

UNICEF Executive Board
2008 Second Regular Session (15-18 September 2008)

Special Focus Session on
Policy and Advocacy for Children's Rights

Wednesday, 17 September 2008
3 – 5 pm, ECOSOC Chamber
United Nations Secretariat, New York

Background Note

The UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) 2006-2009 has five focus areas: (1) Young child survival and development; (2) Basic education and gender equality; (3) HIV/AIDS and children; (4) Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse; and (5) Policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights.

The MTSP articulates the goal of focus area 5 as “strengthen[ing] the capacities of States and societies to design and implement social and economic policies, legislative measures and budgetary allocations that enable them to meet their obligations” under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). UNICEF is pursuing this objective by supporting the collection of data and information on the rights and well-being of children and women to inform strategic decision-making; supporting participation by children and young people; promoting research and policy analysis on children and women; and engaging in advocacy and policy dialogue with decision makers based on evidence.¹

The introduction of this new MTSP area in UNICEF has, amongst other changes, contributed to moving the organization's support toward upstream policy engagement, in particular:

- Policies for reducing child poverty, together with the inequalities and disparities that underlie poverty;
- Macro-economic frameworks, participatory budget processes and resource allocations for financing these policies;
- Social protection programmes and policies that, in a given set of circumstances, serve as a buffer against economic and social shocks to poor families and extend the Millennium Development Goals to the most excluded;
- Decentralization strategies that improve equity, efficiency, accessibility, and accountability in the provision of quality services to produce results for children;
- Legislative reform and policy measures for accelerated implementation of CRC and CEDAW.

By building on common elements and addressing major constraints, such as household poverty or insufficient public budget allocations, the policy approach within this MTSP focus area 5 helps create an enabling environment for the attainment of Millennium Development Goals in gender equality,

¹ ‘Report on the midterm review of the medium-term strategic plan 2006–2009’ United Nations Children's Fund, 25 July 2008, item 4 of the provisional agenda, Executive Board 2008 second regular session, 15–18 September, 2008.

child survival, basic education, HIV/AIDS and child protection. The table in the annex demonstrates how focus area 5 works supports MDG results across the MTSP.

Engagement in these new policy arenas requires UNICEF to interact with national government, parliamentary and civil society partners with which the organisation has not traditionally worked. The Special Focus Session will permit the Executive Board to hear directly from some senior government partners about how the UNICEF shift to upstream policy support is making a difference for children in their countries.

Purpose

The purpose of this Special Focus Session is to enhance understanding of what cross-cutting upstream policy analysis and advocacy means in terms of concrete programme interventions and results, recognizing that this focus area is a relatively new element in UNICEF work for children.² The two-hour session is scheduled on 17 September as part of the 2008 regular session of the Executive Board. It will allow members of the UNICEF Executive Board to become familiar with *four concrete country examples of policy work* to be presented by senior government partners; and situate these distinct examples within the ‘bigger picture’ and overall direction of UNICEF upstream policy work. Executive Board members will have the opportunity to discuss with partners how to leverage enhanced results for children through evidence-based policy analysis and advocacy.

Content

Following an introduction by the President of the Executive Board, the Secretariat of UNICEF will brief Members on the overall direction of UNICEF support to policy and advocacy for children’s rights. Presentations from three middle-income countries (Colombia, Kazakhstan and Mongolia) and one low-income country (Malawi) will illustrate new forms of cooperation.

The presentation on ‘facts and rights’ from Colombia will describe a strategy to promote the centrality of children, adolescents and youth in municipal and departmental public policies. It will highlight how Colombia’s new Code for Children and Adolescents, as well as the country’s current National Development Plan (2007-2010), hold governors and mayors accountable for progress on child rights.

The presentation from Kazakhstan will show the experience of this country in introducing child-friendly budgeting, providing insights into how UNICEF might support governments in other countries and regions to ensure that public budgets prioritize vulnerable children and families.

The presentation on Malawi’s social cash transfer initiative will provide evidence of how a very poor, agricultural country can make concrete steps to protect its most vulnerable populations from the cumulative effects of poverty, malnutrition and AIDS by embracing innovative social protection measures and evidence-based policy approaches.

The presentation from Mongolia will highlight how the country has achieved progress on implementing the Millennium Agenda and the Convention on the Rights of the Child by prioritizing national policies, programmes and resource allocations for children and by developing partnerships with the international community.

² The UNICEF ‘Thematic Report 2007’ offers an overall picture of progress in focus area 5; copies of this document will be made available at the session.

Annex

*Focus Area 5 support to Focus Areas 1-4
UNICEF's Medium Term Strategic Plan*

Focus Area 5 Thematic Priorities	FA1 Young Child Survival and Development	FA2 Basic Education and Gender Equality	FA3 HIV/AIDS and Children	FA4 Child Protection
Analysis of child poverty, disparities and MDG outcomes (Key Result Area 1.2, KRA 2.5), and public policies that affect them.	Contributes to identifying which children are being left behind /not benefiting from high-impact interventions, and policies which explain the situation (KRA 1.4 and 1.5); provides info for design of PRS that recognizes need for scaling up (KRA 1.5).	Contributes to identifying disparities in access to education: which children are not starting school at prescribed age (KRA 1), not in school (KRA 2), or not completing school (KRA 3); and the policies that may be alleviating or contributing to these disparities.	Contributes to identifying which children/adolescents are being affected by HIV/AIDS, and which policies are alleviating the consequent deprivations (KRA 1, 2, 3).	Contributes to baseline data on child protection, identifying characteristics of children suffering protection failures and to analysis for public policy (KRA 1), as well as identifying policies that are increasing or undermining child protection (KRA 1, 5).
Scaling up of Social protection/family support policies (KRA 3.6).	Contributes to improved access to health (KRA 1.4), family and community care practices (KRA 2.7) and an enabling policy environment (KRA 2.8) through social services and cash transfers.	Contributes to improved educational access and achievement (KRA 1, 2, 3) for poor children through social services and cash transfers at household level.	Contributes to improved protection, care and support to children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS (KRA 2).	Contributes to improved social service systems to address abuse and other protection failures (KRA 2) and to social protection systems that reach vulnerable children and their families, including in emergency settings (KRA 4, 5).
Increased social investment through budget analysis and citizen 'watchdog' organizations and improved decentralization (KRA 2.5).	Contributes public budget available for scaling up high-impact interventions and reaching low-coverage districts (KRA 1) and for increased access to WES (KRA 3), as well as financing of preparedness plans for emergency response (KRA 4).	Contributes to public budget available for increasing number and quality of schools, raises additional and alternative resources so that school fees can be abolished, access/achievement of poor children increased (KRA 2, 3).	Contributes to increasing the public budget available for combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic through prevention (KRA 3) and ARV treatment for affected populations (KRA 1).	Contributes public budget available for increasing the quantity and quality of child protection data collection and analysis (KRA 1) and of public services devoted to protection of children from abuse and exploitation, institutionalization (KRA 1-5), as well as for juvenile justices systems that reflect international norms and standards (KRA 4).

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Legislative Reform for CRC and CEDAW implementation (KRA 1.4; KRA 2.5; KRA 3.6).	Contributes to the legal enforcement of health standards, including in EPI programmes, iodized salt and fortified flour (KRA 1), baby-friendly hospitals (KRA 2), as well as maternity leave.	Contributes to establishment and enforcement of prescribed age of school entry, (KRA 1), number of years of free and compulsory education (KRA 2, 3) and to elimination of corporal punishment. Establishes and enforces synchronized ages for school leaving, and minimum age for full-time employment (KRA 2, 3).	Contributes to establishment and enforcement of non-discrimination in access to health, education and other social services (KRA 1, 2); laws on privacy and prevention of disclosure of HIV status, and regulations of HIV-related goods (including affordable treatments), services and information (KRA 1.3).	Contributes to establishment and enforcement of legislation / regulations identifying and responding to children at risk or needing protection and rehabilitation, minimum age of employment and for marriage; prohibition of FGM (KRA 2); regulations for effective birth registration (KRA 5); laws and regulations for children requiring alternative care; (KRA 5)criminalization of violence, exploitation, trafficking affecting children; a juvenile justice system that meets international standards (KRA 4); ratification and entry into effect of two Optional Protocols to CRC.