UNICEF

Multi-Country Evaluation - Increasing Access and Equity in Early Childhood Education in the CEE/CIS Region

UNICEF Executive Board

Informal Briefing

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Multi-Country Evaluation
Evidence for Measuring Results and Learning

Scope & Approach:
• Rigorous and Independent (Education for Change Ltd)
• Theme: Early Childhood Education

• Period: 2005-2012
• Coverage: 6 countries
• Innovative Approach and Lessons Learned
Generic Regional Theory of Change

Increasing access and equity in early childhood education in the CEE/CIS region

Enabling Environment
Supply & Quality of Services
Demand for Services

UNICEF’s Contribution (7 core roles)
Government & Partner Inputs and External Factors

Situation Analysis

L1 (and inputs)
L2 (Output)
L3 (Outcome)
L4 (Impact)
Evaluation Findings
Findings – Did UNICEF Do The Right Thing?

- UNICEF responded appropriately to the context – and to the need for rebuilding the early learning system in the post Soviet era.
- UNICEF focus on building understanding, political commitment and the regulatory framework was important for increasing the availability of early learning services.

- Until recently UNICEF paid less attention to issues of quality and demand for early childhood education (ECE) services – and to emerging private sector provision.
- There is a need to promote further coherence, intersectorality and continuity in the approach to 0-8 age learning
Findings – Changes in the Lives of Children and Equity Gaps

- Overall access to ECE has increased, sometimes very significantly, but starting from a low base in most countries.
- Indications of early learning contributing to increased school “readiness”
- While data availability has been limited, reductions in equity gaps appear variable.

% children 3-5 years accessing pre-school
Findings – UNICEF’s Upstream Work and System Level Changes

- Improved legislation, policies and increased budgets for ECE
- Professionals and communities recognize the value of early learning
- The supply of pre-school facilities, qualified staff and complementary services such as educational TV have improved.

Challenges:
- Attitudes towards marginalized children
- Sub national capacities, budget allocations and private sector provision
- Demand for integrated childcare and early learning and emerging fragmentation of supply
Findings – UNICEF’s Upstream Work and System Level Changes

- Effective advocacy and successful efforts to leverage funding for ECE
- Influential modelling/piloting work
- Strong reputation for policy and technical advice and knowledge brokering

- Less support for monitoring systems e.g. for different modalities of provision, on exclusion and on learning outcomes
Findings - UNICEF Core Roles & Efficiency

“Overall, UNICEF has had limited budgets and human resources for ECE but through effectively combining its core roles it has been one of the most important partners for ECE in all six countries/regions studied. It has utilised its position and relationships to progress its agenda in a complex and evolving sector.”

“However, progress has largely taken place without a clear and articulated longer-term UNICEF vision for ECE. As both the sector and UNICEF’s own programming have developed, the need for a strategic framework has grown.”
Recommendations
Recommendations:

- Develop a long term vision and strategy for early learning, amending the Theory of Change, strengthen cross-sectoral approaches to system level change and align with European policy and practice (R1,2,12,14,15).

- Review quality risks arising from rapidly expanding access to ECE (R3); develop standards and guidelines (R7)

- Deepen approach to teacher training and professional development (R4)
Recommendations:

• Develop guidance/tools for child participation in early learning as a contribution to strengthening the quality of early learning (R5)

• Strengthen UNICEF’s ability to navigate decentralization and to provide sustainable capacity development (R8)

• Support and, if necessary, drive a research agenda on ECE (R11)

• Develop a stronger framework for data collection (R10)

• Further support the institutionalization of quality children’s educational television (R6)
Questions?