



## Scoping Phase Report for the System-Wide Evaluation (SWE) of the Joint SDG Fund

December 2021

The COVID-19 Crisis has been unprecedented in its global impact, the effects of which continue to be felt across all sectors of society. In September 2021, the Secretary-General presented *Our Common Agenda* to the General Assembly, detailing his vision of the way forward for the multilateral system and the world in light of COVID-19. He began with the following message:

“We are at an inflection point in history. In our biggest shared test since the Second World War, humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is upending our world, threatening our health, destroying economies and livelihoods and deepening poverty and inequalities.”

The Secretary-General ended the summary of the report by saying:

“Humanity has shown time and time again that it is capable of great achievements when we work together. This common agenda is our road map to recapture this positive spirit and begin rebuilding our world and mending the trust in one another we need so desperately at this moment in history. **Now is the time to take the next steps in our journey together, in solidarity with and for all people.**”

Countries have looked towards the UN for support and a broad spectrum of initiatives, including the Joint SDG fund, to stop the reversal of the progress on SDGs due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19.

This scoping exercise has drawn on the experience to date of key stakeholders and partners to formulate a terms of reference for the next phase of the evaluation.

### **Purpose**

The objective of the scoping exercise is to define the objectives, scope, method, and workplan that meets the deadlines for feedback to plan of the next phase of the fund, resource requirements for the system-wide evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund, and ensure consultation and buy-in from the Fund’s diverse stakeholder groups including donors, UN partners and the Fund’s governance/management structures. Specifically, the scoping exercise seeks to:

- Define the objectives, scope, key evaluation questions, methods, and overall approach of the SWE of the Joint SDG Fund.
- Develop milestones/timeline and identify composition of the evaluation team for the SWE.
- Develop a detailed budget for the SWE.
- Ensure consultation and buy-in from the Fund’s diverse stakeholder groups on the SWE.

The scoping phase was led by **Indran A. Naidoo**, Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), on a pro-bono basis, at the request of EOSG to provide intellectual rigor and strategic direction for this evaluation. Mr. Naidoo brought to this scoping phase not only his knowledge of evaluation but also his knowledge of Socio-Economic Response Plans. He served on a pro-bono basis between June-October 2020 providing a rapid review of the UN social economic response and recovery plans and impact assessments for the UNDP and secretariat.

**Heewoong Kim**, Reporting & Evaluation specialist at the Joint SDG Fund provided substantive support to the scoping phase.

### **Desk Review / Data Analysis**

The scoping team reviewed the key reference documents of the Joint SDG Fund, including its TOR, Operational Guidance, annual reports, portfolio mid-term reviews, OIOS audit draft report, and Operational Steering Committee (OSC) materials. It also reviewed other relevant reports and analyses including MOPAN reports, evaluations of inter-agency pooled financing services, Dag Hammarskjold Foundation report on financing the UNDS and the Funding Compact, and the COVID-19 MPTF Early Lessons report.

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

The scoping mission conducted key informant interviews between 29 November and 3 December 2021 of the Fund’s diverse stakeholder groups including the UN RCs, UN partners and donor member states. The interviews aimed to discuss the stakeholders’ expectations on the evaluation to devise the TOR and get their buy-in on the full evaluation. As an innovative methodology it managed to capture the perspectives of the partners in short period of time, and also signalled the importance placed on their views before the actual conduct of the evaluation.

The team interviewed a total of 32 key informants including 8 members from the UN RCs and RC Offices that received funding from the Joint SDG Fund, 14 focal points from UN partners and Operational Steering Committee members including DCO, MPTFO, and UN funds and programmes, and 10 representatives of the donor partners both from the capitals and permanent missions. The full list of stakeholders interviewed are presented below:

#### *List of Stakeholder Interviewed<sup>1</sup>*

<b>Stakeholder Group</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
UN RC/RCO (8)	Valerie Julliand	RC, UN Indonesia
	Afke Bootsman	Head of RCO, UN Indonesia
	Sarah Aver	Joint Programme Officer, UN Indonesia
	Erlangga A Landiyanto	Data & reporting officer, UN Indonesia
	Sabine Machl	RC, UN Georgia
	Maria Jose Torres Macho	RC, UN Chile (formerly RC, UN Malawi)

<sup>1</sup> A few more interviews are being scheduled and the notes from the interviews will be included into the Inception Report which will focus on a plan for the evaluation.

	Consuelo Vidal Bruce	RC, UN Cuba
	Tapan Mishra	RC, UN Mongolia
UN partners / OSC members (14)	Jennifer Topping	Executive Director, MPTF-O
	Ilaria Carnevali	Deputy Executive Director, MPTF-O
	Mari Matsumoto	Portfolio officer, MPTF-O
	Raul de Mora Jimenez	Communication officer, MPTF-O
	Robert Piper	ASG/Director, DCO
	Rosemary Kalapurakal	Deputy Director, DCO
	Haoliang Xu	ASG/UNDP, Chair of OSC
	Coco Ushiyama	Director of UN systems, WFP
	Romina Woldemariam	Partnership officer, WFP
	Solome Zemene	Partnership officer, UNICEF
	Raky Kane	Senior Social Protection officer, ILO
	Mira Ihalainen	Partnership officer, UNFPA
	Lisa Kurbiel	Head of Secretariat, Joint SDG Fund
	Michelle Gyles-McDonnough	Director of Sustainable Development Unit, EOSG
Donors / Member State Representatives (10)	Moe Siv Cathrine	Minister Counsellor, UN Mission, Norway
	Rina Kristmoen	Senior Advisory, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
	Balbir Singh	Evaluation Unit, NORAD
	Gerard Steeghs	Director of Multilateral Organizations, The Netherlands
	Yvonne Wilmer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands
	Martijn Engels	First Secretary, UN Mission, The Netherlands
	Liliane Tarnutzer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland
	Ulla Jarvela-Seppinen	Evaluation Unit, Finland
	Jan Matyas	SDG Unit, European Commission
	Federica Petrucci	Evaluation Unit, European Commission

### Key Issues Identified

Through the desk review and interviews, the scoping mission identified the following key issues relevant to the evaluation.

**The Joint SDG Fund is considered by all stakeholders – RCs, UN partners, donors – to be an important instrument to energize the UNDS reform and the contributions to the SDGs especially at the country level.** There is also recognition especially among the RCs and UN partners that the Fund has served its initial purpose to promote integrated social protection, devise integrated financing frameworks and catalyzed public and private partners for SDG investments through its early operations.

That said, all stakeholders also agree that further change and revival of the Fund is needed to live up to its full potential:

1. To meet its full expectations and strategic impact, the Fund should contribute to the SDGs but also take into account the impact of COVID-19. It should not be another project fund but must align with and contribute to the UNDS reform.
2. The Fund needs inclusive governance with participation of donors (including the capitals), member states, UN agencies.
3. There needs to be a review of the Fund's substantive focus, which should contribute to cross-cutting areas, upstream integrated policies and SDG financing/investments. The programmes should influence and contribute to the UNSDCFs and have flexibility to include MICs. The Fund should also take into account the SG's report on Our Common Agenda as a possible framing document.
4. There is need to better define the lead role of the RCs/UNCTs in the management of the Fund at the country level. At the global level, there is need to better define the coordination and management role of DCO and above all ensure proper oversight and attention of the EOSG in providing leadership, visibility and tone from the very top.
5. The Fund's full capitalization and scale is critical for it to influence UNDS reform and collaborative results during a time of COVID-19. This requires guidance from UN entities as well as donors to play their role and commit fully to the Funding Compact and dedications to pooled funds.
6. There are certain characteristics that are important for the Fund including clarity of its value propositions, strong evidence of its operational results, quality of programming, and ensuring dynamism and visibility through collective action. While ensuring these characteristics, the Fund is also required to streamline and simplify its procedures, guidelines and eligibility criteria to ensure flexibility and quick processing of its proposals and programmatic implementations.

Furthermore, the interviews identified the following aspects that should be considered by the evaluation:

- Concerns that the UNDS reform might not progress without financial incentives. Historically, we recognize that the UNDS reform have faced challenges and stalls when dedicated funding for the reform dried up. An example is the lessons from the Delivering As One initiative. Hence, the Fund's role and sufficient capitalization would be important to maintain the momentum behind the UNDS reform.
- COVID-19 MPTF was cited by a number of interviewees as a good example that responded quickly to the development emergency, aligned and contributed to the UNDS reform, successfully managed its value proposition linked with the SERPs, managed through an inclusive governance structure with strong leadership from the top. However, it is also recognized that the COVID-19 MPTF struggled to raise sufficient funding needed to scale. Also, there were opportunity costs for UNCTs in devising proposals that were not funded at the end.

There are also a few unresolved questions that the evaluation would need to analyze and assess:

- What does the Joint SDG Fund want to be after its revival? What is its potential value proposition that can enhance its chances of reaching full capitalization without risks of losing focus among the various themes and issues related to the SDGs?
- How to achieve better clarity in what the UN does at the global level on the SDGs especially in relations to UN's global framework on recovery during COVID-19? Can the UN provide a substantive programming framework that could provide clarity and link with the Fund's value proposition?

- How can we shift the attitudes of donors to support pooled funding mechanisms? It is recognised that this change in donor attitude is not easy and requires continued push from the senior management of the UN.

Overall, the Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund will be critical in providing forward-looking strategic findings and recommendations to inform the next phase of the Fund as it looks towards reform and revival. The evaluation should coordinate in real time with the Fund to ensure that its potential findings and analyses are taken into account as the Fund implements its reform process.

### **Key Deliverables**

As a result of the scoping mission, the following deliverables have been developed:

- Background note on the Joint SDG Fund's establishment (Annex 1)
- Draft TOR for the SWE of the Joint SDG Fund (Annex 2)
- Detailed budget (Annex 3)

These deliverables will be shared with the Joint SDG Fund governance structures and EOSG to inform the evaluation. The background and interview notes will be shared also with the evaluation team, once selected, as information and data for the full evaluation.

## **Annex 1.**

### **Joint SDG Fund Backgrounder System-Wide Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund**

#### **Establishment of the Joint SDG Fund**

The Joint SDG Fund was set up in 2017 and operationalized with its TOR approved and core funds received in November 2018 as an inter-agency pooled fund to mobilized resources and address the need for better integrated and multi-sectoral policy solutions and financing at the country level to meet the SDGs. The initiative for a dedicated pooled fund originated in the UNDG lead by UNDP with support from ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, who together became the inaugural member of the Fund’s Operational Steering Committee.

After its establishment by the inter-agency process, the Joint SDG Fund was linked with the UNDS reform process and highlighted by the SG in his report on the repositioning of the UNDS as the “muscle” of RCs and the new generation of UNCTs to help countries deliver on the SDGs ([A/72/684](#), 2018). As a response, the QCPR resolution ([A/RES/72/279](#), 2018) called on Member States to capitalize the Fund at \$290 million per annum, which has become part of the QCPR Funding Compact.

While governed by an inter-agency Fund board, called the Operational Steering Committee, the day-to-day Fund management by the Secretariat was hosted by UN DCO (formerly DOCO). These dual tracks of management and inter-linked mandate provides the unique value add of the Joint SDG Fund: supporting countries to accelerate their progress towards the SDGs through integrated policy solutions and financing generated by the UN coming together at the country level under the leadership of the RC.

#### **Muscle of the UNDS reform**

The Joint SDG Fund as ‘muscle’ of the UNDS aims to incentive transformative policy shifts and joined-up action by the UN to help countries deliver the SDGs through catalytical support in three domains: (i) integrated policy support; (ii) SDG financing enabling environments; and (iii) catalytic SDG investments.

To enable effective implementation of the UN Development Systems reforms on the ground and to make UNCTs more fit for purpose for achieving the SDGs, the roles of UN Resident Coordinators have been instituted to be more independent and empowered to lead UNCTs. The power of the Resident Coordinators is both structural and conceptual. Structurally, the Resident Coordinator is the UN Secretary-General’s representative at the country level and is accountable to the host governments on planning, managing and reporting UN development results. This accountability of the Resident Coordinators is captured in the new Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System. Apart from, but interlinked with, this structural power, the Resident Coordinator also has conceptual power in influencing the collaborative efforts of the UN country team (UNCT) coming together through coordination of the various UN entities and other stakeholders and directing critical financing, such as pooled funds like the Joint SDG Fund, to joint programming in responses to the national development priorities. The Joint SDG Fund is one of the critical modalities the

Resident Coordinator can use in leveraging its conceptual power and coordination to bring about UN joint actions in response to the country's needs and development priorities.

The Fund operates by financing UN joint programmes identified and endorsed by the RC in partnership with UNCTs and other technical UN entities (e.g. regional commissions and non-residential UN entities are also part of the Fund's PUNOs). All joint programmes supported by the Fund are required to align with the UNDAFs/UNSDCFs contributing to the national priorities to support the SDGs. The Fund emphasizes the role of the RC during implementation and review, where RCs are requested to chair or co-chair the joint programme steering committees or equivalent bodies at the country level and serves as the face of the UN in issue-based national coordination mechanisms with government counterparts and other partners. The Joint SDG Fund was instrumental in underscoring the role and responsibilities of the RC in joint programming especially for pooled funds in the newly released [Management & Accountability Framework \(MAF\) of the UN development and RC system \(2021\)](#).

At the programmatic level, the Fund promotes integrated and harmonized upstream policies and financial solutions for the SDGs. For instance, the Fund supports the implementation of 62 of the 71 integrated national financial frameworks (INFFs) that provides the foundation for developing and implementing national SDG financing strategies. This work is closely carried out in partnership with UN DESA, UNDP and UNICEF that provides technical advisory services and upstream policy harmonization. Similarly in integrated social protection and LNOB, the Fund's portfolio is co-led in partnership with ILO, UNICEF, UNDP with technical support from UN-Women and WFP ensuring harmonization of policy directives and tools as well as sharing of data, analysis and learning.

### **COVID-19 induced changes**

The Fund quickly responded to the COVID-19 crisis by allowing options for joint programmes to repurpose 20% of its social protection budget to support SERPs. In particular, the joint programmes supported the assessments, planning, targeting and implementation of the emergency social protection responses to COVID-19. It also provided investments to COVID-19 solutions. For instance, as part of the recent call for proposal for SIDS resilience, the Joint SDG Fund is supporting 16 aligned solutions out of the [COVID-19 Solutions Catalogue](#).

In addition, the Joint SDG Fund is incorporating lessons from the COVID-19 MPTF building on the [COVID-19 MPTF early lessons report](#) to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness in Fund management including:

- Ensuring that its joint programmes are aligned with the new generation of CFs.
- Assessing options of having a more inclusive governance structure in line with other MPTFs.
- Opening a development emergency window to enable quick pooling and disbursements of financing for emergencies without the need to create additional financing mechanisms and temporary pooled funds in the future and to build on the lessons from the COVID-19 MPTF.

### **Key results / progress of the Joint SDG Fund**

Since 2019, the Joint SDG Fund has launched 125 joint programmes and initiatives in 97 UNCTs/MCOs with 24 UN entities through its calls for proposals on "Social Protection to Leave No One Behind" and "SDG Financing." In addition, the Fund has recently launched a new call on "Building Resilience and Ending

Vulnerability in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)” that will implement 26 new joint programmes to strengthen resilience capacities in 42 SIDs.

***Joint SDG Fund budget and programming status by calls for proposals/portfolio***

<b>Calls / Portfolios</b>	<b>Approved Budget</b>	<b># JPs</b>	<b>Countries/territories</b>
Integrated social protection	\$70.6 million	35	39
SDG financing strategy (C1)	\$59.1 million	62	69
SDG investments (C2)	\$37.2 million	28	28
SIDS resilience building	\$30 million	26*	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$205.3 million</b>	<b>151 JPs</b>	<b>118</b>

\* *The Joint Programmes for the SIDS call are currently under review.*

**With support from the Joint SDG Fund, the RCs are leading innovative joint programmes that leverage UNCT networks and expertise:** Initial internal reviews of the Joint SDG Fund’s results indicate that **the Fund has successfully positioned RCs to lead and coordinate transformative actions** aimed at SDG acceleration, in many cases establishing unique national platforms and fostering dialogues with government, private sector and civil society under the banner of a more unified UN. They suggest that, if substantively capitalized, the Joint SDG Fund could indeed be a powerful tool to incentivize transformational UN support for countries to achieve the SDGs in a world emerging from COVID-19.

**The Joint SDG Fund promotes multi-sectoral policy solutions to transform national social protection systems:** The 2019 call is supporting 35 joint programmes to advance integrated approaches to social protection/LNOB, enabling an additional 87 million people across 39 countries to become eligible for national social protection schemes and programmes as of 2020. These joint programmes are being leveraged to support national COVID-19 response programmes through better targeting, registration and service delivery of social protection programmes. RC leadership has been pivotal to facilitate broader UNCT support, and greater coherence in policies, institutional arrangements and budget allocations by national governments.

*The joint programme in **Cambodia** establishes institutional and financing foundation for an integrated, universal social protection system that protects the most vulnerable, which will ensure coverage of additional 200,000 pregnant women and children, and 1.5 million older persons already in 2022 and form the basis for further scale up.*

**The Joint SDG Fund is spearheading innovative partnerships and launching blended financing instruments to leverage SDG financing.** The Fund’s second call (2020) aims to instrumentalize the RC system as a means for implementation for SDG financing, with support to Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) in 69 countries. RCs are co-leading the INFF national oversight committees with Heads of State and Ministers of Finance to reform national development financing landscapes. The resulting financing strategies aim to link sectoral approaches on gender, climate, social protection, and energy. The Fund’s additional focus on **innovative blended finance** is especially noteworthy, [attracting non-traditional partners to invest in the SDGs](#), with each of 16 initiatives<sup>2</sup> engaging a consortium of partners such as anchor investors and development banks that collaborate under the UN banner.

<sup>2</sup> The 16 initiatives include four that are already funded (Indonesia, Malawi, Fiji and Uruguay) plus the twelve proposals currently under review.

*The Fund supported the launch of **Indonesia's** first SDG Bond, which raised \$580 million from the global capital market in partnership with the Government, commercial banks, and green bond rating agencies. A similar effort in **Uzbekistan** is being supported through the Joint SDG Fund to reach \$635m. An additional nine blended finance instruments coupled with technical assistance facilities supported by the Fund – including project finance for waste management in **Fiji** and a sustainable agriculture impact fund in **Malawi** - are projected to leverage \$4-5 billion in additional resources for blue and green industries in developing economies.*