Internal guidance for management response to evaluations

ENHANCING CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT FOR THE STRATEGIC USE OF EVALUATIONS

DECEMBER 2009
Introduction

The purpose of this internal guidance on Management Response is to strengthen the use of evaluation by UNICEF management and, to the maximum extent possible, its partners, thus fostering greater ownership over the process of change and ultimately ensuring accountability for results. It does so by facilitating strategic engagement on evaluation findings and appropriate follow-up actions through a formal process that includes:

- Holistic consideration of the evaluation report;
- An indication whether management agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with the findings and recommendations in the evaluation report;
- A written formulation of time-bound action-plans, and those responsible for ensuring their implementation; and
- Implementation and monitoring of the planned actions.

The Tracking System documents management’s response and follow-up actions to evaluations. It provides a written record of what actions are planned in response to evaluations and what is actually done. In this sense, it not only strengthens organizational accountability for results, but also transparency in the process of determining how results will be achieved.

Justification

Several corporate decisions have been taken committing UNICEF to respond to evaluations in an appropriate manner. The UNICEF Evaluation Policy states that “Country Representatives, Regional Directors and, as appropriate, Divisional Directors will ensure that recommendations are fully considered with concerned partners, that accepted recommendations are acted on, and that annual reports include a statement on the status of evaluation follow-up”. The 2008 UNICEF Executive Board’s decision on the Evaluation Policy requests “preparation and availability of management responses for all evaluation reports” and systematic incorporation of evaluation findings and recommendations “into all relevant policy and strategic documents, including country programme documents”. A 2009 Executive Board decision restated such a request.

Management response is a formal mechanism that helps ensure that evaluations are used, contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning and accountability.

Type of evaluation

All UNICEF-supported evaluations should make use of a written management response mechanism.

In the case of joint and country-led evaluations, management response may either follow UNICEF format or the one suggested by partners. UNICEF is accountable to develop a management response for recommendations directed to UNICEF, as well as facilitate and support partners to develop their own response. For recommendations directed to the UNCT – i.e., in UNDAF evaluations – UNICEF should facilitate, in cooperation with UNCT members, a joint management response.

How to develop the management response

Stage 1: Evaluation planning and prioritization of strategic recommendations

Preparation for management response starts when an evaluation is planned. Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) should clearly state the intended use (how the evaluation process and results will be used and by whom), and request the evaluation team to prioritize key strategic recommendations. If evaluation reports do not prioritize key strategic recommendations, the commissioning office, in consultation with Regional Office and Headquarter Divisions as appropriate, should prioritize key strategic recommendations based on their strategic nature, the likelihood for the recommendation to steer change, and the appropriate sequencing in their implementation.
Box 1: Requirements for effective evaluation recommendations

1. To ensure programmatic and technical relevance, key stakeholders should be consulted during the development of recommendations. 
2. The evaluation team should highlight key strategic recommendations, suggesting an appropriate sequencing in the implementation of recommendations whenever possible. 
3. Recommendations should be firmly based on evidence and analysis. 
4. Recommendations should clearly identify the specific operational units/offices/divisions responsible for its implementation. (If this hasn’t been done it should be done in the response)

Stage 2: Key stakeholders holistically review the evaluation report and process, including additional insights not articulated in the recommendations

Key evaluation stakeholders - including Country Management Team/Programme Management Team, Monitoring and Evaluation specialist, the responsible Programme Officer and external stakeholders - holistically review the evaluation report and process in its entirety, and complement recommendations with additional insights as appropriate. Relevant Regional Office and Headquarter divisions may also highlight strategic issues and recommendations they think the commissioning office should act on.

Stage 3: Formulation of management response

Written management response to the key strategic recommendations and issues is developed within 4 weeks of the evaluation report submission, unless there is a need for an extended consultative process. The management response indicates if management agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with key strategic recommendations/critical issues. In the latter case, the reason for partial agreement/disagreement is provided. In the former case, actions to be taken are described, indicating the time frame and specific units/persons responsible for each action. A focal point is appointed for internally coordinating all subsequent follow-up by individual operational units specified in each recommendation. The management response is saved in the Tracking system available at [http://intranet.unicef.org/epp/evaluationtracking.nsf](http://intranet.unicef.org/epp/evaluationtracking.nsf)

Offices should use the proposed format for internal purposes. However, different formats – such as a memo - may be used with government officials and other partners, focusing on the accepted recommendations and additional issues emanating from the evaluation report.

Stage 4: Implementation and monitoring of the management response

The designated office implements actions by the expected completion date. Progress on management response implementation is reviewed at Office Management Team meetings and End-Year Review, where any necessary update and adjustment is discussed and decided. The designated office records any documentary evidence that the actions claimed actually occurred. The Office of Internal Audit may verify existence and implementation of the management response during scheduled office audits.

Stage 5: Reporting on management response implementation

The Evaluation Office reports to the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board on the progress in implementing management response within the organization.

Accountabilities

The Head of Office or Headquarter Division is responsible for finalization, implementation and monitoring of the management response. Monitoring and Evaluation Officers provide technical support in the development and tracking of management responses.

Regional Chiefs of Monitoring and Evaluation provide assistance to Country Offices in developing relevant and high-quality management response to major evaluations.

Evaluation Office provides organization-wide guidance on the management response mechanisms, administers the tracking system, monitors key trends and reports them annually to the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board.
Evaluation Office also facilitates sharing of good practices and lessons learned. Office of Internal Audit may verify existence and implementation of management responses during scheduled office audits.
Evaluation title: Evaluation of the Safe and Caring Child Friendly Schools Programme
Year: 2010/2011
Office and person in charge for management response: Iliana Nadi Albino

Overall response to the evaluation: The evaluation was very thorough, comprehensive and articulated all the technical aspects highlighting issues that both UNICEF and the Department were aware of. The report provides a good basis for some of the challenges related to the roles of Provincial Education Departments and district level support for schools. This has helped to a large extent to open the debate in particular into the role of districts (or lack thereof). The report also supports the premise of a differentiated approach to supporting schools based on their levels of performance. Senior management agrees with the observations of the report that the review shows a high degree of synergy between the SCCFS Programme goals and South African Government strategies in crime prevention, provision of health services and improvement in school education, all of which stress the importance of community involvement, as does the SCCFS Programme. The review pays particular attention to the synergy that exists between the Programme and the ‘Action Plan to 2014 Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025’ of the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2010a). However, relevant cautions must be noted, related to serious barriers in the way of effective Programme implementation, such as the lack of integration of functions within and across Government departments and the need to strengthen schools’ internal capacity for teaching and learning, as well as management and leadership.

Planned use of evaluation: Even as the evaluation was in progress the initial findings provided an evidence base for the development of the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning South Africa Country framework. The framework incorporated all the CFS principles and as indicated above the evaluation shows clear synergy in current thinking and direction of the Department of basic Education. The paradigm of school functionality in the Action Plan 2014 and Sector Plan Towards the Realization of Schooling 2025 has largely been informed by the CFS principles espoused in the Safe and Caring Child Friendly Schools Framework. The report is already in use by government counterparts and has been the impetus for the direct support to three provinces from 2012 on as defined in point two below. The report will also be presented at the first South Africa conference on Quality Basic Education in April 2 – 4 2012. It will also be shared with parliamentarians, schools, civil society organizations nationally and regionally offices.

Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 1: Monitoring and evaluation of Programme activities needs to be strengthened, given the considerable variability in Programme effectiveness during its lifespan. Consistency in the design of baseline studies, and availability of baseline data per school, are essential to enable measurement of progress.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions planned</th>
<th>Responsible Office/Person</th>
<th>Expected completion date</th>
<th>Implementation stage:</th>
<th>Actions taken</th>
<th>Supporting documents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) principles have been incorporated into the Care and Support for Teaching and in</td>
<td>Education Section – Gerrit Maritz</td>
<td>Third quarter of 2012</td>
<td>Underway</td>
<td>Terms of Reference drafted in collaboration with Department of Basic Education (DBE) – M&amp;E section</td>
<td>Zero Draft ToR</td>
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Learning (CSTL) Programme as part of the response to issues of school functionality articulated in Action 2014 towards the realization of Sector Plan Schooling 2025 – support will be provided to develop and implement a Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) plan for CSTL.

**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 2**: A high level political intervention is recommended to ensure that future SCCFS or SCCFS-related interventions are given appropriate status, possibly in the office of the MEC for Education to ensure strong political support and ‘across silo’ capability.

**Management Response**: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): **Agree**

**If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:**

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<td>SCCFS has informed and forms the core of the CSTL programme – this has been articulated in the Action Plan 2014 towards sector plan the realization Schooling 2025. UNICEF will work closely with the National Department – three provinces will get direct UNICEF support in implementation and monitoring beginning 2012 – reaching an estimated over 9,000 schools – 5 million girls and boys – this will be supported by the National Department and led by the Heads of Department (HOD) under the guidance MECs of the three provinces -</td>
<td>Education Section - GM</td>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>Discussions process underway – first planning meeting for Mpumalanga province 20/21 January 2012 Date for Free State and Eastern Cape Provinces TBC</td>
<td>Meeting with HOD of Mpumalanga – dates for first planning agreed on</td>
<td>Zero draft implementation plan</td>
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**Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 3**: A Standardized model of delivery, combining training provision with three levels of intensity in terms of school based support.
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<td>Development of a standardized implementation plan – with different intensity of support for different levels of schools – poor performing schools – with a high intensity, medium and high performing with medium and high intensity</td>
<td>Education Section Nadi Albino</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>Underway</td>
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Evaluation Recommendation or Issue 4: Focus on teaching on learning – where a conducive school environment has been created Department of Basic Education should ensure that Provincial Education Departments develop strategies to assist schools directly in the improvement of learner performance

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree
If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

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<td>In 2011 DBE provided workbooks for all schools particularly the poor performing schools to improve teaching and learning – UNICEF will support an assessment of the difference this initiative has had in improving teaching and learning in 2012 – the findings will help to define a more technically target approach to improve the quality of teaching and learning</td>
<td>Education section - NA</td>
<td>September 2012</td>
<td>Underway</td>
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learning in the poor performing school