

MOPAN case study

Country-level collaboration between FAO, IFAD, and WFP

Synthesis report | August 2019



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Preface

About MOPAN

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) comprises 18 countries¹ that share a common interest in assessing the effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations they fund. These include United Nations agencies, international financial institutions and global funds. The Network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on their organisational and development effectiveness. This knowledge base is intended to contribute to organisational learning within and among the organisations, their direct clients and partners, and other stakeholders. Network members use the reports for their own accountability needs and as a source of input for strategic decision-making.

In addition to assessments, MOPAN delivers analytical products focusing on responding to broader questions related to the multilateral system. ●

¹ In 2019, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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Acronyms

AIM	Association Intercooperation Madagascar	MUCH	Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere	NARC	National Agricultural Research Centre
DEFIS	Inclusive Agricultural Value Chains Development Project	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
DoS	Department of Statistics	NICCOD	Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	NSCV	Nutrition-sensitive value chain
HQ	Headquarters	P4P	Purchase for Progress
ICCO	Global Non-Governmental Organization based in Utrecht, Netherlands Cooperation	RRRC	Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development	RBA's	Rome-based agencies
IFI	International financing institution	SAFE	Safe Access to Fuel and Energy
ILO	International Labour Organization	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
IOM	International Organization for Migration	SHF	Smallholder Farmers
KPI	Key performance indicator	SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department	UN	United Nations
LPG	Liquid petroleum gas	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
MI	Micro-indicator	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
MIC	Middle-income country	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MO	Multilateral organisation	UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network	UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding	USD	United States dollar
		US	United States
		WFP	World Food Programme
		WG	Working Group
		WHH	Welthungerhilfe

Executive summary

This report sets out the findings of a learning-focused case study on partnerships for MOPAN, focusing on collaboration among the three Rome-based agencies (RBAs): the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme. The study is based on their work in four countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Madagascar. Considering that the three agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and by reviewing the four countries in more detail and interviewing stakeholders in country, it has been possible to identify some of the factors that drive partnership in practice at country level. It should be noted that the MoU was signed in June 2018 and collaboration predates the MoU in the four countries reviewed.

The four countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Madagascar) included in this case study provide a highly varied and interesting context for learning about RBA collaboration, with a good range of different types of context. It is hoped that the priority attached to food security, agricultural development and humanitarian response in the countries means that the UN Rome-based agencies play an important role and have a large and demanding shared agenda of work. However, it is important to note that these case studies cover a small sample of countries and do not explore RBA collaboration in its entirety. It is sensible therefore to view this case study as a learning product with lessons and recommendations which may be of interest more widely, but which should not be assumed to be representative of all country contexts or all types of collaboration.

This is the first pilot of a case study approach by MOPAN. As such this pilot MOPAN learning case study has considered the experience of the RBA collaboration at country level, with the intention to provide a different lens on partnership. While partnership is key to how multilateral organisations work and is part of the MOPAN 3.0 assessment framework, this partnerships case study is not an evaluation of the agencies and is separate and distinct from the MOPAN 3.0 institutional assessment process.

Main conclusions are based on exploring RBA collaboration in four country contexts, and it is hoped the learning will be of use to the RBAs, the United Nations (UN) system and others more widely seeking to understand, build on and deepen their partnerships, particularly in the wider context of UN reform. The conclusions are as follows:

- A significant amount of collaboration is happening on the ground at country level, and there is a broadly supportive context for it to continue to evolve.** The country studies found many good examples of the RBAs working together. Other opportunities are being explored, and recent work on national level action plans and high level engagement with government including visits to Bangladesh and Ethiopia at senior level have helped to build a platform for further collaboration.
- The main drivers of the RBA collaboration work are country needs and context, as well as the direction set by the national governments in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** In the countries considered for this study, the RBA collaboration has been mainly demand-driven and relevant to the SDGs and results. The collaboration should continue to evolve with country needs as the central driver. The changing needs of the countries, such as the way Bangladesh is evolving and its approach to the SDGs, mean that the RBAs need to be responsive to the changing context including how they collaborate.
- There are important positive enablers for RBA collaboration in place.** These include the fact that staff in the RBAs have a good understanding of comparative advantage and each other's roles. People and personal relationships are a very important underlying determinant of successful collaboration on the ground. This highlights the role that leadership in each of the agencies, at country level, plays in encouraging effective partnerships with the other RBAs.

RBA collaboration is held back by a lack of alignment of business processes, by the fragmented nature of funding flows and by how donors work with individual agencies. The commitments in the MoU, agreed by the RBAs (with member states' views represented in the management structures), need to be matched by support in how the donors work on the ground. For example, if donors focus on funding specific initiatives through individual agencies to deliver on their own priorities, the potential for RBA collaboration across agencies in support of country priorities is constrained.

So far, RBA collaboration is typically at project level and somewhat transactional in nature rather than strategic. The collaboration is more frequent between two of the three agencies than a full tripartite partnership and generally works with government departments or other UN agencies and partners such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

RBAs increasingly recognise the importance of the MoU. It is clear that collaboration on the ground has been evolving since well before the MoU was agreed, and that the MoU's role is mainly facilitative. On the other hand, awareness of the MoU is rising, and staff interviewed felt that it can send a strong positive signal and has helped to encourage joint working.

Looking ahead, the study has considered what might help RBA collaboration to evolve further. Several key points are worth emphasising:

It would be useful to be specific on expectations about how RBA collaboration should evolve. The main message could be that RBA collaboration should evolve naturally from discussions which are already happening around country needs and priorities, strategic approaches, and institutional mapping of capabilities and potential contributions of each agency. It would not be helpful if the discussion assumes uncritically that more collaboration is always a positive: partnerships need to have a purpose.

With that in mind, at country level, the agencies can consider how to **move further and faster on aligning their country strategic planning work, within the context of collaborative**

work around the SDGs. This process has begun but could usefully develop further. This could naturally lead to exploring the potential for further RBA collaboration on issues where there are the most synergies between the three agencies, including in particular multisectoral issues.

This would position the RBA collaboration at country level around the **best ways of targeting collaboration within a strategic approach, building in flexibility on modes of implementation** and continuing to ensure that decisions on how to work together are determined by the needs and issues in each country and by what each agency can specifically bring to the table.

At headquarters (HQ) level, the agencies and donors can help facilitate collaboration by better **aligning business processes and planning cycles.** So far, staff at country level are working at project level and in relatively informal ways. They are finding workarounds when the differences in planning cycles, funding environments and capacity on the ground create obstacles to joint working.

Increased alignment would require resolving some **practical constraints that stem from differences in business processes.** While the agencies have a common agenda, they also are intrinsically different from each other and have their own core business. Bridging across their different natures to get to more substantive co-operation is a challenge, beyond the low-hanging fruit of sharing information, facilitation of each other's work opportunistically and working at project level.

Finally, the importance of country context and needs for deciding on which partnerships to pursue has an interesting implication both for the agencies and MOPAN. It means that **country needs should also be central in assessing the quality and evolution of the RBA collaboration.** This is relevant both for how the RBAs assess internally and as part of how MOPAN looks at their performance. It emphasises the importance of evaluation evidence at country level, a current gap that could be considered in going forward. It also highlights that assessments which focus mainly at HQ level may not provide a detailed enough picture, unless they are able to draw on such evidence from decentralised evaluations. ●



Introduction

Objectives of the case study

This report sets out the findings of a learning-focused case study on partnerships for MOPAN, focusing on collaboration among the three Rome-based agencies (RBAs): the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The study is based on their work in four countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Madagascar. This is the first pilot of a case study approach by MOPAN.

The core of the case study explored partnerships between the three agencies at a country level; this includes their co-operation and collaboration mechanisms, knowledge and information sharing platforms (both formal and informal), and how they work as partners in joint programming and projects. This extended to consideration of HQ level partnerships, as obviously there is a relationship between country offices and HQ, but HQ level collaboration was not the focus of this study. How the RBAs work in partnership with national governments and NGOs was also considered, and their partners in government and civil society were interviewed to explore this further. A final area of partnership and joint working considered was that between the RBAs and other multilateral organisations, with UN co-ordination mechanisms and the changing nature of the UN as it works towards Agenda 2030, clearly a key issue for the RBAs and other UN agencies.

The concept of partnership in development has continued to evolve following the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Busan Declaration. Initially partnership was considered a strategy to improve aid effectiveness through aligning aid to the policies and institutions of recipient countries and harmonising aid procedures. Partnerships have evolved from these early conceptions based on increasing effectiveness to be at the heart of the global development agenda. This is reflected in the inclusion of “Global Partnerships” as SDG 17 with corresponding targets, including:



“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.”

Structure of this report

The rest of the report is structured as follows:

- The first section sets the scene and the overall institutional context, including by considering the varied context for RBA work at country level, which is a major determinant of how the collaboration has evolved.
- The following sections present the main findings in relation to the eight areas of inquiry. The second section looks at the level of existing collaboration, how much RBA collaboration is happening in practice at country level, and how has it been evolving and changing. This includes some examples

of good practice and a discussion on the balance between issues-driven, project-focused and more reactive/opportunistic work and opportunities for collaboration, and more programmatic and strategic approaches to co-ordination. This is followed by a discussion of the relevance and quality of the partnerships in relation to the needs of each of the countries, to support national priorities and the SDGs.

- The third section considers what drives partnerships on the ground, what are the enabling factors and what are the constraints in practice. This includes the role of different factors such as the MoU itself and the broader UN co-ordination arrangements in country.

This is followed by a section on the main findings and lessons as well as areas for learning, including:

- The lessons for the RBAs themselves and the MOPAN members in relation to RBA collaboration and partnership. These are structured around the eight main areas of inquiry for the case study.
- Lessons on the MOPAN assessment framework which may be useful to inform the approach to assessing partnerships going forward.

Finally, the annex provides details on the methodology used for conducting the study. ●



Context

Country context

The four countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Madagascar) included in this case study provide a highly varied and interesting context for learning about RBA collaboration, with a good range of different types of context. It is hoped that the priority attached to food security, agricultural development and humanitarian response in the countries means that the UN Rome-based agencies play an important role and have a large and demanding shared agenda of work. However, it is important to note that these case studies cover a small sample of countries and do not explore RBA collaboration in its entirety. It is sensible therefore to view this case study as a learning product with lessons and recommendations which may be of interest more widely, but which should not be assumed to be representative of all country contexts or all types of collaboration.

Two of the countries – Bangladesh and Ethiopia – have among the largest populations in their regions. While classified as low to lower-middle-income, they are also dynamic in terms of development and have a strong sense of direction and rapid pace of reform. They act as engines of growth and development in their respective regions, based partly on success in agriculture and in finding ways to feed their populations, although rural poverty and nutrition security remain major challenges. They have faced many challenges regarding food security but have been successfully developing their agriculture sectors and economies rapidly. Both countries are seeking to move from low-income to lower-middle-income/developing country status, and their governments have clear plans for achieving their goals. Climate change, vulnerabilities to drought, flooding and other climate-related issues, and building resilience are key issues for both of these countries.

A key factor in the case of Bangladesh is the changing needs of the country as it prepares to graduate from least-developed country to middle-income country status in the coming years. The Government of Bangladesh has a very clear vision in

relation to the country's needs and to addressing the SDGs and has provided international leadership on these issues. Bangladesh's development trajectory is changing what is required of UN agencies including the Rome-based agencies and provides a strong demand-driven context for their work, focusing less on more traditional aid delivery methods and modalities. Instead, the country is likely to require a different type of support from the UN, including expert technical assistance, capacity building and country-led partnerships, and activities which support and drive economic growth.

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia the new leadership in place since April 2018 is also seeking to establish a "rapid pace of reform" both on governance and in terms of economic growth, based around the Growth and Transformation Plan which sets a trajectory for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. Ethiopia has had a national nutrition plan in place since 2013, while the Government of Bangladesh has similarly given very high priority to a national nutrition plan, supported directly by the prime minister. Both governments are engaging in a multisectoral way with nutrition and are also members of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) country network, as is Madagascar.

Madagascar shares the challenges around food security and climate change but in other respects it is very different, and this is reflected in a different need for types of support from the RBAs. It is a small, low-income food-deficit country with a very poor population, with agriculture one of the main pillars of its economy and employment. The country has been through a series of crises, mostly climate-related, which means that building resilience is a key issue. Major vulnerabilities include food insecurity, health emergencies and climate change. It has suffered a number of severe climate shocks and has experienced a devastating locust invasion. Seventy-six percent of the population live in a state of chronic malnutrition, the world's fourth highest rate.¹

Jordan is also a smaller country, both in population and size, but has much greater

¹ www1.wfp.org/countries/madagascar

capacity for its size, playing an influential role in its region and is the furthest along the path of development. It is very different from the other three countries and as an upper-middle-income country is relatively more affluent. However, it also faces challenges, and the impact on Jordanian society and the economy of responding to a refugee crisis and hosting more than 2 million registered refugees has been considerable. Like Bangladesh and Ethiopia, the Government of Jordan has a clear vision for the country's long-term development in the form of the Jordan 2025 National Plan. But in recent years, the need for the humanitarian Jordan Response Plan has taken up much of the focus, and both government and partners are conscious of the need to shift the attention to longer-term development approaches to supporting refugee populations. Jordan is affected by the political-economic context of its geographic location, which can mitigate against longer-term planning.

Providing support to refugees is a feature in three of the countries, and dealing with humanitarian crises and building resilience to shocks from natural disasters, migration, conflict and climate change are key issues in all the countries. Ethiopia has a long history of supporting refugees from neighbouring countries, and Bangladesh is hosting a large influx of refugees in Cox's Bazar, with over 700 000 people arriving in the region since August 2017.² Jordan's social and economic system has been hugely affected by over 700 000 refugees in the country, many of whom arrived prior to 2015. Refugees from other countries in the region are also key issues, and managing this long-term movement of people has dominated much of the discussion within Jordan and the international community, recognising that there are positive economic effects, as well as economic challenges, associated with the impact of refugees in Jordan. In view of these complex and protracted refugee situations, the international community is searching for ways forward that continue to meet humanitarian response requirements and support longer-term development needs facing affected and host populations.

Focus of the three agencies' work at country level

As would be expected from their mandates, the work of the RBAs in the countries considered is focused around food security and nutrition, sustainable agricultural development, resilience, and poverty reduction. These are shared issues set out in SDG 2 and the wider 2030 Agenda. While this means a large degree of commonality and shared vision in the objectives for the RBAs in the four countries, their presence and the scale and nature of activity is actually quite varied. They have specific mandates and comparative advantages, and their capacity and staffing on the ground also differ in important ways.

In Jordan, WFP's role is by far the largest of the three agencies', and the country's needs are dominated by the challenges of humanitarian response. WFP has rapidly scaled up since 2011 and now has over 160 staff and a large budget. FAO's presence in Jordan has also increased during this period but is relatively small compared to other UN agencies in Amman. IFAD's presence is very limited – they do not have staff permanently based in Amman (its regional representative covering Jordan is based in Cairo) and IFAD has only two projects in Jordan.

In the other three countries, the presence of all three Rome-based agencies is substantial and well-established. It is more broadly focused, covering the full range of issues including the food-related SDGs, nutrition, agricultural productivity, resilience to climate change, tackling poverty and emergency response. This provides some obvious synergies and potential to collaborate and support each other. Nevertheless, IFAD's presence in each country is achieved in different ways from FAO and WFP, which have much larger country offices and greater capabilities around implementation – by design and mandate. IFAD works through lending and grant instruments supported from HQ and regional levels. A recent decision by IFAD to decentralise means that it expects to shortly have more staff on the ground. ●

² www.unhcr.org/uk/rohingya-emergency.html

Extent and evolution of collaboration

Current extent of collaboration

The level of RBA collaboration at country level predates the MoU signed in 2018 and is driven by, and responds to, specific needs in the countries, underpinned by good relationships among country-based staff. Collaboration is strong in Madagascar where there were numerous examples of synergistic working and where the RBA teams in country won the award for excellence in RBA collaboration in 2016. There are also many good examples in Bangladesh including on rural development, on resilience and as part of the refugee response, with identified potential for more work together on issues such as nutrition, value chains and the food system. In Ethiopia, there is similarly a track record of working together among the RBAs in specific ways.

RBA collaboration is less developed so far at country level in Jordan, although it was possible to find selected examples such as the FAO Social Stability project where WFP shared their modality of service with FAO. The more limited RBA collaboration appears to reflect the specific country context which plays more to WFP's role, in this case in humanitarian response, and less to a shared collaboration involving the other RBAs, for example around the broader SDG 2 agenda as in the other countries (Example 1).

There are many different types of partnership taking place, which include (a) sharing knowledge and technical expertise, (b) joint working on design and delivery of projects in response to specific needs, including on resilience and emergency response (c) funding, with IFAD providing loans/

Example 1: FAO Social Stability project and the WFP OneCard system in Jordan

FAO wanted to implement a cash-based transfer system to help refugees and the poor population purchase non-food items, such as cooking implements, and withdraw cash-payments for training. Due to their lack of experience with cash-transfer systems, FAO identified WFP, with the OneCard system, as a good partnership.

The OneCard is a cash-transfer based tool, developed by WFP and introduced in Jordan in 2014. It is a plastic prepaid card with a magnetic strip allowing beneficiaries to receive assistance in the form of both electronic voucher transfers at WFP partner shops and an optional cash withdrawal through ATMs. The card has sub-accounts allowing different humanitarian actors, such as UNICEF and UNRWA, to partner with WFP.

FAO approached WFP with a request to be a partner on the system and to access their database to identify suitable beneficiaries. The FAO project went ahead, with USD 1 million funding from the Government of Japan. The partnership was project-based and was scheduled to run until 31 March 2019, with no date extension. FAO partnered with the Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCOD) a Japanese NGO, to implement the project activities with the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC). WFP received a 1% payment for providing the service to FAO. The project targeted around 500 beneficiaries.

The integration of FAO on the WFP OneCard system required WFP Jordan to amend the OneCard platform. For example, WFP had to include non-food retailers to the list of approved retailers and to select beneficiaries from the WFP confidential beneficiary database.

This posed some challenges for the partnership; however, FAO, for their part, found WFP open to the partnership, and WFP indicated that the RBA Partnership MoU was very much in their mind. In terms of efficiency, the project saved FAO from hiring a cash-based transfer expert, reducing the cost for beneficiary selection, while also building their internal capacity. Furthermore, FAO has approached the Government of Japan with a request to fund a second phase of the project. Should funding be secured, the second phase will present an opportunity for improving and scaling up the partnership between FAO and WFP.

Example 2: Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh

SAFE is an interesting example of UN agencies' partnership in Cox's Bazar, involving FAO, IOM and WFP. The partners are working closely with UNHCR and other humanitarian actors to co-ordinate activities related to energy and the environment.

By providing the populations with a clean cooking fuel alternative (liquid petroleum gas [LPG]), the SAFE Plus project will contribute to environmental restoration and improved living conditions for host communities and refugees. The project aims to provide up to 125 000 refugee and host community households with LPG cooking sets; the coverage of the whole affected population will promote the peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host communities. This will decrease competition for forest resources, support the restoration of the forest and the environment, empower people, eliminate the need for women and children to make risky journeys to distant forests and tackle the health issues related to smoke inhalation.

Associated opportunities and activities – such as enhancing the local production and supply by host communities of safe and quality fresh produce for refugees – will also deliver significant improvements in food and nutrition security.

grants to government for activities such as FAO technical assistance and FAO and WFP supporting implementation and service delivery, (d) multi-layered partnerships led by one of the RBAs with one other RBA also involved, (e) policy dialogue and capacity building with ministries and (f) mutually providing inputs and insights for each of the agencies' country strategies.

A key theme is that the collaboration has tended to be quite specific and issues-driven so far, which as some respondents noted may be entirely appropriate and efficient. It is often collaboration on specific projects that responds to emerging needs, typically involving two agencies at any one time and addressing a time-limited issue. This has helped to deliver substantive and high priority work for the countries in ways which ensure that the agencies work in a complementary fashion to provide a relevant and timely response on key issues. An example is the Safe Access to Fuel and

Energy project in Bangladesh where FAO has worked closely with WFP and other UN agencies to provide clean fuel for cooking in the Cox's Bazar District (Example 2).

Examples of all three RBAs working together on a multisectoral approach are rarer than project-based collaboration between two of the agencies working bilaterally with each other and government. However, at the country level, FAO and WFP have collaborated on a project with co-financing by IFAD, for example on locust control in Madagascar, or around policy dialogue and sharing ideas on the SDGs in several of the countries (Example 3). In Bangladesh, the RBAs held productive discussions with the government as part of the visit by the Membership of the IFAD Executive Board to Bangladesh. The September 2017 joint mission to Ethiopia by the executive heads of the three agencies (a "historic first") is another example of visible

Example 3: Tackling the locust invasion in Madagascar

Madagascar suffered a severe locust invasion which began in 2012, with the Madagascar migratory locust devastating large sections of the country and threatening the livelihoods of 13 million people. FAO and the Government of Madagascar, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, launched a three-year locust control campaign in response to the invasion.

In 2014, FAO and WFP conducted an assessment mission with the Ministry of Agriculture. Their results showed that the first anti-locust campaign prevented larger damage to crops and pastures and protected the large rice-producing regions of the country.

The total cost of the programme was USD 37 million. IFAD's funded projects (FORMAPROD and PROSPERER) contributed USD 1.6 million to build the capacity of regional structures of the Ministry of Agriculture to manage ground locust control operations. One respondent interviewed said that without the intervention of FAO in the locust crisis, Madagascar "would have disappeared". As part of the new IFAD-funded Inclusive Agricultural Value Chains Development Project (DEFIS) project, resources have been earmarked for managing risk of future locust invasion.

three-way collaboration which helps to build a platform for further joint work. In Jordan, tripartite collaboration is being taken forward in the context of the Madad bid, a multi-country, multi-agency proposal.

The fact that programme and project level collaboration is typically more opportunistic, ad hoc and reactive to specific issues and funding opportunities does not mean that it is not useful. However, much of the work so far might be described as “transactional”. It was quite clear that there is not much evidence of shared programming among the three RBAs to date, nor is there much sign of an integrated, sequenced or long-term strategic approach. However, it is important to note that there is ongoing dialogue and information exchange between the RBAs, at all levels of the organisations, as seen clearly in the countries which were part of this case study. Also, a more formal programming-based collaboration would have significant transaction costs and require finding ways around the differences in systems between the agencies, an issue addressed in more detail in the Key findings and lessons section below. In addition, it would be more complex than the bilateral approach to projects. However it does have the potential to increase value for money and impact. While there was some interest in the opportunities afforded, staff in the agencies in one country also expressed

quite a degree of scepticism about whether the benefits would outweigh the costs in practice – and the underlying theme was the need to remain flexible and focused on the country-specific needs.

In Madagascar and Ethiopia, there have nevertheless been important steps forward which might provide the foundations in future for moving (if desired) towards a strategic approach. Specifically, work has been taken forward in developing a national action plan for greater collaboration among the RBAs, with the government also consulted in the case of Ethiopia. At the same time, the many demands on the country teams mean that the time available for devoting to structured discussions on action plans and follow up to the MoU is limited, except in the context of specific country needs. In Bangladesh, the approach is more ad hoc and informal to date, although there is frequent interaction among the heads of office and as part of regular monthly meetings of the UN country team. In Jordan, the support to the Department of Statistics for developing and analysing both food security data and the SDG 2 indicators provides an example of a more strategic partnership with great potential long-term benefits to the Government of Jordan. It also identifies an opportunity for WFP and FAO to collaborate globally on a strategic issue (Example 4).

Example 4: Sustainable Development Goal 2 indicators in Jordan

FAO is the global custodian of the SDG 2 indicators, mandated with the responsibility to help ensure comparability of country data. SDG 2 is “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. It is, therefore, seen by both FAO and WFP as an area of interest but also as a natural place for partnership. FAO and WFP have both been involved with supporting and strengthening the capacity of the Department of Statistics (DoS) with regards to methodology for data collection and analysis of SDG 2 indicators.

However, this collaborative support to DoS was instigated by DoS themselves, rather than the RBAs. FAO Jordan, with specialist input from FAO HQ, provided training workshops to DoS on methods for collecting and analysing food security data for SDG 2 indicators. Recognising their complementary expertise, FAO invited WFP to participate, bringing both agencies together in trainings. FAO held training on SDG 2.1 analysis in December 2017 and invited the World Bank, WFP, the Ministry of Agriculture and even the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) to attend. FAO also held an awareness raising event where the main speakers were from MOPIC, FAO and WFP.

This collaboration has been a positive outcome for DoS. With support from FAO, DoS developed a single methodology for food security indicators, incorporating and aligning the input of both agencies. FAO and WFP continue to work in partnership on the SDG 2 indicators and see this development as an important strategic RBA collaboration.

SDG 2 is a natural area of focus for WFP and FAO, and as one respondent noted, it should be a national area of strategic partnership. Indeed, the partnership would better position Jordan on food security reporting and bring the country to a higher level of reporting on the SDGs. It was suggested that this could be an area of global partnerships between the RBAs with guidance from HQ level.

While the focus of this study is on the collaboration among the RBAs themselves, it was evident that FAO, IFAD and WFP are also engaged in a wide range of other types of important partnerships, and sometimes these other partnerships provide more “natural synergies” in that they allow working with agencies which have greater similarities in structure, instruments and resources, as well as those with shared priorities. For example, IFAD in Bangladesh might naturally partner with the Asian Development Bank given that international financing institutions (IFIs) have similar approaches and systems. In Jordan, WFP currently partners with UNHCR and UNICEF, as they co-ordinate on humanitarian work in the refugee camps in North Jordan. On the other hand, the RBAs draw on each other’s ideas and expertise in all their partnership work, and the boundary between what partnership constitutes as part of the RBA collaboration and wider partnership is not hard and fast. These other types of partnership include:

- a. UN co-ordination among UN agencies in country to help deliver on the SDGs, in support of national goals and priorities, including the role of the UN resident co-ordinator and the UNDAF frameworks and country plans.
- b. Engagement in specific projects implemented by and with government ministries and departments. For example, IFAD would typically provide grants and loans which co-fund projects carried out by government ministries, sometimes with technical advice from FAO or the support and capacity of WFP. FAO works very closely with government ministries in all the countries, providing technical assistance with staff embedded in ministries. Likewise, IFAD has strong working relationships with specific ministries and departments such as in Bangladesh through the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED).
- c. Partnerships with other UN agencies and strategic partners on specific areas, including on humanitarian response or the needs of host communities. For example, on emergency response both FAO and WFP are partnering with agencies such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, UN Women and IOM and with international and local NGOs.
- d. Partnerships with IFIs and bilateral donors. This is a particular feature of IFAD’s work. In

Bangladesh, for example, it has a close working relationship with the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank and has also worked with the Dutch ministry, among others. Similarly, WFP has worked with the World Bank on its cash-transfer programmes.

Opportunities for evolution

Discussions with RBA staff, government leads and partners indicated several areas where RBA collaboration could be taken to the next level, to include more strategic partnerships and joint programming, particularly around multisectoral working.

One major cross cutting and multisectoral area was nutrition, where all three agencies have interests and complementary strengths. In Bangladesh, FAO is already taking a strong lead on nutrition, and the National Nutrition Council and national strategy provide a natural forum for further RBA collaboration to support the government’s priorities. FAO, IFAD and WFP can work together closely on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and cropping and on nutrition awareness and training. In fact the RBAs have already identified nutrition-sensitive value chains as a key area where their collaboration can be strengthened, along with that of governments, private sector, civil society and academia, to enhance progress towards ending malnutrition and nutrition insecurity in all its forms.

In this context, there is much to build on. An RBA Working Group (WG) was set up on the topic. Drawing on existing value chains for nutrition approaches, the RBA WG developed a joint Nutrition-Sensitive Value Chain framework.¹ The SUN country network and the Meeting the Undernutrition Challenge (MUCH) provide well established networks and projects for co-operation. For the MUCH project, FAO staff are based in the Ministry of Food Planning and Monitoring Unit, and FAO sits “side by side” with the government. One senior government official stated that this longstanding, highly effective partnership with FAO was a “showcase of partnerships” and could be used to highlight what a good partnership looks like and how it functions, not just within Bangladesh but worldwide. Other government officials in Bangladesh commented that FAO’s strong links to WFP and RBA collaboration actually supported and

¹ www.fao.org/3/a-mr918rev1e.pdf

enabled government ministries to work together better, thus promoting strategic collaboration for effective partnerships.

An opportunity to extend RBA collaboration in Jordan includes the Healthy Kitchens project run in the communities. As noted in a WFP evaluation, the collaboration could be expanded to partner with FAO to support local agriculture production and food processing, in turn, supplying food for the Healthy Kitchens. This possibility is now being explored by FAO and WFP. The opportunity to fully engage all three RBAs in the WFP Zero Hunger Strategic Review was not fully exploited, which might have facilitated coordinated longer-term strategic planning between the RBAs in Jordan, and could perhaps be replicated in other context / countries.

Other topics for further RBA collaboration were also suggested. In Bangladesh, the UN resident coordinator is providing a strong lead to encourage the UN agencies to consider the potential for joint programming within the UN agencies in support of the SDGs and national priorities. In relation to the RBAs, this provides an excellent positive context from the UN side but would also require substantial planning and overcoming practical challenges over differences in systems and resource environments. Multisectoral work on value chains and food systems are both topics to explore. A sequenced approach to responding to the needs of host communities in relation to humanitarian crises is also an area where all three agencies have much to offer in partnership. In Madagascar, an RBA Joint Working Group has been created which will be responsible for operationalising the MoU. ●



Features of collaboration

Relevance and responsiveness to the country context

As already noted, most of the examples of RBA collaboration cited by respondents at country level have developed in response to specific country needs, and as such, they are highly relevant and responsive to those needs. In Bangladesh, the way the agencies work is strongly demand-driven, and the direction comes to a large extent from government, based around SDGs. In Ethiopia and Jordan, the governments also use their co-ordination mechanisms to ensure that agencies work in ways which respond to the country needs, as exemplified by the Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Ethiopia (Example 5). There were good examples of policy dialogue around the SDGs, including the Committee on World Food Security in Ethiopia and the recent rapid assessment of progress against each of the SDGs in Bangladesh to which the RBAs contributed.

While this ensures a degree of responsiveness on specific needs at project level, it does not necessarily always mean that strategic needs and

overall development priorities are being met or that there is a joined-up and sequenced approach in a broader sense which is capable of shifting the biggest challenges. This is a particular issue in Jordan, where the short-term humanitarian response has taken priority over longer-term aims, partly due to the large amounts of donor funds for humanitarian work. In Madagascar, as already noted, the government's resources are more limited, and the lead comes more from the donors and UN agencies than in the other three countries.

Type and quality of partnerships

While this study is not an evaluation, the country missions and document review provide a picture of the RBAs delivering important work in partnership on key issues in each of the four countries. This includes many examples of knowledge sharing, synergies and agencies with different mandates but similar objectives working together to enhance the scope of their work to deliver benefits which would not otherwise have

Example 5: Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Ethiopia

FAO and WFP worked together on the Purchase from Africans for Africa programme, a pilot project supported by the Government of Brazil and the United Kingdom. The programme links smallholder farmers to schools to support access to education, food diversity, healthier eating habits and behavioural changes for school-age children. It also seeks to increase farmers' market access and income opportunities.

FAO and WFP jointly designed the project, which emerged from mutual interest. It was piloted in a region where FAO was working on the supply side and WFP was working on the demand side. The project had two cycles through which there was good collaboration at the strategic and technical levels. Since the delivery of the project, there has been a continuation of this collaboration focusing more on procurement, food safety and learning. FAO and WFP made efforts to engage IFAD, but it has been challenging to determine the modality for IFAD's involvement given IFAD's direct financing of the government.

Through this initiative, FAO signed an agreement with the Government of Ethiopia at the federal level, but more broadly, through the UNDAF, UN agencies have an agreement and signed action plan with the Bureau of Education for the school feeding programme. This project is part of the government's commitment to contribute to SDG 2 (on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture) and SDG 4 (on quality education). The project demonstrated the potential for complementarity between the RBAs.

FAO and WFP plan to sign an MoU with Ethiopia to support their Home Grown School Feeding Programme in the areas that were identified as gaps (e.g. training in safety, hygiene, contract farming and supply chain). Going forward, IFAD is helping to provide access to irrigation so that home grown school feeding can continue.

Example 6: The Integrated Actions in Nutrition and Food (AINA) project, Madagascar

AINA was a partnership project led by FAO and funded by the European Union that ran from 2013 to 2017. With a budget of EUR 12.5 million, the project sought to improve the livelihood and the food and nutrition security of vulnerable farming populations in five regions of Madagascar. As the leader of the project, FAO was responsible for ensuring its overall strategic, operational, administrative and monitoring co-ordination, with WFP, IFAD, four international NGOs^a, and one national NGO (AIM, Association Intercooperation Madagascar) as co-implementers.

The RBAs worked together in targeted communities, leveraging their comparative advantages and utilising the combined scope of their mandates and expertise. For example, FAO improved accessibility and availability of diversified seeds and planting materials by setting the technical standards for the production of quality adapted seeds which were transferred to beneficiaries through training. Another example is the Farmer Field Schools approach initiated by FAO and scaled up through IFAD-funded projects. It allowed a large number of farmers to improve their productivity through voluntary adoption of improved farming techniques and practices.

The three RBAs also worked together on a value chain approach. FAO delivered training and management support to improve access to markets, IFAD invested in coaching and training farmers and producers in negotiating and signing commercial agreements with the private sector and WFP ensured local purchasing of excess production.

^a CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere), GRET (Professionals for Fair Development, French-based International NGO), WHH (Welthungerhilfe), and ICCO Cooperation (global NGO based in Utrecht, Netherlands)

been possible. For example, in Madagascar, FAO has hosted the Secretariat of the Donors' Platform on Rural Development since 2012, and all three RBAs participate in this forum. FAO and WFP also co-lead the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster, which is designed to allow for an exchange of information and knowledge on related issues, as well as co-ordination of emergency activities among stakeholders. A tripartite project in Madagascar exemplifies the agencies playing to their comparative advantages and working in close partnership with each other, and other partners, on significant cross cutting issues (Example 6).

The collaboration at country level among the RBAs appears to be based on a solid understanding among interviewees of division of labour, playing to strengths and comparative advantages. There were few signs of competition between agencies on the ground or problems around "mission creep", duplication and unhelpful overlaps. Competition for resources came up as an issue but was not a dominant theme or seen as a major obstacle.

The main question here is whether the potential exists to take partnerships to the next level, since many of them are reactive and project-focused. On the other hand, given day-to-day pressures, it was not clear how much space there is for shared strategic thinking to take place – in all the three agencies the time and resources available for

getting away from daily needs and joint strategic thinking was quite constrained. The exception to this was some consultation during the process of preparing country strategic plans and work programmes.

It would appear that existing partnerships between the RBAs are driven by the country needs and that this is a driver that should remain. There is, therefore, scope to build on existing partnership structures to create time and space for strategic partnership planning to take place, with many examples of strong and beneficial partnerships to draw from in this regard.

Contributions to achieving beneficial results for the country

The picture here is somewhat mixed, and it is difficult to be precise. One issue is the input and role of national governments in driving wider UN (and SDG) co-ordination and the systems that are in place to support this, or not. The case study noted a wide range of examples of where the RBA collaboration has helped to deliver tangible benefits at country level. These included:

- meeting the needs of the refugee population in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and the host communities in the surrounding districts (Example 2)

Example 7: Promoting Resilience of Vulnerable through Access to Infrastructure, Improved Skills and Information (PROVATi3) Project, Bangladesh

The six-year PROVATi3 Project was approved by the IFAD Executive Board in December 2017 and subsequently by the Government of Bangladesh on 25 July 2018. The project objective is to sustainably improve incomes and promote resilience to extreme weather conditions of 303 000 rural households in 25 flood-prone sub-districts of northern Bangladesh. The main focus of the project is threefold: building climate-proof infrastructure, creating off-farm employment opportunities, and strengthening communities' ability to adapt to climate change-related risks by significantly increasing disaster and flood preparedness through improved access to quality information.

The project will undertake mapping of ultra-poverty and malnutrition in partnership with WFP and will put in place the early warning systems managed by communities themselves through an MOU between LGED and WFP, which will help in targeting beneficiaries of the project. The total cost of the project is USD 92.35 million (comprised of an IFAD loan of 63.25 million, an IFAD grant of 1.2 million and government input of 27.9 million).

- locust control in Madagascar (Example 3)
- SDG 2 indicators in Jordan (Example 4)
- FAO working with WFP to benefit from its SCOPE card and data on beneficiary needs in Bangladesh
- IFAD working with WFP to benefit from its poverty mapping work in Bangladesh (Example 7).

These examples indicate or suggest that the RBAs – in working together – are meeting the country needs in a synergistic way, with some potential to go further. As yet, however, the beneficial impact has not been confirmed by any definitive or firm evidence based on formal evaluation, and it is not within the scope of this learning case study to provide the data that would underpin a full in-depth assessment. The RBAs focus on getting the work done, and there has not been much, if any, strategic evaluation by the agencies themselves of how far RBA collaboration has delivered either on specific projects or overall in relation to what was intended. Consequently, learning about partnerships, including those with the government as the main development partner, is still in its infancy.

Government support in each country

In all four countries, the role of government is supportive towards coordination among UN agencies in principle and strongly supportive of the SDGs, which means it is also broadly supportive to the intention of the RBA collaboration.

In Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Madagascar, this is followed through in specific ways. Examples include Bangladesh's well-developed understanding of the RBAs' work and the potential benefits of RBA collaboration and the Ethiopian government's role in consultation on the RBA national action plans.

In two of the countries – Bangladesh and Ethiopia –, the clarity of the government's strategy is a key factor in setting the direction for partnerships. In Bangladesh, this centres around the country's particular approach to and strong ownership of the SDGs. The message from government was that it is in the lead, using the SDGs as the main framework. The targets and strategies to deliver them have been clearly laid out, and the role of the agencies is quite straightforward: to show how they will respond. Similarly, in Ethiopia the government strategy is closely aligned to the SDGs, and the agencies can come together around shared priorities. The government has incentivised joint approaches from UN agencies through its participation in and endorsement of the UNDAF. In Bangladesh, there was high level interest in the RBA partnership, partly because of the fortunate situation that senior officials in the Economic Relations Division have a good understanding of how the agencies work and the potential benefits of closer collaboration.

On the other hand, partnership is not always supported in practice by the government context. For example, while it is clear that some governments are committed to UN co-ordination and an integrated approach, the interviews for this case study revealed a tension which arises from the de facto bilateral communications and relationships between individual ministries and

Example 8: Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JPRWEE) in Ethiopia

The JPRWEE programme is a joint initiative of FAO, IFAD, WFP and UN Women that is implemented in Ethiopia (and other countries). The project benefited from a close relationship and understanding among the technical focal persons of agencies, functioning national, regional and district level technical working groups and a common platform for government partnership.

There were operational challenges in maintaining the partnership with IFAD, and the project encountered conflicting priorities with other ongoing agency level programmes.

The programme demonstrated the added value of collaboration for programme success and emphasised the importance of creating functioning governance structures for smooth communication, monitoring and evaluation.

individual agencies. While there is an incentive for governments overall to reduce transaction costs by having a single UN response, there is simultaneously an incentive to have separate budget envelopes to ensure delivery of specific projects. Similar issues came out in several of the interviews, where the overall government approach is extremely clear and provides a framework that supports the SDGs and UN co-ordination, yet the practice in relation to how the RBAs work with specific ministries is much more complex.

This means that the complexities of co-ordinating across government ministries should not be underestimated in any of the countries, and typically each of the RBAs have their own particular entry points and relationships which are not always shared. However, RBA collaboration also provides a potential way to help address these challenges. A good example of how this could be improved was provided through FAO's role in facilitating renewed contact in the Ministry of Agriculture for IFAD in Bangladesh.

In another instance, the focal points are already shared between the three agencies which is very helpful, but in other respects the relationship with government is less able to support RBA collaboration since the capacity of the government

to provide direction is much more limited than in the other three countries.

In Ethiopia, the aid co-ordination mechanisms are well developed. The Government of Ethiopia has working groups involving government itself, UN agencies and other development partners. Elsewhere, there are similarly well-defined sectoral co-ordination mechanisms, but they are not always effective. In certain areas, these mechanisms are very important, although on particular issues such as gender equality there is a highly co-ordinated approach (Example 8).

In one country, strategic oversight of donors was seen by interviewees as opportunistic and reactive, which led to challenges around harmonisation and coherence. Better forward planning and co-ordination would increase capacity to identify and promote partnerships and align donors to meet national needs. There is, however, clear potential and opportunity for closer partnership working for the RBAs, government and their partners, with a clear process and system to build on to achieve this.

In summary, the interaction of government with the RBAs can either support or constrain effective partnership, depending on the context, specific issues and government capacity to take ownership and a strategic lead. ●



Enablers of collaboration

The next two sections consider the drivers and enablers of RBA collaboration, on the one hand, and the constraints and obstacles on the other. It is worth noting at the outset that many of the factors which affect RBA collaboration – such as country context, the role of government or the role of UN co-ordination – can be either enablers or barriers depending on the specific situation and how far they have been developed. One way to view this is that RBA collaboration is affected by the interaction between the three different systems: the country context, the government system and the UN system.

The enablers of RBA collaboration identified from the four countries considered here include:

- I the commonality, and complementarity of vision in RBA goals and mandates
- I a shared imperative to meet the country needs in situations where the challenges are very substantial and “it makes sense” to work together practically
- I high levels of trust and strong working relationships which have developed over many years, built around a good understanding of comparative strengths, roles and complementarities
- I most recently, the facilitative role played by the MoU itself.

These are discussed in greater detail below.

Common vision and complementary mandates

As noted in the MoU, there is a common vision shared among the RBAs both at HQ level and at country level in relation to issues such as food security and nutrition, sustainable agricultural development, and poverty. This complementarity in the mandates – in a positive sense – around SDG 2 is an important enabler where there is potential to work collaboratively to define and

deliver a shared indicator. Whether the potential for these complementary mandates has been maximised so far is more open for debate and is further considered below in the Key findings and lessons section.

In the Jordanian context, complementary mandates can be both a facilitator and barrier. Complementarity provides the potential for closer collaboration; however, agencies also saw it as a source of competition. The large amount of humanitarian funding available has led to some competition for funds. There has been some duplication of activities between the RBAs and other agencies in relation to agricultural projects and livelihoods. As agriculture is a major sector that employs refugees, several UN agencies have developed agricultural projects where FAO has the comparative advantage.

Country context and national needs, priorities, and planning

All the work of the RBAs, including collaboration and partnerships, is driven first and foremost by the country context and many different needs, which typically encourages them to work together.

There is a shared imperative of meeting the needs of vulnerable populations, including poor rural households, the food insecure and those affected by humanitarian crises and natural disasters as well as by the wider development needs in each country. Since the needs are substantial and challenging in all four countries, this provides a strong driver for staff in the agencies to collaborate. As was frequently noted by those interviewed, it makes sense to work together, and it would not be possible or efficient to tackle the issues without doing so.

The fact that the needs are often huge and partly unmet, particularly with regard to refugee responses, can also help to limit the competition for resources since agencies will have their own roles to play and funding streams to support

this; in initial refugee responses this is especially apparent, and joint responses plans are a common tool. Larger countries like Bangladesh and Ethiopia and a middle-income country like Jordan will also have more resources to draw on both nationally and internationally; thus competition for resources was not a key issue noted by interview respondents. On the other hand, in Madagascar, the pool of donors and funding is much more limited, which could be one reason that competition for resources was highlighted by interviewees as an important issue.

The most obvious examples of this practical demand- and issues-driven approach were seen in how the RBAs work with each other on the ground and with the government, other UN agencies and NGOs in responding to humanitarian needs, protecting rural livelihoods for host populations, aiding remote rural areas affected by climate change, and ensuring food security and tackling nutrition. This includes assisting refugees in Bangladesh, meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and the food insecure in Ethiopia, and building resilience and mitigating the effects of climate shocks in Madagascar. Specifically, FAO and WFP were able to work together in identifying the needs of beneficiary populations in Cox's Bazar through sharing data based around WFP's SCOPE card in Bangladesh. And FAO was able to bring its technical expertise to bear and work with IFAD and WFP on tackling the effects of the locust invasion in Madagascar. And all three agencies contributed to shared responses under the umbrella of the Committee on World Food Security in Ethiopia.

The humanitarian – development nexus

The fact that the RBAs work in both the development and humanitarian sectors was both a potential enabler and a significant barrier to closer collaboration, depending on the context and how the government viewed their contributions. WFP clearly has a dual mandate in the development and humanitarian sectors. FAO as a specialised agency also assists countries in their rural development as well in responding to crises affecting countries' food production and rural communities. It supports them by protecting and restoring the livelihoods of affected farmers,

fishers, herders and foresters, with the aim to help communities lay the foundations for long-term recovery and resilience. IFAD also has some facilities to assist refugees, displaced people and host communities.

In Bangladesh, the refugee response is a politically sensitive issue, and while the needs are huge, there is a very clear dividing line between what the UN agencies are allowed to do in relation to the refugees and the broader needs of the people of Bangladesh. FAO and WFP are authorised to support the needs of those in the camps and are doing important work, often in collaboration with each other and also with other UN agencies such as UNHCR, IOM or UNICEF. IFAD is not authorised to support the needs of the refugees – nor does it have any mandate or comparative advantage to do so. On the other hand, both the government and IFAD are starting to consider the potential work on related issues due to the additional demands on Bangladesh from the influx of refugees. An example raised by the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) was the need to consider raising agricultural productivity in the host districts.

Meanwhile, in Jordan, as already noted, the context is more of a barrier than an enabler at this point. The focus on refugee response has limited RBA collaboration by focusing resources on one of the three agencies, WFP, and one set of issues, the humanitarian needs. Instead of discussions around the wider national strategy, the focus has been more on the Jordan Response Plan, and here FAO has only a limited role and IFAD has none. This situation is now beginning to change as the Government of Jordan seeks to develop the Jordan Response Plan in ways that include longer term interventions that address the needs of both the refugees and Jordanian host communities.

In Ethiopia, working across the development-humanitarian nexus is of course an equally important issue and a large proportion of aid has been dedicated to humanitarian relief. The focus of the UNDAF provides a natural platform for RBA collaboration in this context. To date, most of the UN's resources have been allocated to immediate response, but the UNDAF is looking to support recovery resilience and national institutional strengthening. This provides an important context for RBA collaboration in addressing food insecurity while also supporting longer-term resilience through agricultural and nutritional programming, as well as social protection climate adaptation, etc.

Comparative advantage to achieve synergies

Among the RBAs in all the countries considered, there is a very strong understanding of each other's mandates and comparative advantage, which provides a good basis for spotting complementarities and synergies. In simple terms, while all focus strongly on the SDGs and the Zero Hunger objectives, the particular strengths of the agencies can be characterised as follows:

- FAO's role in the countries includes its ability to provide world-class technical expertise

to address a wide range of specific issues but also engaging with substantial project implementation on the ground, supporting capacity building and normative work, and taking a lead on key issues such as food safety, nutrition-sensitive approaches and sustainable food systems in rural and urban areas.

- IFAD is the only IFI within the UN system with a key role in financing combined with technical expertise on enhanced production, value chains, rural finance and rural climate-smart infrastructure.

Example 9: Achieving synergies through AROPA and Purchase for Progress (P4P) in Madagascar

Food security and resilience are the priorities for the RBAs especially in the south of Madagascar which suffers from recurrent droughts and famines. Here the synergies between the three organisations come to life through emergency responses but also increasingly through resilience and development work. Farmers on the receiving end appreciate receiving different types of support from three complementary sources including the AROPA project, summarised below.

Meanwhile, WFP cannot achieve food security working alone and relies on FAO's distribution of improved seeds and technical expertise to work on this. When the FAO provides seeds to grow food, WFP distributes food aid in order to ensure that farmers do not eat the FAO seeds but actually plant them. In the context of the P4P programme, also described below, WFP buys crops grown locally, while IFAD, through the AROPA project, helps producers to organise themselves and grow crops of good quality.

AROPA is a ten-year project providing support to farmers' professional organisations and agricultural services, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Finance with an approved financing of USD 44.4 million (with USD 30.2 million coming from IFAD). The overarching goal of the project is to strengthen existing farmers' organisations, with the aim of improving agricultural production and increasing the incomes and livelihoods of rural households. The project emphasises a flexible, demand-driven participatory approach and, as part of the government's Agricultural Sector Programme, it seeks to contribute to poverty reduction and to the diversification of the rural economy.

The project's specific objectives are to:

- build the capacity of farmers to better integrate them into the economy
- facilitate farmers' access to services by matching demand and supply
- increase production levels by establishing sustainable financial mechanisms responding to demand for services, through the Agricultural Development Fund and the Regional Agricultural Development Fund.

The project is active in five regions in the south of Madagascar and, as of August 2018, had provided services to 85 000 smallholder family farmers belonging to 4012 farmers' organisations at grassroots, regional and national levels. The targeted households, which include small-scale farmers with little or no land, families with nutritional deficits, and women and young people, have substantially increased their revenue.

P4P is a WFP-led programme that supports farmers' access to agricultural markets by purchasing their surplus production. It links WFP's demand for staple food commodities with small-scale farmers' need to sell their produce while leveraging the technical expertise of a wide range of partners. This collaboration provides smallholder farmers (SHF) with the skills and knowledge to improve their agricultural production and also gives them an incentive to do so, as they have a guaranteed market in which to sell their surplus crops.

WFP has mainstreamed and enhanced pro-SHF food procurement by enabling partnerships with supply-side actors (AROPA) and capacity building of SHF. From 2013 to 2017, this steadily increased the tonnage of food procurement from SHF organisations by 270%, which emphasises the importance of partnerships and capacity building as pillars for successful pro-SHF food procurement.

- WFP is recognised as a large but agile agency with expertise on emergency response, procurement, logistics, social safety nets and nutrition, with a dual humanitarian and development mandate.

Bringing together this different expertise to create synergies for economic transformation is the challenge. Knowledge of each other's comparative advantage makes the identification of areas for collaboration easier, and it also enables a more efficient division of labour. For example, WFP in its school feeding programmes has partnered with FAO on certain aspects of this work, and a clear division of labour has been essential for this to be delivered successfully.

Differences in implementation modalities can also create a hurdle to collaboration. For example, in the case of Jordan it was noted that the fact that IFAD's modality is to provide lending to the government that then implements and manages the project or programme limits the potential for IFAD to partner with other RBAs. On the other hand, in Jordan, FAO and IFAD also had partnered effectively in projects where FAO provided technical expertise. Similarly, in Bangladesh IFAD was successful in partnering with FAO on design aspects and technical assistance as an input to its work with government departments.

Trust and relationships

Levels of trust and working relationships are a strong positive enabling factor for RBA collaboration in country. The staff in the RBAs are part of the same community of experts working on food security, nutrition, resilience and the wider development and humanitarian challenges in all the countries considered. Staff from the different agencies meet regularly as part of working groups on specific issues, convened by the government or in the UN, and this combines with an appetite for collaboration among the country representatives and heads of office in the RBAs themselves. In Bangladesh, for example, those interviewed including in government often referred to the importance of the leadership in the agencies in supporting partnership, frequent informal contact and exchange of ideas.

In Jordan, all the heads of the RBAs identified the importance of good personal relationships and of leadership competencies and inclination

for collaborative working as essential to partnerships. They expressed a clear view that strong partnerships are built on interpersonal trust and communication, rather than primarily on written commitments (although these do help). A suggestion was made that decisions on recruitment at senior level should specifically consider competency in partnership working. Similar comments were made in Bangladesh.

Role of the MoU to date

There was reasonable awareness of the MoU within country-based staff in the Rome-based agencies themselves and key contacts in government working on aid co-ordination. In Jordan, the MoU was seen as providing an enabling environment for partnership between the RBAs and as something which sets out a global vision and guiding principles; however, at present it frames a developing intention rather than showing evidence of use in practice. Awareness was quite limited in the wider UN community or in specific line ministries. Among the RBA staff interviewed in most countries, the MoU was seen as providing a facilitative role rather than driving the agencies to work together. It was regarded as potentially useful at the margins and a helpful signal from HQ that provides legitimacy. As noted already, the benefits of RBA collaboration were in fact already quite well understood by staff at country level, and this positive environment for collaboration at country level predates the MoU by some years.

In reality, then, the strongest drivers come from the other factors – the country needs, how they can be better met, what each agency can bring, and the trust and relationships on the ground. There was also some wariness among those interviewed for the case study about the usefulness of top-down HQ agreements in driving change, because of the need to maintain flexibility and tailor the response to suit the issue, although that is not to say that the MoU itself is top down, simply that top-down approaches in general do not naturally take due account of country needs and priorities. In Jordan, interviewees observed that there could be useful guidance from HQ on ways to work together at country level to support more partnership; this was envisaged as facilitative rather than prescriptive.

Where the MoU can be helpful, therefore, is in reminding staff of the need to work together and in providing a framework for practical work

on aligning business processes and reducing competition for funding. This is discussed later in this report.

Wider UN reforms and partnerships at country level

The UN reforms, SDGs and Agenda 2030 provide the overarching framework for RBA collaboration both at HQ level and in country. How far this plays out in practice at country level varies. In Bangladesh and Ethiopia this is a very important factor. Specifically, in Ethiopia, the UNDAF is actively supported by the government, and its focus is particularly relevant to the RBAs since it aims to ensure a coherent approach to addressing the nexus between humanitarian and development assistance. By contrast, in Jordan, while this nexus is also a crucially important issue, the approach has been more around the Jordan Response Plan, and both the partners and government recognise the need to develop the thinking towards more long-term approaches.

In Bangladesh, as already noted, the SDGs are the main focus for the government. The UNDAF is also important as a driver of agency collaboration, including planning, monitoring and reporting, and the UN country team provides a central space for regular dialogue. However, there was

clearly potential to go further as well. A strong sense of forward vision and intent is coming from the recently appointed Resident Coordinator, who seeks to take UN co-operation to a higher level and reinvigorate intersectoral co-ordination mechanisms. This should provide a favourable environment and opportunities for greater RBA collaboration on specific multisectoral issues.

In Jordan (and also in Bangladesh), it was noted that early consultation and collaboration on the development of agency country strategies should increase alignment and harmonisation of country programme strategic objectives and workplans under the wider UN frameworks. The country heads in Jordan noted the potential to use the process to achieve greater clarity on how the different mandates and resources of each RBA can contribute to shared goals drawing on comparative advantage. WFP in Jordan has strongly stated its intent to use the opportunity of developing the WFP country programme for 2019–21 to increase alignment of plans and activities by holding joint discussions with FAO as part of the programme development process. This is particularly relevant for the coming strategic period, since WFP plans to focus more explicitly on resilience, reflecting both the shift in emphasis of the Jordan Response Plan from a humanitarian response to resilience and the reality that a majority of refugees will be long-term residents in Jordan, with a resultant impact on Jordanian communities. ●

Constraints and challenges

Donor behaviour

Some of the drive for RBAs to work more closely in partnership comes from donors at the highest levels. In the context of the UN reforms, the representatives at missions in New York and Rome are pushing for greater co-ordination and collaboration. It is contradictory, then, that one of the factors cited as affecting the reality of partnership at country level is the way that the donor funding streams actually work within programmes, and in country. This can be fragmented and siloed, with each bilateral donor and each agency having its own preferred partners, topics and priorities. Many of those interviewed for this case study noted that this leads to duplication and is not helpful in encouraging RBAs to work together, let alone to work collaboratively in a strategic or long-term way.

These challenges may also be a particular feature of the work on sustainable agricultural development and food security SDGs – as opposed to other areas such as health, social protection, climate change, poverty reduction or education. It is possible that this helps to explain why joint donor working, programmatic responses and pooled funding streams are not very common in relation to SDG 2 and the work of the RBAs.

Business processes

As things stand, there is limited evidence of any progress in joining up processes on the ground in country, other than in sharing office accommodation. It is also not clear how the country staff can influence this issue, which is mainly HQ-driven. The differences between the RBA processes remain substantial, including on planning cycles and funding arrangements, delegation of authority, and resources which hinder effective partnerships, even when there is a will to collaborate. For instance, delays in getting approval in FAO, which is more centralised, can mean it is too slow to join potential partnerships; different funding and planning cycles reduce opportunities for planned collaboration. Co-location/shared offices is a positive factor in two of the countries (Bangladesh and Madagascar). IFAD's

decision to decentralise and move its country lead to Dhaka is also helpful, although in general IFAD's presence in the ground is considerably more limited than the other two agencies. This is also an obstacle in Jordan as IFAD is based out of Cairo.

Differences in capacity

One barrier in practice to effective RBA collaboration is that there are significant differences in capacity between the RBAs themselves – in terms of staffing on the ground – and between other partners including government. In most countries, FAO and WFP typically have much greater staffing and capacity for engagement on the ground than IFAD. In Jordan, FAO's presence is also relatively smaller than WFP's, and it does not have sufficient staff to engage widely with IFAD or WFP as it does, say, in Bangladesh. The partnerships in which it can engage with WFP in Jordan are likely to be smaller projects which are less significant to WFP than to FAO.

The picture in Bangladesh is somewhat different given that FAO's presence in Dhaka has been built up over several decades since independence and is very substantial. FAO is able to engage in a wide range of activities directly, and to partner with government and other agencies in the process, and is very much an equal partner when it works with WFP. IFAD's approach is very different, with representation in country but only a relatively small team of staff in each country office (and none in Amman). This is part of its business model since it tends to rely on the implementation capacity of its government partners, other IFIs and/or to call in technical expertise from Rome, although recent decisions to decentralise more staff to country level are changing the picture somewhat.

These differences in size do not have to be an obstacle, in principle, provided that the agencies work in such a way that each has a complementary role. In practice, however, it can mean that the larger agency is much more visible with government and other organisations. There are also practical issues related to size, as a smaller agency such as FAO or

IFAD in Jordan cannot attend all the potential UN and other meetings that take place; they do not have enough staff to do so. WFP's access to greater resources that flow through the humanitarian aid budget also means it is positioned differently from FAO and IFAD, especially in Jordan.

Limited monitoring and evaluation of the quality of partnerships

As already noted, monitoring and evaluation of partnerships for learning or accountability was

noted as a gap by many interviewees. This was particularly highlighted in the Madagascar case, where respondents were very positive about the value added of partnership but were not able to provide substantiated evidence. The need to consciously develop reflective practice as a main point to address for future learning could equally apply to the other countries. Acknowledging the challenges of doing so, it is also fair to note that a clear process for feeding back experience on the ground, and identifying what helps to deliver effective partnerships, would increase the ability of the RBAs to improve and build on their collaboration in the future. ●



Key findings and lessons

This concluding section comprises two parts. The first summarises the main findings and lessons for the RBA collaboration, based on the inquiry areas for this study as agreed in the inception report. Each group of findings is followed by the principle lessons that flow from them. The second part offers lessons for MOPAN.

Lessons for FAO, IFAD and WFP

Evolution of RBA collaboration

Finding 1: RBA collaboration has already evolved in very positive ways to make a significant contribution overall, although it varies between countries.

The conditions in each country are generally conducive towards collaboration on the ground; specifically, there is a level of willingness to work together between the agencies based on a common understanding of what each RBA can bring to addressing the country needs, which helps to identify synergies and comparative advantages, and a good level of trust and positive working relationships at senior level. Staff are aware of the MoU, and although not the main driver it is sending a positive signal. The needs of the countries and issues drive actual decisions, and not surprisingly the country context and the capacity and presence of the RBAs in the field are major factors in all countries and can either support or hold back RBA collaboration.

Finding 2: Across the humanitarian – development nexus, it can be harder for the RBAs to work together due to political constraints, differences in role, and the effect of the funding flows and aid architecture.

This is the reality and shows that in some important ways the core business of the RBAs is shared, while in others it is quite different in that WFP has, in certain contexts, a major role in humanitarian response and IFAD does not. There

are some good examples of collaboration among FAO and WFP in this arena, such as in the refugee response in Bangladesh. The government's and donors' focus on the immediate humanitarian response in Jordan has not facilitated further RBA collaboration in that country.

Moreover, there is clearly a need and interest in countries such as Bangladesh and Jordan to address the challenges of refugees with an integrated approach. This looks both at the immediate emergency response and the longer-term development implications including the needs of the countries themselves, such as the host districts in Cox's Bazar and host communities in North Jordan. The shift to an integrated approach provides an opportunity for the RBAs to work in synergy and in a multisectoral way to add value. However, the flow of resources and the aid architecture, as well as political dimensions, pose some challenges to integrating humanitarian and development approaches which need to be managed.

For example, FAO and WFP are already playing a very important role to meet the immediate needs of the refugees in Bangladesh, but there is potential for IFAD to play a role in agricultural productivity and value chains which would help the host districts. This would need to be done in a way that respects the dividing line, between humanitarian response and the domestic agenda set out by the government, which defines which agencies can work on which issues.

Finding 3: The level of collaboration on strategic planning as part of the RBA collaboration is quite limited. However, countries providing a strong lead on the SDGs have shown some good examples of policy dialogue involving government and all three RBAs.

There have been some relatively informal, limited consultations around country plans, but essentially it appears the country strategic planning processes, in these four countries, are proceeding in parallel with little cross-referencing or substantive alignment.

Finding 4: While there are many good examples of collaboration, they have been bounded projects responding to specific issues and emerging needs and have not typically involved all three agencies.

This is not to undervalue the very positive examples of joint working in projects that have evolved, which clearly meet specific needs and help to exploit synergies. Additionally, there are some examples of project level collaboration which are innovative and could be replicable elsewhere. These include the use of shared systems to reach beneficiaries, as seen with the WFP SCOPE card in Bangladesh to allow refugees to access services, as well as the FAO Social Stability project working with WFP in Jordan sharing the same e-card cash-transfer system. These examples of using shared systems and processes for the benefit of beneficiaries could provide useful lessons for the RBAs, as well as for UN agencies more widely. There are, however, the questions of whether potential exists to go beyond the project level and what would be the best modality to do so. The feedback from country staff suggested a level of interest in greater multisectoral working but also some healthy skepticism about the transaction costs involved in moving to shared programmes.

Lesson 1: The country context and needs should be the main driver for decisions about how to target RBA collaboration at country level, and the appropriate role for the MoU in this context is to be supportive and facilitative.

In practice, this lesson is already well recognised on the ground. It reflects the huge needs that each country has and the welcome reality that countries such as Bangladesh and Ethiopia, in the context of the SDGs, have strong ownership and ability to set out the needed direction. The collaboration has been happening in ways which are issues driven and in response to demand from government and emerging needs. The RBA MoU agreement itself is a facilitating framework and is not the determining factor for what happens at country level.

Lesson 2: The RBAs in country could push ahead further and faster with aligning and sharing their country strategic planning processes and mapping the institutional capabilities and synergies to meet the country needs.

This can be done by building on the progress already made with high level consultations with government in the context of the SDGs and opportunities to develop the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework approach. Decisions about areas for future RBA collaboration should be firmly within the context of shared strategic planning. So far, there has been a moderate degree of sharing of plans and consultation, but the strategic planning is not fully aligned. As such, there have been opportunities for stronger and deeper collaboration which were not always taken up.

Lesson 3: Further developing a targeted approach to RBA collaboration, driven by country needs and shared strategic planning, could enable country-specific approaches to assessing progress on the MoU.

The quality and range of RBA collaboration at country level should be measured against performance criteria which are primarily about how far they meet the country needs, in support of the SDGs. This requires shared mapping of country needs and appropriate responses, which can inform decisions on the role of each agency in fulfilling responses. This itself requires some flexibility to suit the context since what is appropriate varies by country. For instance, in Jordan the refugee crisis is a major driver of what is possible, while in another country it was found that the government capacity constraints are a factor in determining the approach the RBAs can take.

It should not be assumed that a joint RBA response is always appropriate. Depending on country needs, the best response may be for RBAs to work with other partners that have better aligned approaches or are more natural bedfellows because of their own mandates. Sometimes the best way that RBAs can collaborate at country level is through their already established entry points into particular government ministries or with other agencies and partners. For example, in the humanitarian sector WFP often works with IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs; IFAD works with the IFIs and the private sector; and FAO uses its links into ministries of agriculture and local research organisations.

Lesson 4: Going beyond project level approaches, the RBAs could explore the potential to deliver synergies further through greater multisectoral collaboration in specific areas. This should be done in flexible ways, so the implementation modality and role of each RBA is driven by what works best.

This lesson suggests a way of going beyond an ad hoc opportunistic approach to exploit systematically the potential for synergies and complementarities, without imposing rigidities that would be unhelpful. The range of collaboration already happening demonstrates considerable synergies and potential for shared work. The country studies also showed significant potential to collaborate more on certain multisectoral issues, such as nutrition-sensitive value chains or an integrated response to humanitarian situations.

A shared programmatic approach involving joint funding and delivery may not always be appropriate. There are costs involved due to the differences in the agencies, as well as transactional costs associated with this, and the relationship with government might be more effectively managed by one lead agency. The implementation modality should vary by country and according to the issues.

Results, learning and responsiveness

Finding 5: The RBA collaboration is demand-driven, responds to a shared understanding of the SDG agenda in country and is clearly aimed at addressing specific country needs.

This is a positive finding and is particularly clear in those countries where the government provides a strong lead on the SDGs. In Bangladesh, the country government's focus on the SDGs is very clear and visible, and on food security, nutrition and agriculture, it helps to set the framework for decisions by the RBAs, that are demand-driven and work closely with government. Not surprisingly, the RBAs respond to this agenda, and the SDG and government priorities are reflected in their strategic planning and projects. The co-ordination around the SDG clusters is strong. In Ethiopia, there is a similarly strong lead from government which sets the scene for how the RBAs work.

In Madagascar, there is frustration on the ground where staff in the agencies know the big issues but are not able to shift them as they do not have control over the wider systems that influence decisions, including funding decisions by donors and top-down decisions from HQ.

In Jordan, the focus is more specific on the Syria crisis and the Jordan Response Plan, and there is now a developing discussion about how to shift the focus to more long-term approaches.

Finding 6: Although there has been progress on SDG frameworks, the processes for shared monitoring and evaluation of the results of RBA collaboration in country are still developing.

There is a reasonably positive context for shared approaches to measuring results at the SDG level, but the linkages to the project level RBA collaboration examples were harder to discern. In both Bangladesh and Ethiopia, the government's SDG monitoring approaches provide a clear framework for measuring results, and in Ethiopia, the UNDAF defines shared outcomes for the RBAs. In Jordan, there was effective collaboration on SDG 2 indicators between the RBAs and the government, a key strategic activity for the RBAs to support Jordan's measurement and delivery of the SDGs. The Government of Jordan has taken significant ownership of the SDGs, and engaging with the SDGs is a critically important activity for the RBAs in relation to SDG 2.

Although the co-ordination arrangements in the UN system are an important framework for partnership, they have not been fully exploited. For example, the UNCT meets monthly in Bangladesh and there is considerable sharing of agendas and ideas, but there was a recognition that the UNDAF could be developed further. The new United Nations Resident Coordinator there is keen to raise this to the next level and has set out the intent to do so. In Jordan, the UNDAF has been renamed the Sustainable Development Framework, indicating its intent to support delivery of the SDGs.

As already noted in Finding 6 in relation to delivery of results, the monitoring and evaluation of partnership as part of the RBA collaboration has been limited. There are the normal project management and monitoring mechanisms which each agency follows, but these are not focused on learning about what makes effective partnerships. This is a clear gap and means that the potential for learning about effective partnerships has not yet been exploited.

At the UN country team level, however, there are shared results mechanisms in some countries. The UNDAF in Ethiopia identifies outputs and shared results for the RBAs. All three RBAs work on inclusive growth and structural transformation to help Ethiopia achieve robust and inclusive growth in agricultural production by 2020 (Pillar 1 of the UNDAF).

Lesson 5: More attention needs to be given to shared monitoring and evaluation to provide the solid evidence to assess how the RBA collaborations are contributing to the overall SDG results and UNDAF frameworks, and to support shared learning.

Partnerships are usually based on shared goals within the context of the SDGs and support key areas defined by the mandates of the three RBAs. However, since collaboration is mainly project based, use of country systems as part of a programmatic approach is not in evidence.

Strong country ownership is evident in Bangladesh, but there are mixed views in Madagascar about how far the partnerships are responding to meeting the country needs in a strategic sense. In Bangladesh, the government plays a key role in setting direction, co-ordinating (e.g. on the Rohingya response) and implementing projects such as those co-financed through IFAD. Use of country systems in the sense of the Busan Partnership agreement was less evident in relation to the RBA collaboration, and there were no examples of shared monitoring beyond specific monitoring at project level.

Comparative advantage, synergies and business processes

Finding 7: There is a good understanding of comparative advantage among RBA staff on the ground, and this is helping to identify and achieve synergies and appropriate division of labour.

The country level staff in the RBAs seem to have clear mandates and understand each other's strengths, which allows them to work in complementary ways on specific issues. For example, FAO has strong relationships at high level within government ministries and is able to help provide technical expertise on key issues and the design of projects, IFAD provides finance and expertise on specific issues such as value chains and remote rural development and WFP has considerable capacity on logistics and responding on the ground. In general, the partnerships develop in ways which play to the particular strengths of each agency.

There is a wide range of examples of RBAs working with each other in three of the four countries and also working with government, other UN agencies,

IFIs, the European Union and bilateral donors to achieve synergies. Formal evaluation of results of partnerships is limited, as already noted, so it is difficult to form a clear view of what would have happened without the specific collaboration. However, the impression from the interviews is that RBAs are involved in partnerships on key issues that would not otherwise be amenable to change. A good example is the SAFE fuels and engineering projects in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh where FAO and WFP have been involved in tackling issues jointly with each other and with other UN agencies. There is potential to deliver even more, such as through nutrition-sensitive value chains and working together on meeting the needs of host communities whose livelihoods have been affected by refugees.

Finding 8: Lack of alignment of business processes holds back RBA collaboration and may be one factor explaining why collaboration is mainly at project level.

Business processes are clearly a constraint and a lesson from this study is that for RBA collaboration to move to the next level there would need to be a concerted, HQ-driven effort to build shared tools and processes, especially in relation to planning mechanisms and pooling resources, shared approval processes and shared monitoring for shared programming. While the MoU provides an overall vision, practical follow through in this way to support and enable country level collaboration could be an important area for future work. Country office staff would need this to be pushed through from Rome or the regional level.

Lesson 6: In order for RBA collaboration to expand beyond the project level, business processes would need aligning at HQ level – although given the differences between the agencies, this may not be easily achieved.

Potential for learning

Finding 9: There are numerous examples of specific collaboration among the RBAs in the countries reviewed. By documenting these and sharing with other countries, the opportunity for the RBAs to learn is significant.

Many of these examples demonstrate good practice, providing a rich experience for learning. How far these are being driven by agreed priorities

in the MoU is much less clear. There were also some examples of missed opportunities mentioned in the country reports. A selection of examples of collaboration in specific areas highlighted in the country studies are summarised in the boxes in this report or referred to in other ways. They include among others:

1. Strategic co-ordination and policy dialogue at the highest level with government, to put the RBA collaboration “on the map” with government. This includes the recent visits of the IFAD Executive Board to Bangladesh and the RBA executive heads to Ethiopia.
2. Committee on World Food Security, a global collaboration consisting of a multi-stakeholder group administered by a joint RBA secretariat. This is seen as a model of multilateral co-operation. The committee helps to present shared solutions on themes related to food security and nutrition.
3. Home Grown School Feeding Programme in Ethiopia, where FAO and WFP have worked together linking smallholder farmers to schools as part of the Purchase from Africans for Africa programme.
4. Joint RBA action plans being development in Ethiopia and Madagascar, in consultation with the country governments.
5. Acceleration Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (a joint initiative between all three RBAs and UN Women which is implemented in Ethiopia and other countries).
6. WFP tools being used by FAO in identifying needs of beneficiaries and for project implementation through the SCOPE card in Bangladesh and OneCard (Social Stability project) in Jordan.
7. SAFE initiative on clean fuels in Bangladesh, led by FAO with support from WFP in the Cox’s Bazar refugee response.
8. PROVATIi3 in Bangladesh, where IFAD and WFP have worked together on mapping poverty in remote areas.
9. Locust control in Madagascar, where all three agencies have worked together to mitigate the risks.

10. AROPA and P4P in Madagascar.

11. Collaboration on definitions and methodologies for the SDG 2 food security indicator in Jordan.

Lessons for MOPAN

One of the purposes of this case study was to identify any emerging lessons for the MOPAN approach and assessment framework on partnership, specifically in relation to Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 6. This KPI includes various micro-indicators on partnership, although the topic does cross into a number of other KPIs. The key issue illustrated by this case study is the tension between the policy context for partnerships set at HQ level, and the drivers for partnership that rather derive from the country context and country needs. Assessing both policy context and country-level drivers is essential for future multilateral organisation (MO) assessments of partnership.

In broad terms, the MOPAN assessment framework micro-indicators on partnerships are relevant to the issues which have emerged in this study at country level. Particularly relevant micro-indicators include Micro-indicator (MI) 6.1 on planning and programming to enable agility in partnerships in response to changes in condition, MI 6.2 on comparative advantage of the agencies, MI 6.4 on identifying synergies to encourage catalytic use of resources and avoid fragmentation and MI 6.9 on deployment of the knowledge base to support programming, policy dialogue and advocacy. These are key features of the partnership work on the ground.

However, the read or “take” of a country level analysis, in what matters for partnerships “on the ground” in country, is significantly different from that which shows up at HQ level or in documentation. This has implications both for how the MOPAN approach draws together its assessments and for the micro-indicators and KPIs in the framework.

In terms of the MOPAN approach, the assessments of individual agencies initially are based around documentary review, followed by HQ visits and supplemented by processes of validation, fact checking and a country level survey. The country visits for this case study mission highlighted the importance of country context and the complexities

of delivering collaboration in practice. Essentially these issues are not easily discerned either from formal documents or surveys, particularly in understanding the practical challenges involved and the government perspective.

Regarding the KPIs and micro-indicators, issues such as key business practices (MI 6.5) are not within the control of staff at country level, and MI 6.3 on adherence to the Busan commitment on use of country systems is hard to relate to the practical experience of the RBAs in the countries considered here. Other issues – such as building trust and relationships, finding appropriate entry points in government, technical assistance embedded within ministries and understanding of government priorities in the context of the SDGs – are not explicit within the MOPAN framework but came up frequently as important enablers of collaboration in this study.

Perhaps the key point to consider in relation to the assumptions in MOPAN is that the scope for partnership in practical terms at country level is to a large extent driven by factors which the RBA staff have to take as given – and respond to; they cannot directly influence these factors, let alone control them. These include the country context and needs, the capacity of the government and perhaps most importantly donor behaviours including the way resources flow – which is often fragmented and through bilateral and project-based channels. This is particularly obvious in the case of Jordan, where the humanitarian resource flows do not naturally support RBA collaboration.

This raises the obvious question of whether it is appropriate for donors to hold UN agencies to account for working in a joined-up fashion when the main driver of fragmentation is the way that donors are channelling resources: through earmarked funds for projects and bilateral mechanisms which target specific agencies rather than pool funding. It was not at all clear whether the staff working in the main bilateral funders on the ground see partnership working as a priority and as a means to more effectively deliver on development objectives and specific government's objectives in each country. It was apparent from speaking to interviewees in country that partnership working can sometimes take longer to set up, but can deliver greater benefits in the long term, an issue which needs additional analysis.

For much the same reason, the focus of the KPIs on use of country systems assumes a greater level of

joint working than is feasible given the realities on the ground in terms of government capacity and how donors are funding work of the agencies. MI 6.3's reference to Busan may need to be updated with that in mind, as it seems to relate to a context when the Paris Declaration and sector-wide and programmatic approaches were more at the forefront in donor thinking than may be the case now. A more appropriate framing would be in relation to the SDGs, where the cluster mechanisms for coordination and building strategic planning around SDG2 and use of UN coordination mechanisms are of course highly relevant.

Given the increased focus on partnerships within the SDG agenda, there is an opportunity for MOPAN to lead the way in assessing them within the multilateral system by going deeper than HQ level and the associated documents. This would, however, require country level investigations, potentially in a number of different political operating contexts. These could be carried out through missions to countries or by revitalising the current partner survey. The latter could perhaps involve phone interviews, short face-to-face interviews by a local survey specialist or semi structured interviews by consultants (rather than by email alone).

A key issue to consider is that by its very nature a global survey is broad. How to choose which issues to include and which issues may be better suited for a narrow and deeper focus is the challenge. Some issues may be better suited for a specific country focused analysis, such as understanding relationship management. Others may be better suited to an Internet-based broad sweep to gather a large quantity of data on a number of issues, instead of a smaller amount of data, but of greater richness, on a single issue.

However, in order to avoid duplicating work, a stronger focus could also be placed on partnership evaluations carried out by the agencies themselves, the vast majority of which attempt to measure and evaluate partnerships in their own right. There may be much to learn from this ever-increasing body of documentation on which future MOPAN assessments can build. Lessons could also be learnt on how specific global partnerships monitor and evaluate themselves, for example CGIAR, REACH and the SUN network. A strategic evaluation exploring how individual MOs monitor partnerships might be a useful next step in the research and planning of future MOPAN methodologies assessing partnership, along with a comparative analysis of SDG 17 and

how it is being interpreted across the MO system and within MOPAN itself.

Partnership is a wide ranging issue that would benefit from further targeted investigation. While not exhaustive, future indicative questions and considerations for understanding an organisation's partnership profile and performance are outlined below. They take into account lessons learnt during this study and the wider context of UN reform.

1. Is there a clear HQ level statement on an organisation's partnership principles including a definition of partnership and the different forms it can take, as well a clear link to wider UN understanding of partnership?
2. From 2019 onwards in the context of UN reform, one would expect that co-ordination and partnerships between UN agencies, and with wider stakeholders, will be managed through a revised system of UN Country Teams, the UN Development Coordination Office and a revised UNDAF, as well as other structures. Given this, each UN agency would be expected to have both a clear policy statement of how it operates in this new environment and practical guidelines on implementation and delivery of its activities within OneUN.
3. Does HQ level steer clear of the implications of SDG 17, and how is this SDG integrated into an organisation's planning and operations?
4. Is there clear scope for giving precedence to country level needs and priorities (noting the strengthened role on UN Country Teams in the context of UN reform) and for forming meaningful partnerships at the country level with government, other UN partners and civil society more widely?
5. Is there guidance or a process (at any level of the organisation) for how partnerships can be identified, assessed for mutual benefit, initiated and maintained? A key part of this process is an organisation demonstrating it (a) understands the reason for partnerships and undertakes a considered and measured process to determine what type of partnership is of most benefit (from a signed MoU to joint planning and implementation) and (b) is able to undertake a prioritisation exercise to determine which partnerships, with whom, will be of most benefit and to ensure they will be adequately resourced.
6. At the country level, how and when are country plans developed? Are planning cycles aligned with government and with other UN agencies, and how are individual agencies operating as part of a UN Country Team?
7. At country level, what formal and informal mechanisms exist for knowledge and information sharing among UN agencies and with governments?
8. At country level, what formal and informal mechanisms exist for strategic level and programmatic level planning around partnerships?
9. At HQ and country levels, how are partnership strategy and planning resourced?
10. At HQ and country levels, how is ongoing maintenance of partnerships resourced?
11. How is the quality and quality of partnerships measured at country and HQ level? Are partnerships evaluated in a strategic manner? Is this information disseminated throughout the organisation?
12. Is there training for staff on how to initiate and manage partnerships? Do staff have devolved authority to effectively manage partnerships at the different levels of an organisation? ●



Annex

Annex: Methodological details

Planned scope and focus of the case study

The MOPAN 3.0 methodology assesses partnerships through several key indicators examining how MOs operate with partners. This includes, but is not limited to, operational planning and working in coherent partnerships directed at leveraging resources. This case study will build on the existing and ongoing MOPAN assessments and the learning that has come from them. It will also go deeper in seeking to explore not just what formal partnerships MOs have with each other and with wider stakeholders, but the wider concept of what well-functioning partnerships look like at the country level, “beyond HQ”, and consider how experience differs across different country contexts.

The case study will use RBA collaboration to illustrate the wider issues within the UN development system, taking a **good practice lens** to explore what has been working well, and what effective partnerships look like, in different country contexts as well as at HQ (Rome) level. The focus will be on (a) identifying and deepening understanding of good practice concerning partnerships at the country level, (b) acknowledging that partnerships will exist at many different levels from programmatic level to strategic level on issues such as policy development, as well as (c) examining partnerships that include sharing resources and functions. While the focus will be on country collaboration, all levels will be considered to better understand the complexities of partnership working.

The differences between the RBAs will allow shared learning across different MOs with different structures, funding mechanisms, programmatic work, partners, etc. As part of this, the **drivers for partnership** will be explored, taking into account the incentive for each RBA and what impact this had at a country level, on wider partnerships with national governments, as well as on measurement and **achievement of relevant SDGs**. To ensure that the case study outcomes are as useful as possible and do not overlap or repeat work

that has already been done, an analysis of RBA partnership findings in recent single and joint entity evaluations, as well as any other relevant evaluations, will be undertaken prior to starting fieldwork.

The case study will therefore:

- identify the drivers and elements for constructive partnership at country level, and explore the benefits gained from these partnerships
- build on existing learning and intelligence gained through MOPAN and current RBA collaboration to deepen understanding of partnerships, power, relationships and behaviours, between the RBAs and with national governments and other partners
- consider staff perception, as well as the views of those who are partners of the RBAs, with regard to how it feels to work in well-functioning partnerships, and how this contributes to the success of collaboration and partnership working
- contribute to organisational learning within and among multilateral organisations, national governments and other stakeholders
- critically review and contribute to future improvement in MOPAN's assessment framework for partnerships in general, and identify evidence of performance and results data at country level.

Methods applied

The review has adopted a case study, learning-focused approach intended to highlight key lessons on partnerships between the RBAs, from a country perspective, which is intentionally different from a MOPAN assessment of individual agencies. It is also an investigative review, not an evaluation, with the starting point being an initial scoping phase and desk review in consultation with the

MOPAN membership and the RBAs. From this, eight inquiry areas were developed then explored, as relevant, in each country context. These were:

1. Evolution of the partnership/collaboration among the RBAs: How has it developed in practice at country level and why, and what has been learnt from this change process?
2. Delivery of results. How has collaboration helped to support delivery of (a) the SDG agenda especially for food security, nutrition and sustainable agricultural development, (b) Agenda 2030 and (c) the more specific agreed priorities in the 2018 MoU and in previous collaboration documents? This does not serve to measure results against the MoU but to aid understanding of how joint working and collaboration support the delivery of results.
3. Responsiveness to country priorities and use of country systems: To what extent has the collaboration taken account of country needs, context and priorities and been agile in responding to these, as well as in making appropriate use of country systems in line with the Busan Partnership agreement?
4. Comparative advantage: Is there a clear, agreed division of labour among the three RBAs which is well understood and implemented within the collaboration at country level, allowing for and informed by comparative strengths and mandates?
5. Achieving synergies through collaboration and partnership: How far does the collaboration support a synergistic and holistic approach to leverage change which would not otherwise have happened?
6. Efficient and effective shared business processes as part of the operational implementation of the partnership: How far is operational implementation of the collaboration supported by efficient and effective shared business systems and practices?
7. Measuring progress and learning: Has the collaboration been based on shared

approaches to accountability, monitoring results and progress and to learning from a common evidence base?

8. Collaboration in specific thematic and cross-cutting areas that are agreed high priorities for the RBAs and development partners, including identifying interesting examples of good practice and innovation that have developed at country level.

Country selection was key to the process, and following consultation with the MOPAN secretariat and the RBAs, four countries were selected: Bangladesh, Jordan and Madagascar initially as full case studies that included fieldwork components, with Ethiopia included as a desk-based review. The criteria for selecting the countries were that they would help to:

- a. generate learning of interest to RBAs and MOPAN members
- b. reflect various different country contexts and thematic areas
- c. reflect a range of co-operation successes and challenges, allowing learning on both good practice and an exploration of barriers
- d. respect feasibility and practical considerations around timing and delivery.

Country missions were conducted in three of these countries (Bangladesh, Jordan and Madagascar) in August and September 2018, involving extensive interviews with government, RBA staff, UN agencies and development partners. In the fourth country (Ethiopia), a desk-based review was conducted and was supplemented by telephone interviews with key stakeholders.

Four country reports were produced and shared with RBA leads in each country for fact-checking purposes, as well as at HQ level. These country reports were working papers, and while they were shared with the RBAs for comment, they have not been published as they were interim products in the process. However, the learning and findings from these working documents have been fused into this overarching synthesis report. ●





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