Evaluation Office
UNICEF

Annual Report 2014

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Part 1: Overview

1. 2014 was a challenging and busy year for the Evaluation Office (EO). The Office completed six evaluations and two studies, fewer than 2013, and also undertook thorough dissemination of evaluations completed in 2013 and in-depth scoping for work to be conducted in 2015. A noteworthy achievement was the completion and dissemination of the Formative Evaluation of UNICEF’s Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) which will support continuing efforts across UNICEF to articulate, develop and mainstream MoRES. 2014 also saw the completion of the Evaluation of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector Strategy “Community Approaches to Total Sanitation” (CATS), the Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, UNICEF’s Upstream Work in Basic Education and Gender Equality 2003 – 2012 and the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (Parts 1 & 2).

2. Engagement with the UNICEF Executive Board continued throughout the year. In addition to the Plan for the Global Thematic Evaluations 2014 – 2017 and the Annual Report of the Evaluation Function and Major Evaluations in UNICEF, the EO presented three evaluations as well as a thematic synthesis report to the Board. Each presentation was followed by a management response and rich discussion which included calls by Board members to further strengthen the evaluation function and promote the use of evaluations to improve policies, programmes and partnerships. Several evaluations completed in 2013 were widely disseminated in 2014. Scoping exercises were conducted for several evaluations to be conducted in 2015.

3. A significant step was taken towards strengthening national evaluation capacities with the passing of UN Resolution A/C.2/69.L.35 _Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level_ (December 2014). UNICEF made significant contributions to the work of the United Nations Evaluation Group and EvalPartners and much work lies ahead in national evaluation capacity development.

4. With respect to evaluation leadership, the Global Evaluation Committee approved Standard Operating Procedures for corporate level evaluations and provided advice on development of a global evaluation action plan to support the implementation of the revised evaluation policy.

5. Several advances were made with regards to system strengthening and the Global Evaluation and Research Database, the Global Management Response Tracking System and the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) were improved. A pilot version of the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, now known as the Planning for Research, Impact Monitoring and Evaluation (PRIME) was launched and was implemented in Central and Eastern Europe Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and South Asia (SA) regions.

6. The Evaluation Office conducted a special assessment of the integration of gender into UNICEF evaluations against the relevant indicators of the UN System-wide Action Plan (SWAP) on gender, a set of standards by which to measure gender integration and mainstreaming. Of the UNICEF evaluation reports assessed, only 5% fully met the requirements while 60% were rated as approaching requirements.
Part 2: Analysis of programme strategies and results: Development Effectiveness

7. The Evaluation Office does not receive funding specifically for development effectiveness activities. Actions taken to support Regional and Country Offices is reported below (see Outcome 200: Global Evaluation Management).

Part 3: Analysis of programme strategies and results: Global and Regional Funding

8. The Office Management Plan (OMP) for the Evaluation Office (EO) consists of two outcome areas, namely Global Evidence and Global Evaluation Governance (Outcome 100 for programmes) and Global Evaluation Management (Outcome 200 for management). The annual report analyses progress against each output within the two outcome areas.

OUTCOME 100: GLOBAL EVIDENCE AND GLOBAL EVALUATION GOVERNANCE

OUTPUT 101 - Independent Global-Level Evaluations: The increased availability of credible and useful global evaluation evidence enables stakeholders to make well-informed decisions on the strategies required and the changes needed to reach the goals to which the organization is committed.

Main results achieved in 2014 in relation to OMP/Annual Work Plan (AWP) targets and indicators

Institutional Effectiveness Evaluations

9. The institutional evaluations aim to contribute evidence at the strategic and policy levels relating to the effectiveness of programme and operational functions and strategic cross-cutting initiatives.

10. **Formative Evaluation of UNICEF’s Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES)**
    Strengthening the focus on equity is an overarching corporate priority for UNICEF. MoRES is an innovative approach to equity-focused programming and programme implementation. The evaluation, completed in August 2014, was undertaken to support continuing efforts across UNICEF to articulate, develop and mainstream MoRES through provision of objective and impartial evaluative evidence.

11. The formative evaluation applied both a theory-based and a case study approach to identify best practices as well as corrective measures. Seven in-depth and twelve light-touch MoRES country case studies were produced. Given the relevance of MoRES across UNICEF’s geographic and thematic areas, the strategic recommendations and conceptual clarity of this evaluation have the potential to strengthen UNICEF’s work in equity-focused programming. The evaluation constituted an important effort to understand how the equity focus has been applied as a corporate priority.

12. Noting that the equity refocus has significantly sharpened UNICEF’s attention to the needs of the world’s most vulnerable children, the evaluation found that MoRES represents a potent blend of strategic and operational intent. The case studies have shown that various elements of MoRES have been usefully
and productively applied, but there remain significant technical challenges that signal a need for stronger
guidance. The complexity of MoRES as an initiative has created significant operational challenges. While
MoRES has helped to generate better understanding of barriers to progress, there is limited evidence of
programme adaptation. The evaluation also concluded that the roll out of MoRES was not coordinated well
- thereby providing lessons to support more effective roll out of corporate priorities.

13. The key recommendations encourage UNICEF to (i) maintain the focus on equity, (ii) mainstream
strategically while providing guidance, (iii) resolve technical challenges, (iv) apply MoRES in ways
sensitive to country context and (v) learn lessons on change management.

14. The evaluation has been disseminated widely and actively inside UNICEF at headquarters (HQ)
and at the regional and country level, in line with a dissemination plan developed with input from regional
offices (ROs). The evaluation has been managed in a participatory fashion with strong involvement and
engagement from the case study countries and regions through a series of validation workshops thereby
maximizing ownership of the emerging recommendations prior the finalization of the report. A
management response is in the process of being developed and the evaluation will be presented at the
Executive Board session in June 2015. The findings, conclusions and recommendations remain relevant to
shaping and guiding the approach in future years.

15. **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)**
The evaluation of the UNICEF-led global household MICS programme was concluded in 2014. It is divided
into two parts. Part 1 examined Round 4 efforts and Round 5 preparations with regard to the technical issues
of design, field implementation, data processing, and analysis. Part 2 examined larger managerial issues of
the stability of funding, fit-for-purpose against various potential uses, and utilization of the data and reports
once completed. Both parts concluded that UNICEF continues to exercise effective global leadership in
social data due to the strength of the MICS program. The resulting recommendations for part 1 are already
being acted upon within the MICS 5 round. The recommendations for part 2 must be carefully considered
in 2015, as part 2 found that UNICEF lacks an overall strategic direction for the sustainable future of MICS.

16. **Evaluability Assessment of UNICEF’s Strategic Plan**
The Evaluability Assessment of UNICEF’s Strategic Plan was launched in 2014 aiming to help UNICEF
to determine the readiness of the Strategic Plan as a vehicle for guiding and measuring progress towards
realizing children’s rights. The evaluability assessment will determine the clarity of the plan’s logic and the
adequacy of indicators, tools and systems for measuring results. Conducting the exercise in the first year of
the programme cycle will allow UNICEF to put in place the systems needed to measure results in the long
term. The final evaluability assessment report is expected to be available in the first quarter of 2015.

17. **Communication for Development (C4D)**
A detailed scoping exercise for the first-ever corporate evaluation of C4D in UNICEF was completed. After
two rounds of consultations and considering data availability issues, it was determined that the evaluation
should focus on UNICEF’s capacity and action in this area (rather than programme level impact from C4D).
Terms of reference are finalized and the evaluation is ready for implementation in 2015.

**Programmatic Evaluations**

18. In 2014, programme evaluations included a focus on water, sanitation and hygiene, education, child
protection and nutrition.

19. **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH): Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS)**
A global WASH strategy evaluation on Community Approaches to Total Sanitation (CATS) was
completed. The evaluation included five country case studies, a global survey, a global document review,
numerous key informant interviews, and a consultative webinar with selected UNICEF staff. An extensive dissemination process was undertaken internally and externally. An internal highlight was a review of the report by the entire UNICEF CATS WASH community at the WASH global meeting in February 2014. This led to the identification by the WASH section of five priority aspects of the CATS strategy to be reviewed in light of the evaluation findings. The external dissemination highlight was the presentation of the evaluation within two sessions of World Water Week in Stockholm (September 2014). This evaluation has joined other recent major studies and evaluations of CATS approaches to improve the global evidence base. There is now a much higher awareness of issues that might hamper sustainable behavior change and a multi-partner commitment to rethink the support required.

20. Child Protection: UNICEF’s Strategies and Programme Performance to protect children from violence. A major comprehensive evaluation examining UNICEF’s strategies and programmes to protect children from violence was implemented throughout 2014. The evaluation includes four detailed country reports for Tanzania, Ghana, Bangladesh, and Mexico and a desk review of programmes in fourteen countries. The final report is expected in the first quarter of 2015. The evaluation represents the first attempt by UNICEF to assess its work with respect to prevention of, and response to violence against children, which is increasingly recognized as a universal problem.

21. The Evaluation of UNICEF Programmes to Protect Children in Emergencies (CPiE), completed in 2013, was disseminated widely through presentations at a Board session, webinars and network meetings in 2014. The management response to the evaluation was completed in a timely manner and is used to strengthen planning and implementation of programmes to protect children in emergencies. The evaluation had a strong follow up and management response. Key actions include increased work on disability issues, finalization of the MRM global guidance, development of resource mobilization strategy for the Children Not Soldiers Campaign, capacity building of African Union on child protection, and launch of the CPiE Post Graduate Diploma together with partners.

22. The Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Accelerating Change, completed in 2013, was disseminated widely among various stakeholders and it is benefitting the second phase of the joint programme directly. Lessons from the evaluation regarding the use of a social norms approach are being applied for programme initiatives to address early marriage, which is a rapidly growing area of work in UNICEF.

23. The Learning from Nutrition Programme Evaluations: A Thematic Evaluation Synthesis Report was completed and presented to the Board in September, together with the management response. The findings of this report are also being used as an input in the scoping of a comprehensive evaluation which will assess UNICEF’s work in preventing malnutrition (stunting in particular) during early childhood. The report was based on a Meta-Analysis of UNICEF’s Nutrition Programme Evaluations (2009-2013).

24. The dissemination of the Global Evaluation of Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) continued in 2014. The dissemination included a presentation of the findings and the management response at the Board session in June, which drew considerable discussion regarding the consequences of severe malnutrition and the need to mobilize national governments and partners at large to address acute malnutrition in children under five.

25. A Joint Evaluation of the Partnership Initiative, Renewed Effort against Child Hunger and Undernutrition (REACH) commenced this year as a collaborative initiative among the evaluation offices of World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO). The evaluation is funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). Following a jointly developed terms of reference, team recruitment was completed by the WFP Evaluation Office who are leading the management of the evaluation. UNICEF is represented
in the evaluation management group and the evaluation reference group which includes all REACH partners. The evaluation focuses on assessing the REACH country level initiative and the extent to which the systems, processes and activities developed have collectively contributed to the overall achievements of objectives and impact on country scale-up of nutrition. The substantive work in implementing the evaluation will occur in the first half of 2015.

26. **Education: Evaluation of UNICEF’s Upstream Work in Basic Education and Gender Equality**

The Evaluation of UNICEF’s Upstream Work in Basic Education and Gender Equality was completed in 2014. The purpose of the evaluation was to examine UNICEF’s contribution in “upstream” work in education, to assess the extent to which UNICEF engages strategically in education sector policy articulation and advocacy at the global and regional levels, and determine whether this engagement translates to desired transformations in education sector policy, practice, and strengthening of the education system. The evaluation found that UNICEF’s education upstream work does achieve results related to policy commitments and changes in education sector procedures. Upstream work was deemed highly relevant in terms of its consistency with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities, and partners' and UNICEF’s policies. It was also found internally coherent in terms of understandings of what constitutes upstream work, even though there were differences on perceptions about the most strategic pathways to achieve upstream results. UNICEF was also found to be a credible partner, trusted by governments to bring key technical contributions and capacities in several education sub-sectors, even though there is a trade-off in that a closer relationship with governments may compromise UNICEF’s perceived neutrality.

27. In terms of gaps, the evaluation found that UNICEF does not always have the right technical capacities for upstream work in the education sector, and that UNICEF’s capacity-building efforts have focused too much on individuals rather than institutions, hence technical assistance provided by UNICEF may create dependency. While results in policy commitments and changes in education sector procedures were appreciated, UNICEF’s upstream work and/or influence had not resulted in desired behavioral change, such as governments’ commitments to increase education sector financing, a necessary condition for sustainability of many of the upstream results. The evaluation is scheduled for presentation at the February 2015 Board session.

28. A scoping exercise for the Evaluation of Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) and School Readiness included conducting a ‘stock-taking’ exercise to determine the status and use of ELDS and similar standards, implementation coverage, and areas of evaluative inquiry. Following the scoping exercise, an Evaluation of Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) and School Readiness was launched and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2015. The purpose is to examine UNICEF’s contribution in strengthening national capacities for providing high quality early learning programmes and improving children’s school readiness. The evaluation has a clear programmatic focus, investigating what country programmes set out to do in early learning initiatives, examining whether there is a coherent program approach to ELDS and school readiness that will increase the likelihood of achieving intended results/outcomes, determining how programmes are being implemented and taking account of the actual results that have been achieved.

29. A synthesis of the Let Us Learn Initiative (LUL) Formative Evaluation was completed. LUL is a unique private partnership initiative that allows for flexible and innovative programming to address inequities in education access and related education outcomes. LUL has been piloting solutions to address challenges and barriers to education in five diverse country contexts over the period 2011-2014. The LUL initiative was intended to sharpen the equity focus in both programming and monitoring of results in each participating country, and to benefit excluded and/or marginalized children and youth. A series of country-based and country-led evaluations for innovations on equity were completed for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Madagascar and Nepal in 2014, while a Liberia evaluation was discontinued due to the Ebola crisis.
synthesis of evaluation findings and lessons indicate some level of success in programming for equity, as demonstrated by twenty programmes across five countries, all with equity components. However, LUL still requires a coherent equity approach that goes beyond gender to address other forms of inequity (e.g., lack of education access and/or participation due to disability, extreme poverty, etc.) with a deliberate focus on improving the quality of education for targeted populations. Evaluations also found that while programming innovation remains largely aspirational, LUL funding arrangements were agile, flexible and responsive enough to allow UNICEF Country Offices (COs) to improve the equity components of existing programmes (girls’ education and out-of-school children programmes).

30. A scoping exercise was conducted for the end-of-year Evaluation of Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (PBEA), a four-year programme aimed at building a culture of peace that is necessary to strengthen resilience, social cohesion and human security in selected countries that are recovering from conflict, and/or are at risk of experiencing conflict. The overall end-of-programme evaluative strategy serves the dual purposes of learning and accountability and will commence in February 2015. Given PBEA’s innovative nature and prematurity for institutionalization and scale-up within UNICEF, a traditional summative evaluation of PBEA outcomes will be complemented with a developmental evaluation of two implementation sites. Already underway, the developmental evaluation offers reflections and organizational learning on programme implementation and the developmental journey it undertook.

31. Gender: Joint Evaluation of Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System. In June 2014, Members of the Executive Boards of the respective agencies were briefed on the results of this evaluation and on the joint management response prepared by the agencies. The evaluation, completed in 2013, was led by UN Women with support from the evaluation offices of several agencies. It has yielded valuable lessons to improve the design and implementation of future joint gender programmes.

Humanitarian Evaluations

32. In 2014, the EO’s humanitarian portfolio included the following: the Real-Time Evaluation (RTE) of UNICEF’s Humanitarian Response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (see below); and preparatory work for two evaluations: the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Crisis in Syria and the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response and Programming Strategies to the Crisis in the Central African Republic (both expected to begin implementation in 2015).

33. At the inter-agency level, the EO made significant contributions to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response and the IASC Co-ordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) initiative for Syria, which produced a context analysis to support future evaluation efforts. The EO also contributed to the planning of three joint evaluations: the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Response to Conflict in South Sudan, the IAHE of the Humanitarian Response in the Central African Republic, and the IAHE of the Humanitarian Response in Iraq (expected to commence in 2015).

34. The Real-Time Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines assessed the first four months of the response. The evaluation found that UNICEF’s response in general has been timely, appropriate and relevant to the needs of affected communities, effective in adding value to the wider response, and linked to recovery and longer-term priorities. UNICEF played a key role, for instance, in restoring the municipal water supply in Tacloban City for some 200,000 people within a week of the typhoon. In education, the initial provision of temporary learning spaces and school kits was timely and appropriate, as was the emphasis on psychosocial support. The interventions in nutrition had very limited coverage, hampered by lack of partner and government capacity in emergency nutrition, as well as weaknesses in UNICEF’s own capacities. The child protection component was not prepared for the
emergency and had to count on external support. The use of unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable individuals and households was widely considered successful and was appreciated, though it took some time to be widely embraced as a strategy and its coordination needed improvement.

35. UNICEF had significant responsibilities as co-lead of the Education, Nutrition and WASH clusters, as well as the Child Protection area of responsibility. UNICEF’s performance was rated highly satisfactory, particularly with regard to overall leadership. Finally, the real-time evaluation considered the extent to which UNICEF’s organizational processes, systems and management structures helped or hindered the response to Typhoon Haiyan. The activation of the Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure (CEAP) and Level 3 protocols was appropriate and timely, and the Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) generally proved their worth, in particular in terms of speed of staff deployment, recruitment and procurement. The recommendations call for a more structured approach to emergency preparedness, the promotion of synergy between sectors, inclusion of the use of cash transfers, the need to develop a wider partner base in the Philippines, and a review of the approval process of Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) in crisis-prone countries. This evaluation, together with the management response, was presented at the Executive Board in January 2015.

36. In parallel, UNICEF participated in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response, led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) together with FAO and WFP. This inter-agency humanitarian evaluation, the first one of its kind following the launch of the Guidelines for IAHE of Large Scale System-Wide Emergencies in April 2014, sought to provide an assessment of the extent to which the inter-agency response met the planned collective objectives set in the Strategic Response Plan. It also assessed the extent to which response mechanisms of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and Transformative Agenda (TA) successfully supported the response. Overall, the evaluation found that the inter-agency response effectively contributed to emergency needs being met through a timely and relevant immediate response. Earlier and more tailored approaches to support recovery, and particularly to restore livelihoods would have been beneficial to meet early recovery targets. The use of different approaches for beneficiary targeting by agencies caused community confusion and dissatisfaction. Innovations, notably in scaled-up cash-based approaches and engagement with communities through accountability and communication mechanisms, were largely effective.

37. With respect to Syria, the EO participated, together with OCHA, UNHCR, WFP and Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), in the IASC CALL for Syria. Based on lessons learned from previous experiences with large-scale multi-agency evaluations, and with the assumption that many agencies will conduct agency specific evaluations of their response in Syria and neighboring countries for accountability purposes, the IASC Steering Committee for Humanitarian Evaluations established the CALL for Syria to co-ordinate evaluation and lesson-learning across humanitarian actors to contribute to improved evidenced-based decision making and humanitarian intervention in Syria and in the sub-region. To this end, the EO contributed, in particular to the creation of a Syria CALL Evaluation Portal to provide access to evaluations, reviews and other resources related to the crisis in Syria. The portal includes a Common Context Analysis covering Syria and neighboring countries affected by the crisis and a Common Evaluation Framework as a support for conducting specific evaluations.

38. The dissemination of two evaluations completed in 2013, the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Cluster Leadership Agency Role (CLARE) and the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Emergency Preparedness Systems continued.
EO support to major evaluations commissioned by other offices at HQ/RO/CO level

39. EO provided technical support to a major regional evaluation led by the CEE/CIS RO that examined the impact on children of the support provided by UNICEF and the European Union (EU), including through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), to juvenile justice system reforms in the CEE/CIS region during the 2006-2012 period. The evaluation which will of considerable use to the other regions as well is due for completion in the first half of 2015.

40. The EO continued to support the Mozambique CO in the end line impact evaluation of the One Million Initiative (WASH), which had successful baseline (2008) and mid-line (2010) exercises. The end line analysis has been significantly delayed by the external institute contracted to do the analysis, who underestimated the work and therefore under-budgeted the person power needed, despite having done the analysis of the previous two rounds. This, as well as a major dissemination event conducted with the Mozambique CO, will be completed in early 2015.

41. In addition, the EO is providing support to the Ghana CO on a longitudinal impact evaluation which assesses the impact of various communication channels on health-related behavioural change. The evaluation is designed as a randomized control trial to assess the effectiveness of different Communication for Development (C4D) behaviour change interventions to promote the adoption of key behaviours and reduce child morbidity and mortality. The results of the evaluation will inform programmes supporting behaviour change interventions so that they effectively use a mix of interventions to support behaviour uptake by community members. The baseline survey was completed in 2012 and the mid-line in 2014.

42. Holistic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks covering entire sectors or sub-sectors are rare in UNICEF, but are now seen to be useful for planning the entirety of the evidence strategies. 2015 saw the start of the EO efforts to develop frameworks in two instances: in peace-building and in WASH.

Shortfalls and constraints

43. An Evaluation of Advocacy and Policy Change was postponed to 2015 due mainly to competing priorities and delays in filling a senior evaluation specialist post.

44. For the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Work on C4D, scoping was completed but the implementation was postponed to 2015 due to the limited availability of counterparts and the time required to proper scoping which was done internally.

45. The Evaluation of UNICEF’s Alignment with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could not commence due to competing priorities.

Lessons learned (general)

46. In 2014, the EO’s performance was strong in dissemination and planning/scoping work dissemination, but it had shortfalls in delivering several evaluations. These shortfalls were partly due to the fact that two senior posts remained vacant for most of the year, but also because EO staff dedicated considerable time in dissemination of evaluations completed in 2013 and in scoping evaluations which will be implemented in 2015. 2015 is expected to see many finalized evaluations, as EO team is complete and scoping of several major evaluations has been completed. The EO also dealt with many requests that are outside its core accountability, which diverted staff effort. There are lessons here around prioritization. In the coming years, the EO will focus more closely on its core responsibilities, in particular, delivery of the corporate evaluation plan.
Considerable experience has been gathered over the years in improving the use of evaluations through dissemination and management response process. A review, scheduled for 2015, will draw on this experience, consolidate the lessons and identify additional measures required to make optimal use of each evaluation, within UNICEF and more widely.

Lessons learned (humanitarian)

While conducting the IASC Humanitarian Evaluation of the Typhoon Haiyan Response, the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (IAHE) group piloted the new Guidelines for IAHE of Large Scale System-Wide Emergencies. This yielded valuable feedback for learning and future development. For instance, IAHEs are not intended to replace sector or agency evaluations, as they rely extensively on previous reviews, RTEs and secondary data to assess progress against planned results. In the case of Typhoon Haiyan the scope of the IAHE proved challenging to define given that the UN Strategic Response Plan (SRP) forms only one part of the response and there was no data to provide a comprehensive overview of the entire relief effort. These, among other factors, made it difficult to assess the extent of the contribution that the UN response made to results in terms of outcomes.

In planning for the Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Crisis in Syria and in the Sub-Region (expected to begin in 2015), the EO undertook an evaluation planning and scoping exercise that led to well-focused design of the terms of reference and a high degree of ownership by the regional and country offices concerned. This approach is recommended for future large-scale humanitarian evaluations.

In 2014, UNICEF continued to engage with several initiatives aimed at reinforcing partnerships, especially participation of CSOs and non-traditional actors (e.g. parliamentarians) on evaluation for national evaluation capacity development at the global, regional and national level.

Main results achieved in 2014 in relation to OMP/AWP targets and indicators

In 2012 UNICEF founded EvalPartners, a global movement aimed at reinforcing innovative partnerships to enhance the capacities of CSOs to influence policy makers and to engage in national evaluation processes, contributing to improved country-led evaluation systems and policies that are equity-focused and gender equality responsive. UNICEF remains a member of the EvalPartners Management Team. In this capacity, UNICEF through the EO has substantively contributed to the creation of national evaluation policies in various countries, to the establishment of civil society and parliamentarians development evaluation fora, and to peer-to-peer initiatives to promote south-south and triangular cooperation among professional development associations, as well as supported and participated in regional and national evaluation conferences and conclaves. In 2014, EvalPartners established a Steering Committee (EsCom) to manage a developmental evaluation of EvalPartners. The EO, as an active member of this EsCom, has participated substantively in the selection of the firm and the overall management of the evaluation. The report, which is in its finalization phase, gives due recognition to the role played by UNICEF in the
conceptualization and development of EvalPartners and to its contribution to overall national evaluation capacity development.

52. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)
UNICEF continued to engage substantively in UNEG by participating in a number of taskforces and initiatives, thus contributing to the achievement of UNEG’s pre-established strategic objectives. UNICEF was instrumental in supporting the organization in partnership with the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia Pacific (UNEDAP) to deliver the 2014 Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE); it also supported the first ever High-Level Forum on Evaluation and Sustainable Development Goals held in Bangkok in June 2014. As part of the preparation for the International Year of Evaluation in 2015 (EvalYear), UNICEF has actively contributed to shaping the agenda for 2015 and the Global Evaluation Agenda for 2016-2020. These agendas together with the General Assembly Resolution A/C.2/69/L.35 “Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level” will set the path for the national evaluation capacity development activities that the EO will implement in 2015 in the frame of the International Year of Evaluation.

53. MyM&E
UNICEF continued to be a key partner with the founding member, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), and EvalPartners in the development of this key global evaluation platform. Although the management of MyM&E moved to UN Women, also a key partner within this global initiative, at the end of 2013, UNICEF has continued to make a significant contribution. Among other things, UNICEF has contributed to learning resources, promoted knowledge exchange, and compiled good practices and lessons learned, and played a key role in the finalization and launch of an e-learning course in Arabic, featuring 33 world-level keynote speakers.

Lessons learned

54. UNICEF’s support to national capacity development has been significant throughout 2014. EO has been engaged in various initiatives through UNEG and EvalPartners. EO has also been instrumental in supporting regional initiatives e.g. UNEDAP as well as national initiatives led by UNICEF COs. The experience reveals the need for EO to better strategize the ways NECD support should be handled in the future. The 2015 UN resolution on national evaluation capacity development is to be seen as an opportunity to further shape the way forward in terms of NECD support.

OUTCOME 200: GLOBAL EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

Output 201: Evaluation Leadership

Evaluation Leadership: The EO exercises leadership in evaluation by mobilizing common or harmonized efforts within UNICEF and the global development community to measurably increase the use of high quality evaluation results to support organizational learning, accountability and performance improvement.

Main results achieved in 2014 in relation to OMP/AWP targets and indicators

55. Executive Board
UNICEF continued to benefit from strong interest in evaluation from the Executive Board. The Board was informed of the Plan for Global Thematic Evaluations at the February session, and offered a supportive decision in the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function at the June session.
56. At the request of the Board, Reports on evaluation findings were made in June on the Evaluation of CMAM and in September on (i) Evaluation of the UNICEF CLARE, (ii) Evaluation of UNICEF CPiE; and (iii) Learning from Nutrition Programme Evaluations: A Thematic Evaluation Synthesis Report. Each of these were accompanied by a management response by the respective counterpart division and elicited substantive feedback by the Board members. Presentation of evaluation reports encouraged constructive interest by Board members in the quality and results of evaluation work.

57. Global Evaluation Committee
The Global Evaluation Committee approved a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for global thematic evaluations, covering the accountabilities and schedules for the completion of global evaluations and respective management responses. It has been issued and is now in effect.

58. Evaluation Strategy Development, Dissemination, and Resourcing
The revised evaluation policy was approved by the Executive Board in June 2013. Subsequently, a Plan for Global Thematic Evaluations 2014-2017 was developed and endorsed by UNICEF management and the Board at the beginning of 2014. This lists evaluation topics to be addressed by global thematic evaluations commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Office. In contrast with earlier plans, the new Plan covers a longer period, expands the types of efforts included (e.g. methodological development), and was directly anchored to the evident needs of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

59. Initial steps were taken to develop an action plan covering work required to implement the revised evaluation policy and further strengthen the evaluation function. Further work is needed to develop a comprehensive approach and this is a priority for 2015.

60. Regarding resources, the core budget of the EO has historically not been sufficient for delivering the planned evaluations and must be annually supplemented. There were major improvements in 2014. Most importantly, the amount of core resources allocated to evaluation was doubled starting in 2014, which halves the persistent annual gap and makes it more likely that the Evaluation Plan can be completely implemented. Evaluation was also added as a dedicated budget line within the thematic funding allotments, which delivered significant funds during the year. No evaluation activities were delayed in 2014 due to budget limitations.

61. In addition, modest funding from donors was utilized, notably from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and funding for 2015 was secured from Switzerland and United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID).

62. Inter-Agency Relations and Governance, WFP Peer review, ALNAP
The Evaluation Office leads a range of inter-agency activities, notably on joint evaluations (described above) and on joint action on issues around harmonization on evaluation issues. In recent years, evaluation has received increased attention from UN Member states. The United Nations General Assembly resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR)\(^1\) emphasized the importance of evaluation and the use of evaluation evidence, and called for effective arrangements for independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE). To guide efforts on ISWE, an Interim Coordination Mechanism was set up and a policy on ISWE was adopted.\(^2\) Terms of Reference for two pilot evaluations have been developed and efforts made to mobilize resources with a view to undertaking the evaluations in 2015. The Evaluation Office has provided advice and assistance in support of the initiative from the outset.

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\(^1\) A/RES/67/226

\(^2\) Ref: ISWE policy
63. In December, for the first time, the General Assembly approved a Resolution specifically on evaluation. The Resolution invites UN entities “to support, upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation in accordance with their national policies and priorities”. Activities will be reported in 2016 within the Secretary-General’s progress report on the QCPR.

64. A key vehicle for harmonization of evaluation work is the UNEG, a professional network composed of the evaluation units of organizations across the UN system. It has supported system-wide evaluation coherence by developing common norms and standards for use across the UN, as well as developing and sharing tools and guidance. In 2013, UNEG adopted a new strategy with a stronger emphasis on advocacy and outreach including closer engagement with the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Evaluation Coordination Group of the international development banks. This shift in orientation has already been reflected in the Evaluation Week held in Bangkok in March 2014, and in several seminars and side events held in New York. In particular, UNEG supported the process leading to adoption of the UNGA Resolution on evaluation capacity building. UNEG is also a member of the ISWE Interim Coordination Mechanism.

65. Peer reviews can be a powerful mechanism for promoting adherence to agreed norms and standards. In recent years, UNEG has undertaken a series of peer reviews among its members, with support from the Evaluation Network of the Development Assistance Committee. The Executive Director of the World Food Programme invited UNEG to undertake such a peer review. Chaired by the Director of the UNICEF Evaluation Office, the peer review was launched in 2013 and successfully completed in 2014 with the presentation to the WFP Executive Board of the final report and the formal WFP management response.

66. Overall, UNEG is an important channel for enhancing the coherence of evaluation across the UN. Recognizing this, UNICEF continues to support and lead its various activities.

67. Contribution to UNICEF Governance: Effectiveness & Efficiency
The evaluation function depends on the procurement of skilled evaluation contractors for much of its work. Procurement of services was a major issue noted in the 2013 Effectiveness and Efficiency exercise. In 2014, a major internal audit on this theme was conducted. The EO made very detailed inputs, including calling an office-wide meeting to speak with the auditors. The audit report is scheduled to issue in early 2015.

Shortfalls and constraints

68. Evaluation matters received considerable attention in 2014 and the case could be made that a strong enabling environment for evaluation is being created within the UN, given the adoption of the first ever Resolution specifically on evaluation, as well as within UNICEF, given strong support from the Board and management. However, there is still some way to go to build, at all levels, the systems and capacities required for evaluation to deliver its full potential. The action plan for strengthening the evaluation function in UNICEF is therefore an important priority.

69. One specific area constraining effectiveness are the procurement arrangements in UNICEF, which are not well adapted to the requirements of a specialized function for which the market is not always well developed, especially where the areas to be evaluated are novel or within challenging environments.

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3 UNGA 69/237. Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level
4 UNEG Strategy 2014-2019
5 The Development Assistance Committee is a committee of members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
Creative solutions need to be found which allow rapid and efficient procurement of services without exposing the organization to undue risk.

Lessons learned

70. Engagement with the Board on evaluation has increased considerably in recent years and, in 2014, more evaluations were presented to the Board that in previous years. Similarly, the system of presenting management response to evaluation findings by the senior management has been fully institutionalized. For each evaluation presented at the Board, detailed presentations and discussion on findings and management response takes place at the informal session, and brief sessions are held at the formal Board sessions. While this system has worked well, there is a need for further sensitization and evolution of an accountability-based approach whereby the management responses to evaluation are periodically reviewed by the respective offices to ensure that the planned actions are resourced and implemented in a timely manner to improve results for children.

Output 202: Systemic Strengthening of UNICEF’s Evaluation Function:
Key stakeholders at the decentralized and global levels better meet their evaluation accountabilities and fulfill the Evaluation Policy objective of robust and useful evaluation practice across all levels and units of the Organizations.

Main results achieved in 2014 in relation to OMP/AWP targets and indicators

71. Knowledge Management

In 2014, the EO and the Office of Research (OoR) continued to cooperate on multiple streams of work. In general, EO was a contributor to OoR-led activities, many of which drew upon EO thinking and leadership. The 2014 results were as follows:

- A common taxonomy of research, monitoring and evaluation terms was completed by OoR, building on prior work by the Evaluation Office. This common vocabulary will guide UNICEF on issues of technical support, rigor, and quality expectations.
- The OoR built on its report on the ethics of research with children to develop proposed guidelines on internal processes for ethics reviews of all research and evaluation efforts. The draft was discussed by the HQ level Research Task Force in December 2014 and will be finalized in the first quarter of 2015. The Guidelines will set out, for the first time in UNICEF, consistent processes for ethics reviews. Once approved, the EO will join the other evidence functions in a common rollout.
- The corporate evaluation database was expanded to include research (see below).
- The OoR completed the methodological briefs on key designs and tools to conduct impact evaluations. These were prepared by an outside party commissioned and managed by OoR. The EO was a partner providing design inputs and quality control.
- The OoR has developed guidance on the quality assurance processes and norms for the conduct of research. To avoid duplication or competing with evaluation approaches this guidance was fully coordinated with the EO. This will be considered for approval in the first quarter of 2015.
- Under the leadership of the Legal Office, and in combination with other interested parties, the development of an updated position on intellectual property was greatly advanced. It will cover many heretofore weakly guided areas, including the control of IP and licensing arrangements, among other issues. Approval is expected early in 2015.
• Once approved and implemented, these several related norm-setting and infrastructural advances will have major positive benefits on the consistency, reliability, ethics, and accessibility of the evidence UNICEF generates on the impact of its programming.

72. The integration of research in the Global Evaluation Database (EBD) was achieved in 2014 as part of the further strengthening of UNICEF’s evidence functions to help achieve better results for children. The EBD was accordingly renamed the Global Evaluation and Research Database (ERDB). The year also saw a rise in the number of evaluations submitted to the database, with 100 reports submitted out of 122 that were reported completed by COs (2013 evaluations); of the 100 reports, 96 reports met the evaluation criteria, compared to 79 reports that met the criteria in 2013.

73. A key innovation in 2014 was the introduction of the live performance dashboard for evaluation as part of the upgraded version of the inSight dashboard. The dashboard draws directly on data from all evaluation data systems and makes the data and information available in real time, with greater flexibility in terms of allowing viewers to take in aggregate views or “drill down” to specifics. The dashboard also includes information on spending on evaluation which ensured real-time tracking of funds spent and committed during the year (2014). At the end of year, spending on evaluation as a percentage of all programme expenditure stood at 0.5%, an improvement over previous years but still far below the 1% required by the revised evaluation policy. The dashboard has facilitated access to real-time information, providing colleagues in the countries and regions with the opportunity to identify and react to performance gaps and challenges more swiftly.

74. 2014 saw a rise in the number of evaluations submitted to the database, as well as a sustained growth in the quality of UNICEF’s evaluations via the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). There was also a rise in the submission of management responses and in the uptake and use of evaluation results, based on the implementation rate of management responses. The EO also shifted from a manual tracking and monitoring process to real-time tracking, monitoring and reporting on the overall performance of the function via the Global Evaluation inSight Dashboard.

75. In 2012, the UN adopted a System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on gender equality and the empowerment of women, comprising a set of standards by which to measure gender integration and mainstreaming in its work. The new policy tasked UN agencies to consider six distinct elements in the promotion of gender and empowerment, of which evaluation was one. In 2014, using the SWAP standards in parallel with the usual GEROS review, the Evaluation Office assessed UNICEF evaluations completed in 2013. This considered compliance with the system-wide gender mainstreaming standards. The results were used to report back to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in UNICEF evaluations, as well as helping to identify key areas for improvement in years to come. This first cycle of SWAP analyses marked an important step in the long-term commitment to gender equality in programming and evaluation in UNICEF and across the UN system. Overall, UNICEF’s score was rated as “approaching requirements”, with 60% of evaluations approaching requirements and 5% fully meeting the requirements. However, some 35% were below the SWAP standards.

76. The Global Management Response Tracking System tracks and monitors the uptake of evaluation results. The system was improved with new additions such as multiple editing rights, which ensured it met the needs of staff at the country level in line with the movement of staff across regions and countries. The orientation of CO staff in the use of the system was completed with the development of a guide on how to use the system. 2014 saw a rise in the submission of management responses at 92%, compared to 88% in the previous year; a 4% rise with almost 100% compliance rate in all the regions. This high rate of submission is a credit to the efforts of the regional and country teams; to the availability of real-time data and information which has helped countries and regions in their tracking and monitoring; and to continued quarterly follow up and reporting by the EO. Regarding the implementation rate for management
responses, the percentage of agreed actions reported as completed stood at 36% in 2014, compared to 24% in the previous year, a significant 12% rise. The percentage of actions underway stood at 45%, compared to 55% last year, showing a downward trend balanced by the upward trend in completed actions. Actions not yet started in 2014 stood at 19% compared to 21% in the previous year.

77. **Knowledge Management and systems to support the evaluation function** - In 2014, the EO continued to position itself as a key partner with IOCE and EvalPartners on country-led M&E to further strengthen national evaluation capacity from a knowledge perspective, and as a knowledge centre for the sharing and exchange of knowledge on country-led M&E systems at a global scale. The EO has published several publications on relevant topics as well as evaluation briefs to facilitate knowledge sharing and use. EvalNews, an internal knowledge product containing information on the latest developments in evaluation, current discussions and debates, access to resources as well as learning and training opportunities reached its 55th issue in December. EvalNews is disseminated among the UNICEF evaluation community as well as those who are interested in evaluation but not members of the community. The feedback received from its general audience but especially from COs and ROs is highly positive. EvalNews is seen as one of the most useful and important regular knowledge and technical support products in UNICEF, and sets a high standard.

78. **Evaluation Briefs** were issued for most of the evaluations managed by the EO in 2014. These four-page briefs are seen as a key aspect in strengthening the communication and dissemination of evaluation as well as communicating results to a much wider audience. During the year, these Knowledge Management initiatives have sustained the EO’s efforts in the continued drive and effort to develop and strengthen evaluation capacity at all levels, both internally among UNICEF staff and externally at the national level.

79. **Methodological Development and Technical Guidance**
In the Plan for Global Thematic Evaluations presented to the Board in February 2014, the EO committed itself to update or consolidate evaluation methodological guidance for areas of growing programmatic interest, especially any that were being under-supported in the broader evaluation profession. For 2014, the planned topic was **innovation**, so the Innovation team could have consolidated and effective M&E guidance to use throughout its network of lab-supported innovation efforts. Research was conducted in 2014 and leading figures identified in institutions like Johns Hopkins, WHO, and USAID. The EO will be able to conclude this effort in 2015, as well as address the M&E of policy work.

80. **Human Resources**
The EO and Organizational Learning and Development Section (OLDS), Division of Human Resources (DHR) collaborated in the development of a new e-learning course on evaluation in humanitarian settings. This course complements the existing e-learning course on the decentralized evaluation function at UNICEF and provides an orientation to the evaluation process in humanitarian situations. The learning objective of this course is to enable UNICEF staff at various levels to become familiar with the evaluation process in humanitarian situations, including: understanding the importance of evaluation in humanitarian settings, situating evaluation within the wider organizational context and strengthening the linkages between M&E of humanitarian action within UNICEF. The course had 124 enrolments but only 14 completions. OLDS is looking into the low rate of completion, as it may be due to the fact that the course should be completed alongside the earlier module which is what was intended. In 2015 DHR (OLDS) and the EO will look at updating and reprogramming both courses as well as doing more promotion of the both e-learning courses.

81. The EO continued to engage effectively with ALNAP in improving both the quality of the humanitarian evidence base and the capacity of the humanitarian system to conduct high-quality evaluations. Toward this end, the EO contributed to the development of a second and more advanced online
training on ‘Evaluation of Humanitarian Action’ in partnership with EvalPartners and UNEG. The course is planned to be launched in first quarter of 2015. The course enhances the capacity of staff conducting evaluation of humanitarian action, especially that of Government and non-governmental organization partners.

82. Coordination across levels of the organization
A global network meeting was held for M&E colleagues in July 2014. For the first time, this included members of the Office of Research to encourage collaboration across the various evidence functions to further strengthen evidence-based decision-making to help achieve better results for children. The expanded membership allowed the use of a new and idealistic acronym: “DREAM” (the Global Data, Research, Evaluation, Analytics and Monitoring Meeting). Part of the meeting was dedicated focused discussion on the implementation of the revised policy and the development of a global evaluation action plan to support the implementation of the policy.

83. During the meeting, participants agreed that an evaluation function commitment to managing for results requires an explicit theory of change as well as agreed performance standards, and that minimum standards can be set by drawing from the current UNEG standards. Furthermore, whatever the size of the office, role or location, all UNICEF offices are accountable for meeting the standards, although organizational arrangements within each office will vary. Finally, corporate accountability systems will draw on the framework of evaluation standards in assessing the performance of the function. The areas for which standards were discussed are (i) Leadership and management, (ii) Institutional framework, (iii) Evaluation Planning and coverage, (iv) Conduct of evaluations, (v) Utilization and (vi) Support to national evaluation capacity development. The outputs from the meeting will form the basis for the development of the plan in 2015.

84. An Evaluation Team Site was developed and implemented as a way of introducing and strengthening collaborative work on all of the EO’s activities as well as collaborating with regional colleagues. The site was used for the Global DREAM Meeting, which ensured it was a paperless meeting for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

85. Major advances were made in the design and implementation of a new management software tool, the e-version of the Integrated M&E Plan. Now called Planning for Research, Impact Monitoring, and Evaluation (PRIME), it was piloted in 2014 in the ESA Region. It will be implemented in two other regions (CEE/CIS and SA) in 2015. Orientation training and technical guidance was delivered to the three regions to support this rollout, and improvements were made in the actual software based on user feedback. To recap the rationale for PRIME all offices will enter their intended studies, surveys, research efforts and evaluations into this SharePoint software platform. This allows the identification of common interests, the coordination of technical support, progress tracking, and oversight according to regional and global standards. A review of the pilot regions will be held by mid-2015 and a decision made about whether it should be mandatory for the all of UNICEF.

86. UNICEF’s evaluation function is largely decentralized, with most evaluations being undertaken at the regional or country level. By undertaking initiatives towards creating an enabling institutional environment, strengthening staff capacity to manage, produce and use high quality and influential evaluations, the EO is contributing to enhancing programming and decision-making, as well as contributing to policy advocacy at regional and country levels and the strengthening of national systems through national evaluation capacity development efforts.
Shortfalls and constraints

87. All major activities planned for 2014 under output 202 have been met, apart from the development of a global evaluation action plan to support the implementation of the revised evaluation policy, including elaboration of common performance standards for the evaluation function. The global evaluation action plan and the evaluation function performance standards remains priorities for 2015.

Lessons learned

88. There have been various factors that have contributed to the success of the work related to systemic strengthening in 2014. First, this builds on a strong collaboration and partnership ethos, collaborating and partnering with other divisions/teams. For example, the EO worked in partnership and collaboration with the DHR (OLDS) team in the development of the internal e-learning modules, with OoR in extending the database to research towards further strengthening of the evidence functions as well as contributing to work on the taxonomy as key examples, with Division of IT Solutions & Services (ITSS), the Knowledge Management Support section on strengthening our systems and developing new systems for greater efficiency and effectiveness of the function and the EO. Success has also been due to the fact that the EO had enough financial resources to support work on strengthening and developing new systems.

89. The EO’s continued efforts towards the further improvement of the quality of UNICEF’s evaluations across UNICEF as well as the uptake of evaluation results through management responses, especially through the implementation of recommendations and actions has also been a success in 2014. The high success rate was due largely to the work by the regional and country teams, the real-time dashboard that helped countries and regions in their tracking and monitoring and corrective action that could be done in real time. Success can also be attributed to the quarterly monitoring, reporting and follow-up by the EO on the performance of the function via the key performance indicators (KPIs). Lastly, having a Long-term agreement in place for key areas of work such as the GEROS review and meta-analysis, and the UN SWAP review and analysis led to greater efficiency and effectiveness, including the ability to carry out the UN SWAP review at short notice, despite the fact there were staff constraints during the year.

90. Work still needs to be done around the quality of evaluations, as well as on the uptake and use of evaluation results. One key constraint during the year was the team capacity; the P5 systemic strengthening lead post was vacant until mid-November 2014. This had an impact in the delivery on the development of an action plan to support the implementation of the revised evaluation policy. More work also needs to be done around gender equality, as UNICEF’s evaluations were scored as “approaching” requirements. There were joint ventures with ROs, especially on the capacity development front. It is foreseen that support to regional activities will be more systematically undertaken in 2015 to support the revised Evaluation Policy, the Global Evaluation Agenda for EvalYear and the recently launched UN Resolution on National Evaluation Capacity Development.

Part 4: Analysis of Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Results

91. External Relations and Partnerships
This has been covered above under Output 201: Evaluation Leadership.
92. **Communications**
This has been covered above under Output: 202: Systemic Strengthening, in the sections on knowledge management.

93. **Evaluation and learning**
The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) has conducted a system-wide ‘Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System’, intended to support the professionalization of the evaluation function, address emerging challenges and contribute to strengthening the United Nations system. The study assessed 28 organizations across the United Nations system, focusing mainly on the central evaluation function while also reviewing the decentralized function where relevant.

94. UNICEF was a major contributor to the study in the design process, development of the main data gathering tools, and review of draft reports. The conclusions from this exercise will be covered by the EO within the report of the Evaluation Function to the June 2015 Board.

95. The ranking criteria included the degree of independence, utility of evaluation, contributions to national evaluation capacity development, and the level of readiness to support system-wide reforms. The findings included a ranking of the overall level of maturity of the central evaluation function for 28 EOs which placed UNICEF at a high level of maturity.

**Figure 1: Level of maturity of the central evaluation function (JIU study rating)**

96. A general conclusion of the study is that the evaluation function needs to be strengthened across all UN agencies, especially with regard to the use of evaluation evidence. UNICEF’s evaluation function ranks among those which are more advanced and falls at the higher end of the rating. In addition, the study notes UNICEF as one of only three agencies that actively support national evaluation capacity development. Nevertheless, there are areas identified by the study which UNICEF will need to further improve while contributing to the UN-wide initiatives that are aimed at greater professionalization and the broader issue of national evaluation capacity development.

97. **Management and operations**
Overall, management of EO resources has been satisfactory, with due attention to efficiency and risk. The existence of flexible funds allowed for the recruitment of two level 3 support professionals, and their presence helped ensure timely achievement of many items. The value added of this level was strongly apparent, and the decision was taken to convert one of these positions into a full time post, to be filled via the New and Emerging Talent Initiative process.

98. **Staff development** received increased attention. Two staff members benefitted from extended stretch assignments, one at the professional level (as a Deputy Rep in the LAC Region) and one at the GS
level (in support of Communication programming). In addition, the staff member who took the LAC assignment received a promotion to a higher level post serving Cambodia and neighboring countries in the EAP Region.

99. The increased global attention to WASH programs following the elevation of WASH to a Sustainable Development Goal has resulted in more funds for UNICEF WASH work. A portion of those funds have been given towards evaluation for a level 4 post. This was filled in November 2014, and the benefits will be apparent in 2015.

100. Increasing efficiency continued to be emphasized during the year. The primary improvement was the creation of an Evaluation Team Site. This internal collaborative tool permits far more efficient production of documents, archiving, engagement with field staff, and many other benefits.

101. Among the internal management partners that collaborated with the EO in 2014, EO team salutes the outstanding support received from the ITSS Division, which has helped the EO transition to several more robust and efficient platforms. Major upgrades were made in the ERDB and in the Management Response Database. In addition, the PRIME system and the Team Site are new initiatives that received strong support.

102. Two senior level posts were filled via recruitment in 2014: the Senior Evaluation Specialist—Humanitarian (August) and the Senior Evaluation Specialist—Systemic Strengthening (November). As both were vacant when the year began, it meant that 18 person months of expected leadership was not available, with the expected impacts on work plan completion. Contracting with retirees and temporary help agencies allowed UNICEF to support staff on maternity/paternity leave or on stretch assignments without any impact on ongoing administration.

Lessons learned

103. Recruiting committed and well-qualified external evaluation teams is a key factor in getting timely and good quality evaluation reports. However, EO’s success is mixed in this respect. EO has tried various options including institutional contracts but has had limited success in finding qualified consultants in short time frames. EO will need to consider learning from other institutions and identifying ways to tackle the problem in a sustainable manner including options for long-term institutional contracts.
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