



Joint evaluation of collaboration among the United Nations Rome-Based Agencies

Summary presentation by Mokoro Limited

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Introduction

- Objectives of the evaluation

- Repeated calls from Governing Bodies to strengthen Rome-Based Agencies collaboration (RBAC), and commitments by RBAs to do so
- But no previous evaluation to give credible evidence of contribution of RBAC towards achieving SDGs and to help understand conditions necessary for effective RBAC
- The RBA evaluation offices jointly appointed and supervised an independent external firm ([Mokoro Ltd.](#)) to review RBAC, 2016-2021

- Evaluation approach and questions

- Backward- and forward-looking
- Assesses relevance, results of RBAC; factors influencing it; value added by RBAC
- Mixed-methods theory-based approach: 12 country case studies; ± 400 interviews; 410 RBA staff responses to online survey; 8 'deep dive' thematic studies

Summary of findings: relevance

- RBAC is relevant to the strategic objectives and goals of the three entities in contributing to 2030 Agenda
- RBAC is highly relevant for the overall direction of the latest phase of UNDS reform
- Secretary General's efficiency agenda reduces relevance of RBAC around corporate services

Summary of findings: results

- RBAC efforts have had mixed results in strengthening coordination over the review period
- Good progress in some projects, countries and thematic areas
- Joint knowledge management and learning are simpler to arrange than joint operations, and the RBAs have strengthened their performance in this regard
- Limited progress in reducing overlap, competition and duplication of work
- At all levels, misunderstandings over mandates and competition for funds between FAO and WFP persist, sometimes alongside good technical collaboration on certain themes and tasks

Summary of findings: factors influencing the effectiveness of RBAC

- The global, regional and country contexts present a spectrum of support and constraints for RBAC
- Interactions between the RBAs and their Member States through governance processes reveal mixed understandings, motives and priorities with regard to RBAC
- There are significant differences between the RBAs, but these differences do not always obstruct meaningful collaboration
- Administrative and programming processes and procedures are a significant obstacle to RBAC
- Insufficient resources are provided for RBAC

Summary of findings: the added value of RBAC

- Limited data available for analysis of value added by RBAC. Although RBAC may have made a positive contribution to effectiveness and may add value compared to single-agency interventions, there is little evidence of this
- Use of the knowledge created through RBAC has, in some cases, led to an increase in the effectiveness of collaborative efforts
- Although RBAC can lead to cost savings in corporate services as well as additional funds from some donors, overall the costs of collaboration can be significant
- Expectations for reducing cost burdens are high, but in practice partners often find that joint work requires additional effort

Conclusions (1)

- Collaboration between the Rome-Based Agencies is a daily reality, reflecting the shared strengths and commitment of these distinctly different organizations. RBA staff routinely see and act on the advantages of collaboration where they see it makes sense
- Despite the daily reality of RBAC, there is widespread ambivalence about the concept
- The official systems and procedures to promote and coordinate RBA collaboration add little value, frustrating staff more often than they inspire them

Conclusions (2)

- Sometimes there are better ways for the RBAs to achieve their shared objectives than to focus on collaboration with each other
- Collaboration and the achievement of the RBAs' shared objectives are still impaired by misunderstandings about the mandates of FAO and WFP
- Although RBA collaboration is a daily reality, some types of collaboration usually impose higher transaction costs. At all levels, 'upstream' and technical work may be an easier area for effective RBA collaboration than formal project formats

Conclusions (3)

- Current United Nations reform restructures modalities for RBA collaboration at country and regional levels, but does not diminish the value of this collaborative effort. It greatly diminishes the value of separate RBA pursuit of joint administrative efficiencies
- Collaboration between the RBAs has significant potential, but the rationale for it is not stated in an appropriately realistic way

Recommendations (1)

1. Update the MOU between the RBAs

- Although the current five-year MOU was only signed three years ago, significant changes since then make an update necessary

2. Restructure and reinforce the co-ordination architecture for RBA collaboration within the framework of UNDS reform

- In order to focus and deliver RBAC more effectively, with an emphasis on full alignment and engagement with the wider UN reform process to support stronger implementation of the 2030 Agenda

3. Further embrace the new joint programming mechanisms at the country level and ensure constructive, collaborative RBA engagement with these mechanisms

- To ensure and facilitate RBAs' full engagement with UN country planning processes

Recommendations (2)

4. Focus administrative collaboration efforts on further embracing the United Nations efficiency agenda.

- The overall United Nations efficiency agenda has largely overtaken RBA efforts to build joint corporate services

5. In considering the development of joint projects and programmes, assess the costs and benefits of the proposed collaboration and only proceed if the benefits outweigh the costs.

- Avoid unnecessarily lengthy and costly planning and implementation processes, instead focusing on joint efforts that pose manageable burdens of administrative co-ordination

Recommendations (3)

6. The Member States of the RBA Governing Bodies should reappraise and adequately resource their position on RBA collaboration

- Insufficient resourcing is one of the main obstacles to RBA collaboration
- Expectations need to be aligned to what makes most sense in specific contexts

Thank you!



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