

**For information**

**United Nations Children's Fund**

Executive Board

**Annual session 2016**

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**Management perspective on the annual report for 2015 on the evaluation function in UNICEF**

1. The present report has been prepared by the management of UNICEF to provide its perspective on the annual report for 2015 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2016/11), in accordance with Executive Board decision 2013/13. UNICEF management continues to be committed to having an effective and efficient evaluation function, particularly in light of the key role that evaluation plays in supporting organizational learning, accountability, transparency and overall performance and results.

**I. Governance of the evaluation function**

2. Management acknowledges that the accountabilities for the evaluation function in UNICEF were discharged in accordance with the revised Evaluation Policy (E/ICEF/2013/14) in 2015:

(a) The Executive Board exercised oversight of the evaluation function in UNICEF, providing a decision on the annual report for 2014 on the evaluation function in UNICEF and a management perspective, as well as substantial feedback on four evaluations presented by the Evaluation Office;

(b) The Global Evaluation Committee fulfilled an internal consultative function, and met in June 2015 to consider areas within its terms of reference;

(c) The Evaluation Office provided global leadership on the evaluation function, as reflected in both the annual report for 2015 on the evaluation function in UNICEF and the plan for global thematic evaluations 2014-2017: review and update for 2016-2017 (E/ICEF/2016/3), which was presented to the Board at its first regular session in 2016;

(d) Accountabilities at the regional and country levels were upheld.

3. Management appreciates the contribution of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee to the governance of the evaluation function in UNICEF.

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\* E/ICEF/2016/5.

4. Management welcomes the annual report of the Evaluation Office, noting that it is clear, evidence-based, accurate and comprehensive.

## II. Evaluation coherence

5. In 2015, the Evaluation Office continued to partner with Member States and evaluation networks to promote the importance of evaluation and to strengthen the relevance and efficiency of the evaluation function within the United Nations system.

6. Management especially welcomes the active role played by the UNICEF Evaluation Office in supporting countries to develop national evaluation capacities. Also of note is the Office's continued focus on inter-agency evaluations, and its increasing role in strengthening the evaluation of humanitarian action within UNICEF at the global and country levels.

7. Management will continue to support these efforts, which increase the relevance and effectiveness of the UNICEF evaluation function.

## III. Performance of the evaluation function within UNICEF

8. Management is committed to monitoring the six key performance indicators presented in the annual report for 2015 on the evaluation function:

(a) *Indicator 1: Number of evaluations managed and submitted to the global evaluation database.* In response to the lower productivity in 2014 as compared with 2013 noted in the report, in 2016 management will work with the Office to identify the root causes of coverage gaps and develop strategies to close them;

(b) *Indicator 2: Topical distribution.* Management notes the findings of the Evaluation Office. Concerning the relatively low number of evaluations focused on humanitarian programming, management is confident that the initiative launched in 2015 by the Office to build capacity within country offices for the evaluation of humanitarian action will help to address the evaluation gaps in that area. In 2016, management will work closely with the Office to support the progress on that initiative and to increase the monitoring of topical distribution in evaluation. Management will also continue to rely on the Office to highlight areas that register a good trend, such as gender equality, so that good strategies can be maintained and systematized;

(c) *Indicator 3: Types of evaluation conducted.* Management notes the positive trends in this area: reductions in output-level and formative-level evaluations and increases in outcome-level and summative-level evaluations. It agrees with the Evaluation Office that the significant decrease in the number of impact-level evaluations (from 52 in 2012 to 18 in 2014) should be closely monitored and addressed, and will rely on the Office to provide guidance in this area;

(d) *Indicator 4: Quality of UNICEF evaluation reports.* The overall quality of UNICEF evaluation reports continued to improve in 2014, especially in terms of the mainstreaming of (i) human rights, gender and equity concerns, (ii) stakeholder engagement and (iii) the consideration of ethical issues in evaluation. Still, management recognizes that more progress is required and will continue to work with the Evaluation Office to develop and implement corrective strategies;

(e) *Indicator 5: Use of evaluation, including management responses.* Management response to evaluation findings provides evidence of the organization's seriousness about using evaluation

findings to enhance performance and results. Management notes good results, but with negative trends in 2015 that need close attention: (i) the reduction in responses entered into the Evaluation Management Response (EMR) system (from 92 per cent in 2013 to 81 per cent in 2014) and (ii) 31 per cent of agreed actions outstanding for two years or longer after the completion of the evaluation, and 14 per cent either cancelled (2 per cent) or never started (12 per cent). The Evaluation Office reports that an ongoing external review confirmed that guidance on the EMR system is adequate but that its tracking system does not capture all of the actions following an evaluation. Management is committed to a high performance in the use of evaluation and will work closely with the Office to follow up on the conclusions of the completed review of the EMR system;

(f) *Indicator 6: Corporate spending on evaluation.* In 2015, the programme budget expenditure for evaluation reached 0.65 per cent of UNICEF total expenditure, which represents progress as compared with 0.5 per cent in 2014, but is still below the target threshold of 1 per cent. Management will continue its efforts to increase corporate spending on evaluation, despite the challenging financial environment, in order to reach the target, recognizing that achieving this goal efficiently and effectively is also dependent upon the progress made in the other indicators.

#### **IV. Human resources**

9. The Evaluation Office, in its annual report on the evaluation function, provides useful detailed analysis of human resources for evaluation and recognizes the intensification of positive trends in this area in 2015. The number of high-level evaluation professionals has increased (by 16 per cent since 2013 and 104 per cent since 2008), with good gender and geographic diversity among staff. In addition, better-resourced country offices increased the number of their evaluation professionals, with a full quarter of positions established in hardship duty stations. Several training and capacity-building activities also took place in a number of countries, most notable of which were those aimed at strengthening the evaluation of humanitarian action.

10. The annual report on the evaluation function indicates that the allocation of evaluation staff's time in the field should continue to be monitored, as they perform other evidence functions in addition to evaluations. Management will work with the Evaluation Office to develop methods to make sure that the evaluation function receives a sufficient allocation of resources.

11. Management acknowledges the continuing efforts of the Evaluation Office to adjust its own structure to meet its accountabilities under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The strengthening of the human resources capacity available for thematic evaluation was a positive development in 2015.

#### **V. Influential evaluations**

12. The annual report of the Evaluation Office advocates effectively for the use of evaluation in decision-making, learning and policy advocacy, presenting the influences that evaluations from UNICEF regional and country offices have had on programming approaches, policies, the scaling-up of programmes and equity issues. Management finds this analysis to be essential to understanding and promoting the role of the evaluation function within UNICEF, and looks forward to working with the Office to develop tools to measure and monitor the influence of evaluation.

## **VI. Conclusions**

13. In conclusion, management welcomes the continued progress in strengthening the evaluation function within UNICEF. Yet, as noted by the Evaluation Office, the rapidly changing context for development and humanitarian action poses new challenges. At the national level, increased capacity and stronger systems for evaluation will be needed for reviewing and supporting progress towards results. At all levels, more sophisticated methods and technologies for undertaking practical and timely evaluation will be required to address the increasing complexity and interconnected character of the development agenda and humanitarian action. Recognizing these challenges, UNICEF will continue to work with others towards better evaluation in the service of better results for children.

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