Summary of midterm reviews of country programmes

East Asia and Pacific region

Summary

This regional summary of midterm reviews of country programmes conducted in 2010 was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8. The Executive Board is invited to comment on the report and provide guidance to the secretariat.
Introduction

1. This report covers the midterm reviews (MTRs) conducted in 2010 of the country programme of Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands multi-country programme, involving the following 14 countries: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

2. The MTRs were conducted during a time of increased scrutiny of the ability of the United Nations to deliver results cohesively, effectively and efficiently in an increasingly crowded development arena. With fewer resources and growing influence of the private sector as a revenue source, the United Nations faces a major challenge on how to reposition itself to remain relevant in the context of national development priorities in middle-income status countries where delivery of services remains severely constrained. The programme strategies of UNICEF have been adjusted accordingly, focusing on fewer and more strategic results that make a difference in the lives of children, also taking into account the organization’s global refocus on equity and shift to a simplified results structure.

Midterm reviews

Papua New Guinea

Introduction

3. The United Nations system in Papua New Guinea launched a self-starter “Delivering as One” pilot initiative in 2007 to implement the One United Nations programme for 2008-2012 which focused on the following pillars: (a) transparent and accountable governance; (b) prevention and management of crisis; (c) access to basic health, education and protection; (d) improved sustainable livelihood practices; (e) data collection for development and population integration; (f) gender equality; and (g) HIV and AIDS reduction. With the overarching theme of “Partnership for Nation Building”, the country programme was operationalized in 16 outcomes and implemented through a number of joint annual work plans developed and managed by inter-agency task teams, together with Government counterparts. In 2010, the midterm of the implementation of the One United Nations programme, a system-wide MTR involving all resident agencies was undertaken; its results led to the shortening of the current programme cycle to end in 2011 in order to align it with national development priorities; it also formed the basis for the development of a new common country programme for 2012-2015.

4. The system-wide MTR of all resident agencies was undertaken by an independent review team in July 2010 to assess the extent to which the “Delivering as One” initiative contributed to national development results and priorities and to aid effectiveness. The review was conducted against the backdrop of a series of ambitious strategic plans launched by the Government to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and address socio-economic challenges: Vision 2050, the Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 and the Medium-term Development Plan 2011-2015. These frameworks provided the impetus for a review of the functioning of United Nations agencies in Papua New Guinea. The MTR took into account other relevant factors and trends: (a) the growing prominence and
influence of the extractive industry sector in influencing the development agenda; (b) national elections in 2012, with possible implications for the way the United Nations conducts its business in Papua New Guinea; (c) growing security concerns and rising rental costs; and (d) decreasing contribution of official development assistance to the Government’s development budget and the increased role of the private sector as a revenue source.

Update of the situation of children and women

5. Papua New Guinea’s economic performance has steadily improved over the past decade due to a significant boom in natural resources, mainly in the extractive minerals and energy sector. Gross domestic product (GDP) increased from 5.5 per cent to 7 per cent in 2009-2010. The construction of a major liquefied natural gas pipeline from the Southern Highlands will be the single largest investment in the country’s history, equivalent to 190 per cent of GDP. Liquefied natural gas exports, which will start in 2014, could double GDP and triple the country’s export revenue by 2020. With a potential 25 per cent boost in GDP, there will be pressures, in the short term, on public finances to ensure that windfall revenues translate into sustained and equitable gains for all Papua New Guineans.

6. The 2004 and 2009 National Millennium Development Goals progress reports concluded that the country is not on track to meet any of its Goals targets. In 2010, Papua New Guinea ranked 137 in the Human Development Index, an improvement from 148 in 2009. Key challenges continue to be low public sector capacity to manage and deliver services across all levels of government, inadequate funding for delivery of services, complex and poorly defined systems of national, provincial and local governance, poor compliance with accountability frameworks, the HIV and AIDS pandemic and public insecurity, especially in the rural areas. The rapidly growing population (2.7 per cent per year), expected to reach 11 million by 2050, poses further challenges in terms of ensuring access to education, health, employment and income-generating opportunities.

7. Papua New Guinea ranks in the bottom 10 countries of the Gender Inequality Index. Women and girls have substantially less access to health care and education services than males. Violence against women remains extremely high, with two-thirds of women estimated to have experienced some level of violence. Rural-urban migration, the proliferation of small arms, increasing urban crime and tribal fights (often over land management) have created law and order problems that are a challenge for the authorities. Security Phase Four of the United Nations Management System was maintained for the whole of Papua New Guinea due to crime and weakness in the rule of law, with implications on programme implementation and costs. The cost of compliance with the Minimum Operating Security Standards and the Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards and the overall costs of living and doing business in the country have increased significantly over the last few years.

Progress and key results at midterm

8. The MTR concluded that progress towards the expected results stipulated in the annual work plans was mostly on track except for the intermediate outcome dealing with the Millennium Development Goals and the Government’s Medium-term Development Strategy 2005-2010. However, at subnational levels, the United
Nations country programme was viewed as being less well-focused and coordinated, including geographically, with many programme activities being still implemented largely at the national level.

9. The upstream advocacy and technical support provided by UNICEF achieved the following major results: (a) inclusion of the most vulnerable children as a critical vulnerable group in need of protection, care and support, in the Government’s Vision 2050 and the Medium-Term Development Plan (2011-2015), and ensuring budgetary allocations and commitments to children; (b) mainstreaming of a child-friendly schools course into pre-service teacher education; (c) adoption of Papua New Guinea’s first costed prevention of mother-to-child transmission (of HIV) and Paediatric AIDS Operational Framework for Action (2010-2015); and (d) 95 per cent immunization coverage.

10. UNICEF supported capacity-building efforts across several sectors in the development of: human resources, organizational and legal frameworks and institutions. The capacity for faith-based leaders to deliver protection, care and support to the most vulnerable children was increased through strategic partnerships. In 2010, over 300 faith-based leaders at the national and provincial levels were trained. UNICEF co-chairs a technical working group on capacity development together with the Department of Education which coordinates all capacity-building programmes for the education system.

11. Programme communication or communication for development has been integral to UNICEF work in Papua New Guinea. In partnership with the country’s Health Department and the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF guided cholera prevention campaigns in Port Moresby, Central Province and Daru, which included developing key messages for cholera prevention around the 5Fs (flies, fingers, fomites, food, fluids) and safe burial practices. Almost 100 schoolteachers have been trained on cholera outreach in Port Moresby, in cooperation with WHO and Médecins Sans Frontières.

12. UNICEF has established working relationships with public partners at the national and subnational levels through interventions in the areas of health, education, child protection and HIV/AIDS. Partnerships with the Government Departments of National Planning and Monitoring, Health, Education, Community Development, Justice and Attorney-General and National Affairs were strengthened through joint planning for annual results, mid-year and year-end reviews. A tripartite agreement was signed in February 2010 between the Digicel Foundation (a private telecommunications company), the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee and UNICEF, to roll out family support centres nationwide. Digicel has committed to contribute $350,000 to build seven centres.

Resources used

13. For the reviewed three-year period (2008-2010) of the current country programme, total resources amounted to $24,599,106, comprising of $4,184,651 in regular resources (RR) and $20,414,455 in other resources (OR).

Constraints and opportunities affecting progress

14. Limitations in strategic planning, lack of consensus on courses of action and competing priorities in the workloads of implementing partners contributed to some
delays in implementation and shortfalls in delivered results. A communication strategy on education did not materialize because of internal constraints within the Department of Education. Effective policy advocacy and planning through such channels as the Progress for Children Report on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals with Equity continues to be limited because of scarce data sources. The Government and development partners are jointly making efforts to strengthen data collection, analysis and reporting through existing routine monitoring systems as well as population-based surveys.

15. The security situation and the high cost of operations, in particular, have constrained the office’s ability to contribute to programme results for children. The office has been functioning below capacity for the duration of the country programme due to resource constraints. Filling vacancies and training new staff is an ongoing requirement, diverting time and resources from programme activities. In terms of funding, regular resources have in the past been used to fund key staff functions and to share a portion of operational costs with other agencies, including rent and security. Increases in post adjustment of international professional staff and of national staff salaries over the last two years, mainly due to increased rental and security costs, have limited the amount of RR available for programmes. Assessments have been carried out by UNICEF and the resident United Nations agencies to review the financial sustainability of the country programme, including an inter-agency mission conducted in April 2011, which made a series of recommendations to address key cost factors and increase cost efficiency.

Adjustments made

16. In view of the challenges to Papua New Guinea to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, the MTR recommended that the United Nations country team intensify and consolidate its support to the Millennium Development Goals outcomes and its support to the priorities of the Government’s Medium-Term Development Plan. The review team recommended that the 16 outcome areas be consolidated into a more focused United Nations country programme, concentrating on upstream aspects such as policy making, planning and policy change, with capacity development as a cross-cutting approach. Following the MTR, the Government called for development partners to align their programming with the new national development priorities as laid out in the Medium-Term Development Plan 2011-2015. In October 2010, the United Nations Development Group agreed to shorten the current programme cycle by one year and begin developing a new four-year UNDAF (2012-2015) with a common country programme document for UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund. This document will be presented to the respective Executive Boards in September 2011.

17. Taking into account MTR recommendations, the new 2012-2015 UNDAF and common country programmes focus on four clusters: (a) governance for equitable development; (b) access to basic services; (c) social justice, protection and gender equality; and (d) environment and disaster risk management, each with several sub-components. The overarching theme is “Supporting Papua New Guinea to accelerate Millennium Development Goals achievement”.

18. UNICEF contribution will focus on the first three pillars, with emphasis on education and child protection. UNICEF will continue to advance results for
children through an interlinked balance of upstream policy advice and downstream initiatives. Local Millennium Development Goals initiatives will be piloted to capture evidence-based practices and facilitate replication of successful models across Papua New Guinea, linking programmatic activities with policy impact. UNICEF will continue to work with partners to advance “Delivering as One” principles, participating with other United Nations agencies in the United Nations Common Services in security, rental, and other related areas. In an effort to maximize the use of resources, one zone office will be moved to premises shared with UNDP in Bougainville. The country office’s risk control and assessment library highlighted 13 high- and medium-risk areas of the current programming and operations practices. Implementation of the Enterprise Risk Management action plan will be integral to reinforcing the organization’s risk management.

Pacific Islands multi-country programme

Introduction

19. An internal midterm review of the 2008-2012 UNICEF Pacific Islands multi-country programme began in April 2010 and culminated in a reflection meeting in Suva, Fiji, 21-25 June, chaired by the UNICEF Representative and attended by 65 staff from Suva, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati. Further, the meeting was attended in full by the UNICEF Deputy Regional Director and the Regional Advisor, Health. The internal review of UNICEF was used as input to the development of the 2008-2012 UNDAF MTR. A joint meeting was also held with the Government of Vanuatu in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on 28 June 2010. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister’s Office (Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination) and attended by director generals and directors from the various ministries.

20. The MTR focused on strategic priorities rather than sectoral details. Six core components informed the MTR process: (a) data from formal situation analysis updates and/or baseline studies and discussions with national and regional partners; (b) commissioned studies on emerging topics, including the global economic crisis, climate change, urbanization and disabilities; (c) a gender audit of UNICEF Pacific programming based on the 2010 UNICEF Gender Policy recommendations; (d) a review of programme performance, which assessed progress to date, lessons learned and constraints, and made recommendations for programme adjustment; (e) a review of convergent subnational programming, assessing progress to date, lessons learned and constraints, and recommendations for programme shifts; and (f) a review of proposed adjustments to the country programme management structure.

Update of the situation of children and women

21. The global economic downturn, rapid urbanization, increasing impact of climate change and continuing political instability in several Pacific Island countries have combined to severely constrain social and economic development across all of the Pacific Island countries. Atoll States such as Kiribati and Tuvalu are particularly vulnerable to external shocks such as the recent food, fuel and financial crises. Sentinel monitoring carried out by UNICEF confirmed the vulnerability of Pacific Islanders to shocks and crises, with the majority of families reporting increased difficulties in meeting daily expenses as a result of the global economic crisis.
(54 per cent of families in Kiribati, 63 per cent in the Solomon Islands and 77 per cent in Tuvalu). While most Pacific Island Governments invest significant proportions of their budgets in health and education, deep budget cuts (for example, in 2010, Kiribati cut its education budget by 24 per cent and Solomon Islands by 35 per cent) have placed considerable strain on social services.

22. Geography is a key dimension of disparities across the Pacific Islands where the most disadvantaged families are generally located in remote rural areas and the outer islands. A child poverty study in Vanuatu found large differences between rural and urban areas; only 10 per cent of children in urban households experience at least one severe deprivation compared to 29 per cent in rural households. The region is also highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change, which exacerbate vulnerabilities. Storm surges and rising sea levels have destroyed infrastructure and contaminated fresh water supplies, affecting children’s nutrition and increasing exposure to water-borne diseases. The Cook Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, and Tuvalu are four of the five nations identified globally as most at risk by the Alliance of Small Island States.

23. Risk factors for the transmission of HIV and other sexually communicable diseases are high. In Kiribati, 43 per cent of survey respondents aged 15-19 years had experienced forced sex; and 57 per cent of sexually active youth were engaged in unprotected high-risk sex. Research undertaken by UNICEF in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu has documented extremely high levels of violence and abuse towards children in homes, communities and schools. For instance, 81 per cent of adult caregivers in Kiribati and 72 per cent in Solomon Islands admitted to physically hurting children in their household.

Progress and key results at midterm

24. The Pacific Islands multi-country programme contributed to key results in many areas. Of 12 outcomes, 11 were on track, with one outcome (HIV and AIDS) identified as being constrained due to reduced donor support. The programme is on track to maintain high coverage of routine immunization in all Pacific Island States. Systems for integration of prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV services in reproductive health have been strengthened in five countries and integrated in nine selected health facilities.

25. Through engagement in a sector-wide approach to development assistance for education, particularly as a pooled partner in Vanuatu, UNICEF has effectively promoted incorporation of child-friendly schools standards within national minimum standards and has leveraged significant increases in budget allocations for early childhood education. UNICEF has also transitioned to a stronger focus on upstream policy work through the sector-wide approach and engagement in national planning and budgeting processes at the national level, and through strengthened partnerships with regional institutions. UNICEF continued to be a strong promoter of United Nations coherence and partnerships; key partnerships for UNICEF Pacific in 2010 include the strengthened relationships with regional agencies, particularly the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the secretariat of the Pacific Community. Building on a strong focus on data and evidence, UNICEF, working with a coalition of United Nations agencies, the Asian Development Bank and other regional multilateral and academic institutions, initiated the Pacific Conference on the Human Face of the Global Economic Crisis in Vanuatu UNICEF Pacific’s increasing
engagement in national sectoral coordination mechanisms also represents key partnerships for results for children with equity in the Pacific.

**Resources used**

26. During 2008-2010, the planned annual regular resource allocation of $5.5 million was fully expended (99 per cent for 2008-2009). Of other resources, $6.013 million was requisitioned in 2008, $6.571 million in 2009 and $8.191 million in 2010 — against an annual OR ceiling of $6.6 million. Other resources available in 2010 ($7.62 million) represented 127 per cent of the annual ceiling. The higher amount reflects increasing confidence of donor partners in the capacity of UNICEF Pacific to support child-centred development. However, distribution of other resources across programmes has been uneven with education and child protection well-funded but health, sanitation and HIV and AIDS having insufficient funds to achieve planned results.

**Constraints and opportunities affecting progress**

27. During the 2008-2012 multi-country programme, UNICEF supported the 14 Pacific Island countries according to a three-tier system: tier one of three priority countries — Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu; tier two of selective engagement in five countries — Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Samoa and Tuvalu; and tier three of engagement through partnerships and regional mechanisms in six countries — Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tokelau and Tonga. However, the global economic crisis created and exposed new vulnerabilities cutting across the three tiers, challenging the continued usefulness of this system.

28. The MTR recommended strengthening UNICEF capacity in tier-one countries and to make stronger links with United Nations Joint Presence Offices to drive programme implementation particularly in tier-two countries. The MTR also suggested that in order to advance results in the Pacific Islands, programme teams should: (a) strengthen the evidence base for action and advocacy, including strengthening of routine data collection and use in the health and education sectors of all countries; (b) strengthen the evidence base to drive communication for social change, particularly at the community level; (c) strengthen integration across programmes to maximize impact on policy, services and behaviour change; and (d) reach the most vulnerable not just in the least developed countries but also in the countries where multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS 3) were recently undertaken (in 2007), particularly the atoll countries of the North Pacific.

**Adjustments made**

29. As a result of the UNICEF internal MTR meeting, UNICEF Pacific has realigned and rationalized its current programme structure of 12 programme outcomes and 38 programme outputs into 16 key results across five thematic areas: health and sanitation; education; child protection; HIV and AIDS; and policy, advocacy, planning and evaluation. These 16 results are aligned with UNDAF outputs. Multi-country programme staffing was also re-examined and 25 additional posts were proposed, 17 of which will be in the three main field offices (Kiribati,

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1 UNICEF hosts two of these United Nations Joint Presence Offices, in Kiribati and Vanuatu.
Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Strategic shifts include a greater focus on partnership capacity development, strengthening UNICEF engagement in upstream policy work, enhancing data integrity and use of best practices, and promoting increased convergence between programmes.

**Conclusion**

30. It is clear from the MTRs that the traditional development paradigm is changing. Governments are increasingly able to implement development programmes themselves, relying on development partners for a different kind of support that emphasizes policy analysis and partnership, building on evidence and lessons learned from service delivery and systems strengthening. Private corporations, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions have gained greater prominence in policy development and service delivery, and are increasingly influencing country agendas.

31. These rapid developments, along with new donor relationships and a more unified United Nations functioning, provide opportunities to sharpen and reshape the role of UNICEF in providing a strong independent voice for children and the promotion of their rights. Some environments have proven more challenging than others in terms of securing political buy-in and developing the political, legal and institutional space to ensure positive results for children. The midterm reviews of Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands have highlighted the strengths as well as the continuing challenges for the work of UNICEF and the United Nations in these contexts.

32. For UNICEF to keep pace with the changing development context, the focus on upstream work and the refocus on equity, there is need for enhanced capacities and skills in communication and advocacy, partnership development, social policy and statistics to complement the traditional strengths of UNICEF so as to advance evidence-based programming and policies for children within United Nations country processes.