

**COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION  
METHODOLOGY AND GUIDANCE DEVELOPMENT  
UPDATED PROGRESS REPORT 30 April 2005**

**1. Background and context**

The **Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities of the United Nations System** (Report of the Secretary General A/56/320 of 23 August 2001) emphasised the need to move away from *project level* towards *strategic and policy-oriented* monitoring and evaluation, i.e. concerns of country-level effectiveness and programme and organisational impact (paragraph 60). It also included recommendations related to efforts related to capacity-building (Recommendation 9), impact evaluations (Recommendation 10), simplification and harmonisation of rules and procedures with full participation of partners in recipient countries and donor cooperation (Recommendation 11) and learning lessons from evaluation systems (Recommendation 14).

UNICEF's **Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP) 2002-2005** (Board Document E/ICEF/2001/13) announces that evaluation will generally focus more on the *country programme level* and on *strategic governance* of the organisation as a whole. Country programme evaluation will be strengthened. It is stated that during the first two years of the MTSP, UNICEF will develop basic principles and methodologies and conduct a limited number of field tests, taking into account previous work on the subject. From the third year of the MTSP, regional offices will assume responsibilities in this regard (MTSP paragraph 174).

UNICEF's **Board Paper concerning the evaluation function in the context of the MTSP** (Board document E/ICEF/2002/10 and Decision 2002/9) confirmed the commitment to strengthen CPE. The document recalled that the multi-donor evaluation of UNICEF had noted in 1994 that a gap existed in the UNICEF accountability system at the level of accounting for the impacts and effects of UNICEF-supported programmes. Evaluations were being conducted mostly at the project level. The lack of systematic use of country programme evaluations explained the discrepancies in the level, depth and scope of the annual MTRs and major evaluations. With the conduct of country programme evaluations by Regional Offices and the increase in the quality of project/activity evaluations led by Country Offices there could be a high expectation that organizational reporting on results at all levels of management would be enhanced significantly.

The Board Paper on the evaluation function claimed that CPE should become an integral part of Country Programme management and play a challenge function to ensure that Country Office staff address strategic-level issues. The Board Paper also elaborated on the role of Regional Offices in this regard. CPE is a task closely related to existing functions of Regional Offices in support of the Regional Management Teams. Key evaluation activities carried out by the Regional Offices are to: coordinate the review of MTRs and major evaluation reports in the region, in cooperation with Programme Division and the Evaluation Office, and submit reports on results to the Executive Board; monitor evaluation activities and review evaluation reports in the region to ensure quality and relevance; ensure the evaluation of regional and multi-country initiatives within the region; synthesize evaluation results and lessons within the region; monitor the quality and use of evaluation results to strengthen programmes within the region; and facilitate the exchange of relevant information and experience in the region.

**It should be noted that CPE is by no means a new feature of the Country Programme Process of UNICEF.** In 1993, the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to ensure that country

programme evaluations become an integral part of the country programme exercise. The stated purpose was to provide better assessments of the performance of the Fund (E/ICEF/1993/14, Decision 1993/5). In the 1990s, the Office of Evaluation and Research piloted **five evaluations of country programmes**, one of the most noteworthy of which was the one of the [Country Programme 1992-96 in Haiti](#) (cf. report on the Internet). Some Country Offices also experimented with approaches to the self-evaluation of country programmes. However, CPE never became a systematic feature of the Country Programme Process and has consistently been considered an optional exercise (cf. the old “Book D” and various versions of the more recent Programme Policy and Procedure Manual). It should also be mentioned that the Evaluation Office conducted [CPE in Mauritius in 2001](#) and in the [Pacific Island Countries in 2002](#) (the latter jointly with Australia).

## **2. The CPE Methodology and Guidance Development Project**

In March 2003, DFID approved funding of a three-year project for **CPE Methodology and Guidance Development**, which was to be implemented by UNICEF’s Evaluation Office at NYHQ. The total amount granted to this project is UKL 975,000, corresponding to approximately USD 1,500,000, which is in principle available until the end of 2006.

As specified in the project proposal of 23 January 2002, the project serves UNICEF’s *goal* stated in the MTSP (2002-2005) to make Country Programmes of Cooperation more effective in terms of focus, implementation strategies and coordination within UNDAF and with other development partners. Well-designed and well-coordinated country programmes are to be based on principles of **programme excellence (human rights based programming approach and results-oriented management)** and equipped with adequate project / programme development, monitoring and evaluation tools (**Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan – IMEP**).

The *purpose* of the project is to strengthen the Country Programme Process. The project involves the development of a **comprehensive framework** to guide CPE, including the establishment of basic **principles and methodologies**, support to a limited number of **field tests** as well as **staff skills development**. Regional Offices are to be closely associated with the implementation of the project component and assume full responsibility for CPE by the end of the MTSP (for further details cf. attached **Logical Framework** in Annex 1).

## **3. Activities deployed and results achieved in 2003**

As far as **staffing** is concerned, the CPE project has been a major feature of the 2003 and 2004 workplans of the Senior Programme Officer Evaluation (P 5 level) in the Evaluation Office. Upon approval of the DFID funds, the Evaluation Office created a new Temporary Fixed Term (TFT) Post for a Project Officer at P 3 level, which was filled in May 2003 and whose contract ends on 31 December 2005. The project also involved senior staff in Regional and Country Offices concerned (especially TACRO, MENARO and EAPRO). Ample use was made of **external consultants** for the implementation of the project.

The **first major activity** undertaken in 2003 was a comprehensive **document and website review** of country programme level evaluation activities of all major external support agencies (bilateral donors, international financial institutions, UN funds, programmes and agencies, UNICEF itself and possibly major NGOs). The review has made an inventory of major evaluations themselves as well as of all available methodological tools and guidance documents. The project thus capitalizes on experiences and results of other agencies and avoids as much as possible duplication and false starts. The review has resulted in a **compendium of tables** (included on CD-ROM) and a comprehensive **review** (included in

the draft discussion paper “CPE in an era of change”). The information gathered on websites and from documents of bilateral and multilateral partners was validated with respective partners in early 2004.

**The second major activity** was to **research as to how to evaluate the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming (HRBAP)** within CPE. HRBAP became corporate policy in 1998 and since then the majority of Country Programmes have adopted the approach in one way or another. Guidance and monitoring of the process has been ensured by the Programme Guidance and Quality Assurance (PGQA) Section at NYHQ. **The major challenge is how to achieve programme excellence as intended in the MTSP, i.e. integrate principles of results-based management in rights-based programming.** The Evaluation Office has in the recent past cooperated closely with various Country and Regional Offices to further develop the Results-Based Programme Planning and Management (RBPPM). The new CPE approach was presented by the Evaluation Office at the **Second Global Consultation on HRBAP** held in Quito (Ecuador) on 21-24 September 2003. A discussion paper on “HRBAP and evaluation” was finalized in November 2003 and was circulated within UNICEF eliciting many responses especially from the field.

**The third major activity** in 2003 was to develop a **plan for pilot CPE** for the duration of the project (2003-2006). It was considered to be important to select Country Programmes to conduct CPE during the period 2004-2006. All Regional Offices were consulted as to the choice of countries on the basis of the calendar of Mid-Term Reviews and Country Programme Recommendations (cf. Annex 2). The process was started during the Global Consultation of Planning and M&E Officers held in New York on 09-13 June 2003. The **selection of pilot CPE** is made on the basis of the following **criteria**: timing (in principle coinciding with Mid-Term Reviews or Strategy Development for the next Country Programme), explicit interest of the Country Offices (and their partners), potential usefulness of the evaluation for further strategy development, geographical spread over the three year period and diversity of specific topical areas of interest and dimensions.

The approval of funding came too late to adequately select pilot CPE to be undertaken in 2003. It was nevertheless possible to conduct one pilot **CPE (Peru)**, which is in fact a **fourth major output** of the workplan for that year. The CPE Peru **report** and a lessons **learned exercise** were completed as scheduled. Both documents underwent final editing in August 2004. The CPE report has been published as a staff working paper.

#### **4. Activities deployed and results achieved in 2004**

The **CPE Morocco** took place between February and November 2004 (in cooperation with the Programme Evaluation Centre with the High Commissioner for Planning of the Government of Morocco and the Evaluation Unit of the Economic Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). First outputs included an inception report and an annotated outline. The consultants’ report was completed at the end of October 2004 and main findings, conclusions and recommendations were validated and enriched during a participatory workshop in Rabat in November 2004. The report is now ready for publication. A separate lessons learned exercise is under way.

The **CPE Cambodia** started in May 2004 and the draft report was completed at the end of 2004. It serves as an input into strategy development for UNDAF / UNICEF. The exercise will focus on three priority areas, viz. UNICEF’s role and contribution related to child survival (given the persistently high Infant Mortality Rates), child protection and child rights based community development in the context of deconcentration and decentralisation. The report will be ready for publication in early 2005.

The project also made an active contribution to the **Joint Strategy Review Tanzania**, which is entirely an initiative of the Government of Tanzania and the United Nations Country Team. UNICEF is an active member of the core group of agencies that lead the process (comprising also UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, WHO, UNAIDS). The exercise is entirely funded by UN partners in Tanzania. Technical support from the Evaluation Office of UNICEF NYHQ is highly appreciated and resulted in drafting of comprehensive TOR as well as briefing and guidance to the review team led by an outstanding expert from Tanzania. The main focus of the exercise is the assessment of the UN's contribution to the PRSP. The review will be completed with a workshop to be organized in January 2005.

As far as conceptual development is concerned, the various discussion papers on HRBAP and the possible place of CPE in wider contexts (UNDAF, PRSP etc.) has been drawn together in one major **staff working paper on "CPE as part of HRBAP: an effective strategy in an era of change"**, which was finalized in December 2004. It will be published in early 2005.

In March 2004, the Evaluation Office (in cooperation with the Strategic Information Section in the Division of Policy and Planning) hosted a **Global meeting of M&E Officers**, during which a whole day was dedicated to CPE. Participants included field staff and consultants who had been involved in CPE in Peru, Morocco, Cambodia and Tanzania. The meeting resulted in a consensus among HQ, regional and country level staff on key opportunities, issues and challenges related to CPE.

To the greatest possible extent pilot CPE are conducted jointly with donor and / or other UN agencies. **The pilot CPE in Morocco was conducted jointly with the Evaluation Unit of the Economic Cooperation Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.** Japanese participation in the CPE of Morocco contributed to making the cooperation between Japan and UNICEF more effective and also presented a welcome opportunity to cooperate on overall aid and evaluation approaches and methodologies.

#### **4. Further outlook for 2005- 2006**

The **pilot CPE** in principle support MTR and strategy development processes. There should be an adequate diversity of specific topical areas of interest and dimensions. Apart from the specific interest in HRBAP / RBPPM, one might think of the following cases (to be completed at a later stage): unstable contexts / humanitarian action (to be coordinated with real-time evaluation), reconstruction and rehabilitation, role of UNICEF in CCA / UNDAF, role of UNICEF supported Country Programmes in sector-wide or even broader approaches (SWAP, SIP, PRSP, Fast-Track, NEPAD etc.).

It has also been decided that the conceptual discussion should be completed by an additional discussion paper on **CPE in unstable contexts / humanitarian action**. This paper should in principle be completed in 2005. Once these various discussions have been completed, it will be possible to directly address **methodology and guidance for CPE**, which will be done in close cooperation with the Programme Guidance and Quality Assurance Section in the Division of Policy and Planning. To ensure maximum efficiency of the country programme process, a **study** will be undertaken on **strengths and weaknesses and the transaction cost of the present MTR mechanism** and the possible benefits of the CPE (see point 5 below). CPE will be strongly anchored in the context of UN Reform.

In its latest TCPR resolution<sup>1</sup>, the General Assembly stressed that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be assessed on the basis of their impact on the recipient countries as contributions to their capacity to pursue poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and

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<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 59/250, paras. 7 and 10

sustainable development. Reform efforts to enhance organizational efficiency should achieve concrete development results.

Taking into account the discussions at the Topical Issue Session, of the 2005 UNEG Annual Meeting, on the evaluation of UNDAF; in light of the interest expressed by evaluators from different UN organizations, a set of joint studies could be launched in 2005, with completion of products recommended for 2006. They are:

- 1) An Evaluability study of current UNDAF results matrices.
- 2) A Country evaluation with focus on the long-term development goals paradigm and alignment of the UNDAF and other instruments (assessment and planning) with national strategies (in relation to PRS, MDGs...).
- 3) A Country evaluation with focus on transition issues. This evaluation could be an evaluation additional to evaluations planned by OCHA and the humanitarian community, or an evaluation already planned which could integrate effectively transition issues.
- 4) A Country evaluation with focus on coordination in one priority area such as HIV/AIDS.
- 5) A Country evaluation with focus on the use of the UN normative work, whether it is integrated or not in operational activities. A few key sectors could be reviewed, from a country perspective, with concrete examples of the use and usefulness of conventions, standards, data and information exchange.
- 6) Synthesis report: how the UN works together; ways and means. The findings would be reported to ECOSOC in 2007 in the context of the triennial comprehensive policy review.

Another activity to be undertaken by 2006 will be the **organisation of more global and / or regional workshops** with participation of senior planning, programme and M&E staff from Regional Offices and selected Country Offices as well as representatives of national partner organisations and other agencies of the UN System. Limited availability of staff will be a challenge to the organisation of these workshops. An option will be to either integrate CPE related topics in existing workshops or at least organize these events as much as possible back-to-back with other events.

The workshops will in principle involve participants from countries having gone through pilot evaluations as well as staff from other countries preparing for similar exercises. The workshops will be major learning events, during which participants will reflect on experiences and be involved in suggesting improvements. The decentralised organisation of the workshops will enhance ownership in the process and results at the field level and also allow fully taking into account specific needs of individual regions. Each workshop will result in comprehensive reports and protocols that will feed the guidelines.

By early 2006, **comprehensive guidelines for CPE** will have been developed, which will be incorporated in mainstream programme planning guidance for the field (in close cooperation with PGQA). The idea is that CPE will become an integrated feature of the Country Programme Process and basically be coordinated with the UNDAF M&E Plan and UNDAF Evaluation.

## 5. Major opportunities, issues and challenges

Mainstreaming of CPE in the Country Programme Process involves tackling a number of major issues and challenges. The first is to clarify **the relationship between CPE and MTR and strategy development**. An emerging lesson seems to be that the MTR with its detailed assessment of projects and programmes involves a high transaction cost and that the more strategic CPE could as a matter of fact be a rather cost-effective management tool. On the other hand, CPE is not necessarily the best and most cost-effective tool for accountability. Its added value seems to be more linked to learning lessons and formulating options for the future. Accountability would better be served by improved programme design and more systematic monitoring and reporting mechanisms (IMEP, results matrices etc.). CPE is basically meant to support MTR and strategy development. However, A CPE is broader in scope than the MTR and includes a more in-depth assessment of the relevance as well as of the role, design and focus of UNICEF support to the realisation of children's and women's rights in a given country. The CPE asks more fundamental questions about effectiveness and efficiency and also addresses in a more or less comprehensive way dimensions of sustainability of supported initiatives and their replicability. CPE is a voluntary exercise, which is justified only when a CP is in need of a major renewal / re-alignment because of, for example, dramatic and rapid changes in the situation of children (e.g. due to HIV/AIDS), major policy changes in the country (e.g. the new Family Code in Morocco), new funding opportunities and / or new demands on the Country Programme by partners (a clearer and more constructive role in UNDAF and / or PRSP). CPE is an investment that is only justified if there is a dividend in the short and medium term in terms of Country Programme relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. In its present form it is a management tool for strategy development that is appropriate in some but not in all cases.

Another issue to be tackled with greater clarity is **the relationship between CPE and the UNDAF M&E Plan / UNDAF Evaluation**. The UN process of Simplification and Harmonisation seeks tools and processes of joint assessment, planning, programming and M&E that are common to the various UN funds, programmes and agencies. Joint programming would involve agreement on common UNDAF outcomes and harmonized formats and procedures for Country Programmes of each UN fund, programme or agency (e.g. Country Programme Document and Country Programme Action Plan). Country Programmes are presently still the basic construct for accountability to the Executive Boards of our respective funds, programmes and agencies. Under present arrangements, UNICEF's CPE would basically feed into the UNDAF evaluation, but the exact modalities need to be clarified (UNICEF actively contributed to the formulation of UNDAF evaluation guidelines in 2004). It is possible that the UN Reform will in the future go beyond joint programming and require joint programmes. In that case, the CPE toolkit will be useful in a broader UN context.

**The role and responsibility for coordinating and conducting a CPE** is another issue that will need to be clarified. The Board Decision 2002/9 concerning the evaluation function requests *UNICEF to support programme countries to evaluate their own programmes and to contribute to the evaluation capacity in these countries*. It also promotes the *full participation of the national authorities ... in all evaluation exercises conducted at country level*. CPE is hence basically a joint exercise between UNICEF and the government and other partners of the country in question. The CPE Morocco breaks new ground in the sense that the formal responsibility for the CPE is between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco and the UNICEF Representative, while both the Programme Evaluation Centre of the High Commissioner for Planning of the Government of Morocco as well as UNICEF's Evaluation Office (in cooperation with MENARO) provide technical support and ensure evaluation quality and impartiality. The CPE hereby takes on a strong challenge related to the development of national evaluation capacity. The Executive Board also decided that CPE will be a structural responsibility of the Regional Offices. CPE is already included in the reporting mechanism of the Regional Directors to the Executive Board on MTR and major evaluations. The Evaluation Office in New York Headquarters

assumes a role of technical coordination of pilot CPE under the present project. Its support role to Regional Offices for regular CPE in the future needs to be delineated.

Mainstreaming of the CPE will in the long run depend on the extent, to which its **transactional cost** can structurally be covered by the support and programme budgets of Headquarters / Regional Office and / or Country Programmes. This cost arises mainly from required competencies and availability of senior staff and the hiring of external consultants (international and national) as well as some administrative support to ease the additional burden on UNICEF staff. In the short run, pilot CPE will be funded by the DFID supported project, but in the long run a solution will have to be found as to how the CPE can become a sustainable / systematic feature of the Country Programme Process.

The CPE can also break new ground on a number of programming issues: the evaluation of the **HRBAP and its relation with RBM**; the **niche and comparative advantage** of UNICEF supported Country Programmes in relation to strategies and activities of other national and external partners that contribute to the realisation of children's and women's rights; a contribution to an assessment of **elements of internal and external risk analysis and management** (in cooperation with the Office of Internal Audit). CPE may thus contribute to central roles of the evaluation function as challenger, change agent and innovator.