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Joint programmes and joint programming experiences of UNICEF since 2004

Addendum

Summary

This addendum to the "Report on the implementation experience of joint programming and joint programmes by UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF since 2004" (E/ICEF/2006/13), prepared jointly by the three agencies, discusses issues specific to UNICEF.

Introduction

1. This addendum to Executive Board report E/ICEF/2006/13 responds to UNICEF Executive Board decision 2005/3 (E/ICEF/2005/5/Rev.1) requesting information on experiences in joint programmes and joint programming and an analysis of resources allocated to the different options for fund management for joint programmes, and the resulting benefit in development impact or efficiency gains. The report draws on the reporting processes of UNICEF as well as on case studies of 21 joint programmes in 14 countries undertaken at the end of 2005 by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).¹

* E/ICEF/2006/10.

¹ Kelly, L. 2006. "Enhancing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Joint Programmes: lessons learned from a UNDG review" UNDGO New York.

2. UNICEF continues to engage fully in joint programming and joint programmes. This engagement has been supported through Programme Guidance to UNICEF offices issued towards the end of 2004 and the establishment of a Joint Programmes Reference Group at headquarters to support country offices in setting up joint programmes.

Implementation experience²

3. Trends in UNICEF participation in joint programmes have been positive, with steady increases in both the number of country programmes that included joint programmes (which reached 45 in 2005, up from 42 in 2004 and 32 in 2003) and the number of joint programmes being implemented. UNICEF is a partner in 80 new joint programmes that commenced in 2005, and was a partner in 55 new joint programmes in 2004. For those country offices participating in joint programmes, the number of joint programmes per country is also increasing, which indicates that once country offices have identified a joint programme opportunity, there is likelihood that they will identify additional opportunities.

4. Reporting for 2004 shows that, by region, UNICEF offices in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) and the Americas and Caribbean Region (TACR) participated in almost one half of all new joint programmes in which UNICEF was a partner in that year, with another fifth taking place in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR). It was likely that opportunities for joint programmes in CEE/CIS were identified during that year as country offices embarked on the Common Country Assessment (CCA)/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process with the United Nations country team. In 2005, almost a third of all new joint programmes in which UNICEF country offices were partners were in ESAR. This rise in the number of ESAR joint programmes probably also resulted from the fact that many countries in the region started the CCA/UNDAF process, and also from the fact that the countries placed a stronger emphasis on aid simplification and harmonization.

5. Country offices that reported on UNICEF financial contributions to joint programmes in their 2005 programme reporting showed contributions slightly above \$71 million. UNICEF is currently in the process of introducing the tagging of joint programmes in its financial reporting systems and will be able to report on joint programme expenditure through financial reporting systems once the full changes have been incorporated.

6. Regarding fund management, the parallel funding modality continues to be the most frequently applied, with almost half of all new joint programmes in 2005 using this modality. Pass-through funding is the least-used modality, although median programme budgets are higher for this modality than for the others. This is mainly the result of the use of the pass-through modality for significant joint programmes in HIV/AIDS in Indonesia and maternal mortality reduction in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. UNICEF expenditure in joint programmes is overwhelmingly from other resources: country offices report that more than 95 per cent of joint programme expenditure in 2005 was from other resources. To date, UNICEF has

² Due to ongoing updates of the data on joint programmes, the figures presented here may differ slightly from those presented in previous oral or written reports to the Executive Board.

played a managing agent role for funds under the pooled funding modality in three cases, and in four cases was administrative agent for funds under the pass-through funding modality. Where they have a comparative advantage, UNICEF country offices are increasingly taking on these roles in joint programmes. Towards the end of 2005, UNICEF assumed the role of the managing or administrative agent for five new joint programmes: three in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (in the areas of literacy, maternal mortality reduction and education), one in Uganda (in nutrition) and one in Burkina Faso (in girls' education).

7. Over the last two years, UNICEF country offices have participated in joint programmes addressing the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals in programme areas linked closely to the medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) focus areas. The most frequent areas for partnerships are in HIV/AIDS, health and education. Together, these three areas account for almost half of UNICEF joint programme effort in terms of the number of joint programmes. There are also joint programmes in child protection, including Guatemala's Strengthening the National Civil Police project, and in early childhood development, for example, Improving Access to Quality Early Childhood Programmes in Moldova.

8. In addition to Governments, the main partnerships of UNICEF with other United Nations agencies in joint programmes are most frequently with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. These partnerships reflect not only the strong common areas of focus within the Millennium agenda but also the in-country presence of these agencies. Specialized agencies with whom UNICEF has partnered in joint programmes include the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and also the World Bank. UNICEF is a major partner in the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

Achievements

9. UNICEF continues to increase its participation in joint programmes and is at the forefront of partnerships with other United Nations agencies to support countries in achieving the targets of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals. As a strong partner in joint programmes, UNICEF has contributed to the achievements outlined in the main report. The roll-out of the common country programming process has helped UNICEF country offices to identify opportunities for partnership with other United Nations agencies, and as experience is gained, UNICEF is taking on new roles in joint programmes, such as that of administrative or managing agent.

Challenges

10. The emerging picture, outlined in the main report, is that joint programmes are more project- than programme-oriented and do not fully reflect the opportunities presented by such programmes to support national development strategies. The "Report on UNICEF engagement in sector-wide approaches" (E/ICEF/2006/14) outlines the aim of UNICEF to address constraints affecting its participation in sector-wide and national programming approaches, as well as its current efforts to

enhance staff capacity to participate actively in policy dialogue. The emphasis in the current MTSP on strengthening UNICEF work in data, policy development, advocacy and participation will support the organization's dialogue with partners at the country level in the context of joint programmes. UNICEF will apply these skills together with its sister United Nations agencies in order to maximize opportunities for joint programmes.

11. The case studies of joint programmes have highlighted issues that potentially inhibit participation in joint programmes. The first is the perception that there are difficulties in transferring resources from UNICEF to other agencies. Since systems are in place that allow a transfer of resources, this perception is likely rooted in inadequate staff knowledge of systems and processes. The second issue is that of cost recovery. The current rates, agreed in Executive Board Decision 2003/9 (E/ICEF/2003/9/Rev.1), include a cost-recovery rate of 12 per cent with discounts applied dependent on the degree of earmarking, size of contribution and timing of receipt of contributions. The cost-recovery policy is seen as inflexible by partners (both United Nations agencies and donors). In some cases, where there is an absolute limit on cost-recovery rates determined by a donor or by rules applied to a trust fund, this inflexibility is perceived to push overall recovery rates to unacceptable levels when combined with cost-recovery rates of other United Nations partners.

Moving forward

12. As noted in the main report, it would be useful to undertake a thorough evaluation of joint programmes. As a full participant in such an evaluation, UNICEF would include an evaluation of its own systems and processes as they relate to joint programmes. UNICEF will continue to analyse the conditions under which joint programmes lead to better results and to report on this in the Executive Director's annual report to the Executive Board.

13. Efforts are under way to review the UNICEF cost recovery policy and were summarized in Executive Board report E/ICEF/2006/AB/L.4, presented at the 2006 annual session. Through this work, UNICEF is recommending changes in the recovery policy that will remove the obstacles that currently make UNICEF appear to be a difficult partner in comparison with other agencies. As noted in the main report, work is being undertaken through inter-agency processes to bring greater harmonization to cost-recovery in joint programmes.

14. As UNICEF and its sister United Nations agencies implement further improvements in the United Nations common country programming process, care must be taken to ensure that work on building UNICEF staff capacity in the MTSP focus areas and on engaging in national policy processes is carried through to the common country programming process and the joint programmes that emerge from it. Achieving this coherence will enhance capacity to support countries in achieving the agenda of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals and in delivering results for children.