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Guidelines for the field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women, and for the joint field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP

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Guidelines for the field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women, and for the joint field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP

I. Guidelines for the field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women

A. Introduction

1. The present guidelines have been prepared in response to Executive Board decisions [2019/16](#) (UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board), [2019/9](#) (UNICEF Executive Board), and [2019/8](#) (UN-Women Executive Board); which stated that each respective Executive Board “*Requests* the Bureau, assisted by the secretariat, to consult with the Bureaux of the Executive Boards of [UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP]¹, to coordinate for the selection of field visits and to propose harmonized criteria for individual field visits, for evaluation by the Board at the first regular session 2020.” The Executive Board secretariats are jointly proposing this harmonized set of field visit guidelines to be relevant for the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, and UN-Women.² The guidelines will be used as a general frame of reference to be applied in a flexible manner for the preparation of field visits, taking into account the specificities of each agency, country and context.

B. Country selection

2. The country(ies) to be visited each year will be selected by the Bureau two years in advance, in consultation with all regional groups, while allowing the flexibility to change host countries if circumstances dictate it, in order to give host countries as well as agencies as much time as possible to prepare for the visits. The country selection should be based on information provided by the Executive Board secretariat and with the concurrence of the countries concerned.

3. The destination for the joint field visits will be selected in agreement with the four Bureaux, in consultation with the respective secretariats, and based on an annual regional rotation.

4. Various selection criteria may be considered for both the individual Executive Board field visits and the joint field visits with the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

(a) General criteria to be considered:

(i) Geographical rotation;

¹ The Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women, and WFP are all listed here in brackets as each individual Board decision only listed the remaining entities and not their own.

² The WFP Executive Board did not adopt a similar decision and have retained their existing field visit guidelines with flexibility, however, the revised joint field visit guidelines will also apply to WFP where relevant.

- (ii) Security situation in the country or the region (based on UNDSS recommendations); and
 - (iii) A country that has not been visited before (or for several years).
- (b) Criteria in relation to the Executive Board:
- (i) Countries with significant activities relevant to the work of the Executive Board;
 - (ii) Forthcoming Executive Board approval of a new country programme (for UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF);
 - (iii) Pilot programmes relevant to the Executive Boards or to the United Nations; and
 - (iv) The value added of the field visit for headquarters to strategically advise at the country level.
- (c) Criteria in relation to the country:
- (i) The importance of United Nations system programming in the country, including humanitarian assistance;
 - (ii) Explicit interest from the United Nations country team and the government, including how the country might benefit from the visit;
 - (iii) The classification of the country in terms of internationally accepted standards or norms, such as least developed, low-income or middle-income country;
 - (iv) Specific (global) United Nations initiatives that are a priority for the country, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights, climate change, crisis and resilience, gender equality and women's empowerment, youth, and other development issues pertinent to the country to be visited;
 - (v) Particular challenges that the country is facing at a given moment; and
 - (vi) The stage of implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

C. Purpose and scope of the field visit

5. The purpose of the visits is to:
- a) Allow Executive Board members to observe the United Nations and the participating agencies field operations, and their work within the UN country team;
 - b) Help Bureau and Executive Board members to understand the linkages between the country programmes (where relevant) of the various organizations to national development priorities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, bilateral development assistance and other relevant frameworks;
 - c) Provide insight into the implementation of the policies and strategies of the organizations at the country and regional level; and
 - d) Discuss the impact and results of the programmes of the organizations and the impact of United Nations strategies and programmes with government and non-government counterparts at the national, local and community levels.
6. Each field visit must have a terms of reference which should include: purpose, timing and methodology of the visit; background and United Nations presence in country and or region; a draft programme and schedule of work; description of participants and, selection criteria, including specific roles and responsibilities of mission members; logistical arrangements; and expected outputs (final report).
7. The teams will study and review issues related to strategy, programming, programme and project delivery in each country visited, including advocacy and policy dialogue with the Government; decentralization of financial and administrative authorities; decentralization of field operations at subnational levels; work with non-governmental organizations and the private sector; cohesion and coordination among United Nations organizations and with Government; and the work of the United Nations country team and its relation to other development partners.
8. Issues to be covered may include:
- (a) The country programme cycle (situation analysis, preparation of the country programme, midterm and final reviews, major evaluations of the country programme) and results achieved against objectives;

- (b) Effectiveness of communication between the organization(s)³ and national and local counterparts, the United Nations country team and bilateral partners;
 - (c) Comparative advantages, impact, results and sustainability of programmes supported by the organization(s);
 - (d) Emergency preparedness and response capacity;
 - (e) Relevance of the United Nations and national ownership;
 - (f) Decentralization;
 - (g) United Nations system coordination and communication;
 - (h) Relevance and impact of Executive Board decisions;
 - (i) Linkages with the organization's strategic plan and global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant frameworks;
 - (j) Reviewing the response of the United Nations system to country needs; and
 - (k) Impact of gender equality and human rights programmes across the organizations.
9. The representatives of the organization(s) will have the opportunity to suggest additional issues.
10. The team will visit a representative sample of programme/project interventions and will spend as much time as possible outside of capitals. Within the framework of the field visit, the team will meet a representative sample of participants in the organizations' programme operations, including:
- (a) Field staff (international and national professionals, and general service staff);
 - (b) Members of the United Nations country team;
 - (c) National counterparts at national, subnational and local levels;
 - (d) National decision-makers working in areas relevant to cooperation with the organization(s);
 - (e) Representatives of civil society, media, religious leaders, community-based organizations, youth and children's groups, professional organizations, and the private sector;
 - (f) International and national non-governmental organizations; and
 - (g) Donors, including bilateral cooperation agencies, the regional banks and the World Bank.
11. The visits will, to the extent possible, be conducted as working visits for study and dialogue, with courtesy and protocol calls kept to a minimum. The programme should be developed to allow field visit members to interact with stakeholders relevant to the programme of the Executive Board, their specific roles, responsibilities, experience and skills. Clustering of meetings and field visits in country is encouraged.

D. Participation

12. The field visits will be working visits of the Executive Board. Participation will be based on the principles of equitable regional participation and equitable access to the field visit. The team visiting a country will be comprised of up to six members of the Executive Board: up to two from the Western European and Others Group of States, and one from each of the African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, and Latin American and the Caribbean groups of States.
13. In selecting team members, the Bureau of the Executive Board should bear the criteria below in mind. The nominee should:
- (a) Not be a national of the country to be visited;
 - (b) Be familiar with the organization's work (an example would be an official who has been dealing with the organization's matters, whether from the capital or the Permanent Mission to the United Nations or to Rome-based United Nations Agencies for joint field visits); and

³ 'Organizations' in the case of the field visits for the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS as there are 3 agencies.

(c) Be reasonably certain of his or her participation in subsequent meetings of the Executive Board.

14. It is advised that at least one mission member have ambassadorial status and that at least 60 per cent of field visit members be at senior representation level. The highest-level representative should be appointed as team leader.

E. Timing and frequency

15. There will be a maximum of one field visit per year, unless otherwise decided by the Executive Board. The field visits dates should be planned to avoid clashes with major UN conferences or meetings.

16. The dates of each field visits will be announced to Executive Board Members with ample advance notice.

17. It is advised that the field visit be conducted within a reasonable time frame, not exceeding five days in addition to travel time, for cost efficiency.

F. Briefings and reporting

18. Mission members will receive a briefing package prepared by the country office, which provide all the background materials for the visit, such as the programme, country profile, information on the organizations, and briefs on the project sites to be visited.

19. Prior to the team's departure, the headquarters of the organizations will provide a briefing on strategy, policy background, programming and other relevant issues, as appropriate. Briefings by the United Nations country team may be arranged through video conferencing. Member States, non-governmental organizations and other relevant entities may also be invited to brief the delegation.

20. All visits will begin with a thorough briefing by the country office, including a security briefing, and an informal question-and-answer session, followed by first-round meetings with government counterparts and visits to project sites.

21. The last day of each visit should have a debriefing, including a roundtable discussion with government counterparts and other partners, and an overall review of the visit. Interaction in the public domain may be considered if appropriate.

22. The participants will write a brief informal report for discussion before and during the subsequent session of the Executive Board. The team will designate a lead rapporteur and possibly other rapporteurs among the Member States who will work with the other members of the delegation in drafting the report. During the visit, appropriate time will be allocated and plans made for the preparation of the report, which should be completed in draft form before the end of the visit.

23. The report must follow United Nations guidelines as to length and date of submission to the United Nations for translation and processing. The report should include:

- (a) Introduction including time and duration of the visit;
- (b) Background of the United Nations in the country;
- (c) Key observations during the visit
- (d) Conclusion, including recommendations; and
- (e) An annex listing the participants of the mission, a brief mission itinerary (listing the towns and provinces and the programmes visited in the country), and the main in-country representatives the mission met with.

G. Logistics

24. The respective secretariats will make the necessary travel arrangements, in accordance with United Nations standards.

II. Joint field visits of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP

A. Country selection

25. The country(ies) to be visited by the joint field visit delegation will be agreed to by the four Bureaux two years in advance in consultation with the regional groups and with the respective representatives of the organizations. There will flexibility to change host countries if circumstances dictate it, in order to give host countries as well as agencies as much time as possible to prepare for the visits. Because the joint visits can place a considerable burden on host governments, this aspect will be taken into account in deciding on the destinations and duration of the joint visits.

26. The responsibility for coordinating the joint field visit will be assigned to one of the six participating organizations (UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP) on an annual rotation basis.

27. The country selection criteria indicated for individual Executive Board field visits shall also apply to joint field visits. As with the individual field visits, they should include the requirement that all the participating agencies are present in the country. In case of the joint field visits, however, if other country selection criteria are met but not all organizations are represented in the country, regional representation should be considered.

B. Purpose and scope of the joint field visit

28. The purpose of the joint field visit is to help members of the Executive Boards to understand the extent and ways in which United Nations organizations contribute to the achievement of national development plans and global United Nations programmes. The visits will pay attention to:

- (a) The resident coordinator system, including the coordination and coherence of the United Nations system;
- (b) Relevance of the United Nations and national ownership;
- (c) Comparative advantage vis-à-vis other development partners;
- (d) United Nations system-wide thematic issues (including Sustainable Development Goals, human rights, climate change, crisis and resilience, gender equality and women's empowerment, youth, and other development issues pertinent to the country to be visited.);
- (e) Donor coordination (both between multilateral agencies and with bilateral donors), simplification and harmonization.

29. The visits should seek to identify or obtain first-hand information on, in specific terms:

- (a) Progress made in simplification and harmonization, including lessons learned from using the approaches and tools and their links to national development strategies, poverty reduction strategies and the Sustainable Development Goals or other frameworks;
- (b) The functioning of the resident coordinator system, including theme groups and relationships between the United Nations country team, the World Bank, the regional banks, civil society and the private sector; and
- (c) The United Nations contribution to any thematic issues that are under discussion by the team.

29. The joint visits should include;

- (a) A one-day joint start to the mission;
- (b) Several days of visits by Executive Board members to organization-specific project sites; and
- (c) An opportunity for specific organization meetings and;
- (e) A joint wrap-up at the end of the visit.

30. The detailed programme of work will be determined by the United Nations country team in consultation with the host Government.

C. Participation

31. The participation criteria indicated for individual field visits (section I.D.13) shall also apply to the joint field visits. Participation for the joint field visits should, in general, be limited to one member from each Executive Board from each regional group or electoral list⁴, plus representatives of the secretariats of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP for a total of no more than 20 participants.

32. Similar to the individual field visits, it is advised that at least one mission member have ambassadorial status and that at least 60 per cent of field visit members be at senior representation level. The highest-level representative should be appointed as team leader.

D. Timing and frequency

33. There will be a maximum of one joint field visit per year, unless otherwise decided by the respective Executive Boards. The field visits timing should be planned to avoid clashes with major UN conferences or meetings.

34. The dates of the joint field visit will be announced to Executive Board members with ample advance notice.

35. Similar to individual field visits, it is advised that the joint field visit be conducted within a reasonable time frame, not exceeding five days in addition to travel time, and that cost efficiency be taken into account.

E. Briefings and reporting

36. The guidance on reporting related to individual field visits shall also apply to the joint field visits. For the joint field visits, it should be noted that the delegation will prepare a single joint report on the visit, which will be presented to the four Executive Boards.

37. The Executive Board secretariat coordinating the visit a given year will also be responsible for coordinating the preparation of the draft report.

F. Logistics

38. Each secretariat will be responsible for making the travel and related arrangements for members of its own Executive Board.

⁴ For the WFP Executive Board, the Electoral List Groupings are as follows: List A (Africa); List B (Asia and Middle/Near East); List C (Latin America and Caribbean); List D (Economically Developed Countries of North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand); and List E (Economically Developed Countries of Eastern/Central Europe).