

**EVALUATION  
REPORT**

# **UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTION TO UN REFORM AND ITS IMPACT ON UNICEF**

**EVALUATION OFFICE  
SEPTEMBER 2004**

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The evaluation report was prepared by Steven Mendelsohn, Abby Stoddard, and Alex Mackenzie — external evaluators supported by UNICEF. The purpose is to assess the situation, facilitate the exchange of knowledge and perspectives among UNICEF staff and to propose measures to address the concerns raised. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF.

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## **PREFACE**

In the first semester of 2004, UNICEF commissioned a pair of evaluations on the theme UNICEF's Contribution to UN Reform and its Impact on UNICEF. One evaluation looked at the humanitarian sector, the other at UN Reform issues managed under the UN Development Group. Two efforts were required to ensure a proper match of consultant expertise to the issues, and in recognition of the differing institutional bodies and processes at work. The independent external consultants were Ms. Abby Stoddard (humanitarian) and Steve Mendelsohn and Alex MacKenzie (UNDG).

The two efforts were consciously oriented to look at as many common issues as possible. Thus, while both stand on their own, there is a synergy that should be captured by looking at how well UNICEF performs as a single entity working within quite different settings and partnership contexts. In short, what is the portrait of UNICEF — strengths and weaknesses — that emerges when looking at the combined efforts?

This paper summarizes the commonalities and differences UNICEF exhibits in span of work from UNDAF settings to humanitarian crises. It is written by the three independent consultants, and was undertaken only when the two base evaluations were completed. UNICEF thanks them for presenting this unified perspective, for it highlights what they came to see as systemic issues.

Readers interested in this work will likely want to also review the base evaluations. These are available on the UNICEF web site, or by contacting the Evaluation Office.

Again, our thanks to the consultants. We look forward to comments from readers.

Jean Serge Quesnel  
Director  
Evaluation Office  
UNICEF. New York



## ACRONYMS

CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
CHAP	Common Humanitarian Action Plan
CCA	Common Country Assessment
COAR	Country Office Annual Report
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECHA	Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes
ExComs	Executive Committees of the UNDG comprising of UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP and UNDP
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HRBAP	Human rights based approach to programming
HQ	Headquarters
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally displaced person
IHL	International humanitarian law
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
QAS	Quality Assurance Support
RC	Resident Coordinator
S&H	Simplification and Harmonization
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCHR	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes and synthesizes the findings of two studies commissioned by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)’s Evaluation Office on UNICEF’s contribution to UN Reform and its impact on UNICEF. The two separate but linked documents from which this report draws focus on UNICEF’s experience in the Development Group and the Humanitarian Sector respectively, and examine the institutional mechanisms and relationships associated with those areas in depth. This combined report seeks to provide an overview assessment across the development and humanitarian sectors, drawing on the findings and conclusions of the two reports, while adding a further layer of analysis to reflect on UNICEF as one organization engaging in these different spheres.

UNICEF has made strong efforts toward the achievement of UN reform objectives, provided critical leadership within the interagency community, and filled important gaps. At the headquarters level, UNICEF has provided significant intellectual support in the development of the mechanics of UN reform–related policies and practices. At the country level, and less so but increasingly at the regional level, UNICEF has acted in a timely and proactive fashion to lead or facilitate interagency processes. UNICEF’s level of engagement and leadership on the development side has been one of marked and steady improvement, while on the humanitarian side it has been consistently high, and indeed — according to external informants — unparalleled among the UN agencies.

However, while UNICEF has made a great deal of effort to harmonize its systems with those at the interagency level, the combined effect of the increased workload related to UN reform, and the requirements of both UN Country Teams (UNCT) and UNICEF work activities has resulted in a heavier workload for staff. In order to fight a rising sense of “coordination fatigue” among some staff members, and their feeling that UNICEF’s investment in reform is not matched by a sufficient return, UNICEF needs to further rationalize, not just harmonize, its systems with the interagency systems. This will require a careful assessment of the value added of each of the newer UN reform activities to ensure that they represent true value added to the UNCTs and to UNICEF.

Historically, UNICEF has cultivated a strong brand identification as an efficient, effective aid organization, focused on the rights and needs of children and women in development, emergency, and transition situations. UN reform requires UNICEF to carefully balance the need to retain its unique identity and visibility objectives with the need to work toward broader UN goals of programming, financial systems and procedural coherence as well as accountability for results. Both internal and external perceptions, as reflected in interviews and in evidence from case illustrations, show that this remains a challenge for UNICEF.

Finally, the evaluation findings underscore the fact that although UNICEF is seen as an important contributor to UN reform processes, some outside observers continue to detect ambivalence in UNICEF about UN reform — at least in the development sphere — and at times UNICEF has been seen as a negative force. In both the development and humanitarian spheres interviewees expressed the sense that UNICEF has the capacity to contribute still more than it has; that it could and should provide the leadership to push the system to the next level of system coherence. External observers believe that if UNICEF does not provide its share of leadership and support to help bring about the required changes in the UN system, there is a danger of the UN being further marginalized. Simultaneously, internal personnel have reiterated their concern that UNICEF not lose its focus on its advocacy efforts for the rights of children.

The findings of both studies indicated, however, that overall, UN reform has:

- Permitted UNICEF to influence the “UN agenda” at the country level through the UNCTs, the Consolidated Appeal Process, Common Humanitarian Action Plan, Common Country Assistance, UN Development Assistance Framework and the theme groups;
- Allowed UNICEF to bring in a stronger focus on children, child protection issues; and to focus on social issues;
- Ensured greater coherence with other agencies; and
- Promoted greater communications with and understanding of other UN agencies, which over time should lead to more joint programming.

Additionally, in the humanitarian sector UNICEF has effectively leveraged its role as facilitator of interagency coordination to position itself as a major humanitarian player alongside agencies with larger humanitarian budgets and programs almost exclusively devoted to humanitarian functions.

As UNICEF looks toward its engagement in UN reform over the coming years, it should be cognizant of the critical catalytic and leadership role it has carved out for itself in both development and humanitarian contexts (and is poised to do in transitions), and the extent to which the interagency system has come to depend on UNICEF serving in this role.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background**

This report was commissioned by UNICEF's Evaluation Office to provide a summary and synthesis of two separate but linked studies on UNICEF's engagement in the UN Reform process. The key findings of the two longer studies, one which covered UNICEF activity in development and the other which dealt with its role in relief and transition situations, were merged in the joint report, which seeks to provide an overview assessment while adding a further layer of analysis to reflect on UNICEF as one organization engaging across a wide range of activities and programming contexts.

### **1.2. Methodological Approach for the Evaluation**

The two studies were completed using a similar approach and set of issues for investigation. Four main themes were identified as key issues to be reviewed:

- UNICEF's interagency contributions;
- Strengthening country programming processes and substance;
- Mainstreaming UN Reform and interagency collaboration within UNICEF; and,
- Impact of UN Reform on UNICEF.

In total, over 120 informants, internal and external to UNICEF, were interviewed in New York for both studies. The component of the evaluation that focused on UNICEF's development activities also included a review of 138 Country Office Annual Reports (COARs) over a two-year period (2002-04), with an in-depth focus on a subset of 38 Reports over that two-year period. Finally, a detailed survey was sent to 18 country offices, to which 16 country offices responded. The 38 COARs and the 18 country offices surveyed were selected so as to be representative of the seven UNICEF regions, and also of the first and second-generation rollout countries for the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Common Country Assessment (CCA) process for the UN development group.

The humanitarian study's informants, along with the relevant headquarters and field staff, included current and former Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), the secretariats of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), and the heads of consortia of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The desk review documentation also encompassed the field staff survey portions of the Country Office Annual Reports, and Regional Management Team reviews of the Medium Term Strategic Plan. Additional documentation and interviews were obtained for the specific purpose of presenting four case illustrations of the themes and issues addressed in the study. The cases — Afghanistan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, and Sudan — were chosen by the evaluation management team with an eye to representing both country level and sub-regional humanitarian response, different typologies of emergencies, and chronological and geographical spread.

The evaluations were completed during the period February to June 2004.



## **2. KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1. UNICEF in the Humanitarian and Development Spheres**

It is an intrinsic strength of UNICEF that it is able to span the activities of relief and development without bifurcating its systems and staff into separate spheres of development and humanitarian action. Overall the studies found a great many more points of commonality than divergence in UNICEF's approach to UN reform across the development and humanitarian spheres. However, a comparison of the two reports' findings indicates that UNICEF has historically been stronger and more proactive in leading reform efforts in the humanitarian sector than in development. Several factors contribute to this discrepancy:

- Humanitarian crises compel coordination among actors, none of whom are able to launch a sufficient response independently. In more stable development contexts, agencies have less incentive to change entrenched institutional systems, work plans, and habits.
- Donor pressure to coordinate is more intense in high-profile emergencies.
- UNICEF is a relatively smaller actor in humanitarian response and has leveraged a coordinating role for a seat at the table among key UN humanitarian actors.
- In general, the personnel involved in humanitarian response are more likely to have moved about between UN agencies and non-UN actors leading to a less parochial mindset.

Yet the overriding factor in the difference in UNICEF's level of proactive engagement may be the simplest: humanitarian reform began several years earlier, and UNICEF has had a longer time to grow into that role. Given the upward trend of UNICEF's engagement in the UN reform process on the development side, it is reasonable to assume that the organization is simply in the process of "catching up."

In the following sections the reviewers have identified the key issue-areas examined in the studies to highlight UNICEF's contributions, accomplishments, continuing challenges or areas of weakness, and organizational impact.

### **2.2. UNICEF Commitment and Leadership**

The studies examined UNICEF commitment and leadership with respect to UN reform. External informants interviewed for the humanitarian sector study were virtually unanimous and unmitigated in their praise for UNICEF's leadership, which they attributed in large part to key individuals in Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) New York and Geneva, who are seen as drivers of reform efforts and personally committed to an interagency approach. On the development side, however, internal UNICEF staff observed that UNICEF has been more reticent in some aspects of UN reform, and has held some areas of interest to be "non-negotiable<sup>1</sup>." This approach has been perceived by counterparts as defensive, and has been blamed for causing delays in some cases in implementing new structures. Senior UNICEF officials as well as external interviewees noted this ambivalence within the organization about

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<sup>1</sup> Non-negotiables were generally recognized by external observers as areas where UNICEF was less willing to give ground. These included independent representation at country level with access to highest levels of decision making and policy for advocacy; accountability of Representatives to the Executive Director (through RDs); and a continued ability for UNICEF to raise resources from non governmental sources.

UN reform, and the apparent unwillingness to participate in some of the reform efforts wholeheartedly. Interestingly, external observers perceived differences of opinion among UNICEF staff concerning the extent to which UNICEF should engage in the various initiatives related to UN reform.

Internal and external staff strongly agreed on the important contributions made by UNICEF to the development of new UN development and humanitarian processes and tools, particularly the UN's harmonized country programming process, the Resident Coordinator (RC) system, theme groups, and common services, among others. As well, UNICEF has provided leadership in normative areas such as child protection and the HRBAP. Its success in promoting human rights based approach at the Stamford conference, which developed an agreed UN-wide approach on human rights, is unquestioned. Likewise UNICEF played a major role in developing the guidelines on protecting human rights through humanitarian action. Its subsequent intellectual leadership at the country level with respect to inclusion of the HRBAP into the CAP, CCA and UNDAF documents is strongly appreciated, especially by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), which sees UNICEF as an important ally in promoting human rights.

External observers understand the dilemma faced by UNICEF with respect to UN reform — that it risks losing its visibility and diluting its image as a professional, results-oriented organization focused on children. However, senior UN external staff members believe that the entire UN system must show greater progress towards reform. In this respect, in the development sphere in particular, external UN observers would like UNICEF to play a greater leadership role in further advancing UN reform and the greater goals of the UN system.

Both studies found evidence, in field staff interviews, emergency case illustrations and a survey of 16 UNDAF country offices that UNICEF country offices demonstrated a relatively strong commitment to working with the UN country teams and working towards the goals of UN reform. The frustration with UN reform at the country level, both studies seem to indicate, primarily comes from the added workloads. On the development side field staff also complained of a lack of tangible results in terms of additional donor support, or greater efficiencies. On the humanitarian side staff largely appreciated the need for coordination in emergency response, but expressed a similar frustration with the multiple responsibilities and added workload it entailed (in particular those staff who have served as RC/HC for any period).

Although UNICEF has shown intellectual leadership and has contributed significantly to the development of the simplification and harmonization (S&H) processes, especially in the development sphere, there is a perception that UNICEF has not provided sufficient leadership in the development of an overall strategy for moving forward in UN reform. Both internal and external key informants judged that UNICEF has not sufficiently developed and/or communicated a vision of what it wants from UN reform. With its non-negotiables, UNICEF seems to have defined what it doesn't want from reform, but not the reverse.

A number of external observers have urged UNICEF to take on a greater leadership role and to focus more on ideas and less on mechanics. Using its place as a global innovator in terms of media and communications as well as field level support and implementation, UNICEF can play an even greater role in leading the reform drive and shaping it to ensure its own concerns are met. One such concern, repeatedly expressed in interviews conducted for the humanitarian study, was the continuing failure of the interagency community to devise an effective and reliable system for covering internally displaced person (IDP) needs in crises. Given the predominance of women and children in IDP populations, the unique vulnerability of displaced

children to sexual abuse, separation, disruption of schooling, and other concerns central to UNICEF's mandate, this would seem an issue for which UNICEF should be prepared to take the lead in seeking structural change.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Develop a long-term vision and internal strategy for organizational change that will permit UNICEF to readjust its own organizational and business model to better fit with the vision of the UN of the future.**

**Conduct internal consultations to develop a long-term vision for organizational evolution to meet the goals of UN reform. This should include efforts to map-out possible scenarios for UNICEF's ongoing engagement in reform, particularly for joint programmes and the joint office initiative.**

**Play a greater role in leading the UN Development Group (UNDG) in restructuring at both global and country level to meet the goals of UN reform.**

The study also concluded that UNICEF staff members believe that donors are pulling it in two different directions. The like-minded donors appear to hold the pooling of resources as a litmus test for an agency's commitment to UN reform. However, some of UNICEF's largest donors are reported to be placing less emphasis on reform issues.

At the same time it should be noted that the intentions of the donors, particularly the like-minded donors, are far from clear. Donors are seen to be demanding greater pooling of funds and joint initiatives, and at the same time continuing to expect the same level of earmarking of resources, attribution of funds provided, and specific, results-oriented reports about agency achievements. There is also a concern raised by UNICEF staff that, even if agencies make a large-scale commitment to joint programmes using pooled funds, it may not result in greater long-term regular resource funding.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Undertake consultations with key representatives of the like-minded group of donors to explain UNICEF concerns regarding the pooling of resources for development, and the potential trade-offs implicit in pooling as well as the implications for reporting.**

**Open and help lead a candid dialogue with the key donors and other agencies with an eye to reducing the competitiveness and inefficiencies that result from current funding requirements for pooling as well as reporting and accountability; and from bilateral humanitarian funding modalities that increase competition between agencies and work against the goals of UN reform.**

## 2.3. Mainstreaming

The study reviewed the efforts made by UNICEF to mainstream UN reform within UNICEF (especially in the development sphere). The analysis demonstrated that UNICEF has made a wide range of important efforts to bring UN reform into the mainstream of its policy and programming practice.

Country offices generally noted that commitment to UN reform in principle is emphasized within both UNICEF country and regional level discussions. Concerns that were raised with respect to overall communications generally related to the aforementioned strategic direction of UN Reform, or UNICEF's long-term direction. Furthermore, interviews in New York also emphasized the fact that communications within UNICEF have been through formal means such as Executive Directives, or through the various fora and meetings. There is no ongoing information resource available on the intranet to update staff on progress in UN reform or forthcoming plans and intentions.

A number of Country Offices also noted that, compared to other UN Agencies, UNICEF has been in a better position in terms of the timely release of guidelines and in making support mechanisms available. Some country offices reported that UNICEF has, more formally than other agencies, integrated the CCA-UNDAF process into its procedures. In the humanitarian sector UNICEF has also proved relatively diligent at disseminating, promoting, and using the policy products and operational guidelines developed in interagency fora like the IASC, though there is no formal process for monitoring their implementation.

In summary, the study concluded that UNICEF Headquarters-initiated communications and guidance is considered good; however there are areas that need strengthening. Foremost is the need to provide a continuing source of information on UNICEF's strategic intent on UN reform so that country offices have a clearer picture of the direction UNICEF wants to take.

### **It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Ensure that a clear message on the long-term vision and strategy for UN Reform is made available to all UNICEF staff.**

**Provide more frequent, less detailed bulletins and updates via the intranet, with an emphasis on how UN reform-related changes may affect UNICEF as well as the strategic issues and options under consideration. These bulletins and updates should also communicate best practices and field level experiences in UN reform, as reported in the internal UNICEF Annual Reports.**

## 2.4. UNICEF Contributions at the Global, Regional and Country Levels

UNICEF's contribution to reform at the global and field levels has been significant, and the organization often plays a leadership or facilitating role in the reform processes. The evaluation study concluded that its continuing engagement is crucial to the reform process.

### 2.4.1. Global Level

As reported above, there is broad agreement that UNICEF has been a major contributor at the global level. UNICEF has participated extensively in Headquarters (HQ) level fora created under

the UN reform process, namely UNDG, ECHA, and the IASC. UNICEF has chaired a number of key UNDG working groups, and has chaired or co-chaired more IASC reference groups, sub-working groups and task forces than any other operational agency. As well, UNICEF led the recent UNDG/ECHA policy work on post-conflict transition.

Human resources inputs have and continue to serve as a key channel for UNICEF contributions. A series of senior staff-level UNICEF secondees have led both the UNDG and IASC secretariats since their inception. UNICEF representatives have also taken on the role of RC/HC in a number of countries (however, concerns have been raised that UNICEF is currently under-represented in this role.)

During the evaluation studies, both internal and external respondents agreed that for the development and the humanitarian spheres, UNICEF's intellectual and technical contributions have been critical to the progress achieved at the global level.

At the same time, the evaluators concluded that the lion's share of UN reform-related work in UNICEF headquarters has been limited to a small group. One UNICEF key informant called this group the UN reform "engine room". This approach has had positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, UNICEF was able to maintain a high level of continuity and focus while engaged in IA working groups. On the negative side, knowledge about UN reform and engagement with other UN agencies, particularly the ExCom agencies, has been limited to a very small group of insiders. This holds true for both the development and humanitarian spheres, with the latter (notwithstanding the widespread staff involvement in feeding into the interagency processes) seen to be overly dependent on key personalities as drivers. Some interviewees suggested that more mainstreaming was needed to secure the full understanding and support of the entire organization for these efforts, and thus ensure consistency of UNICEF's approach over time.

### ***Global Policy Setting and Normative Issues***

UNICEF's human rights based approach to programming (HRBAP) has provided an important conceptual bridge between the organization's humanitarian and development work, by virtue of its basis in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). Most significantly, the provisions of the CRC are held to be constant and non-derogable whether in times of peace or war, and they recognize as duty bearers not only lawful governments but non-state actors, parents, and other adults who affect children's lives. The rights based approach is also well suited to post-conflict transitions as it implies a longer time horizon than the acute crisis period and a broader set of goals than humanitarian relief.

UNICEF has been a key force in promoting HRBAP in development and humanitarian contexts, but needs to provide better guidance and tools to its own field staff for practical application of human rights principles in programming.

A number of observers acknowledged the lack of consistency in human rights advocacy by RCs and RC/HCs, who are often reluctant to take up politically controversial issues for fear of jeopardizing working relations with the host government. This reluctance to speak out forcefully in the face of human rights abuses must be more actively countered by UNICEF country offices. By the same token, UNICEF interviews and documentation also suggest that UNICEF itself must be more consistent in its field-based advocacy for children's rights by not merely encouraging but expecting its representatives to take a strong and vocal stance vis-à-vis governments on children's rights issues, and providing clear direction on how this may be

accomplished. Such guidance would be integral to a framework for normative policy and advocacy strategy (as distinct from communications strategy). The framework would derive from UNICEF's fundamental principles as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to identify the key priorities and guidelines for setting normative policy and crafting advocacy approaches.

UN reform has given UNICEF a platform for promoting the human rights-based approach, but UNICEF needs to continue lobbying forcefully within UNDG and IASC/ECHA fora for the consistent application of human rights principles in UNDAFs, CAPs, and CHAPs. Such application cannot be limited to rhetorical endorsement in the joint documents but must be evidenced within the programs and activities. Additionally, UNICEF must develop an advocacy strategy to more forcefully promote the child rights agenda vis-à-vis political actors both within the UN and at country level.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Maintain its level of technical commitment and involvement in UN reform working groups, but spread involvement over a greater number of staff so as to create greater buy-in and understanding of the challenges of UN reform.**

**Begin to develop a comprehensive policy-making and advocacy strategy framework; identifying fundamental principles of UNICEF advocacy based on the human rights and IHL principles already underpinning UNICEF's rights-based approach.**

**Within such a framework, allow/encourage/expect policy staff and other HQ and field personnel involved in interagency mechanisms to formulate advocacy strategies around specific issues in accordance with these principles.**

**Delineate the areas of responsibility between Country and Regional Offices and HQ, and establish mechanisms to support Country Representatives in raising human rights issues with their host governments.**

**2.4.2. Regional level**

The evaluation concluded that UNICEF offices are among the better trained and resourced of the UN agencies and are therefore well equipped to meet their UN reform requirements and to provide technical backup to the country teams. The evaluation concluded, based on a review of documents and limited discussions with regional personnel, that, there is some frustration as to the regional office role in the Quality Assurance Support (QAS) process for the CCA/UNDAF processes. The differing UN agency regional boundaries and locations, structures and accountabilities to different Boards cause further complexity for the QAS system.

**It is recommended that:**

**UNICEF should promote strengthening and regularizing of interagency coordination as well as joint planning and preparedness in the humanitarian area at the regional level. UNICEF should facilitate the UNICEF regional offices initiating and leading coordination at this level by providing greater program management responsibility and authority to Deputy Regional Directors.**

### **2.4.3. Country Level**

#### ***Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator Systems and UN Country Teams***

The evaluation concluded that UNICEF offices have provided good support to the UNCTs and to the Resident Coordinator's office by actively engaging in the work planning process, contributing financially and materially where needed, and providing acting RCs. One of the concerns raised by UNICEF staff, is with respect to the independence of the Resident Coordinator position vis-à-vis the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Some UNICEF staff believe that the RC position is still controlled by UNDP. This concern is considered by some UNICEF interviewees to hamper greater collaboration in the UNCT

UNICEF has contributed to strengthening the RC/HC system in three important ways: (1) by participating actively in the design and refinement of the RC competency assessment; (2) by enabling and encouraging its staff to apply for these positions and forwarding names of highly skilled candidates for the assessment; and (3) by insisting that RCs without relevant skills or experience in the humanitarian coordination role be replaced by more suitable candidates.

However, the study concluded that the current number of UNICEF Resident Coordinators is relatively low (and that there are no UNICEF Humanitarian Coordinators at present). Since UNICEF is the leading agency in the social sector, greater numbers of UNICEF staff moving into the resident coordinator system should enhance the capacities of UNCTs in country programming as well as the application of a human rights based approach. Interviews with those who served in these roles in the past revealed consistent concerns over the "multiple roles" required of the position, which includes management and programming tasks for the host agency as well as its formidable coordination responsibilities.

Currently UNICEF does not possess any effective avenues for influence over selection of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) in humanitarian emergency contexts, and there is concern that the proliferation of SRSGs will further complicate humanitarian action in the field. While UNICEF cannot influence SRSG appointments, it is beginning to have a modest voice in the selection of Deputy SRSGs that often serve as the side of the office responsible for relief and recovery efforts.

#### **It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Review the impediments to its staff becoming RCs/HCs and endeavor through training and revised hiring practices to increase its ability to provide RCs/HCs to the system.**

**Continue to promote the independence of the RC/HC position vis-à-vis UNDP, as in some countries the perception that the RC position is controlled by UNDP has hampered greater collaboration in the UNCT, and the added burden of UNDP organizational duties detract from the coordination function.**

#### ***CCA and UNDAF Processes***

The study concluded that UNICEF provides leadership and technical support for the UNDAF in a number of country teams. The study concluded, however, that the usefulness and results of the CCA and UNDAF processes and results have varied by region and by country.

An important advantage of the CCA/UNDAF processes is that they permit UNICEF to advance its priorities for children to the UNCT level. In this sense the CCA/UNDAF helps promote

UNICEF objectives. Although concerns were raised at headquarters, that the CCA/UNDAF would restrict UNICEF's independence in programming, none of the countries reported that the UNDAF had prevented them from formulating a suitable Country Programme. Rather in most cases the UNDAF enriched the UNICEF Country Programme, allowed UNICEF to influence the UNDAF to reflect UNICEF priorities, or in a few cases appeared to generate a basis for joint programming efforts.

Some countries noted that competition for funding among UN Agencies, different administrative procedures, and the UN agency "silo" mentality resulting in part from differing agency mandates, governance processes, plans and expectations for results, are greatly limiting their ability to achieve greater joint programming objectives through the CCA and UNDAF processes. Country offices also consider the CCA and UNDAF processes to be quite time-consuming, without sufficient benefits.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Continue to seek ways of improving the usefulness and impact of these tools for UNICEF itself as well as for the country team. As the CCA and UNDAF are resource intensive, UNICEF should also continue reviewing its own processes to make greater use of and not duplicate the CCA and UNDAF.**

***CAP/CHAP Mechanisms***

The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) mechanisms have improved significantly over time, thanks in no small part to UNICEF-led work on evaluating and retooling the mechanisms within the IASC. For the most part these systems have been embraced and effectively mainstreamed within UNICEF, and it is rare today to hear negative views regarding their value to UNICEF or the system as a whole. Perhaps by virtue of its earlier inception, the CAP/CHAP have evolved a bit further than the CCA/UNDAF in becoming an actual tool for interagency strategizing. However, similar to the CCA/UNDAF, the CAP remains inconsistent across countries, with the worst (albeit increasingly rare) examples continuing to represent little more than combined agency "wish lists" of projects for funding.

***Preparedness and Contingency Planning***

UNICEF has led the interagency process in this area, which provides an example both of an agency-led value-added to the system, and of the effectiveness of technical level cooperation on an informal, task-oriented basis. In contingency planning and preparedness, UNICEF has developed a sophisticated methodology to benefit its own country programming and used the interagency architecture in order to share this tool with the broader community. Together in close partnership with other key agencies who have played critical roles in this area (particularly WFP and UNHCR), UNICEF has steered the joint effort to test, train, and spread the application of a useful methodology in the field. Contingency planning has now been integrated into the terms of reference of the RC and while results are still uneven, is widespread, routine, and well regarded in the field.

***Common Premises and Services***

UNICEF has shown itself to be an active participant, and at times a leader, in the area of common premises and services. UNICEF participates in the majority of "UN Houses" that have been established, and in emergency settings has repeatedly taken responsibility for initiating and managing such premises. UNICEF has also stepped up to fill gaps in common services on several occasions including in security, banking, and communications. Notwithstanding

UNICEF's contribution and interagency efforts to promote greater cooperation in this area, the development sector study found that there has been no consistent method developed for monitoring and evaluating the benefits accruing to the implementation of common premises and services at the country level.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Establish procedures (in concert with the UNDG) to monitor and evaluate the value of implementing common premises and services at the country level.**

## **2.5 Impact of UN reform on UNICEF at the Country Level**

### ***Thematic groups, IASC sub-working groups:***

UN reform has seen a growth in interagency groups organized around particular issues. Although UNICEF participates in numerous thematic Groups in the development area, interviews revealed that only a few are considered effective and worthy of the time and effort UNICEF puts into them. Likewise on the humanitarian side, the most effective subsidiary groups of the IASC have been those such as the Contingency Planning and Preparedness sub-working group that are problem-driven, field oriented, informal and focus on results over process.

UNICEF headquarters and field staff members have cited examples of UNICEF initiating informal and effective working groups, composed of technical experts drawn from inside and outside the UN system, including NGOs in particular. Examples of issue-areas around which UNICEF has convened such groups include children in armed conflict and water and sanitation. The evaluation studies concluded that UNICEF should endeavor to focus its energies on the most effective of the various theme groups and advocate for the elimination of those that are time consuming and/or of limited benefit.

### ***Joint Programming, Sectoral Coordination, and Division of Labor***

In humanitarian emergencies a weakness of UNICEF in the past was that it has been seen as inconsistent in taking on programmatic responsibilities, prompting other agencies to complain that it is not always a predictable or reliable partner. The Core Commitments for Children have gone a long way to ameliorate this concern, according to internal and external informants alike, and there is evidence that UNICEF's predictability in the field has been enhanced as a result.

The lowest common denominator effect in joint programming remains a concern, as often the interagency process may be delayed, or system-wide credibility may suffer because of the slow pace or poor accountability of one or two agency participants. This becomes especially difficult in emergency cases where UNICEF and other operational agencies are compelled to include non-operational technical agencies in planning or response efforts.

UNCT theme groups are a common example of joint programming practice. UNICEF has been active in theme groups in most countries reviewed for this evaluation. The most useful theme groups have been in HIV/AIDs, and in some countries in emergency or disaster management, and occasionally in education and health. Country offices reported that theme groups take up a lot of their time, sometimes with mixed results. However, country offices reported that theme groups help UNICEF promote its priorities such as human rights, and child protection, etc.

At the same time, there appears to be a high level of disagreement among UNICEF staff at all levels as to how to attribute a joint programme and communicate the results in UNICEF's communication and fundraising efforts. The evaluators concluded that, from a communications and fundraising standpoint, there does not seem to be strong reason why a joint programme cannot also be considered as a UNICEF programme. But this issue needs greater clarity.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Document a practical minimum requirement (in terms of benefits and results versus costs) for its engagement in the various types of joint programming, and clarify its operational requirements for joint programming under different scenarios.**

***UN Reform and Preparation for Emergencies***

Based on the responses received from the 16 countries responding to the country office questionnaire, the study concluded that UN Reform has only had an impact on UN emergency preparedness in a handful of countries, most of which already had good UNCT disaster management teams, or theme groups. Four of the respondent countries reported no real activity in their country for emergencies related to UN Reform.

***HIV/AIDS***

Although UNICEF welcomed the Secretary-General's UN reform program's highlighting of the importance of a concerted approach to HIV/AIDS, in practical terms UN reform (e.g. the CCA/UNDAF processes) has not made a major impact on UNICEF programming in HIV/AIDS. The most important aspect of UN Reform vis-à-vis UNICEF HIV/AIDS programming has been the establishment of thematic groups on the issue within the UNCT. In these UNICEF has played an active role in both emergency and development settings, including, in many countries, serving as chair or co-chair of the group. UNICEF has also been active in the IASC subsidiary body on HIV/AIDS in emergency situations, and has contributed to the conceptualization of the recent food crisis in southern Africa as a largely AIDS-driven catastrophe. Additionally, UNICEF has provided significant staffing support for UNAIDS. Three very senior positions at UNAIDS are staffed by UNICEF secondees, and UNICEF has provided technical staff to the body as well.

***Child Protection***

Overall there is a strongly perceived need within UNICEF to develop additional technical assistance, guidance, and leadership from HQ on child protection issues. As the internal systems are enhanced, it was also emphasized by staff that it is UNICEF's primary responsibility to move this issue forward in the UN system. As one possible means, UNICEF should explore expanding the use of Child Protection Advisers in peacekeeping missions and continue to identify and nominate individuals with appropriate experience.

Regarding children affected by armed conflict, despite UNICEF's leadership on this issue and its close working relationship with the SRSG for children in armed conflict, UNICEF lacks sufficient human resources capacity to adequately meet its mandate. Staff members have admonished that UNICEF's response to rights violations from the field level upward needs to be quicker, and note that it has not taken sufficient advantage of the potential to partner with human rights organizations on the ground to monitor, witness, and sound the alarm about abuses to children's rights from the earliest possible stages. In addition, staff report that the organization has been forced to "shuttle the same handful of people around" from one emergency to another. And despite a significant expansion of child protection activities across UNICEF countries, staff

members felt this has been inconsistent and lacking leadership at a policy level on norms and standards.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Strengthen its field activity in child protection by taking on additional monitoring and reporting roles in partnership with human rights organizations to uncover and bring attention to rights abuses as early as possible.**

**Enhance applied learning on child protection by compiling best practices/lessons-learned on experiences of child protection in conflict situations; and, arranging participation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the upcoming evaluation of Child Protection Advisers.**

***Security***

UNICEF has been proactive and generous in the area of security coordination, often sharing or seconding its security personnel to other UN agencies and non-UN partners. The current security environment has raised the concern that the UN's emphasis on security threatens to paralyze effective humanitarian action, which to be effective must entail both a degree of accepted risk and the distance from political interests to project an image of neutrality. In current and future integrated missions, UNICEF increasingly will have to grapple with the dilemma posed between being a good team player and being present where needed to aid and protect children.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Advocate for a thorough examination of the current UN security regime with an eye to identifying appropriate adjustments, which would a) separate security issues from political concerns and b) ensure the humanitarian sector does not become paralyzed by adherence to a single, system-wide standard.**

***Transitions***

In the area of transitions, UNICEF is facing a wide range of new opportunities for action and the potential to play a leading role, for which it has already demonstrated willingness and capacity. UNICEF programming encompasses relief, development, and bridging activities, and it is accustomed to working with a wide range of local actors and interlocutors, from national government entities to CBOs, non-state actors and NGOs — and is capable of shifting from one set to another, as conditions require.

To increase this facility and to ensure a place at the policy table in transitional countries, UNICEF will need to enhance its relationships with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the regional development banks, and learn to work more effectively with trust funds. It should also be prepared to continue and expand the practice it begun in Afghanistan and Iraq of seconding significant numbers of its international staff to serve as technical advisors within government ministries. Some constraints to UNICEF moving into a more prominent role in transitions include uneven, unreliable funding to post-conflict cases that UNICEF has yet not been able to adequately mitigate with its own fund mobilization mechanisms, and the lingering perception among other parts of the UN (e.g. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political Affairs) of UNICEF as a service delivery organization in emergencies.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**Adapt program approaches to the demands of post-conflict transition situations, including shifting from a direct implementation role to a less visible support and mentoring approach with the government and civil society; and taking on new and unfamiliar areas of responsibility such as managing trust funds.**

**Continue to seek and build upon partnership opportunities with the World Bank. Explore the possibility of forming a global, standing partnership arrangement with the Bank that would formalize leadership roles and responsibilities for UNICEF in transition situations as they arise in all countries emerging from conflict.**

***Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers***

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are a process driven by the IFIs and national governments. As the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSPs) have emerged as an important process in many countries, UNCT involvement is important to ensure advocacy and positioning of the UN development programs within the framework of the national development strategies, which are increasingly captured in the PRSPs.

Given the increasing importance of the PRSP process and the PRSP document at the country level as a planning document for government, it is important that UNICEF improve its ability to engage in the PRSP process. This may require a review of country staff capabilities in macroeconomics, and social and economic policy analysis and knowledge of World Bank processes. If UNICEF is to be a forceful advocate of children in the PRSP process, the required staff experience and training will be required.

**It is recommended that UNICEF:**

**UNICEF should review its capacity to engage in the PRSP process in terms of guidance, training and human resources.**



