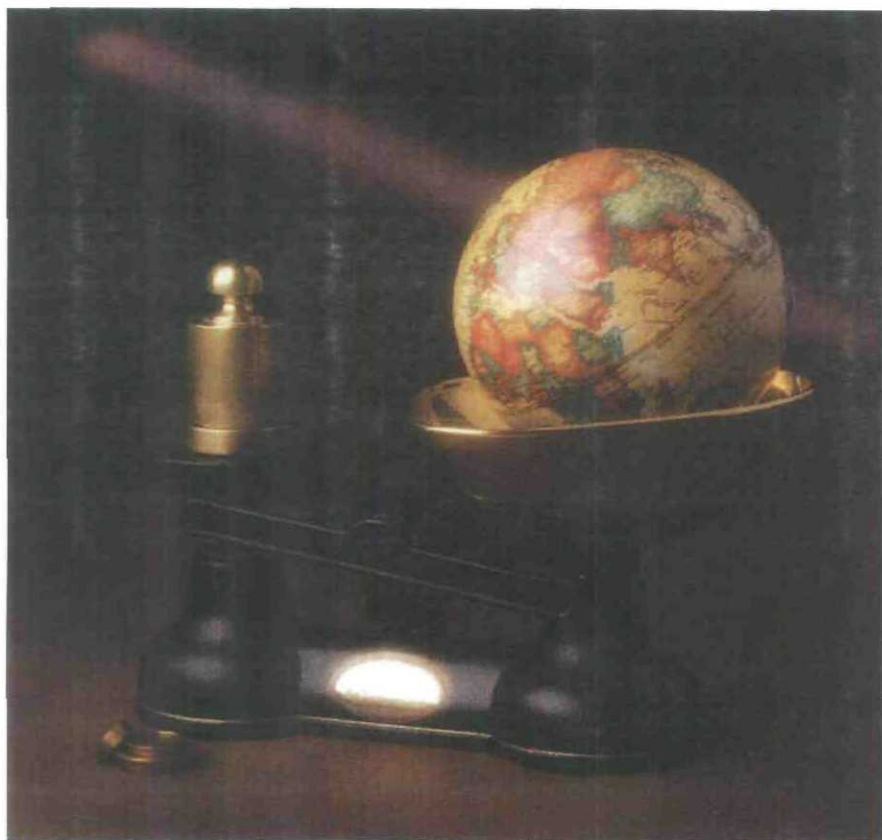


Peer Review of Evaluation Function at United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



May 4, 2006

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Abbreviations Used in the Executive Summary

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability in Performance in Humanitarian Action
CCC	Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (for UNICEF response in emergency situations)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPD	Country Programme Document (previously CN and Country Programme Recommendation)
CPE	Country Programme Evaluation
EO	Evaluation Office (UNICEF Headquarters, New York)
HQ	Headquarters
HRBA(P)	Human Rights-based Approach (to Programming)
IMEF	Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
IMEP	Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTSP	Medium Term Strategic Plan (currently 2002-2005, new 2006-2009)
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OR	Other Resources
PPPM	Programme Policy and Procedure Manual
RBM	Results-based Management
RR	Regular Resources
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	UN Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group



Foreword

The Peer Review of UNICEF's evaluation function aims to assess and enhance the organization's evaluation capacity and performance, thereby helping to improve its development performance. At the same time, the review also aims to foster the increased use of UNICEF's own evaluation products by member states and partners as an alternative to costly and time-consuming externally-led evaluations of performance.

The UNICEF Peer Review is the second effort to apply a new assessment approach designed under the auspices of the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. The approach is based on assessment against defined and agreed-upon international benchmarks and best practices, articulated in the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group in April 2005.

The review of UNICEF's evaluation function was conducted by an independent Review Panel made up of professional evaluators with a wide range of experience and excellent understanding of the application of the norms and standards for evaluation. The review was led by the Evaluation Division of the Canadian International Development Agency.

The Peer Review Panel was comprised of six members and two alternates:

- Ms. Françoise Mailhot: Evaluation Manager, Evaluation Division, Performance and Knowledge Management Branch, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), who chaired the Panel.
- Mr. Finbar O'Brien, Head of Evaluation and Audit, Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland, who also participated actively in the Ghana country reference case.
- Ms. Agnete Eriksen, Senior Evaluation Manager, Evaluation Department, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Norway.
- Dr. Sulley Gariba: Independent Evaluation Expert and Executive Director, Institute for Policy Alternatives, Ghana; former President of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS).
- Mr. Giorgis Getinet: Director, Operation Evaluation Department, African Development Bank, Tunisia (retired February 2006).
- Ms. Donatella Magliani: Director, Evaluation Group, Bureau for Organizational Strategy and Learning, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna and Co-chair of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Quality Stamp Task Force.
- Ms. Beate Bull (alternate to Norway representative): Evaluation Adviser, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Norway.
- Mr. Patrick Empey (alternate to Ireland representative): Audit and Evaluation Unit, Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland.

The Panel received invaluable assistance from two advisers, Ruth Baldwin (Canada) and Ingrid Eide (Norway), both of whom are experienced consultants in the field of evaluation.

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A peer review is conducted on a consultative basis and relies heavily on mutual trust among the entities involved, as well as their shared confidence in the process. The Peer Panel appreciated the full cooperation of UNICEF in this process. The Panel conducted extensive documentary research, numerous interviews with UNICEF staff, Board members and evaluators, both internal and external. It engaged in intensive discussions with UNICEF's Evaluation Office. It also undertook a study of how evaluation is implemented in one country (Ghana), not as an evaluation of the country or regional offices, but to gain a more in-depth understanding of the systems and processes that guide UNICEF's decentralized evaluation function.

The **central question** for the Peer Review was:

Whether UNICEF's evaluation function and its products are independent, credible, and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed against UNEG norms and standards by a panel of evaluation peers.

The short answer to this question is a qualified 'Yes'. The central Evaluation Office demonstrates a high level of independence and produces evaluations that are credible and useful for learning and decision-making within the organization. The decentralized evaluation system is appropriate for the operational nature of the organization, but its credibility and usefulness are limited by critical gaps in resources. Before the evaluation function's potential to strengthen accountability and organizational learning can be fully realized, some organizational constraints must be addressed.

The Executive Summary provides commentary on the Panel's judgment and recommendations to enhance UNICEF's evaluation function and performance assessment. The findings have been discussed with UNICEF senior management and will be presented to the Executive Board meeting in June 2006.

The report is intended for decision-makers and other users of evaluation. The information will be of particular interest for UNICEF, but will also be relevant for the OECD-DAC Evaluation Committee and the UN Evaluation Group.

We hope that UNICEF as a whole – its Executive Board, senior management and staff – will be able to make use of the Peer Review Panel's assessment and recommendations to strengthen the conduct and use of evaluation in the organization.

Françoise Mailhot
Chair of the Peer Review Panel



Executive Summary

Background

1. The UNICEF Peer Review is the second effort to apply a new assessment approach designed under the auspices of the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The approach aims to enhance *multilateral agencies' own evaluation capacity and performance* by reviewing an agency's evaluation systems and processes.
2. The Peer Panel has greatly appreciated UNICEF's collaboration and full support throughout this review. The Evaluation Office has engaged with the Panel in an open and constructive dialogue, sharing information, thoughts and ideas. Executive Board members, senior management, regional directors, evaluation staff at UNICEF headquarters and in the field have all facilitated the collection of data and discussion of findings. The West and Central Africa Regional Office and Ghana Country Office provided essential support to complete the Ghana country reference case. This high level of engagement has enabled the Panel to come to its conclusions with confidence. Further, the Panel commends UNICEF for its willingness to engage openly and candidly in discussions about its capacities and performance.
3. The conclusions and recommendations in the report reflect the Panel's judgment. However, the Panel recognizes that UNICEF must decide which approach is best suited to the particularities of the organization.

Purpose of the Review

4. The purpose of the review was to determine:

Whether UNICEF's evaluation function and its products are independent, credible, and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed against UNEG norms and standards by a panel of evaluation peers.

Methodology

5. The three crucial aspects of evaluation – *independence, credibility and usefulness* – were assessed against defined and agreed-upon international benchmarks and best practices, articulated in the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group in April 2005.
6. The UNICEF Peer Review was able to draw from, and build on, the experience of the UNDP review completed in December 2005. The UNICEF Peer Review followed the same general methodology, but the Panel made some adjustments to reflect the particularities of UNICEF's evaluation system:
 - A country reference case (Ghana) was introduced to provide illustrative information about UNICEF's decentralized evaluation function.
 - The partner countries' role as stakeholders and users of evaluation was included to reflect UNICEF's emphasis on national ownership and capacity development.



- Three issues of interest to UNICEF were included and assessed against relevant UNEG standards: fostering evaluation capacity building in member countries, facilitating stakeholder participation in evaluation, and mainstreaming gender in evaluation.

Limitations of the Review

7. Although the review looked at UNICEF's decentralized evaluation function in a systematic manner, the Peer Panel recognizes that it has been hampered in drawing strong conclusions about the decentralized elements by the limitations of the data collected from the regional and country levels.
8. The Panel felt that the OECD-DAC assessment approach was too limiting and consequently made changes as described above to better suit the UNICEF context.
9. The requirement to follow the UNEG Norms and Standards posed some challenges in so far as they do not fall neatly into the categories of independence, credibility and usefulness. The Panel generally followed the 'sorting' approach used for the UNDP Peer Review normative framework. However, the Panel will make a recommendation to the OECD-DAC Evaluation Network to review the assessment approach in light of this difficulty.

Overall Assessment

Purpose of the Evaluation Function

10. The primary purposes for UNICEF's evaluation function are coherent with UNEG Norms and Standards. They are:¹
 - To *inform decision-making* by identifying and understanding results and their impacts;
 - To *facilitate improvements* in on-going or future operations by identifying lessons;
 - To *provide information for accountability purposes*.
11. UNICEF also identifies secondary purposes for evaluation that relate to issues that are important to the organization--(1) using participatory processes *to expand ownership* of the evaluation, and (2) using the results of evaluation as "impartial and credible evidence"² *to advocate for children's and women's rights* in global and national policies and programmes.
12. In practice, UNICEF places the major emphasis for evaluation on learning to inform decision-making and future planning and less on accountability.³ To improve the use of evaluation for accountability purposes, the Panel believes that the organization will have to enhance its systems for planning and performance measurement (Results-based Management).

1. UNICEF, *Report on the evaluation function in the context of the medium-term strategic plan*, (E/ICEF/2002/10), 11 April 2002.

2. UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual*, May 2005, p. 124, paras. 20-21.

3. UNICEF Evaluation Office, *Self-Assessment Report – UNEG Quality Stamp Task Force*, October 2005, p. 6.



Central Evaluation Office

13. The central Evaluation Office has strengthened the role and performance of the evaluation function in UNICEF over the past five years. It demonstrates a high level of independence and professional credibility. Evaluation's contribution to management and decision-making for both programmes and policies is considered by the Panel to be strong, timely and useful. The EO has played an important leadership role in UN harmonization through the United Nations Evaluation Group. However, the Panel agrees with the EO's self-assessment that improvements are needed in the areas of (1) strengthening evaluation capacity at the decentralized levels (regional/country offices, partner countries), and (2) disseminating evaluation results and lessons more effectively.

Decentralized Evaluation System

14. The majority of UNICEF evaluations (97%) are undertaken at the country level. The Panel recognizes that a decentralized system of evaluation is well suited to the operational nature of the organization, given UNICEF's intent to act as an authoritative voice on children's issues in the many countries where it works and the necessity to reflect the differences and particularities of each country and region. However, the systems, capacities and outputs of evaluation at the regional and country levels exhibit critical gaps that must be addressed in order to ensure that the evaluation function serves the Organization effectively. The Panel notes that evaluation at the regional and country level serves learning and decision-making purposes well but it is less useful for accountability purposes at those levels. In addition, evaluation results are not yet being aggregated from the country level to the regional or Headquarters level to provide information on overall organizational performance.

Resources for Evaluation

15. The Panel notes that there are limitations in the *level and predictability of core resources for evaluation*, especially for the Evaluation Office. The EO's core budget from Regular Resources provides assured funding for approximately two corporate evaluations per year. The EO is heavily dependent on Other Resources, which generally come from donors and may be designated for specific evaluations (e.g. tsunami, Real Time evaluations). The EO may also manage evaluations for other Headquarters Divisions if requested to do so. These evaluations are generally identified and funded by the Division.
16. No funding has been allocated by UNICEF for activities related to *evaluation capacity development* at the country and regional levels or for Country Programme Evaluations. The EO Director has been authorized to seek funding from donors for these activities, estimated to be 64% of the EO budget for 2006-2007.
17. The Panel acknowledges UNICEF's intention to allocate 2-5% of country programme funding to monitoring, evaluation and research. However the present UNICEF financial management system does not disaggregate commitments and expenditures for M&E and it is not possible to verify whether the targets are being met.
18. It was reported that country-level evaluations are most often undertaken in response to donor requests, although the frequency of this practice varies between countries and regions.
19. The Panel believes that the limited core budget for evaluation and the heavy reliance on Other Resources has an impact on planning, prioritization and evaluation coverage at all levels. The capacity to identify and carry out evaluations of strategic importance is reduced when evaluation is funded on a project-by-project basis.



20. UNICEF has an on-going need for credible and independent assessment of results to demonstrate that the organization is meeting its mandate and is accountable to all stakeholders, including partner governments and beneficiaries. Evaluation is an essential tool to demonstrate impact and sustainability. In the Panel's view, evaluation should be considered *a core function* and should be provided with a *predictable and adequate budget*.

Results-based Management

21. The Panel's mandate did not include a comprehensive analysis of UNICEF's system for Results-based Management. However, in the course of data collection and interviews it became apparent that weaknesses in the organization's RBM systems have an impact on the quality of evaluations, and their credibility, particularly at the country level. These weaknesses are not unique to UNICEF; the challenges are the same for other development cooperation agencies and for bilateral donors. As UNICEF endeavours to focus more on policy advocacy and joint programming, it becomes harder to define results, measure progress and determine attribution.

22. UNICEF has made progress since 2002 in creating a stronger organizational framework for Results-based Management, as demonstrated in the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that accompanies the current corporate plan (MTSP 2006-2009), the requirements at the country level for IMEPs and a summary results matrix in the Country Programme Document.

23. UNICEF's participation in the UNDAF process at the country level is also placing greater emphasis on results-oriented planning as "the UNDAF Results Matrix describes the results to be collaboratively achieved".⁴

24. The Panel concluded that the EO has contributed towards strengthening UNICEF's Results-based Management systems, most notably through its contribution to development of the integrated monitoring and evaluation framework and detailed performance indicators for the MTSP 2006-2009. However, there is a gap between high level, organization-wide indicators and the systems used for planning and performance assessment at the programme/project level.

Evaluation Policy

25. The Panel concluded that the culture and practice of independent evaluation seem well established at UNICEF but are not supported by an up-to-date and comprehensive evaluation policy that reflects the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System. The Panel believes that the independence, credibility and usefulness of the evaluation function would be strengthened by updating the current policy statements into a comprehensive policy document that provides a clearer framework for implementation of the evaluation function.

Independence

26. The Panel considers that UNICEF's Evaluation Office is meeting the UNEG Norms and Standards related to independence, including:

- Fostering an enabling environment for evaluation;
- Independence and impartiality of evaluators;

4. UNICEF, *Programme Policy and Procedure Manual (PPPM)*, May 2005, p. 45, para 29.



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- Ensuring access to information required for evaluations;
 - EO's freedom to report to the appropriate level of decision-making on evaluation findings.
27. The Panel believes that independence of the evaluation function should be formalized in an *updated evaluation policy document* that is approved by the *Executive Board* and disseminated and implemented throughout the organization by way of an *Executive Directive*.
28. Clarifying the EO's reporting line and responsibilities would provide assurance against any infringement on independence, real or perceived. The Panel recommends that the Director of the Evaluation Office should report directly to the Executive Director.
29. The Panel considered the option of a direct reporting line to the Executive Board but concluded that such an arrangement would not significantly increase the EO's independence. Board members have not identified a direct reporting relationship as a priority and it would be inconsistent with the reporting lines for other elements of the decentralized system. Frequent rotation of Board members and lack of evaluation experience were identified as potential barriers to ensuring strong oversight for an Evaluation Office that reported to the Board.
30. Engaging Executive Board members in a discussion of an updated evaluation policy document would afford an opportunity to explore ways in which the evaluation function could make a stronger contribution to the Board's decision-making. In particular, the Board could consider:
- Commissioning evaluations on specific subjects;
 - Greater use of evaluation (including Country Programme evaluations) to validate results of self-assessments undertaken at the country level;
 - Requesting aggregation of evaluation information to assess performance at the organizational level.
31. It is important to note that, in the Panel's view, ***independence of the evaluation function does not mean isolation***. Evaluation has intrinsic links to all stages of the project/programme cycle. It provides essential information to determine whether results are being achieved, the impact of those results, the need for change, and the potential for a project/programme to be sustainable. Evaluation is a key management tool for learning and for performance accountability. In fact, it has been argued that "rigorous program evaluations are the lifeblood of good governance."⁵ In this respect, the Panel considers evaluation as a core function that should have a predictable and adequate budget to ensure credible and independent information that can be used to assess whether or not UNICEF is fulfilling its mandate.
32. The Panel considers the *ability to budget for evaluation* as a key element of independence. Having limited Regular Resources in the EO's core budget and having to negotiate with other Divisions for evaluation funding restricts the EO's capacity to choose evaluation topics that it considers strategically important for accountability. Similarly, having to raise almost two-thirds of its budget from Other Resources makes the EO potentially vulnerable to donor demands.

5. David Zussman, "The Accountability Act should also account for money well spent", The Ottawa Citizen, April 24, 2006. This is a quotation from Canada's Auditor-General.



33. **Relation between Evaluation and Audit** – The Panel notes that UNICEF intends to review the mandates of the Audit and Evaluation functions. This is timely in light of the current discussions within the UN system about co-locating these functions. The Panel discussed the relation between the two functions but did not undertake a review of options for locating the evaluation function within various organizational structures. The UNEG Norms and Standards indicate that the EO Director should report either to the Board or to the Head of the organization to ensure independence of the evaluation function. The consensus of the Panel was not to make a specific recommendation on structure, but instead, to encourage UNICEF to ensure that evaluation remains a strong, independent and credible function that addresses programme effectiveness, value and impact results.

Credibility

34. The Panel considers that UNICEF's Evaluation Office is meeting the UNEG Norms and Standards related to credibility as follows:

- Setting quality standards and providing guidance on key aspects of evaluation;
- Highly competent and credible professional staff;
- Transparency in selection and management processes for EO evaluations;
- Impartiality of EO evaluations;
- Participation of country governments and other partners in EO-led evaluative activities;
- Building evaluation capacity in member countries, especially through CPE methodology and the facilitation and support of evaluation networks.

35. The Panel notes that UNICEF's approach to evaluation at the country level *fosters partnership* and *builds ownership* for development results. This process of mutual accountability enhances UNICEF's overall credibility with its partners.

36. Weaknesses were noted in the following areas, especially related to country-level evaluative activities:

- Lack of clear organizational criteria for the selection of evaluations;
- Inconsistencies in applying guidance provided by the EO to ensure that all evaluations, and evaluation reports, meet the required quality standards;
- No clear separation of responsibilities for evaluation, monitoring, programming, fund raising and advocacy functions at the country level;
- Uneven participation by stakeholders, including beneficiaries, in roles other than information sources;
- Inconsistent assessment of gender issues, especially analysis of the impact of results for women/girls and men/boys;
- Inconsistent assessment/analysis of how the human-rights-based approach was applied;
- No mandatory use of end-of-project evaluations for pilot projects;
- Limited capacity to aggregate information on results in order to assess performance at the organizational level.

37. **Budget limitations** have reduced the EO's ability to strengthen UNICEF's internal evaluation capacity at the decentralized levels, in spite of the Executive Board's having identified this as a priority focus. The Panel notes that approximately half of UNICEF's 126 country offices do not have a level three M&E officer (level three is the desired minimum level to ensure competence). The EO reports that these offices are less able to consistently deliver high quality evaluations.



38. Poor quality of country level evaluations was first identified as a problem following a meta-evaluation commissioned by the Evaluation Office in 2004.⁶ Since then, the EO has provided guidance for Terms of Reference and quality standards for conducting evaluations and reporting on them. The EO carries out an annual quality review of evaluation reports submitted from all levels (HQ, region, country). The EO's latest *Evaluation Report Quality Review* indicates that there has been some improvement in the quality of evaluation reports submitted for review over the past two years, but the low number of reports submitted suggests that training on the standards or other support is still needed.

Usefulness of Evaluation Evidence

39. The Panel considers that UNICEF's Evaluation Office is meeting the UNEG Norms and Standards related to usefulness of evaluation evidence as follows:

- Intentionality by the Executive Board and senior management to use evaluations to inform decision-making;
- Transparency of the evaluation process, disclosure policy and public accessibility of reports;
- Contribution to strengthening UNICEF's Results-based Management systems;
- Contribution to policy making, organizational effectiveness, and development effectiveness;
- Contribution to UN harmonization in evaluation and humanitarian assistance.

40. **Timeliness** – Evaluations are generally well-timed to feed into the planning cycle for country programmes and for decision-making at the Board level. Evaluation's contribution to management and decision-making for both programmes and policies is considered by the Panel to be strong at all levels. There is also evidence that evaluation is contributing to improving the development effectiveness of UNICEF interventions.

41. **Learning** – Evaluation's contribution to learning is stressed at all levels of the organization and there are good indications that evaluation findings are used to improve programming and policies. At the same time, however, the Panel notes that organizational systems for knowledge sharing and institutional learning are not yet adequately developed.

42. **Contribution to UN harmonization** – Senior managers and other agencies recognize the EO's leadership within the United Nations Evaluation Group to create professional Norms and Standards for implementation of evaluation across the UN system.

43. UNICEF's active role in promoting the improvement of best practices across UN agencies has also been recognized.⁷ The EO is presently providing leadership for three UNEG task forces:

- Country Level Evaluation – intended to build strategies for joint evaluations at the national level and to undertake case studies on joint evaluations;
- Evaluation Capacity Development – which will contribute to the professionalization of evaluation in the UN system by developing generic competencies for Evaluation Officers and a curriculum for evaluation training tailored to the needs and specifications of the UN system;

6. UNICEF Evaluation Office, *The Quality of Evaluations Supported by UNICEF Country Offices 2000-2001*, September 2004.

7. *The Mid-Term Review of the UNICEF Medium Term Strategic Plan 2002-2005 – Synthesis Report – final draft, June 2004, and Reference Case: UNICEF's Contribution to UN Reform and Its Impact on UNICEF, 2004.*



- Evaluation Practice Exchange – in which agencies will share ‘better practice’ using examples of (a) proven and transferable experience, and (b) innovations with potential for wider application.
44. UNICEF’s participation in the area of **humanitarian assistance** has increased significantly in the past few years. The EO has made a contribution to developing more effective methodology for evaluation in disaster and crisis situations. EO-led evaluations of Iraq, Darfur, Liberia, tsunami-affected countries, and two major evaluations of humanitarian capacity building, have helped set a new agenda to improve humanitarian response. The Darfur evaluation was used as an illustrative case by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action to promote discussion and learning through its network of organizations that provide humanitarian assistance.
45. Information provided to the Executive Board – The Panel notes that the Executive Board has repeatedly requested more results-oriented reporting from UNICEF. During this Review, some Executive Board members expressed the view that the information provided on evaluation is still not adequately substantive or analytical. Some also indicated that the time available for discussion of evaluations is too limited. Some members indicated that a management response should be included with evaluation reports.
46. **Tracking System** – The Panel commends the recently undertaken initiative to track management response to global/corporate evaluations. Management response and implementation of evaluation recommendations are fundamental indicators of the importance of an evaluation function to an organization. In addition to the new tracking system at Headquarters, efforts should also be made to strengthen tracking of management response at the field level.

Summative Judgment of the UNICEF Peer Review Panel

Evaluation at UNICEF is highly useful for learning and decision-making purposes and, to a lesser extent, for accountability in achieving results.

UNICEF’s central Evaluation Office is considered to be strong, independent and credible. Its leadership by respected professional evaluators is a major strength. The EO has played an important leadership role in UN harmonization through the UN Evaluation Group.

The Peer Review Panel considers that a decentralized system of evaluation is well-suited to the operational nature of UNICEF. However, there are critical gaps in quality and resources at the regional and country levels that weaken the usefulness of the evaluation function as a management tool.

Suggestions for Action:

A clear and comprehensive evaluation policy document, consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards; a more predictable budget for evaluation, additional interventions to strengthen and support field offices; and improved use of Results-based Management throughout the organization would strengthen the evaluation function overall.



Summary of Recommendations to UNICEF’s Executive Board, Executive Director and the Evaluation Office

To the Executive Board

Evaluation Policy

- i. The Executive Board should request that UNICEF update previous policy statements into a comprehensive policy document on evaluation that is consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards and adapted to the present UNICEF context. The Board should subsequently discuss and approve the evaluation policy document.
- ii. It is recommended that the Director of the Evaluation Office should report on the implementation of the evaluation policy in the biennial report on the evaluation function.

Resources for Evaluation

- iii. The Executive Board should ensure that the evaluation function has adequate Regular Resources to operate in an independent and credible manner.
- iv. For transparency and accountability purposes, the Executive Board should be presented with costed evaluation workplans as well as documentation of evaluation expenditures at HQ, regional and country levels.

Use of Evaluation by the Executive Board

- v. Reports from the EO and Regional Directors should inform the Executive Board on the implementation of evaluation recommendations and management plans of action.
- vi. The Executive Board could take more advantage of the evaluation function by requesting specific evaluations to inform its decision-making.
- vii. The Executive Board could consider holding more frequent informal sessions to discuss evaluation reports.

To UNICEF’s Executive Director

Evaluation Policy

- viii. UNICEF should update previous policy statements into a comprehensive evaluation policy document that is consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards and adapted to the present UNICEF context.
 - The evaluation policy should be a stand-alone document that is approved by the Executive Board.
 - The evaluation policy should assert the independence of the evaluation function and specify that the Director of the Evaluation Office reports directly to the Executive Director.
 - The evaluation policy should be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including partner countries.
 - The policy should be disseminated and implemented throughout the organization by way of an Executive Directive.



- The *Executive Directive* should:
 - ◆ Clearly identify how evaluation contributes to learning, accountability and decision-making within the organization;
 - ◆ Spell out roles, responsibilities and accountabilities at the central, regional and country levels;
 - ◆ Address the highly decentralized nature of the evaluation function and the need to ensure quality, credibility and usefulness of evaluations at all levels;
 - ◆ Define protocols for consultation with, and participation of, internal and external stakeholders (especially partner countries) and beneficiaries;
 - ◆ Address issues specific to UNICEF's work that have implications for the evaluation function (HRBA(P), RBM, CCC, etc).

Evaluation Resources

- ix. The Panel recommends that evaluation should be considered a core function for UNICEF, similar to Audit. To strengthen independence and credibility of the evaluation function at all levels, and to ensure adequate evaluation coverage, a *more predictable budget* should be provided. Specific suggestions include:
 - Regular Resources assigned to the evaluation function both in HQ and in the field should be increased.
 - The Regular Resources should be sufficient to cover strategic evaluations on corporate priorities.
 - Other Resources should be committed for strengthening internal evaluation capacity at all levels and for evaluation capacity development of country partners.
- x. Regional office allocations for evaluation should be sufficient to support thematic and strategic evaluations, quality assurance of evaluations at the country level and professional networking activities.

Evaluation Coverage

- xi. Consideration should be given to identifying explicit criteria for selection of evaluations that will ensure good coverage of UNICEF's corporate priorities. These criteria should guide the selection of evaluations at all levels. They should be related to the organization's strategic and programming priorities in order to inform decision-making and investment in a timely manner.

Results-based Management

- xii. To enhance the relevance of evaluations for assessing results, efforts to strengthen the use of performance measurement systems identified within the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (at HQ level) and Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plans (at regional and country levels) should be given high priority.
- xiii. Consideration should be given to mandatory use of end-of-project/programme evaluations when an approach or methodology is being piloted. It is also recommended that aggregation of evaluation information should be integrated within the RBM system to assess performance at the organizational level, ensure accountability and provide information for learning.



xiv. Consideration should be given to:

- Mandatory training on results-oriented monitoring and evaluation;
- Formal participation when possible of evaluation officers at the project/programme design stage to strengthen evaluability;
- Use of an Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan at the regional level;
- Greater scrutiny by Regional Offices of country IMEPs and evaluation TOR.

Quality Assurance

- xv. Organizational links and accountability for quality assurance of all evaluations (most notably at the country and regional levels) should be more clearly defined and implemented at all levels. In particular, the EO's role in assuring quality of evaluations carried out at the regional level should be specified and adequately resourced.
- xvi. UNICEF management should give higher priority to strengthening the capacity of Regional Offices to provide technical support, oversight and quality assurance to evaluations carried out at the country level, including opportunities for professional networking.
- xvii. To increase the credibility of evaluations at the country level, advocacy and fund-raising should be separated from the evaluation function to the extent possible.

Management Response and Plans of Action

- xviii. Efforts to document and track management response to evaluations at the decentralized levels should be strengthened. The tracking system should be designed in such a way that it is also possible to follow up at reasonable intervals to assess the impact of evaluation recommendations.

To the Evaluation Office

Evaluation Policy

- xix. The EO should update previous policy statements on evaluation into a comprehensive policy document that is consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards. Stakeholders, including partner countries, should be consulted in updating the policy.
- xx. The EO should prepare an Executive Directive on the updated evaluation policy to ensure its implementation throughout the organization.

Reporting on the Evaluation Function

- xxi. It is recommended that the Director of the Evaluation Office should report on the implementation of the evaluation policy in the biennial report on the evaluation function that is presented to the Executive Board.
- xxii. It is also recommended that the Director of the Evaluation Office should put more emphasis on lessons learned from evaluations in the biannual report on the evaluation function that is presented to the Executive Board.



Evaluation Workplan

- xxiii. The Panel recognizes that the EO's current focus on institutional reviews is strategically important at present. However, it is recommended that, in the future, the EO give more emphasis to evaluation of development effectiveness in strategic policy and programme areas.
- xxiv. It is recommended that the EO develop a costed evaluation workplan that includes all EO evaluations, capacity development activities at the regional and country level, dissemination of evaluation results and lessons learned, and other items as appropriate.

Quality Assurance

- xxv. Existing materials for training, guidance and support should be reviewed by the EO and supplemented as necessary to improve the quality of evaluations at the regional and country levels.
- xxvi. Consideration should be given to strengthening guidance on the following issues:
- a Code of Conduct for evaluators;
 - options to increase participation by stakeholders (especially beneficiaries) in evaluations;
 - assessment of issues arising from the human-rights-based approach;
 - disaggregation of results information according to sex;
 - assessment of gender equality issues, especially how results affect women/girls and men/boys;
 - scrutiny of consultant qualifications and suitability;
 - training on evaluation reporting standards;
 - compliance with the requirement to provide all evaluations to the EO for quality review.

Dissemination

- xxvii. It is recommended that the EO should develop a strategy for dissemination of evaluation results and lessons learned in order to strengthen knowledge sharing within the organization.