

**COMMON SERVICES & HARMONIZED BUSINESS PRACTICES**  
**PROGRESS REPORT & MOVING FORWARD 2012**  
**(A proposal by the UN System Staff College to the High Level Committee on Management)**

**SUMMARY**

This proposal requests funding support to design and deliver a knowledge and skills training and planning workshop aimed at building the capacity of the Operations Management Teams (OMTs) and enhancing linkages between Programmes and Operations to be able to support UN Country Teams deliver better programmatic results and achieve greater operational efficiency. The UNDG-HLCM mission recommendations and implementation plan, as well as the Delivering as One evaluation and DESA reports, and the ongoing process leading to the QCPR, all points to a need for a results based structure with strong focus on M&E, performance measurement, and quantification of gains at country level. The proposed skills training and integrated planning workshop focuses on addressing these needs, as well as improving coherence and business efficiency, and ensuring accountability in the process.

Total amount of funding requested from HLCM is **\$175,480**. Target participants are senior Operations and Programme staff in UNDAF rollout countries and senior members of the OMTs. Based on the attendance in Operations courses offered by UNSSC in the past and staff that were on waitlist due to huge turnouts in these workshops, and the fact that there is lack of Operations courses offered in the UN System, an estimated 40 senior Operations and Programme staff are expected to participate in each of these 4 courses. Participants shoulder their respective travel costs and DSA, including course fees which UNSSC will use to cover staff costs as there are no funds available from core budget to pay for staff supporting the design, development and delivery of these Operations courses.

**BACKGROUND**

The TCPR, SWC and DaO/self-starter countries have all highlighted the imperative for the UN system to harmonize and simplify business practices at the country level. While much progress has been made in a number of areas, most notably in common services, common procurement and ICT, programme country governments and UNCTs have called for the acceleration of progress and a more holistic approach to simplification and harmonization of business practices. It is in response to the above and in support to the EFW (DaO) and UNDAF rollout countries that 3 Training of Trainers (ToT) on Common Services and Harmonized Business Practices were held in Cairo, New York and Dakar in 2010. The scope and objectives of the ToTs were to further define common services and share country examples, facilitate the identification of areas for harmonization of business practices, provide an overview on the process to develop and manage common services, clarify the linkages between programmes and operations, and to assist the OMTs in developing common services work plans. The ToTs also intended to establish a pool of sub-regional resource persons who can lead common services and harmonization of business practices in their respective countries, as well as serve as peer support to other countries in their region. A total of 76 UN staff from 30 countries participated in the 3 ToTs.

A number of key points came out from the 3 ToTs based on feedback from participants and reports of the facilitation teams. These were:

- The Process Approach Model (PAM) proved to be a very good tool to assess, develop, plan and manage common services. In addition, group exercises using country cases adapted the application of PAM to local situations. The governance framework likewise put a structure in place to ensure empowerment and accountability at the OMT level.
- Sharing of experiences was very useful. There was a strong request for more case studies and best practice examples in common services and harmonized business practices, particularly from DaO/self-starter countries.
- Linkage of Operations with Programme and the UNDAF needs to be clearly articulated, and country experiences shared.
- A module on Cost & Benefit Analysis should be added to the agenda.
- A continuing request to set up a network to get updates, share experiences and support country offices to sustain momentum.

## **2011 PROGRESS REPORT**

As a follow-up to the Common Services ToTs and in support to the undg-hlcm High-Level Mission recommendations and Implementation Plan, the Regional UNDAF Planning Workshop for 2011 roll-out countries was modified to integrate business operations into the programming process starting with the UNDAF. The objective was to improve coherence and coordination across business operations and programmes and achieve greater operational efficiency and effectiveness at the country level. The overall feedback from the workshop was very positive as participants recognized the value of bringing both Programme and Operations together to discuss the UNDAF process, their respective roles and accountability, and more importantly, to identify opportunities for improving operational efficiency, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing the Operations Management Team's capacity to manage common services and harmonize business practices. A total of 54 senior Operations Staff from 21 countries participated in the 2011 Regional UNDAF Planning Workshops in Bangkok, Kigali, Dakar and Panama.

## **WAY FORWARD 2012**

**Linkage to Phase I (Common Services ToTs) and Phase II (Regional UNDAF Planning Workshops).** Significant progress has been made towards simplification and harmonization in the UN System. Phase I and II contributed considerably in scaling up common services and harmonization initiatives at the country level. Building on these positive developments, and to ensure that significant progress is sustained, UNSSC re-focused its training and learning packages to support implementation at the country level, specifically in managing change, building the leadership and capacity of the Country Teams, ensuring accountability at all levels and achieving greater operational efficiency to deliver better programmatic results. These included the following:

1. **Leadership, accountability and managing change.** The undg-hlcm recommendations crystallized the importance of developing strong leadership at the UN Country Team level (RC/UNCT) and a changing management culture, commitment to working closely together across agencies and with the government, and in streamlining business practices to deliver better programmatic results. The UN-DESA Report for 2012 QCPR on simplification and harmonization of business practices at country level likewise noted the lack of UNCT leadership to effectively support the harmonization of business practices. To reinforce this initiative, the session on UN Reform and UN Coherence in the UNCT Leadership and Coordination Skills Workshops in Turin was modified to include updates, latest guidelines, best practices, lessons learned, challenges, toolkits and business models on common services and harmonized business practices.
2. **Building capacity in the Operations Management Team,** another priority area in the undg-hlcm Implementation Plan and also referred to in the UN-DESA Report, specifically, the lack of capacity in business planning, transaction costs analysis and management of inter-agency initiatives, as well as the absence a good monitoring system to capture and evaluate results. To support this pressing need, an Operations Management Skills Training (see attached flyer and agenda) was designed and delivered by UNSSC in October and November 2011 in Turin. It was participated by 67 senior Operations staff from 48 countries (6 regions) and 12 UN agencies, 2 UN Missions, UN Joint Office in Cape Verde, UN Office in Nairobi and NY Headquarters. The training focused on improving inter-agency cooperation and support, ensuring that latest guidelines, tools and business models are used and applied to the local country contexts, improving operational efficiency, and enhancing the OMT's skills in business process mapping and analysis, assessment and costing of business practice harmonization initiatives, cost-benefit analysis, developing baselines/targets and quantifying efficiency gains, project management, alternative organizational arrangements, and business acumen. The OMT will be tasked to provide the business analysis and the technical and financial feasibility of alternative options so it is important to equip the OMT with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide accurate, relevant and timely recommendations. Overall feedback was excellent and requests for OMS training were received immediately after the October and

November courses prompting UNSSC to offer a regional OMS course in Bangkok in February 2012 where a total of 58 senior staff from 14 UN agencies and 38 countries participated. The plan is to deliver another OMS training during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2012.

3. **Programme Management.....from a business perspective.** To complement leadership and culture change at the RC/UNCT level, Programme middle management should undergo a similar transformation, from a purely technical and thematic management approach to a strategic programme management approach integrating business entrepreneurship and process orientation into its sectoral technical responses. Programme operations framework is technical in nature and more often than not, the planning and decision-making process lack sound business practices. Keeping financial resources and staff focused on agreed results to ensure that outputs and services meet business requirements and the highest possible quality standards at the least possible cost is essential in effective programme management. A good example is HACT which is an integral part of the UNDAF. Programme Managers will need a minimum level of proficiency in basic management principles, business methods and strategies to be able to achieve programme and operational efficiency. The plan is to design a Programme-Operations Integrated Planning Workshop that will bring senior Programme and Operations staff together to develop a business operations strategy and results matrix/M&E with indicators that is aligned with UNDAF. It will also include sessions on programme and business process review and mapping to identify opportunities for simplification and harmonization of business processes, as well as improving overall efficiency and effectiveness at the country level. The intention is to offer 2 integrated planning workshops in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2012 and 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2013.
4. **UNSSC will continue supporting the 2012 UNDAF rollout countries,** specifically on programme-operations integration, development of the business operations strategy and results matrix/M&E framework for UNDAF, and achieving greater operational efficiency. This would require in-country support and guidance for the 18 rollout countries this year.
5. **Community of Practice.** A forum for knowledge exchange will be set up to capture good business practices accurately, analyze success factors and lessons learned, with the objective of broadening the collective application of these experiences, supporting interactive information exchange and moderated discussions among the countries.

Effective learning occurs when members can apply hands-on the knowledge, share with peers their insights and successes, and do not feel isolated in the process. Communities of practice do not just start or continue automatically. They need to be championed and nurtured. Knowledge is perishable, increasingly short-lived, and rapidly loses its value if not used immediately. As things change, the knowledge base erodes. To create a knowledge sharing culture and knowledge sharing mindset, we need to encourage people to work together more effectively, to collaborate and to share, and ultimately, to make organizational knowledge more productive. Learning to make knowledge productive is as important, if not more important than sharing knowledge.

The plan is to dedicate a Community of Practice moderator who will accompany the members through the application of their learning. The CoP moderator will be tasked to ensure that knowledge sharing results in enhanced productivity and that it is properly sustained. The CoP will be launched in May 2012. Funding support is currently being arranged with UN DOCO.

The CoP is intended to serve as a:

- Platform for learning, sharing, consulting, discussing and collaborating on all issues relating to common services, simplification and harmonization of business practices, and achieving operational efficiency.
- Network for practitioners, managers and experts on common services and harmonized business practices. Member profile will include agency affiliation, position

title, duty station, email address, contact numbers, areas of expertise, work experience, technical competencies, management skills, and project involvement.

- Forum for online chats, web conferencing and email exchange.
- Links to business operations guidelines, case studies, tools, methodologies, templates, training materials, inter-agency agreements, work plans, best practices, challenges, lessons learned and updates.
- Links to related events, workshops, courses, conferences, discussion groups and other communities of practice.

Membership will start with the Common Services ToT participants in Cairo, New York and Dakar in 2010, the Regional UNDAF Planning Workshop participants in Bangkok, Kigali, Dakar and Panama in 2011, the Operations Management Skills Training participants in Turin in 2011 and Bangkok in 2012, and the Chairs of the Operations Management Teams in all countries. A total of about 278 members have been registered in the CoP space with their profiles ready to be completed once it is rolled out. Others will be included, as needed and appropriate.

### **RESOURCES REQUIRED**

UNSSC is proposing that HLCM fund the design and development of the Programme-Operations Integrated Planning Workshop including travel costs and DSA of resource persons for 2 workshops, and also the venue, admin and logistics costs, as well as travel costs and DSA of the resource persons for the 2 Operations Management Skills Trainings. Total amount of funding requested from HLCM sums up to **\$175,480**, broken down as follows:

<b>No</b>	<b><u>Cost Category</u></b>	<b><u>Unit Cost</u></b>	<b><u># of Units</u></b>	<b><u>Total Cost</u></b>
<b>1</b>	<b><u>Regional Operations Management Skills Training</u></b>			
	Venue costs, admin and logistical support expenses	20,000	2	40,000
	Travel costs - 1 lead facilitator and 2 resource persons	7,000	6	42,000
<b>2</b>	<b><u>Programme-Operations Integrated Planning Workshop</u></b>			
	Course design and development			26,000
	Travel costs - 1 lead facilitator and 3 resource persons	7,000	8	56,000
	Add: 7% Administrative Costs			11,480
	<b>TOTAL</b>			<b><u>\$175,480</u></b>

### **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

- UNCT, with guidance and support from the UNDG Regional Team, is able to provide leadership and direction in the simplification and harmonization of business practices at the country level, and in promoting the appropriate culture to manage the structural, technical and mindset transformation.
- OMT is able to identify opportunities, as well as develop innovative solutions to improve business efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and effectively manage harmonization of business practices.
- Allow integration of Programme and Operations and alignment to programmatic needs and priorities early in the UNDAF process, including clarity on roles and accountability.
- A forum for interactive and moderated knowledge exchange is established to support the simplification and harmonization of business practices, and expansion of common services.
- A peer support mechanism to scale up harmonization of business practices globally is set up and sustained with the roster of qualified and trained resource persons.