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Annual report on the evaluation function and major evaluations in UNICEF

Summary

This annual report has been prepared in accordance with the evaluation policy (E/ICEF/2008/4) and the relevant Executive Board decisions (2008/4, 2008/22). The first section of the report provides a review of the implementation of the evaluation policy.

The annual report also contains a summary of major evaluations conducted at country, regional and global levels in the past year. The information on evaluations at the regional and country levels is based on reports prepared by the Regional Directors.

Introduction

1. The evaluation function helps ensure that UNICEF has timely, strategically focused and objective information on the performance of policies, programmes and initiatives to produce better results for children and women. It contributes to both organizational learning and accountability.
2. Most of the organization's evaluation work is carried out at the country level. Oversight and support are provided by the regional offices, which also conduct thematic and multi-country evaluations. Headquarters divisions also undertake evaluations related to their respective areas of responsibility.

* E/ICEF/2009/16.

3. The UNICEF Evaluation Office provides leadership for the evaluation function. In addition, it commissions independent evaluations, mostly at the global level, and undertakes joint evaluations in partnership with the United Nations system, and with programme countries and with other partners.

4. This report is structured in two parts. Section 1 reviews progress in implementing the evaluation policy, especially in relation to decentralized evaluation. Section 2 presents findings and recommendations of major evaluations undertaken during the past year. Wherever possible, a note on the management response and use of the evaluation is also included.

5. The annex provides an overview of the biennial workplan of the Evaluation Office.

I. Review of the implementation of the evaluation policy

6. The present review has been prepared in response to Executive Board decision 2008/4, which followed the approval of the evaluation policy. The emphasis in this review is on decentralized evaluation since most evaluations within the organization take place at the field level. Improving the quality of decentralized evaluation is critical to upholding the evaluation policy commitments and achieving the key performance indicators for evaluation contained in the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP).

7. Information for this review comes from Evaluation Office reporting; results achieved and observations submitted by regional offices, including country office contributions; management information systems reporting; and a report by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit on the management of evaluations in country offices.

8. It should be noted that no holistic external review has been carried out since the policy was adopted. However, UNICEF participated in the *2008 Global Accountability Report*, an annual assessment carried out by One World Trust, a think tank based in the United Kingdom. UNICEF ranked first in evaluation capabilities amongst intergovernmental bodies that participated in that year's review.

A. Management endorsement and regional roll-out

9. Strong management support for the evaluation policy has been achieved at all levels, with most regions now identifying clear strategies to meet policy commitments.

10. The Executive Directive on the Evaluation Function was issued in March 2009, after a lengthy consultative process among stakeholders. It provides UNICEF senior management and other staff members with operational guidance for the implementation of the evaluation policy and emphasizes the following major elements: clear accountabilities for evaluation at different levels of the organization; a strong leadership role for the Evaluation Office in the evaluation function; and the importance of management attention at all stages of the evaluation process.

11. Regional offices have used multiple means to educate stakeholders on their accountabilities. All seven regions circulated the policy to all heads of offices, with

regional directors communicating the importance of taking action. Explanatory sessions were held in all seven regions at regional monitoring and evaluation officers network meetings, with Evaluation Office participation. Presentations were also given at other regional technical or managerial meetings. The policy was featured at the most recent policy and programme planning workshops in three regions, and all regional monitoring and evaluation officers review the policy during country visits. The Americas and the Caribbean regional office also used audits as a learning opportunity for linking audit results and recommendations to the evaluation policy.

12. In alignment with the policy's emphasis on improved strategic planning for evaluation and adequate resource allocation, most regions are developing or revising evaluation strategies to determine their highest priority needs and effective regional responses.

13. All managerial levels are meeting their accountabilities to disseminate and promote the policy. The Executive Directive has clearly communicated the interest of UNICEF management in the evaluation function.

14. Opportunities exist to increase collaboration with the Office of Internal Audit. The evaluation policy, the executive directive, and the audit report on the evaluation function will be the basis for a review of evaluation-related items included in future audit schedules.

15. Contextualizing the policy to regional and national environments needs to be done carefully. A baseline survey, like that being carried out in the Middle East and North Africa region, is a good example of an improved mechanism for quality assurance. Consistent with its function, the Evaluation Office will provide leadership to ensure that survey information is analysed systematically and that regional strategies are focused on implementing policy priorities.

16. The Evaluation Office, working closely with the Evaluation Committee and the regional offices, will develop additional technical and managerial guidance as needed.

B. Strengthening the evaluation system

17. The evaluation policy commits UNICEF offices to improving the functioning of the evaluation system across all levels. In 2008/2009, substantial efforts to develop internal capacities were undertaken, and the policy and the executive directive have clarified accountabilities. However, the pace of implementation will vary, as discussed below.

Where faster progress is more likely: accountabilities and leadership, and staff capacity

Accountabilities and leadership

18. Given the strong management support that exists for the policy, it is likely that offices and staff in all regions will understand and accept their accountabilities. Particular attention will be paid to the executive directive and to addressing audit-observed weaknesses around the assignment of duties, including monitoring and evaluation in performance reviews, and accessing technical expertise.

19. In 2008, five regional vacancies for monitoring and evaluation advisors were filled. The hiring of regional survey coordinators has to some extent reduced the monitoring workload of the advisors and increased their capacity to support evaluative activities. In 2009, one post in the Evaluation Office was redesigned to focus on strengthening the linkages between the Evaluation Office and the regional offices. A revitalized Evaluation Committee, including representation from the highest management levels, has been put in place.

Staff capacity strengthening

20. The directors of most regional offices believe they can adequately increase the evaluation skills of the monitoring and evaluation staff and programme staff within two years. While a baseline skills inventory does not yet exist, this confidence reflects the expansive internal training agenda that has been made available since 2008. Facilitated training included sessions at regional monitoring and evaluation officers' network meetings and during many missions to country offices. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) course 'What a United Nations Evaluator Needs to Know' was delivered, in partnership with the United Nations Staff College, in two regions with 74 participants. Many others participated in other professional conferences. In an important diversification of approaches, evaluation was incorporated into other kinds of training, including human rights-based programming, results-based management and programme policies and procedures.

21. The integration of new technologies offers new opportunities. Evaluation knowledge-sharing events organized by Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) regional office were web cast live, allowing monitoring and evaluation officers to be in dialogue with global evaluation experts. The Evaluation Office identified a wide variety of self-learning evaluation courses in a global search for materials produced by Governments, universities and other institutions. These are hosted on the Intranet to enable self-learning. The Evaluation Office also designed an online community of practice, which will be launched in September 2009. Moderated discussions will permit staff to obtain input from other practitioners about effective training and seek answers to immediate concerns.

22. Interaction with United Nations peers can also help develop UNICEF staff skills. In addition to the global UNEG, regional groups are now active in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Asia and Pacific region.

Where progress is slower and additional efforts are needed: human and financial resources

23. Six regions indicated that mobilizing adequate financial and human resources remains problematic. Middle-income countries and small offices are especially vulnerable to shortfalls. The tendency to increase tasks on monitoring and evaluation officer is also prevalent. An absence of guidance on allocating human resources for evaluation was seen as an important issue, critical in achieving the policy's aim in strengthening the evaluation function.

24. In response, the Evaluation Office has prepared a set of data-gathering tools to aid long-term human resource planning and capacity development. These include (a) self-assessment of skills and interests in monitoring and evaluation by UNICEF staff; (b) network analysis, identifying persons and institutions that can be relied

upon for technical support; and (c) technical skills assessment, to help develop individual learning plans and guide corporate learning strategies.

25. Financial resources devoted to evaluation (excluding staff salaries) did not increase in 2008. However, spending on the full set of monitoring and evaluation investments surpassed 3 per cent for the first time. An audit report on the management of evaluation at the country office level concluded that a shortage of financial resources was not the major cause for low evaluation spending; rather, the spending levels reflected evaluation prioritization and planning. It did point out, however, that the majority of country-level evaluations were linked to donor-funded projects. The issue of funding may become more prominent if evaluations are to become more thematic in nature, as specific allocations are usually not readily available for these.

Table 1
UNICEF spending on evaluation at country and regional levels, 2007-2008

	2007	2008	Trend 2007-2008
Spending on evaluation	\$10.1 million	\$9.1 million	-10%
Comparator: overall UNICEF programme spending	\$2.5 billion	\$2.8 billion	+11%
Evaluation spending as a percentage of all programme spending	0.40%	0.33%	-17%
Average spent per completed evaluation	\$41,000	\$39,350	-4%
Related spending: analysis, research and surveys	\$34.1 million	\$39.8 million	+17%
Related spending: data, databases, surveys and statistics	\$26.0 million	\$26.9 million	+3%
Overall spending on research, social data and evaluation as a percentage of all programme spending	2.79%	3.10%	+11%

26. Capacity strengthening is harder than it appears, as years of effort with slow progress demonstrate. It is therefore a major element in the global and regional workplans for 2009-2011.

27. A rapid scale-up of electronic platforms is needed to foster skills growth and mutual support. Evaluation Office research on utilization of such platforms in the private and public sector indicates that these electronic platforms can be cost-effective and sustainable strategies.

28. The Evaluation Committee has noted that human and financial investments are not adequate at the present time to realize policy goals. Managers must be convinced to invest more. A starting point will be ensuring that those responsible for budget allocations understand what their accountabilities mean in practical terms, and that senior management will monitor investments.

C. Ensuring excellence in evaluations

29. The evaluation policy commits UNICEF to excellence in prioritizing, planning, executing, and using evaluations. While it is too early to expect measurable improvements, regions do not identify this as a problematic area over the next two years, with the possible exception of achieving universal management responses.

Where faster progress is more likely: planning and prioritization, and quality assurance

Planning and prioritization

30. Annex 2 of the revised MTSP remains the corporate plan for evaluations globally, and the MTSP contains key performance indicators for evaluation.

31. The integrated monitoring and evaluation plans of country offices have sometimes been of poor quality; however, regional offices have committed to strengthening oversight to ensure that these are developed through strategic planning exercises.

32. The audit report identified a number of weaknesses in prioritization at the country level, often linked to planning. The cited problems included (a) over-investment in project-specific evaluations, compared to programme or thematic evaluations; (b) certain programmes continuing for many years with no evaluations; and (c) a general absence of institutional performance evaluations.

33. In line with the evaluation policy, offices are already implementing strategic evaluations that go well beyond UNICEF-supported project interventions. In 2008, many offices expanded investment in these areas.

Table 2

Recent strategic evaluations of UNICEF offices

<i>Offices</i>	<i>Investment</i>
Eastern and Southern Africa region	Planning for two large multi-country evaluation frameworks began in 2008: on cash transfer programmes, and on large-scale water, sanitation and hygiene education programmes.
Middle East and North Africa Region	A regional review of UNICEF-led inter-agency evaluations of emergencies was conducted.
CEE/CIS	Continued multi-country evaluations, which consistently attain high-quality ratings.
Americas and the Caribbean region	More country offices are supporting evaluations of national development programmes as a programming tool.

<i>Offices</i>	<i>Investment</i>
The Evaluation Office as a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group	Supported the first-ever country-led evaluation of the United Nations system in South Africa.

Quality assurance

34. At the country level, the audit report found that all offices visited had established adequate internal committees to develop terms of references. Problems included under-use of steering committees throughout the evaluations and relative isolation of monitoring and evaluation staff from the good practices of their peers.

35. Regional offices are strengthening their quality-assurance support to help develop networks of support and a culture of quality evaluations:

(a) The CEE/CIS Regional Office has created an evaluation ‘facility’, making 13 support elements available on demand to offices. Technical feedback was delivered to all draft terms of references, evaluation plans and evaluation reports;

(b) External expertise mobilized to support field offices includes private consulting firms (CEE/CIS), universities, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional hub, and the regional office of the United Nations Economic Commission in the Americas and Caribbean;

(c) A Middle East and North Africa pilot programme to review the terms of reference for evaluations by 3 to 4 peers with relevant expertise was so successful that it is being scaled up;

(d) The West and Central Africa Regional Office increased support in several ways. The major innovation occurred in evaluability of programmes. Checklist-based tools for country offices have been developed;

(e) The Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office targeted 2009 support to 6-8 countries for strengthened technical assistance (design, implementation, follow-up and management response) to foster a culture of high quality evaluations.

36. Policy objectives related to supporting strategic evaluations and quality assurance from the regional level should be met in coming years, contingent on staff resources.

37. More active engagement is needed by regional offices and the Evaluation Office, with country offices to establish priorities and institute good management practices ensuring quality and independence. Inter-office support should improve quickly through the establishment of an active community of practice.

38. The CEE/CIS model shows that multiple external partners can be coordinated within an overall systematic approach to quality assurance and support. Other regional offices are also devising support networks. The Evaluation Office will consult with the regional offices and seek economies of scale through global support contracts with external centres of excellence.

**Where progress is slower and additional efforts are needed:
management response**

39. Although the policy has mandated that all evaluations have management responses, a number of regions have reported slow progress in achieving this. The audit report also found weaknesses in this area.

40. One reason for this is the current absence of clear technical guidance. A more fundamental issue is that in some countries, particularly middle-income countries, evaluations are often de-linked from traditional programme or project implementation. In some cases, entire national social development programmes are evaluated, where the responsibility for management response goes well beyond UNICEF.

41. Meanwhile, specific actions have shown promise for scaling up. The Evaluation Office piloted a system to track management responses to corporate-level evaluations. CEE/CIS field-tested the platform at country and regional levels, and will expand it in 2009.

42. Management responses rates will continue to improve when guidelines, training and tools are rolled out and oversight in this area is strengthened.

D. Developing national capacity

43. The policy commits UNICEF to developing national capacities in evaluation. In 2008/2009, a broad range of efforts were undertaken, including notable region-wide efforts. These augment steady, ongoing national efforts.

44. As in past years, much support was given via direct training, often with regional office support. In addition to supporting long-term counterparts in statistics offices and planning units, UNICEF helped other national partners in various countries to develop evaluation skills and also invested in global or regional strategies:

(a) *Evaluation associations.* UNICEF support helped Egypt and Morocco form their first national evaluation associations, and helped Kenya revive a dormant one. UNICEF was actively involved in all regional association conferences.

(b) *National statistics offices.* UNICEF, in cooperation with UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and others, convened national statistic office chiefs in the CEE/CIS region to share good practices in evidence-based policymaking.

(c) *University-led training.* A partnership with South Asian academic institutions for capacity strengthening of government officials and civil society professionals in evaluation continued. Courses have been delivered in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh will benefit in 2009. Senior leaders in particular are targeted with executive-level courses on evaluation.

45. The way evaluations are conducted can be an important contributing factor to national capacity development, and this is an increasingly important element of the UNICEF approach to evaluation at all levels.

46. Developing a coherent approach to national capacity development requires good coordination with other United Nations actors, with bilateral donors and the

multilateral banks. In recognition of this need for coherence, the United Nations Evaluation Group has organized a sub-group to coordinate approaches to national evaluation capacity-building.

47. Given limited UNICEF resources, well-managed partnerships are the key to increasing impact. The collaborative partnerships now developing in evaluation capacity development are having a positive impact and will be sustainable and replicable in other contexts.

E. Conclusion

48. The present internal review, carried out 18 months after the evaluation policy was adopted, indicates that considerable progress has been made but that continued management attention will be required to strengthen the evaluation function further.

II. Summaries of major evaluations

A. Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Thematic evaluation of the juvenile justice reforms in Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Turkey

49. UNICEF is working with five governments in Eastern Europe to provide access to normative guidance and high-quality policy expertise for supporting juvenile justice systems reforms tailored to country specific needs. This evaluation examined the appropriateness of strategies adopted by UNICEF in each country, the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation, and the extent to which countries have brought the respective juvenile justice systems into greater conformity with international standards.

50. Specialized juvenile courts, special sections for juveniles, specially trained prosecutors and judges designated to handle cases involving juveniles, and special children's police units were found in all five countries. As a result, the number of juvenile prisoners serving sentences has fallen, sometimes by as much as 50 per cent. Good practices included passing new legislation prohibiting custodial sentences for first offenders convicted of minor offences, as well as publication of up-to-date statistics on juvenile justice, providing valuable information for advocacy and policy development. However, accused juveniles were still being detained for unacceptably long periods during pre-trial and while awaiting sentencing. In such cases, conditions of detention did not comply with international standards.

51. The evaluation recommended the use of pre-trial detention for first offenders, non-violent offenders, and offenders who attend school and have good ties with their families. UNICEF was advised to conduct research to identify most appropriate forms of prevention and assistance to juvenile offenders and to continue advocacy for the development of comprehensive juvenile systems with appropriate coordination mechanisms involving all actors.

52. The results of the evaluation will be used to refine an approach to juvenile justice reform and adapt it to the needs of each country, while good practices will be

shared during subregional conferences in Albania, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Governments, parliaments and key partners are developing action plans to follow up the evaluation recommendations to strengthen and accelerate reforms in their respective juvenile justice systems.

Regional thematic evaluation of health promotion and communication capacity

53. The evaluation assessed deficits in public health communication capacity and its contribution to failures in supplementary immunization campaigns and lack of preparedness for the influenza pandemic. The evaluation covered different subregions: Albania and Serbia in South-Eastern Europe; Moldova, Romania and Ukraine in Central and Eastern Europe; Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia; and Turkey.

54. A limited but significant number of individuals in the region were found to have the necessary skills, intellectual breadth and commitment to make a significant contribution to health systems reform by facilitating effective communications strategies. However, these professionals are not fully supported institutionally, and are without most of the technical and financial resources they require to do this work.

55. Recommendations included accelerating health systems reform by developing sustainable professional health communication capacity; establishing linkages between national health systems and the private sector; and facilitating the introduction of new knowledge and practices in behavioural change. UNICEF was charged to further support government counterparts by providing technical assistance in the design and implementation of health promotion media and communications strategies. Evaluation findings were discussed with all UNICEF country offices, and will be used to inform the initiatives and strategies by the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the European Commission in supporting health reforms in the region. Countries engaged in the evaluation prepared an action plan to implement recommendations in 2009-2010.

B. East Asia and Pacific

Interim evaluation of UNICEF programmes in Indonesia, 2006 and 2007

56. The evaluation assessed the UNICEF programme strategy in Indonesia following the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Aceh and the 2005 earthquake in Nias. The evaluation sought to provide evidence of UNICEF performance and achievement of results, determine the future role, design and focus, strategy and human resources needed for UNICEF support, and to contribute to organizational learning in linking emergency response to recovery and long-term development efforts.

57. UNICEF was found to be a major player in the reconstruction effort, in mounting interventions to avoid post-disaster mortality and in establishing a sound basis for sustainable development in education and child protection. However, there was no clear mapping or rationalization of work undertaken by the different organizations involved. Without such a comprehensive sectoral analysis, it was not easy to understand the conceptual framework and criteria on which UNICEF selected the specific interventions in the multi-year plan results matrix for each

sector, how strategic these interventions were or how they complemented one another to reach the stated objectives.

58. The evaluation generated 22 recommendations centred on the future of the offices, staffing, programming in the transition period, and the definition of roles and responsibilities. For Aceh, it was envisioned that the office would remain open to support capacity building for implementation of the multi-year plan, with a focus on partnerships in support of the Millennium Development Goals. For Nias, it was recommended that all programme activities, except education, be completed by end-2008 and to close the office by end-2009. It was determined that UNICEF Jakarta should play a quality assurance role, while the Aceh and Nias offices should focus more on management and support to implementation.

Evaluation of arsenic mitigation in four countries of the Greater Mekong subregion

59. The purpose of the evaluation was to document and evaluate the progress of UNICEF country offices in the prevention and mitigation of arsenic in drinking water in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam. Overall, approximately 1.75 million people were found to be at risk of arsenic poisoning due to consuming water with arsenic levels above national standards, and all four countries initially focused on the negative health impacts associated with drinking arsenic-contaminated water. However, countries used different water quality parameters in addition to arsenic, with no clear and concise arsenic mitigation communication strategies.

60. Myanmar achieved significantly more progress in the number of samples tested and the development of a comprehensive database system. Cambodia and Myanmar offered communities in the affected areas a variety of mitigation options for implementation, including rain water harvesting, different filters, including ceramic filters, deep and shallow tube wells, and piped water systems. Cambodia undertook blanket testing in all high-risk villages and cross-checked results at the field level, while Myanmar and Viet Nam sent samples to laboratories for cross-referencing. Cambodia completed a survey specific to arsenic-mitigation activities, and had public-private partnerships in arsenic-affected communities.

61. Recommendations focused on standardization of practices and procedures. They sought to build on best practices, where available: expansion of testing; systematic use of cross-checking in the field and in the laboratory; use of standard test kits; conducting arsenic-mitigation surveys; elaboration of national strategies; and enhanced coordination among stakeholders. The recommendations have been used for advocacy to tackle arsenic and broader water-quality issues, and to reshape programming in all four countries.

C. Eastern and Southern Africa

Evaluation of the accelerating birth registration programme in Mozambique

62. An estimated 92 per cent of Mozambican children under the age of five years did not have a birth registration document at the beginning of 2005. This resulted in UNICEF programming to accelerate birth registration to reduce the backlog of unregistered children and to establish routine community-based birth registration for

all children. An evaluation was conducted in 2008 to assess the level of access to the birth registration system among the general population, knowledge of birth registration procedures, the success rate of the campaigns, and the effectiveness of a community-based model adopted by the programme.

63. The survey found that the percentage of children under the age of 18 registered in Xai-Xai district rose from 25.9 per cent in 2006 to 70 per cent in 2008, while the birth registration rate in Maganja da Costa increased from 3 per cent to 60 per cent. The impact of the programme was found to be particularly high in rural areas, where mobile brigades were employed to reach remote communities. The registration rate among orphans was slightly higher, testifying to the effectiveness of the programme's focus on orphans and vulnerable children.

64. The evaluation recommended that future social mobilization for birth registration be increasingly tailored to the different areas of the country through more active engagement of community leaders and provincial institutes for social communication. The evaluation also provided a number of recommendations of strategic importance related to the role of registration agents, including their training and supervision, planning and coordination mechanisms, and the operationalization of the routine information system of birth registration.

Evaluation of diarrhoeal disease prevention efforts through the perinatal care system in Malawi

65. The United States Agency for International Development, in collaboration with UNICEF, the Malawian Ministry of Health and Population Services International (PSI), sponsored a pilot programme to test the feasibility of promoting hygiene improvement interventions in Malawi, which included disinfection and safe storage of water at the point-of-use, and hand washing with soap. The purpose of this initiative was to improve maternal health and decrease diarrhoeal diseases, the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in children in Malawi. The pilot was evaluated in 2008 by comparing knowledge, prevention and use of WaterGuard, a water purification agent, and hand washing with soap, targeting mothers in 775 households.

66. The programme evaluation showed significant increases in knowledge about WaterGuard and in its purchase and observed use among programme participants. There was also a significant increase in hand washing knowledge and ability to demonstrate correct hand washing procedures among the programme participants. Besides improvements in water treatment and hygiene practices, the evaluation also noted programme benefits in the use of antenatal, delivery, postnatal, and newborn health services. Significant improvements in water treatment and hand washing practices were also recorded among friends and relatives of programme participants, demonstrating the diffusion of the intervention within the community, especially among women with children under the age of five, who are at highest risk of diarrhoea.

67. The results of the evaluation have been used to advocate the continuation of the programme in Blantyre and Salima districts, and expansion of the programme to other districts in Malawi. It was recommended that future programme expansion include education components by nurses in health facilities who have the capacity to conduct programme monitoring during home visits.

D. Middle East and North Africa

Emergency preparedness and response evaluations in the Middle East and North Africa, 2003-2008

68. Between 2003 and 2008, the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO) commissioned a number of evaluations to assess emergency responses to natural and human-made disasters. Building on this comprehensive body of work, MENARO commissioned an assessment to synthesize lessons learned and examine recommendations that would inform future humanitarian preparedness and response at all levels.

69. The evaluation found that the global roll-out of the United Nations humanitarian reform has greatly influenced operations in the humanitarian environment: resident coordinators are increasingly embracing their responsibilities in emergency preparedness and response while the cluster approach is proving to be a useful tool for coordination. Donors were also supporting the reform process, including through the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Consolidated and Flash Appeal Process.

70. UNICEF emergency preparedness and response show an increasingly higher standard, with preparedness being a major determinant of success in providing an immediate and appropriate response to a crisis at the country office level. The Regional Office has an additional responsibility to initiate a response where countries are reluctant to acknowledge or unable to identify a humanitarian crisis. However, there needs to be clarity on conditions that constitute a formal trigger for a response by the Regional Office.

71. While inter-agency coordination has greatly improved in the framework of the United Nations humanitarian reform, UNICEF has an important role in advocating sound and inclusive preparedness processes and leveraging partnerships in countries not prone to emergencies. As a voice for children, UNICEF was advised to refine its communication and advocacy strategies related to children's rights and their broader mandate. Assessment, planning and monitoring were found to be weak areas of UNICEF work; country offices were advised to dedicate more resources to strengthening monitoring efforts and to ensuring that the well-being and rights of staff are safeguarded and supported in all circumstances.

Assessment of gender institutionalization in United Nations programmes in Djibouti

72. The United Nations country team (UNCT) in Djibouti commissioned an evaluation in 2008 to gauge the extent of gender mainstreaming in programme activities covered by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2003-2007. The evaluation found strong institutional commitment to gender equity from the Government, exemplified by the 1998 ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and enactment of major legislation in the area of women's rights. However, key obstacles included the non-existence of agreed terms of reference for the United Nations gender focal points and weaknesses in leadership and technical capacity of some members of UNCT Gender Thematic Group.

73. The assessment recommended that the Ministry of Women Promotion, Family Welfare and Social Affairs set up a gender observatory to monitor progress on overcoming gender inequalities and that the UNCT in Djibouti adopt more rigorous gender mainstreaming in supported programmes and ensure that enough resources are allocated to related activities. Both the Government and the UNCT were advised to develop gender-sensitive criteria guiding eligibility for allocating funds to national development programmes and to develop gender-sensitive performance indicators.

74. Follow-up actions included hiring of additional staff by the Ministry, to strengthen its programme planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity, and establishment of gender offices in each of the regions. The Ministry also finalized its gender audit report and set up a gender partnership group tasked with developing its gender mainstreaming framework. The UNCT will assess progress on implementing recommendations for the Gender Thematic Group in the 2009 UNDAF review.

E. West and Central Africa

Midterm evaluation of programme for extended assistance to returnees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

75. UNICEF and its partners commissioned an evaluation of the programme for extended assistance to returnees (PEAR), assisting internally displaced people (IDPs) through distribution of non-food items, school rehabilitation, and multi-sector assessments. PEAR reached 1,650,490 IDPs at the cost of \$12.24 million in its two years of implementation.

76. The evaluation concluded that programme objectives were successfully achieved, with the key achievement being the breadth of coverage. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development was found to be the most appropriate way of targeting the most vulnerable populations within the context of the humanitarian realities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Multi-sectoral assessments undertaken by PEAR partners have become a standard for other humanitarian actors. PEAR was found to be highly cost-effective, and the partnership between UNICEF and four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) demonstrated a successful model of cooperation.

77. Rather than be perceived as rapid response mechanism (RRM), the evaluation recommended reaffirming PEAR as a humanitarian programme, emphasizing sustainability of return as a key entry point for all subsequent programming interventions and smooth phasing of its current activities into longer-term development programmes. The evaluation recommended advocating abolition of school fees through the regular education programme of the UNICEF Emergency Unit, arguing that facilitating universal access to schooling for every child would maximize impact.

78. The evaluation findings have been used to improve practice. RRM and PEAR teams are working together on a more streamlined multi-sectoral assessment tool. Additional steps have been taken to address returnees' needs for seeds, tools, hoes in the return packages. Cash vouchers to purchase a wide variety of livelihood materials to complement non-food items have also been introduced. UNICEF and

the Congolese National Refugee Commission have initiated a study to help better understand the scope of the resettlement phenomenon and the different needs of internally displaced populations.

Evaluation of prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Equatorial Guinea

79. An evaluation was commissioned to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and challenges to the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) strategy in 18 health centres in Equatorial Guinea, and to facilitate scaling-up of the programme. The evaluation found that the PMTCT strategy was relevant to the needs of women, and was in high demand. However, the programme encountered (a) frequent interruption of PMTCT services due to shortages of drugs; (b) breakdown of testing equipment, resulting in irregular testing for HIV, with women and babies often being treated without confirmation of their HIV status; (c) paucity of data on transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies; and (d) low motivation and high attrition among trained professionals due to low remuneration levels.

80. The evaluation recommended that a PMTCT policy, a scale-up plan and a design strategy to systematically mobilize external funding opportunities be developed. On the clinical side, the evaluation identified the need to validate new protocols for PMTCT and paediatric care, and to develop an efficient procurement system for supplies.

81. Substantive follow-up action includes establishment of an inter-sectoral committee to revise the national HIV/AIDS programme, with PMTCT constituting an important component. A partnership for scaling-up PMTCT interventions has been formed between UNICEF, the Government of Equatorial Guinea, the Government of Cuba and the Instituto de Salud Carlos III of Spain. Furthermore, Equatorial Guinea has been included in the UNICEF-supported South-South programme to reinforce technical and institutional capacities for scaling-up, and a project proposal has been presented to the Government of Spain for follow-up on some of the evaluation recommendations.

F. Regional Office for South Asia

Evaluation of UNICEF flood emergency response in India

82. UNICEF mobilized \$4 million following the 2007 floods in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India. An evaluation was conducted on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of UNICEF emergency response, and to identify good practice for future emergency response and recovery efforts. The evaluation found that the emergency response in Bihar was relevant, appropriate, timely, well coordinated, and in accordance with the UNICEF guidelines on its Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies, and targeted to the most vulnerable populations.

83. In Uttar Pradesh, the Government promptly responded to the relief requirements, while UNICEF supported operational management of health interventions and deployed a surveillance system for preventing disease outbreaks.

However, there were delays in accessing some of the worst affected pockets of people due to transportation constraints in both states.

84. The evaluation also found that UNICEF set an example for supply of critical items and supported the Government in setting standards for priority-setting, timeliness and overall responsiveness in an emergency.

85. Key recommendations included stronger attention to operational issues, spatial diversity, and more pre-positioning and management of operations during emergencies. UNICEF was charged to develop and strengthen its partnership with local NGOs and to increase flexibility in allowing state-level procurement in times of emergency. Other recommendations included strengthening the role of district-based coordinators for cross-sectoral liaison and logistic coordination with government departments and civil society organizations, and increasing support for district-level consolidated documentation of emergency support interventions. Recommendations are being fed into the emergency preparedness and response plans and active emergency response processes.

Evaluation of the early childhood care and development programme in Sri Lanka

86. An evaluation of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Programme in Sri Lanka was undertaken in 2008 to determine the relevance and appropriateness of the programme in promoting holistic development, to gauge satisfaction of caregivers and service providers, and to determine if the programme achieved its stated objectives.

87. A household survey revealed that the proportion of women aware of key care practices during pregnancy was marginally higher in the ECCD implementing areas than in the control areas. The ECCD areas also scored better in support from husbands during pregnancy, the exclusive breastfeeding rate under six months and the timely complementary feeding rate. There was no difference in dietary diversity or responsive feeding practices among children aged 6-23 months between the groups. According to the available data in the Clinical Data Repository/Health Data Repository, the rates for age-appropriate achievement of developmental milestones by children were poor in the ECCD areas compared to the control areas. However, documenting the developmental milestones in the clinical database was not satisfactory in both ECCD and control areas.

88. The evaluation recommended that positive contributions made by the ECCD programme be incorporated into the ongoing child health activities. Continued development of human resources, monitoring and evaluation activities at all levels, and allocation of financial resources at the national and subnational levels were identified as necessary inputs for making the ECCD programme sustainable.

G. The Americas and the Caribbean

Evaluation of the “Juntos” conditional cash transfer programme in Peru

89. Since 2005, the Government of Peru has implemented “Juntos”, a monthly conditional cash transfer programme aimed at reducing poverty, advancing sustainable human development and targeting pregnant women and extremely poor families with children aged 14 years or younger. An evaluation of Juntos in six rural districts was conducted by UNICEF and UNFPA to determine (a) access to the

programme by the most vulnerable families; (b) use of the cash transfers; and (c) behavioural change among the beneficiaries.

90. The evaluation found that the poorest families were the programme beneficiaries, who used cash transfers for the intended purposes, with most funds spent on food, school supplies, uniforms and shoes. There were only a few cases where funds were used for purposes other than intended. However, there was dissatisfaction with the inclusion criteria; the majority of the respondents believed that all poor families should benefit from the programme. The evaluation also revealed that the amount of cash transfer is not sufficient to generate substantial changes in the living condition of beneficiaries.

91. Recommendations included reviewing the selection process for enrolment in “Juntos” and to assess the possibility to enrol all poor people in small communities in order to avoid conflict among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. An in-depth study of the characteristics of the beneficiaries is necessary in order to execute the programme under more culturally sensitive conditions.

Evaluation of implementation of the norms regarding vertical transmission of HIV in pregnant women in Chile

92. The objective of the evaluation was to review access to the Norms for Prevention of Vertical Transmission of HIV, elaborated in 2005 by the Chilean Ministry of Health, targeting diagnosis of HIV infection in pregnant woman, application of the prevention protocol, and decision makers’ perceptions on the norms. Application of the protocol to prevent vertical transmission of HIV was found to have an adequate focus on preventing infection of newborn babies and increased access to HIV testing and service coverage. However, 45 per cent of pregnant women still had no access to HIV testing services.

93. The evaluation also found that users and health care professionals supported compulsory HIV screening for pregnant women on their first visit to prenatal care. Individualized follow-up of each case from the maternity ward, to ensure proper treatment for the newborn, and working with laboratories to deliver timely results were identified as good practices. However, medical personnel were facing difficulties in applying the prevention protocol to children and occasionally appealed to the courts to seek protection measures for the newborn in cases where mothers refused to undergo HIV testing.

94. The quality of attention received by the pregnant women varied among the public institutions assessed. Based on findings of this evaluation, application of the norm will be reviewed and strengthened. Quality and coverage of prevention services to reduce mother-to-child transmission of HIV will be improved. An assessment of the proper care of HIV-positive mothers and their newborns, including future options for antiretroviral treatment for the mothers and babies, will also be undertaken.

H. UNICEF Headquarters

Child-friendly schools: a global evaluation of UNICEF programming

95. The evaluation of the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative was commissioned to investigate three aspects of UNICEF programming: (a) what the

underlying principles of CFS are; (b) what child-friendly schools look like in practice and whether they realize UNICEF objectives; and (c) whether UNICEF programming for the initiative has an impact on improving the quality of education at the national level.

96. The evaluation concluded that child-friendly schools successfully apply, with varying emphasis, the principles of inclusiveness, child-centeredness and democratic participation. Students felt safer, more supported and engaged in schools that used child-centred pedagogy and had high levels of family and community participation. Although having well-built, safe schools that provide comfortable learning environments was important, this was not sufficient to make a school child-friendly. Rather, other, less tangible aspects determined whether a school is child-friendly: child-centeredness; parental engagement; mutual respect among students and teachers; having a strong school principal and an effective leader.

97. CFS models were found to be easily adaptable to different contexts, broadly appropriate and heuristic. Operationally, CFS was found to be a framework that can be implemented with different levels of support, depending on local needs, and provides an approach that offers Ministries of Education with a useful and relevant framework for making schools inclusive, participatory and responsive at a systemic level. More importantly, child-friendly schools were successful in creating an environment where female students felt included — they reported significantly higher ratings of experiencing a positive school climate than their male counterparts.

98. Challenges to meeting UNICEF objectives for child-friendly schools include a lack of infrastructure and strategies to fully accommodate students with physical and learning disabilities and the inability to fully implement child-centred instructional methods due to inadequacies in teacher preparation and teaching skills. While all stakeholders enthusiastically embraced the idea of parent and community involvement in schools, often schools were not able to involve communities in a meaningful way.

99. Recommendations called for improvement in CFS programming aspects, such as identifying strong school leaders and equipping them with more skills and capacity to implement CFS, developing strategies to improve readiness for CFS implementation at the school and community levels, and positioning CFS as a model for teaching a life skills education programme. Going forward, UNICEF should focus efforts on encouraging Ministries of Education to adopt the CFS framework and build it into their national education strategies and budgets.

Evaluation of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)

100. UNICEF commissioned an independent external evaluation of the third round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS3) programme to learn how best to improve the MICS and similar major surveys, and to judge if the results justify the expenses and commitments made. Key findings on MICS3 impact were as follows: (a) the MICS3 surveys of 2005-2007 are an important part of the evidence-base for programming and policy within UNICEF; and (b) nine of ten stakeholders at country level felt that MICS3 was an integral part of the country's information base on women and children, while global partners reported that it is valued for monitoring and advocacy for the Millennium Development Goals. In sum: the MICS programme does indeed justify the investments and commitments made.

101. Tools, materials, technical assistance and training provided by UNICEF Headquarters to support MICS implementation were of high quality. However, significant data-quality lapses and deviations from accepted sampling norms and field-work procedures were noted in several countries. Other areas identified for improvement included a proliferation of indicators between MICS2 and MICS3, suggesting weaknesses in processes and structures for strategic decision-making; delays in publishing final reports; and the decentralized structure of UNICEF resulting in critical technical decisions in the conduct of household surveys being negotiated by people without adequate knowledge or experience.

102. Besides recommending specific technical improvements, the evaluation team made a number of recommendations to UNICEF: (a) clarify the primary objective of MICS to be monitoring and advocacy at the global level and advocacy related to children's health and well-being at the national level (that is, not to be undertaken to facilitate programmatic decision-making, as this increases size, cost and quality concerns); (b) bolster quality assurance through several mechanisms by rationalizing decision-making processes such that those with greater expertise and experience are more closely involved; (c) capitalize on its investment in MICS to strengthen and expand the evidence-base for children and women; and (d) consider establishing a permanent information and coverage support centre.

103. A management response is yet to be fully formulated. However, most of the technical recommendations and many of the more strategic ones had already been identified by UNICEF and partners. These are being implemented now as the new MICS4 cycle begins.

Annex

Evaluation Office workplan for 2010-2011

The Evaluation Office Management Plan for the biennium 2010-2011 covers seven areas of work, outlined below. Detailed annual work plans, specifying individual evaluations, will be submitted to the Evaluation Committee.

1. Conduct independent evaluations, reflecting the focus areas of the MTSP and other key organizational priorities

Programme performance assessments

In collaboration with the Office of Internal Audit, the Evaluation Office will conduct programme performance assessments in four to five country offices per year. These assessments aim to determine the value added by UNICEF to the national development of the host country.

Programmatic evaluations

At least four major programmatic evaluations will be conducted by the Evaluation Office. These will mainly be selected from the Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) for the biennium 2010-2011 in the MTSP. Examples are likely to include an impact evaluation of the water supply, sanitation and hygiene programme in East Africa (in conjunction with the Regional Office) and an evaluation of the effectiveness of UNICEF work in policy advocacy.

Humanitarian evaluations

The scope of the humanitarian portfolio will encompass the preparedness, response, transition and recovery stages of the humanitarian response. Within the biennium 2010-2011, a minimum of two major humanitarian evaluations will be conducted. A probable topic is strengthening gender equality in programming in humanitarian action. Real-time evaluations will also be conducted.

Institutional effectiveness evaluations

Institutional effectiveness evaluations address cross-cutting themes and functions of UNICEF that are essential for achieving results in terms of outcomes and impact. Several evaluations, including an evaluation of the Asia Pacific Shared Services Centre, will be conducted. A likely thematic evaluation is the organizational performance in a human rights-based approach to programming.

2. Support other divisions in UNICEF, enabling them to conduct evaluations in accordance with agreed priorities

At the request of other divisions and offices at headquarters, the Evaluation Office will provide support to evaluations conducted by these entities that focus on priority themes, especially those of the IMEF 2010-2011.

3. Produce, with relevant partners, joint and inter-agency evaluations of relevance to UNICEF

The Evaluation Office will assess the appropriate level of involvement in joint and inter-agency evaluations on a case-by-case basis. Evaluations under consideration include: (a) the second phase of the evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration; (b) at least one major joint evaluation of the humanitarian sector, and continued work on inter-agency real-time evaluation; and (c) support to the evaluation of the “Delivering as One” pilots, if requested.

4. Improve utilization of evaluation findings and recommendations through active knowledge management

The Evaluation Office will continue to develop an enhanced dissemination system for evaluation reports, leading to increased awareness of evaluation findings and ownership of results. It will provide support to four large-scale lessons learned reviews.

5. Provide clear leadership in strengthening the evaluation function throughout the organization through appropriate guidance and support

The Evaluation Office will continue to develop guidance and good practice advice in line with the evaluation policy in areas where needs have been identified. It will also improve human resource planning for evaluations by preparing a minimum set of comprehensive, self-learning evaluation materials and technical guidance materials for staff.

6. Support national evaluation capacity development, with a view to promoting country-led evaluations

The Evaluation Office will support regional and country offices in their national evaluation capacity development efforts. Guidance will be provided on how to advocate, leverage and support national leadership and capacity development initiatives. The Evaluation Office will work closely with the United Nations Evaluation Group to achieve this result. It will also support country-led evaluations when requested.

7. Contribute to more harmonized evaluation practices within the United Nations system and capacity-building of United Nations staff in evaluation

The Evaluation Office will continue to actively participate in the task forces of the United Nations Evaluation Group to harmonize evaluation approaches and practices and to promote coherence on evaluation in the United Nations system.