United Nations Joint Programme on Millenium Development Goals (MDGs)

UNDP MDG Taskforce Recommendations

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<th>Joint Project: UN support to Developing Capacity for Pacific’s implementation of MDG-based National Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Policies.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Region: Pacific Islands</td>
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<td>UNDAF Outcome: Outcome 1 -Equitable Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction</td>
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<td>UNDAF Output: Enhanced national capacity¹ to incorporate MDG, pro-poor and gender-responsive approaches in national and sectoral policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting (including MDG costing).</td>
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<td>Funding Modality: Pass-Through Funding</td>
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¹ National capacity includes government, civil society and the private sector.
A. UN RC Lead function in the Coordination of Joint Programme Formulation

Outcome: The Resident Coordinator (RC- Executive), the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the Joint Programme Steering Committee (JPSC) (Quality Assurance), the UN Core Group, the Coordination Committee, Government Thematic Working Groups (TWG) and Donor to each play an important role in initiating and implementing the Joint Programme.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Resident Coordinator

- The RC should play a crucial role from the inception of the project. The RC should engage the government in the Joint Programme who will be chosen as the beneficiary countries at a late stage when UNCT has reached a common understanding on the MDGs JP. The RC office should take a lead role in pulling the agencies that have vested interest in the MDG goals together and engaging them. The UNDP RC office:
  1- Lead drafting of the programme document with the support of other UN agencies, where by UNDP takes active role in JP initiation and facilitation;
  2- Lead in engaging the other UN agencies (FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO & UNESCAP) to work together under one Programme Document with a common goal;
  3- Secure/identify additional resources from the donor by formalizing the Joint Programme. Donors in Pacific want the UN agencies to work together as one mechanism for a greater impact in order to allocate its contribution;
  4- The RC office to liaise with the government for the formulation and endorsement of the programme;
  5- The RC to chair the UNCT MDG group to give the group support and guidance.

RECOMMENDATION 2: UN Country Team

- To facilitate UN coordination, under the guidance of the UN RC, the UNCT should establish a UN Core Group that serves as a consultative body to oversee the strategic direction of the UN system support to the MDG planning/implementation, national development planning exercise, including UN/donor engagement and technical discussions on support and other resource requirements.

  1- Should recognize that the agencies are working separately towards the Millennium Development Goals and that if the resources are pulled together for the benefit of the country, the impact will be more powerful and better coordinated;
  2- Advocate within respective agencies and to the Government the Joint Programme and its importance (in the Yemen programme, this was viewed by some as not very active or sometimes as just reactive). Invite the high-level policy makers from the public sector to this forum to exchange information and keep concerns fresh on all sides.
  3- Should be part of the Joint Programme Steering Committee.

In the Yemen Joint Project, the UNCT agreed on terms of reference and was meeting regularly. The Group also invited bilateral donors to participate in the discussions (of which none participated). In addition to this a document on a common consensus on the outcome of the engagement of the process was shared and endorsed provisionally. This mechanism to ensure that this process of engagement remained informed, it was ensured that the UNCT reviewed its response continually to the emerging problems and the bottlenecks in the process (the beginnings of this was initiated by holding joint forum of bilateral donors and the UN Core Group).

The overall responsibility for coordinating the work of the UN Country Team (UNCT) rests with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC). Towards this effort, a senior economist was recruited to support the

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UN RC and the UNCT. In addition, the UNCT utilized additional national, regional, international experts in relevant technical areas to reinforce the capacity of the Government in the preparation of the MDG-based national poverty reduction plan. This support was directly provided to TWGs through the provision of technical consultants, national or international experts, and/or missions, to be supported through the Joint Programme funds.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Joint Programme Steering Committee**

- Steering Committee should compose of the RC as Chairperson, UNCT at the Head of Agency level, the contributing donor representatives, CROP agency representatives, Government designated officials. The Steering Committee should be tasked with:
  - Examination and approval of the eligible proposals in the light of their quality and merit. Where the UN Core Group (i.e. One of the IATF member to be present as the senior supplier in the Project Executive Board) cannot reach agreement on project approval, the RC will act to approve or reject the project proposal. The JPSC should meet at least monthly, and otherwise as required. The JPSC should also be responsible for providing strategic guidance to the Joint Programme; reviewing progress; and ensuring coherence and collaboration between the Joint Programme and the national authorities’ priorities.
  - The criteria for approving proposals will be essentially, though not exclusively, should be based on meeting immediate needs within priority areas, country priorities, MDGs, recipient’s absorption capacity and the executing entity’s implementation capacity.
  - Decisions on the selection of an executing Participating UN Organization should be made based on demonstrated operational and absorptive capacity and expertise.
  - Donors may wish to channel budgetary support to national authorities through a Participating UN Organization in the form of budget support provision. Budgetary support type of earmarking must be explicitly indicated. The funding provided is intended to cover gaps identified by the Government in its yearly budget and is targeted at specific projects aimed at poverty reduction. National and/or international NGOs can also be recipient of funds through a Participating UN Organization.

In addition the JPSC should:
  - Ensure that the activities funded under the Joint Programme are coordinated with those funded from the national budget and bilateral donors;
  - Advise donors on the most appropriate allocation of their resources, based on needs, priorities and absorptive capacities, when requested to do so.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: UN Core Group/ and or Coordination Committee (CC)**

- UN Core Group can be formed (1) to monitor the process of the CCA/UNDAF and (2) monitor the implementation of the UN MDG Joint Programme

1. The UN Core Group can be tasked with the following:
   - Developing a work plan and revise it on a regular basis;
   - Developing success and failure criteria;
   - Overseeing the implementation of the work plan;
   - Conducting quality reviews of results;
   - Documenting issues and raising them to the UNCT and concerned parties;
   - Assessing management and administrative capacities of government implementation;
   - Writing highlight reports for the UNCT and Donors;

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5 UNDP experience from Fiji Biodiversity Steering Committee where several Govt., CROP agencies, INGOs and NGOs are represented.

- Supporting resources mobilization efforts;
- Identifying any follow up items for project objectives and activities;
- Assessing and supporting training and capacity building component of the project through coordinated or individual agency support;
- Keeping other member agencies of Core Group and UNCT of related parallel agency activities;
- Each agency should chair by rotation, depending on which agency is hosting the UN Core Group the meeting; hence ensuring representation of agencies in the Group.

2. In its role as the Coordination Committee, the UN Core Group can perform the following tasks:

- Initial technical review of proposals, and funding eligibility. Following successful review, transfer of eligible proposals to the JPSC, with recommendations and all documentation from the technical review.
- Review of the operational activities of the Joint Programme;
- Review of the Joint Programme’s reports;
- Liaise closely with counterparts, on a continuing basis, to assure both programme and implementation coherence with PIC priorities.
B. Identifying and defining the issues requiring a MDG Joint Programme

**Situation Analysis**

It is apparent that the 14 PICs are at various stages of development and MDG achievement. The progress towards the MDGs varies significantly across the region and in many cases within countries as well. Greater disparity occurs in MDGs 1, 3 and 6, where most countries are below the targets. A number of countries have undertaken activities to integrate the MDGs into their national planning frameworks, while others have embarked on a range of advocacy initiatives. Countries have also begun the process of preparing national reports. These various activities are illustrative of the growing commitment to MDGs in the region.

Geographically 3 LDCs (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Kiribati) and 2 Non-LDCs (FSM, RMI) are furthest away from achieving their MDG targets. Therefore the geographical focus of the Joint Project should be on these countries. There is a need for further attention in specific thematic areas (especially MDGs 1, 3, 6), including collection of time series data and improvement of national systems of data collection. It is also clear that there is a greater need to address a broader range of issues than just poverty (e.g., Gender, HIV AIDS, Child Mortality, Youth unemployment and Water & Sanitation). Within the context of the MDG framework analysis, countries require additional support in planning and monitoring mechanisms at the national level to measure progress on the attainment of the MDGs.

The challenge remains that the attainment of the MDGs by 2015 is too ambitious with the possible exception of universal primary education and under-five child mortality. To achieve the Goals on time, PICs will need to make significant investments to build capacity in human resources, infrastructure and institutions as well as to mobilize resources to bridge the financial gap. Current constraints, can be overcome between now and 2015 to meet the Goals. To do so, however, requires a systematic and long-term plan for investing across all sectors, as well as sufficient international/regional support. The majority of the support is concentrated at the national level, however, with little involvement of the local capacities. It is envisaged that local institutional capacities are also affected by the Joint Programme.

**Recommendations on Strategy**

The strategy should select an MDG priority area which meets the specific needs of countries consistent with Pacific Framework for Action, UNDAF and Pacific Plan. Such priorities should address the gaps amongst countries in implementing national MDG goals.

**RECOMMENDATION 1**: A bottom up approach to the development of the Joint Programme, as opposed to the top down approach should be adopted. The national authorities, under the leadership of the Ministry of National Planning and Finance should be engaged from the beginning in the JP process. Such ministries in Joint Programming have proved to be great proponents, taking on the role of coordinator among other ministries and UN agencies to ensure the success of the national working groups at each level as a critical support piece of the MDG implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION 2**: Capacity development offers long term opportunity for implementation of national development goals (and achieves MDG targets once NDS are aligned to MDGs). Addressing gaps in specific MDG goals will only lead to short term achievement of these goals, and leaving weak capacity to report and plan in the longer term. Hence it is appropriate for the JP to develop capacity than to address reaching specific goals in PICs (due to existing capacity and data gaps). For individual targets, it is best to ‘repackage’ existing programmes and align to weak targets (and not necessarily create new ones). Thus the objective of the joint programme should be:

*To enhance national capacity to incorporate MDG, pro-poor and gender-responsive approaches in national and sectoral policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting (including MDG costing) for MDG implementation in PICs.*

The new UNDAF (2008-2012) supports the enhancing of National Capacity for Policy Analysis and Programme Development for Human Development. Hence the Joint Programme is in broad alignment with the UNDAF and with the national strategy of the participating governments. The new UNDAF is aligned

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7 National capacity includes government, civil society and the private sector.
with the Pacific Plan, the national development plans and the MDG goals. The Joint Programme process can start as a natural need. The national partners can use the Joint Programme as the basis to develop capacity for implementing poverty reduction and national development strategies through MDG based planning & budgeting in specific areas.

RECOMMENDATION 3: As noted through the UNDAF Results Matrices, the results that UN system organizations plan to achieve to contribute to each UNDAF Outcome are common in the area of MDG achievement. Hence the key interventions should focus on (Annex 1):

- **Policy dialogue**
  - Support to evidence-based planning and budgeting
  - Capacity building of government, civil society and private sector
- **Data analysis**
  - MDG-based data collection and analysis
- **Public outreach**
  - Advocacy of national MDG agenda

**C. Joint Programme Implementation**

*Outcome:* To achieve the most effective, efficient and timely implementation of the MDG Joint Programme, and to reduce transaction costs for national partners, donors and the UN.

**Situation Analysis**

The MDG joint programme has a common objective/result (3 outcomes), a common work plan defined by UNDAF (but under separate CPDs). There is also a strong possibility that the different agencies would target common national partners (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women and specialised NGOs etc), as well as the joint programme will be operating in common island countries. The role of each UN agency is to primarily provide support to the Government in particular in national and sectoral policy, planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting (including MDG costing). Each agency will consequently cover a topic from its own perspective in the programme e.g. UNDP covering employment from a development and economical angle, while ILO from labour standpoint. Agencies may also look at addressing ‘cross-cutting’ topics, were each agency will bring something new to the table. However there are funding gaps and the joint programme would consider mobilising resources from other donors.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** At the time of the development of the Joint Programme, the total financial contribution of the UN agencies to the JP process should be noted to determine Joint Programme funding modality. Due to the main conditions for the proposed MDG joint programme management, **POOLED OR PARALLEL FUNDING MANAGEMENT** is recommended. However, should the pooled/parallel funding modality not cover the entire funding of the Joint Programme, a combination funding. With the introduction of HACT, standard reporting of the different agencies will be standardised which will enhance consolidated reporting.

It is hard to determine if the Joint Programme at this stage if the proposed programme will contribute to an increase or reduction of transaction costs for the governments and for each of the UN agencies, given that the formulation is still in progress. In the case of the UN Armenia Joint Programme, no duplication was perceived to have occurred in the support to the Government through a pooled funding modality. However, in theory the Joint Programme should be a cost effective programme as duplication of agencies work is minimized, comparative advantages are leveraged among agencies and coordination is optimal.

**Lessons Learnt from Joint Operational Modalities**

1. **UN Joint Programme in Yemen**
   - The Financial Software (ATLAS) of the Administrative Agent was not equipped to manage the Joint Programming funds causing long delays in the funding. Training from the UNDGO on how to navigate the financial software would be required for the Administrative Agent. Consistent UN software among all agencies is recommended to facilitate transfers among agencies.

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8 This matter is now of some urgency since the Leaders in the Pacific Plan (Initiative 12.4) have agreed to upgrade and extend country and regional statistical information systems and databases across all sectors by 2008.
2. UN Joint Programme in Bolivia

- Roles and responsibilities of all the agencies/partners should be clearly stated. Technical input should also be delegated to agencies that will be part of the process, even if some of the partners don’t sign the project document. This can be further validated via Agreement Memo between the agencies and during the process of formulation and implementing the JP.

- Communication strategy for the JP should be clear from the beginning, with agencies discussing this constantly via communication committee meetings dealing with disagreements professionally to arrive to a consensus. For this project, it is recommended that the Communication Strategy includes social mobilization, communication campaigns, advocacy activities as well as campaigns to disseminate results.

- In the Bolivia JP The fear to involve too many partners that will affect the timelines of the products, the extra effort to reach consensus in concepts and approaches, accompanied with thoughts of “agency ownership” of the identified products, were some concerns. However, it is envisioned that the opportunity of the Pacific JP is to build on the political and technical skills of each person involved in order to add value, scale up and use more efficiently human and financial resources. Hence the national authorities should be recognized via participatory process from the design to the implementation of the JP and the fund flow under management arrangements should also include the possibility of funds disbursed by national partners. . “The Millennium Goals gives us the opportunity to think in a holistic manner. All agencies coincide that working together is best to achieve results. Working together adds value, scales up individual efforts. The nature and substance of the results have been enriched by the interagency collaboration".
D. Building Capacity to Effectively Develop and Implement Joint Programmes

**Situation Analysis**
Although Joint Programming have been analyzed by the UNCT in several meetings by UN representatives and has been the guidance tool for the design and implementation of some Pacific JP, technical discussion on the instrument has not been sufficient. The taskforce is aware that much more effort should be displayed in analyzing the implications of Joint Programming instrument and the lessons learned from other countries. This issue will become evident when discussions about roles and responsibilities would be emerging at the UNCT and IATF levels.

The UN Bolivia JP review report highlighted that national partners also need the opportunity to intervene in the analysis and strategize together with the other partners, instead of receiving a document in which they haven’t been actively involved.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** In case of Bolivia’s experience, the learning process that took place between the staff of the different institutions was also useful. They identified that the alliances between organizations give them a broader understanding of programme issues, strengthened their capacities and enabled them to have a better impact with the products they are implementing. Continuous exchange of documents and ideas between the different agencies would also initiate a rich analysis on JP.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** It is suggested that two areas needs to be further discussed interms of capacity development for Pacific UN JP: technical and professional strengthening because of the participation in the process of implementation of the JP and increasing knowledge about how to develop JP and working in partnerships to make more effective programs. The efforts that UN agencies are displaying to learn about this process from the different experiences all over the world will be crucial for the next steps in developing JP. The above can be done via workshop that should take place at the beginning of the JP process and during the follow up activities. Concluding Analysis. Capacity assessment for implementing partners also needs to take place prior to JP implementation.

E. MDG JP Programme Partnership for Greater Impact

The UNAIDS partnership is at the forefront of UN reform, spearheading reform efforts and demonstrating how the UN family can work together in a coherent and coordinated manner for greater impact and results at country level (UNDG). However, working together does not mean doing everything jointly. It means developing a common understanding and vision, planning jointly, agreeing on outputs, and collectively monitoring and being accountable for results. But efficiency and effectiveness dictate that implementation of joint programmes must be based on each Cospromisors’ strengths and expertise. Working together does not only look and sound good, it results in more effective programmes and outcomes. The programme must emphasise and demonstrate the value of partnership across all levels, by building on each agency’s comparative advantage for better collective results.
## E. Key Lessons Learned from UN Joint Programmes

The lessons learned to date from this fruitful exercise of joint programmes are many and it is fair to state the following:

- **Yemen:** "This is the best Programme ever with the UN" stated the Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. The Government is celebrating the success of the Joint Programme due to its modality. The UN agencies, by combining their efforts into one project have presented to the Government a full palette of services. If one agency was unable to provide support in one area, the Government directly resorted to another agency.

- **Yemen & Armenia:** The Resident Coordinator and its office successfully rallied the UN agencies to work together as a team for the benefit of a greater goal despite initial resistance. The UNCT formed the UN Core Group, an efficient tool for the Joint Programme with representation from each agency that allowed the leveraging of agencies’ comparative advantage. The Core Group allowed a flow of communication regarding each agencies progress. It also allowed inter agency exchange of ideas and problem solving.

- **Bolivia:** UN agencies and their respective staff have now a clearer understanding of Joint Programme and its benefits. All of the UN agencies recognize the many benefits of working within a Joint Programme modality such as more efficiency, less duplication of work, bigger impact for the beneficiary… This renewed enthusiasm toward Joint Programming has lead the Head of Agencies to seriously consider incorporating Joint Programme activities among UN agencies in their Country Plan and the UNDAF.

- **Republic of Moldova:** It is imperative that Headquarters institutionalize Joint Programming, formalize an escalation process for challenging situations at the field level, appoint a team to respond to the queries of the agencies involved in Joint Programming and to monitor the progress of programmes while acting as the focal point, and become more involved in the technical aspect of the Joint Programming in the development implementation.

- **Yemen:** A more active role of the Joint Programme Steering Committee with quarterly or semi annual meetings held to review the Programme.

- **Kenya:** More advocacy and awareness through workshops and training on Joint Programming is needed to clarify any confusion on Joint Programming.

- **Paraguay, Kenya & Moldova:** It is key to engage the Government at an early stage in the Joint Programming process to familiarize it with the Joint Programme methodology and technical aspect. This allows the Government sufficient time to consult with their finance and legal departments on Joint Programme funding modalities for early clearance. It is also recommended to provide workshops for the Government and donors about the Joint Programme modalities to orient them about this new concept.

- **Yemen:** A bottom up approach to the development of the Joint Programme, as opposed to the top down approach adopted.
# ANNEX 1

## Context of Pacific MDG Joint Programme

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<th>JP Focal Area</th>
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<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>Specific Interventions</th>
<th>Partners</th>
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<td><strong>1. National &amp; Sub-regional policy dialogue and capacity development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Budgeting &amp; Forecasting</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td># of NDS linked to financial resources and national budget mechanisms</td>
<td>A. Assess and establish country specific training requirements for MDG based planning &amp; budgeting</td>
<td>UNDP, UNESCAP</td>
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<td>Formulation of budgets informed by clear national priorities</td>
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<td>B. Planning</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td>National effort to link NDS, MDG and other related global commitments</td>
<td>A. Aligning NDS to localized MDG targets (pro-poor &amp; gender sensitive) for short to medium term needs</td>
<td>UNDP, UNESCAP,</td>
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<td>C. Monitoring &amp; Reporting</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td># national MDG reports published (post 2004)</td>
<td>A. Assist countries in National MDG reporting &amp; M&amp;E frameworks</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
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<td>D. Develop &amp; build on existing capacity</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td>Optimum use of local skills and capacity both within and outside government</td>
<td>A. National workshops &amp; stakeholder consultations on MDGs (national reports, HIV, MDGs-Human Rights)</td>
<td>UNDP, UNAIDS, UNFPA,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td># multi-stakeholder processes initiated</td>
<td>B. Strengthening national MDG mechanisms at all levels, to include local governments, NGOs</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>C. Develop capacity at different levels for gender based planning &amp; HIV AIDS</td>
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<td>E. Gender Mainstreaming</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td># National reports reflecting gender specific data</td>
<td>A. Collate sex disaggregated data on the 8 goals to establish current situation</td>
<td>UNFEM, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO,</td>
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<td><strong>2. Data Collection &amp; Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Addressing data gaps</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
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<td>A. Stocktake &amp; analyse existing national level MDG data</td>
<td>All agencies,</td>
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<td>B. Create Pacific database for MDG related information</td>
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<td>C. Develop capacity (HIES) &amp; improve regional/national coordination for collection of time series data</td>
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<td><strong>3. Public outreach to link national &amp; local levels</strong></td>
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<td>Advocacy at all levels</td>
<td>SOI, VAN, KIR, RMI, FSM, TUV</td>
<td>#national MDG</td>
<td>A. Common budget for standard</td>
<td>All Agencies</td>
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9 MDG reporting & alignment with national planning processes could be a niche for UNDP
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<tr>
<th>(National, Provincial &amp; Local Governments, NGOs, CSOs) for MDG implementation</th>
<th>RMI, FSM, TUV</th>
<th>stakeholder communications strategies</th>
<th>advocacy packages &amp; monitoring material</th>
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<td>B. MDG goals advocated at all UN workshops (general &amp; specific)</td>
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<td>C. Media campaigns for MDG based awareness</td>
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