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Proposed guidelines for field visits by members of the UNICEF Executive Board

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in response to a request by the Bureau, made at the 2004 annual session of the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2004/CRP.10), that the secretariat prepare guidelines for field visits: (a) by the Bureau; (b) by the UNICEF Board; and (c) a joint field visit with the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP). In preparing the guidelines, the secretariat was requested to examine the need for alignment with the guidelines for field visits of other funds and programmes as well as UNICEF participation in frameworks other than the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and in humanitarian programming.

2. The proposed guidelines have been prepared taking into account comments made by delegations during the Executive Board's recent discussions on field visits, decision 2003/15 of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board on joint field visits and the terms of reference for the 2003 joint visit to Guatemala. They are intended to be a flexible frame of reference for preparing field visits, in the context of the particular features of the relevant UNICEF country programme and the programmes of the other agencies taking part in joint field visits.

II. Types of visits

3. In principle, there shall be three field visits each year: a field visit by the members of the Bureau; a field visit to a UNICEF country programme by members

* E/ICEF/2004/12.

of the Executive Board; and a joint visit with members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP.

III. Selection of countries

4. The countries to be visited each year shall be selected at the end of the previous year by the Bureau, based on information provided by the secretariat and with the concurrence of the countries concerned. The destinations for joint field visits shall be agreed upon by the three Bureaux, in consultation with the respective secretariats. In principle, there should be rotation between regions in terms of the countries to be visited each year, although one visit should be to Africa, if possible, in order to focus attention on the continent's urgent needs.

IV. Purpose and scope of the visits

A. Visits to UNICEF country programmes by the Bureau and by a team of Executive Board members

5. The purpose of the visits is to: (a) allow the Bureau/Board members to observe UNICEF field operations and the work of the United Nations country team; (b) help them to understand the relationship of the UNICEF country programme to national development priorities, the UNDAF, bilateral development assistance and other relevant frameworks; (c) provide insight into the implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies at field level; and (d) discuss the impact and results of UNICEF programmes with government and non-government counterparts at national, local and community levels, if possible.

6. The teams shall study and review all facets of programming and programme delivery in each country visited, including advocacy and policy dialogue with the Government; the programme approach adopted; decentralization of financial and administrative authorities; decentralized field operations at subnational levels; working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs); the principle and practice of flexible response to emerging issues and changing situations; social mobilization and programme communication; and involvement and working relationship with the United Nations country team and other development partners, etc. The visits shall highlight the dynamics of UNICEF programme operations.

7. Issues to be covered may include:

(a) The country programme cycle (situation analysis/Common Country Assessment (CCA), preparation of the country programme, the mid-term review, any major evaluations of the country programme) and results achieved against objectives;

(b) Effectiveness of communication between UNICEF and national and local counterparts, the United Nations country team and bilateral partners;

(c) Comparative advantages, impact, results and sustainability of UNICEF-supported programmes;

(d) Emergency preparedness and response capacity;

- (e) Decentralization;
 - (f) United Nations system coordination;
 - (g) Relevance and impact of Executive Board decisions;
 - (h) Linkages with the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan, the CCA/UNDAF, the Millennium Development Goals and other relevant frameworks.
8. The UNICEF Representative shall have the opportunity to suggest additional issues.
9. The team shall visit a representative sample of programme/project interventions and shall spend as much time as possible outside the capitals.
10. Within the framework for the field visit, the team shall meet a representative sample of participants in UNICEF programme operations, including:
- (a) UNICEF field staff (international and national Professionals, General Service);
 - (b) Members of the United Nations country team;
 - (c) National counterparts at national, subnational and local levels;
 - (d) National decision makers who work in areas relevant to UNICEF cooperation;
 - (e) Representatives of civil society who work with UNICEF (e.g., mass media, religious leaders, community-based organizations, professional organizations, children's groups);
 - (f) International and national NGOs;
 - (g) Donors, including bilateral cooperation agencies, the World Bank, etc.
11. The visits shall, to the extent possible, be conducted as working visits for study and dialogue, with courtesy and protocol calls kept to a minimum.

Participation

12. The five members of the Bureau (the President and four Vice-Presidents) shall take part in a field visit each year.
13. The team visiting a UNICEF country programme shall comprise six members of the Executive Board, two from the Western European and Others group of States, with one each from the African, Asian, Central and Eastern European, and Latin American and Caribbean groups of States. In selecting team members, the regional groups of the UNICEF Executive Board should bear the following criteria in mind. The nominee should:
- (a) Not be a national of the countries to be visited;
 - (b) Be familiar with UNICEF work, i.e., an official who has been dealing with UNICEF matters, whether from the capital or the Permanent Mission to the United Nations;
 - (c) Be reasonably certain of his/her participation in subsequent meetings of the Executive Board.

B. Joint field visits by members of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP

14. The purpose of the joint field visits is to help members of the Executive Boards to understand the extent and ways in which United Nations organizations contribute to the achievement of millennium development goals. The visits will pay particular attention to donor coordination (both between multilateral agencies and with bilateral donors), simplification and harmonization, the resident coordinator system and important system-wide thematic issues (e.g., HIV/AIDS, transition from relief to development).

15. The visits should seek to identify in specific terms: (a) progress made on the issue of simplification and harmonization, including lessons learned from using the approved tools and their links to national development strategies, poverty reduction strategies and millennium development goals; (b) the functioning of the resident coordinator system, including theme groups and relationships between the United Nations country team, the World Bank and the civil society; and (c) the United Nations contribution to any thematic issues that are under discussion by the team.

16. The joint visits should be composed of four parts: (a) a one-day joint start to the mission; (b) several days of joint visits to project sites; (c) several days of visits to agency-specific project sites by all Board members; and (d) one or two days of agency meetings and a joint wrap-up at the end of the visit. The detailed programme of work will be determined by the host Government in consultation with the United Nations country team.

17. The team shall prepare a single joint report on the visit, which will be presented to the three Executive Boards. The secretariat that has responsibility for coordinating the visit will be responsible for coordinating the preparation of the draft report, which must follow United Nations guidelines for length and date of submission to the United Nations for translation and processing.

18. The countries to be visited by the joint teams will be selected by the three Bureaux, in consultation with the respective secretariats. Because the joint visits can place a considerable burden on the host Governments, this will be taken into account in deciding on the destinations and duration of the joint visits. Responsibility for organizing the joint visit each year shall rotate between the three secretariats, with each secretariat responsible for making travel and related arrangements for members of its own Board.

19. Participation should in general be limited to one member from each Executive Board from each regional group, plus representatives of the secretariats of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, for a total of no more than 20 persons.

C. Logistics

Timing of the visits

20. In principle, the visits should take place as early as possible in the year, preferable in February or March.

Length of the visits

21. Teams will spend at least five working days in each country visited, and shall visit not more than two countries per visit.

Preparations and communications

22. In advance of the visit, the field offices concerned shall provide all the background materials required such as the schedule of the visit, the situation analysis, the programme plan of action for the year and a summary of the UNDAF, striking a balance between providing information needed to render the visits meaningful and not overburdening team members with excessive documentation.

Briefing, debriefing and trip report

23. Prior to the team's departure, UNICEF headquarters may provide a briefing on policy background and issues, as appropriate.

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

25. The last day of each visit will be devoted to debriefing, including a round-table discussion with government counterparts and other partners, and an overall review of the visit.

26. The participants shall write a brief informal report for discussion at the subsequent session of the Executive Board. The team shall designate a rapporteur who will work with the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board in drafting the report. During the visit, appropriate time shall be allocated and organizational plans made for the preparation of the report, which should be completed in draft form before the end of the visit.

Travel arrangements

27. The UNICEF secretariat will make necessary travel arrangements, as required, in accordance with United Nations standards.
