

# Joint SDG Fund Operational Guidance

*Revised September 2023*

## **Summary**

*This guidance outlines the framework for operations, coordination and decision making for aspects of the Joint SDG Fund's operations.*

*In defining various processes, roles and responsibilities and procedures, this document seeks to serve as a guide for the Operational Steering Committee and Joint SDG Fund Secretariat, elaborating upon the Fund's Terms of Reference.*

*The Joint SDG Fund's commitment to an iterative learning process will inform the continuous improvement and evolution of this operational guidance, which will be updated as appropriate. For programmatic issues not covered in this document consult the UNSDG Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes.*

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## 1. Overview

Within the broader context of the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the UN Development System (UNDS) has collectively developed an inter-agency pooled mechanism to support governments in advancing the SDGs: the Joint SDG Fund<sup>1</sup>.

The overall aim of the Joint SDG Fund is to incentivize integrated and transformative policy shifts and support the United Nations in convening and creating SDG financing strategies to unlock catalytic investments that will enable countries to leapfrog in their development.

The Joint SDG Fund focuses on accelerating SDG progress and funds proposals that reflect the interdependent nature of the SDGs, leverage public and private financing, and/or lead to the development of new partnerships that steer investments towards the SDGs. The Joint SDG Fund supports initiatives that promote innovative ways to create new coalitions and networks between Governments, development banks, commercial banks, impact investors, funds<sup>2</sup>, and other sources of private and public capital.

This document provides complementary guidance to the Fund's stakeholders, building on the Joint SDG Fund's Terms of Reference.

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/72/279/para 27

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Pension Funds, Health Funds, Social Security Funds, Sovereign Wealth Funds, etc.

## 2. Governance and management arrangements

### 2.1. Operational Steering Committee (OSC) Internal Rules of Procedure

#### 2.1.1. OSC Membership, Duties and Rotation

##### OSC Chair

- The Director of the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) shall serve as OSC chair.<sup>2</sup>
- The Chair will be responsible for the opening, conduct, suspension, and adjournment of the OSC meeting as well as handling all procedural matters.
- The Chair is responsible for ensuring the observance of the rules of procedure of the OSC and adherence to the agenda. The Chair will rule on points of order and any such determination will be final.
- The Chair may represent the OSC at external meetings and report back to the OSC on those meetings. If necessary, the Chair may delegate this function to other OSC members.

##### OSC Members

- In addition to the OSC Chair, the OSC shall consist of six to eight UN entity members representing the Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs) of the Fund.
- The composition of OSC membership should ensure a balanced representation of UN Funds and Programmes and UN Specialized Agencies.
- Ex-officio members of the OSC are: the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat; the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, as the administrative agent of the Fund, to guarantee compliance and administration follow-up; the UN Global Compact to support structural engagement with the private sector; and one regional economic commission, on a rotational basis, to ensure the perspective of regional assets of the UN is fully leveraged.
- Each OSC entity shall nominate a representative at the Assistant Secretary-General level or an officer of an equivalent rank to attend meetings and make decisions on behalf of the member entity.
- Each OSC entity shall also nominate a technical focal point at the professional officer level to support and advise the OSC member and provide technical assistance.
- OSC membership shall have a term duration of no more than two years.

##### OSC Rotation

- A discussion item regarding upcoming rotations of OSC membership shall be included as an agenda item for the OSC meeting, at least four months prior to implementation of the membership rotation.
- During the OSC meeting, the OSC Chair shall request recommendations from the OSC members regarding membership rotation.
- The decisions regarding the OSC membership rotation shall be made by the OSC Chair. These decisions will be based on the recommendations provided by the OSC members and the guidance given by the Deputy Secretary-General, who serves as the Chair of the Strategic Advisory Group.

##### Responsibilities of the OSC members

Complementing the roles and responsibilities of the OSC as defined in the Fund's Terms of Reference (in section 4.1.2, paragraph "Roles and responsibilities of the Operational Steering Committee", p.7), the following duties apply to the OSC membership:

- The OSC members shall actively engage in joint advocacy efforts to promote the Fund's objectives, strategy, and progress to external partners and ensure active engagement of their Principals in Fund-related events and campaigns.
- During their membership, OSC members shall co-host or co-organize at least one high-level stakeholder meeting in collaboration with the Fund Secretariat, with the aim to support the Fund's partnerships and resource mobilization.
- Upon completion of their mandate, the OSC members shall continue to serve as Emeritus Members and PUNOs of the Fund. They are expected to provide ongoing support and engagement in the Fund's programmes and partnership activities. While not partaking in OSC meetings, unless invited, Emeritus Members will be invited to stakeholder meetings and are expected to provide ongoing support and engagement in the Fund's programmes and in partnership activities at country, regional and global events.

### **2.1.2. OSC Meetings**

#### **Frequency and Location:**

- The OSC will convene at least once every quarter, or as needed, determined by the OSC Chair.
- The OSC meeting shall primarily be held in person at the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) with provisions for virtual participation for members located in duty stations outside New York City.

#### **Notification of Meetings:**

- The Fund Secretariat will notify OSC members, technical focal points, and any observers of the meeting dates and venue, circulating a provisional agenda for any meeting at least 14 calendar days before the scheduled meeting.
- For planning purposes, the Fund Secretariat shall propose a tentative yearly schedule of quarterly OSC meetings.

#### **Agenda for Meetings:**

- The Secretariat will, with the approval of the OSC Chair, prepare and distribute the provisional agenda for each meeting.
- The OSC will, at the beginning of each meeting, adopt the agenda for the meeting.

#### **Transmittal of documents:**

- The Secretariat shall transmit any background documentation related to items on the provisional agenda to the OSC members and technical focal points at least 10 calendar days before the scheduled meeting.
- The Secretariat will use electronic means for transmission, distribution and storage of documentation.

#### **Attendance**

- OSC members must notify the Secretariat of their attendance at least 7 calendar days before the scheduled meeting.
- OSC member, in exceptional circumstances, may delegate their attendance to a senior-level alternative representative from the member entity, provided that the Secretariat is notified of the alternative representative at least 7 calendar days before the scheduled meeting.

- Membership of OSC entities that have frequently been absent from meetings or have delegated representation more than once in consecutive OSC meetings shall be reviewed.

#### **Quorum**

- The OSC will have a quorum when the Chair and at least 50 per cent of members are present.
- The existence of a quorum will be verified by the Chair at the beginning of the meeting.

### **2.1.3. OSC Decision-making**

#### **Decision-making**

- Decisions of the OSC shall be reached through consensus among the OSC members.
- In the event of non-consensus, the OSC Chair may make recommendations, taking into consideration the views expressed by the OSC members.
- In situations where a decision must be made by the OSC and cannot be postponed until the next meeting, the OSC Chair, exercising judgment, may facilitate decision-making through an electronic review and approval process without convening a formal OSC meeting.
- In such case, the Secretariat, with the approval of the Chair, shall transmit a proposed decision to the OSC members and technical focal points, inviting them to approve the decision on a non-objection basis within a prescribed period, usually no less than five calendar days.
- Upon the expiration of the prescribed period for replies, the decision shall be considered approved unless an objection is raised. The Secretariat will share the official communication regarding the adoption of the decision. If an objection is received, the Chair will engage directly with the OSC member to address the objection and update the OSC.

## **2.2. Stakeholder Engagements**

The Fund recognizes the importance of engaging with key stakeholders to foster collaboration and coordination in the Fund's activities. To achieve this, the following initiatives will be undertaken:

- **Stakeholder Meetings**

At least two stakeholder meetings will be organized by the Fund annually, inviting participation from contributing Member States, potential contributing Member States, UNSDG entities and other relevant partners. These meetings are to be strategically designed for inclusive consultation of stakeholders, dissemination of knowledge and enhanced coordination. To promote effective planning, the agenda and dates of these meetings will be agreed upon with the Chair of the Operational Steering Committee. The meetings may be chaired either by the OSC Chair or a Member of the Operational Steering Committee or by the Fund Secretariat, with delegated authority by the Committee.

- **PUNO Focal Point Group Meetings**

In addition to the Stakeholder Meetings, the Fund Secretariat will arrange meetings for the PUNO focal point groups, with a particular focus on the launch of calls for proposals or other funding rounds. These meetings serve as platforms for sharing information and seeking active participation and support from PUNOs to advance the Fund's activities.

Through these engagement mechanisms, the Fund fosters strong collaboration and cooperation among its stakeholders.

### 3. Call for Proposals and Funding Rounds

The Joint SDG Fund will operate at country level through Joint Programmes implemented by UN entities in collaboration with national counterparts. UN country teams (UNCTs), under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), will be invited to apply for funding from the Joint SDG Fund through a call for proposals, which can be fully open or targeted for certain UN country teams. The call for proposals could also be designed for different levels of funding, including preparatory/seed funding or full funding of mature joint programmes, depending on resources and descriptions of the funding round. Any new window opened in the Fund will be operated through calls for proposals or funding rounds. The details of each call for proposal or funding round process will be approved by the OSC, including any transfers to single or multiple agencies in relation to possible incubation phases. The Joint SDG Fund will only support UN joint programmes and initiatives implemented by a minimum of two Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs).

Funding will only be provided to proposals that are part of the country's UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (or UNDAF, if CFs are not yet adopted) and are aligned with national development priorities. Successful proposals will promote integrated approaches across the 2030 Agenda and will apply the principle of Leaving No One Behind. All proposals will be required to include an analysis of risks and the mitigation measures.

The Joint SDG Fund's standard programming cycle is based on three phases:

- 1) Preparation and launch;
- 2) Technical review and quality assurance of Joint Programme Documents/Proposals;
- 3) Joint Programme approval and implementation.

The OSC is authorized to approve any deviations from this programming cycle. This could encompass scenarios such as activating the Fund's Development Emergency Modalities, subject to the distinct requirements and development context.

#### 3.1 Preparation and launch

The OSC will endorse the scope, objective, eligibility conditions, and the overall procedures for every Call for Proposals or Funding Round, including criteria for the review and selection processes. Based on the OSC decision, the Fund Secretariat, with support from relevant stakeholders, will develop relevant documents describing the operationalization of the call for proposal or funding round.

Upon approval by the OSC, the call for proposals or funding round will be formally announced and initiated via a communication from the Director of the Development Coordination Office to the pertinent Resident Coordinators. The Fund Secretariat will inform UN agencies as relevant through established communication channels and PUNO focal points. It will also provide necessary updates, clarifications and hotline support to RCs/RC Offices (RCOs).

RCs will submit finalized proposals, based on inputs from the UNCTs following the submission procedures outlined in each description of the call for proposal or funding round. These documents could include full

joint programme documents, or shorter expressions of interest or concept notes, which include a lower level of detail. The latter two undergo an additional, preliminary round of review before being developed into full joint programmes. The Joint Programme documents will follow the [UNSDG Guidance Note on a New Generation of Joint Programmes \(Oct 2022\)](#).

### 3.2 Technical Review and Quality Assurance

All proposals will be screened based on a set of eligibility criteria (see Annex 1). A proposal will be rejected if it does not meet the eligibility criteria. The Fund Secretariat will be responsible for screening concept notes or proposals that meet the eligibility criteria.

The eligibility criteria for Joint Programmes (JPs) could include, amongst others, the following:

- Reflects the integrated nature of the SDGs;
- Is designed and implemented with an inter-agency approach (two or more UN entities involved<sup>3</sup>), under the leadership of the RC;
- Results are part of the Cooperation Framework and aligned with national SDG priorities;
- The proposal is based on country level consultations, and endorsed by the Government;
- Based on the standard template for joint programme proposals, it is complete, and it includes:
  - Theory of Change demonstrating contribution to SDG acceleration,
  - Strategic partnerships that involved the broader ecosystem,
  - Specific and tangible results, and
  - Initial risk assessment and mitigation measures.

The technical review of proposals will be conducted by technical experts from UN entities (both from OSC members and other UN entities) and/or independent external experts. The Fund Secretariat will facilitate the technical review with the support and technical leadership by the agencies involved and seek a minimum of three experts per Joint Programme, to independently assess each proposal based on the technical criteria described in the Call for Proposal announcement.

The Joint SDG Fund will request that experts for technical review maintain confidentiality during the technical review process. Technical reviewers should recuse themselves from the technical review process, if there are any conflicts of interest.

The technical review experts will perform the following primary tasks:

- Disclosure any conflict of interest in reviewing proposals;
- Conduct the technical review of concepts/JP proposals in a timely manner;
- Ensure overall consistency of technical review amongst concepts/JP proposals;
- Score concepts/JP proposals based on the technical criteria provided;
- Submit the results of the technical review to the Fund Secretariat as requested.

Each expert will:

- Be familiar with the TOR of the Joint SDG Fund and the specific Call for Proposal terms;
- Participate in any webinar/workshop organized by the Fund's Secretariat on the technical review

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<sup>3</sup> Lessons learned from SDG-F and MDG-F indicate that the good practice is maximum four PUNOs per Joint Programme.



- approach, issues, and standards;
- Provide written comments and assessments against the agreed criteria based on the approach proposed in this note and instructions provided by the Fund Secretariat;
- Review assigned proposals with independence and impartiality.

Following the technical review, full Joint Programme documents will also undergo quality assurance to ensure that the Joint Programmes are ready for implementation.

If the initial proposal is requested in the form of an Expression of Interest or a Concept note, the Fund Secretariat will inform the RCs of countries who have submitted successful proposals on the process of developing full joint programme documents. The quality assurance and technical review of the full joint programme document will be organized subsequently by the Fund Secretariat.

### 3.3 Joint Programme approval and implementation

Following the outcome of the technical review and quality assurance, the Fund Secretariat will propose options to the OSC to make funding allocation decisions for joint programmes. The funding decisions may be informed by the portfolio approach that takes into consideration the expected impact, and the operationalization of the following principles:

- Regional representation.
- Typology of countries: including Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, Middle Income Countries, Small Island Developing States, as well as post-conflict and peace-development-humanitarian nexus settings.
- SDGs coverage: a wide range of approaches that comprehensively cover the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda.
- Other considerations relevant for a particular Call/Funding Round.

To formalize the fund allocation decision, the Fund Secretariat will prepare a Fund Allocation Matrix (Annex 2) for OSC approval. Upon OSC approval, the OSC Chair will sign the Fund Allocation Matrix and the Secretariat will communicate the funding decision to the selected RCs. Upon final approval of a Joint Programme, the Fund Secretariat will also request disbursement of the authorized amount by the Administrative Agent (MPTF-O) to the identified PUNOs, subject to the availability of funds.

The following documents will be compiled by the Fund Secretariat and forwarded to the Administrative Agent:

- Minutes of the relevant OSC meeting, or email correspondence confirming endorsement or no-objection to the matter;
- Fund Allocation Matrix signed by the OSC Chair;
- The Fund Transfer Request form (FTR, Annex 3) signed by the RC on behalf of PUNOs;
- JP document signed by RC and PUNOs, which must include the budget per UNSDG harmonized categories and all mandatory annexes, in alignment with the UNSDG Guidance Note on A New Generation of Joint Programmes.

The Administrative Agent will disburse the authorized amounts to the relevant PUNOs within five business days after receiving the duly signed FTR form with all the required supporting documentation listed above. The Fund Secretariat will be included in the notification email from the Administrative Agent to PUNOs

when the funds are transferred.

For funding decisions, the Joint SDG Fund may introduce multiple tranches for the fund transfer, whereby only the first tranche may be considered fully committed by the Joint SDG Fund. Subsequent tranches would depend on availability of funds and joint programme delivery as outlined below.

Each financial transfer will be approved based on successful performance in the previous period of implementation, and availability of funds. The minimum amount of the transfer to a PUNO will be US\$100,000 per year of implementation.

The release of the first tranche is based on the JP document as approved by the OSC. Subsequent tranches, as calculated in the joint programme's budget, as approved by the OSC, are subject to the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat's confirmation that:

- The Joint Programme has committed 75% of the previous tranche(s);
- The Joint Programme has demonstrated satisfactory accomplishment of results and financial delivery planned under the previous tranches;
- The Joint Programme has satisfied all financial and narrative reporting requirements and operational and financial closure requirements for any current or previous Joint SDG Fund-funded joint programmes in the countries involved in the joint programme;
- Each PUNO has complied with operational and financial closure conditions of previous funds provided by the Joint SDG Fund in the same country (see section 4.5).

After approval and transfer of the funds, the Joint Programmes will be launched by the PUNOs and begin implementation as per Joint Programme Documents and in line with the indications in the 'Administration of the Joint SDG Fund' section of this Guidance Note.

### 3.4 Direct cost budget and global projects

The Joint SDG Fund may develop and implement global projects or direct cost budget projects to facilitate the operations of the Fund. This includes projects to allocate resources for the Fund Secretariat operations or conduct Fund-level global evaluations (e.g., System-Wide Evaluations) under the Direct cost budget category. It could also include global projects to support the incubation of thematic windows and/or particular SDG-integrated policy and/or financing innovations. Global projects could be administered by one or more PUNOs with support provided by the Fund Secretariat.

The Operational Steering Committee (OSC) has the authority to approve and oversee the management of all direct cost budgets and global projects. The Fund Secretariat will prepare and submit a Project Document including the objectives, results, workplan, budget and management structure of the project to the OSC for approval.

## 4. Administration of the Joint SDG Fund

### 4.1 Financial contributions

The Fund Secretariat liaises with potential contributing partners to promote the Fund and finalize negotiations on financial contributions. Once the amount has been determined, the Fund Secretariat introduces the contributor to the Administrative Agent to finalize the contribution through a Standard Administrative Arrangement. If the contributor has special conditions, they will be discussed with the Fund Secretariat, Administrative Agent, and Participating UN Organizations as appropriate.

Contributions to the Joint SDG Fund may be accepted from PUNOs, Governments of Member States of the United Nations or from inter-governmental or non-governmental organizations, and/or from private sources. Acceptance of funds from the private sector will be guided by the relevant due diligence processes and criteria stipulated in the UN system-wide guidelines on cooperation between the UN and the Business Community.

### 4.2 Thematic and Regional Windows/Modalities

The Joint SDG Fund will be able to establish thematic, regional and multi-country windows. Detailed guidelines will be approved by the OSC including criteria, thresholds, and management arrangements.<sup>4</sup>

Any new thematic window or modality shall hold eligibility criteria for JPs including:

1. Requires RC leadership in design and coordination of joint programmes at the country level.
2. Directly contributes to the results and theory of change of the relevant UNSDCF and to enhancing UNCT coherence.
3. Requires pooling of expertise, knowledge, and networks from two or more UN entities.
4. Multi-sectoral in nature, creates cross-sectoral impact, and contributes to accelerated progress on multiple SDGs.
5. Leverages engagement of diverse stakeholders, including government, private sector and civil society, and promotes a systems approach to designing, developing and implementing solutions.
6. Facilitates systemic and catalytic results in line with priority goals and agendas of the UN Secretary-General and UN Sustainable Development Group.

The Fund has established a Development Emergency Modality drawing on the lessons from the UN's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to enable joined-up emergency actions by the UNCTs and the experience of the Fund's own support extended to over 100 countries during the pandemic. The Modality is designed to enable a rapid and collective response to situations that threaten to derail progress toward multiple SDGs. It offers a rapid avenue for donors and development partners to extend fast and flexible seed financing for a coordinated UN response at the country level under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. The Modality will be activated and operated according to the Modality's terms of reference (See Annex 4)

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<sup>4</sup> The Fund Secretariat will submit detailed guidelines to the OSC, for the Committee's approval.

### 4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The RC, with the convening PUNO will be required to monitor the implementation of the JP and provide data and reporting to the Fund Secretariat, as requested. At least 5% of the overall JP budget must be allocated for monitoring and evaluations and strategic communications. Other information and insights (such as policy papers, value for money analysis, case studies, infographics, blogs) may also be required from the JP teams.

JPs with a total programme budget of over \$3 million are required to complete a final independent evaluation before the end of the programme. The minimum allocation for the final evaluation must be at least 2% of the overall budget. The final independent evaluation will be managed at the country-level by the PUNOs with oversight provided by an Evaluation Reference Group. The Evaluation Reference Group should be chaired or co-chaired by the RC and consist of key stakeholders including Government and PUNOs. The JP steering committee could serve as the Evaluation Reference Group, if appropriate. The Fund Secretariat will provide quality assurance and guidance on the scope, methodology and draft reports of the evaluation.

The evaluations will follow the [United Nations Evaluation Group's \(UNEG\) Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#), using the guidance on Joint Evaluation and relevant UNSDG guidance on evaluations. The management and implementation of the joint evaluation will have due regard to the evaluation policies of the PUNOs to ensure the requirements of those policies are met and with use of appropriate guidance from PUNOs on joint evaluation.

The evaluation process will be participatory and will involve all relevant programme's stakeholders and partners. Evaluation results will be disseminated amongst relevant stakeholders, which could include governments, donors, academic institutions, and civil society, including workers' and employers' organizations. A joint management response will be prepared by the JP steering committee upon completion of the evaluation and shared with the Fund Secretariat. The Fund Secretariat will publish the completed evaluation and relevant management responses via the UNEG evaluation database and MPTFO Gateway.

Thematic or portfolio evaluations, formative or summative, may be conducted at the global level based on guidance provided by the Operational Steering Committee.

Based on inputs from the JPs and data collection on CFs/SDGs results, the Fund Secretariat will be responsible to aggregate and analyse the results data as stipulated in the Fund Terms of Reference. It will also draft and submit Fund level consolidated annual report to the Operational Steering Committee to ensure monitoring of the Fund's performance. The Fund Secretariat will submit global-level independent evaluations commissioned by the Fund, including Fund-level, thematic and/or portfolio evaluations, as well as summaries of decentralized evaluations to the OSC and facilitate the drafting of a management response against the recommendations. The Fund Secretariat will also develop various results data platforms and visualization tools to ensure updated communication of results from the JPs to the OSC and other stakeholders.

### 4.4 Communications

Communicating aims, progress, challenges, and good practices is integral to the success of a Joint SDG

Fund initiative.

JPs with budgets of \$1 million or above will require a communication strategy for JP implementation, including integrating communication activities into the work plan with dedicated costs in the JP budget. In communicating processes and results, the tools, instruments, and materials will vary according to country context. UNCTs should agree on and share their communication strategy to the Fund Secretariat, upon request.

The Joint SDG Fund developed its [Communications Guidelines](#) in 2020. The Guidelines aims to empower global, regional and country-level communications officers and focal points with the tools necessary to ensure a credible and consistent flow of information about the Joint SDG Fund. Recipients and partners are encouraged to align with Joint SDG Fund brand guidelines, including donor visibility requirements. The guidelines and [Style Guide](#) will be made available to UNCTs prior to the implementation of their JP.

The Joint SDG Fund website ([jointsdggfund.org](https://jointsdggfund.org)) serves as an entry point for all information on the Joint SDG Fund at global, regional and country levels, from information on Joint Programmes, expert insights, voices from youth and [stories](#) from the field. An official X account (@JointSDGFund) is active in the dissemination of results from the Fund and JPs.

#### 4.5 JP Changes and Closures

##### **No-cost extensions and revisions of Joint Programmes**

To ensure flexibility and adaptability in Joint Programmes (JP), the process for no-cost extensions and substantial revisions has been established as follows:

##### **No-Cost Extensions:**

Regional Coordinators (RCs) may request no-cost extensions or revisions of Joint Programmes by providing a well-justified proposal (Note-To-File) for the proposed change. This proposal must be signed by both the RC and all the Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs) involved in the JP and submitted to the Fund Secretariat. The duration of the extension shall not exceed 50% of the originally approved duration of the joint programme, unless in extraordinary circumstances.

No-cost extensions that do not include any financial changes will be subject to approval by the Head of the Fund Secretariat, who holds delegated authority from the Operational Steering Committee (OSC). The maximum duration of no-cost extensions is recommended to be no more than 50% of the initial joint programme duration. The Fund's Secretariat will request OSC approval in case of no-cost extensions of longer length. Approved no-cost extensions will be documented as an annex in the minutes of the subsequent OSC meeting. To ensure efficient planning and implementation, the process for no-cost extensions should commence with the JP country team notifying the Fund Secretariat of the need for an extension, no later than three months before the operational end date of the JP. With the approval of any extension, the joint programme document must be revised and signed with the new operational end date.

##### **Substantial Revisions of Joint Programmes:**

For revisions of the JP that modify more than 25% of the budget or programmatic revisions that significantly change the scope, objectives, strategy or priorities of the JP, the RC is required to submit a comprehensive justification (Note-To-File), co-signed by both the RC and PUNOs, providing relevant

information on the proposed changes. This information may include details about revised budgets, work plans, and management arrangements. The submission should be made to the Fund Secretariat.

The Fund Secretariat will then facilitate the review and approval process of the JP revisions by seeking the endorsement of the Operational Steering Committee (OSC). Once the revision is approved, the Fund Secretariat will promptly notify both the RC and the JP team, as well as the Administrative Agent involved in the implementation.

### **Operational closure**

JPs should complete all programmatic activities by the operational end date indicated in the JP programme document approved by the OSC. Operational closure provides for cost-effective and timely closure and reporting following the end of programmatic activities. Delays in closure result in increased risk, cost accrual, and reduced credibility for the United Nations System as an efficient fund manager. Delays by a single partner or even a single project closure affect the entire fund closure timeline, since refunded balances cannot be re-programmed and utilized, implicitly driving up costs for all parties, including financial contributors who cannot close their own books.

JPs should complete all activities by the operational end date indicated in the full JP document approved by the OSC. The RC is encouraged to submit to the Fund Secretariat, and the MPTF Office, the final narrative reports on or before the operational closure date, when project personnel have not yet moved on to other assignments. The final narrative reports should be submitted to the Fund Secretariat within two months after the operational closure of the JP.

On a quarterly basis, the Fund Secretariat will submit documentation to the MPTF Office, including, as appropriate: (i) final agency narrative project report, (ii) consolidated final JP narrative report, and (iii) a list of projects (in the case of a JP, it could be 'JP components') that have been operationally closed by agencies. Upon receipt, final narrative reports will be uploaded to Gateway, to document fully closed projects.

### **Financial closure**

Each PUNO must provide a certified financial report for its portion of the Joint Programme to the MPTF Office no later than 18 months after the operational closure of the Joint Programme. While each PUNO has different procedures, typically, the project is financially closed at the country level prior to each PUNO's Headquarters' provision of a certified financial report<sup>5</sup>.

## **4.6 Risk management**

A structured risk management approach will be iteratively implemented in all levels of the Fund's activities, at the Joint Programme level managed by the local steering committee or equivalent structures, and at the global level covering both portfolio-level and Fund-level risks managed by OSC with support from the Fund Secretariat.

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<sup>5</sup> Guidance from the Multi-partner Trust Fund Office is available online ([https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet\\_how\\_to\\_close\\_a\\_project\\_or\\_joint\\_programme.pdf](https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/factsheet_how_to_close_a_project_or_joint_programme.pdf))

As the Joint SDG Fund encourages new approaches and solutions, a relatively higher level of risk can be tolerated in JPs if associated with rigorous risk mitigation strategies, keeping in consideration that proneness and aversion to risk might vary based on JP, country team and entities involved. With an integrated approach to risk management, risks will be viewed from a common UN system-wide perspective and considered at every step of the process of joint programming and fund management.

In addition to the external and internal context, as defined by UN entities risk management policies, given the inter-agency nature of the JPs, the context of the risk management process will also be informed by the objectives, values, processes and capacities of inter-agency collaboration processes in the countries and at global level.

Risk analysis requires an assessment of the likelihood of a risk and the potential impact on the objectives. The likelihood and impact of each risk is determined using a five-point scale, which is an integral part of JP project documentation, and builds on criteria for consistent risk management across the organization, as detailed in the Risk Management policy section of the Fund's TOR.

*Very high* risk levels require escalation and thorough risk analysis. Both *high* and *medium* risk levels require risk analysis scaled to the scope and nature of the risks with risk treatment and monitoring measures in place and budgeted. *High* risks require more detailed risk analysis and risk management plans. *Low* risk levels do not require further analysis or treatment. For each *Very High*, *High* or *Medium* risks, one or more risk mitigation measures must be identified and recorded in the risk registers/logs of relevant JPs and/or in the global risk register at the Fund level.

The Fund Secretariat will be responsible for monitoring risk reports from the JP level at least once a year, most likely during the annual progress reporting exercise. The Secretariat will review JP risks, especially risks identified as *Very High* and *High*, that occur across different JPs and country contexts for their aggregated risk potential. If necessary, the Secretariat will recommend including such substantial risks that occur across JPs and countries as portfolio-level risks in the global risk register for review by the OSC. The Secretariat could also propose additional portfolio-management specific risks to the global risk register.

All risk registers at the JP and global level should be reviewed and updated as regularly as required, but no less than once a year.

#### 4.7 Private Sector Partnerships

All direct contributions and partnerships initiatives with the private sector partners are subject to a due diligence process led by the Administrative Agent, which follows its policies and procedures to determine the risk level and mitigation measures.<sup>6</sup> The Fund Secretariat will fill out the information in the Risk Assessment Tool based on inputs from the private sector partner and submits it to the Administrative Agent, which commissions an independent review and provides this information to the Fund Secretariat, for onward submission to the OSC for review and decision. The Administrative Agent will sign the contribution on behalf of the fund, based on the decision of the OSC. For non-financial contributions, the Participating UN Organization that implements the direct cost project will facilitate gathering information

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<sup>6</sup> Further information on UNDP's policies around private sector partnerships are available online, <https://popp.undp.org/policy-page/private-sector-partnerships>



on the Risk Assessment tool. The OSC will oversee any risk management requirements in relates to private sector engagement based on the due diligence recommendations.



## Annex 1: Checklist for quality assurance of joint programmes

Country	JP template overall	Theory of Change	Result framework	Stakeholders	Management arrangements	Monitoring, reporting, evaluation	Communication plan	Learning plan	Risk management plan
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comments	None								
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comments	Minor edit: include the cost for final, independent evaluation in the workplan								
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comments	None								

## Annex 2: Funding Allocation Matrix

FUND ALLOCATION MATRIX FOR APPROVAL OF JOINT PROGRAMMES					
Name of call:					
Date of allocation decision:					
Total amount approved by this allocation decision:					
No.	Country	Joint Programme Title	PUNO	Budget per PUNO	Amount approved for tranche disbursement

### Annex 3: Fund Transfer Request Form

#### Fund Transfer Request Form to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, UNDP

To be completed by the RC Office on behalf of Participating Organization(s)					
To:	Jennifer Topping	From:	insert		
Title:	Executive Coordinator	Title:	Resident Coordinator, Country		
email address:	jennifer.topping@undp.org	Email address:	insert		
Joint programme focal point	insert	Email address:	insert		
Joint programme title :	insert	Participating UN Organization's (PUNO) Focal point & email (cc'd)			
		PUNO	PUNO focal point name	PUNO focal point email	
Joint programme no:	insert	PUNO1	insert	insert	
Country:	insert	PUNO2	insert	insert	
Theme (Call)	Policy: Social Protect	PUNO3	insert	insert	
		PUNO4	insert	insert	
		PUNO5	insert	insert	
Notes/ Special Instructions, if any:					
Amounts in USD - insert into the table and please do NOT use decimals.					
Participating UN Organization(s), as applicable <i>(Use English Acronym)</i>	Total Approved Allocation *	Total previously transferred amount (if applicable)	Amount Requested at this time	Remaining Balance after <i>this request</i>	Total Committed to date <sup>[1]</sup>
	A	B	C	D = ( A - B - C)	E
PUNO1		-		-	#N/A
PUNO2		-		-	#N/A
PUNO3		-		-	#N/A
PUNO4		-		-	#N/A
PUNO5		-		-	#N/A
Grand Total:		-		-	#N/A
<i>Please check here if there is a change in the overall budget allocation:</i>					
<i>[1] legally binding contracts signed, including multi-year commitments which may be disbursed in future years, prevailing guidelines.</i>					
Total amount committed as percentage of total amount received (% calculated, E/B) must be 75% or greater to request next installment					#N/A
Joint programme end date (operational closure) as approved by the Joint SDG Fund Operational Steering Committee: _____ Month/Year: _____					
I hereby confirm that the funds requested are calculated in accordance with the approved Work Plan & Joint Programme Document. * I also certify that the copy transmitted to the MPTF Office is a true copy of the original which is secured by the RC Office. I have received documentation from Participating Organizations demonstrating Committed amounts as indicated in column E above where applicable. I also confirm that the PUNOs' indirect cost does not exceed 7%.					
Signature _____		Date: _____			
Name: _____					
Title: _____					
*Attach signed Joint Programme document with budget breakdown by PUNO and year. ** Please submit soft copy along with signed version					

## Annex 4: Development Emergency Modality Terms of Reference

### I. Introduction

The Development Emergency Modality of the Joint SDG Fund is established building on the UN's previous response to the Ebola and COVID-19 pandemic to offer a similar rapid response, should another development emergency arise. A development emergency will be considered when the multiple pathways towards the SDGs are disrupted across multiple countries, akin to what occurred with the pandemic.

- While development is a long-term process, development emergencies are **short-term** but severe disruptions that must be dealt with immediately, less they threaten long-term goals and objectives.
- Development emergencies could be **global, regional, or national** in nature and may stem from a variety of natural and man-made shocks (pandemics, climate/weather-related events, civil unrest or conflict, government collapse, etc.).
- Since every emergency will have its own characteristics and create specific needs, the modality should not be a capitalized standing fund.

### II. From Reaction to Preparation

The UN Secretary-General's trust fund mechanism has proven to be an important additional source of funding that supported countries' responses to the 2014 West African Ebola outbreak and 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. The UN's vision for Ebola response was articulated in The Ebola Outbreak - Overview of the Needs and Requirements, and the UN Secretary-General's Vision for COVID-19 Response was laid out in The UN Framework for the Immediate Response to COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic became a development emergency as it threatened to roll back progress towards the SDGs, threatening not just public health, but social, economic, and overall well-being. The lessons learned from these Secretary-General's global funds informed the structure and function of the development emergency modality.

### III. Criteria for Activation of the Modality

A development emergency occurs when the development process is severely waylaid by crisis. It is a situation that disrupts multiple pathways to the SDGs across multiple countries, akin to what occurred as the COVID-19 pandemic evolved rapidly into a social and economic crisis as well as a threat to global public health. To help countries cope with a future development emergency, a set of criteria<sup>7</sup> would trigger the emergency modality into set-up and operation. These criteria would include:

- A **health threat** of classification grade 2<sup>8</sup> or 3<sup>9</sup> and/or PHEIC
- An **emergency** at the global, regional, or country levels **that affects three or more SDGs**
  - For instance, a climate change related drought affects SDG1 on poverty, SDG 2 on hunger; and SDG 6 on water
- **10,000** [this number could be revised by the Operational Steering Committee] or more **people are impacted** in ways that make them increasingly vulnerable and less likely to reach the SDGs
- **Government responses can be significantly strengthened** with UN support
- **The UN Secretary-General deems it necessary** to trigger modality activation.

<sup>7</sup> This is by no means an exhaustive list.

<sup>8</sup> Grade 2: a single or multiple country event with moderate public health consequences, according to WHO classification.

<sup>9</sup> Grade 3: a single or multiple country event with substantial public health, according to WHO classification.

- **With the transition of the Covid-19 MPTF into the Joint SDG Fund**, the modality will initially be activated in 2021-22 to continue to fund initiatives of Covid-19 recovery especially the pipeline of initiatives in the Covid-19 Solutions Catalogue. Earmarking can be used to ringfence contributions for this purpose.

#### IV. Qualifying Triggers

The following events could trigger the modality for future emergencies:

- **Trigger 1: Pandemic-related Emergencies:** There may be a public health event, or conditions that threaten public health, which require timely and coordinated UN action, even if they do not fulfill the criteria for [PHEIC](#) (public health emergencies of international concern). Activation of the emergency modality would be based on epidemiological data:
  - **Outbreak size:** The rolling (or ongoing) total case amount reaches a certain # or more; and the total number of fatalities reaches a certain # or more
  - **The confirmation ratio:** Confirmed cases as percentage of total cases exceed x%
  - **Cross-border spread:** The outbreak hits more than one country,
  - **Positive growth rate:** The total number of cases in countries grow exponentially as confirmed by the third-party calculation agent
- **Trigger 2:** Climate-related natural catastrophes such as droughts, floods, fires, and storms.
  - E.g., Indonesian fires of 2019
- **Trigger 3:** Earthquake or volcanic related catastrophes such as tsunamis, landslides, fires, and mass infrastructure collapse, where Development Emergency constitutes to a nexus bridge.
  - e.g., Haiti earthquake of 2010
- **Trigger 4:** Pollution-related events (both man-made and natural catastrophes) that make large swaths of land or potentially seas (in the case of SIDS) uninhabitable.
  - e.g., Trafigura pollution catastrophe in Ivory Coast circa 2006
- **Trigger 5:** Conflict that creates socio-economic shocks and setbacks.
  - e.g., Multiple examples: Yemen, Somalia, CAR, Chad

#### V. Fund Governance Structure

The governance structure of the development emergency modality will follow the governance structure of the Joint SDG Fund. It will receive technical support from relevant UN entities depending on the characteristics of the development emergency (e.g., WHO for COVID-19, OCHA for humanitarian linkages).

#### VI. Contributors

- Contributions to the modality may be accepted from governments, inter-governmental or non-governmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and individuals, in line with Section 4 of this Operational Guidance.

#### VII. Modality Intent: What can this fund be used for?

- The **modality will enable governments** and communities, especially those **in affected low- and middle-income countries, to overcome social and economic shocks caused by development emergencies**. Activities will, *inter alia*, support countries to fully implement any National Plans for coping with the emergency as well as plans to maintain or advance SDG progress.

- In mitigating the socio-economic impacts of development emergencies and safeguarding people and their livelihoods, the modality aims to ensure that the burden of response and recovery is not disproportionately carried by the most vulnerable.
- The **modality will be in full coordination with the WHO** (in case of the pandemic nature of emergency) and **OCHA** to coordinate the humanitarian linkages, ensuring alignment, where relevant, with the **Peace Building Fund** and the **Central Emergency Response Fund**.
- The modality will invest in the effective and innovative delivery of public services to achieve sustainable and inclusive economies that leave no-one behind and safeguard country SDG programmes from development emergency-related setbacks.
  - The modality will thus align to the principles of **LNOB, gender equality, and innovative solutions** that, inter alia, help close the digital divide.
  - It will ensure that new investments done as part of the emergency response are helping **advance the SDGs**, and progress towards biodiversity and climate commitments.
- The modality will focus on **recovering better** so that target countries and communities are better prepared to cope with possible future shocks.