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Harmonization and simplification of the approval procedure for extensions of ongoing country programmes

Summary

This paper recommends that the Executive Board adopt simplified approval procedures for extensions of ongoing country programmes, harmonized with those of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Under these modified procedures, the Executive Director approves the first one-year extension of ongoing country programmes and informs the Executive Board; requests for two-year or second one-year extensions of ongoing country programmes will continue to be submitted to the Executive Board for approval.

* E/ICEF/2009/8.

1. The current procedures for extension of ongoing country programmes of cooperation (Executive Board decisions 2002/4 and 2006/19) involve the submission of all requests for extensions of ongoing country programmes, using the standard format for country programme documents, for further consideration and approval by the Executive Board. This is not consistent with the simplified procedures used by UNDP and UNFPA.
2. Reasons for requesting extensions of ongoing country programmes include emergencies and other changes affecting the routine operations of the Government or the programming environment. In addition, the commitment to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the United Nations development system activities at the country level has resulted in an increasing number of requests for extensions of ongoing country programmes, with a view to ensure (a) harmonization of country programme duration, in consultation with the United Nations system and other partners contributing to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the country, and (b) closer alignment with national development cycles and priorities.
3. The introduction of simplified procedures that are consistent with those already used by UNDP and UNFPA will considerably reduce the burden on UNICEF country offices and national partners who are currently required to prepare and submit a country programme document for any extension — a process that involves an extended period of joint planning, consultation and documentation. Under the proposed modifications, in cases where there are no significant changes in the approved goals and strategies, an ongoing country programme could be extended through a simplified procedure.
4. The proposed modifications of the extension procedure for ongoing country programmes responds to the call by Member States to simplify reporting requirements and limit the workload of the Executive Board. It is also in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/208 of 18 December 2007 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, calling for continued harmonization and simplification of the rules and procedures of the United Nations funds and programmes.
5. Under this proposal, a summary document would be presented to the Executive Board at its annual session, informing the Board of any one-year extensions to ongoing country programmes approved by the Executive Director and the reasons for the extensions, as agreed with national authorities. In addition, also in keeping with the current practice of UNDP and UNFPA, a shorter format would be introduced for approval by the Executive Board of any proposed two-year extensions of ongoing country programmes and for any second consecutive one-year extensions.
6. New short-duration country programmes that involve significant changes to the goals and strategies of UNICEF cooperation would continue to be presented to the Executive Board for approval, following the same procedure for review and approval as for full-cycle country programmes.
7. These modifications would enable a significant simplification of the preparation and approval process for extensions of ongoing country programmes which do not involve significant changes, without jeopardizing the basic principles

and robust quality standards of programme planning for UNICEF cooperation with national partners. Harmonizing with current UNDP and UNFPA practices would strengthen the contribution of UNICEF toward coherent joint country programming processes grounded in the development of the UNDAF and national priorities.

8. **Draft decision**

The Executive Board

Welcomes the continued commitment of UNICEF to enhance the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and credibility of the United Nations development system;

Decides to adopt the following modified procedure for the approval of extensions to ongoing country programmes, as agreed with national authorities, in cases where significant changes are not made to the approved goals and strategies of cooperation:

1. Extensions of one year for ongoing country programmes may be approved by the Executive Director, who will inform the Executive Board of such approvals and the reasons for each extension;
 2. Extensions of two years for ongoing country programmes will be submitted by the Executive Director for approval by the Executive Board on the basis of a short proposal document including the reasons for the proposal. This procedure will also apply to any second consecutive proposed extension of a country programme by one year.
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