**Review Highlights** JIU/REP/2021/4
February 2022

REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS IN UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ORGANIZATIONS

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Background

The JIU reviewed the management of implementing partners by organizations of the United Nations system, assessing the progress achieved since the 2013/4 review and the recent developments and trends. JIU sought to assess the major developments, evolving landscape and changes in the practices of United Nations

system organizations since the 2013 report in managing implementing partners. It explored how major changes in the past decade, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the principles of partnership from the global humanitarian platform, the Grand Bargain commitments and the repositioning of the development system, had affected entities' relationships with the different types of implementing partners and the modalities of engaging them. Consistent with its Statute, JIU studied the ways to strengthen governance, accountability and oversight of the regulatory frameworks, and policies and practices of the entities in managing their implementing partners. It looked at ways of improving the implementing partner modality and management in the coming years; it also drew up an illustrative list of good practices from United Nations entities. In supporting the efforts of Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and targets adopted under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, organizations of the United Nations system rely increasingly on implementing partners to deliver results, including in highly volatile and high-risk environments, underscoring not only the pressing need for strengthened managerial oversight and accountability, but also intensifying financial scrutiny, and addressing legal constraints and repercussions for losses, credibility and reputational risks. Sustainable Development Goal 17 recognizes the revitalization of global partnerships for sustainable development, including through multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, as being critical in this effort. The study included reviews of the policies, practices and procedures of the United Nations system in
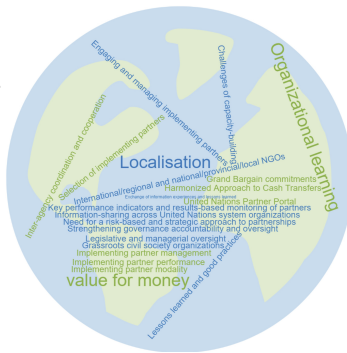
managing and implementing partners. Specific areas are identified to strengthen the due diligence efforts and standard operating procedures in a cost-effective manner. The review underscores the need to differentiate among types of implementing partners.

Objectives

The scope of the review was system-wide, covering the participating organizations engaged in the management of implementing partners in the period 2012-2019 and considering, as appropriate, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on engaging them. The review examined the methods and practices used by United Nations organizations system-wide to select and manage implementing partners for programme and project delivery, to identify issues, strengths and weaknesses in current practices and to explore areas for further improvement for an effective and efficient management of implementing partners. The review aimed at:
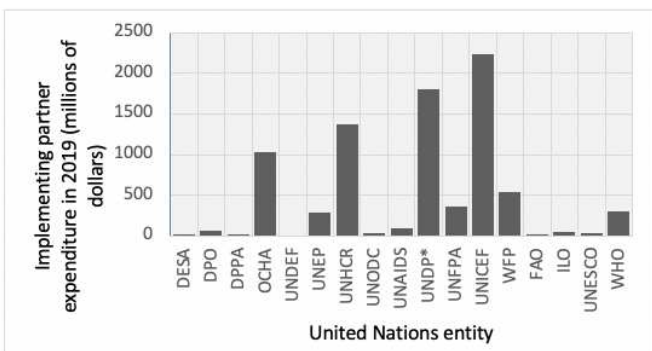
- Enhancing accountability, by determining the governance and accountability frameworks for the management of implementing partners, to enable Member States to ensure reliability and credibility of United Nations entities in delivering services to host countries in the fields concerned and explore the mechanisms in place that provide assurance that resources allocated to third parties have been used for the intended purposes;
- Identifying and supporting the dissemination of good practices, by identifying effective methods and modalities in selecting, engaging, and managing implementing partners;
- Encouraging inter-agency cooperation and coordination among the various actors involved in delivering programmes through implementing partners (Member States/donors, host Governments, United Nations entities, NGOs and United Nations country teams) and sharing information among United Nations system organizations in respect of implementing partner-related activities at the country, regional or global and headquarters levels; and
- Addressing issues of efficiency and effectiveness, by examining the objectives and goals set out for the work delivered by implementing partners, the systems of effective monitoring and evaluation of the work and the systems in place for accurate and reliable financial transactions involving implementing partners.

1. Conceptualization: definition, mandates, policies, guidelines, quantitative data

Implementing partner activity varies significantly in volume and importance across organizations. Some entities allocate more than one third of their total expenditures to implementing partners, with more than a thousand and up to several thousands of partners, while other entities have insignificant implementing partner activities. The great majority of organizations with implementing partner activity have in place a definition for implementing partners that contains the main elements of such an entity and makes it clearly distinguishable from other types of engagement of third parties, such as procurement, commercial services and consultants and individual contractors. Compared with 2013, the situation has improved, and the majority of organizations have adopted definitions and policies that provide the necessary detailed guidance for various types of implementing partners, taking into account their specificities. Entities with significant implementing partner activity have updated their policies and guidance. Furthermore, organizations have listed the different types of entities that are eligible as implementing partners. Building on the progress made, it would be useful if organizations continue their efforts and engage in the appropriate inter-agency mechanism to develop greater conceptual clarity in respect to their implementing partner management policies and practices, including a common definition of implementing partner, and to agree upon the key principles, standards and processes, such as due diligence, risk and capacity assessments, risk-based monitoring, assurance and oversight of implementing partners and their performance assessment, in line with a results-based methodology. A common set of guiding principles, or a policy framework, would provide guidance, benchmarks and good practices that organizations would be encouraged to follow, as possible, and would enhance transparency and accountability and strengthen coherence and harmonization.

2. Challenges to providing implementing partner data and limited strategic guidance and oversight

Some entities had difficulties in producing data, but the situation overall has improved considerably compared with the period 2012-2013. Information is still fragmented: financial and programmatic data are kept in separate systems and often are not corroborated or aligned, making monitoring, performance monitoring and partner performance assessments difficult. Not all organizations have databases that capture such data. Responsibilities for implementing partner management are scattered across various offices and functions, which impedes data collection across the organization. these challenges and shortcomings, as well as the considerable volume and

extent of implementing partner activities and their associated risks, reinforce the need to have suitable management systems and administrative tools to support implementing partner management and operations, including at the headquarters, regional and country levels, notably for those organizations that have significant implementing partner activity. Some entities have addressed these shortcomings, and they have developed new tools, established partner databases and made them searchable through automated screening and artificial intelligence. Some organizations have added dashboard and report functionalities in their enterprise resource planning (ERP) and other management systems to better produce and analyse implementing partner data and operations. Yet, more needs to be done. A review of the resolutions and decisions of the legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations organizations showed that they provided only limited legislative mandates and guidance in the area of implementing partner management. In a limited number of organizations, such as OCHA, UNAIDS, UNODC, WFP and WHO, legislative organs and governing bodies have specifically adopted mandates for engaging in partnerships. Typically, these provide general mandates without specific guidance, except in respect of very few entities, such as WFP and WHO. There is a lack of systematic monitoring, data collection and regular reporting to the legislative organs and governing bodies in some organizations, which has an adverse impact on any entity, as senior management does not have access to this useful management tool to study and appreciate the challenges of implementing partner management. The absence of periodic reporting on implementing partner activities prevents legislative organs and governing bodies from providing overall strategic direction, guidance and oversight. It also prevents the entity from having a strategic approach for engaging and managing implementing partners aligned to the organization's overall strategic priorities. To address this gap, organizations should put in place policies and procedures providing for the monitoring and reporting of data relating to their engagement of implementing partners annually.

3. Regulatory frameworks, partnership strategy, policy, guidelines, standards and benchmarks

The review examined contemporary policies, practices and procedures related to engaging and managing implementing partners by organizations of the United Nations system, in order to suggest improvements in them and thereby strengthen their governance, accountability and oversight, consistent with the Statute of JIU. Progress has been made since the issuance of the 2013 JIU report. Most organizations, notably those with significant implementing partner activities, have developed and adopted partnership policies covering implementing partners, as well as additional guidance and standard operating procedures. Several have added references to partnerships, including implementing partners, in their organizations' strategic frameworks. However, not all organizations have adopted policies for all categories of implementing partners. There has been some ambiguity as to how the different policies align with each other, as they are contained in different documents and are not always cross-referenced. Furthermore, the various policies are owned by different offices or functions, which can

dilute responsibilities and accountability and negatively impact intra-organizational coordination and coherence. The partnership policies were not in all cases submitted to and endorsed by the entities' legislative organs and governing bodies. Such endorsement would allow the latter to provide overall strategic guidance, direction and oversight on the key aspects of implementing partner management. References or cross-references between the partner and implementing partner policies and the organizations' strategic frameworks are not always made, which would ensure a coherent regulatory framework for implementing partners and a strategic approach to engaging and managing them. Furthermore, the supervision of implementing partner activities should be integrated into the organizations' internal system of control. Adequate capacity – financial, human and technical – both at the headquarters and the field levels, needs to be in place to effectively provide the necessary managerial oversight of implementing partners.

4. Dispersed responsibilities for implementing partner management create challenges for accountability, internal coordination and coherence
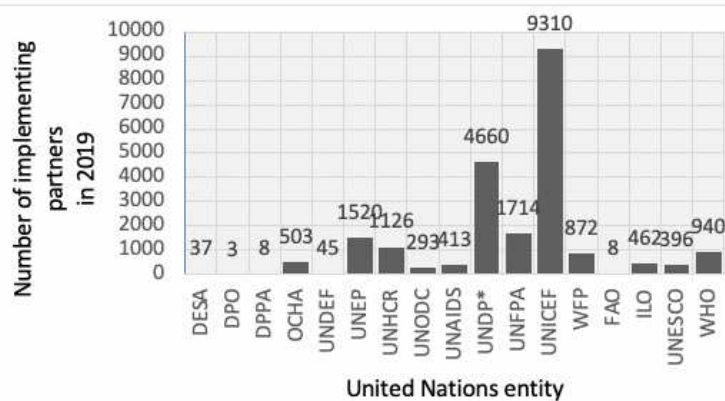
Implementing partner management is a cross-cutting activity involving different offices and functions, with responsibility dispersed within the organization, not only horizontally across different functions at headquarters, but also vertically between headquarters, regional and field offices, thereby creating challenges of clear division of responsibilities, accountability and reporting lines, intra-organizational coordination and ensuring a coherent approach and compliance across the entity. Some offices and functions are primarily entrusted with developing policies, policy advice, guidance, related training and some, limited, supervision of their implementation. The responsibility for operationalizing and implementing policies on the ground lies with the programme or project managers and technical sections, while programme, management and administrative support functions, such as finance, accounting and internal management control, as well as compliance functions play their role in ensuring adherence to and compliance with the rules, guidelines and policies. The oversight offices and functions, namely, internal and external audit, investigation and evaluation, have oversight mandates concerning implementing partners and related issues. Clarity on the roles, responsibilities and concomitant accountability of the various offices and functions is essential to ensure a coherent, effective and efficient process. Foremost, a clear, comprehensive and concise regulatory framework for implementing partners is imperative. A dedicated implementing partner unit will help to strengthen coordination, coherent approaches and management of implementing partners and information-sharing. Several organizations, including FAO, UNHCR, WFP and UNODC,

have implementing partner (or partner) units or equivalent, specifically mandated to manage implementing partners, while others, despite significant implementing partner activity (such as UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA), do not have a dedicated unit but responsibilities are divided across various functions and offices. Such a unit may collect and consolidate all key data related to partnerships throughout the organization, including administering an implementing partner database, partner portal or other information tool; provide guidance on issues, including on the applicable policies, guidelines and procedures in consultation with other relevant offices; liaise among the different offices and functions dealing with implementing partners at the headquarters, regional and country levels, among others. The Inspector believes that there is a case for setting up such a unit for organizations that have significant implementing partner activities, which should be based on a cost-benefit analysis. This will help the entity to address the challenges stemming from dispersed responsibilities and the cross-cutting nature of implementing partner management, and foster a strategic, coherent, effective and efficient approach, as demonstrated by the examples of those organizations that have set up such unit.

5. Need for a risk-based approach to implementing partners

While partnerships come with opportunities, they also expose the entities to operational, reputational, legal, country/field, strategic, exit-strategy, counterparty, systemic, concentration, compliance, cyber, contractual and financial risks. A systematic and robust risk-based approach to making critical choices about engaging an implementing partner for programme or project implementation and delivery is essential. Implementing partners are a high-risk activity, and the associated risks need to be identified and managed adequately Building on the progress made, more needs to be done to put in place holistic and systematic management process, notably for organizations with significant implementing partner activity, and to incorporate it into the organization's enterprise risk management (ERM) process. This will help to gain a better appreciation of the entity's risk exposure and the required costs and resource needs for appropriate mitigating measures, and to define levels of risk acceptance and risk appetite. Key information on the implementing partner risks should be periodically reported to legislative organs or governing bodies, allowing them to take informed decisions and provide the related overall guidance and strategic direction. Organizations have made progress in applying a risk-based approach to implementing partners through the various measures outlined above. A review of the status of implementation of recommendation 7 of the 2013 JIU report indicated that most organizations considered the recommendation implemented. However, they admitted that further work needed to be done in this area and that the implementation of the risk management assessments and mitigation measures could be further improved.

6. Measuring partner performance in line with results-based management principles

The key to effectively managing implementing partners is the development of easily measurable, practical and meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs). This helps the contract manager to ensure that the partner has been performing according to contractual terms and stipulated quality requirements, meets the key performance indicators and fulfils all obligations in this regard. Entities

have made marked progress since issuance of the 2013 JIU report. Most have added in their partnership agreement or annexes a log frame and results framework with KPIs. Yet challenges persist in measuring implementing partner performance in practice. KPIs should be aligned to the organization's strategic plan and results framework, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review monitoring framework for 2021-2024, and guided by commonly accepted indicators of key areas or activities, including capacity-building, to foster system-wide coherence and harmonization. The collection, monitoring and reporting of the data should be done through and integrated into the existing ERP system, managements systems and reporting tools.

7. Training implementing partner management

In its 2013 report, JIU proposed that organizations should strengthen their staff training on implementing partner management and ensure that the necessary training instruments are in place to support effective and efficient implementation of projects and activities. Costs associated with such training should be identified up front as part of the budget and programming process. Organizations have made progress in developing and providing training on implementing partner management to their staff. The great majority of entities provide such training and have developed training courses covering both general aspects, such as project management and contracting, and more specific aspects, such as training on HACT and working with CSOs or NGOs. Training includes both in-person training and online courses. In view of the COVID-19 epidemic, the focus has been on online training in the past year. Some of the training courses are mandatory for staff managing partners. Several entities also have training courses on PSEA and fraud prevention.

8. Capacity-building of implementing partners

A key challenge for effective programme delivery through implementing partners is their lack of adequate capacity in the robustness of their internal management systems, systems of internal control and financial management, accounting and human resources or procurement policies and processes. This concerns all categories of implementing partners and government entities, as well as NGOs, in particular small, local, community-based or grass-roots . entities that often do not have a strong set-up and structure. Partners are faced with the rather complex, highly demanding and comprehensive regulatory frameworks and demands when partnering with United Nations systems entities. Organizations have been addressing these challenges through various capacity-building efforts, including conducting capacity assessments, formal training courses, workshops and training sessions and providing informal, ad hoc and continuous guidance throughout the project implementation cycle. Compared with 2013, significant progress has been made in undertaking capacity-building measures, through the instituting of upfront risk and capacity assessments of partners, the issuance of specific guidance and the overall expansion of such activities. However, more needs to be done. Capacity-building of implementing partners, strengthening national capacities and promoting national ownership are key objectives and guiding criteria in delivery of programmes through implementing partners. Capacity-building activities are supported by system-wide mandates from the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the repositioning of the development system and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Yet limited information is available on whether expected results in respect of

capacity-building, national ownership and knowledge transfer are being achieved, either fully or partially. Therefore, organizations should assess the progress made since 2013, including lessons learned and areas for further improvement.
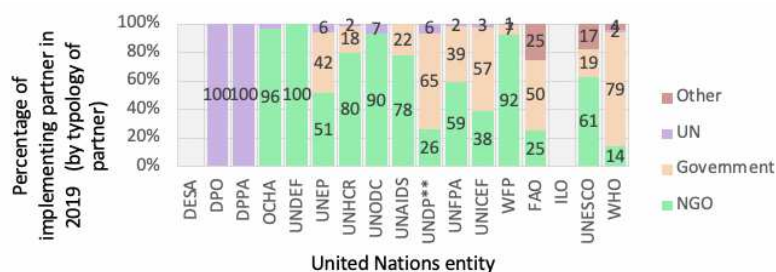
9. Strengthening inter-agency cooperation and information-sharing

JIU revisited the ways in which organizations have advanced in strengthening inter-agency cooperation, collaboration and information-sharing related to implementing partner management, including as measured against recommendations 11 and 12 of its 2013 report. More needs to be done to further strengthen inter-agency cooperation and information-sharing at the headquarters, regional and country levels. Inter-agency mechanisms have served as platforms for experience-sharing and information exchange; however, in relative terms, little action has been taken, despite promising initiatives such as HACT, the United Nations Partner Portal, work on a common definition of implementing partners in the High-level Committee on Management, the informal group of organizations with significant implementing partner activities involving UNHCR, and some discussions in the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System. To enhance inter-agency coordination and collaboration on implementing partner selection and related initiatives, programme managers and other officials made several suggestions: (a) expand the mutual recognition of rules and procedures for partner selection and related initiatives as part of ongoing business innovation; (b) develop, through inter-agency platforms, joint standards and principles for implementing partner management procedures that all organizations can adopt or that can serve as useful guidance; (c) share implementing partner risk and capacity assessments and performance reports on a confidential basis, as needed; (d) discuss the monitoring of partner performance in inter-agency platforms; (e) develop a repository of partner agreements and related annexes such as reporting templates and formats, performance monitoring, evaluation and oversight requirements; (f) conduct monitoring indexed by, inter alia, country and type of implementing partner and activity; and (g) develop, through inter-agency platforms, a standardized methodology for establishing key selection criteria such as cost-benefit analysis and capacity-building and for determining risks levels (and ideally a risk rating). The advantages of enhancing cooperation, coordination and collaboration among the United Nations system organizations with regard to implementing partner management are self-evident. JIU calls for the strengthening of the existing system-wide networks and platforms for the purpose of exchanging experiences, information and intelligence, and agreement templates, and of sharing the lists of debarred and sanctioned implementing partners and other relevant documentation.

What the JIU Recommends

The JIU makes ten formal recommendations, two for action by the legislative organs and governing bodies, and eight by the executive heads, of the United Nations system organizations. These are complemented by 17 informal recommendations, outlining suggestions to the executive heads for effecting further improvements.

Legislative organs and governing bodies of United Nations system organizations are asked to:

3 Provide, starting in 2024 and on the basis of reports submitted to them annually by their respective executive heads, overall strategic guidance and legislative oversight to the management of their implementing partners, including in the framework of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, especially with regard to capacity-building, inter-agency coordination and information-sharing.

9 Assess, beginning in 2023, their approaches to capacity-building of implementing partners and strengthening national capacities and ownership, in the framework of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, including the effectiveness of such efforts since 2013, progress made and lessons learned, based on reports prepared by their respective secretariats, and adopt specific measures to strengthen national capacities and ownership and build the capacities of their implementing partners.

Executive heads of United Nations system organizations are called upon to:

1 Develop, by the end of 2024, through consultations in the appropriate inter-agency mechanisms, a common system-wide definition and a set of agreed guiding principles and standards for implementing partners that is informed by a risk-based and strategic approach to partnerships and results-based management methodology

2 Include, by the end of 2023, in their annual reports on the work of the organization a section on the engagement and management of their implementing partners, including important details useful to the legislative organs and governing bodies.

4 Update, by the end of 2023, as necessary and implement their implementing partner policies and related guidance, including standard operating procedures for the selection, engagement, management, oversight and evaluation of implementing partners, to sustain a strategic and risk-based approach to implementing partner management, aligned to the entity's strategic framework.

5 Establish, if they have not done so, on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis, an implementing partner unit or designate, by the end of 2024, a focal point for the management of implementing partners to support the coordination of implementing partner policies and activities within the organization, including by providing policy guidance and backstopping and by facilitating liaison and information-sharing, under terms of reference that clearly define its role and responsibilities.

6 Incorporate implementing partner risks into their organization's risk management frameworks by the end of 2023.

7 Develop, by the end of 2024, key performance indicators for the management of implementing partners and establish systems to collect, monitor and report the performance data.

8 Share, by the end of 2023, among themselves, through existing inter-agency mechanisms/forums, their specialized training materials and modules for the management of implementing partners, including due diligence, risk and capacity assessments of partners, results-based and risk-based performance monitoring, fraud prevention, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, capacity-building, working with local non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, the harmonized approach to cash transfers and the United Nations Partner Portal.

10 Agree, by the end of 2024 and with the support of the Development Coordination Office, resident coordinator offices and the United Nations country team mechanisms, upon specific measures to further strengthen inter-agency coordination for improving implementing partner management at the country level and report on the implementation to their respective legislative organs and governing bodies from 2025

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17 informal recommendations, outlining suggestions to the executive heads for effecting further improvements:

1. ERP systems to include state-of-the-art functionalities and features for implementing partners

Organizations with significant implementing partner activities should, on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis, include state-of-the-art functionalities and feature in their ERP and other systems to support effective implementing partner management, such as real-time access to data, automated monitoring, due diligence, performance assessment functions, dashboards and integrated data interfaces with partners.

2. Strengthen performance monitoring of partners in line with a risk-based approach and RBM

Building on the progress made, organizations should continue their efforts to strengthen performance monitoring of partners in line with a risk-based approach and results-based management (RBM) methodologies. Adequate resources should be allocated to that end, taking into account the risk exposure and level of acceptable risks. Those efforts should be supported through ongoing digitalization initiatives, including updating the ERP and other management systems.

3. Negative earmarking' and partner selection

Organizations should ensure that any funding they accept is in line with the applicable fundraising policies and other pertinent rules and regulations, which equally apply to any funding received by them that is allocated to implementing partners if this implementation modality is chosen. They should pay due attention to avoid any perception that could be seen as deviating from the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality associated with the United Nations system organizations. Any issues should be discussed as early as possible during the donor negotiation process to avoid possible problems arising later during implementation. Organizations should be guided by commonly accepted fundraising principles and standards as agreed by the United Nations system. Entities should develop through appropriate inter-agency mechanisms a common standard of conduct that all entities can accept, embrace and adapt to their specific circumstances.

4. Donor and partner selection

A common practice or standard for partner selection should be developed, through appropriate inter-agency mechanisms, that is in conformity with regulations, rules and policies and and that all entities can accept and adapt to their circumstances.

5. Capacity-building of partners

United Nations entities could engage international NGOs as implementing partners and incorporate appropriate provisions to the effect that the latter, in turn, would undertake, and be obliged, to engage local NGOs and develop their capacity in specific, identified areas. Some are doing so already; others should be encouraged to follow their example.

6. Implementing the mutual recognition statement

United Nations entities should review the effective implementation of the mutual recognition statement andhe challenges encountered. Through appropriate coordination mechanisms, such as the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), a protocol or guidance should be developed and agreed upon to iron out any recurrent disagreements and differences in areas such as intellectual property rights, data protection, rates for agency support costs or reporting requirements.

7. Fast-track procedures

Entities that have not yet developed fast-track procedures and have activities in emergency settings and humanitarian and similar operational environments should develop and adopt them. It is helpful to have processes in place for the preregistering or rostering of eligible and suitable partners, as discussed in the paragraphs below.

8. Rosters of partners and use of the United Nations Partner Portal

The practice among some organizations to have rosters of implementing partners allows for better planning, the faster engagement of partners when the need arises, and the reduction of transaction costs, as certain selection steps such as due diligence and assessments, are valid for several years. The United Nations Partner Portal can also serve as a roster of implementing partners available for more than one agency, fostering inter-agency cooperation.

9. Procedures for 'blacklisting' of partners

In line with the suggestion in the JIU report on fraud prevention, detection and response in United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2016/4), the executive heads of those United Nations system organizations that have not yet done so should update by the end of 2023 their implementing partner policies, procedures and related legal instruments to allow for the "blacklisting" of implementing partners, including referrals of related fraud cases to national authorities and asset recovery. The particularities and sensitivities related to government entities should be taken into account, as appropriate.

10. Periodic partner consultations and feedback mechanisms

Progress was made in setting up and strengthening feedback, consultation mechanisms and modalities for soliciting the input, views, concerns and perspectives of implementing partners and other shareholders. Such structured consultations on a regular basis by the country offices of United Nations organizations with their implementing partners are useful, as they allow entities to discuss pertinent issues, improve communications with their partners and provide them with a platform for sensitizing entities about their common concerns and specific problems that need attention at an appropriately senior level for speedy resolution. Entities that have not yet put in place such consultation and feedback mechanisms are encouraged to follow the good practice of organizations that already have them.

11. Sharing results and outcomes of partner consultations among organizations

Results and key outcomes of such consultations should be shared not only within the respective entity but also across organizations through the appropriate inter-agency forums and using the tools available, such as the United Nations Partner Portal, CEB and its networks and RCOs.

12. Guidance by internal oversight offices related to implementing partner audits conducted by external service providers

In line with the suggestion contained in the 2013 report of the JIU, the supportive role and guidance provided by internal audit offices or similar headquarters management oversight functions to country teams under the national execution execution modality/national implementation modality audit regime or similar audit regimes should be intensified subject to capacities and resource availability. It helps to address the risks of fragmentation of implementing partner audits, as it makes it possible to maintain the overall direction and oversight over the implementing partner audit process within the organization while outsourcing the required implementing partner-related field audit activity. This would support organizational learning, the continuous improvement of implementing partner processes and the fostering of in-house coherence with regard to implementing partners and compliance with the pertinent rules, guidelines and policies.

13. Strengthen organizational learning based on oversight work

From an oversight perspective, the absence of systematic organizational learning from project- and programme-level evaluations of projects and programmes, including replicable good practices in relation to implementing partner performance in many organizations is a serious shortcoming andcalls for urgent and concrete steps towards its remediation. This is not limited to evaluations: holistically, the learning from all oversight units that have findings on implementing partner management needs to be strengthened in many organizations. Evaluation responsibilities and coverage should be defined clearly and unambiguously in the agreements for engaging implementing partners with specific criteria and indicators, thereby making it possible to measure the effectiveness and impact of .projects and programmes. Concerted efforts at the organizational and inter-agency levels are imperative to improve the current situation.

14. Strengthening the prevention and detection of fraud and other types of misconduct by partners

Based on the progress made in strengthening the prevention and detection of fraud and other types of misconduct, including SEA, by implementing partners, organizations are encouraged to continue such efforts, as implementing partners have been considered both by management and oversight offices to pose a high risk, and high-profile cases inthe past have shown the devastating impact that such behaviour can have on the organizations, in terms of not only financial losses but also reputational risks and the loss of the trust of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Organizations should embark on joint actions and inter-agency initiatives and enhance system-wide cooperation and information-sharing in this regard.

15. Enhance internal coordination and collaboration among the oversight disciplines

Heads of oversight offices of United Nations system organizations should enhance internal coordination and collaboration among the oversight disciplines within the offices to achieve efficiency gains and promote lessons learned. They should consider including a section on the status of such coordination in their existing mechanisms for reporting to the legislative organs and governing bodies.

16. Strengthen and expand the functionalities of the United Nations Partner Portal

Organizations should continue their efforts to further strengthen and expand the functionalities of the Portal and encourages all entities that are not yet participating in the Portal to join it. Portal staff should explore ways to foster cooperation, interfaces and information-sharing with other inter-agency mechanisms and initiatives, such as through HACT, the United Nations Global Marketplace, relevant activities of the RCO and country team, the protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners and the various groups of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, with a view to further expanding the sharing of relevant information across the system and enhancing collaboration.

17. Strengthen and improve HACT

Organizations should continue their efforts to further strengthen and improve HACT on the basis of the lessons learned and good practices and encourages other interested entities to join the framework. HACT agencies should explore ways to foster cooperation, interfaces and information-sharing with other inter-agency mechanisms and initiatives, as feasible.

Methodology

A mixed-methods research approach for data collection, research and analysis, was applied consisting of the following:

A desk review of legislative mandates, policies, guidelines and oversight reports related to the management of implementing partners by the United Nations system organizations, as well as reports of the Secretary-General and executive heads of other entities and oversight offices, among others, on the subject matter;

A desk review of documentation related to the management of implementing partners by the United Nations system organizations, obtained through online searches from other international organizations, public and private sector entities;

A data collection phase, starting with an organizational questionnaire circulated to all participating organizations;

Follow-up interviews, based on the analysis of responses to the organizational questionnaire, held with participating organizations remotely (via telephone and videoconferencing tools);

Interviews with other international organizations to learn about good practices and lessons learned on the management of implementing partners.

In total, 19 of the 28 participating organizations provided responses to the organizational questionnaire, albeit to varying levels of detail. In all, 120 interviews were conducted with approximately 500 staff members and officials.

JIU Reports 2020 and 2021

JIU/REP/2021/6, Business continuity management in United Nations system organizations (to be released)

JIU/REP/2021/5, Review of the ethics function in the United Nations system (to be released)

JIU/REP/2021/4, Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2021/3, Cybersecurity in the United Nations system organizations and **JIU/ML/2021/1**, Management letter on securing the integrity of documents, records and archives of the United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2021/2, Review of United Nations system support for landlocked developing countries to implement the Vienna Programme of Action

JIU/REP/2021/1, Review of management and administration in the World Meteorological Organization

JIU/REP/2020/8, Review of mainstreaming environmental sustainability across organizations of the United Nations system

JIU/REP/2020/7, Blockchain applications in the United Nations system: towards a state of readiness

JIU/REP/2020/6, Multilingualism in the United Nations system

JIU/REP/2020/5, Enterprise risk management: approaches and uses in United Nations system organizations

JIU/REP/2020/4, Review of management and administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

JIU/REP/2020/3, Review of common premises in the United Nations system: current practices and future prospects

JIU/REP/2020/2, Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination and convergence

JIU/REP/2020/1, Review of the state of the investigation function: progress made in the United Nations system organizations in strengthening the investigation function

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