ILO is making optimum use of the opportunities the UN system may accord it to pursue policy coherence and promote Decent Work at the country level on the one hand, and on the other, whether the UN coordinating mechanisms pose problems for the ILO to pursue its efforts towards policy coherence and to promote Decent Work.

3 CODEV can provide specific examples. One successful ILO/UNDP programme is managed by EMP/INVEST.
2. **UN frameworks and diagnostic instruments**

14. As part of the UN Reform introduced in 1997, efforts were made at the country level, among the UNCT members to pool resources, share information and undertake jointly analysis of national development problems and challenges and then to formulate together programmes for action. The approach was designed to be participatory, with national ownership as a key principle and involving as many of the UN agencies as possible, to ensure a coherent and integrated UN system-wide programme that had government agreement.

15. Two main mechanisms were introduced to carry out the coordinated approach: the common country assessment (CCA) and the United National development assistance framework (UNDAF). The programming period of these mechanisms is usually 5 years. The CCA is an analytical exercise, drawing on existing data, reports and national statistics, which reviews a given country’s development situation, assesses trends, identifies major challenges and examines the country’s capacities to address the challenges. The CCA process includes selecting a few priority (3-5) issues for further analysis (to be handled by theme groups, with participation from the UNCT members). The selection must be justified, and the relationship of the issues to the MDGs, the Millenium Declaration and human rights instruments needs to be spelled out. The CCA report may be 30-35 pages in length and may take 8-9 months to prepare. It is subject to a quality assessment process, with a copy of the document sent to all UNCT members as well as to the Headquarters of each of the EXCOM members of the UNDG. The CCA is the basis for the formulation of the UN system-wide programme, or the UNDAF. As of 2004, 106 CCAs had been prepared worldwide.

16. The UNDAF is the UN strategic framework for the operational activities of the UN at the country level. Ideally it should represent a coherent and integrated programme for the development activities of all UN system agencies. The approach is also participatory, and wide involvement of national stakeholders is desired. While governments are not obliged to sign the final document, it is highly desirable that they do so. The UNDAF should represent the UN response to national priorities and needs, including the poverty reduction strategies, and should clearly indicate how the overall programme will contribute to the MDGs and respond to the Millenium Declaration and other conferences as well as taking a rights-based approach. The framework should clearly delineate 3-5 priority areas for action, where the UN system has a clear comparative advantage. The results section of the UNDAF has recently been modified to make it much more specific in terms of citing the areas for cooperation, the rationale for the priority activities, linking strategies and outcomes, role of partners and resource requirements. These inputs should be set out in a results matrix for each UNDAF. Introducing the matrix has moved the UNDAF beyond being a “framework” to a more operational results-based document. UNDAFs should be about 15 pages long, not including annexes. The UNDAF should clearly delineate 3-5 priority areas for cooperation. They normally take 6 months to prepare. Quality assessment of the UNDAFs is undertaken by the UNDG. To date about 85 UNDAFs have been prepared.

17. As the results matrix is still very new, it is too early to assess whether it is fostering greater coordination and coherence within the system. But it is clear that the different specialized agencies will be expected to indicate specifically how their operational activities fit into the overall programme. This may raise programming issues for the ILO and other specialized agencies that have separate and different programming cycles than those of the UN funds and programmes. The coordination of the preparation of the ILO Decent Work
Country Programme and preparation of the CCA and UNDAF will also need to be examined.

18. The CCA and the UNDAF are the main UN frameworks that concern the ILO. Other UN system-wide frameworks do exist. There are specific frameworks for countries in or emerging from crisis, and there are specific trade related integrated frameworks (collaboration among World Bank, IMF, UNDP, WTO, ITC and UNCTAD). Sector wide approaches (SWAps) are also frameworks for several donors, including UNDP and the bilateral donors as the case may be, to come together in partnership with a government to focus on a particular sector.

19. Outside of the UN system, there are many other frameworks, diagnostic instruments and programming arrangements. The World Bank has Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), which outlines its country level strategy for a given country. In addition the World Bank launched the concept of a Country Development Framework (CDF) in the late 1990s, which would provide an umbrella framework for all development activities in a country, in all areas and including all sources of funding. The use of the CDF is not widespread, but it may have potential. Both the World Bank and the IMF have other mechanisms. The World Bank Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) is based on the CAS to outline development assistance for countries to help them implement their PRSs. The IMF has the Poverty Reduction Grant Facility (PRGF) which is a low-interest lending facility. The European Commission has a Country Strategy Outline for countries collaborating with it. This is a detailed document analysing individual country situations, areas for cooperation, and programmes for action. The bilateral donors also have separate frameworks as do the individual specialized agencies.

20. The ILO Decent Work Country Programme (DCWP) is a framework for ILO action at the country level. It also has a participatory approach involving the ILO constituents in defining priority areas for action, taking into account the ILO’s mandate and strategic objectives. The DWCPs are the ILO’s contribution to national plans and programmes, poverty reduction strategies, development assistance frameworks and common country assessments.

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4 ILO Circular Series 1, Number 599, 20 May 2004
3. **UN frameworks, ILO DWCPs, PRSPs and MDGs**

21. The relationships among the UN frameworks and the individual specialized agencies programmes are quite clear in the UNDG guidelines. According to these guidelines, the CCA is the main analytical document that forms the basis for UN country programming. It may obviate the need for each specialized agency to undertake its own analysis, although this is not excluded. If an agency does have its own analytical document or is embarking on an exercise, then it should contribute the data to the CCA exercise. It is suggested that common action by the agencies in contributing to the CCA should enhance the quality of the analysis and reduce overlap and duplication of effort. In any event, the CCA in most instances is the foundation for the UNDAF and identifies the main areas for collaborative UN action for the following years (up to five). An issue for ILO offices would be how to ensure that the CCA includes subjects that are priorities for ILO DWCPs.

22. The UNDG guidelines are similarly clear about the relationship of the UNDAF with specialized agency programmes. The guidelines foresee that the UNDAF should provide a coherent and integrated framework that covers the UN system-wide assistance in a given country. The specialized agency programmes should be designed so as to contribute to that overall framework. For the ILO this means that the ILO DWCP is the ILO’s contribution to the UNDAF, as is spelled out in ILO circular 1/599. Since any given UNDAF is supposed to focus on a limited number of priority areas, many of the objectives of specialized agencies as well as the concerns of their constituents may not find a place in the UNDAF. Consequently, agency action, outside of the confines of the UNDAF, should be expected. This situation presents challenges to the UN system in terms of coherence as well as presenting a unified front vis à vis national authorities and the donor community. The degree of skilful management and good interpersonal relations between the Resident Coordinator and the agency office heads are critical factors in managing these situations. A major issue would be to ensure overall policy coherence between the agency action and the UNDAF and to make sure that efforts are coordinated and not duplicated.

23. Experience in the ILO with the DWCP is very recent and is considered as “work in progress”. Consequently it is not possible to determine how the DWCPs interact in practice with the UNDAFs and the CCAs. Issues for the ILO in the immediate future would include how the guidance and formal guidelines for the preparation of DWCPs will take into account the revised UNDAF procedures and the results matrix and how to promote ILO action outside of the UNDAF, when this is necessary.

24. The linkages between the UNDAFs and the Poverty Reductions Strategies or PRSPs have been spelled out in a number of documents, including in the UNDG Guidance Note on UN Country Engagement in PRSPs, December 2003. Specific briefing was provided to all UNCTs and to World Bank field offices in a letter co-signed by the Managing Director of the World Bank and the UNDG Chair in May 2003. As PRSPs (or PRSs) are rapidly becoming the centrepiece of national development plans, and even replacing such plans in many instances, the UN CCA and the UNDAF are primarily focused on them. Some regard the UNDAF as the UN “business plan” for assisting governments to implement their PRSs. The purpose of the co-signed letter was to help achieve greater complementarity, cooperation and non-duplication between the two processes since alignment between the two is not automatic. In many countries they have been established.

5 See [www.undg.org](http://www.undg.org), guidelines.
with different timeframes and refer to separate programming cycles. The UN Resident Coordinator has been requested by the UNDG to get Government agreement for a better harmonisation of programming cycles.

25. Given the disparate sequencing of these instruments, considerable flexibility and common sense prevails at the country level. If a PRSP has been prepared before a CCA, the CCA may not be necessary. If the CCA is already available, the PRSP can draw heavily on it. If a PRSP has been developed before an UNDAF, then the UNDAF should reflect how the UN system would contribute to the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy. If the UNDAF has been prepared prior to the PRSP, adjustments would be necessary. Issues for the ILO will be to see how its country DWCP links to the UNDAF’s contribution to the PRSs and what other ILO inputs (as defined in the DWCP, but perhaps outside of the scope of the UNDAF) can be foreseen to the PRSs.

26. As regards the relationships of UNDAFs and PRSPs to the MDGs, there is widespread agreement that both processes should be working towards the MDGs, which constitute overall targets. However, the MDGs are limited in number and most UNDG guidance for the preparation of UNDAFs call for account to be taken not only of the MDGs but also of the Millenium Declaration, which is broader, and of the other global conferences and summit meetings. The linkages between the ILO’s work and the MDGs have been spelled out in the past two years, and this exercise continues to be work in progress (see EXREL website). How the MDGs are reflected in the ILO’s DWCPs may require guidance and information sharing between HQ and the field and among field offices.
4. **Coherence issues: frameworks, strategies and goals at the national level**

27. While the linkages cited above among MDGs, PRSs, the UN frameworks and the ILO’s DWCPs appear straightforward in theory and their “mechanical” relationship is easily outlined, there are none the less some questions as to whether all of these instruments and frameworks are coherent with one another on substantive issues. Although the literature on this subject is rather sparse, several concerns have been voiced:

- The UN General Assembly Triennial Review (2004) noted that the UN CCAs and UNDAFs did not take sufficiently into account issues related to trade and investment flows in defining strategies to achieve the MDGs. The Review cautioned that if there was not better coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions in preparing the CCAs and UNDAFs, the relevance of the UN instruments might be seriously diminished.
- The Triennial Review also noted that the links between the CCAs and UNDAFs on the one hand and the PRSPs on the other were variable in many instances.
- The draft of INTEGRATION’s PRSP Reference Manual has drawn attention to the fact that PRS do not include MDG indicators as indicators of poverty reduction.
- As regards ILO issues, the Director-General’s report to the 2004 ILC (Fair Globalization) noted that the economic framework found in PRSPs include issues such as adjustment, budget and fiscal policies, which are sideline issues for some ILO constituents.
- A number of documents, including UNDG guidelines on CCAs and UNDAFs and on PRSPs, have drawn attention to the different programming cycles of the UN instruments and the PRSs and the need for improved alignment.

28. From an ILO perspective, the discussion about coherence should include at least the following concerns at the country level:

- A clear understanding of how ILO’s Decent Work Agenda relates to the MDGs. Should this be reflected in the DWCPs, on a country by country basis?
- Delineation of ILO programmes in the DWCPs that are not directly cited in (or directly related to) the MDGs, but respond to ILO objectives and the priorities of ILO constituents.
- An assessment of how a DWCP can contribute to a country’s PRSs and whether that contribution can best be reflected in the UNDAF (depending on its content) or whether a separate line of action would be required and would be feasible.
- An assessment of how the ILO office can ensure that ILO objectives and the priorities of its constituents are included in CCAs and UNDAFs. If they are not included, how should DWCPs be established and presented in a way to maintain the ILO’s adherence to the UN Country Team and its profile as a team player?

29. Many of these concerns relate to conceptual clarity and to programming matters. Should information be collected and shared among field offices (and with HQ) on how these concerns have been approached in various offices? Examples of where ILO offices have been successful in defining the issues and in ensuring coherence among the various instruments and frameworks, as well as the experience of those offices where these efforts have not worked, might be helpful for the Office as a whole.
30. The lessons learned from successful efforts may include such issues as:

- Policy coherence may not apply across the board, that is there may be subjects that the ILO must pursue that are not reflected in MDGs or in PRSs or in UNDAFs. Clearly ILO action should not be in contradiction with the global goals or national plans or UN frameworks, but the DWCP may have to outline action outside of these references.

- By sharply focussing on a key number of ILO priorities in CCA/UNDAF exercises, a given ILO office may be able to leverage the Decent Work Agenda in a more effective manner.

- ILO offices cannot do all the work. How have certain offices drawn on technical expertise and inputs in order to contribute to PRSs or to CCA/UNDAF?

31. Lessons learned from negative experiences may include the following:

- Was the lack of conceptual clarity an issue?

- Was technical support forthcoming from HQ or SROs?

- Were negotiating skills for ILO staff an issue?

- What other factors contributed to the sense of a lack of coherence?
5. **Coordination issues at the national level**

32. ILO offices in the field are required to coordinate their programmes and activities with many entities, particularly with ILO constituents. Aside from those privileged relationships, the ILO is expected at the country level to coordinate with the UN system and to be part of the UN country team. While coordination with other multilateral agencies or bilateral agencies or others engaged in development work is desirable, the expectation within the UN system is that the UN Resident Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that UN action is fully coordinated. System-wide coordination is a challenge, and a number of issues arise for ILO offices in the field. These issues can be broken down into several categories: those closely related to internal ILO resources, capacities and methods of work; those related to the Organization as a whole and the potential role of the social partners; and those related to the set-up of the UNCT and past ILO experience with the UNCTs and the Resident Coordinator system.

33. Effective coordination of the ILO with the UN system may well depend on ILO resources, capacities and methods of work. Several factors may enter into play:

- How well is the overall ILO policy on UN coordination known? Are directives available and disseminated?
- Coordination in those countries where the ILO has a presence can be reasonably expected. Is this the case where the ILO is not present? Are there lessons to be learned by certain ILO offices that have succeeded in those non-host countries?
- Resources are limited everywhere, but there are examples of stronger commitment and engagement in some ILO offices than in others. What are the factors that determine this difference? Are SROs and Regional Offices active, helpful?
- Are ILO programming instruments and capacities at the field level adequate and agile enough to enable the field offices to participate in UNDAF programming, to contribute to the UNDAF results matrix, to adjust to other forms of joint programming with sister UN-agencies?
- Are there adequate tools to assess and measure an ILO role or contribution to activities that have been jointly programmed with other institutions? And where the ILO does not have a role in implementation, but may have made significant inputs in terms of resource mobilization or programme development?
- Do field office staff (international and national) need upgrades in negotiation and persuasion skills and techniques?
- What type of ILO tools and guidance are required? How urgent is this question?

34. ILO constituents can contribute significantly to improved coordination (as well as to coherence). They can play a direct role in their contacts with other line ministries that are closely associated with the processes formulating the frameworks/defining the issues and which are in close contact with the UN Resident Coordinator. The social partners, in particular, can exercise influence across the board in assuring that they have a proper place in consultations and that they are included as the so-called shareholders. The challenges for ILO field offices are at least twofold: The first is to find the most effective means to brief the constituents and enhance their capacities, given the resource constraints and heavy workloads of all concerned; and the second is to determine how to associate the constituents in the different processes and in the ILO’s inputs into these processes. There
are certainly a number of lessons to be collected on these approaches and practices from different field office experiences in the various regions.

35. Some factors affecting the coordination process may be outside of ILO field office control, or at least involve matters of interpersonal and inter-agency relationships. At the institutional level, it is clear that the UNCT is chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator, who in 80% of the cases is also the UNDP Resident Representative. The UN funds and programmes (UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, WFP) are strong members of a UNCT and they in fact constitute the Executive Board of the UN Development Group. They are obliged by their executive boards to engage in joint programming and to participate fully in CCAs and UNDAFs. Other specialized agencies, including the ILO in some countries, do not feel they have the same status in the UNCT as the UN funds and programmes. The challenges are to find ways to have an influential voice at the UNCT table and to secure a place for ILO’s priorities in the formulation of the UN instruments, while maintaining leeway, if necessary, to pursue ILO issues outside of the frameworks. Good relations with the Resident Coordinator are obviously important as are the relations with the other agencies. Other factors may include high quality ILO inputs that build respect for the Office; timely submissions and contributions to various Resident Coordinator reports; initiatives to take the lead in different theme groups; initiatives to review and assess processes; and innovative ways to programme ILO inputs into UNDAF processes given the different programming cycles. There are no doubt other factors that can be highlighted by different field offices.

36. One problem that many ILO offices have faced in the recent past has been the lack of resources and HQ approval to participate financially to support various UNCT processes. There is considerable pressure in the field for all UN agencies to contribute something to the costs that developing CCAs, UNDAFs and other reports entail. According to many field directors, ILO field offices are not authorized to commit resources to activities that have a recurrent cost. Although the sums involved may not be great, the situation, according to the field directors, is quite embarrassing. How and when should this matter be addressed, and who should lead the process?
6. **Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of ILO involvement in the UNCT**

37. How and to what extent the ILO participates as a full team player in the UN processes and in the UNCT are not simple matters. As with most processes involving several partners, often with competing objectives and mandates and different levels of resources, there are many advantages in joining forces, but also some weaknesses. Similarly there are future opportunities and potential threats. Some of the main issues that have been highlighted in discussions with field directors are included in the chart below.

38. Setting out the issues in a chart form may help to identify the most pressing issues that should be addressed. Can the weaknesses be overcome and what would be required to do so? Are the opportunities genuine and could they be obtained in other ways? Are the threats real, and if so what can be done to mitigate them? A SWOT also helps to identify issues that have been omitted.

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<th>Strengths</th>
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<td>- Promote ILO policies and objectives</td>
<td>- RC system perceived as dominated by UNDP and EXCOM of UNDG</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Focus on priorities</td>
<td>- UNDG dominated by EXCOM</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Creates synergies</td>
<td>- Unequal sharing of information and resources; not a level playing field</td>
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<td>- Credibility/legitimacy with national authorities and donors</td>
<td>- Role of SURFs not coordinated</td>
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<td>- Access to wide government circles</td>
<td>- Transaction costs are high. Little added value in many instances for input required.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Channel to promote new ILO policy thrusts (Fair globalization, Decent Work as a global goal)</td>
<td>- Dilutes ILO focus to the extent DW and strategic objectives are not at forefront of the agenda</td>
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<td>- Platform to promote policy coherence in PRSs and in CCAs/UNDAFs</td>
<td>- Ultimate loss of ILO identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Possible role in assessment of CCAs and role in UN common action on formulation, analysis of PRSs and PRS and MDG reports</td>
<td>- ILO inputs taken over by UN system and possible decline in ILO implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Entry point (or place at the table) for various dialogues/negotiations which government channels through UN</td>
<td>- Time and effort required pre-empts work on ILO mandate and strategic objectives</td>
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<td>- Sensitize UNCT to tripartism</td>
<td>- Consultation may not include social partners. Meaning of national ownership is limited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Platform to associate social partners in UN priority setting and reinforce capacities of social partners in dealing with frameworks</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Assurance that ILO is a team player in the eyes of government and donors</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Qualification for donor extra-budgetary (multi-bi, IFIs, WB, EC) and for government execution</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Development/implementation of joint programmes with other agencies, drawing on strengths and resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Means to strengthen UN system vis à vis other institutions with separate frameworks</td>
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39. Assessments of whether the opportunities outweigh the threats will have to be determined. In carrying out those assessments, several other questions arise in terms of what might be possible consequences of a weak or inexistent ILO role in the UNCT. In effect the opportunities listed above turn around to become potential liabilities. The following issues might be considered:

- Missed opportunities for promotion and advocacy of ILO Decent Work Agenda
- ILO perceived as working against UN Reforms and not a team player (by governments, other multilateral and donor agencies)
- Possible disparity with high level ILO policy
- Isolation from UNCT processes on MDGs, PRSs, PRS and MDG reports; Isolation from CCAs and UNDAFs; Failure to promote ILO’s comparative advantage and potential of tripartism
- Isolation from UNCT dialogues and negotiations with governments, IFIs, other donors
- Real danger of disqualifying the ILO from access to funds under the new “aid architecture”
- Missed opportunities to build partnerships and create synergies with other agencies, sharing expertise, resources
- Weak contribution to strengthen the UN system, which may be needed in view of other multilateral strengths and initiatives that may not be in the ILO’s interests.

40. These points are self-evident. Different assessments of them may emerge in different ILO settings. The last point, however, merits a few extra words. It is obviously desirable for the ILO to build close relationships with the multilateral donor community, such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the European Union. But it should not be forgotten that the ILO is part of the UN system. Is it realistic to foresee closer integration and coordination with the other multilateral organizations, without having a solid position within the UN system? In addition, if the UN system itself is not a strong partner with governments and the donor community, will it have an effective impact in determining what the key issues are and how to address them? Will a weak UN system mean that its instruments might become irrelevant and be overtaken by other frameworks? In this scenario, will the ILO have a role in defining and contributing to those other frameworks? (Some of these questions have been raised in the draft INTEGRATION PRSP Reference Manual. The issue for the ILO is to determine how strategically important it is at the country level to foster a stronger UN system.)
7. **Next steps: some food for thought**

41. Many different issues have been raised in this discussion as to whether the ILO should pursue a more active role in the UN system. Whether and how these issues might be approached may well vary from office to office, or between HQ and the field. A grouping of some of the areas for consideration are listed below.

42. **At HQ level**, has it become urgent and important to issue directives on ILO policy vis à vis the UN reforms and operations at the country level? What guidance will the field need following meetings of the Chief Executives Board? Will guidelines on the preparation of the DWCP be forthcoming and how will they address the critical programming issues that field offices face? How helpful will the forthcoming TC manual be to this discussion?

43. **At the country level**, would some stock taking exercises be useful? Issues that might be covered could include:
   - Policy coherence: MDGs/PRSs/UNDAFs and DWCP
   - Coordination challenges: strengths and weaknesses
   - ILO expectations for the functioning of the UNCT and the Resident Coordinator system; what changes would be desirable?
   - What internal ILO support would be needed to be effective?
   - How to move forward on the DWCPs
   Who should drive these efforts? Who should compile and coordinate process?

44. **Also at the country level with support from HQ**, should the ILO take certain initiatives?
   - What are the best entry points to pursue an activist agenda with the UNCT? Are the follow-up activities to the DG’s report to the 2004 ILC appropriate starting points?
   - Are investments in taking the lead in CCA and UNDAF theme groups worth the time and effort?
   - Similarly, should the ILO initiate more involvement in the quality assessment reviews of CCAs and UNDAFs?
   - Should the ILO play a greater role in the UN system in analysing and commenting on PRS and MDG reports?
   - What role can the ILO propose for itself within the UN system in terms of leading UNCT’s contributions to PRSs?
   - What capacity building programmes are necessary to involve the social partners in these exercises?

45. **In conclusion**, for the ILO the issues of coherence and coordination among the global goals, national strategies/plans and various frameworks go beyond matters involving conceptual clarity and effective working methods. The challenges involve the role of the ILO as a member of the UN System and how it can be an effective and credible player in international development programmes. The credibility issue affects ILO relations with national authorities, with the UN system itself and with the larger donor community. The effectiveness issues go beyond internal working methods or collaboration with other agencies. These issues affect how the ILO can best promote and advocate its objectives and priorities. All this notwithstanding, the ILO will no doubt need to continue to pursue certain objectives that are squarely in its mandate and that may not find a priority place within a UN coordinated programme. Finding the right balance will be critical. However, with the UN Reforms, the new “aid architecture” and the many formal calls for better cooperation among development partners, is the time not ripe for ILO adjustments?