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Executive Board  
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Management perspective on the 2013 annual report on the evaluation function

1. The present report has been prepared by the management of UNICEF to provide its perspective on the 2013 annual report of the evaluation function (E/ICEF/2014/12). UNICEF management is committed to having an effective and efficient evaluation function, particularly in light of the key role evaluation plays in supporting organizational learning, accountability, transparency and overall performance and results-based management.

I. Governance of the evaluation function

2. Management appreciates the importance that the Executive Board gives to the evaluation function in UNICEF. It is important to note that management places equal emphasis on the importance of the evaluation function through internal accountability, governance and oversight mechanisms, as detailed in the revised Evaluation Policy (E/ICEF/2013/14). The evaluation function is overseen by the Executive Director. The Deputy Executive Director for Management chairs the Global Evaluation Committee and oversees the management interaction with the Evaluation Office. Accountabilities and responsibilities of heads of offices, technical evaluation and sectoral programme staff at headquarters, regional and country levels are also detailed in the Evaluation Policy.

3. Evaluation-related issues are often featured on the agenda of the Global Management Team. The evaluation function is integrated into UNICEF planning, budgeting, implementation and reporting processes at headquarters, regional and country levels through mechanisms such as office management plans, integrated monitoring and evaluation plans, annual reporting tools, and the Evaluation Management Response Tracking System. This emphasis on the evaluation function by the Executive Board and by UNICEF management can be one of the underlying causes for the improvement in evaluation quality and the increased compliance with evaluation management response standards.

* E/ICEF/2014/5.
II. System-wide evaluation coherence

4. UNICEF management notes the contributions made to strengthen the evaluation function within the context of United Nations coherence by meeting the related requirements of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which emphasizes the importance of the use of evaluation evidence; calls for greater alignment between evaluations plans and new corporate strategic plans; encourages the strengthening of evaluation capacities both within United Nations entities and within national evaluation systems; and emphasizes the need for effective independent system-wide evaluation arrangements.

5. Recognizing the importance of responding to these points, UNICEF will further strengthen the evaluation system through the implementation of the revised Evaluation Policy and continue support for national evaluation capacity development. The Plan for Global Thematic Evaluations 2014-2017 is aligned with the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2014-2017. UNICEF management acknowledges the contribution to the development of the independent system-wide evaluation policy by the Evaluation Office; and its active participation in United Nations Evaluation Group initiatives and inter-agency and joint evaluations. These efforts are in line with UNICEF commitment to United Nations coherence and the broader United Nations system reform efforts.

III. Evaluation coherence and capacity development at the global level

6. UNICEF management acknowledges the important role the Evaluation Office has played in nurturing and developing global evaluation networks, such as Evalpartners and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. Management encourages future engagement and investment in these networks not only as a means to strengthen the evaluation capacity of national and civil society partners, but as a potentially rich source of evaluation expertise and talent for UNICEF to capitalize on in the future when seeking new staff and partners to help strengthen internal evaluation capacity.

IV. The evaluation function in UNICEF: performance and results

7. UNICEF management welcomes the trends highlighted by the data emerging from the suite of six key performance indicators. Management believes that the increased number of outcome and impact evaluations, and the broader coverage of multi-sector topics is a reflection of the organization’s shift towards upstream work and more strategic-level programme approaches. Management encourages the Evaluation Office to continue supporting actions that move these trends forward, particularly as UNICEF begins implementing the Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

V. The evaluation function in UNICEF: human and financial resources

8. Management welcomes the positive trends in the staffing of the evaluation function, particularly the increase in higher-level posts at country level and the growth of the monitoring and evaluation function in medium-sized and large country offices. Notable efforts have also been made at regional level where despite limited evaluation function capacity, high productivity in major evaluations is reported. Management believes the increase in evaluation-related posts in medium-sized and large country offices and the notable productivity in major evaluations at regional level are indicative of the responsiveness of UNICEF to address perceived weaknesses of the evaluation function in different programme contexts.
9. In addition to the positive trends in evaluation staffing, the financial commitment of UNICEF management to the Evaluation Office has increased by 47 per cent in regular resources, reducing the dependency on other resources to fund global evaluations.

10. At the same time, the annual report on the evaluation function highlights a number of discrepancies, which warrant further analysis. For example, despite the positive trends in human resource and financial investments for evaluation noted above, the external Review of UNICEF Development Effectiveness, 2009-2011, found that UNICEF did not have adequate evaluation coverage of the programming in countries receiving the most funding (especially countries with humanitarian emergencies). In addition, there appears to be no direct correlation between the increase in evaluation staff and the number of evaluations completed.

11. UNICEF management encourages the Evaluation Office to explore the underlying causes of these discrepancies, recognizing that there can be many variables at work which contribute to differences in evaluation performance across countries, regions and levels of the organization. These may include the level of management attention, drive and direction for the evaluation function in each office; the extent of technical specialist involvement in the evaluation process; the amount of external capacity employed in each evaluation; and the number of additional functions that must be carried out by staff on evaluation-related posts. Management looks forward to learning more on these issues and recommends that lessons learned be drawn from the experiences of different offices so that good practices can be identified and applied across the organization.

VI. Strengthening evaluation within UNICEF: the regional link

12. Management notes that the variations in implementing the evaluation function across regions are one of the unique features of a decentralized organizational environment like UNICEF. Management supports this approach, stressing the importance of strong global capacity building, guidance and quality assurance of evaluation standards to ensure coherence and consistency in the evaluation function across the different programme contexts and levels of the organization.

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